

**LONDON BOROUGH OF SUTTON  
QUESTIONS ASKED DURING DEBATE  
UNDER STANDING ORDER 8.1**

**Minute 298 - The Construction and Operation of the Sutton Life Centre**

**1. Question asked by Councillor Paul Scully, in the absence of Councillor Tony Shields, to the Leader of the Council**

Can the Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Leisure and Libraries name the tens of thousands of people who have asked this Liberal Democrat-run Council for the controversial £8million Sutton Life Centre, and were the details of the cost made available to them?

**Reply by Councillor Graham Tope, Executive Councillor for Libraries, Leisure and Community Services**

Thank you Mr Mayor. I am really disappointed that Councillor Shields hasn't come to hear the answer to his question because he does seem to enjoy them so much. Mr Mayor, I calculate that if I were to name just the first 10,000 it would actually take something like 14 hours. I conclude that this is yet another attempt by the Conservatives to deny any debate on this. I am going to refuse that Mr Mayor. I want to get on with the debate. What I actually said at the last Council meeting, we have all got it in the book, was to point out that people bring us problems. They don't bring us solutions; they expect us to find the solutions. There are thousands, probably tens of thousands of people, who have raised concerns about anti-social behaviour, who believe that there are not enough youth facilities in this borough, who believe that we should be doing far more to prepare young people and indeed older people for the world of work, that there is much more we can do on inter-generational work and so on. Mr Mayor, there are tens of thousands of people who believe that. We are providing the solution and instead of silly procedural nit picking and really daft questioning, I'm not surprised he is too ashamed to come and ask it for himself. Let's get on and have the debate.

**Supplementary Question asked by Councillor Paul Scully to the Leader of the Council**

Actually Councillor Tope it wasn't that Tony Shields didn't want to come to ask his question. He found out this afternoon that his father is dying, so he is in Hastings. So I hope you will withdraw your disparaging remarks.

It's pointless asking for the names and addresses of the 10,000 people, so that we can check with them. But can Councillor Tope instead outline the research and evidential basis on the need for the citizenship section of this project, including how anyone has learnt, ever learnt not to take drugs, not join gangs, not get involved in anti-social behaviour without the benefit of an immersive simulation experience?

**Reply by Councillor Graham Tope**

Thank you Mr Mayor. I am not entirely sure what an immersive simulation experience is, Mr Mayor, I just assume that it is some strange practice the Conservatives get up to in private. Mr Mayor, I do of course and I'm sure we all do send our good wishes to Councillor Shields; that's the point at which I end. Mr Mayor, we have had in this borough for many years, very, very successful junior citizenship schemes. This is actually the origin of this and we do know for certain that participation in those schemes has actually saved lives. It has grown from that original idea. We have seen similar schemes in other parts of the country, I'm sure it will be referred to in the debate, in Milton Keynes and we have grown on that basis. I can't believe that the Opposition Leader is actually suggesting that a

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citizenship scheme, which is only one part of the Life Centre, is actually a bad thing. He can't surely be suggesting that. I say it yet again. Let's get on and have the debate and we'll hear what the positive alternatives are, the concerns that we have for dealing with all the issues I just referred to.

**Supplementary Question asked by Councillor John Kennedy**

Mr Mayor, I want to believe everything that Councillor Tope says and maybe he can have a go at convincing me. I want to believe he really does know that there are tens of thousands of people that have asked him for this. Just convince me by also reminding me of the identities of the tens of thousands of people who asked for the green garden waste not to go ahead, the freeze on Council Tax and to keep Cheam baths open. These figures are bandied around for expenditure, vast expenditure by the Council but there is very little real evidence. The core and the crux of the problem tonight is it is all based on of a lack of evidence and a convincing story from Councillor Tope. Who are these people? Where have these petitions come from?

**Reply by Councillor Graham Tope**

I'm not quite sure what the question was there, but Councillor Kennedy committed himself to try harder to believe me. If he will do that; I'll try harder to convince him. We may both be destined for failure.