

Southwark  
Life

Spring 2015

# Housing News

Southwark  
Council

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FROZEN FOR 7<sup>TH</sup>  
YEAR RUNNING

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# WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE?

## WELCOME TO THE SPRING ISSUE OF SOUTHWARK LIFE HOUSING NEWS

In this issue we once again celebrate the pillars of our community, our Housing Heroes. Go to **page 6** to find out more about these people who do so much for our borough.

Housing Heroes winner and long time Southwark employee Stephen takes us through a day in the life of an estate cleaner on **page 12**. We are also proud to announce more about our plans to build 11,000 new council homes and we tell you all about Willow Walk, where the first homes are due to be completed on **page 8**.

I'd also invite you to turn to **page 14** where we tell you more about the new services you can access online through MySouthwark, and on **page 19** we talk to Jermaine about why he thinks apprenticeships are a great way to earn and learn.

We also ask you for your feedback about the magazine so we can continue to make it as relevant to you as possible. Please fill out the evaluation form on the back page and post it back to us. And as always we very much hope you enjoy this issue.

Best wishes  
Cllr. Richard Livingstone

**CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING**

### CONTACT US

Do you have something to say about Southwark Life Housing News? Write to:  
**Letters, Southwark Life Housing News, Communications, Southwark Council, 160 Tooley Street, Second floor, Hub 5, SE1 2QH or email SLHN@southwark.gov.uk**

### TWEET TWEET

We're online – come and say hi.

 @LB\_southwark

 www.facebook.com/southwarkcouncil

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**WE ARE FREEZING  
YOUR COUNCIL TAX**

**FOR THE 7<sup>TH</sup> YEAR  
IN A ROW**

Over the last five years the council's funding has been cut by more than £90 million in the face of the largest central government funding reductions in living memory. Southwark has been especially badly hit by these cutbacks, losing £155 per household, the third largest reduction in spending power in the country.

We are keeping our commitment to  
**Keep council tax low**  
by working hard to make sure we spend every penny as if it were from our own pockets.

But we also know how tough these times have been for so many of you and we want to be supportive of your needs. In particular we recognise the needs of our most vulnerable residents in the midst of a series of welfare reforms; this is why we're investing in initiatives such as the Southwark Emergency Support Scheme (SESS).

Cllr Fiona Colley, cabinet member for finance, strategy and performance, said: "This is the fifth year of consecutive cuts in government funding and yet again Southwark is one of the hardest hit councils in the country.

"Just as the council faces budget challenges, we understand that all too many of our residents are struggling with the cost of living. So we want to do everything we can to help by freezing council tax for the seventh year in a row.

We won't let these cuts to our finances cut our ambition or commitment to high quality public services. We are being more efficient with our money, and are investing in the services that people tell us matter most like libraries, children's centres, street cleaning and home care."

#### **Take control of your council tax**

Switch to Direct Debit and you could win a £25,000 prize draw.

For more information go to [www.directdebit.co.uk/londoncounciltax](http://www.directdebit.co.uk/londoncounciltax)



For more information go to [www.southwark.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/counciltax)

**Southwark Emergency Support Scheme is a scheme to help those most in need in the borough. Subject to eligibility, the programme provides furniture, white goods, food bank vouchers, rent deposits and emergency cash for people in desperate situations.**

**For more information on the scheme go to [www.southwark.gov.uk/emergency\\_support](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/emergency_support)**

# HAVE YOU EVER DREAMT ABOUT JOINING THE CIRCUS?



Well here's your chance! This May, Southwark will see the premiere of **Weighting**, an incredible circus performance produced by **Extraordinary Bodies**, the UK's first integrated circus company of disabled and non-disabled performers.

The show includes a large community choir which we are inviting local residents to be a part of. You will need to attend a few rehearsals, and the performances are on Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 May in Dulwich Park.

**i** Visit [www.southwark.gov.uk/southwarkpresents/weighting](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/southwarkpresents/weighting) or call 020 7525 3422 to find out more.

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO THE LIFE OF A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY

Can you share some of your free time at weekends to care for a child or young person?

We are looking for motivated caring people with experience of working with children, to offer daytime care or overnight breaks for children with disabilities. You will receive training, support and an allowance.



**i** If you want to find out more call 020 3049 8213/8047 or visit [www.southwark.gov.uk/familylink](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/familylink)

## SOUTHWARK'S HOUSING ACADEMY

New

Are you looking for an exciting and challenging career in housing?

