

**COUNCIL ASSEMBLY
(ORDINARY)**

WEDNESDAY JULY 8 2009

MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME

1. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR PETER JOHN

What guarantees has the leader sought from the preferred bidder regarding its ability to complete the Elephant & Castle scheme in the current economic climate?

RESPONSE

Councillor John is right to highlight the difficulties caused by the current recession. Property prices in London have fallen by 3.3%, in Southwark by 8.7% and in some London boroughs by up to 20% in the 12 months up to March 2009. The impact of the recession on the banking sector has resulted in severe restraints on finance for private sector developers.

Negotiations with the preferred bidder are, as Councillor John will appreciate, subject to commercial confidentiality but I can assure him that all the appropriate guarantees have been sought, at the highest levels, from our preferred bidder and that a report on progress towards a final agreement will be coming to the executive on the July 21 2009.

2. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR JENNY JONES

On Wednesday November 5 2008, council agreed to support the London living wage by paying all staff, including staff employed by contractors providing a service on behalf of council, the London living wage. Council further agreed to promote the living wage more widely across the borough, including to the private sector. What steps has the council taken since that date to implement these commitments?

RESPONSE

To follow

3. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR CAROLINE PIDGEON

Would the leader of the council tell us what discussions he has had with the Mayor of London about securing funding for the cross river tram?

RESPONSE

I met with Boris Johnson on the June 16 where we discussed a number of issues including the Cross River Tram. Mayor Johnson is still very keen that the Tram is developed, although he has made it clear that Transport for London (TfL) is unable to provide funding.

I am pleased to be able to report that the Mayor agreed to write to Lord Adonis to ask him to consider funding the project. In light of the new high speed domestic services from St Pancras to destinations in East London and Kent, the argument

for creating this vital additional link between South and North London is stronger than ever.

4. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR RICHARD LIVINGSTONE

Can the leader provide the date by which he expects the agreement with the preferred bidder for the Elephant & Castle regeneration will be signed?

RESPONSE

Councillor Livingstone will be aware of the confidential nature of commercial negotiations to secure an agreement with the preferred bidder for the Elephant and Castle. I can assure him that every effort is being made to conclude the negotiations in a way that secures our vision for the regeneration of the Elephant and Castle and that a full report on progress towards an agreement will be made to the executive on July 21 2009.

5. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID HUBBER

Would the leader of the council care to reflect on the likely impact on the lives of people living in Southwark of the Labour government's mishandling of the economy, in particular the need for a £100 billion banking bail-out. In the light of this can he remind members of the steps that the council is taking to ensure that local businesses continue to thrive and bring new jobs and opportunities to our area?

RESPONSE

The executive took the decision on May 19 2009 to help small businesses in this difficult economic climate. These actions include:

Promoting the small business rate relief scheme

- Instruct the Supply Southwark Group to develop and implement at the earliest opportunity a method to promote opportunities for Southwark businesses to supply to the council by advertising contracts locally, including a website section listing all council procurement opportunities between £5,000 and £75,000 which local businesses can bid for
- Make best endeavours to accelerate payments to suppliers by reducing the payment period from 30 days to 20 days
- Permit businesses that are commercial property tenants of the council to pay rents monthly in advance rather than quarterly, so that more money is retained in the cashflow of that business.

In addition to this, through the work of the economic and development team the council has allocated an additional £2m to commission local organisations to provide training and support to help an additional 760 people get jobs and help over 150 new businesses start, plus £200,000 to fund 24 apprenticeships within the council.

Furthermore, the uncertainty of the current economic climate and the likelihood of future controls over public spending will create some difficult issues for the continuity and provision of council services. While the efficiency programme remains at the heart of council priorities for containing costs and balancing the

budget, continuing financial pressures, not least government grant, means that all front line services remain under continual scrutiny of costs and ways of working.

6. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ALISON MCGOVERN

What alternative development proposals is the leader considering to improve the Elephant & Castle area, in case the current proposals cannot be progressed?

RESPONSE

Under the terms of the exclusivity agreement signed with the preferred bidder, as is normal practice in such commercial negotiations, the council undertook not to pursue any alternative proposals. A full report on progress towards a final agreement with the preferred bidder will be made to executive on July 21 2009.

7. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR DENISE CAPSTICK

What are the treasury's published projections about public spending and what are the implications for Southwark council's finances and services in the future?

