

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY MEETING)

30 NOVEMBER 2016

LATE QUESTION

1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI

Following the welcome news last week that the government has dropped plans to make 'Pay to Stay' mandatory for local authorities, what will the Leader personally be doing to ensure that other elements of the Act which will damage social housing and tenants' rights in Southwark are also stopped?

RESPONSE

It is very welcome that, following significant lobbying and campaigning by Southwark Labour councillors and others, the government has scrapped its plans to force councils to adopt Pay to Stay. We have argued that this policy would have a disastrous impact on council tenants in our borough by forcing huge rent spikes for working families, so I am delighted that it has been dropped.

Of course, there are still other elements of the Housing and Planning Act which will damage social housing and tenants' rights including the forced sale of council homes and the end of lifetime tenancies for council tenants. We have raised our concerns about Pay to Stay, and in September 2016 the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing wrote to all council tenants to advise them about the potential impact of the Housing and Planning Act. The cabinet member will continue to update residents as we get more details about the implementation of this legislation and we will continue to lobby the government to completely rethink the policies contained in this disastrous Act. Yesterday I gave evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee about the damaging impact the uncertainty of the government's housing policies are having on homebuilding in London and I will continue to make the case strongly for the protection of much-needed social housing.

The Minister of State for Housing and Planning has indicated that the provisions in the Housing and Planning Act, which requires secondary legislation to bring key elements into effect, are likely to be delayed beyond April 2017. Therefore it is essential that we use this opportunity to lobby the government to drop these damaging plans. Southwark is at the heart of the affordable housing crisis in London and I hope that all councillors in the borough will join us in fighting this assault on social housing.