Council

Questions from Councillors

1. **By:** Councillor Judith Best (submitted on 10.12.10)
   **To:** Councillor Steve Reed – Leader of the Council

   **Streatham Ice Rink**

   Will Councillor Steve Reed stand up and fight for the residents of Streatham and uphold the S106 agreement for a temporary ice rink to be built in Streatham?

   **Party:** Liberal Democrats

   **Answer**

   It is shocking that the Liberal Democrats want to delay the opening of Streatham’s new permanent ice rink and leisure centre so there are no operational facilities for five years. After years of Lib Dem dithering while they were in power, our Labour council has negotiated a £120m regeneration project that includes a new leisure centre and state-of-the-art permanent ice rink for Streatham. There is no s106 agreement to build a temporary ice rink in Streatham and never was. Labour has agreed a deal that will reduce the construction period from five years to just three by operating a temporary ice rink on a different site so that construction of the permanent facilities can go ahead more quickly. Lib Dem proposals to ditch this opportunity would delay the building and opening of the new leisure centre and ice rink, representing a huge blow to the people of Streatham.

   The temporary ice rink will operate for two and a half years and be funded and run by Tesco as a private operation and will then be decommissioned. Lib Dem plans would at best mean a two-year delay in opening the new permanent ice rink in Streatham, and at worst would see Tesco walk away from the whole deal meaning Streatham would get no new ice rink at all – which was, of course, exactly the situation the Lib Dems had landed us all in when the voters kicked them out of office in 2006.

2. **By:** Councillor John Whelan (submitted on 10.12.10)
   **To:** Councillor Lorna Campbell – Cabinet Member for Environment

   **Anti-dog fouling signage**

   Why is the anti dog fouling signage commission in six wards under the 2009-2010 Ward Purse scheme still not implemented despite the demand from residents for such measures?
Party: Conservative

Answer

The dog fouling signs were designed earlier this year. Originally it was planned that the message on the signs would indicate that dog fouling bags could be picked up from sweepers. A review of the signs raised concerns that the message would confuse dog owners and indicate that if they did not have bags provided by the authority they would no longer have a responsibility to pick up after their pets. As a consequence the message on the signs has been changed informing dog owners that they can put the waste in any general street litter bin. It is anticipated that the signs will be installed early in the New Year. Officers apologise for the delay.

3. By: Councillor Matthew Bennett (submitted on 09.12.10)

To: Councillor Lib Peck – Cabinet Member for Housing

Rent

The Coalition Government has decided that new social rents will be set at 80% of market rent. What is the current average weekly rent for a two bedroom property rented from Lambeth Living and what is 80% of the average market rent for a two bedroom property in: SE19, SE21, SE27, SW2, SW16, SW9, SW11, SW8, SW4, SE24?

Party: Labour

Answer:

As at 13 December 2010:

- **£83.49** is the Average Basic Rent for tenanted two bedroom properties managed by Lambeth Living (excluding all service charges) (£106.88 average total including Service Charges and Thames Water Charges)
- **£83.43** is the Average Basic Rent for tenanted and void two bedroom properties managed by Lambeth Living (excluding all service charges) (£106.61 average total including Service Charges and Thames Water Charges)

The Government has announced that it will allow social housing providers, typically housing associations, to charge up to 80% of market rents. The Government has not confirmed how they will calculate the market rent in a locality, but it is suggested that the approach may be similar to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) valuations, which are published by the Valuation Office Agency. This represents the median market rent within a relatively large geographic area, called a Broad Market Rental Area (BRMA). This is a larger area than covered by a postcode. Most of Lambeth is covered by Inner South East London BRMA, while a small part of the borough falls within the Inner South West London BRMA. The LHA for a 2-bedroom property in Lambeth for December 2010, is £250 pw in the Inner South East area, or £315 pw in the Inner South West area.
The proposed maximum rent level for a 2-bedroom property, at 80% of the LHA, would therefore be £200 pw for most of Lambeth, or £252 pw in those parts of the borough that fall inside the Inner South West area. The LHA levels are summarised by postcode below:

SE19, £250
SE21, £250
SE27, £250
SW2, £250 / £315 depending on broad market rental area in which the property sits
SW16, £250 / £315 depending on broad market rental area in which the property sits
SW9, £250
SW11, £250 / £315 depending on broad market rental area in which the property sits
SW8, £250 / £315 depending on broad market rental area in which the property sits
SW4, £250 / £315 depending on broad market rental area in which the property sits
SE24 £250

Additional information can be found regarding LHAs postcodes / property size as per the link below:


4. By: Councillor Roger Giess (submitted on 10.12.10)
To: Councillor Pete Robbins – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Durand Academy

Do you welcome Durand Academy’s plans to expand into secondary provision and if so what are you doing to help them?

Party: Liberal Democrats

Answer

Lambeth Council welcomes working with all schools to find solutions to the issues of provision of secondary pupil places. We look forward to discussions with Durand Academy on this matter.