We are looking for:  
• Apprentices • Trainees • Graduates

**i** For more information go to [www.southwark.gov.uk/apprenticeships](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/apprenticeships)

# Southwark IN BI

## BEKO PRODUCT SAFETY NOTICES

There are currently some product safety notices out about faulty Beko appliances, including some fridge freezers, tumble dryers and gas cookers.

**i** If you think this might affect an appliance in your home you can check at [www.beko.co.uk/safety](http://www.beko.co.uk/safety) or by ringing the customer care line on 0800 917 2018.

## DULWICH PARK'S NEW ART PIECE



Southwark's latest public art piece is set to be revealed in April. The 'Three Perpetual Chords' sculpture has been created by artist Conrad Shawcross, previously artist in residence at the Science Museum.

The installation was a local favourite during our extensive consultation to find a replacement for the Barbara Hepworth statue stolen from Dulwich Park in 2011.

## IMPROVED AND EASIER WAYS TO CONTACT THE COUNCIL

Did you know that you can now access almost all council services online? Just sign up for a MySouthwark account at [www.southwark.gov.uk/mysouthwark](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/mysouthwark)

Here you can access services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year from the comfort of your own home. In fact, unless you have an emergency which you need to report immediately by phone, you can do pretty much everything online.

Following a successful trial last September when we piloted new operating hours at the council's contact centre and received around a 40 per cent decrease in calls, we are now making these changes permanent, coming into effect on 1 April 2015. For some services, such as the registering of births, deaths and marriages you will still be able to call the council between 9am to 5pm on weekdays and the emergency repairs service will still be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

# RISE

## YOU SAID, WE DID

While the vast majority of residents are happy with the quality and service of major improvements to their properties, we're always trying to get better. That is why we recently established a group of tenants, leaseholders and homeowners to review our standards for involving people in major building work, called Putting Residents First.

The group made a total of 16 recommendations, which included:

- Residents being able to set rules for their estate, which contractors must follow while they're on site
- Holding meetings at more convenient times
- Providing better information about how long works take and how much they cost.

All 16 recommendations have been approved and we are working to implement them as soon as possible.

We want to thank the group for giving up their time to improve services, it's a great example of what can be achieved when the council and residents work together.

## LET'S GO GUIDES

There are lots of activities for families, expectant parents and children under five years to enjoy including soft play sessions, weaning and healthy eating advice sessions and adult learning courses.

These sessions offer the chance to meet other parents, get advice and support and have fun. Most activities are free or affordable, and at a range of times and locations that are convenient for you.

 Find out more at [www.southwark.gov.uk/letsagoguides](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/letsagoguides)

Southwark residents awarded for their dedicated community spirit and hard work within their housing communities.

Fairer future  
Quality affordable homes

## HONOURING OUR

# HOUSING HEROES

Our second annual Housing Heroes ceremony was a very special celebration of the incredible work of our community champions.

This year's Housing Heroes ceremony certainly didn't disappoint. It had tears, laughter, emotional speeches and of course great cake. Pat Hickson, the winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award even commented it meant as much to her, if not more, than her MBE. Move over Buckingham Palace.

The winners were drawn from several categories including Best Community Initiative and Customer Service of the Year. The nominations showed the amazing breadth of community spirit we have in our borough with people involved in a huge mix of clubs, projects and organisations and general neighbourliness. Everyone at the ceremony, from community figures to nominees and nominators to council staff were also clearly a very strong community themselves, with the goodwill and support between everyone there very apparent.



Cllr Livingstone, cabinet member for housing, said:

**"At a time when it is becoming more common for people not to know their neighbours we should be truly grateful**

**to those groups and individuals who are building communities where people feel valued and supported. I would like to offer my congratulations to all our winners, and my thanks to everyone who was nominated for the work they do."**



## THE WINNERS WERE:

### BEST COMMUNITY INITIATIVE 2014

Christina Nilsen

### CUSTOMER SERVICE OF THE YEAR 2014

Stephen Dawson

### OUTSTANDING TENANT AND RESIDENT ASSOCIATION 2014

Decima Street TRA

### LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT 2014

Pat Hickson MBE

### NEIGHBOUR OF THE YEAR 2014

Michael Hulme

### OVERALL WINNER FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

Michael Hulme

### LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT 2014

Pat Hickson MBE



Pat Hickson has been a pillar of the Bonamy and Bramcote community for many years. As well as being the chair of her TRA, she is involved in a huge list of clubs and projects, impossible to list here. Most importantly, she feels, is her club for older people which

is a vital lifeline to many in her community. When asked why she does what she does, she said: "Because I live here, this is my home, my community; I want to keep the community spirit going. But I couldn't do it on my own; I am not a one man band." When quizzed about her award win, she said: "It was a very nice evening. I was very proud to get the award. It was a lovely surprise and I did get a bit emotional."

