

## **Council**

Meeting held on Wednesday, 13 December 2023 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,  
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

### **MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Tony Pearson (Chair);

Councillors Appu Srinivasan, Kola Agboola, Jade Appleton, Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel, Sue Bennett, Adele Benson, Margaret Bird, Claire Bonham, Mike Bonello, Simon Brew, Janet Campbell, Louis Carserides, Richard Chatterjee, Chris Clark, Sherwan Chowdhury, Stuart Collins, Mario Creatura, Jason Cummings, Patsy Cummings, Nina Degrad, Rowenna Davis, Danielle Denton, Samir Dwesar, Lara Fish, Sean Fitzsimons, Clive Fraser, Amy Foster, Simon Fox, Gayle Gander, Maria Gatland, Brigitte Graham, Matt Griffiths, Lynne Hale, Patricia Hay-Justice, Maddie Henson, Christopher Herman, Yvette Hopley, Mohammed Islam, Karen Jewitt, Mark Johnson, Humayun Kabir, Stuart King, Ola Kolade, Joseph Lee, Endri Llabuti, Michael Neal, Tamar Barrett, Eunice O'Dame, Ian Parker, Ria Patel, Jason Perry, Ellily Ponnuthurai, Holly Ramsey, Helen Redfern, Chrishni Reshekaron, Scott Roche, Manju Shahul-Hameed, Nikhil Sherine Thampi, Luke Shortland, Andy Stranack, Aladair Stewart, Esther Sutton, Catherine Wilson, Robert Ward, Callton Young and Fatima Zaman

**Apologies:** Councillors Alisa Flemming, Enid Mollyneaux and Stella Nabukeera  
Katherine Kerswell, Chief Executive and Elaine Jackson, Deputy Chief Executive.

### **PART A**

84/21 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED:** To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2023 as an accurate record.

85/21 **Disclosure of Interests**

Mayor Jason Perry and Councillor Alasdair Stewart declared disclosable non-pecuniary interests in Item 10 - Question to the Mayor and Executive - in relation to a question about electric cars as both currently own electric vehicles.

86/21 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

## 87/21 **Announcements**

1. The Chair informed Council of the following additional papers had been published and circulated to Members:
  - Item 6 (Public Questions) and Item 8C (Updated version Appendix 1.A – Housing Strategy and Labour Group Proposed Amendments to the Housing Strategy).
2. The Chair moved to suspend Council Procedure Rules to allow for effective conduct of Council business. This was seconded by Councillor Luke Shortland, put to the vote and;

### **RESOLVED:**

- To suspend Council Procedure Rules (paragraph 3.82 to 3.90) - Council reforms and members or notice or referring back recommendations in relation to Item 8C - Housing Strategy - to allow Council, consider the Labour Group amendment and the updated version of the Housing Strategy and use agreed debate speaking rules during the consideration of the item.
  - To suspend Council Procedure Rules (paragraph 3.7) - Item 9 - Maiden Speeches to limit the time allocated to each speech to two minutes instead of three minutes to ensure parity with previously delivered speeches by new Members to full Council.
3. The Chair announced the success of charity events; the Christmas Card Winners and the Civic Mail Christmas Card and highlighted the following forthcoming events in the New Year:
    - Chinese New Year event - 29 January 2024.
    - Hollywood Charity event - 22 February 2024
    - Young Stars of Croydon - 2/3 March 2024

The Chair thanked Members for their support and advised that details of the forthcoming charity events would be circulated once confirmed.

4. The Chair expressed his gratitude and thanks to Senior Democratic Services and Governance officer, Marianna Ritchie, who recently left Croydon Council, for her contribution and service in the past four years.
5. Mayor Jason Perry announced the receipt of the £18 .5m levelling up funding. He said that it was fantastic news and represented great investment in Croydon.

