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**THE PLACE W E
CALL HOM E**

**A VISION FOR
LEW ISHAM**

M AYOR STEVE BU LLOCK

THE PLACE WE CALL HOME

When I stood for election in 2002 I made a pledge that I would be “open, accessible and work in consultation with the people and the diverse communities of our borough on the major issues which affect all our lives.” I have now been your mayor for almost 2 years and there have been many tasks to complete and plans to make during that time.

I am often asked “what is your vision for Lewisham”. The Council’s mission is to work in make Lewisham the best place to live, work and learn and I endorse that but as the borough’s first directly elected mayor I need to articulate a vision in human terms that has the potential to mean something to every individual.

This paper tries to describe what sort of place Lewisham is today, what it might become in the future and what I as its mayor must do help the borough and its people maximize their potential.

Along the way I will endeavour to explain the beliefs that underpin the vision. One of the benefits of having lived for 50 years is the knowledge that while fashions come and go there really are some things the value of which is beyond question - respect for others, tolerance of difference, care for the community and the satisfaction of knowing at the end of the day that we have tried to carry out our allotted task to the best of our ability – these things matter to me and I know they matter to the vast majority of my fellow citizens.

This is not a plan or a blue print – there are enough of those already – it is a personal statement that I hope will encourage debate. I hope many of you will share my concerns and want to join me in exploring how the challenges I set out can be addressed.

This is my document and the thoughts and proposals are my responsibility. But there have been many influences and ideas have been taken from any source without compunction. If you come across something which you think sounds like one of your own ideas that’s probably because it is. I owe thanks to a number of people who have been kind enough to read some or all the drafts and also to others for turning my some of my more convoluted arguments into something more comprehensible.

Steve Bullock,
Mayor of Lewisham
1 February 2004

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INTRODUCTION

The place we call the London Borough of Lewisham has only existed since 1964. It is an artificial construct. Most of us when asked where we live are more likely to say London or our neighbourhood. Yet in those 40 years Lewisham has grown together as a community and apart from its neighbours. As a community it has less crime, experiences less tensions and is more integrated than those neighbours. The Council has played a dual role throughout those years – as a provider of services and a source of leadership to the community.

Today Lewisham is part of one of the great cities of the world – a city which is growing faster than it has for a 100 years – a city where a spectacular new business district has been built in the last 20 years on the old Isle of Dogs. In 1988 I became Leader of Lewisham Council and I pledged then that our borough would be part of that bright future, that the jobs which were being created would be jobs which Lewisham folk would fill. To achieve that we needed to do two things – help our citizens acquire the skills to match those jobs and make sure that they could get to them.

I delivered the Docklands Light rail extension which made the journey time from Lewisham Town Centre to Canary Wharf a mere 7 minutes while Charing Cross is just 15 minutes away. Today the area of opportunity extends far to the East of London beyond Docklands. Lewisham can be part of this great revival of London but it won't happen if we don't work at it, we must seize the opportunities provided by the DLR and the other changes that are coming not least the East London Line extension.

Head South out of Lewisham and you quickly enter that great suburban sprawl that surrounds the heart of London. Head North and you reach the edge of the London that millions of tourists recognise and hundreds of thousand of Londoners work in. Lewisham straddles those two, very different worlds; and each neighbourhood in Lewisham locality has its own character, history and culture. They can be places of warmth and compassion, urban villages where roots are put down but they can also be places of loneliness and fear where a friendly word from a neighbour can make a world of difference. The providers of public services must strive to deliver the basics without fuss and in ways that increase rather than undermine a sense of neighbourliness, in ways that help us to take pride in the places we call home. When we need more specialised services whether in the field of Education, Health or Social Care we want them to be available without our having to fight to get them and to be of the quality that residents of the 7th most successful economy in the world are entitled to expect.

But Lewisham is more, much more than a disparate collection of localities. Head for the river and you soon enter the Inner City. Inner City that much abused term – it has become synonymous with decay, desolation and deprivation – yet it can also be a watchword for excitement, creativity and talent. The Inner City bustles,

it challenges – its not an easy ride – space is in short supply – but it is where the drive that makes London great is most frequently found.

The task you have given me is to lead those two Lewishams – to find ways of reconciling different aspirations – to make sure that the public services are delivered – the streets swept, the parks made safe and attractive, the graffiti that some of our citizens feel compelled to create removed and a 101 other things. But you have also asked me to do something more – to articulate what Lewisham can be – to describe a future that locates us as a creative hub for the growing city and persuades others to join us in making the dream a reality.

We all crave simplicity and clarity – define the goal, identify the route and go for it! Sometimes we can actually work like that. You made it clear you wanted something done about the old cars that were being dumped on our streets daily – and I responded. I made the resources available and gave the staff concerned the go ahead to move those cars just as quickly as they could. But other challenges are more complex.

I have a dream of what our home can be – of what being the best place to live, work and learn might mean.

One way of describing that dream would be to think about a Lewisham where good neighbours are easy to find, where good parents help their children to grow into good citizens, a place where we understand that we are the trustees of this earth for generations still unborn, a place where talents are fulfilled and the wisdom of elders is valued.

