

Public Document Pack

Council

Meeting held on Wednesday, 17 July 2024 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Kola Agboola (Chair);
Councillor Richard Chatterjee (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel, Sue Bennett, Adele Benson,
Margaret Bird, Claire Bonham, Janet Campbell, Chris Clark,
Sherwan Chowdhury, Stuart Collins, Mario Creatura, Jason Cummings,
Patsy Cummings, Nina Degrads, Rowenna Davis, Danielle Denton,
Samir Dwesar, Lara Fish, Sean Fitzsimons, Alisa Flemming, Clive Fraser,
Amy Foster, Simon Fox, Maria Gatland, Brigitte Graham, Matt Griffiths,
Lynne Hale, Jessica Hammersley-Rich, 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, Enid Mollyneaux, Stella Nabukeera, Michael Neal,
Tamar Barrett, Eunice O'Dame, Ian Parker, Ria Patel, Tony Pearson,
Jason Perry, Ellily Ponnuthurai, Andrew Price, Holly Ramsey, Helen Redfern,
Chrishni Reshekaron, Scott Roche, Manju Shahul-Hameed,
Nikhil Sherine Thampi, Luke Shortland, Andy Stranack, Alasdair Stewart,
Appu Srinivasan, Esther Sutton, Catherine Wilson, Robert Ward,
Callton Young and Fatima Zaman

Apologies: Councillor Simon Brew, Louis Carserides and Gayle Gander
Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Alisa Flemming,
Chrishni Reshekaron and Christopher Herman.

PART A

128/24 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the annual meeting held on 22nd May 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

129/24 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

130/24 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

131/24 **Announcements**

The Chair informed the Council that additional meeting papers had been published. These included the Labour Group's amendment to Item 8D on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, as well as supplementary agendas for the Council Housing Asset Management Strategy and the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy. These publications followed the Cabinet meeting on 15th July 2024.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Luke Shortland and agreed by Council that the order of business be varied to enable Council to consider the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy after the Council Housing Asset Management and Housing Resident Engagement Strategies and Council Procedural Rules be suspended to limit time for Item 10 (Maiden Speeches) to two minutes for to ensure fairness for new members.

The Chair then highlighted several recent and upcoming charity and civic events, including Pride Month, Windrush Day, Armed Forces Week, and NHS Frontline Workers Day. He also mentioned forthcoming celebrations for Pakistan and Indian Independence Days on 14th and 15th August respectively.

He also highlighted his attendance of 12 of the Big Lunch Street Parties and St. Patrick's Day celebrations on 1st and 2nd June. Forth coming events include the anniversary of the Airborne Commission on 28th September and an inaugural dinner for the Civic Mayor on 19th July at the Grand Sapphire Hotel.

Mayor Jason Perry expressed his gratitude to Catherine Kerswell and the staff involved in the recent general election, noting the smooth and efficient execution of the election count. He also congratulated the newly elected MPs: Natasha Irons, Sarah Jones, Chris Philp, and Steve Reed.

The Mayor also informed Council that he had written to the new Secretary of State, Angela Rayner, to discuss Croydon's financial challenges and plans for achieving sustainable local government

132/24 **Croydon Question Time**

The Council received twelve questions from residents. The following responses were given to supplementary questions based on the answers given and published in the agenda.

1. It was noted that the questioner was not present as was expected online and the Chair in accordance with the Constitution asked that the response be sent to the questioner via email and published in the Minutes.
2. It was noted that the questioner was not present and the Chair in accordance with the Constitution asked that the response be sent to the questioner via email and published in the Minutes.
3. In response to a supplementary question on how the Council planned to address the addiction issues at the root of much of the antisocial behaviour, and how this was linked to knife crime. Councillor Ola Kolade acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and highlighted the introduction of a Town Centre Task Force, which brings together key agencies, including the police and homelessness services, to quickly respond to such problems. He encouraged reporting crimes through the police website or Crime Stoppers, especially if anonymity was a concern, as this data was crucial for the police's response. He also mentioned the implementation of Public Safety Protection Orders (PSPOs) in Croydon, including one in Thornton Heath, as part of the Council's approach to both supporting people with substance misuse issues and enforcing actions when antisocial behaviour was persistent. He also invited the questioner to attend the quarterly police ward panels, which bring together councillors, safer neighbourhood officers, and other key organisations to set priorities for tackling local issues. He reiterated his willingness to meet with the questioner to further understand the situation and what the police were doing to help. He hoped his response had been helpful and looked forward to further discussions.
4. In response to a supplementary question about the about omission of parts of the original response, Councillor Scott Roche noted that a more detailed answer had been published on the Council's website and encouraged questioner to reach out for any further clarifications. In response to the specific point raised about the availability of a PayPoint machine in South Croydon, Councillor Roche said that officers would investigate the matter further and explained that PayPoint was one option among several