### NEIGHBOUR OF THE YEAR 2014 AND OVERALL WINNER FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

Michael Hulme

Michael Hulme won not only Neighbour of the Year, but also the overall award for Outstanding Achievement, as judged by the Housing Heroes panel. His nomination described how "Michael's devotion to the welfare of the community has positively contributed to making Delawyk Crescent a better, safer place to live." Helping particularly those who are elderly and vulnerable, he has collected newspapers, kept spare keys, carried out small repairs and helped with gardening as well as looking after the community's vegetable garden. Alongside this Michael helps organise social activities such as an Easter egg hunt and Christmas tree decorating. His nomination goes on to say: "He does all of this free of charge and is always ready with a joke and a helping hand. He has been a firm friend to neighbours old and young."



## VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY

Our new Volunteering Strategy Action Plan was introduced at the ceremony by Cllr Michael Situ, cabinet member for volunteering. He said, "The Action Plan sets out our commitment to promoting volunteering in the borough. Working with our partners, Volunteer Centre Southwark and Community Action Southwark, the plan offers us a real opportunity to support our residents to take up volunteering opportunities in a way that enriches their lives."

For more information on getting involved in volunteering go to [www.southwark.gov.uk/volunteering](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/volunteering)



COMING SOON

# FIRST NEW COUNCIL HOMES AT WILLOW WALK

Fairer future  
Quality affordable homes

There is a huge demand for more housing across London. Currently we have thousands of people on our waiting list, and it is estimated that the local population is set to grow by 50,000 by the year 2030.

Due to this demand, we are building 11,000 new council homes by 2043, with the first 1,500 to be delivered by 2018. It's the most ambitious council house building plan in the UK and we are determined to lead the way in London.

## TAKE A LOOK AT WILLOW WALK:

WILLOW WALK SE1



Willow Walk is the first site due for completion and comprises 75 council homes through two blocks of accommodation. One will provide 54 short stay accommodation units and the other, 21 general needs flats for council rent. These houses are set to be ready this spring.

We are building  
**11,000**  
new council homes  
across Southwark  
by 2043

# OTHER SITES WELL ON THE WAY

SUMNER ROAD SE15



112 units over two blocks; one with 50 council rent and 20 intermediate homes, and one with 42 private homes – the development will also include a new community centre,

a landscaped play area and a new through road. The project is scheduled for completion in 2017.

MASTERMAN HOUSE SE5



Ten private one and two bedroom flats and 15 one, two and three bedroom flats for council rent, with wheelchair accessible flats

included at ground level with integrated parking. This project is scheduled for completion in 2016.

CATOR STREET SE15



42 extra care flats associated with an adjacent centre of excellence day care facility. Fully wheelchair accessible flats on the ground floor along with

communal and visitor facilities. This project is currently scheduled for completion in 2016.

169 LONG LANE SE15



21 new homes for council rent here along with a commercial unit. Construction is underway and scheduled for completion in 2016.

NUNHEAD LANE SE15



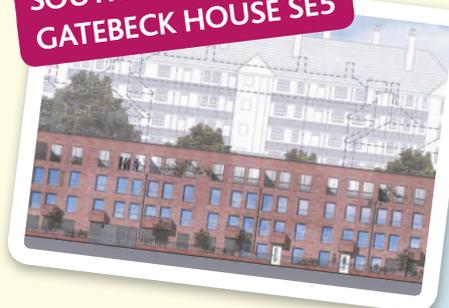
Eight new homes are to be provided to replace a disused single storey community centre. This project is scheduled for completion in 2016.

CLIFTON ESTATE SE15



Eight homes within a four storey block which was formerly a garage site fronting Clayton Road. This development is scheduled for completion in 2016.

SOUTHDOWN HOUSE AND GATEBECK HOUSE SE5



27 new homes. The project is currently scheduled for completion in 2016.

 Find out more and view images of what the completed homes will look like at [www.southwark.gov.uk/11000homes](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/11000homes)

Let's talk about

# 11,000 NEW COUNCIL HOMES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

We need your help to make some important decisions about these 11,000 new homes. Over 2,000 people got involved in the first stage of our community conversation and we want even more of you to have a say in these three areas.