## **Croydon Question Time**

1. The answer was given and printed in the agenda. The questioner had no supplementary question.
2. The answer was given and printed in the agenda. In response to a supplementary question regarding the recognition of the work of her organisation Soul Purpose 360, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Councillor Ola Kolade advised that the Council was always seeking to improve pathways to community engagement and would be willing to meet and discuss or attend a meeting at the organisation if invited.
3. The answer was given and printed in the agenda. In response to the supplementary question, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings, advised that he could not say much due to confidentiality but assured the questioner that due diligence was being undertaken on the project and stated that he would be willing to discuss further once the deal was concluded, negating the need for confidentiality as the information would be in the public domain.
4. The answer was given and printed in the agenda. In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment, Councillor Scott Roche advised that additional data was needed additional testing was being carried out in other district centres across Britain to understand what this does in other areas. The Council was going through consultation to decide what was the appropriate department parking policy to adopt.
5. The answer was given and printed in the agenda. In response to the supplementary question, Mayor Jason Perry said he appreciated the frustration of residents, but the Council was trying to deal with a variety of issues across the borough regarding homelessness first making use of resources and partners to offering support and then enforcement. He advised that improvements were expected soon.
6. The answer was given and printed in the agenda and in response to a supplementary question, Mayor Jason Perry, explained that the Council was raising the profile as the London borough of Culture.
7. The answer was given and printed in the agenda. The questioner had no supplementary question.
8. The answer was given and printed in the agenda. The questioner had no supplementary question.

**The Croydon Debate**

Council received one Public Petition on the use and keeping of Metropolitan Open Land free from development.

In response to Mr James Foster, the Lead Petitioner, Mayor Jason Perry, explained that land of Lovely Green was owned by a private individual. The landowner had agreed a license to occupy with the Council, which allowed local residents to set up the community garden on the site whilst it was vacant.

Sadly, the landowner issued legal notice to terminate the license to occupy in May 2023, giving the Council, and Friends of Lovely Lane Green, one month to vacate the land. The Landowner suspended the process in order to investigate any possible way forward to maintain community access and space on the site. But disappointingly, in September 2023, the landowner terminated the license to occupy. Mayor Perry advised he had written to the landowner and urged him to allow that access for the community and was disappointed that he was unwilling to do so. He had met the Friends of Love Lane Green, and assured them that whilst the Council had to respect the legal ownership of the site, he would continue to support the Friends and Wider Communities Campaign to be able to access Love Lane Green. In the meantime, the Council intended to continue to protect Metropolitan Open Land status from future development and within the Local Plan review coming in the new year, the Council intended to uphold the Metropolitan Open Land status of this land.

Councillor Chris Clark, the Shadow Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration advised that he had visited Love Lane Green in September and the social, health and environmental benefits had shone through he was also disappointed that the petition had become necessary. He argued that the story of Love Lane Green showed what could be achieved by working together in partnership across the borough and hoped that a sensible and enduring resolution could be reached as soon as possible.

Councillor Andrew Stranack, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture advised that Croydon had one of the highest number of parks and green spaces of any borough in London that currently worked with nearly 50 friends of group to look after Croydon's local parks and spaces. The site of Love Lane was currently designated as Metropolitan Open Land. He stated that the Council was committed to protecting multiple and open land and working with partners and residents and national sporting bodies to invest in our parks and green spaces. The Crime Suburban Design Guide had been withdrawn and the Council was in the process of reviewing and changing the Croydon Local Plan.

Councillor Mike Bonello in speaking to the debate, said that Love Lane Green was an open space that had been enjoyed by the people of Woodside for a period of time. The land that had been protected for the use of the residents of

Woodside for centuries was now under threat from development. He asked Mayor Jason Perry to give the campaign his full support.

In closing the debate, Mayor Jason Perry expressed his thanks to residents for looking after the borough's green and open spaces and promised the Council would continue to try and restore public access to the site.

### Member Petition

#### Residents of Ramsey Road

Councillor Stuart King, Leader of the Labour Group, introduced the petition stating that the petitioners did not believe that the current hours and days of operation of the control parking in their road met their needs. He asked if the Cabinet Member could provide an assurance that he would initiate a consultation in line with the request and an undertaking that such a consultation will take place and conclude within twelve months of the date of the petition being received.

The Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment, Councillor Scott Roche, in response stated that as part of the new parking and policy consultation, there would be a review of the operational hours beyond street parking control, which would include the shared use permit payment base and all control parking zones in the borough.

Ramsey Road was within end to permit zone, which currently had an 08:00 a.m. to 08:00 a.m. controlled parking zone. Before the end to permit zone was introduced, residents were given the options and majority of those who responded indicated a preference for the 08:00 a.m. to 08:00 a.m. controls, which were subsequently introduced. Unfortunately, it would be now impractical to change the control of one road, as this was likely to cause confusion and maybe detrimental to residents of Ramsey Road as the road may become congested as visitors and other road users choose to park there to avoid charges. He said that changing the controls of the whole zone was more logical. He would raise the petition with officers and respond accordingly.