5. By: Councillor Shirley Cosgrave (submitted on 10.12.10)
To: Councillor Pete Robbins – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Schools Capital Building Projects

In view of the fact that it took three and a half years for the Council to be in a position to take advantage of the extra funding for schools which was announced in
December 2006, and that this delay has put at risk many important projects in the phase 2 building programme for schools in the borough, will the Council give urgent consideration to speeding up and streamlining its procurement process for schools building projects?

**Party: Conservative**

**Answer**

If Councillor Cosgrave is referring to phase 2 of the BSF programme, then I am happy to reassure her that there is nothing more that Lambeth Council could have done to further streamline its procurement processes to ensure speedy implementation of the programme. The BSF project process has been mapped out by the government as it wanted all authorities to use their procurement approach that had its own prescribed timetable and processes. Lambeth’s progress was one of the fastest in the country, both in the first and second phases and at the time the funding for the second phase (national wave 5) was controversially slashed by the coalition government it was well ahead of programme and within just two days of contract close.

It would be more constructive if Councillor Cosgrave directed her energies on joining Labour in campaigning to persuade Rt Hon Michael Gove MP to perform another of his now famous U-turns and restore the tens of millions in funding he took away from Lambeth schools.

6. **By: Councillor Edward Davie (submitted on 09.12.10)**

**To: Councillor Lorna Campbell – Cabinet Member for Environment**

**Compulsory Recycling**

Many residents are interested in the Council’s proposals for compulsory recycling as outlined in Lambeth’s Waste Strategy. Can the cabinet member explain how such a scheme would work and give us a short update on the implementation of the strategy?

**Party: Labour**

**Answer:**

Eight London boroughs have already successfully introduced compulsory recycling. In Lambeth the designation will be borough-wide, but it is only possible to monitor and enforce for households with individual collections of recycling. There will be 40 low-rise recycling collection rounds, each covering 1,900 households. The procedure will be implemented in May, with four collection rounds being monitored at any one time. In addition, Veolia operatives will provide details of households that they are aware definitely do not recycle. Residents who recycle via other means, or are genuinely unable to recycle will be exempt.

All residents will receive notification that recycling is compulsory and exactly what that means via leaflets and other communication materials delivered via the waste
strategy communications plan. In addition potentially vulnerable groups within the community will be contacted with the aim of providing reassurance over compulsory recycling and inviting early correspondence so that we can establish assisted collections, exemptions or other arrangements as appropriate.

The aim of the Compulsory Recycling Procedure is to give residents every reasonable opportunity to start recycling during a 21 week monitoring and engagement process for each collection round. After this period, if residents are still not recycling their details will be passed to enforcement officers who will begin implementing the enforcement part of the procedure. It is worth noting that the definition of participation is recycling at least once during a period covering three consecutive collection days. Details on the enforcement procedure are being finalised and will be available via Lambeth’s website.

The new Waste Strategy will be implemented in April 2011. A Project Team comprising officers from all relevant council departments, Veolia and Lambeth Living meets fortnightly to drive the implementation. Specialist sub-groups are working on the fine detail for compulsory recycling, the communications plan, the commercial recycling service, the changes to green and bulky waste services and the various trials.

7. By: Councillor Peter Truesdale (submitted on 10.12.10)

To: Councillor Paul McGlone – Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

Labour Budget 2010

Party: Liberal Democrats

In his statement before the election on 24 March 2010 Alistair Darling announced public spending cuts of £44bn a year. What steps did the administration take to plan for that spending outturn?

Answer

The Tory lead minority government indicated in their June emergency budget that funding to local government would not be unfairly targeted in their spending cuts to public services. Along with all other councils, Lambeth initially relied on Government guidance and estimated a massive £62m of 21% cut in funding, evening phased over three years from 2011/12. However, following the publication of the Comprehensive Spending Review on 20th October and the Local Government Funding Settlement announced 13th December, it has been clear that the cuts to local government were going to be much worse than feared, that local government was in fact targeted for reductions in funding and with Lambeth having assessed the impact of the reduction of revenue resources to be in the region of £79m or 28% over 3 years. These cuts have been ‘front loaded’ to 2011/12, with some £37m having to be cut next financial year alone, which has not allowed Councils to plan effectively. The Government has created even greater uncertainty by unilaterally changing the four year funding announcements to two years. It is the Council’s view that years 3 and 4 of the review will require greater savings to compensate for the smaller than expected cuts in years 1 and 2 from £42m to £37m.
As part of the Service & Financial planning framework Executive Directors and Cabinet Members have worked jointly to consider departmental submissions to meet the savings target over the three year period.

The Capital Programme is currently funded by approximately 60% Government grant. It is anticipated that the reduction in this source of funding could reduce by 60%. The other main source of financing the Capital Programme is capital receipts. With a reducing asset base and unfavourable market conditions, it is not sustainable to rely on asset sales to support the Programme. Officers are investigating all options available, but have advised Members that the Council can only allow schemes to commence when certainty of financing is assured, e.g. if a scheme is scheduled to be financed from capital receipts it can only go ahead once the requisite disposal has been achieved. Members are currently working with Officers to prioritise existing and new schemes for the 2011/12 – 2013/14 budget.