RESPONSE

To follow

8. QUESTION TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR JONATHAN MITCHELL

In the light of several unfair and undemocratic decisions taken by the tenants council, or the tenant fund management committee acting on the tenants council's behalf, will the leader of the council now take immediate steps to remedy the unintended consequences flowing from these decisions, to ensure that organisations like the Barry Road residents association who represent Southwark Council tenants and leaseholders including those in "street properties" [as distinct from those on estates] are able to:

- (i) obtain for their tenant members the share of the tenant fund (into which they have an obligation to pay) to which they are entitled and which they have a legitimate expectation of receiving, but of which at present they are being unreasonably deprived;
- (ii) fairly challenge the arbitrary and self-interested decisions taken at present by the tenants council, which are taken in the interests of a part only and not the whole population of tenants in Southwark;
- (iii) freely "operate under the terms of the constitution" which was given to them by Southwark Council, and not under the dictation of a Tenants Council whose aims and objectives are in conflict with that constitution.

RESPONSE

Barry Road Residents Association (BARA)'s application for tenant fund grant last year was unsuccessful as it was deemed not to have met the criteria for funding. BARA appealed unsuccessfully about the decision, first to the tenant fund management committee (TFMC), and then to Tenants Council. The appeal to Tenants Council was made at the September 1 2008 meeting. Following a careful and thorough discussion, the TFMC's decision not to fund BARA because it did not qualify for funding according to the current tenant fund criteria, was upheld. There

is no evidence to suggest that either TFMC or Tenants Council were operating unconstitutionally.

9. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR CHRIS PAGE

Does the executive member believe that any deal reached with Lend Lease for the Elephant & Castle regeneration will be as satisfactory for Southwark and Southwark residents as it would have been had it been concluded within the original timetable?

RESPONSE

Negotiations with the preferred bidder are subject to commercial confidentiality but a report on progress towards a final agreement will be coming to the executive on the July 21 2009.

10. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR IAN WINGFIELD

Does the executive member believe that the final agreement with the preferred bidder for the Elephant & Castle regeneration will meet the council's aspirations for the number of socially affordable homes in the scheme?

RESPONSE

Yes.

11. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR KIRSTY MCNEILL

Is the executive member for housing able to re-iterate assurances that all residents required to move as a result of the Elephant & Castle regeneration schemes will be able to return to the area following the completion of the scheme?

RESPONSE

Yes.

12. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR JOHN FRIARY

Despite his various assurances to tenants that he wouldn't scrap the tenant's arbitration process since he's been responsible for housing, can the executive member now confirm that he intends to scrap it?

RESPONSE

We are strongly committed to maintaining the tenant's arbitration process; there is no suggestion that it should be 'scrapped'. As part of the tenancy agreement review we are looking at all clauses in the current agreement, including clause 25 which refers to the arbitration process.

I cannot envisage any circumstances under which this very effective remedy would be taken away, but I am interested in exploring whether it would sit more

appropriately within the council's complaints procedure. This might benefit tenants by giving them a wider range of remedies at an earlier stage in the complaints process.

13. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR TOBY ECKERSLEY

Does the executive member consider it feasible to structure major works contracts for low rise housing estates with a substantial number of leaseholders/freeholders so as to provide those owners with the opportunity, at their expense, to opt in to the contract, with the advantage that economies of scale and less disruption might be achieved in the interests of all concerned?

RESPONSE

It is feasible, the environment and housing department wish to pilot an 'opt-in' scheme this year, with a view to developing borough wide arrangements under the new major works partnering contracts starting on site in April 2010.

14. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR COLUMBA BLANGO

Would the executive member for housing tell us what steps he has taken to ensure that new social housing is being developed in Southwark?

RESPONSE

The council has been active in its role of enabling housing development generally, and ensuring that appropriate levels of affordable housing are constructed as part of that development. Affordable housing includes homes developed for social rent as well as low cost home ownership and other types of intermediate housing.

The council has a target set by the Mayor of London, of 2,453 affordable homes in the years 2008-09 to 2010-11, and a local area agreement target of 2,215 in the same period.

A number of specific council activities are contributing to the delivery of affordable housing and meeting these targets. These include:

- Providing clarity for developers on the council's expectations in planning policies and associated documents. The Southwark Plan is currently the substantive document, but the production of the new core strategy is progressing
- Maintaining regular liaison with individual registered social landlords (RSLs) who develop in Southwark to discuss strategies and monitor progress
- Maintaining regular contact with the developing RSLs collectively through the cycle of meetings with the Southwark Housing Associations Group (SouHAG)
- Using the planning process to secure the delivery of appropriate levels of affordable housing relevant and all RSLs through section 106 agreements with developers
- Establishing a joint programme board with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to co-ordinate the various activities and schemes that will secure HCA funding and maximise the development potential in Southwark
- Developing a housing supply and demand database to contribute to the effective mapping / monitoring / and delivery over time, of those key elements

of the council's 'sustainable community strategy' which will be integral to the Housing Strategy 2016

- Developing a new housing supply line through the hidden homes strategy;
- Expressing interest to the HCA for the challenge fund programme to build new council homes.

15. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI

What progress is being made with demolition of Giles, Carton and Darnay House?

RESPONSE

To follow

16. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES BARBER

What is the schedule for Southwark's acquired street properties to be brought up to Southwark decent homes standards?

RESPONSE

Housing management is now finalising a full stock condition survey which will cover the street property portfolio. Consultation will begin in July 2009, and the investment strategy reported to executive in October 2009. The new major works contracts are being let on an area by area basis, with a fifth 'area' covering street properties and voids. This will mean a more specialist approach to the renovation of street properties, and a better quality of service to residents.

17. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR MACKIE SHEIK

Would the executive member for housing tell us what steps he has taken to update and improve the council's tenancy agreement?

RESPONSE

Our current tenancy agreement dates from 2002, much has changed in public policy since then, and our terms and conditions of tenancy are badly in need of updating.

The current review began in March 2009. Through this process we aim to capture legislative and policy changes, and with help and input from tenants produce a new and modern agreement. It is a lengthy and complex project, and one which we are managing with very valuable support from a tenants working party. Initial consultation with a wide range of agencies and from area forums identified many issues to be considering including:

- Recognition of civil partnerships
- Dog ownership and management
- Succession
- Noise nuisance and wooden floors

A full list of consultation issues and potential changes to the agreement is being worked up for distribution to tenants' representatives in late July. The consultation process will continue with a mail-out of prospective changes to all tenants in line with statutory requirements. We expect to take the final report on changes to full executive in December 2009.

18. QUESTION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR JANE SALMON

Would the executive member for housing update us on the progress towards the digital switchover for tenants using communal antennae on council blocks?

RESPONSE

The digital switchover procurement strategy has been agreed, and is being progressed in line with the tight deadline of 2012 compliance. The government's agency for the national digital switchover, Digitaluk.co.uk, has accredited the Southwark switchover plan, giving a welcome vote to confidence to our challenging timetable.

We are now at procurement stage with EU notice and trade adverts due to go out shortly. We expect to attract a good shortlist of contractors based on the size of the Southwark project. Selection and appointment of contractors will take approximately 10 months to complete, the planned start date is April 2010. Completion before switch off of the analogue signal in early 2012 will be a contractual requirement.

Notices of intention have already been served on affected leaseholders with works to individual sites subject to a block by block survey.

19. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CITIZENSHIP, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITIES FROM COUNCILLOR MARY FOULKES

What is the demographic profile of the staff who have left Southwark council from January 2008 to June 2009? Can these figures be broken down by age, gender, ethnicity and reason for leaving?

RESPONSE

The figures we have available are for April 2008 to March 2009 for staff who have left employment with Southwark Council, by age, gender and ethnicity, and are as follows:

Age

Reason for leaving	Percentage					Number
	16-24	25-39	40-49	50-64	65 and older	
Career Break	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	16
Deceased	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	2
Dismissal - Capability	0%	42%	17%	42%	0%	12
Dismissal	4%	38%	46%	13%	0%	24
Expiration of Contract	11%	65%	15%	9%	0%	65
Outsourced	0%	14%	43%	43%	0%	7
Redundancy	0%	21%	35%	40%	4%	52

Resignation	8%	53%	26%	13%	0%	387
Retirement Age	0%	0%	0%	57%	43%	35
Retirement Early	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	8
Retirement Ill Health	0%	7%	7%	86%	0%	14
Total	6%	45%	25%	21%	3%	622

Gender

Reason for leaving	Percentage		Number
	Female	Male	
Career Break	94%	6%	16
Deceased	0%	100%	2
Dismissal - Capability	33%	67%	12
Dismissal	38%	63%	24
Expiration of Contract	40%	60%	65
Outsourced	43%	57%	7
Redundancy	65%	35%	52
Resignation	60%	40%	387
Retirement Age	60%	40%	35
Retirement Early	38%	63%	8
Retirement Ill Health	50%	50%	14
Total	57%	43%	622

Ethnicity

Reason for leaving	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	White	Not Stated	Number
Career Break	13%	31%	6%	13%	38%	0%	16
Deceased	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	2
Dismissal - Capability	0%	33%	8%	8%	50%	0%	12
Dismissal	4%	46%	0%	8%	38%	4%	24
Expiration of Contract	2%	54%	2%	2%	34%	8%	65
Outsourced	0%	29%	0%	14%	57%	0%	7
Redundancy	4%	42%	0%	2%	50%	2%	52
Resignation	3%	33%	3%	3%	57%	2%	387
Retirement Age	3%	11%	0%	3%	83%	0%	35
Retirement Early	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	8
Retirement Ill Health	0%	29%	0%	0%	71%	0%	14
Total	3%	35%	2%	3%	55%	2%	622

Data for quarters can be extracted; but we have not had time to do so before council assembly. Furthermore, figures for quarters can be misleading and so annual data is most reliable. I would be happy to work with the member to provide further information when it is available.

20. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CITIZENSHIP, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITIES FROM COUNCILLOR TAYO SITU

At the last council assembly when we had the opportunity to ask questions, the executive member said that the council's policy is that frontline staff and managerial staff, approximately 3,000 members of staff, complete equalities and

diversity training, but did not say how many of those members of staff have actually completed the training. How many members of staff have completed equalities and diversity training?

RESPONSE

Up to April 2009 we have trained 2,050 members of staff in equality and diversity and this number is continuing to increase. This is broken down as follows:

Grade	Number of people
Staff	1,649
Managers	308
Senior manager (grade 14+)	93
Total	2,050

We should reach our target of training 3,000 employees by the end of this financial year.

Moreover, we have recently changed our training, saving money and improving its relevance, and will continue to assess how we provide staff with the skills they need in equality and diversity. In September we will be improving our induction process: continuing to stress that equality and diversity is an essential component of the work of the council. Furthermore, all staff must demonstrate their knowledge of and commitment to equality and diversity when they apply for their job.

21. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CITIZENSHIP, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITIES FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES GURLING

Following the resignation of Hazel Blears, the secretary of state for communities, and the shelving of the government's community empowerment bill, what affect will this have on our efforts to strengthen community empowerment in Southwark?

RESPONSE

Whilst the resignation of Hazel Blears and the subsequent appointment of John Denham may lead to a shift in emphasis of the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) approach to community empowerment, it will have little or no effect on the council's approach to community empowerment.

Southwark Council has long been committed to engaging with local communities and is recognised for its efforts in this area by, for example, being awarded Beacon Status for Cohesive and Resilient Communities and being one of the eighteen local authorities that make up the Network of Empowering Authorities (NEA), recently co-hosting a high-profile NEA conference. Much of the Communities in Control White Paper - and the legislation which is now following it - is about spreading the sort of best practice that Southwark Council is acknowledged as being at the forefront of.

Although DCLG's Community Empowerment Bill has now been shelved, work continues in Southwark looking at whether our current community empowerment strategies are sufficient, or whether we need to develop a new community empowerment strategy. For example, the council's community involvement and development unit (CIDU) works closely with a range of local community groups and aims to deliver effective partnership working with local residents, communities of interest, voluntary and faith groups, and other organisations with a role to play in social regeneration. We also seek to empower local people by giving them opportunities to influence spending on local services, through the cleaner greener safer fund, the community fund and the tenant's fund to name but a few examples. The eight community councils, which were created in 2002, provide local people with a forum to engage in their wider community and to discuss issues with their local ward councillors. This approach is focused on enabling people to influence local decision-making and to increase community cohesion, ensuring that our community empowerment activities are focused on improving outcomes for local communities.

22. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CITIZENSHIP, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITIES FROM COUNCILLOR ADE LASAKI

Can the executive member for citizenship, equalities and communities tell us what progress is being made in strengthening the powers of community councils?

RESPONSE

Community councils provide a voice for local communities and the people within those communities. They allow the council to be more responsive to what people want. So we want to build on the good work of community councils; and recent or forthcoming developments include:

- we are considering allowing community councils to guide investment in local infrastructure by making recommendations for highways and street lighting improvements to the value of £100,000 and £75,000 respectively per community council area in addition to the borough-wide highways capital programme
- asking community councils to identify their priorities for small scale capital projects for consideration under section 106 funding and other capital funding streams including cleaner greener safer and local implementation plan
- continuing the great work which has gone on in cleaner greener safer, letting people make important changes to their environment
- adopting the community councils protocol at the last council assembly, which aims to further define the roles and responsibilities of both officers and members
- plans to link in Southwark Youth Council with the new youth community councils, giving young people more influence in their local communities

I also meet regularly with chairs and vice-chairs and the relevant supporting officers to ensure that good practice and ideas are being shared between community councils.

I will continue to champion community councils and to support them as a key link between communities and the council.

23. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR SUSAN ELAN JONES

In the light of the astonishing fiasco of 'talking' CCTV which was installed, never worked, and is now going to be ripped out again, all at a cost of £85,000, what measures is the executive member putting in place to ensure that the council properly considers the viability and value of similar initiatives before significant amounts of resources are expended upon them?

RESPONSE

We are currently working on a comprehensive CCTV strategy through which we will ensure that any CCTV solution is clearly linked to wider council objectives, be they crime prevention or income generation.

