

Item No. 5.2	Classification: Open	Date: 14 July 2021	Meeting Name: Council Assembly
Report title:		Members' Motions	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Proper Constitutional Officer	

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The councillor introducing or “moving” the motion may make a speech directed to the matter under discussion. This may not exceed five minutes¹. A second councillor will then be asked by the Mayor to “second” the motion. This may not exceed three minutes without the consent of the Mayor.

The meeting will then debate the issue and any amendments on the motion will be dealt with. At the end of the debate the mover of the motion may make a concluding speech, known as a “right of reply”. If an amendment is carried, the mover of the amendment shall hold the right of reply to any subsequent amendments and, if no further amendments are carried, at the conclusion of the debate on the substantive motion.

The Mayor will then ask councillors to vote on the motion (and any amendments).

IMPLICATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION

The constitution allocates responsibility for particular functions to council assembly, including approving the budget and policy framework, and allocates to the cabinet responsibility for developing and implementing the budget and policy framework and overseeing the running of council services on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, any matters that are reserved to the cabinet (i.e. housing, social services, regeneration, environment, education etc.) cannot be decided upon by council assembly without prior reference to the cabinet. While it would be in order for council assembly to discuss an issue, consideration of any of the following should be referred to the cabinet:

- to change or develop a new or existing policy
- to instruct officers to implement new procedures
- to allocate resources.

Note: In accordance with council assembly procedure rule 2.10 (7) & (8) (prioritisation and rotation by the political groups) the order in which motions appear in the agenda may not necessarily be the order in which they are considered at the meeting.

¹ Council assembly procedure rule 1.14 (9)

1. MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR STEPHANIE CRYAN (Seconded by Councillor Margy Newens)

Recognising Single Parent Rights

1. Council assembly notes:
 - a. There are 2.9 million single parents in the UK, accounting for one in four parents. Around one third of parents experience some period of single parenting. Although almost 70% of single parents are employed, a third of children in working single parent homes live in poverty and almost 30% (double that of coupled parents) report mental health concerns. Single parents face discrimination throughout their daily lives, from the workplace to accessing housing. This has knock on effects for them, their children and society as a whole.
 - b. Many single parents face multiple discrimination given 90% are women, around 27% live with a disability (compared with 21% of couple parent households), and black and mixed ethnicity communities have higher numbers of single parents compared with white communities. In London there are over 260,000 single parents; according to the 2011 census Southwark has 40% rate of single parent households and these figures are likely under-reported.
2. Council assembly further notes that discrimination towards single parents occurs in:
 - a. the workplace when it comes to recruitment, professional development and promotion
 - b. housing, specifically accessing private rentals properties especially for those reliant on housing benefit
 - c. child benefit calculations: a couple earning £98,000 combined will receive full child benefit for one child, whilst a single parent on £60,000 will receive no child benefit for two children;
 - d. childcare vouchers with couples able to access double the amount of vouchers where both are working, regardless of the actual amount they spend on childcare;
 - e. universal credit childcare payments;
 - f. support and adaptations required for a disabled child to live safely in both homes where parents share care.
 - g. entrance fees at tourist attractions are often higher per person for single parent families than couple families. At the National Trust single parents pay 25% more per adult;
 - h. membership fees e.g. for birthing/ parenting classes where the second parent in a couple is often 'free';

- i. inheritance tax with the child(ren) of a couple essentially have double the threshold compared to the child(ren) of a single parent;
 - j. the cost of holidays, and
 - k. government and business policies and rules during the Coronavirus lockdown 2020.
3. Council assembly recognises:
- a. That Southwark Council is committed to promoting equality irrespective of marital or civil partnership status and valuing the contribution made by all citizens. At a national level, however, the legislative oversight in respect of single parents is a chasm which needs to be addressed. Single parents are often subject to systematic discrimination across every aspect of life, and it is unconscionable that these circumstances have been permitted to exist for so long, all the while doing so much harm.
4. Council assembly therefore resolves to:
- a. Be at the forefront of ensuring that equality for all is embedded in our practices and employment policies.
 - b. Actively support the campaign for single parents' rights, working with the government, campaign groups, community organisations and other partners to ensure that single parents have the parity they deserve.
 - c. Lobby the Government to enshrine single parent rights in law including:
 - 1. The right for employees to request part-time or flexible working from their first day in a job.
 - 2. Commissioning an independent review into the funding and affordability of childcare, particularly in regards to single parents, and to accept its recommendations.
 - 3. Better access to financial support for single parents who have to take time off work to care for children sent home from school or childcare settings due to Covid-19. The single parents' charity Gingerbread is calling for the Government's £500 Test and Trace Isolation Grant to be extended to parents in low-income households who have to take unpaid time off work when their children are sent home from school or childcare settings due to Covid-19.
 - 4. End the 5 week wait for Universal Credit and create a faster process for single parents to receive their first Universal Credit payment.
 - 5. Make the £20 Universal Credit uplift permanent, as according to Save the Children two thirds of claimants are single parents.

5. Council assembly recognises that making these law changes would have a number of benefits, including:
 - a. greater single parent employment;
 - b. reduced reliance on government benefits;
 - c. greater disposable income for single parents to spend in society;
 - d. more stable and decent housing for single parent families;
 - e. better mental health for single parents;
 - f. lower poverty levels for children of single parents; and
 - g. better outcomes for the children of single parents.

Note: If the motion is agreed, any proposals will be submitted to the cabinet for consideration.

2. MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI (Seconded by Councillor Hamish McCallum)

Protecting Green Spaces for Our Future Generations

1. Council Assembly notes that:
 - a. Green spaces in London are under threat even though they are of significant benefit and popularity to the population surrounding them.
 - b. There is a risk that green spaces are becoming more and more of a luxury only accessible to the well off. A report by the National Children's Bureau in 2013 found that better-off children were nine times more likely to have access to green spaces than those in the most deprived areas.
 - c. Our green spaces aid wellbeing. A London Green Spaces Commission report last year estimated that green spaces save London £950m per year in avoided health costs. A Public Health England report in 2020 stated, "£2.1 billion per year could be saved in health costs if everyone in England had good access to greenspace."
 - d. After a year of lockdowns, Londoners want to see green spaces protected. A May 2020 poll by CPRE, the countryside charity, and the National Federation of Women's Institutes (WI), found that nearly two-thirds of Londoners (62%) felt that protecting nearby green spaces should be a higher priority for the government when lockdown ends.
 - e. London is facing increased urbanisation. A 2020 report by the London Green Spaces Commission discovered that, in the previous ten years, spending on public green space fell by over 30% to £159m. However, London's population in that time grew by 11.2%.
 - f. Losing our green spaces would adversely affect the climate emergency. For instance, the ONS found that UK vegetation

removed enough dangerous air pollution in 2017 to equate to a saving of £1.3bn in health costs.

- g. Therefore, it is our duty as councillors to ensure that we protect our green spaces so that future generations can enjoy them equally and gain from them as fruitfully as we have done.

2. Council assembly highlights that:

- a. Southwark Council is contemplating or proposing to build on green spaces that would be lost permanently to eventual constructions.
- b. Developing those sites would guarantee that future generations lose out on the health, climate, and copious other benefits that green spaces provide.
- c. Multiple projects (the 'Peckham Green' site and 'Bells Gardens', to name a few) have met resistance from campaigners living on or near the proposed site of construction. These campaigners want new homes, but not at the cost of their green spaces. There is real concern that more green spaces across Southwark could face similar proposals.
- d. Southwark has a green space problem that is likely to disproportionately affect its residents. A Friends of the Earth report last year ranked Southwark as one of the worst local authorities in England for residents' access to green spaces. It also noted, "42% of England's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities live in the most green-space deprived neighbourhoods."
- e. The New Southwark Plan acknowledges the 'deficit in parks and other green space' in many parts of the borough.
- f. Although there is a dire need to meet Southwark's 15,000-strong waiting list for housing, there is a concern that the council's current approach to site-selection will cost its scarce green spaces.
- g. The Labour-led Southwark Council has, since 2010, sold or demolished over 3,000 council homes.
- h. Over the same period, the number of empty homes in Southwark has soared to over 6000² – the borough now has over 2,300 long-term empty homes including 1000 of which are empty council homes, which is the highest in London.
- i. Better planning in its house building would have helped the council avoid reaching a point where it has to even consider building on green spaces.

3. Council assembly calls on the cabinet to:

² As at 5 October 2020, 3720 vacant plus second homes which is now 3630 from 523 in 2019, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/council-taxbase-statistics>

- a. Conduct an audit of all green spaces across Southwark to ensure that they are recognised and protected for residents' amenity.
- b. Urgently review the site-selection criteria for council-led developments, to ensure they are not being built on scarce green spaces.
- c. Give some form of formal protection for the borough's green spaces — including Peckham Green and Bells Gardens — to ensure that they are not needlessly lost to developments.
- d. Not only protect green spaces, but also look at enhancing them.
- e. Focus on building new council homes on sites better suited for development — such as former industrial/commercial sites across the borough and on car parks and infill sites on our existing estates and publicly owned land.
- f. Be more creative in finding ways to deliver more council homes, including buying new sites and homes and securing more social housing in new developments.

Note: If the motion is agreed, any proposals will be submitted to the cabinet for consideration.

3. MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES McASH (Seconded by Councillor Maggie Browning)

Covid-19 Education Recovery

1. Council assembly notes that:
 - a. The Government published its plans for education recovery after the pandemic on 2 June 2021.
 - b. Sir Kevan Collins, appointed by the Prime Minister as the Government's Education Recovery Commissioner, had judged that some £15bn was needed to repair the damage done to the nation's pupils because of Covid-19. The Government's subsequent offer of £1.4bn falls far short and is severely inadequate. The Education Policy Institute have calculated that this amounts to £50 per pupil per year.
 - c. This contrasts with the offer of £1,600 per pupil in the USA and £2,500 per pupil in the Netherlands. There are no quick or cheap fixes if we are to build back better from the pandemic and have an education system that supports high standards and strong mental health for everyone.
2. Council assembly also notes that:
 - a. The Department for Education has changed the census used to calculate Pupil Premium funding for the most disadvantaged pupils. This means that £150 million is being taken away from

young people and schools most in need, including £1.2m in Southwark – the equivalent of 892 Southwark primary school children not receiving their Pupil Premium.

3. Council assembly therefore resolves:
 - a. To lobby the Government to value and invest in all our children, so they are supported to learn, succeed, and go on to have bright futures.
 - b. To write to the Prime Minister and call on the Government to scale up its ambition for our children and young people and give our education system the resources they need to ensure that no child is left behind. The Government should show it is serious about levelling up by putting in the investment called for by its own former Education Recovery Commissioner.

Note: If the motion is agreed, any proposals will be submitted to the cabinet for consideration.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Member Motions	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Virginia Wynn-Jones 020 7525 7222

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Chidilim Agada, Head of Constitutional Services
Report Author	Virginia Wynn-Jones, Principal Constitutional Officer
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