8. **By:** Councillor Julia Memery (submitted on 10.12.10)

**To:** Councillor Florence Nosegbe – Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport and the 2012 Games

The Big Tree Plant

How is Lambeth proposing to get involved in the Government’s “Big Tree Plant” initiative to augment the existing programme of work in respect of street trees and trees in parks and open spaces?

**Party:** Conservative

**Answer**

Where budgets allow, the Council is committed to not only protecting its existing stock of public trees, whether in parks, housing estates or on the public highway, but also replacing its present stock. This to respond to losses when older trees die because of vandalism, disease, age or storm damage; as well as adding to existing stock and helping to improve greenspaces and green corridors in areas of open space and wildlife deficiency. For these reasons, we welcome and support the government’s ‘Big Tree Plant’ programme as an ideal opportunity to complement and augment the council’s successful tree planting and replacement programme.

Amongst the other benefits of tree planting include the conversion of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to oxygen and settling out, trapping and holding particle pollutants (dust, ash, pollen and smoke) that can damage human lungs.

Lambeth Parks have for many years successfully supported tree planting initiatives with volunteers and Friends of the Parks groups. These are typically based on public donations and external grant funding from sources such as land fill tax schemes. Our support to these groups involves providing practical advice, supervision and supplying assistance from our parks maintenance contractors who will ensure that the work is carried out safely and correctly.
We have already advertised “The Big tree Plant” to the Friends groups via the ‘Lambeth Parks Forum’ and e-distribution network. We have also highlighted the opportunity for up to £4.2M of funding to help develop and deliver tree planting schemes across England, and we are hopeful that some of this funding will come to Lambeth through the active work of our local community partners. We have received some initial interest at several parks, and will provide support to help develop projects. However, we must assess each proposal on the basis of its sustainability, in order to ensure we can maintain planted trees within existing resources, and pay regard to the effects of possible funding cuts which may affect the council’s ability to maintain and extend its tree stock.

9. By: Councillor Jane Edbrooke (submitted on 09.12.10)

To: Councillor Pete Robbins – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Pupil Places

Can the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People please set out the scale of the challenge faced by the Council in finding and funding sufficient pupil places in coming years? And can he comment on proposals for the ‘Pupil Premium’, a Liberal Democrat initiative that threatens to take funding away from poorer pupils in Lambeth.

Party: Labour

Answer:

The report to Cabinet in December 2010 showed how demand for primary school places in some parts of Lambeth rose by 40% in just four years, and is likely to increase even further by 2015. Whilst Lambeth has been able to meet demand, providing over 300 more places by expanding some primary schools and providing extra ‘bulge’ classes in others, this was heavily reliant on continued investment provided by the previous Labour Government. The decision by the coalition government to make cuts of 60% to school building investment could lead to a crisis in the future, with children left without places at local schools.

Last year alone we received an extra £9m from Ed Balls, which will allow us to build a much-needed brand new primary school in Norwood, and should help the Council meet demand in the short term. But the funding situation now is very difficult – we may need up to £40m just to ensure we can provide sufficient primary places by 2015.

The rise in demand for primary places is largely due to population change, but the huge increase in standards at Lambeth primary schools means more parents are trying to secure a place in local school. The effects of the recession may also have discouraged parents from sending their children to expensive private schools.

The DfE announced a flat rate premium of £430 per pupil for all schools in England. The funding for the premium has been taken from existing education budgets - despite an earlier promise that it would be on top of existing education funding. In the context of savage cuts to school building projects, school sports partnerships,
London Challenge funding, and extended school services, and a real terms cut in per pupil funding, it is clear that the key ingredients of the much-vaunted 'premium' are actually smoke and mirrors.

What is more, it was later revealed that the funding is only guaranteed for one year as there is a wide ranging review of all school funding next year to consider changes for 2012/13. Given what the public now know of Lib Dem promises, there will undoubtedly be great anxiety about this, and the implications for Lambeth schools.

10. By: Councillor Christine Barratt (submitted on 10.12.10)

To: Councillor Florence Nosegbe – Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport and the 2012 Games

Clapham Common

Will the Cabinet Member agree to ringfence the income from events on Clapham Common to be spent on repairs and restoration of Clapham Common?

Party: Liberal Democrat

Answer

It is the case that for all events booked on Clapham Common, the Council has always required event organisers to pay a deposit. If repairs and restoration are required after an event, then this sum is used to pay for those repairs before any balance is returned to the organiser. Previously this mechanism has only rarely been called upon and it has been acknowledged that this needs to be strengthened.