### Member Petition 2

Councillor Jade Appleton introduced the petition and addressed Council. She explained that Park Hill Road ran directly through her ward, and was a busy road used by many buses, and the incline on the road itself meant that cars often travelled beyond the speed limit.

She advised that she had contacted various council offices on many occasions to request review of the crossings along this road, in particular for the remarking of the crossing in the midpoint of the road, where there had been several collisions over the years. She advised that more needed to be done as there was a large secondary school, Archbishop Tennyson, on one

side of the road and Park Hill Infants and Park Hill Juniors on the other side.

She informed Council that there had been several incidents on the existing crossings, which had affected people from both schools, and it was essential the Council urgently addressed the crossing designs to ensure everyone was safe to travel to school daily. James Cork a resident also addressed Council and called for additional crossing on the road, well as improvement assessment, travel modelling and remarking of the crossings.

In response, the Cabinet Member Councillor for Streets and Environment Councillor Scott Roche, advised that the Council receives several pedestrian crossing requests every year and once received, requests were assessed on individual basis according to the following factors, traffic volume and pedestrian crossing surveys difficulties that pedestrians face crossing a road due to vehicle speeds or traffic volumes and the time they wait before they can cross the road. The personal injury accident records indicated how many accidents occurred that involved pedestrians.

He stated that as this route was used by school children attending Park Hill Infants and Junior School, which implemented a healthy school street in January 2023, the options would be investigated to ensure a safe crossing point at this junction.

## 90/21 **Reports to Council**

The Chair moved the recommendations on the following items due to the limited time available to conduct the business of the meeting, it was seconded by Councillor Luke Shortland, put to the vote and;

**RESOLVED** to agree the recommendations as stated in the reports on the following items:

- Item 8b - Independent Member Appointment to Audit and Governance.
- Item 8e - Quarterly Report on the Use of Special Urgency and General Exception Procedures
- Item 8g - Independent Person Appointment – Ethics Committee
- Item 8h - Draft Council Calendar 2024-25

(please see the minutes on each item for details of the decision).

### **Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report**

Council received a presentation on the annual report from the Independent Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, Dr Olu Olasode. The report highlighted the following:

- the work of the Committee over the last year as provided within the Committee's 'Terms of Reference and Scope of Work'.
- a brief forward look into the year ahead on the Committee's work and developments and specific comments in relation to the Council's exit strategy and expected outcomes in governance and financial control in the next few years to satisfy the requirements of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities.
- The Audit and Governance Committee continued to provide a robust and independent challenge to the processes, structures and arrangements surrounding the Council's audit, assurance, risk management, financial control, and governance framework. Significant focus has been given to the latter two in recent times, particularly as it concerned the risks to the Council's underlying financial sustainability, the effectiveness of its governance and assurance arrangements, and the Council's ability to deliver services to residents.
- The year had been eventful, as the Council issued its third S114 in January 2023, while continuing to work to implement actions arising from the Reports in the Public Interest in January 2022 and October 2020.

In closing, Dr Olasode, thanked officers, external auditors, cabinet members, professional advisers, and members of the Audit and Governance Committee for their input and support of the work of the Committee.

In response to a question from Councillor Danielle Denton if good progress had been made on returning the Council to good governance systems and controls, Dr Olasode advised that the different governance activities showed progress and this had been stated in the recent annual governance statement.

In response to a question from Councillor Bridgette Graham, Dr Olasode advised that there had been a challenge with legacy reports, but the committee was working with officers to ensure pace as there were three years accounts yet to be signed off.

In response to a question from Councillor Mario Creatura, if the report showed significant improvement in terms of assurance from internal audits reports and if this was expected to improve in the coming years. Dr Olasode advised That there had been a challenge with long standing actions but the committee had supported the Head of Audit to put together a framework to escalate actions, track progress and ensure delivery.

In response to a question to Councillor Rowenna Davis, on the committee would work with the Improvement and Assurance Panel to make sure that transformation was happening as fast as possible. Dr Olasode advised that he had regular meetings and discussions with the Panel but the transformation journey was still two or three years away.