But to make progress towards that Lewisham we have to begin with the world as we find it and act accordingly -

We need to make sure every resident of Lewisham has a decent home;
We need to make our homes and our streets safe;
We need to give every child the opportunity to fulfil its potential;
We need to give young people the chance to explore their talents and imagination;
We need to provide the training and support that enables every adult to make a contribution;
We need to give our elders the respect and care that their work and wisdom deserves; and
We need to treat each other with respect and compassion.

That is more than I alone can deliver.

It is more than 54 local councillors, 3 MPs and 1 GLA member can deliver.

It is more than thousands of public employees can deliver

But it might not be more than what 250,000 of us working together can deliver.

While I am mayor my aim, my mission, my ambition will be to try to make that dream live, to leave office knowing we are closer to that ideal than when I started. Few of us ever achieve our dreams in quite the way we hope but the pursuit of them is what makes us human and in that pursuit we can make Lewisham, our home, a better place to live, work and learn. We might even raise a generation who will laugh at our puny efforts as they make their own dream live in their chosen way. But if we don't try now we will never know how much we really can achieve.

THE CRITICAL CHALLENGES

When the Act of Parliament which introduced directly elected mayors was going through Parliament Katy Donnelly, now a member of my cabinet, wrote;

“The real impact of the reforms will depend on the ability of local government to deliver strong community leadership. This emphasis on community leadership is not an attempt to step back to a golden age of municipalism; instead it represents a step beyond the market-led, contract-based “reinvention” of government seen in the 1980’s and early 1990’s. It positions local government as a catalyst for effective local solutions, demanding a much more effective and genuine engagement with local communities; it is focused on advocacy, and the steering and influencing of local services and priorities, rather than on direct delivery.”

Local Councils – in touch with the people? Renewal, Spring 2000

The Borough of Lewisham is my home and has been for most of my adult life. It is where I choose to live and I am proud to be its mayor. Before becoming mayor I was chairman of Lewisham Hospital NHS Trust for 5 years. I learned many things during that time not the least of which was that the overwhelming majority of people who work in the public sector whether they are professionals, managers or support staff do so because they care about others.

We may live in a city where it is common not to know our neighbours but that doesn't mean we don't care. Sometimes we are frustrated and demoralised by the actions of a small minority who have no respect for their fellow citizens' needs. I want to play my part in changing that and helping to create a place where caring about how the things that you do effect others is regarded as commendable not a subject for derision. And we need to extend that care to the legacy we leave to future generations. We enjoy much of what we can today because of the wisdom and foresight of the generations that have gone before us. Our parks, museums and public buildings are there because of decisions taken by people like us 50, 100 or more years ago. Today however we know things they couldn't know – in particular that our planet is fragile and its resources are not infinite. What we do in this community and thousands of other local communities across the globe will determine whether our grandchildren and their grandchildren look back on us as the people who started to create ways of living in harmony with our planet or whether we were the ones who knew what was happening yet failed to act leaving future generations to try as best they can to heal a ruined world.

It is an extraordinary privilege to be the Mayor of Lewisham. I am very grateful to everyone who has welcomed me and supported me in carrying out this role. A

significant element of my work has been to attend local and civic functions. Some see this element of mayoral life as a purely ceremonial role – more ribbon-cutting than agenda-setting. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is an enormously valuable opportunity for me to get out and about in the borough and to see the energy, enthusiasm and commitment that local people – of all ages, backgrounds and races – are giving to building a better future for Lewisham. It is one of our greatest strengths that people of talent and vision in our communities give us the capacity to develop excellence at every level – from the most focused and localised projects through to large-scale developments of national importance such as the new Horniman Museum in Forest Hill or the award winning Laban Centre in Deptford.

Listening to local people is one of the most important responsibilities of any elected representative and as the directly elected Mayor of the borough I have a special duty to listen actively and to be responsive. One of the strongest arguments for the direct election of Mayors is that we become accountable in a highly visible way. Since every voter got the chance to choose, they also know who to blame if things go wrong – or even who to praise when things go right. I am the Mayor for the whole of Lewisham. Although I stood on a party ticket I was elected to serve the whole borough and to do that properly I must strive to represent everyone's interests.

As Mayor I have vested in me substantial powers to set the direction of services in the borough but I have always acknowledged that - whatever the formal, legal position - my powers have no meaning without the wholehearted consent of the communities I serve. I want to see lasting and sustainable change and I know that that will only be achieved on the basis of a vision that is broadly and enthusiastically shared by local people.

And we need to be clear about our aims and our purpose if we are serious about asking the community at large to play their part in achieving those aspirations. The council is committed itself to making Lewisham the best place in London to live, work and learn. But what are the challenges we have to meet as our journey to that destination takes shape?

There are three distinct areas that need to be addressed:-

- How can we make Lewisham Liveable?
- How best to tackle "Crime and Grime"?
- How can we make Lewisham Sustainable?
- How can we capitalise on Lewisham's Creativity and Diversity?

Making Lewisham Liveable

Lewisham has great qualities and strengths that we should celebrate. For over a century it has been a successful and growing urban community with attractive parks and open spaces, good provision of public services and retail facilities and a long tradition of social stability. This is an inheritance that, as Mayor, I want to build on to make sure that Lewisham becomes an even better and more attractive place to live.