Join our

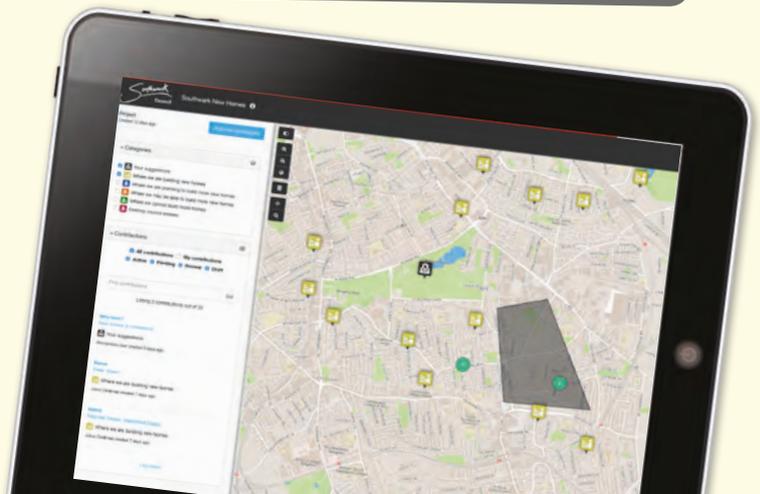
**COMMUNITY**  
CONVERSATION

Have your say

1. **CURRENTLY** we need your input about where we should build these new homes.
2. **FROM APRIL** we will be consulting with you about what these new homes should look like.
3. **FROM MAY** we will be asking how we can make these new homes and neighbourhoods better places.

## WHERE SHOULD WE BUILD THESE NEW HOMES?

You know Southwark better than anyone else. With that in mind, we've created an online map for you to tell us where we should build these new homes. The map is fast and easy to use. You can view the entire borough; zoom into a specific place and mark wherever you think we should be building. You can leave a comment with your suggestions and you can also view and comment on other residents' suggestions. Visit [www.southwark.gov.uk/communityconversation](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/communityconversation) for more information.



**WE ARE IMPROVING**

# HOUSING IN SOUTHWARK



*Improving housing in Southwark is central to the council's wider plans to create a fairer future for all.*

Access to appropriate, good quality, genuinely affordable homes is important not only for residents but also for shaping a borough that all residents can be proud of and which is truly sustainable for the future.

This year we are launching a new programme to replace kitchens older than 20 years and bathrooms older than 30 years. The six year programme was originally planned to start in April 2016. However the council's cabinet in February agreed to bring the first year of the programme forward to this April.

By starting with some of our oldest kitchens and bathrooms on estates that are also undergoing Warm, Dry

and Safe works, we hope to minimise disruption to the tenants and provide the best value for money. We are planning to make all kitchens and bathrooms across the borough meet the new standard, where they are older than 20 years for kitchens and 30 years for bathrooms. We will do this over the next six years and we will be consulting with residents on this later this year.

Our new Fairer Future

**PROMISE**

to deliver a quality kitchen and bathroom for every council tenant by 2021

We have spent

**€250m**

so far to make our council homes Warm, Dry and Safe

## MAKING THE MOST OF EMPTY PROPERTIES

As we begin to roll out our kitchens and bathrooms scheme, we are also focusing on the work we have already been doing to improve the standards of our empty properties. We look to go beyond just making a home clean and liveable and making it a home anybody would want to move into. As part of this we are freshly painting all the rooms in the house, doing essential repairs and improvements and where it is needed putting in new kitchens and bathrooms to meet the new standard. Check out these before and after pictures to see the difference.



For more housing information go to [www.southwark.gov.uk/housing](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/housing)

# A DAY IN THE LIFE...

**STEPHEN DAWSON**  
SOUTHWARK ESTATE CLEANER



**S**tephen's day starts off at the same time many of us will still be snoozing our alarms. He says, "I always get into work early for about 7.15am, I'm used to getting up early." His official working day starts at 8am. Every day Stephen and his team go around the Barset Estate in Nunhead, "We litter pick, sweep up, clean the chutes out, and clean the lawns and footpaths. It's a bit of everything." But Stephen's role doesn't stop there – estate cleaners also play a crucial part in keeping Southwark moving whatever the weather.

**“ We always go gritting when snows about. We use a snow shovel to clear the path and then lay the salt. It is a lot of hard work. ”**

From 8am to 9.30am on Tuesdays and Thursdays the team also collects the estate's rubbish bags before starting their normal cleaning rounds. On Wednesdays they issue new rubbish bags, two bags per flat to 130 flats. Despite his busy work, Stephen enjoys talking to residents, "Sometimes you get to have a quick chat with people, especially if they need something from the council, I always give them the number so they can access the services they need." Nominated for his Housing Heroes award by local resident

Peter Holmes and supported by the Buchan TRA, it was noted that "Steve readily gives advice about his service and welcomes feedback, always

with a smile and a chat." For anyone who has met him, this is most definitely true.