All new contracts with event organisers will ensure that proper restoration takes place and will apply equally to events organised by the Council. It is recognised that some community event organisers may not be in a position to afford significant deposits, so the Events team will work with them to ensure that community events take place in such a way as to minimise potential damage. It is also intended that where reparation cannot take place immediately, for example due to growing conditions, then temporary repairs are undertaken to minimise the visual and environmental impact of the damaged areas.

11. By: Councillor Clare Whelan (submitted on 10.12.10)

To: Councillor Steve Reed – Leader of the Council

Co-operative Council and Social Care

In light of the moves towards a Co-operative Council can you identify how the infrastructure of the Council, and Voluntary Sector, needs to change to facilitate and support this radical new approach, particularly in relation to social care taking advantage of new funding available from the government? What is the Council
doing to encourage staff to think about setting up social enterprises to deliver some of the Adult’s & Community Services (ACS) services better?

**Party:**  Conservative

**Answer**

In addition to the specific work being undertaken in ACS, to support greater use of third sector organisations to provide social care services, the Co-operative Council Citizens’ Commission has also explored ways in which council services; more broadly, could be delivered by a range of local organisations.

The conclusions and recommendations of this report will be considered by Cabinet on 24 January 2011 and will form the basis of the subsequent Co-operative Council delivery plan.

**Voluntary Sector**

In January 2010 the Council in collaboration with the Association of Chief Executives from Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), Lambeth Voluntary Action Council, Lambeth Voluntary Sector Health and Wellbeing Forum, Lambeth First and NHS Lambeth established a commission to identify the business model required of voluntary sector providers to meet the challenges of the future. The Lambeth Commission on Personalisation and the Voluntary Sector was the only one of its type has drawn interest from the Government, local authorities and voluntary sector organisations from around the country.

The Commission received evidence from local, regional and national agencies, undertook visits to Lambeth based voluntary organisations, as well as receiving evidence from people with known expertise in this field. The Commission’s report has been made available to all members of the Council. The launch of the commission’s report took place on 9 November 2010 and included a speech from Nick Hurd MP, Minister for Civil Society.

The Minister was very complementary to Lambeth, the work of the Commission and its report and has asked Lambeth to share this example of good practice with this office. I can confirm that officers of the Council have met with civil servants to discuss this work and will continue to do so. The report is currently being assessed by the Executive Director of Adults’ and Community Services, who chairs the Council’s internal Third Sector Investment Board. The intention is the report will help shape the future commissioning of contracts for the capacity building of voluntary organisations in Lambeth. This will help develop and support the voluntary sector through the transitional period leading to the co-operative council.

**The Council**

The first wave of Pathfinder mutuals, to be run by entrepreneurial public sector staff, who want to take control of their services, were announced by the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Francis Maude, in August 2010 and formally launched in November 2010. Twelve fledgling public service projects have been chosen to be Pathfinders for the mutuals initiative. These pathfinders will be trailblazers for the rest of the public sector – helping Government establish, by learning from the front line, what
type of support and structures will best enable the development of employee-led
mutuals on an ongoing basis.

The Lambeth Resource Centre has been chosen as one of the 12 national pilots
within the Cabinet Office Pathfinder programme, and is the only Labour authority
that is part of the programme. There are strong links into the Co-operative Council
approach, and the Lambeth Resource Centre has been working closely with the Co-
operative Council Commission.

The pathfinders are being supported by expert mentors from some of the country’s
most successful businesses and leaders in employee ownership models. Lambeth
are being mentored by Price, Waterhouse, Coopers.

The journey we have embarked upon will take time, present many challenges and
we will inevitably have our successes and failures on the way. The examples within
this reply demonstrate the determination and ambition we have set and place
Lambeth at the vanguard of this agenda and ensure we maximise any funding
Government might make available.

12. By: Councillor Jane Pickard (submitted on 09.12.10)
To: Councillor Florence Nosegbe – Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport and
the 2012 Games

Library Services

The Government has made the decision to abolish the Museums Libraries and
Archives Council and many local authorities are being forced to review their Library
services due to massive frontloaded cuts from the Coalition. In light of this, what
does she make of Culture Minister, Ed Vaizey MP’s recent letter to the Council
reminding us of our statutory responsibility for these institutions?

Party: Labour

Answer:

It is all very well for Lib Dem Culture Minister Ed Vaizey to take this point in time to
remind us of our statutory responsibilities, but it would have been more helpful if the
Coalition Government supported organisations such as the MLA that may have
been helpful in identifying new solutions for libraries and cultural services. In the
face of having to make the cuts imposed on Lambeth by this government, we are
seeking to be innovative but we are restricted by shrinking resources.

13. By: Councillor Ishbel Brown (submitted on 10.12.10)
To: Councillor Lib Peck – Cabinet Member for Housing

Fire Safety

What progress has been made by Lambeth Living on meeting its safety obligations
with respect to fire and when does it expect all of its properties to obtain the
necessary certificates from the Fire Authorities? Bearing in mind enormous
overspends at the Ethelred Towers, due in large part to fire safety measures costing £675,000, as an example what is the current estimate of the total costs of making all Lambeth housing properties safe?

