

NEWS RELEASE: SUNDAY 16TH JULY 2017

Don't attack residents – instead answer their questions, says Lambeth Peoples' Audit

Lambeth Peoples' Audit has hit back at claims made on the BBC's Sunday Politics Programme by Lambeth Council's Labour leadership, that 'citizen auditors' are a 'façade' for the Liberal Democrats and the Greens.

'Instead of attacking residents who have raised legitimate concerns about Lambeth's lack of financial management, we call on the council's leadership to answer their questions,' said co-ordinator of the Lambeth Peoples' Audit, Simon Morrow.

He said questions raised by the 10-strong team of 'citizen auditors' include:

1. What has the council done to investigate the appearance of price fixing by contractors?
2. On Wyvil estate in Vauxhall, where documents show that in three blocks of flats Lambeth paid invoices for twice the amount of brickwork and concrete repairs than that carried out by the subcontractor, what has the council done to check the other 13 blocks?
3. Why is Lambeth's finance department unable to access invoices worth £8m paid by the housing department?
4. What steps is Lambeth taking to reduce its poor record on housing repairs, given the £10.4m it has paid out in housing disrepair compensation over five years (30% of all those made by local authorities in the UK)?
5. Why is Lambeth not getting a better deal in its dealings with developers – for example in its relationship with Pocket Living, which has received discounts worth £1m on three plots sold by the council?

Mr Morrow, a quantity surveyor who has never been a member of a political party, said Lambeth Peoples' Audit was made up of local residents with of a range of political views and is not a façade for any political party.

He said: "We share a desire to hold to account the council that is spending our money. We want to play our part in helping Lambeth Council do a much better job in serving us, its residents. We believe greater openness and transparency will lead to better decisions and we urge other people to exercise the rights we all have to scrutinise our councils' spending.

"Instead of attacking us, we hope Lambeth will take note of the problems we have shone a spotlight on, take our concerns seriously, and make it a priority to improve its financial management and governance systems.

"Then, instead of leaking money out to contractors through poor financial management, more money would be available to spend on precious local services that Lambeth residents need."

Notes

1. For photos or more information contact Simon Morrow 07505 409778 or Chris Holt 07866 801177
2. Lambeth Peoples' Audit was published on 7 July: <http://www.thepeoplesaudit.info/>
3. Cllr Imogen Walker, Lambeth's Deputy Leader (Finance), on BBC's Sunday Politics broadcast today 16th July, calling Lambeth Peoples' Audit a 'political campaign'. In an earlier statement she said that none of its objections had been 'upheld by an extensive and independent audit'.
4. Three objections raised by Lambeth Peoples' Audit with Lambeth's external auditor KPMG are still outstanding.
5. The current period for scrutinising Lambeth's accounts for 2016/17 runs from July 3 to August 11 2017.

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