The decision on not spending more public money on the Talking CCTV system was made after careful consideration of the various options. The decision to not have the Talking CCTV system in the borough was made because it was clear that:

- Talking CCTV will not provide the interactive communication with the public originally considered
- The feedback from other local authorities is inconclusive as to the effectiveness of the project
- There is no capital budget currently set aside for the additional costs for this service these options would place additional budgetary pressures beyond the original grant funding from the Home Office.

24. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY FROM COUNCILLOR LORRAINE ZULETA

Will the executive member for community safety tell us what steps are being taken to reduce the threat from aggressive and dangerous dogs in the borough?

RESPONSE

We are committed to using all our possible powers to meet the very high levels of concern expressed by members of the public about aggressive and dangerous dogs. Examples of current activities include:

- Dog control orders being piloted on the Aylesbury Estate require dogs to be kept on leads at all times. The penalty if dogs are not on leads is a £50 on the spot fine and if successful will be rolled out in other areas of the borough. The order will come into force in August 2009.
- Educational events are planned to take place on Southwark's estates and in parks throughout the year with a focus on all dog issues including dog behaviour and dog control. This will include the ID chipping of dogs which enables stray dogs to be identified and returned to their owners. So far over 200 dogs in the borough have been chipped.
- Call centre staff have been asked to direct calls to police if a dangerous dog is reported and the council make a note of the call to assess whether there are any patterns emerging (police have the powers to deal with dangerous dogs).

- Dog chipping is being investigated as a potential tenancy condition as part of the review of the council's agreement. This initiative has been successfully introduced in neighbouring boroughs.

We believe this combination of actions using common law, statutory and contractual powers will raise awareness of the need to control dogs in public, and provide real incentives to responsible dog owners.

25. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORT FROM COUNCILLOR ROBIN CROOKSHANK HILTON

Given the success of the recent Lost Southwark exhibition at the Cuming Museum, does the executive member have any further plans to exhibit the council's art collection?

RESPONSE

I am aware that there are many councillors, but particularly some from the Conservative Group, who have long held the view that residents of the borough have not in the past had as many opportunities as they might to view Southwark's extensive art collection, and as I stated at the last council assembly this is something I wish to put right.

Southwark Council will hang pieces from the "Lost Southwark" exhibition dating from 1645 to 2007 at the new Tooley Street building once the Cuming exhibition closes in August. This will feature 40 works from collections arranged to depict the transformation of different parts of the borough, mostly completed by local artists.

Following some very positive feedback from local residents and civic societies I am keen to bring smaller exhibitions to different parts of the borough. Discussions are already underway about a "Lost Dulwich" exhibition, possibly at the next Dulwich Festival, and I am exploring the possibility of a similar exhibition in Camberwell Baths next year once the building has been refurbished. There will also be a display of works depicting Burgess Park and the environs at Chumleigh Gardens, with workshops. We are also in negotiation with the University of Arts about the development of a gallery space at the Elephant and Castle.

Contemporary works are used by South London Gallery as part of education projects, including the Double Take, where works were placed in schools, and this scheme will be repeated. The comprehensive Art in Class, teaching collection is available to be borrowed for Southwark schools and enables schools to borrow artworks and run curriculum-based activities inspired by the exhibition.

In late 2010, the works of Austin Spare (d.1959), from the collection, will be the basis of a larger exhibition at the Cuming Museum and the subject of an artist's book. The Edwardian and Victorian wallpaper collections will then form the first exhibition of the De Morgan Foundation's new museum in Kennington in 2010-11.

I am of the view that where council buildings are open to the public, there is an opportunity, providing conditions are suitable, to display art from our collection, or others, and maintain the reputation Southwark has as one of the leading boroughs for culture and the arts, improving the quality of life for our residents.

26. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORT FROM COUNCILLOR JELIL LADIPO

Can the executive member please tell me how Southwark will help celebrate the 175th anniversary of Surrey Gardens?

RESPONSE

The idea to celebrate the 175th anniversary of Surrey Zoological Gardens arose from a discussion I had at the end of last year with Councillor Caroline Pidgeon and forms one of a series of events which are part of the council's "Lost Southwark" exhibition at the Cuming Museum, and the London Mayor's "Story of London". Since then both of us have been working with the local community to organise an event this summer to commemorate this little known piece of the borough's history.

There will be a celebratory event on Saturday July 25 from 12pm – 6pm at Pasley Park (the alternative name for Surrey Gardens). This event includes Victorian Tours of the area, led by a guide who will host visits to the Cuming Museum and Walworth Garden Farm.