The cleaning teams also cover a lot of ground, Stephen says, "I mainly work on the Barset Estate but we're not really based in one place. It's a big area and there are lots of hills and a lot of walking, which is good as I like to keep active. And you're always working with your colleagues, so it's nice and sociable."

As his Housing Heroes nomination sums up "Steve carries out his daily responsibilities with pride and commitment by keeping the community areas clean and scrupulously clear of rubbish over a wide area, whatever the weather." Southwark really is lucky to have him.



**i** For more information about estate cleaning go to [www.southwark.gov.uk/estatecleaning](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/estatecleaning)

# LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION:

# FIX IT AT HOME

Watch our new videos online to learn how to take care of small repairs around your home.



There are a lot of repairs around your home that are easy to fix yourself but only if you know how. This is where our Fix it at Home videos come in. With the council's repairs and maintenance team looking after over 50,000 homes across the borough we want to pass on some of our DIY knowledge so you can save yourself time and money. Reducing these callouts will also free the team up to focus on the more complex repairs.

All the videos are simple and easy to follow and will transform you from a DIY novice to a Fix it at Home hero in a matter of minutes. Blocked sinks and toilets will be nothing. Changing fluorescent lights and smoke alarms a walk in the park. You will know exactly what to do with condensation, heating problems and tripping electrics.

Cllr Livingstone, cabinet member for housing, said:

**"Our aim is to save our tenants time and money by reducing the number of call outs the team get for these smaller, simpler repairs. Even if the number is reduced by half, it equates to thousands of pounds saved and will also help the repairs team focus their time and expertise on more complex repairs."**

Based on recommendations from our own expert plumbers and electricians, here are a few of the top tips from the videos.

[www.youtube.com/southwarkcouncil](http://www.youtube.com/southwarkcouncil)

## DISCOVER THE POWER OF THE MOP

Who knew that to unblock a toilet you only need a mop and two bin bags?

Place the mop in bag one and holding the bag as high as possible plunge to the u bend a few times. Take out the mop and bag and place into bag two (and dispose of bags). Flush and hey presto you should be back in business.

## GET YOUR HARDWARE SHOP TO DO THE HARD WORK FOR YOU

Not sure what those complicated looking kitchen and bathroom lights are – take your old ones along to your local hardware shop so they can find you the right size and voltage. Most shops will also have a waste disposal facility so you can dispose of them safely and easily.

## CHECK YOUR THERMOSTAT

It sounds obvious but if your house is cold it may be as simple as your thermostat having been knocked. The optimum temperature is 18 to 21 degrees centigrade and will stop you overheating your house and your heating bills being higher than necessary.



Central heating



Smoke alarm



Lighting



If you are unable to fix your repair yourself, report it at [www.southwark.gov.uk/mysouthwark](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/mysouthwark)



To watch the videos go to [www.southwark.gov.uk/fixitathome](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/fixitathome) or [www.youtube.com/southwarkcouncil](http://www.youtube.com/southwarkcouncil)

# COUNCIL SERVICES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

*Fancy getting your repair sorted while lolling on the sofa in your pyjamas? Registering to vote while you're stuck on the bus? Renewing your library books in your lunch break? Well now the answer is here in the form of MySouthwark.*

MySouthwark is the council's online portal that allows you to access a whole host of council services online. So move over Facebook, forget Twitter, Instagram goodbye, MySouthwark is all you really need in this digital age.

Once you've signed up for your MySouthwark account, there are so many services you can access from the comfort of your own home, on the go, or pretty much anywhere you can get an internet connection.

Signing up for an account is quick and easy. It will only take a few minutes and with more services being added all the time, it will make managing everything a lot easier. And if you are one of our 91,000 (and counting) residents who have already signed up, make sure you stay up to date with all the new and fun things you can use it for (and the less fun but very useful things).