**Party:** Liberal Democrats

**Answer**

The status of fire risk assessments carried out to date is as follows:

- Blocks above ten floors – completed.
- Blocks with floors between 6 – 9 floors – completed.
- Sheltered housing schemes – completed.
- Hostel schemes – completed.
- Street properties (conversions) – due for completion in March 2011.
- Blocks 5 floors and below – comprehensive reviews projected to be completed by March 2012.
- There is no requirement to obtain a ‘certificate’ from the fire authority for any property falling under the auspices of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) order. The figures for FRAs have been completed up to and including 30th November 2010.
- All 10+ Fire Risk Assessment reports have been finalised, and placed on the Lambeth Living website – the majority of immediate remedial works have now been undertaken and more intrusive investigations identified by the fire risk assessments are well underway.
- All sheltered schemes and hostels have been assessed and action plans established and passed over to the relevant Council management teams via the Corporate Safety Team. The action plans give a clear indication of responsibility and the Lambeth Living ‘structural’ management remedial works have been fed to the fire remedial planning.
- All 6-9 storey blocks have been assessed and we are continuing the preparation of the final reports and action plans for web publication. It is hoped that the last of these will appear on the Lambeth Living web page by January 2011 at the latest.
- Assessment has been completed by Frankhams of all the TMO blocks of 5 storeys and below. These reports are undergoing final verification prior to release to the TMO management. This activity will be supported by a TMO briefing session.
- Frankhams are now working on the street properties with a goal of March 2011. The five and below Lambeth Living managed stock is now being reviewed by two ‘in-house’ fire risk assessors. This project is set estimated to be completed by January 2012 at current resource levels.
- It is probable that there will be a need for significant capital funds to maintain fire safety and deliver the remedial works.

14. **By:** Councillor Mike Smith (submitted on 09.12.10)

**To:** Councillor Florence Nosegbe – Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport and the 2012 Games
School Sports Partnerships

What impact does she think the axing of the School Sports Partnerships will have on Lambeth given that they have worked tirelessly to inspire young people to be physically active, healthy and enjoy sport?

Party: Labour

Answer

As part of the recent change of Government, and subsequent Comprehensive Spending Review, a number of key changes in the strategic approach and funding for PE, Sport and Physical Activity have been announced. At a national level, there are no longer plans to deliver the ‘5 hour’ offer, and the need for Local Authorities and School Sports Partnerships to report on performance against achieving the ‘5 hour’ offer has also be removed. The current Government is instead placing a strong emphasis on competitive sports, including through the introduction of Schools Olympics.

A significant change was the announcement that the funding for the School Sport Partnerships is no longer ring-fenced within the schools budget meaning that schools have the freedom to decide if they invest in the School Sport Partnerships infrastructure or not.

The Lambeth School Sports Partnership has been very successful in working with schools to improve the quality and quantity of PE and Sport in the borough, and if the infrastructure does not continue it will be missed and will undoubtedly have an impact on the provision of school sport. In light of these concerns which have been raised nationally the government is reviewing this decision, and hence there maybe further changes ahead. I am however aware that the Lambeth SSP are looking into opportunities to continue to operate as a traded service and are in discussions with schools about this.

On 21 December 2010, the Government made an announcement that the Department for Education (DfE) has reconsidered and will now fund School Sports Partnerships to the end of the current academic year at a cost of £47m. In addition, £65m from the DfE’s spending review settlement will be allocated to allow every school in England to release a PE teacher for one day a week for the following two academic years.

At a local level, Lambeth partners remain committed to the delivery of PE, Sports and Physical Activity. However, despite the Government reinstating Schools Sports Funding Partnership funding until the end of the current academic year, the broad-ranging changes at the national level will need to be taken into account, and in light of funding changes affecting all key partners. Work about these changes has started through the Children and Young Peoples Sports Partnership which oversees the delivery of PE and School sport in the borough and will continue in the New Year.

15. By: Councillor Daphne Marchant (submitted on 10.12.10)
To: Councillor Lorna Campbell – Cabinet Member for Environment

Icy Pavements

Can the cabinet member explain to older people in the borough why pavements on side roads were left un-gritted and salt bins delivered around the borough empty? Does she not realise that this traps many older people in their homes when there is snow and ice on pavements? Will she guarantee that the next time we have snowy weather the situation will improve and the all priority roads will have at least one pavement gritted or cleared of snow and ice?

Party: Liberal Democrats

Answer

The salt bins have been strategically located around the Borough in order to ensure that the Council footway priorities are gritted.

Our priorities include (in order):

(1) Police, Fire, Ambulance, Train Stations and Bus Depots
(2) Shopping Areas and Area’s with heavy footfall
(3) Schools
(4) Steep Hills
(5) Sheltered Housing entranceways

The Council needs to stick to these priorities in order to keep Lambeth moving by gritting key transport routes and links and to minimise delays, accidents and damage resulting from snow and ice. Prioritising allows the Council to manage its resources in a co-ordinated fashion, while also ensuring that a resilient salt supply is kept for any further severe weather that may be encountered.