available for making payments, particularly for those without access to a smartphone or who prefer not to use a landline or mobile. The Council aims to offer a broad range of payment options to Croydon residents while also supporting local businesses and promoting the local economy.

5. In response to a supplementary question if any of the new MPs were prepared to discuss with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) the possibility of amending the Act to apply it as a national service rather than a bureaucratic one, Councillor Andy Stranack stated that while he could not answer on behalf of the local MPs, the current legislation was believed to be sufficient to provide an effective and efficient library service for all residents in Croydon.
6. In response to a supplementary question about how outreach services and potential transport options would replace the benefits of having a local library, particularly for working parents like himself who walk to the library with their children, Councillor Andy Stranack stated that there had been an excellent consultation process, with thousands of responses being analysed. A full report on the future of library services would be presented to the Full Council in September. He emphasised that both the Council and the Mayor desire to establish community hubs in areas where library buildings might be closed, and these hubs would include some of the activities mentioned, such as book clubs and craft clubs.
7. The Chair informed Council that Question 8 had been withdrawn by the questionnaire.
8. In response to a supplementary question reminding the Council of the democratic purpose of libraries, referencing the first library in Manchester, which was founded with the intent of serving the public democratically. The questioner expressed concern about how closing libraries might make access more difficult for some residents, questioning how such actions align with the Council's commitment to providing a democratic service. Councillor Andy Stranack acknowledged the concern, noting that currently less than 10% of the population are using library buildings. The proposals being developed aim to increase access to library services across Croydon, with three key objectives: reaching more residents, improving public services, and making the library system more efficient and effective. A full report on the review and consultation would be provided in September.

9. The questioner was experiencing IT issues, so a member of the Democratic services team asked the question on her behalf. The response from Councillor Andy Stranack was published on the Council website before the meeting
10. In response to a supplementary question regarding the consultation process referenced in Councillor Andy Stranack's published response. The questioner, representing the Friends of Shirley Library Group, highlighted concerns about the submission of additional evidence. Given these concerns, requested an extension of the consultation period to the end of August, noting that this could restore confidence among library groups. Councillor Andy Stranack acknowledged the additional evidence submitted by the Shirley Group. Although the evidence was beyond the original consultation deadline, he confirmed that it was currently being reviewed within the mayor's system, and officers would respond through that channel in due course.
11. it was noted that the questioner for Question 11 was not present at the meeting. As per the Constitution, the response will be sent via email and published in the Minutes.
12. In response to a supplementary question regarding the responsibility for cleaning up rubbish at Pearly Cross, with the questioner suggesting that local business owners, who contribute significantly to the waste, should bear responsibility rather than ratepayers. The questioner also informed the Council about a letter received from Thames Water, stating that their road would be closed, except for emergency vehicles, from the end of July until mid-November, raising concerns about parking availability during this period. Councillor Scott Roche acknowledged the concerns about Purley Cross and committed to discussing the issue with the local team. He also mentioned that meetings had already taken place with Purley Barbers to address general issues in the area, and a blitz clean-up would be conducted in the Purley area in the coming months to improve the situation. Regarding the road closure by Thames Water, Councillor Roche stated that he was not fully informed about the issue but would ask officers to investigate and provide further information.
The session concluded with thanks to all who submitted questions and attended the meeting

133/24 **The Croydon Debate**

The Council received one member petition. Councillor Samir Dwesar addressed the Council in support of this petition, sharing his allotted time with

the lead petitioner, Jack Conner. Councillor Dwesar explained that road safety had been a priority since his election due to the high traffic in Purley and Woodcote and the presence of many young families. He was particularly concerned about Pampersford Road, where cars regularly mounted the pavement, creating unsafe conditions for pedestrians, especially children attending nearby schools and nurseries. While the Council had taken some steps, such as installing bollards, she emphasised that the situation would only improve with a pedestrian crossing. She urged the Council to take appropriate action and then passed the floor to Jack Conner.