There are four distinct dimensions to enhancing the quality of life in our borough. The physical environment needs to be made more attractive, we need our public spaces, shopping areas and residential streets to be greener and more welcoming. We also need to find effective ways to keep those areas clean and free of crime. The way we get around needs attention – whether it is within the borough or journeys across the city for work or pleasure – our geographical location means that we have the potential to build on existing transports links, increasing the capacity of the DLR, delivering the East London Line extension and creating a state of the art interchange in central Lewisham are our priorities today but we must start planning what comes next now. Finally we need to make sure that there are great things to do in Lewisham – we have some gems already – the Broadway Theatre, the Deptford Albany and the Horniman Museum spring to mind not forgetting the Borough’s own professional sports team, Millwall FC. But we do not have the depth of provision that has given some parts of the city a thriving evening economy and this must be addressed.

Lewisham is changing substantially. Our population has grown over the last decade – and it will continue to grow over the next ten years. This should be come as no surprise to us – it mirrors the changes that have seen London’s overall size grow. The popularity of the capital brings challenges and opportunities: an increasing demand for housing puts pressure both in terms of demands on existing stock and also in pressure for the development of new housing; yet a growing population is also a key factor in economic growth. So our physical infrastructure is groaning in many places, while many enjoy the benefits of a ten-year boom in prosperity.

Our borough has increasing attractions for anyone seeking quality, affordable housing. It offers more “affordable” opportunities for owner-occupiers than many other parts of London but we must not lose sight of just how expensive housing in London has become. This can generate difficulties for sons and daughters of existing Lewisham residents who may see the possibility of owning a home near their parents receding. It certainly imposes harsh choices on workers carrying out essential jobs but whose incomes cannot sustain huge mortgage repayments.

We need strategies for affordable housing – both for rent and in forms of shared equity schemes – but we must continue to welcome new residents. Once they have come here, they often stay and become valuable members of the community – sometimes becoming vocal and persuasive advocates of the liveability of Lewisham. We will see more and more households like this as

London continues to grow eastwards and we continue to benefit from improved transport links.

I spend a lot of time speaking to and, more importantly, listening to local citizens – new and old. And I get one message from them loud and clear – that if they are concerned with one thing above all else it is their quality of life. They talk about this in many different ways. Some are concerned with litter and graffiti; others with cars and traffic; and many – particularly younger people – about a ‘green agenda’ in its broadest sense, something I will return to when I look at the challenge of sustainability. These are all aspects of a cluster of issues and concerns that taken together create the sense of whether somewhere is a good place to live or not.

Action will have to be taken to tackle each of these areas individually, but they impact on each other as well – inaction in one area can spill over rapidly into another. The dumped car, which is quickly vandalised, creates a feeling that the street is less safe, less cared for and so the rots sets in. Anyone who has been out in the community in recent years will have heard complaints like this and we must act on them – because we know that a borough which is cleaner and greener will also be safer.

Tackling “Crime and Grime”

I recognise that many of the things that damage our local environment are caused by a small minority of the borough’s more irresponsible – and in some cases criminal – residents. So we face a double challenge. On the one hand we need to tackle the underlying culture of the throwaway society – one of the reasons that cars are dumped in the first place is that we live in a world that wastes resources without a second thought. On the other we have to pursue vigorously those who fly tip, vandalise buildings and dump rubbish. Success in this area depends critically on a genuine partnership between the council as service provider and local communities. The pride and self-respect of local areas combined with powerful expectations of appropriate behaviour make crucial contributions to the physical and social environment of neighbourhoods. These values, though, must be backed up by actions. Whatever defaces the environment – from graffiti to dumped refuse – must be tackled rapidly to break the possibility of any cycle of decline. Where this does not happen people feel worse about their locality and see physical decay as an outward and visible sign of social disintegration and thus their fear of crime increases. This is critical because fear of crime isolates people – particularly older people – making them less likely to leave the safety of their own homes with a cumulative impact on well-being.

It is important that we have a measured view of the challenges we face. I would do our borough a disservice if I either talked it down by putting too much emphasis on the negatives but neither should I view it through rose tinted

spectacles. I listed many positives earlier but I acknowledge that we must address serious issues not only in relation to environmental crimes but also in relation to drug abuse, domestic violence, hate crime and gang culture.

Crime has become the dominant issue of concern expressed to us in the residents' survey and it is a concern that has significantly increased in recent years. In 1997, just one-third of Lewisham citizens saw crime as an issue of personal concern for them – it is now one-half. Halting this rising concern, and indeed reversing it, must become one of our central ambitions. We need to work with the grain of what the community wants both through the direct actions of the council and through the influence we seek to exercise with others. When you say you want to see a more visible police presence on our streets I must listen and act on that.

But a clean, tidy safe environment is not enough. An holistic approach to improving quality of life requires a multi-track approach. We live at a time of enormous prosperity which has in its turn brought substantial liberation – many individuals and families now have the power to shape the life that they want by deploying their own material resources. And yet, the very conditions of prosperity seem to bring with them a style of living – faster, sharper and less aware of the needs of others – that at the very least tolerates, indeed at times seems to encourage, the minor incivilities that create a climate within which social bonds are eroded. It is not just with broken windows and abandoned cars that a cycle of decline starts. In truth, its roots stretch farther back – to the scum to board a bus which has replaced the queue; to the dirty shoes placed casually on seats in a train; to the way in which older people – the wise and experienced in our communities – are sidelined and ignored. If we are to have cleaner, greener, safer communities we also need communities that care for each other and share responsibility for the world that starts at their front door.

