

**1. Question asked by Councillor Cliff Carter of the Chair of The Executive**

One year on, how many advertisements and sponsorships have been used to finance Sutton Scene Magazine after promises were made in this Chamber, at the Council Meeting held on January 22nd 2007, to look into alternative sources of funding for the publication?

**Reply by Councillor Tony Brett Young, Executive Member for Public Relations and Learning Services**

I can report that one year on and a period covered by six issues of the magazine Sutton Scene has attracted fourteen separately funded advertisements generating a sum of £20,160. Advertisers have included Transport for London, The Environment Agency, Connexions and Sutton based businesses such as First Hire. We shall be looking for ways of increasing that take up and income in the future. There are a number of advertising opportunities in the magazine to meet advertisers' needs from quarter page advertisements to six page supplements. Can I add that during the past twelve months the Communications team has also raised an additional £37,000 by winning externally funded communications projects from Transport for London and DEFRA.

**Supplementary Question asked by Councillor Cliff Carter**

I am pleased to hear that we are at least getting some money back in but £20,000 is, of course, nowhere near the cost of the publication itself. Could you tell me exactly when these 14 advertisements appeared because I can't remember them? And also when do you predict that this magazine will be self financing and not a burden on the Sutton Council taxpayers?

**Reply by Councillor Tony Brett Young**

I don't accept that £20,000 is a low amount. Sutton Scene has a total budget of something like £118,000 a year and advertising revenue currently represents more than 17% of the budget. The magazine actually costs £19,700 for each edition including delivery to 90,000 addresses and that works out as 21 pence for each resident. That's less than a cost of a stamp for each. As I said before we shall be looking at ways of increasing the take up and income from advertising in the future and that's a challenge for us. I don't think that it is poor value. The fact is that all over the country, councils are producing magazines like Sutton Scene; councils of all political persuasions I have to say, to communicate with their residents about the services they offer, facilities and opportunities that exist. I believe that it's a cost effective way of doing that.

**Supplementary Question asked by Councillor Paul Scully**

I don't think that anyone doubts that it is important to communicate with our residents. You say its costs £19,700 for each edition, I welcome the adverts that you've managed to attract. Can you tell us how much it cost last year per edition?

**Reply by Councillor Tony Brett Young**

I can't from the top of my head but I'll let you have that information and indeed the information about the advertisements that have appeared that Councillor Carter has asked for as well.

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## **2. Question asked by Councillor Eric Howell of the Chair of The Executive**

Given the recent spate of violent crimes in Sutton, typified by an unprovoked machete attack in Cheam and a riot in the high street which required the use of CS gas to disperse it, how can the Liberal Democrat Council still tell residents that the Borough is very safe and will these offences be reflected in future crime figures?"

### **Reply by Councillor Graham Tope, Executive Member for Community Safety**

The recording of reported crimes in London is a matter for the Metropolitan Police Service and I really don't know why Councillor Howell wants to imply that the police might not record these particularly high profile crimes. Again it is the Metropolitan Police service who describes Sutton as, I quote "One of the safest boroughs in London" a relative description that is certainly repeated by others including the Liberal Democrats who wish to reassure people that fear of crime in this borough is far higher than the reality. However I don't recall anyone, and certainly not the Liberal Democrats, ever describing Sutton as "very safe". That is an absolute description and, whilst any crime still occurs in the borough, it will not be safe enough to satisfy the Liberal Democrats. That is why we have developed the best partnership between a council and the police to be found anywhere in London. In contrast, it has always been Tory practice to try to frighten people. Indeed I recall one local Tory politician commenting to me, not so long ago, that raising the fear of crime was the only success Sutton Tories have had in 25 years.

### **Supplementary Question asked by Councillor Eric Howell**

Funny part about this is that the first paragraph said "when the Conservatives mention Law and Order we are accused of scare-mongering": I pre-empted it. In the past few weeks in our borough we've had two murders, two armed robberies; one in Cheam one in Wallington, many stabbings; one man was stabbed in his own home while his terrified family hid upstairs, we've got ASBOs which have failed twice, two breaches but are still free. What major incident must we have in this borough before the Liberal Democrats will accept that there is a crime problem in Sutton?

### **Reply by Councillor Graham Tope**

Councillor Howell once again does what one of his compatriots did at the last Council meeting; prepares his supplementary before he gets his answer. It's always a mistake Councillor Howell. I have always accepted, of course I have always accepted, that there is a crime problem in Sutton as there is everywhere else in the country. That is why we invest so much in community safety in this borough. Frankly it would be helpful if the Opposition party invested a little bit more time and effort in reassuring people rather than constantly trying to frighten people and to exaggerate the problem even worse than it is.

### **Supplementary Question asked by Councillor Tony Shields**

The big concern is stabbing. Stabbings are up, they call it knife-enabled crime: stabbing, threatening, it's very unpleasant and very worrying. I believe you hold the key that restricts some of the powers of our PCSOs and they aren't given the powers in this borough as they are in other boroughs. Now I understand the Liberal Democrats ethos of "don't lock anybody up because it might hurt their feelings." Unfortunately for the residents of Sutton, although we like the PCSOs on the street, they are not as powerful as they are in other parts of London. Will you enable their powers?

