

**COUNCIL ASSEMBLY**  
**(COUNCIL TAX SETTING MEETING)**

**WEDNESDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2015**

**QUESTIONS ON REPORTS: 2.1 – COUNCIL PLAN 2014/2015 – 2017/2018**

**1. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR HELEN HAYES**

Is the leader confident that the council will be able to deliver on the commitments set out in the council plan in the context of a £20.4m government cut to the council's spending power this year, with further cuts likely in future years?

**RESPONSE**

Yes, I am confident that we will deliver our plans. We knew the Conservative/Liberal Democrat government would continue to disproportionately hit the councils with the highest need and this was detailed in our manifesto. From this we developed the council plan so that the commitments that the Labour councillors made to residents in the election now become the policy of this council, and are policies that we are confident that we can deliver.

We also know that while a future Labour government will continue to make cuts to public spending, they will look again at the funding formula which has seen an increase in spending in the affluent towns of the home counties, whilst taking an axe to the areas most in need.

I had hoped that having a government Minister as a local MP, would mean that we had someone in government fighting for a fair deal for Southwark. Sadly, he has systematically failed to stand up for Southwark. The only way to make sure that people in Southwark get a fairer deal from government is to elect three MPs who will stand up for local people: Harriet Harman, Helen Hayes and Neil Coyle.

Despite this, we have not let Liberal Democrat/Conservative cuts, cut our ambition. We are presenting a council plan which is the most bold and radical in London. It will make us the first council in the country to offer free swimming and gyms to all residents, to build 11,000 new council homes and achieve some of the best school results in the country.

**2. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR NEIL COYLE**

Can the leader give an update on the council's campaign to extend the Bakerloo line to Camberwell and the Old Kent Road?

**RESPONSE**

Two years ago, I got agreement from the Mayor of London to recognise the potential for the Bakerloo Line Extension to deliver real growth in homes and jobs in Southwark. Since then it has become a political priority for the Mayor and last week, the Chancellor also joined in his support.

Last week the Chancellor and the Mayor set out the "Long Term Economic Plan for London". The Bakerloo Line extension has now become one of the

government's top two priorities for potential major capital infrastructure spending together with Crossrail 2. The Chancellor challenged the Mayor and TfL to bring back detailed costings and proposals for the BLE ahead of the next Comprehensive Spending Review which will take place after the election. We already know that some major work has already been undertaken in this regard, so it really looks as if the Bakerloo Line Extension has now found its way into longer-term treasury thinking.

We will continue to make the case for the Bakerloo line to run along a dual line in Southwark – along the Old Kent Road and through Camberwell and Peckham. I am confident that we can demonstrate the overwhelming case for both of these routes as well as a commitment to find a funding solution for their delivery.

This is great news for Southwark and our campaign, alongside the community to extend the Bakerloo line.

### **3. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL FLEMING**

How will the leader ensure that the council's ambitious house building programme enables communities to stay together and that local people benefit from regeneration of their local area?

#### **RESPONSE**

The council has committed to build 1,500 new council homes by 2018. Many of these homes will be built on underutilised land on housing estates. In order for local residents to directly benefit from these new homes the council introduced a local lettings policy which will allocate 50% of these new homes to those with a housing need on that estate. This will enable the elderly to downsize into a brand new home which meets their need as well as freeing up their existing home for reallocation. Others with a housing need like over crowding will also be a priority when allocating these high quality new homes. This will help give an additional housing option for those wishing to stay within their local community. Contractors working on the delivery of new homes will also have to provide local labour opportunities to enable local people to benefit from apprenticeships and construction jobs.

Regeneration provides a broad spectrum of benefits to all local residents existing and new. These include jobs, new homes, investment in public facilities like leisure centres, libraries, schools and public spaces as well as new homes and public transport improvements.

### **4. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR CHRIS GONDE**

The Liberal Democrats have suggested that the council's free swimming and gyms policy should not be a priority for public health, just as they did with free healthy school meals. Can the leader assure me that free swimming and gym use will remain a top priority for this administration?