Activities at Pasley Park will include a Victorian style walkabout, street performers, a town crier, Victorian zoetrope and shadow puppetry, heritage displays and activities about the zoo and Surrey Gardens history and a small Victorian funfair. Further, there will be animal themed workshops, such as giant lizards from London Zoo, Surrey Docks Farm and others. A performance will also be devised with active participation from the public and hopefully local councillors, that will recreate the zoo and gardens.

I hope that there will also be a permanent legacy project with an art piece created by local organisations who are working with us to improve and enhance the gardens, subject to a successful cleaner greener safer application.

Walworth Garden Farm is also working with three local schools on an exotic planting project using the plants that were popular in the Victorian era. This will include a display and interpretation board once these are planted.

27. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES FROM COUNCILLOR FIONA COLLEY

Will Nunhead and Peckham Rye residents be consulted on options for the future use of the Nunhead Green Early Years Centre site before the council decides whether or not to dispose of it?

RESPONSE

As part of the council's children's centre programme the Nunhead early years centre has been replaced by the Rye Oak Children's Centre. As part of the funding arrangements for the council's ambitious children's centre programme it was agreed that the Nunhead early years centre would be sold. It is anticipated that the service currently run from the facility will be relocated to its new fit for purpose centre in the next couple of months and in the short term the Nunhead early years centre will be used as a temporary home for the Gumboots Nursery which needs to be relocated due to its premises on Crystal Palace Road being substantially improved and extended as part of the programme.

Any decision to sell the property will ultimately be taken by the council's executive. It is likely that the property will be redeveloped. The ultimate use and form of development will be determined by the statutory planning process and subject to the normal statutory consultation processes. We will however prepare a development brief to inform development proposals and will consult with local ward councillors and residents on the content of that brief.

28. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT CARE FROM COUNCILLOR AUBYN GRAHAM

Does the executive member for health and adult care agree with me that day centres for older people in Southwark provide vital services and activities for the most vulnerable residents, including the BME communities, and that the present working partnership service level agreements between the voluntary sector and the council has proven to be an effective way of maintaining such services in Southwark?

RESPONSE

To follow

29. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT CARE FROM COUNCILLOR PAUL BATES

Can the executive member please give me a comprehensive update on the discussions between the council and the primary care trust with regard to the Aylesbury health centre? When will services begin to run from the centre again?

RESPONSE

To follow

30. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION FROM COUNCILLOR NICK VINEALL

Having regard to the core strategy draft preferred options paper dated April 2009 which at page 14 states that "We will support development of the railway arches [in Herne Hill] into niche businesses or other activities that provide vibrancy to the town centre", what steps does he anticipate being taken in the next 6 months in order to achieve this expressed aim?

RESPONSE

Under Policy 1.5 of the Southwark Plan, small businesses such as those likely to relocate under railway arches are protected and encouraged, this is applied to development across the whole of Southwark.

I would be happy to work with him, the owners of the arches and the council's economic development team to help achieve the strategy's expressed aim.

31. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION FROM COUNCILLOR WILMA NELSON

Is the executive member for regeneration planning to attend the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition this year which runs until the August 16 and is he aware of any interesting regeneration projects that are being highlighted there?

RESPONSE

I had the pleasure of attending the exhibition, at my own expense, a few weeks ago and was extremely pleased to see designs for the new Canada Water Library proudly on display alongside some of the other most exciting architectural projects currently underway around the world.

I'm sure that she will agree, that not only will this world class library add to the skyline of Rotherhithe, but will also be welcomed by local people because of the excellent facilities and resources which will be contained within it.

32. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES FROM COUNCILLOR HELEN JARDINE-BROWN

Will the executive member update members on progress in developing the strategy to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies in Southwark and let us know what actions are being prioritised?

RESPONSE

Although Southwark has the highest conception rates nationally, we do have a reduction on the 1998 baseline figure, and reducing the numbers of teenage conceptions remains a high priority. We are in the process of formulating a refreshed teenage pregnancy strategy with an accompanying action plan.

The strategy is based on an evaluation of current intervention work and the successful actions of other boroughs with similar demographics and success in reducing rates of teenage pregnancy. There is a renewed focus on increasing the availability of contraception and information about contraception, sex and relationships.