It is worth noting that the bins have been left unlocked to allow residents to draw on the supplies in times of need. For this reason, we have seen the bins empty at a much faster rate than previous winters. The grit bins were being filled week commencing 13 December with our efforts starting in the southern parts of the Borough. This process will be repeated as necessary.

16. By: Councillor Adrian Garden (submitted on 09.12.10)

To: Councillor Sally Prentice – Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning, Employment and Enterprise

Pay Day Loan Shops

Can the Cabinet Member give us an estimate of the impact that the proliferation of pay day loan shops is likely to have in Lambeth and explain what steps the Council is able to take to reduce any negative impact?

Party: Labour
The issue with pay-day loans is that the loan itself is usually for a small amount over a short period for what seems a small amount of cash interest, however the actual interest rates can be colossal so small debts can mushroom if not paid off quickly. Whilst it has been alleged in the media that these companies may be undesirable and exploit vulnerable and low income people, they are not illegal. The shops are licensed as credit brokers and as there is no legal action Lambeth Trading Standards can take to restrict the interest rates charged. If they mis-describe their services or make false claims on their interest rates then action can be taken on those points. There are many concerns about the annual interest rates many of these companies charge however there is no legal limit on this so there is no intervention that can be made to limit these.

The main role for the Council is therefore in providing advice to residents on seeking sustainable interest rates. There is a four page wrap coming out in Lambeth Life shortly that provides advice and information to residents on dealing with loans. This will advise people to seek out low interest rates, join credit unions, only take loans from reputable organisations, avoid short term/high interest loans (such as many pay-day deals), seek out finance with more sustainable interest rates and to avoid unlicensed loan sharks.

17. **By: Councillor Ashley Lumsden (submitted on 10.12.10)**

**To: Councillor Jim Dickson – Cabinet Member for Health and Well Being**

**Social Care Funding**

The cabinet member will know that an extra £1 billion has been promised by the Government to local authorities for social care over the next two years so will he recognise the importance of the social care support for many vulnerable and disabled people by ring-fencing these extra funds allocated by the government to social care on social care support in order to protect important services to residents and avoid any consideration of reducing the eligibility criteria?

Party: Liberal Democrats

**Answer**

The extra £1bn promised to local authorities (New Personal Social Services Grant) is an indicative allocation for of £530m in year 1 and £930m in year 2. The grant is non-ring fenced and has been rolled into the councils revenue formula grant. The allocation of this grant has to be considered in line with the whole financial remit and the priorities of the council. Overall there has been a reduction in revenue support grant of £20.17m and our aim is to prioritise front line services including those supporting vulnerable adults.

18. **By: Councillor Marcia Cameron (submitted on 09.12.10)**

**To: Councillor Jim Dickson – Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing**
Public Health

In December the government announced that local authorities like Lambeth would be taking on a Public Health role. Is there any more clarity on how the £4bn set aside nationally for this role will be allocated and can he update us on how the Council will be working with the NHS to fulfil this function?

Party: Labour

Answer

We welcome the proposal in the recent Public Health White paper to transfer responsibility for health improvement from the NHS to Local Authorities, subject to understanding whether sufficient funding will be made available to fulfil the role properly.

Effective action to improve health requires political leadership which Councils are uniquely placed to provide at a local level. We will ensure this new function in Lambeth focuses on addressing the determinants of health, such as social economic inequalities, employment and poverty which have been proven to have the greatest impact on population health, as well as issues of personal lifestyle and public health support to GPs to ensure high quality health services for all.

The Government has said it will transfer responsibility for health improvement from the NHS to Local Authorities from April 2013 with an accompanying ring-fenced budget from this date, to be weighted for inequalities. There will also be a shadow allocation in 2012/13 which will be paid to PCTs. The level of funding has not yet been confirmed however we are expecting a consultation on the proposed funding and commissioning routes from Government shortly.

We are already working with NHS Lambeth and local GPs to ensure Lambeth’s response to the full range of health changes proposed by Government achieves the best outcomes for Lambeth residents. This will be taken foreword by our new health and wellbeing board. We will be using our health and wellbeing joint strategic needs assessment as the basis for identifying the most effective ways to invest this funding to improve outcomes for our residents.


To: Councillor Florence Nosegbe – Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport and the 2012 Games

Arts and Culture

How much does Lambeth Council itself spend annually on the Arts and what does this represent as a proportion of the Cultural Services budget? What is the total cost of the current Cultural Commission Strategy and consultation process?

Party: Liberal Democrats
The 2010 / 2011 budget for Lambeth Arts within Cultural Services is £376,266. This includes the grant programme supporting local arts organisation of £264,000. This represents 2.25% of the overall budget for the Cultural Services Division in 2010/11.