*But don't just take our word for it; here is what a couple of our residents had to say about the new repairs portal:*

**"It is good for reporting a repair. It was easy to use, and often I send an email and get a reply back the same day. I would definitely use it again."**

Alexander Hagan-Morgan, local resident

**"I've been on the council website and even reported a repair online – it was so much quicker and easier than calling up and waiting."**

Anne Abbot, local resident

## YOU CAN

Pay your rent

Pay your council tax

Register to vote

Report and track your repairs and check your repair history

Manage your library account

Manage your service charge account

Request to have bulky waste collected e.g. an old sofa/fridge

Check which benefits you're entitled to

Find out what's going on in your area

Find your nearest leisure facilities

**i** It is not just the computer savvy who can use MySouthwark. You can sign up and access your account for free on any of our library computers, where our staff will always be happy to help you get going. There are also computer classes available at many of our libraries. For more information go to [www.southwark.gov.uk/learning\\_in\\_libraries](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/learning_in_libraries)

**i** To sign up for your MySouthwark account go to [www.southwark.gov.uk/mysouthwark](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/mysouthwark)

# MAKING YOUR COUNCIL PAYMENTS

As part of our commitment to providing value for money across our services we are making the vast majority of our payment options digital in 2015.

Around two thirds of payments to the council – including housing rents, business rates, parking fines, service charges and invoices – are now made digitally, either through direct debit or the council's online payment system and automated telephone service.

Cllr Fiona Colley, cabinet member for finance, strategy and performance, said: "Recent improvements in digital technology mean more and more people prefer to use the faster, secure and more convenient digital options to pay their bills, and the number of people paying in person has significantly reduced. Setting up direct debits or standing orders has numerous advantages, especially as you won't forget to make a payment and it is much safer than carrying large amounts of cash around the borough."

As part of the proposals, the council will be closing the current cash offices in Walworth and Peckham on Tuesday 31 March.

See page 20 for payment information.

# PUT YOUR HAND UP FOR HELP

Paying your rent needs to be a priority – you're in danger of losing your home if you don't. If you are struggling to pay, get in touch with us as early as possible. Call us on **020 7525 5950** or speak to your housing or income officer in confidence.



# KEEPING HOUSING RENT

## AFFORDABLE

Last year we promised to ensure that for the next four years, rent increases would be no more than one per cent above the September inflation rate. This means we have been consulting on a proposed rent increase of 2.2 per cent. The same increase will also apply for tenant service charges so we can continue to deliver the best possible service for both our tenants and leaseholders. The new charges will be applicable from 6 April.

Cllr Richard Livingstone, cabinet member for housing, said: "I am very proud that Southwark Council tenants pay some of the lowest rents in London and we are continuing to keep rent increases low by sticking to our promise of keeping any rise in rent to the rate of inflation plus one per cent. This is at the same time as the council is supporting increasing numbers of residents who have been hit hardest by welfare reform and delivering our Warm Dry and Safe programme to improve standards in our homes.

"Our primary concern in the housing budget is to protect our frontline services, particularly for our most vulnerable tenants, and we are always looking at new and innovative ways to get the best value for money for our tenants. The majority of our housing funding comes from rents, so we have to find the best balance between having the income to maintain homes to the highest quality and keeping rents low."



For more information go to [www.southwark.gov.uk/rent](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/rent)

# ASK SALLY

## ANSWERING YOUR MONEY QUESTIONS...



Whether you're having money worries, need some advice about loans or have a question about benefits, Sally Causer of Southwark Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) has got straightforward, no-nonsense advice you can really use.

I have read that the rules around how you can use your pension savings in retirement are changing in April. Last week I started receiving texts from a company offering me a free pension review. I don't know whether to contact them?

### SALLY SAYS...

Be wary if you've been contacted out of the blue by phone, email, text or via an online advert about getting a free pension review. Most of the companies making these offers haven't been authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority.

These reviews are aimed at getting you to move money from an existing personal or occupational pension into unregulated investments like overseas property developments. These are higher risk and you could lose everything you've invested, reducing your retirement income.

If you invest your pension in one of these schemes you won't be able to get compensation from the Financial Services Compensation Scheme if things go wrong.

For more information go to

[www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

[www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk](http://www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk)

is an independent service which provides free information and guidance on all pension matters.

[www.moneyadvice.service.gov.uk](http://www.moneyadvice.service.gov.uk)

is an independent service set up by the government to help people manage their money better.

My sister bought me a rather expensive jumper for Christmas which I don't really like. What are my rights if I return the gift to the shop where it was bought?

### SALLY SAYS...

The shop may agree to give you a refund, but there is nothing in law which says they have to.

Many of the large high street retailers do have returns policies which give you more than just your basic legal rights. They may offer you a refund, an exchange, a credit note or gift voucher, generally within a given time limit.

Even if a shop doesn't have a returns policy, they may still offer to take the gift back as a goodwill gesture, particularly after Christmas. This is less likely to be the case with smaller shops which may be unable to afford to do so.