Making Lewisham Sustainable

If we really care about the place live in and the other people who share that space surely it is a small step to caring about what happens in the future. I am passionate about building a more sustainable Lewisham. We have to expand our horizons and set ourselves truly ambitious targets. Sustainability is about rethinking - from beginning to end – the ways in which we live with others in the world. Let's return again to the example of the abandoned car and apply the fundamental principles of sustainability – reduce, reuse, recycle. An extraordinary amount of energy and natural resources are expended in building a car – this process absorbs more than half the energy consumed by a car in its lifetime. It therefore makes sense to have roadworthy second-hand cars with clean emissions being used and re-used for as long as possible. When they reach the end of their lives they must be systematically recycled with the aim of achieving virtually 100% re-use of parts or recycling of constituent elements. This recycling

can itself be a profitable and growing industry providing jobs from low level breaking and salvage to the value added end of designing out any elements which prove resistant to recycling. But ultimately we need to reduce our dependence on car transport.

I know that some will see that as an anti-car statement but it is no such thing – it simply a recognition that we are nearing the point where our city will simply not be able to provide either the road space or parking space for all the vehicles we want to own. And one day, maybe sooner than we think there won't be enough fuel to run them either.

The challenge of 'greening' Lewisham is one that is widely supported in the borough. The desire that voters expressed for a sustainable approach to running the borough is one that I share and will seek to fulfil.

Creativity and Diversity

Lewisham is a diverse borough with a history of embracing new communities – in recent years the established Irish and Caribbean communities have been joined by Vietnamese and most recently African communities. We have a history of good relations between different communities within the borough though we must acknowledge that there have been harsh incidents in the past. When the National Front tried to sow hatred in Deptford in the 1970s they were seen off by local people working together. The horror of the New Cross Fire created other bonds of solidarity across races and generations in our borough. Just last year we saw again the spectre of race hate in the borough with the British National Party gaining 17% of the vote in one ward. This is a warning to us that the battle against extremism must continue. As Mayor I am committed to fighting racism – equally I am committed to tackling the conditions that allow it to flourish. Where communities feel detached from the mainstream and fear that they are unable to access the prosperity and opportunities others take for granted there are fertile grounds for those who wish to create division.

Diversity must be defended – it is important for Lewisham that our kids grow up in a world of "differences" rather than homogeneity. This is in many ways the heart of what make Lewisham work for us – in a place where we are all different it is impossible for anyone to be an outsider. And it is important for our future. Partly this is straightforward reality, the rising generation is truly multi-cultural – one half of the kids under 10 in the borough are from black and ethnic minority communities. As importantly, there is evidence worldwide that tolerance and diversity are the wellsprings of the creative industries. On the one hand, only an open, unprejudiced mind will allow you to see talent wherever it flourishes rather than merely in the stereotypical candidates you seek. On the other, talent is footloose and likes to locate itself in richly diverse neighbourhoods. The story of Goldsmith's is just one tiny part of how we can attract and retain the individuals who will help drive the creative economy in Lewisham. A world-class Fine Arts

course attracts students from across the UK and more broadly. Some of them have liked living in Lewisham and have found the right kind of studio spaces – and now they are creating a cluster of arts based enterprises, a critical mass which in turn attracts others to come here. Other creative industries are like this – we have a massively successful, but largely hidden, music industry. Pirate radio stations, clubs, DJs and record labels are flourishing in an almost underground economy. Yet it is a creative career that attracts and enfranchises some of the young people of the borough who are the most alienated by formal education. The figures show that the fastest growing sector of the London economy in the last decade has been the creative industries. Now we must build on the existing strengths of the borough to ensure that some of that jobs growth can come here. From the Laban to the Albany to Lewisham Theatre to the Horniman Museum we have most of the necessary physical infrastructure. Now we need to invest in attracting and retaining the people and skills that required to drive a creative economy.

There are, of course, some critical tasks for us if we are to release the potential of Lewisham – especially amongst younger people. Unequal attainment by children in our schools must be addressed without equivocation. And I am not prepared to compromise on this – if we are truly to celebrate diversity in Lewisham we must strive for equality too. Parents in Lewisham are restless to achieve for their children. Too often their commitment manifests itself negatively when parents take their children out of the borough for secondary schooling – or when whole families move out for the same reason. Their passion comes to the fore when a campaign is organised against the closure of a school – or in favour of the provision of a new one. But why is it that we are unable to tap into that energy in a positive way? Why can't we turn this situation on its head and enfranchise and empower all those parents to work with the council, with heads and with schools to transform education in the borough. Not only does creativity have to start early with proven initiatives like Sure Start we have to make sure that this principle leads to real action and we see more effective solutions and partnerships for solving deep-seated problems.

LOCALITY REALLY MATTERS

Governments both local and national only exist because you and I have agreed to let them make decisions on our behalf. Most Governments won't tell you that – and they certainly won't be very happy if you try to withdraw your consent. We have to give governments those powers because there are some things we just can't do individually – or even as a family - build roads, train doctors or dispose of our rubbish for example. And as a community we have to be able to stop individuals behaving in ways that limit the freedom of others.