Jack Conner thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak and shared his concerns about the lack of safe crossing options on Pampersford Road. He described his daily experience walking his daughter to nursery, along with many other families, and noted the dangerous conditions caused by speeding vehicles, poor sight lines, and cars mounting the pavement. He emphasised that this created a serious risk for pedestrians and urged the Council to install a pedestrian crossing before a serious incident occurred.

In response, Councillor Scott Roche acknowledged the issues raised and confirmed that the Council had installed bollards to discourage vehicles from mounting the curb, but vehicles continued to use the drop curbs. He reported that two additional bollards had been installed in July but emphasised that this was the maximum number possible without affecting vehicle access. Councillor Roche explained that due to the limited road safety budget and a low number of reported collisions, Pampersford Road was not currently a priority for the Council. However, a traffic sensor would be installed to measure vehicle speeds, and the feasibility of a pedestrian crossing would be assessed based on the speed data. Additionally, the Council would review road markings and signage, keeping Councillor Dwesar and Jack Conner informed of any further developments.

The debate on this item concluded, and thanks were extended to all participants.

134/24 **Reports to Council**

135/24 **Proposed Changes to the Constitution - Staff Employment Procedure Rules**

Councillor Sean Fitzsimons, the Chair General Purposes Committee, in moving the recommendations as outlined in paragraph 4.5 of the report and in Appendix 1, explained that the General Purposes Committee had considered the changes at its meeting on 10 June 2024. He briefly outlined that the detailed report had already been thoroughly reviewed by councillors at the Committee. Councillor Luke Shortland seconded the motion.

The Chair then put the recommendations to a vote and for the reasons set out in the reports and appendices, Council:

RESOLVED to:

- 2.1.1 Approve the proposed changes to the Constitution contained in paragraph 4.5 of the report to General Purposes Committee (Appendix 1) and Appendix 1A;
- 2.1.2 Authorise the Monitoring Officer to update the Constitution.

136/24 **Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report**

In moving the recommendations, Councillor Yvette Hopley highlighted the significant work and changes within the Board. She noted that there had been considerable collaboration with partners, particularly with the establishment of a new integrated care system. Councillor Hopley emphasised the Board's commitment to effective integration of health and social care, aiming to make meaningful differences to the health and well-being of residents in the borough.

She outlined the board's pivotal role in shaping the Southwest London Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) and its associated forward plan, ensuring Croydon's voice was represented at the system level. Councillor Hopley also mentioned the development of a joint local health and well-being strategy with partners, enhancing relationships and addressing health needs and inequalities. While she acknowledged the significant work accomplished, she noted time constraints prevented her from detailing all achievements but assured members that they were listed in the report. Councillor Hopley expressed gratitude to all involved in the board's work, especially thanking Rachel Flowers for her long-standing support.

Following her presentation Members were invited by the Chair to ask questions:

Councillor Tony Pearson asked how the Board had delivered against the Mayor's priorities and business plan. In response, Councillor Hopley stated that the Board had collaborated effectively to support several of the mayor's manifesto pledges, including achieving dementia-friendly borough status. She also noted the reinstatement of the position of a second Vice-Chair, increasing engagement with the voluntary sector, and the development of a joint local health and well-being strategy.

Councillor Patricia Hay-Justice then asked how the board planned to incorporate innovations from the annual report on digital health advancement to improve service delivery and patient outcomes. Councillor Hopley

responded that the Board worked collaboratively with partners on innovations and had already implemented virtual wards and various technologies to support elderly residents. She assured that they were continuously exploring new ideas to enhance outcomes for residents.

Councillor Sue Bennett asked whether the board's work would impact beyond Croydon. Councillor Hopley confirmed that the board not only focused on Croydon but also ensured that local interests were represented in broader Southwest London partnerships, contributing to overarching strategies and assessments.

Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel raised a concern regarding the family hubs transformation and monitoring of early years support. Councillor Hopley acknowledged the importance of the points raised and assured that the Board would monitor the progress through the joint strategic needs assessment, working with various partners to address the highlighted priorities.