To return a gift it should be unused and in perfect condition. You normally need a receipt, although some retailers will exchange items without one. If you don't have a receipt, you could try using a bank or credit card statement from the person who bought the present. If paid for by card any refund will normally have to go back on the same card, so if you want to exchange your present for cash, you'll probably have to get the person who bought it for you to arrange a refund.

For more information on your consumer rights please visit [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk) or telephone the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on **0345 4040 506**.



## GOT A QUESTION FOR SALLY?

Email [SLHN@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:SLHN@southwark.gov.uk)

Sally can't answer all letters personally but if you need help with money issues contact Southwark Citizens Advice Bureau on **0344 4994 134**.

For full details of opening times and more useful information about the advice agencies in Southwark please visit [www.southwarkadvice.org.uk](http://www.southwarkadvice.org.uk)

citizens  
advice  
bureau



Southwark employer?  
 Need more staff?  
 Want to help a young person thrive?

If you think you can cultivate potential in someone who's had a challenging start in life then SEEDS has a business proposition you won't want to turn down.

Give a job to a young local person who has struggled to find their place in the job market and we will pay up to 50% of their salary.

For more information on eligibility and how SEEDS can help your business bloom visit [www.southwark.gov.uk/sowandgrow](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/sowandgrow)

Fairer future  
 Strong local economy £

SOUTHWARK  
 EMPLOYMENT  
 ENTERPRISE  
 DEVELOPMENT  
 SCHEME



## THE WAY WE ALL REGISTER TO VOTE IS CHANGING

### How is the new system different?

- You can now register online at [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)
- Everyone is responsible for registering themselves. Under the old system the head of every household could register everyone who lived at their address, now **each person must register individually**
- You need to provide a few more details to register – including your **National Insurance Number** and **date of birth**. This makes the electoral register more secure.

You can now register to vote online at your local library

[Scan here to register to vote online](#)




**YOUR VOTE MATTERS**  
**MAKE SURE YOU'RE IN**




# HOME OWNERSHIP SERVICES

Check your service charge account online with MySouthwark

Since November last year, anyone with a Southwark service charge account can take advantage of our new MySouthwark self serve facility. By the end of January 2015, 1,500 people had already signed up to access their accounts online – it's quick and simple to do, so why not join them?

Use the service charge account part of MySouthwark to check your service charge account balance, invoice breakdowns and payments through a secure, password protected portal. And you can do all of this from the comfort of your own home, at a time convenient to you.

## Sign up today

Signing up to MySouthwark is easy and only takes a few minutes, just visit [www.southwark.gov.uk/mysouthwark](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/mysouthwark)

Once you have logged into your MySouthwark account, you will need a Personal Identification Number (PIN) to access your service charge information for the first time. You should already have received a unique PIN and instructions by post last November. Once you have registered, you will be able to

view your service charge account at any time simply by logging into your main MySouthwark account.

If you have not received a PIN, or are having any problems creating an account, please contact your dedicated service charge account officer – their contact details are given on your statements and invoices.

We are currently working on adding more features to the homeowner self serve portal, such as repairs breakdowns and we'll let you know more information about this as soon as it's ready.

## 2015/16 estimated service charges

Soon all homeowners will receive an invoice, breakdown of charges and further information for their service charges for 2015/16.

We offer a range of payment options which are outlined in our letter to you. If you have any questions about the invoice, the charges or about payment options, please speak to your dedicated service charge account officer, whose contact details will be given on the invoice.



For more information on self serve go to [www.southwark.gov.uk/homeowner\\_selfserve](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/homeowner_selfserve)

# THINK APPRENTICESHIPS THINK SOUTHWARK

In its tenth year running, our successful apprenticeship scheme has supported over 400 apprentices across the council and its contractors. Apprenticeships offer a great way to earn and learn at the same time whilst gaining valuable hands on experience in the workplace.



Jermaine completed his surveying apprenticeship in 2014 and is now a communal repair technical quality officer, employed by the council. He was also the Southwark Apprentice of the Year in 2013.

"When I heard about the Southwark Council apprenticeship scheme,

I knew it was for me.

Apprenticeships have always been very appealing as they allow you to work and earn a good wage while gaining a qualification. In most instances people have to sacrifice further education to work or vice versa, but with the apprenticeship I got the best of both worlds.

I decided to go for the surveying apprenticeship as I have always had an interest in the construction industry and liked the sound of the surveyor role.