But many things can be done locally – we know that because in Lewisham there are more than 900 local organisations all of which exist to allow groups of people to do things together. I believe that the notion of subsidiarity is pertinent in this context – it most often discussed in relation to the European Union and the relations between the EU and its members. There it relates to efforts to square the circle of national sovereignty and the coming together of smaller entities to do collectively some things they cannot do effectively alone. For some nations the answer is a Federal system of government and even in the UK there have been steps towards federal solutions with the establishment of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh assembly. But the debate about subsidiarity perversely starts in the middle in terms of power in the UK – there is a breathtaking arrogance attached to our Parliament with its overblown building and pompous procedures – the setting is for a body which rules us not an assembly of our representatives making decisions on our behalf.

The thinkers who developed the notion of subsidiarity were clear about its real meaning – they argued that just as it is wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish for themselves and give it to the community so it is also wrong to

“assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organisations can do.” *Pope Pius XI, encyclical "Quadragesimo Anno"*

I am convinced that it is the people who are closest to the ground who understand best what is needed in a given locality. I believe that the more room there is for localised decision making the more commitment and innovation is released.

This notion of empowerment needs to be extended to the government of localities but successive national governments in the UK have tended to do precisely the opposite. Let us consider education – Lewisham College is a fine example of the benefits of local empowerment – it has flourished since being given its independence. Yet Government continues to try and prescribe to the last penny what a community should spend on its schools.

But there are some signs that this may be changing. Ministers and their advisers are recognising that real change requires commitment and involvement bottom up. Ed Balls, adviser to the Chancellor has advocated

“Discretion for public service managers with the maximum devolution of power to encourage flexibility and creativity and meet consumer demands.”

This is encouraging and both the Treasury and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) have demonstrated their commitment to this approach. But a truly local approach has to go further and genuinely empower democratic local government to make choices and decisions at that level without constraints being imposed from the centre. This has far reaching implications and would relocate the key legitimacy of our system of government back to the local level. Parliament and parliamentarians may have some problems with this – it challenges their right to tell lower tiers of government what to do and that in turn challenges the way we view our national politics. I believe our best hope is a bottom up democracy and I aim to do what I can to make that principle real in Lewisham.

If the argument holds good for relations between central and local government it logically follows that local councils should also seek to hand back power to local people wherever possible. In a recent Fabian Pamphlet, Hazel Blears, the Home Office Minister wrote:

“We need to change the culture of democracy, with the democratisation of huge swathes of public life. This does not mean more elections for more public officials.....A culture of democracy is not determined by how many votes you have to cast for others, but by what stake and say you have over decisions which affect you.”

Communities in Control, pub. Fabian Society, 2003

One of my challenges is to bring that kind of change centre stage in Lewisham.

LEADERSHIP AND GLOBAL CHANGE

It is a little over a century since Marconi first demonstrated that radio transmissions were possible – today we can watch events take place live from anywhere on the globe. We chat on line with colleagues half a world away and email documents with a few keystrokes. During that same period of time social and economic changes have brought us to the point where we have the means to function as world citizens yet feel that our ability to influence what happens in our daily lives is constantly diminishing.

Globalisation disempowers us all leaving an ever shrinking circle of things we can really influence while the media now pound us relentlessly – there is no time to wait and see something grow – instant results are the order of the day. And if they are not the right results then blame must be apportioned and someone made to pay.

We look on in horror at the mob that gathers outside a courtroom demanding instant justice when the object of its hatred has not yet spoken a single word in his or her own defence. The same media that eggs on the mob also makes demands of politicians and the political process that simply cannot be met. It is little wonder that politicians are regularly ranked last in voters lists of who they trust. Nor is it a surprise that fewer voters than ever see any point in using their vote.

Anger and impatience seem to be a way of life for many people today whether in their dealings with corporate bodies – public and private – or with their fellow citizens. Some of the many emails I receive reflect this but when there is time to respond and establish an exchange of views something changes. I endeavour to be as honest as I can about particular issues and early in 2003 Lewisham experienced severe problems with its refuse collection service but when the background and what was being done to change things was shared with email correspondents in many cases subsequent responses were different in tone from the original – some were actually sympathetic, even supportive!

I believe that this is in part because the exchange created a genuine sense of involvement which helps takes away some of the feeling of exclusion that lies behind much of that anger and frustration. The challenge here is to find ways of making that kind of connection but with greater numbers than can be reached through email.

Those of us who are involved in leadership roles in relation to local government and public services need to recognise and understand the sense of insecurity that many citizens feel today. I fear that many will greet that vision of the future I set out earlier with derision.

They have a sense of the world being unfair to them. They believe others get easily things they themselves have worked hard for. This may be as much part

of the explanation for the hostility we see to Asylum seekers as overt racism itself.

The world we live in only gets more complex and the places where decisions are made ever more remote. It is only within that tight circle of family and friends that there is a sense of security. Outside whether in the workplace, public spaces or on the street there is a growing sense of being under threat. That threat may be in our imagination but it affects our behaviour just the same. For many insecurity is a way of life and if there is hope it is simply that some how we will survive despite what the world does to us.

Politicians in particular have fallen from grace. It seems we don't listen and we don't deliver. The contract between politicians and electors has been broken just as the contract between the individual and society has been broken. We politicians must try to address this sense of disempowerment and counter it by offering both a greater sense of security – physical and spiritual and providing the opportunities for individuals to make real differences to their lives.