For the reasons set out in this report, Council **RESOVLED to:**

- 2.1 Note the work undertaken by the HWB during the 2023 calendar year, Including the partnership refresh to the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, alongside planned work for 2024.

i **The Use of Special Urgency for Key Decisions and Exemption from Call-in December 2023 to June 2024**

In moving the recommendation, Mayor Jason Perry expressed gratitude to Councillor Rowenna Davis, the Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, and the Scrutiny Deputy Chairs for their co-operation during what had been a busy period for the Council given the numerous exemption requests made to the Scrutiny.

Mayor Jason Perry noted that while efforts were being made to reduce the use of urgency and exemption rules, such measures were often necessary when moving quickly.

Councillor Luke Shortland seconded the motion, and the Chair put the recommendations to the vote:

For the reasons set out in the report Council **RESOLVED to:**

1. To note the use of Special Urgency for the key decisions listed at section 4.4 of this report during the period December 2023 to June 2024.

2. To note the use of Exemption from Call-in for the key decisions listed at section 5.3 of this report during the period December 2023 to June 2024.

ii **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

Members were informed that an amendment from the Labour Group had been received. The Civic Chair invited Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense, the Monitoring Officer, to share advice on the amendment.

The Monitoring Officer, advised against Labour's Amendment #5, which proposed requiring the Executive to include a provision not to place families in split accommodation for over 14 nights. He provided two reasons for this:

1. Jurisdiction Issue: Full Council does not have the authority to impose such requirements on the Executive. The Council's remit in this meeting was the homelessness strategy, a policy framework document, whereas the temporary accommodation placement policy was matter for the Executive.
2. Judicial Risk: Implementing the proposed requirement would expose the Council to a risk of judicial review proceedings.

Councillor Stuart King, the Leader of the Opposition and mover of the Labour Group's amendment, acknowledged the Monitoring Officer's advice, which was received after their amendment was submitted. In response, he proposed a revised wording for Amendment #5. The new proposal called for the Council to make every effort to avoid splitting families in temporary accommodation, with careful consideration if it must occur. He also suggested adding a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) to the Mayor's Business Plan, which would track the number of split households in emergency accommodation and the duration of their stay.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the revised amendment addressed the previous concerns and could now be considered by the Full Council.

It was moved by the Chair seconded by Councillor Luke Shortland and **RESOLVED** by Council that:

The following process be adopted for the consideration of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, involving three-minute speeches from Councillors:

- The mover of the Executive proposals:
- The Secunder for the Executive (with rights to speak reserved)
- Councillor from the Labour Group
- The Conservative Secunder
- Councillor from the Labour Group
- The mover of the Executive proposals (with right of last reply)

The Deputy Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Lynne Hale presented the report, explaining that under the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities are required to produce a homelessness strategy every five years. She stressed the importance of this strategy, which not only met the Council's legal obligations but also addressed Croydon's homelessness and rough sleeping issues. She highlighted the role of the Housing Transformation Programme in improving services and thanked all contributors, including residents, partners, and the Scrutiny Home Sub-Committee, for their input.

Councillor Chrishni Reshekaron highlighted the alarming rise in homelessness and rough sleeping, particularly among ethnic minorities. He welcomed the strategy's focus on preventing homelessness, better management of housing stock, and partnership work with landlords. He emphasized Labour's amendments, particularly those addressing family splits in temporary accommodation and the introduction of a KPI to monitor split households.

Mayor Jason Perry who seconded the motion, expressed his support for the strategy, aligning it with the goals of his Business Plan. He discussed the Council's efforts to prevent homelessness through early intervention and highlighted several improvements, such as reduced waiting times for assessments, additional housing benefit claims, and better management of temporary accommodation. He acknowledged the Labour Group's concerns about split families and accepted the revised amendment.

Councillor Stuart King expressed concern over the rising number of split families in temporary accommodation, citing figures showing a sharp increase in recent years. He welcomed the acceptance of Labour's amendments and called for clear targets to reduce the practice of splitting families. He emphasized the need for continued efforts to address this issue and supported the amended strategy.

Councillor Lynne Hale, exercising her right of last reply, provided updates on recent progress, including reduced waiting times for homelessness assessments, efforts to clear backlogs, and improved data management. She acknowledged the need for further improvement in reducing family splits and reiterated the Council's commitment to providing a service that supports the homeless and prevents homelessness as early as possible.