In response to Councillor Michael Neal's question on joint scrutiny and assurance with Lambert Council. Dr Olasode said there was joint working at officer level to share information and aids benchmarking but not a joint committee.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Luke Shortland and put to the vote and RESOLVED to unanimously to note the report.

### **Independent Member Appointment - Audit and Governance Committee**

It was MOVED by the Chair, SECONDED by Councillor Luke Shortland, and RESOLVED, unanimously to:

- Support the recommendation of the Audit and Governance Committee for the preferred candidate David Clarke to be appointed as an independent co-opted non-voting member of the Committee; and,
- Agree that David Clarke be appointed for an initial period of 1 year, to be extended thereafter for another 3 years, and that said appointment be subject to standards of conduct which encompass the Nolan Principles.

### **The Housing Strategy 2024-2028**

In moving the amended recommendation, Mayor Jason Perry, stated that the updated version of the strategy tabled for consideration by Council, reflected the changes following discussions with opposition colleagues. The strategy was based on recent changes and the Housing Transformation Plan agreed last year and it also solidified long, term housing improvement objectives, focused on key priorities, such as keeping neighbourhoods clean, improving the repair service, stamping out anti-social behaviour, enhancing neighbourhood safety and ensured the Council's compliance with the regulator of social housing consumer standards.

Councillor Stuart King, speaking in support of the recommendation, stated that the Labour Group amendment, had sought successfully to strengthen the strategy by setting out explicit and clear commitment to consult on options for the introduction of a landlord license and scheme on either a borough, wide or a selective, targeted area basis. He expressed gratitude to the Liberal Democrat and Green Councillors for their support.

Councillor Chrishni Reshekaron welcomed the strategy and advised the Council could review how homelessness and housing applications from survivors of domestic violence could be supported and the quality of services offered improved. She expressed concerns at the lack of engagement from private tenants during the consultation.

Councillor Ria Patel stated that although houses in the borough were unaffordable, and efficiency could be improved, that the strategy would help drive forward the transformation that the housing service desperately needed.

She argued that the strategy did not deliver a meaningful plan with clear, measurable and scrutinised progress and did not mention how the strategy would be reviewed,

She welcomed the inclusion of the climate emergency in the amendment but felt it did not go far enough. She stated that the Greens would have wanted to see the housing strategy layout, the standards for new bills being passive house standard, considering operation energy costs and embodied carbon or new building. And buildings should not be demolished. Refurbishment must be prioritised, and buildings must be brought up to modern standards, reflecting the need for adequate modern fire and safety measures.

Demolition should be a truly last resort. The Council should work with housing associations and private landlords to ensure that they are also delivering the housing standards required.

Councillor Lynne Hale, statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes speaking in support of the recommendations stated that the strategy set out how the Council intended to respond to the challenges of ensuring that existing housing stock in both the private and social housing sector were well managed and safe, and that residents with genuine housing needs were adequately supported. She said that significant progress such as the adoption of a residence Charter, progress with the Regina Road regeneration plans and the launch of a new repair service had been made in closing, she said the process had involved considerable consultation and thanked officers and Members for their hard work and contributions.

Mayor Jason Perry, exercising his right of reply stated that the strategy which was a key part of the exit strategy for the Improvement and Assurance Panel, had always focused on the private rented sector and the Council's statutory duties as a local authority and it was important that residents form a key part of Croydon's improvement journey. He asked cross party support for the strategy to ensure the lives of residents across the borough were improved in the years to come.

The recommendations as set out in the updated version of the Housing Strategy was put to the vote and it was **RESOLVED**: to agree the updated Housing Strategy 2023- 2028.

## **Youth Justice Plan**

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Maria Gatland, in moving the recommendations in the report informed Council that the Youth Justice Plan was a national plan which had been approved by the National Crime Board and the process had involved negotiations with the shadow Cabinet Member for Children, Councillor Amy Foster and approval by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committees.

It was **MOVED** by the Chair, **SECONDED** by Councillor Luke Shortland, and **RESOLVED**, to endorse the Youth Justice Plan in line with statutory obligations detailed in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

### **Report on the Use of Special Urgency for Key Decision and Exemption from Call-in April to November**

It was **MOVED** by the Chair, **SECONDED** by Councillor Luke Shortland, and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the use of Special Urgency for the key decisions listed at section 4.4 of the report during the period April to November 2023.
2. Note the use of Exemption from Call-in for the key decisions listed at section 5.3 of this report during the period April to November 2023.