The work on the Cultural Commissioning Strategy has identified that across all sections of the Council approximately £41.3million is invested in cultural activity in Lambeth. £16.3million of this amount is held within the Cultural Services Division Budget. The remainder is made up of budget allocations from other parts of the council on cultural activities and programmes.

The bulk of the work to deliver the Cultural Commissioning Strategy has been delivered from within the existing resources of the ACS division of the Council. It is impossible to disaggregate an accurate isolated cost of producing the document as officer time and expertise has been drawn on across the council to research and deliver all work thus far. I can also assure Councillor Clyne that no additional money has been spent on commissioning individual pieces of research for the strategy and that all information contained in the current public document has been drawn from existing research and previous consultations. However, it is easier to disaggregate and measure the cost of the materials and room hire to conduct public consultation on the current discussion document; this has cost £6K to date.

20. **By:** Councillor Mark Harrison (submitted on 09.12.10)

**To:** Councillor Lorna Campbell – Cabinet Member for Environment

**Cold Weather**

Can the cabinet member provide an update on the council’s efforts in keeping Lambeth moving during the cold weather and can she give us her impression of the performance of the gritting service?

**Party:** Labour

**Answer**

Our efforts to keep Lambeth moving have been successful in terms of:

(1) Gritting key transport routes and links to minimise delays; and
(2) Minimising accidents and damage resulting from snow and ice

During the recent cold snap our gritting operation was deployed to grit our Priority 1, Priority 2 and Plus 1 routes several times over and at no point were we at risk of running out of salt for the carriageway priorities.

Our footway grit bins were sufficiently stocked prior to the winter season commencing and, for this reason, our sweepers have been able to get through a majority of the footway priorities. Gritting side roads has been a topic of discussion
from residents, but the sweepers and salt levels will only currently allow us to stick to the agreed priorities.

A further cold snap was expected at the time of writing this reply (15 December) and the grit bins on the highway network were being restocked. Veolia, our contractual partners are receiving fresh supplies of salt in preparation.

21. **By:** Councillor Brian Palmer (submitted on 10.12.10)

**To:** Councillor Steve Reed – Leader of the Council

**Lambeth Life**

How much advertising revenue has Lambeth Life brought in broken down by revenue from council departments, public sector organisations and the private sector? What are the staff costs, printing costs and delivery costs of Lambeth Life?

**Party:** Liberal Democrats

**Answer**

I am sure you will join me in deploring the proposed changes to the Government’s Publicity Code for local councils that are anti-localist, will increase the council’s net costs meaning either a higher level of council tax or additional cuts in frontline services, and will make it harder to recruit foster-carers and to register people to vote.

Lambeth Life’s full costs and revenue are published online here: [http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/News/LambethLifeYourQuestionsAnswered.htm](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/News/LambethLifeYourQuestionsAnswered.htm)

However, here is a breakdown of costs over the year 09/10.

**Lambeth Life accounts 09/10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009/10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>Fortnightly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income (largely from advertising)</strong></td>
<td>£403,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expenditure (not including staff)</strong></td>
<td>£411,431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff costs</strong></td>
<td>£155,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average cost per issue</strong></td>
<td>£7,102.00 (23 editions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average cost per issue to residents based on a 136,000 print run</strong></td>
<td>5.2p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The vast majority of Lambeth Life’s print, production, distribution and salary costs are offset by advertising from both the private and public sectors such as police community safety information and recruitment for local schools. As a result, Lambeth Life costs around 5p per issue, per resident. Our aim is to get the cost down to zero and we are close to that. The net cost of publishing Lambeth Life, both overall and cost per copy, is less now than it was under the Lib Dem -Tory Council that increased the frequency of publication but failed to attract external advertising to reduce the cost to residents.

Without Lambeth Life the subsidy from external advertising revenue will be lost so the cost of communicating with residents will become a greater burden to taxpayers than it is now. The Government requires the Council to advertise statutory notices and to do that in an alternative publication will cost thousands more per year. In addition we still need to contact residents for vital needs like recruiting foster parents and to register to vote. Without Lambeth Life we will be relying on individual mail shots and advertising externally which is much more expensive. Moreover, Lambeth Life provides an opportunity for local businesses to advertise to nearly every potential customer in the borough, which is enormously helpful to the local economy during this period of economic slow down.

To answer the second part of your question below is a further breakdown of advertising revenue:

Advertising revenue for the year 09/10 is as follows.

- Private sector external £88,544
- Public sector external (i.e. NHS, Police, schools, colleges) £62,500
- Internal by dept:
  - HRE £128,703 (The majority of this is statutory notices)
  - ACS £25,521
  - CYPS £24,290
  - F&R £24,057
  - OCE £16,536

It is important to note that of the advertising income generated from Council departments, much of this is statutory notices, which we are legally obliged to produce.