Yet when we do so we must be realistic about the scale of challenge that faces us, honest about what is and is not possible and to use a language that is accessible – not politician speak. We should not underestimate the importance of the language we use – in a time when public debate is often reduced to little more than simplistic headlines and demands we need to find ways to explain that bring people in rather than exclude them.

This can only be achieved if the bonds of trust between those who have been elected and those who elect them can be re-established. This is a task that must begin at the local level and elected mayors must strive to offer leadership in achieving it. But they do not need to and must strive to avoid believing that they could or should do this alone.

We are fortunate in having a strong, vibrant community in Lewisham that is capable of organising and delivering a new way of working that can begin to address those twin concerns of providing security and creating opportunity.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

There are literally hundreds of community organisations in Lewisham – some are small and have a very focussed approach – others are large and employ their own staff. Some undertake campaigning and can be fiercely critical of the council and other public bodies. Their work sheds light on real issues of concern and helps better decisions to be made. Groups as disparate as the Sydenham Society, Forest Hill Traders, the Friends of Ladywell Park, Brockley Cross Action Group and Convoys Opportunity and many others have my support and admiration. I may not always like what they say but they are right to say it and we are able to discuss differences of opinion in a constructive way.

Other groups focus on directly helping fellow citizens by providing services and support sometimes because they can reach people in a way that public bodies struggle to or because there are gaps in public provision. Some raise their own funds and public bodies fund some. At their best they release energy and skills in communities and individuals that can transform lives. The Sure Start programmes, which were launched by central government, have worked so brilliantly because they have been able to connect with the communities they serve.

Whatever their role all those groups can play a part in reinvigorating local democracy – getting more people involved. I want to create openness and debate but for that to happen we all need to accept that there are some basic things we agree on like honesty, respect for other people's views and common courtesy.

Before I reach any decision I listen, talk, think – sometimes lose a night's sleep – and then make the best decision I can. I don't always get it right and I am very willing to revisit decisions in the light of experience. But I am also acutely aware that there is truth in the old saying "you can't please all the people all the time" and neither should you try. In the end, after the debating and campaigning has taken place decisions do need to be made and it is my responsibility to make them.

Political parties in office too often behave as though they have a monopoly on access to decision making. We must not let that happen. The election of a number of independent mayors was the clearest possible signal as to the electorate's view on this. This does not mean the end of party politics but the parties need to change both the way they are organised and the way they behave. They need to become much easier to reach, more willing to listen and bottom up organisations. They also need to conduct debate both within and between parties in ways that are much less shrill and which offer fewer simplistic solutions to complex problems.

I do not apologise for the attention I have given to the concerns of young people, Far too often our young people are seen as a problem, not as fellow citizens whose participation and involvement we will need if we are to make our borough a better place. I believe we have failed too often to provide the facilities that our young people need – we have failed to give them a good reason to become involved in the life of their communities. Yet I constantly meet young people with things to say who want to make a difference. I have given the young people of Lewisham the chance to elect their own "Young" mayor to work alongside me.

Power must not be something that governments dispense when the mood takes them. Power starts with individuals and we make a series of decisions both

individually and collectively to ask others to exercise it on our behalf. And we should be entitled to take it back if it is abused or used unwisely.

Yet those who have power whether locally or elsewhere need to do more than just exercise it wisely. They need to use it to create the conditions that allow others to exercise power too. They should strive to both release the untapped potential that exists in every community and identify and remove those obstacles that stand in the way of groups and individuals finding their voices and taking responsibility.

Neither must the powerful delude themselves that they are doing this because they are kind and fair minded people. The reason we must do this is because the scale and nature of the challenges we face can only be addressed if we are all involved – we all need to sign on as crew not passengers if we are to mobilise the energy and talents of a whole community.

Local Government has received some encouragement and representatives of local communities have been told that they should have more involvement – even control. There has been a growth of fairer electoral systems though not yet for Parliament itself or even local councils.

We need to take a stand on the fairness of elections. At the 2002 local elections in Lewisham the Labour Party won 83% of the seats despite only getting 41% of the votes. This is just plain wrong and has to change if we are to give people a reason to start voting again. But empowering communities is about much more than fair elections.

Jess Steele, an effective and persuasive community advocate in Deptford wrote in the Spring of 2002 that:

“Nothing, but nothing will work to regenerate neighbourhoods if the community is not involved“Community leadership is either not possible or not good enough without community development – the process which brings out the skills in residents and creates the structures for citizenship (networks, grants, advice, places to meet, ways of reaching agreement).

Redesigning Local Democracy, Discovering new tools for civic empowerment – a discussion paper published by the New Politics Network

Providing space and support for community development is a necessary prerequisite for empowering communities but it is not a sufficient one. Governmental organisations are characterised by the need to work in structured ways, often subject to statutory requirements – the room for individual initiative, for making unconventional leaps in thinking is inevitably constrained. The best

governmental organisations strive to overcome this but also recognise that community groups are likely to have a vitality and energy that derives from their closeness to where activity takes place. But when governments and their agents seek to achieve public policy objectives by working with such groups something rather sad occurs. The community organisations themselves take on many of the characteristics of the very bodies that are seeking to give them power and control.