### **Proposed Changes to the Constitution**

It was **MOVED** by the Chair, **SECONDED** by Councillor Luke Shortland, and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Approve the proposed changes to the Constitution as set out in the report and appendices.

### **Independent Person Appointment - Ethics Committee**

It was **MOVED** by the Chair, **SECONDED** by Councillor Luke Shortland, and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Agree to appoint Luisa Zingone Independent Person as recommended by the Ethics Committee for the duration of 2 years, with a possible extension of 2 years;
2. Note that another appointment is due to be made by the Ethics Committee in March 2024 as a second vacancy arose after the first application round (due to resignation by an Independent Person).

### **Draft Council Calendar 2024-25**

It was **MOVED** by the Chair, **SECONDED** by Councillor Luke Shortland, and **RESOLVED** to:

1. Approve the full schedule of council meetings for the municipal year 2024-25 (Appendices A & B); and,

2. Note the dates of Council approved by the General Purposes Committee.

## 91/21 **Questions to Mayor and Executive**

Mayor Jason Perry, supported by members of the Cabinet, invited questions from Council on various topics affecting the borough. The Chair called upon councillors in turn and Mayor Perry responded that:

- Consultation had concluded on the progress, approach and process around maintained nursery schools and was embarking on a three-month program of working with maintained set nursery schools to ensure financial viability in the future.
- Independent Panel Orders or advice notes had not been issued to the Council in the 2023/24 Municipal year.
- Council finances were still challenging, and large cuts and savings would have to be made in the budget next year.
- The program put in place with drawn resources from Violence Reduction Unit to address the increased number of thefts across border targeting Croydon's young children led to a decline in incidents.
- The Council was holding discussions with the British Transport Police, The Police and Transport For London (TFL) on how to collectively deal with the growing trend around groups targeting school children at the end of the school day, in a holistic approach. Some Arrests had been made.
- Violence against Women and Girls Delivery Plan would be ready in the New Year and the Council worked with housing, Police, and community groups when processing referrals.
- Over 300 people including the Chief Executive participated in a peer challenge facilitated by the Local Government Association to prepare the Council for assessment by the Care Quality Commission.
- The initial findings of the per challenge were good and the Council was looking forward to receiving the formal report and working across the whole sector in order to improve what we've already got in place and deliver for the residents here.
- The number of affordable homes approved by the planning committee in the 2023/24 municipal would be provided by the executive Mayor after the meeting.

- There was going to be an increased police presence in the Town Centre. This would be funded via a specific project work which involved working with the police and the voluntary sector to target specific issues around young women and girls.
- Consultation had begun on the Flood Alleviation Strategy which would be presented at Cabinet January 2024.
- Figures on the current eviction rate in the borough, would be provided after the meeting.
- The Council was working in partnership with the police, charity groups and voluntary sector groups such as Croydon Reach, to support the homeless.
- The restructure of the Housing Department was delivering results as rather than waiting for those evicted from their homes to turn up, they were trying to deal with their issues at a much earlier stage so that people do not end up being evicted in the first place and help those in the private sector stay in their properties. Pan London provision as well. So as a London, a group of councils
- The Council was working across departments to support residents and deal with the anti-social behaviours.
- There had been a huge investment in electric charging points and over 350 street charging points have been deployed and it was agreed that encouraging drivers to switch to electric cars was a better way to approach clean air rather than fining residents who could not afford the fines.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Luke Shortland put to the vote and RESOLVED to consider item 9: Appointments before item 11 – Maiden Speeches.

## 92/21 **Maiden Speeches**

Council heard the Maiden Speeches of the following Councillors:

- Lara Fish, New Addington South Ward
- Councillor Alasdair Stewart, Purley Oaks and Riddlesdown Ward.