22. **By:** Councillor David Malley (submitted on 09.12.10)

**To:** Councillor Paul McGlone – Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

**Lambeth Council Reserves**

It was recently claimed by the Leader of the Opposition that Lambeth Council is holding £123m in reserves and in December the Secretary of State for Local Government, Eric Pickles MP, said that councils should be ‘dipping’ into their ‘piggy banks’ instead of cutting services. Can the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources clarify the veracity of the opposition’s claim and explain the position of Lambeth’s reserves?
Party: Labour

Answer

The analysis of the £123m referred to is set out below:

GF Balance         £28.7m
Schools Balances   £14.5m
HRA                £0.01m
Reserves           £67.0m
Provisions         £14.3m
Collection Fund    (£1.0m)
Total              £123.51m

Taking each in turn:-

- The General Fund balance is maintained at a level which is between 5% and 10% of the net General fund budget requirement. This is in accordance with the professional judgement of the Section 151 Officer (Executive Director of Finance & Resources), and endorsed by the Chief Executive. Lambeth is an organisation providing diverse and complex services with a turnover of +£1 billion; there are inherent risks in such an environment whereby it is prudent to maintain balances sufficient to meet unbudgeted costs which may occur outside the control of the Council. I set out below an extract from the Executive Director's statement in the February 2010 Budget report, pursuant to section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003:

  4.1 I have consistently advised members that in my professional opinion the minimum level of balances that the council needs to maintain to ensure financial stability, and so provide a strong environment within which services can be continuously improved, is £15m and that the council should plan to hold £30m in balances, which is approximately 10% of net revenue expenditure. I reiterate this previous advice, and add to it that in light of current economic circumstances, of which members have been advised in detail by way of previous reports, that the arguments for holding balances to the upper end of this level are strengthened.

- Schools balances are not within the control of the authority.

- HRA balances broadly break even but it is prudent to have a working balance in accordance with the advice of the Executive Director of between £5m and £10m.

- The level of reserves at £67m is broadly at the same level as the previous financial year. These balances are not a general resource but are in fact earmarked for specific purposes. Pages 57 and 58 of the Statement of Accounts provide further detail (see: http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/4B3E5EA3-3FD1-4555-BDD2-4FAF530520B6/0/200910StatementofAccounts.pdf)
• The provisions balance of £14.3m is held for known liabilities (details on pages 60 and 61 of the Statement of Accounts). As such the Council has no discretion over how this resource is used.

• The deficit on the Collection Fund relates to Council Tax billed and collected. The Council plans to maintain this balance at a broadly break even position to ensure the level of Council Tax levied is appropriate.

23. By: Councillor Kita Ogden (submitted on 10.12.10)

To: Councillor Lib Peck – Cabinet Member for Housing

Housing Waiting List

How many people and families currently await a council property and what is the average time spent on Lambeth’s Housing Waiting List?

Party: Liberal Democrats

Answer

Officers do not classify people on the housing register as “awaiting” a council property, as this implies an expectation that a council property will eventually be provided if one waits long enough, which is not the case.

The average time spent on the list is relatively low, given that the number of people applying for housing far exceeds the amount of housing available. The reason is that the housing register is primarily a list of people currently seeking housing, and does not include people who applied but have since moved away, obtained their own housing or simply are no longer seeking social housing. While on the register, applicants must notify us of any change in circumstances, such as a change in address. We periodically write to applicants to ask them if they are still seeking housing, and will close their application if they do not respond. We will be carrying out a similar exercise next year using our new web based system. As a result, the housing register at any given time will always tend to include more recent applications than old ones.

24. By: Councillor Julia Memery (submitted on 10.12.10)

To: Councillor Sally Prentice – Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning, Employment and Enterprise

Euro Hotel Acquiring Leasehold Properties from Lambeth Council at Clapham Common South Side

Is the cabinet member aware that the Euro Hotel is destroying Clapham Common Southside, which is a conservation area, by buying up leasehold properties from Lambeth Borough of Lambeth (LBL) and turning them into poorly designed hotel accommodation without seeking planning permission? No enforcement action can be taken as it is considered that LBL would be taking action against itself, and am I
left to tell residents that it is tough luck that their homes are being ruined. Does the Cabinet member agree that this situation is unacceptable, and can she suggest what actions LBL can take to tackle this type of planning violation and penalise the offenders or can anyone who owns the leasehold of such a property do as he or she pleases without repercussion?

Party: Conservative

Answer

The Council is aware that a number of flats (7 so far) in Council blocks in the vicinity of the EURO Hotel Clapham Common have been acquired by an investment company apparently on behalf of the Hotel. The flats had previously been sold by way of leases to former Council residential tenants under the Right To Buy legislation.

The subsequent use of the flats by the Hotel for commercial purposes does not have planning consent. Furthermore and importantly, the Council is of the view that such commercial use in connection with the Hotel is in breach of the express and implied terms of the residential leases granted.

Arrangements to inspect the flats internally are being pursued by Home Ownership Services with the intention that the issue of appropriate notices and Enforcement Action under the terms of the leases will be pursued to prevent the unauthorised use.