The major prioritised actions include:

- A large-scale media campaign, to tie in with the launch of a new condom distribution scheme, which will launch in October
- Signposting young people to services and publicising the availability of contraception, including long acting reversible contraception (LARC), in line with overwhelming evidence and government policy
- Brook Advisory have been commissioned to run a sexual health outreach campaign at various youth events over the summer
- Parental sex and relationship education (SRE) awareness presentations, workshops and training to be held at parent events, to help parents talk to their children about sex and relationships
- A new condom distribution scheme, with a range of easy access points based in youth friendly venues. This will increase free condom venues for young people by 100% by October, and up to 200% by month four of the scheme. It

will also bring on board, and extend, the pre-existing C-Card scheme (Condom Card)

- A range of school-based health drop-in centres, able to offer advice and guidance on a wide range of health issues including sexual health and contraception
- A pilot scheme in areas, schools and groups of young people that are deemed to have a higher risk of becoming pregnant, which involves sexual health outreach counselling and drop-in centres
- Training on the pan-London SRE curriculum will be provided to staff in schools with higher rates and risks of teenage pregnancy by the Christopher Winter Project in Autumn 2009, ensuring better quality SRE delivery across schools
- Children's services in the prevention of subsequent pregnancies in young women who have already had a child
- Gender equality and respect work with primary and early secondary age children to be included in personal, social and health education (PSHE) to promote healthy relationships
- We are also exploring the influence of domestic and sexual violence on rates of teenage pregnancy, as well as the effect of previous terminated pregnancies on girls' attitudes and intentions regarding future pregnancies
- Mentors of looked after children (LAC) to be given SRE training to enable them to provide better support for LAC
- Work with the Youth Offending Team to reduce levels of sexual peer pressure and coercion amongst at-risk young people.

33. QUESTION ON EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ATTAINMENT TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR VERONICA WARD

What steps are being taken to ensure that parents in East Dulwich who have so far not been offered a primary school place for September within a reasonably accessible distance from their homes will be found places in East Dulwich primary schools so that they do not have to take complex journeys, often with smaller children in tow? Given the baby boom in East Dulwich what plans are in place to ensure that there are sufficient primary and nursery places in East Dulwich in future years to meet the needs of these families?

RESPONSE

We were able to offer all applicants for primary school places in the borough, including the East Dulwich area, places within the guidelines that the government sets out for us, which means that they must be within two miles and have a journey time of less than 45 minutes that requires no more than two buses. However, I am aware that a number of parents were not offered a place at one of their four preference schools and I understand the frustration this caused them. I have met with parents in East Dulwich twice in recent weeks to discuss their issues and to ask them to take part in a focus group to help us further improve the admissions process in future years.

When it first became apparent that this was an issue, I made sure that officers were in constant touch with each parent who was unhappy with their offer, to keep them up to date with the situation, and advise them on their options. I am pleased that we have now been able to offer many of these parents alternative places in one of their four preference schools, some even receiving their first preference school.

It is true to say that there has been an increased number of applications to schools in the East Dulwich area this year, although this is not specific to Southwark. Across London, there has been an increase in applications this year above what was anticipated.

London's birth rate is increasing rapidly which has been taken into account in terms of projecting need for reception classes. However, according to London Councils, this has been compounded this year by a number of other issues. For example, the economic downturn appears to have increased demand for state school places compared to the independent sector. There has also been an increase this year in cross borough applications because of capacity issues in neighbouring authorities.

I have asked officers to investigate further, and urgently develop possible options to increase the number of primary school places in the south of the borough.

34. QUESTION ON EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ATTAINMENT TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ROBERT SMEATH

Please detail the percentage of new applicants for primary school places that did not receive a) their first choice of school b) any of their top five choices of school, in the borough by ward.

RESPONSE

To follow

35. QUESTION ON EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ATTAINMENT TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR BOB SKELLY

Would the leader of the council like to join me in congratulating Councillor Lisa Rajan and her team for the successful conclusion of the negotiations of Southwark's £200 million local education partnership agreement and can he give us an update as to when work will be starting to deliver the improvements to the borough's schools?

RESPONSE

I would be very happy to join you in congratulating Councillor Rajan, and all of the officers who have worked so hard, and acted so professionally, to set up Southwark's Local Education Partnership Company, 4 Futures.

4 Futures mobilised in May of this year and will be responsible for delivering a £200m programme of investment to the borough's secondary schools which will either completely rebuild or extensively refurbish every secondary school in Southwark.

We are already onsite at both Tuke and St Michal's schools with building work underway on their foundations. Design development work is underway for St Thomas the Apostle College, Spa School, the project to co-locate St Michael and All Angels Academy with Highshore School and the new school on the Walworth Lower School site.

Design specification work is also starting on the final phase of schools which includes Notre Dame, Sacred Heart, St Saviour's and St Olave's, Rotherhithe and the two Bredinghurst sites.

36. QUESTION ON EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ATTAINMENT TO THE LEADER FROM COUNCILLOR ELIZA MANN

Would the leader of the council please update members on the re-location of Southwark Park Road special school?

RESPONSE

Provision was made in the primary capital programme approved by the executive in March 2009, for a new building to house the Cherry Gardens Special School at a cost of £14m.