## 93/21 **Appointments**

It was moved by Councillors Luke Shortland and Leila Ben Hassel and seconded by Councillors Jason Cummings and Councillor Luke Shortland respectively and RESOLVED to unanimously approve the following changes to committees, outside bodies and political groups:

COMMITTEE	REPLACE	APPOINT
Appeals Committee	Jade Appleton	Mario Creatura
Ethics Committee	Mario Creatura Jade Appleton	Luke Shortland Mario Creatura
Mayoralty and Honorary Freedom Selection Committee	Mario Creatura Jade Appleton	Luke Shortland Simon Fox
Scrutiny and Overview Committee	Jade Appleton Sue Bennett	Sue Bennett Mario Creatura
Scrutiny children and Young People Committee	Luke Shortland	Endri Llabuti
Appointments & Disciplinary Committee  RESERVES	Maria Gatland Yvette Hopley Jeet Bains Luke Shortland Robert Ward Scott Roche	Janet Campell Chris Clark Nina Degrads Amy Foster Christopher Herman Chrishini Reshekaron
Scrutiny Streets Homes and Environment Sub-Committee	Luke Shortland	Nikhil Sherine Thampil
<b>POLITICAL PARTY GROUP OFFICER APPOINTMENTS</b>		
Conservative Group Chief Whip	Mario Creatura Luke Shortland Samir Dwesar	Luke Shortland Simon Fox N/A
<b>APPOINTMENTS TO ALL OTHER PANELS, WORKING GROUPS AND OUTSIDE BODIES</b>		
Members Learning and Development Panel	Jade Appleton	Simon Fox

## 94/21 Council Debate Motions

### Conservative Group Motion

In moving the motion, Mayor Jason Perry stated:

- the successful bid for 18.5 million pounds from the government's Levelling Up fund was a fantastic achievement for the Council. He informed Council that the Minister had described the bid as high quality and ready to deliver.
- the investment in the Town Centre would bring funding to a number of wards as the scheme provides for six infrastructure and public, realm projects, which would dramatically improve connections in Town Centre and enable safer and easier travel for residents and visitors.
- that he was intent on tackling the broken windows effects of the borough, making Town Centre, cleaner, healthier, and safer. The public space Protection order had been reintroduced and the Police had been given the power to tackle and social behaviour. The Council was also delivering on a program outreach providing support for young people at risk of youth violence.
- In buying out the development partner earlier this year, Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield had showed long, term commitments to Croydon, the

development of a master plan and a planning application were eagerly awaited to begin Croydon's transformation.

Councillor Chris Clark, the Shadow Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration spoke in support of the motion stated:

- that the success of the bid was welcomed and the plans had been developed over a number of years, and showed the ambition to make Croydon a safer, cleaner borough row through improvements to walking, cycling infrastructure, and the urban environment.
- He argued that as the bid was submitted in Summer 2022, there may be need for a review taking into account inflation and rising costs, to make sure that all the important projects costs were still affordable before the government released the money.
- local government needed longer term funding settlements and as residents wanted a safe, clean Town Centre where they and members of their families could safely go about their business safely, the Council needed to work together with its various partners, if it wanted to bring Town Centre back to life and deliver the change that Croydon communities needed.
- Councillor Jason Cummings seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak

Councillor Elilly Ponnuthurai spoke in support of the motion and argued that:

- The Bid had identified air pollution and crime as barriers to a prosperous borough and had outlined key four key objects objectives at its heart.
- The first objective was economic growth for investors to have confidence in Croydon but more and more business businesses were leaving Croydon.
- The second key objective was levelling up to include better quality of life outcomes but the quality of life outcomes Croydon's young people was at an all, time low.
- The third objective was to revitalize the Town Center and make it vibrant but there was no timeline to the talks with Westfield and though there been speculation of a company takeover yet there seemed to be no concrete alternative plan.
- The final key objective was decarbonizing transport and adapting to climate change but the units introduced by the London Mayor to significantly reduce Pollution had been fiercely rejected and the Council's air pollution team was underfunded. There seemed to be a lack of seriousness and urgency about reducing crime, air pollution, and regenerating Croydon Townhall to improve the lives of residents.

- But it's not as welcoming or safer place as it used to be, the many people now go elsewhere to do their shopping.

The Cabinet Member for Finance Councillor Jason Cummings spoke in support of the motion stating that:

- The bid being granted this second round after initial refusal could only be described as a success and showcased political cooperation at its best as the bid was initiated by Mayor Perry, but was backed by councillors across the chamber and endorsed by Sarah Jones MP. Though the bid would not change everything, but it was a step in the right direction. He closed by saying the bid was to be celebrated and the cooperation that helped obtain it was welcomed, and the expected benefits, eagerly awaited.
- In closing Mayor Perry in exercising his right of last reply, said, the investment was good for Croydon create time and would bring other investments, creates homes, jobs and bring people back to Croydon's Town Centre.