The reason is clear – in order to access the resources, to take up the seats on boards which are offered, to gain employment in community based posts the community groups will have to demonstrate they can provide the mission statements, constitutions, minutes, accounts and so on that are the common place of government organisations. (To see a fully worked up explanation of this phenomena read “The parable of the Blobs and Squares” at http://www.timedollar.org/nmtap/Chapter10_Squares_blobs.htm)

We need to find a better way of working together – one that builds on the strengths on different types of organisation rather than trying to change effective community groups to meet a governmental template. All levels of government need to stop congratulating themselves for their unilateral acts of charity, of service, of largesse to “the community”. Instead we need to take the next step and recognize that every thing we do, every interaction has to become a way of saying and meaning "We need each other."

Creating social capital must be more than a buzzword, more than something we pay lip service to. As the African proverb often quoted by Hillary Clinton says “it takes a village to raise a child”. It also means being willing to ask: what does it take to build, to restore, and to sustain that village. It means building an infrastructure of trust and reciprocity and engagement, often in situations where distrust and alienation hold sway.

One very specific way of doing this is to apply the principles that underlie Time Banks (also known as Time Dollars). It is an approach which is so simple yet so radical that it has the power to transform lives – and the most extraordinary thing of all is that there already people here in Lewisham who are making it work!

I want us to build on those foundations and take an approach to community development which both supports individual and organisations in the way Jess prescribes but also makes greater use of citizen juries, referenda, on line consultation and the like. Time Banks and related schemes not only will this contribute to community development but can in the words of Dr Robin Stott;

“..revolutionise local work patterns, with substantial public health gain.”

The Ecology of Health, Robin Stott, published by the Schumacher Society, 2000

I am delighted to say that Robin has since agreed to serve as my adviser on sustainability.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICES

I have direct responsibility for the services provided by the Council and in all that I do I will seek to ensure that the Council as a whole works in an open, consultative way. I want the Council to be:

- focused on serving its citizens
- passionate about the services it offers
- working as one team
- honest and confident
- listening and learning all the time

The commitment to working with the community must be reflected in the way those services are delivered. As individuals in our communities we are stronger when we act together, weaker when we act alone. The same is true of delivering the complex services for which the Council, and other public authorities, are responsible. While I was at Lewisham Hospital we were awarded 3 star status but I knew that it could not have happened without both the support of the Council and other bodies and the commitment of staff.

Improvements in front line services to the people of Lewisham will come through the very successful and strong partnerships that have been established with key statutory agencies – like health, police, education, training, probation and many others as well as with voluntary sector organisations. Those partnerships need to be built upon to improve measurably outcomes for local people. Most people are understandably not very interested in the precise detail of who delivers services but they are concerned about access to, and the quality of, those services. Through joint commissioning of services the aim must be to ensure that service delivery becomes as seamless as possible.

Underpinning all that partnership work must be a commitment to involving the public, and specifically users, in the development, improvement and delivery of services. To be effective this approach needs to be shared by all the agencies working in Lewisham. The challenge for the future is to build on the most successful initiatives and to extend the principles of public and user involvement more widely.

RADICAL REFORM OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Local Government is often defined in terms of the services it delivers but what sets local government apart is that it is led by elected politicians and our first thoughts should be about how we act as advocates for and representatives of

our electorates. We will fail to rebuild trust between us if we simply act as managers rather than strategists.

We do need to ensure that services are delivered in the way and of the quality that our communities want. There is of course, a sub plot in that we have to have a simultaneous dialogue with citizens about what they consider to be an acceptable price. These are not easy or straightforward discussions to formulate. Local authorities have responsibilities in law that they must fulfil as well as a need to get closer to the hopes and fears of citizens. Recent experience with Social Services illustrates this – year after year the service has overspent and services like highway maintenance have been cut back to pay for this – yet there has been no public demand to increase spending on Social Services while the state of the roads was a key election issue. Nevertheless in order to be able to meet our legal and moral duty to protect the most vulnerable members of our community we must continue to resource Social Services adequately.

Just as at the national level the government must both challenge and support service providers so must we locally. But people like me must not fall into the trap of substituting ourselves for the managers of those services – and if our system makes us do that then we need to change the system.

Crucially adopting a radical approach to reforming services can provide opportunities to involve individuals and communities in decision making and the management of local services which in turn provides opportunities to rebuild the links between individuals and communities

There is some troublesome debris that we need to clear away before we can make progress however. We need to distinguish between public ownership and public services. There is no evidence that I am aware of that indicates that there is a direct link between ownership and quality.

Taking reform forward also requires a thoughtful dialogue with public sector workers. In many of our services there are recruitment and retention difficulties and pay alone will not provide a solution. Decent working conditions, control of work circumstances, status and esteem together with pay determine the attractiveness of a given job. At the same time we must recognise the particular circumstances of Lewisham. Earlier I said that it in housing terms it was more affordable than many parts of London but this must not be allowed to obscure the very high cost of housing here in relation to the rest of the country.

Anthony Giddens of the LSE has argued

“Work conditions and personal autonomy are what count for most. This is one reason why it is so vital to connect reform of public services to decentralization. Labour seems to lack a consistent philosophy of management within public institutions. The most effective forms of

management in the business sector are those that have introduced flattened hierarchies, allow for bottom-up decision-making, and cultivate autonomy. These traits could be much further developed in public institutions than has happened so far. They are not compatible with the centralized “command and control” that remains a persistent feature of some areas of the public services, and aspects of government policy towards them.”