Learning these new skills and being in a role that would lead to a career was really satisfying and I learned that as long as you have confidence and belief in yourself, you can thrive in any environment you're exposed to.

The experience I gained as an apprentice was invaluable and

from this, I have a number of different career path options. It has also brought me closer to my goal of becoming a chartered surveyor. Throughout my

time as an apprentice, I had a lot of support from my manager, who gave me opportunities where I could get valuable experience.

After completing my apprenticeship, I successfully applied for the communal repair technical quality officer position within the council. I have now been in this role for eight months and I'm enjoying the job and learning new things. My job requires me to inspect specific housing estates across the borough and raise work orders for communal repairs. I then work closely with our repairs contractor to ensure works are done right the first time.

To anyone considering applying for an apprenticeship I would say apply for the Southwark apprenticeship scheme. You will get the opportunity to gain experience, further your education and earn a decent wage at the same time. So don't think about applying, just do it and you will enjoy your apprenticeship as much as I enjoyed mine."

## Did you know?

Our apprenticeships adhere to such a high standard, we have named it the Southwark Apprenticeship Standard. We are working with businesses across Southwark to create 2,000 new apprenticeships and all of these will meet the apprenticeship standard.



**REGISTER NOW** The next round of apprenticeships is coming soon. Find out more about our apprenticeship scheme and register your interest at [www.southwark.gov.uk/apprenticeships](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/apprenticeships)

# WORDSEARCH

APPRENTICE MONEY ELECTIONS  
 NEW HOMES HEROES VOTE  
 VOLUNTEER RENT FIX IT  
 VIDEOS WILLOW WALK ESTATE

I	V	Z	V	R	E	E	T	N	U	L	O	V
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## WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE?

Tell us what you would like to see in the next issue of Southwark Life Housing News:

1

2

3

Name:

Tel:

Address:  Age:

SOLVE THE WORD SEARCH FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN A £50 SHOPPING VOUCHER

Rachel Angly from Bermondsey was the lucky winner from the last issue.

## TELL US WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT SLHN

Do you find this magazine useful? YES/NO  
 Is there any way you think we could improve it?

Comments

Would you be interested in receiving this magazine online? YES/NO

Send your feedback on the magazine and/or your completed competition entries to: Southwark Council, Southwark Life Housing News, Communications team, PO BOX 64529 or email SLHN@southwark.gov.uk by Friday by Friday 27 March 2015. The competition winner will be notified directly by letter and announced in the next edition of Southwark Life Housing News.

The information you provide will be used fairly and lawfully. Southwark Council will not knowingly do anything which may lead to the breach of the Data Protection Act 1998.

## USEFUL HOUSING CONTACTS

### HOUSING SERVICES FOR COUNCIL TENANTS

Tel: 020 7525 2600  
 Mon to Fri – 8am to 6pm

### RENT

Pay by Direct Debit:  
 020 7525 2600

Pay by debit/credit card:  
 0845 6000 611 (24hrs)

Pay online:  
[www.southwark.gov.uk/payforit](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/payforit)

### To pay in person:

The cash offices are closing on 31 March 2015. If you still want to pay by cash, there are 162 Paypoints and 17 Post Offices where you can pay housing rent, council tax and social care contributions. Contact us to obtain an LBS swipe card.

### To pay by post:

London Borough of Southwark  
 Income Collection Business Unit  
 PO BOX 11767  
 153-159 Abbeyfield Road  
 London SE16 3ZF

### REPAIRS

Tel: 0800 952 4444 (24hrs)  
 Online: [www.southwark.gov.uk/repairs](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/repairs)

### UTILITIES (emergencies)

Electricity: 0800 096 9000  
 Gas: 0800 111 999  
 Water: 0845 200 800

### LEASEHOLDERS/FREEHOLDERS

Home ownership unit  
 Mon to Fri – 9am to 5pm  
 Tel: 020 7525 1400  
 Email: [hsg.homeownership@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:hsg.homeownership@southwark.gov.uk)

Southwark Antisocial Behaviour Unit  
 Tel: 020 7525 5777 (24 hours)  
 Email: [sasbu@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:sasbu@southwark.gov.uk)  
 Web: [www.southwark.gov.uk/sasbu](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/sasbu)

Southwark Homesearch  
 Bidding hotline: 0845 270 0655  
 Bidding text line: 07781 486 526  
 Advice line: 020 7525 4140  
[www.southwarkhomesearch.org.uk](http://www.southwarkhomesearch.org.uk)

### WRITE TO SOUTHWARK LIFE HOUSING NEWS

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