#### **RESPONSE**

Councillor Gonde is quite right to highlight the Liberal Democrats' consistent opposition to Free Healthy School Meals. However, when they saw what a success it was, and when their own national party was about to adopt a similar

policy to the one they had so vehemently opposed, they performed a u-turn and claimed to back it.

With free swimming and gyms we can expect more of the same. Liberal Democrat Councillors oppose a policy and then when we make it a success claim that they support it.

I am happy to assure Councillor Gonde that free swim and gyms remains a top priority for this administration. This is a phased process, and we are starting off by targeting particular groups, before rolling out a universal offer. As a first step, cabinet agreed to begin a pilot offer in spring this year. We have agreed:

- 18s and under free swim – all day Friday; afternoons from 2pm until 6pm on Saturday and Sunday
- 16 to 18 years free gym – all day Friday; afternoons from 2pm until 6pm on Saturday and Sunday
- 14 to 16 years free youth gym sessions – at selected times on Friday evenings, Saturday and Sunday afternoons
- Free ‘Silver Sessions’ – access to the 60+ sessions all week
- Free access to The Castle for those with disabilities (from Summer 2015) – all day Friday, afternoons from 2pm until close on Saturday and Sunday
- Free gym and swim for referrals to key healthy lifestyle schemes (from April 2016)
  - o MEND family weight management programmed
  - o GP physical activity referral scheme including Kickstart
  - o NHS Health Checks fitness passport scheme.

Cabinet also agreed for the next stage of the roll out to be in June next year. We have asked officers to explore free access to gym and swimming for all residents – all day Friday; afternoons on Saturday and Sunday. We will continue to be ambitious to roll this out as far and as fast as we can to give people access to gyms and swimming improving health in our borough.

#### **5. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES OKOSUN**

Can the leader update us on progress with the council’s childcare commission and when the outcomes will be published?

#### **RESPONSE**

The report has now been completed and is due to be published next week.

#### **6. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ADELE MORRIS**

Can the leader update us on work identifying site options for a new secondary school in the north of the borough, as mentioned in the Quarter 2 2014/2015 commentary on BSL7?

#### **RESPONSE**

The council has made clear that it wishes to see a new secondary school on the Dulwich Hospital site. Officers now believe that the site has space for up to 8FE (1200 plus a 400 place sixth form). In October 2014, the cabinet agreed that the site should be included in the new Southwark Plan as the council’s priority for

providing secondary school places. The site is a short walk from East Dulwich Station and offers excellent transport links throughout the borough.

The council expects to hear the results of the Education Funding Agency (EFA) interviews with potential sponsors in March. We also understand that heads of terms have been agreed with NHS Property to sell the site, alongside the re-provision of new health facilities on the same site.

In terms of sites to the north of the borough, the Mayor of London has recently indicated that the Fire Training site on Southwark Bridge Road should be sold to the EFA for a new school. I strongly support using this site for a school.

There is one other potential site, which is currently the subject of confidential commercial discussions with the EFA. Officers are also opening discussions with all borough secondary schools to explore opportunities for expansion. I have asked officers to prepare a comprehensive report on secondary school places for consideration by cabinet in July 2015, so I will be able to give a further update in the summer.

#### **7. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID NOAKES**

Can the leader explain why there are no commitments or milestones in the council plan on reducing health inequalities caused by air pollution, obesity, consumption of alcohol/illegal drugs, or sexually transmitted infections?

#### **RESPONSE**

The Council Plan does not contain all the business of the council. Measuring impact on health inequalities is the responsibility of the Health and Wellbeing Board as success in this area requires a multi-agency approach and not just Southwark Council working in isolation. As Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, I have focused the work into a few areas to ensure that in those, all agencies are working together to achieve real outcomes for people in the borough.

Tackling health inequalities is the responsibility of almost every part of the council. Health and wellbeing are influenced by social and environmental determinants, income, employment, health behaviour and health services. The Council Plan reflects the approach taken in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy which is to develop a public health perspective to mainstreaming services so that within the broader headings of the Council Plan there will be specific public health outcomes.