

CANNES

I'm not on a jolly says leader on Cannes trip

Top council bosses at developers' conference

By Oliver Pugh

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SOUTHWARK'S COUNCIL leader has defended his trip to the south coast of France to promote the regeneration of Elephant and Castle, after he was accused of 'going on a jolly'.

Cllr Peter John and the council's chief executive Eleanor Kelly made the trip out to Cannes on Tuesday for the start of an international conference for developers.

Lend Lease, the council's regeneration partners, paid for their travel and accommodation there and have a stand exhibiting their plans for the Elephant and Castle. This is in stark contrast to previous administrations, which spent upwards of £100,000 on PR for the event, including taking Borough Market traders to make sausage rolls and distributing Southwark's own bottled water, branded as: 'Canada Water'.

Council sources said the refreshments had been "very popular".

The £1,600-a-ticket shindig, "MIPIM – the international real estate show", attracts some of the biggest spenders from around the world and is seen as a "must attend" event for many councils.

Cllr John, said: "While we're very fond of our neighbouring boroughs, we can't afford to watch them steal investment from under our noses, and that's why we need to be at events like MIPIM, telling people why they should choose Southwark over anywhere else."

Cllr John added: "I'm well aware that I could be criticised for spending two days in Cannes, but I can assure residents that I would be as keen to attend MIPIM if it was in Cardiff or Crewe because of the benefits



Leader Peter John and Cannes

it can bring the borough.

"Spending nothing to potentially bring millions of pounds of investment to the borough seems like a very good use of our time to me."

Cllr Anood Al-Samerai, the leader of the Lib Dem opposition, claimed the free trip to France raised more questions about the "cosy" relationship between developers and the council.

She said: "The leader of the council should be sorting out problems in the borough rather than clinking glasses in the south of France. When Labour can't even get the basics right on things like housing and street cleaning, he should be spending more time running the council and less time on jollies."

She added: "For starters, exactly what are Lend Lease paying for, and when was this trip arranged? Couldn't they have just given us an extra council home instead?"

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Councillor goes for Deptford MP job

BERMONDSEY: A Labour councillor has thrown her hat in the ring for the contest to take over from Joan Ruddock as the candidate for the Lewisham and Deptford seat at the next election.

Catherine McDonald, Livesey councillor and Cabinet member for Adult Social Care, made the announcement on her website at the weekend.

She said: "I'm gutsy, energetic, I'm solid Labour. I tackle unfairness wherever I see it. I listen to residents. I get things done to improve the lives of the people I represent."

Cllr McDonald is now asking for local members to back her at branch



Cllr Catherine McDonald

meetings. Ms Ruddock is set to step down at the next election, to allow someone with 'fresh ideas, commitment and energy' to take over.



Divine tapas in SE5

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