Currently, we are in the process of identifying the very best site for the new building. Potential sites will be discussed with the school before a final recommendation emerges in the early autumn term 2009. I know members will agree with me that Cherry Gardens does an excellent job in educating some of the most vulnerable children in the borough, and that it deserves the best possible facilities to deliver that.

37. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR BARRIE HARGROVE

Could the executive member for environment provide a status update on cleaner, greener, safer projects broken down by community council area showing year by year from 2004-09: total number of projects; total projects uncompleted; under-spend?

RESPONSE

The table below provides a breakdown by community council area on the number of projects in total, those that have been completed and the amount of cleaner, greener, safer (CGS) funding in each area that has been allocated and remains to be spent. There are only 7% of projects approved prior to 2007 which remain to be completed, and it is expected that these will be completed by the end of this financial year.

Community Council	No of projects approved	No of projects completed	CGS funding yet to be spent
Bermondsey	103	79	£779,468
Borough & Banskside	101	68	£1,057,969
Camberwell	134	105	£586,497
Dulwich	167	144	£253,821

Nunhead & Peckham Rye	110	89	£947,012
Peckham	110	74	£1,307,981
Rotherhithe	110	63	£883,099
Walworth	102	74	£892,756
Total	937	696	£6,708,603

38. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR GORDON NARDELL

Is the executive member aware of any instances where the council's waste and recycling contractor, Veolia, has taken waste collected in Southwark as household recycling to landfill or for incineration instead of recycling it? How many tonnes of waste that residents had left for collection as recycling have been sent to landfill or for incineration in the last year?

RESPONSE

There have been no instances where the council's waste and recycling contractor, Veolia Environmental Services, has taken household waste collected for recycling to landfill or for incineration. Veolia Environmental Services has a company policy to never take materials collected for recycling to landfill or incineration and therefore there have been zero tonnes of such household waste going to landfill or being incinerated.

39. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR ABDUL MOHAMED

Can the executive member tell us why nearly all public toilets have been shut in Southwark? Does the member agree that this can be a severe inconvenience for residents (particularly the vulnerable)?

RESPONSE

In Southwark, we believe that public conveniences make a real contribution to a cleaner, greener borough and can help in reducing crime.

I am therefore very pleased to be able to inform Councillor Mohamed that far from reducing the amount of toilet facilities open to the public, we have in fact increased them.

By opening and signposting public toilets in council buildings and private facilities, toilet provision had increased from 17 in 2005 to 34 by December 2008.

Some council owned facilities have been closed because the amount required to bring them into compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 would have been too high. However, we have made sure that when one facility closes, there is suitable alternative provision.

For details of current toilet facilities in Southwark, please see the link on the Southwark website:

<http://www.southwark.gov.uk/YourServices/environment/PublicToilets.html>.

40. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR LORRAINE LAUDER

Can the executive member please provide an update on any plans to make long overdue improvements to East Street market, or to the road surface on East Street?

RESPONSE

East Street is a particularly vibrant and popular market, and we recognise that it is economically, socially and culturally important to the borough. Current economic and social conditions have caused difficulties for the market sector nationally. At Southwark we have responded with a robust review of all our markets to see how we can improve the management of markets, modernise trading practices, work with traders and others to develop existing markets and take advantage of new opportunities, for example, establishing more specialist markets.

We believe through this review, that Southwark's markets can continue to innovate and be a means of individualised entrepreneurship and innovation, with East Street being a prime example of a thriving community facility.

The council has brought in over £2m of external investment in the Walworth Road which has also had a positive effect on East Street market and the support of the traders. The investment in Nursery Row Park, adjacent to the market, includes providing places for people to sit while they are visiting the market and we have installed new lighting columns along East Street with £65,000 of cleaner, greener, safer capital allocated by Walworth community council.

We have also spent over £30,000 on improvement works to the road surface on East Street.

In total £175,000, which equates to £100,000 for road resurfacing and £75,000 for street lighting will be allocated to each community council. This will come with a set of recommendations based on a ranking by road condition, one by insurance claims and one by complaints.

It is down to each community council to decide if they wish to heed the recommendations. It is however my view that this would be the opportunity for East Street to be resurfaced if that is what the community council so wishes.

41. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT FROM COUNCILLOR RICHARD THOMAS

Can the executive member for environment confirm that Southwark will stick to the UK's national cycling infrastructure guidelines and not implement Boris's recent whizzy idea of blue cycle lanes?

RESPONSE

The London Cycle Network is currently a green route, and is in line with the National cycle highways scheme. My view is that we should stick with this, so as not to confuse cyclists and other road users by using blue. Instead Transport for London should be looking to enhance the current cycling infrastructure.

I will be having further discussions with Transport for London to express my concern with the proposed implementation of blue cycle lanes, as it is not something I want to see on any of our roads.