The recommendations were put to the vote and Full Council **RESOLVED** to:
Full Council is asked to:

- a) Consider the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Review Summary set out in the report and at Appendix B;
- b) Consider the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Consultation Report set out in the report and at Appendix C;
- c) Consider the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan in Appendix D

- d) Consider the Equality Impact Assessment set out in the report and in Appendix E
- e) Note that the Scrutiny Homes Sub-Committee recommendations and draft Executive response at Section 6 were considered by Cabinet on 15th July 2024.
- f) Approve for adoption and publication the amended Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 as set out in Appendix A and as amended by the agreed Labour Amendment.

137/24 **Council Housing Asset Management Strategy**

It was noted that a supplementary agenda had been published following the Cabinet meeting on Monday, 15th July, during which two recommendations from The Scrutiny and Overview Committee were agreed, leading to amendments to the proposed strategy.

Councillor Lynne Hale, Deputy Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing, presented the housing report, emphasizing that delivering high-quality Council homes is crucial to building strong, healthy, and sustainable communities. She noted that this could only be achieved if tenants and leaseholders live in homes that are fit for purpose and located in well-managed neighbourhoods. The strategy, she explained, ensures Council housing assets are well-designed, managed, and responsive to residents' needs through active engagement.

Councillor Hale pointed out that the 2019 asset management strategy lacked flexibility to address the long-term investment needs of housing, leading to underfunding and disrepair, notably highlighted by the issues on Regina Road, which caused distress and reputational damage. She added that the new strategy focuses on maintaining and investing in housing stock, adapting to regulatory changes, and aligning with the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan.

She outlined two key investment areas: increasing housing supply and improving existing homes, including estate regeneration. Hale emphasized the importance of cultural change within the Housing Directorate, new working methods, and better data management. She concluded by acknowledging feedback from consultations and reiterated the Council's commitment to safe and comfortable homes, before moving the recommendations. It was seconded and put to the vote:

Council **RESOLVED** to:

- 2.21 Consider the feedback received on the principles behind the Asset Management Strategy 2024-2029 from residents, partners and Members via engagement and consultation briefings; and Equalities Impact Assessment detailed in Appendix 2
- 2.2 Consider the feedback from the Homes Scrutiny Committee held on 9th July 2024 and executive response (Appendix 3).
- 2.3 Agree the Amended Council Housing Asset Management Strategy 2024-2029 (Appendix 1) as agreed by Cabinet on 15th July 2024 and as detailed in the Supplementary Agenda.
- 2.4 Agree to delegated authority to Corporate Director to make minor amendments (i.e., slight wording changes to make more accessible, formatting etc.) in conjunction with Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member but prior to its recommendation

138/24 **The Housing Resident Engagement Strategy**

The Deputy Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Lynne Hale, in moving the recommendations, stated that the strategy was designed to give residents a significant influence on housing-related decisions, strategies, policies, and services. She noted that it was the first such strategy in several years and was aligned with the principles of the residents' charter, highlighting the Council's commitment to ensuring that residents have a meaningful voice in the services that affect their lives.

Councillor Hale emphasised that the strategy was co-designed with input from residents, staff, the Tenants Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), and feedback from the tenants and leaseholder panel, as well as from councillor colleagues during briefing sessions and scrutiny. She expressed her gratitude to all those who had contributed to the development of the strategy, and explained that a new Customer Influence and Assurance Group would be established to hold housing services accountable and monitor the implementation of the strategy and delivery plan, alongside the broader housing transformation program.

Furthermore, Councillor Hale mentioned that the strategy provides a pathway for compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards. It will allow tenants to provide assurance or highlight areas where these standards are not being met, using their lived experiences to drive service improvements. She acknowledged feedback from the Scrutiny Home Sub-Committee and assured the Council would continue to work with data to address barriers to engagement and focus on creating accessible and flexible resident engagement events.