It appears that our colleagues in government have taken this to heart and are embarking on a process of seeking ways to devolve and decentralize the management of public services. We in Lewisham should be well placed to take the lead in this.

Both services supplied by the Council and those supplied by partner organisations have demonstrated that they are achieving quality standards – they also have good managers and are used to working together. Giddens sets out an approach, which I propose to follow in a local context;

“First, no return to any flirtation with statism – press on with reform of the state and the diversifying of public service provision. Second, the encouragement of partnerships, but with systematic monitoring of performance and outcomes. Third, a continued commitment to improvement in the status and conditions of work of state sector employees based upon providing good incentives, increased autonomy and continuing managerial reform. Fourth the forging of a more effective ideological position which integrates the renewal of public services with a wider commitment to public institutions and the public sphere.”

In taking this project forward we should look at a variety of forms of provision, management and ownership.

The options are not just public (in the sense of the state or the local government) and private – there are mutuals, social enterprises, not for profit trusts and public benefit corporations that could be explored. Ownership should be one of our themes in the future in both senses – widening ownership of services as described but also politically striving to achieve a wider ownership of the challenges we face by both our communities and public service workers.

Our role as the local government should be to set standards, allocate resources, deliver directly where this is necessary and appropriate, facilitate ownership and act as advocates for our locality and its inhabitants. Our role is definitely not to present ourselves as a monolithic, bureaucratic service organisation!

CONCLUSION

The people of this borough elected me and I must be directly accountable to them. Charles Handy gave the best description of the sort of leadership to which I aspire. He describes how leaders may be located at the centre of organisations but must not be of the centre. This describes how I must lead - my task is to govern on behalf of all the people of Lewisham, and at times that will mean that I should be critical of the services the council provides. More importantly, I will need to ensure that I am open to all the voices of the borough.

Providing community leadership has always been a task of locally elected leaders but for directly elected mayors it moves centre stage and how well we do it will be one of the criteria by which not only us as individuals are judged but how the whole experiment is evaluated. There are basic services which must be the responsibility of the mayor in any logical system of government – sweeping the streets, clearing the refuse and fixing the roads and so on.

The staff who work for the Council matter to me whether in the basic, universal services or more specialised areas. I try to meet with them and see at first hand what they do and the challenges they face. Sometimes problems arise requiring my attention and involvement but most of the time they simply get on with delivering services led by capable and experienced managers. The day-to-day oversight as well as much of the longer term planning is in the hands of the senior managers working alongside the members of my cabinet.

To be the Mayor of Lewisham at this moment of exceptional opportunity for the borough is a great privilege. London, already one of the world's great cities, is undergoing a phenomenal renaissance. It currently has vitality unmatched anywhere in the world. The eastward development of the city will bring massive benefits to the borough. Already the growth of Canary Wharf, combined with the extension of the Docklands Light Railway, has transformed the opportunities of many in Lewisham. Having removed the physical barriers preventing our people from crossing the river there remains a real job to do in dissolving the internalised, psychological barriers that still hold some of them back.

Raising aspirations and broadening horizons for all is one of the great challenges for me as a leader. The opportunities within easy reach of the borough are multiplying. A successful bid for the Olympics to be held in London in 2012 will not just provide work on construction contracts, or new transport infrastructure – welcome though those will both be. It will be a living example of excellence – an inspiration to compete, and to excel, that we should harness to inspire all our communities. It will also make real the internationalism that we often talk about but all too rarely practice. Many in our borough come from countries and communities across the world – and their presence enriches our borough. Equally, Lewisham people should go out into the broader world - exploring possibilities, expanding potential, and contributing to other communities in

Europe and further a field. We have nothing to fear from such a movement of our people. For Lewisham to succeed it must not only be a great place to be from, it must also be a fantastic place to which to return.

My job is to see the big picture and offer guidance, leadership and decisiveness. I am not seeking anyone's agreement to what is in this pamphlet – although I would be delighted to hear what you think. If you have ideas about how we can achieve some of the ambitions I have set out, how we can turn vision into reality please let me know. I can't do this alone – I need your help.

APPENDIX – STATEMENT OF PRIORITIES (ADD LATEST VERSION)

The foregoing will mean little if it is not linked to the practicalities of day to day work. Set out below is a list of the 10 priorities that I am proposing be used to guide our work.

- ?? **Community leadership and empowerment** – develop opportunities for the active participation and engagement of people in the life of the community.
- ?? **Young people’s involvement and achievement** – raising educational attainment and improving facilities for young people through partnership working.
- ?? **Clean, green and liveable** - environmental management, cleanliness and care for roads, pavements and a sustainable environment.
- ?? **Safety, security and a visible presence** - partnership working with the police to further reduce crime levels and anti-social behaviour.
- ?? **Strengthening the local economy** – committing resources to regenerate key localities and to improve public transport.
- ?? **Decent homes for all** - investment in social and affordable housing to achieve the decent homes standard and to tackle homelessness.
- ?? **Protection of children** – better joined up services for children at risk.
- ?? **Caring for adults and the elderly** - working with health services to care for elderly people and adults in need of care
- ?? **Active, healthy citizens** – leisure, sporting and creative activities for everyone.
- ?? **Inspiring efficiency** – ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and excellent service delivery to meet the need of the community.