**Reply by Councillor Graham Tope**

I really genuinely do not understand the question. Neither the Liberal Democrats nor this Council has any responsibility for the powers of police or PCSOs in the Metropolitan Police Service. I'm happy to discuss it outside this meeting with Councillor Shields but I think we are at cross-purposes. This is not something we either do or have power to do.

**3. Question asked by Councillor Terry Faulds of the Chair of The Executive**

Hammersmith and Fulham Council is estimating that it can save between £5m and £10m from outsourcing £90m of its services. Are there any plans for Sutton Council to take the same approach?"

**Reply by Councillor John Drage, Executive Member for Resources**

The Council is very open-minded about who delivers services on its behalf and has traditionally had very mixed service delivery by the private, public and third sectors. We score highly in providing value for money, in fact more highly than Hammersmith and Fulham and that is the important measure for me, not who it is providing services. We are always considering opportunities that the market can present and in our care services we are increasingly moving our emphasis away from direct delivery to commissioning of services from others. Also we have recently held some exploratory discussions with three major private sector providers of services to local government to help us to assess whether they could help us in providing even better value for money than we currently achieve. I think it is fair to say that given we have already done many of the things that these companies focus on to achieve savings, in particular revamping I.T. and re-engineering back office services, they did not have any instant ideas to offer as to how they could help us to achieve any significant additional savings. It will be most interesting to see if Hammersmith and Fulham do succeed in saving what could be a level of savings of over 10% from their 90 million market testing. They do however have a long way to go to get the costs of the services they provide down from their current level of £1,025 per head of population to Sutton's level of £691 per head of population.

**Supplementary Question asked by Councillor Terry Faulds**

Looking through your budget statement I wouldn't have thought there were any plans to look anywhere at all for savings and we will have more to say about Hammersmith and Fulham and other Conservative councils over the next few months. My supplementary question is do you believe that the service being delivered to the residents of Sutton could not possibly be delivered at a more economical price and to the same standard, in other words, that all departments are working at the absolute peak of efficiency?

**Reply by Councillor John Drage**

We are always on this side looking at how we can make improvements. This Council is not perfect; I'm not vain enough to say it's perfect. I think its very good but we are always looking for ways of how we can make it better and achieve even better value for money for our residents than we currently do.

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#### **4. Question asked by Councillor Moira Butt of the Chair of The Executive**

What effect will the recent Age Discrimination Act have on SCOLA?"

#### **Reply by Councillor Tony Brett Young, Executive Member for Adult Learning**

The effect of the Age Discrimination Act which applies to colleges such as SCOLA throughout the country has been to prevent them from establishing courses which exclude people on the basis of age. Nor can benefits be provided that would advantage one age group over another. This means that they can't offer discounts simply because someone is 60 or over. However they can continue to offer concessions for example for people on benefits such as disability allowance. This was not a popular decision by the government and many colleges around the country lobbied to try to persuade the government not to introduce this. In Sutton SCOLA took the issue up with local MPs Tom Brake and Paul Burstow. The college also sought legal advice on how to get round the provision but finally accepted that it had to take this course of action. The effect of these measures on SCOLA this term is that the proportion of enrolments by adult and community learners among the over 60s has dropped by just 1.4% and for further education courses has dropped by just 1.2%. I am pleased to say that that's far less than anticipated because SCOLA had feared a reduction of up to 5% for its over 60 learners.

#### **Supplementary Question asked by Councillor Moira Butt**

I appreciate the 1.4% but I feel that as the years go on, numbers are going to dwindle because I have evidence from my residents that they are not going to be able to afford this year on year on like they were before. Does this mean that some day classes will have to close due to lack of numbers? Maybe buy one get one free?

#### **Reply by Councillor Tony Brett Young**

There may be just a ray of hope on the horizon because I can report that just as recently as the week before last Paul Burstow raised the matter again in the House of Commons and it may be just that the government is having a change of heart on this. The Secretary of State for Innovation, University and Skills, John Denham said he would be launching a consultation on how informal adult education of the sort such as the one provided by SCOLA can be developed in the future. The implication of this response may just be that the government is ready to reconsider just how the loss of concessions has affected the take up of courses. I'm sure all colleges will want to contribute to that consultation to try to persuade the government to change its mind on this issue. Can I just say that I think the way that SCOLA has handled this issue has been the reason for the comparatively small impact on its enrolments. I think it's done it very sensitively. Many colleges actually implemented the full fees for over 60s in 2006-2007 but SCOLA waited until 2007-2008. It took several actions to try and reduce the impact on those that found the new charges difficult to manage. It added 20 pence to every fee to create a hardship fund which is being used to help those who need financial support. There has been a positive reaction to this and a number of people are being assisted in this way. So that may help to dissuade people from actually not doing the courses and I think the low figure is an indication that it's working so far.

#### **Supplementary Question asked by Councillor Tim Crowley**

It's come to my attention through some of my residents as well that what also happens at the beginning of this year, and I wonder if you could look into it for me, is that people had to pre-pay for most of their courses upfront for a term and there were people who were 65 years old and over that that used to "pay as you play"

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and in respect to SCOLA courses used to pay on the day for certain courses?  
Would it be possible to revisit that policy and whether or not they might be able to do that?

**Reply by Councillor Tony Brett Young**

I understood that people paid upfront but paid for the full term and I think that's right. There is an opportunity now for them to pay for shorter periods rather than having to pay a large lump sum up front. I'll certainly look into that though for you.

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