She also expressed the Council's openness to working with residents and contractors to find the best ways to record and use informal feedback on resident experiences. Building on the foundation of the residents' charter, Councillor Hale concluded by affirming that the strategy strengthens the Council's commitment to caring for and respecting residents, ensuring they are involved in the ongoing housing improvement process.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Luke Shortland and put to the vote:

For the reasons set out in the report and appendices, Full Council **RESOLVED** to:

- 2.7 Consider the feedback received via the engagement and consultation process as detailed in Appendix 2, and;
- 2.8 Note the feedback received from the Homes Scrutiny Committee held on 23 October 2023 and 9th July 2024 and Executive Response (Appendix 5).
- 2.9 Consider the Equalities Impact Assessment detailed in Appendix 3 2029
- 2.10 Agree and adopt the amended Residents Engagement Strategy 2024- Appendix 1 to this report as agreed by Cabinet on 15th July 2024 and stated in the Supplementary Agenda.
- 2.9 Agree to delegated authority to Corporate Director to make minor amendments (i.e., slight wording changes to make more accessible, formatting etc.) in conjunction with Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member prior to final publication.

139/24 **Questions to the Mayor and Executive**

Mayor Perry announced that the Museum of Croydon had regained its accreditation from the Arts Council of England. He credited this success to the London Borough of Culture's contributions and was pleased that the accreditation would enable the museum to reopen its permanent gallery, including the *Rewind* exhibition, which celebrates Croydon's rich musical history. The accreditation will also enhance the museum's ability to secure further funding, affirming its adherence to the highest museum standards.

Addressing a recent stabbing of a shopkeeper on Church Street, the mayor praised the swift response of police and first aiders and confirmed that two suspects had been arrested. He condemned the criminal behaviour and reassured the council that such incidents would not define Croydon. The council's investment in a Town Centre Coordinator, who will work with the Town Centre Task Force, will focus on combating antisocial behaviour and enhancing safety, particularly through data-driven strategies to target knife crime.

He then gave the following answers to questions from Members:

- **Collaboration with Government:** The mayor highlighted ongoing collaboration among London boroughs to present a united front to the new government. He welcomed several government proposals, including ending Section 21 no-fault evictions, boosting neighbourhood policing, and addressing knife crime and violence against women. He noted that Croydon was already working on many of these objectives.
- **Nursery Schools and Education:** The mayor confirmed that all five maintained nursery schools in the borough would remain open, with financial sustainability achieved through cost-saving measures such as forming federations between schools. In terms of special education, smaller SEN units were being added to schools with available capacity, and additional funding had been allocated through the Schools Forum to support SEN initiatives. Efforts were also being made to keep children with Educational Health Care Plans (EHCPs) in temporary accommodation close to their schools.
- **Housing and Temporary Accommodation:** Mayor Perry outlined efforts to improve the quality of temporary accommodation, despite challenges such as demand exceeding supply. Initiatives like the Red Clover Garden scheme, offering 85 units of quality housing, aim to transition people from temporary accommodation to better housing. He noted that an additional audit of temporary accommodation conditions might not be necessary due to the Council's ongoing improvement efforts.
- **Child Benefit Cap and Financial Sustainability:** The mayor expressed openness to reviewing proposals to amend the two-child benefit cap and confirmed his intention to work with Labour's Child Poverty Task Force chairs, Liz Kendall and Bridget Phillipson, to advocate for scrapping the cap. He also addressed the council's ongoing discussions with the government regarding Croydon's debt burden, stating that private correspondence with former ministers about debt write-off would remain confidential.
- **Council Services and Infrastructure:** On the topic of grass-cutting services, the mayor acknowledged previous challenges caused by unreliable data and outdated equipment. To address this, contractors, including some from TfL, have been brought in to manage overgrown areas. Regarding playgrounds, there are plans to refurbish four to five

per year, with additional cleaning and maintenance provided where necessary. Funding for this program primarily comes from Section 106 developer contributions.

- **Support for Young People:** To ensure the safety of young people, especially during the summer, the council has implemented the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) program, with 71 holiday clubs offering meals and activities. Collaborative efforts with the Violence Reduction Unit and the police aim to tackle robbery and antisocial behaviour during the transition to senior school for Year 6 pupils.
- **Female-Owned Businesses:** The mayor detailed measures to support female-owned businesses, including creating a local board to tackle issues in West Croydon and London Road, improving lighting, and increasing police presence. The council is using £200,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to enhance public safety and support local traders.
- **Transport and Parking:** The mayor confirmed that 89% of residents favoured removing light segregation on Brighton Road, which has improved safety and eased delivery and shop operation challenges. The council is also reviewing parking provisions and junction safety improvements. A report will soon be presented detailing a proposal for Transport for London (TfL) to provide bus shelters across the borough, aligning Croydon with 30 of the 32 London boroughs that already use TfL for this service.
- **Waste Management:** The new waste management contract would maintain and improve current services, particularly street cleaning. Further plans include reintroducing scheduled residential street cleaning and exploring nighttime cleaning in busy districts.
- **Business and Economic Initiatives:** The mayor mentioned the establishment of an Entrepreneur's Academy, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to support Croydon's young population. He also committed to investigating the lack of communication regarding maintenance work at Whitehorse Meadow.
- **Universal Breakfast Clubs:** The mayor expressed the Council's support for any government initiative to implement universal breakfast clubs for all children.
- **Mayor Perry reiterated that Croydon would continue to collaborate closely with other councils, especially in light of potential new government legislation.**

