

SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY MEETING)

WEDNESDAY 24 MARCH 2010

URGENT QUESTION

**URGENT QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM
COUNCILLOR PETER JOHN**

Would the leader not agree that to try to force through the housing major works contract before the beginning of purdah would be dismissing the findings of the Leaseholder Valuation Tribunal and intentionally acting to undermine the wishes and interests of leaseholders in this borough?

RESPONSE

The executive has adjourned a decision until Friday so we can receive advice about the decision of the Leaseholder Valuation Tribunal. Obviously it would be premature to comment on what decision if any the executive will take until it has received that advice. Our only concern with major works contracts is to get good value for money for the council, its tenants and for leaseholders.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR PETER JOHN

Given that the judgment of the leasehold valuation tribunal is a lengthy document, 35 or 40 pages in length and 140 paragraphs of contents, and given that any decision which the executive takes with regard to these contracts could affect our leaseholders and tenants for many years to come, wouldn't it be simply wiser for the leader of the council to say this evening that he will defer not only just till Friday but until after May 6 any decision about these major works contracts for an incoming administration of whatever political colour? To rush through a decision on Friday without proper consideration of the leasehold valuation tribunal decision and without any further consultation with the leaseholders who are most directly affected by this would be absurd.

RESPONSE

Well, Mr Mayor, it might but of course it might mean that I would then have to amend the children's and young people's plan to say that we want decent homes but we don't want to do anything about it for a few months while we think about what we are going to do about the major works contracts that we need to let in order to provide decent homes; so you kind of see the problem that we are in here. The way that we provide decent homes is by going onto estates and doing major works, and in order to go onto estates and do major works we need to have contracts with people who are going to go and do the major works, so I thought we are in favour of decent homes at least, and trying to get on with it or

not – I am a bit confused about where we are with the children's and young people's plan and the commitment to at least decent homes now, because Councillor Seaton spoke very eloquently about the conditions that some people are living in; but that is alright, we will go on letting them live in those conditions for a few months while we think about the LVT decisions. The truth is we will get a bundle of legal advice about a very complicated decision on Friday, we will take a decision in accordance with that advice; I am not going to rush into anything for the sake of rushing into it, but everyone needs to understand that all these things link together.