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the recent success of our bid for £18.5m in funding from HM Government to transform our town centre. Council notes that the funding will be spent on multiple projects that cover the South End restaurant quarter, East Croydon Station, West Croydon Station, and Old Town & Croydon Minster, as well as a new civic square for the Fairfield cultural complex, connecting Queen's Gardens and Surrey Street Market.
2. The success of this bid showed that Croydon was a Borough with a bright future. It also showed what could be achieved by working together in partnership across the Borough - be it the Executive Mayor, Councillors, MPs, Voluntary & Faith sectors and statutory partners such as health and the Police.

#### **Labour Group Motion**

Councillor Chrishni Reshekaron, the Shadow Cabinet Member for Homes opened the debate by stating:

- that the Household Support Fund was an important safety net that provided much, needed assistance to those who needed help with food and energy. It was a vital lifeline for hundreds of families, including facing hunger and hardship.
- that the decision not to extend the Household Support Fund and the recent increase in council rent and Council Tax would impact on the most vulnerable residents employed who are doing everything they could to get their families through the cost of living crisis.
- that she hoped the Mayor would follow through with Councillor King's request and write a letter condemning the Chancellor's decision not to

extend the Household Support Fund, urge him to extend the fund for a further year, and publish the letter and the Chancellor's response on the council's website.

Councillor Foster seconded the motion and reserved her right to speak.

The Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Alasdair Stewart then spoke in support of the motion stating that:

- the Conservative group would be voting in support of the motion, but would not condemn the Chancellor's decision,
- Every budget, local or national involved difficult decisions and the need to carefully balance the level of income, expected expenditure, and levels of debt. Many of the Chancellor's announcements were welcomed such as child welfare benefits increasing to match inflation and the retention of the triple lock, which would increase the income of pensioners. The Household Support Fund was one of a number of existing additional support programs for local residents, which included a counter, tax support scheme, counter tax hardship fund and benefits from the Housing Revenue Account discretionary fund and the Healthy home Service. So, while inflation was falling, it was recognised that the cost of living pressures were still affecting many residents.
- the current Household Support Fund had enabled Croydon to provide amazing support to local vulnerable households who were most in need so any additional central government funding that would enable this to continue was welcomed and Mayor Perry's request to central government should be supported.

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Maria Gatland, spoke in support of the motion stating that:

- She welcomed that the Household Fund had been allocated to our schools, and was directed to Croydon's most vulnerable families.
- She also welcomed the additional funding for pupils on free school meals, especially the discretionary fund for pupils just outside the threshold of free school meals and the fact that the fund also supported families with hampers or vouchers during holidays as well as families in emergency situations.
- She was in support of the motion as the support from the government had been vital for many families, and it should continue beyond 2004.

Shadow Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Amy Foster, in closing the debate, argued that:

- the Chancellor's decision to bring the Household Support Fund to a close was not surprising and that the situation in Croydon was extremely serious but was made worse due to national policy decisions.

- that local authorities across the country were struggling to manage the increasing costs of children's social care due to the autumn budget. The Local Government Association had made clear their profound disappointment with the Autumn statement and its failure to reference children's Services funding for early years and support for students with special educational needs and disabilities.
- it was understood that Mayor Perry's powers were limited, but he had a strong voice, which was needed for the letter as it had to be firm and to publicly state that these policies do not serve Croydon.

The Council RESOLVED:

- To condemn the Chancellor's decision not to extend the Household Support Fund when it expires in March 2024.
- The fund has provided a lifeline to hundreds of Croydon families facing hunger and hardship and its withdrawal during an ongoing cost of living crisis will hit many households hard. We call on the Executive Mayor to write to the Chancellor to urge him to extend the Household Support Fund for a further year and to publish the chancellor's reply on the council's website.
- The Executive Mayor speaking in response to the debate stated: that it was fair to say that all local authorities, had challenging budgets right now across the country but the immediate priorities were to ensure that as many of Croydon's eligible residents as possible were receiving the support they needed this winter. He said that the Household Support Fund was doing important work and that must continue and advised he had drafted the letter and it would be circulated to Members before the Christmas break.

The meeting ended at 9.42 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:**

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