140/24 **Appointments**

There were none.

141/24 **Maiden Speeches**

Council heard the Maiden Speeches of the following Councillors:

- Councillor Andrew Parker, Park Hill & Whitgift Ward
- Councillor Jessica Hammersley-Rich, Woodside Ward.

142/24 **Council Debate Motions**

Conservative Group Motion

Councillor Jason Cummings, the Cabinet Member for Finance, in opening the debate, noted the well-documented financial history of Croydon and stressed that both parties had historically agreed that Croydon was underfunded. He argued that despite the change in government, there had been no progress on funding, and reaffirmed the need for national government support, given that the scale of the borough's financial problems exceeded local capacity.

Councillor Stuart King, the Leader of the Opposition, speaking next, criticised the Conservative motion for politicising the Council's financial difficulties. He stated that Mayor Perry failed to secure a debt deal over the past two years while working with a Conservative government and claimed that the open letter to the Deputy Prime Minister was partisan and ill-thought-out. Despite this, King expressed willingness to support the motion if a cross-party approach could be established.

Councillor Callton Young then highlighted Croydon's debt, explaining that around 15% of the borough's spending was directed toward servicing this debt rather than providing services for residents. He expressed support for the motion, stating that solving Croydon's financial issues required both local efforts and central government intervention. The Labour group, while criticising Mayor Perry's narrative in his letter to the Deputy Prime Minister, agreed to support the motion, with Councillor Young emphasising the systemic failure of previous government policies, which had severely cut funding to local councils and led to Croydon's financial troubles.

Councillor Jason Cummings in closing the debate, reiterated that solving Croydon's financial problems required government support. he urged for clarity on whether public communications with government should be made more open, as conflicting views had been presented during the debate.

Following the discussion, the motion was put to the vote.

Council **RESOLVED** to:

Note that steps have already been taken to fix the Borough's finances, including raising Council Tax and reducing spending. Council believes that securing the Borough's long-term financial sustainability can only be done with Government assistance. The burden cannot fall on residents alone, it must be shared with central Government. Council therefore agrees that the new Government must urgently finish the work to agree a long-term deal, without inflicting yet more pain on Croydon's residents.

Mayor Perry expressed his hope for collaborative efforts with the new government to secure a sustainable financial future for Croydon.

Labour Group Motion

Councillor Matt Griffiths opened the debate meeting he noted that the general election had brought about a significant change, ushering in a new era of governance under the new Prime Minister. He emphasised the government's commitment to restoring serious, principled governance, public service as a privilege, and rebuilding public trust. He highlighted the new government's pledge to prioritise public service, transparency, accountability, and evidence-based policymaking, while tackling economic inequality, climate change, and revitalizing public services. In moving the motion he expressed optimism about the incoming government's capacity to restore dignity in governance and rebuild public trust.

Councillor Ola Kolade in speaking to the motion, expressed support for the new government but reminded the Council of the accomplishments of the last 14 years under the previous administration. He highlighted achievements such as lower unemployment rates, improved education outcomes, and the recruitment of 20,000 police officers. Councillor Kolade stressed the importance of addressing antisocial behaviour and highlighted the previous administration's efforts in this area, such as restoring the graffiti removal service and introducing the Violence Against Women and Girls Plan. He concluded by recognising the new government's mandate while expressing a cautious optimism, comparing it to "the proof will be in the pudding."

Councillor Patsy Cummings who seconded the motion, spoke about the new Labour government's plans as outlined in the King's Speech, which included 40 new bills aimed at improving national and local economic stability and growth. She mentioned key initiatives such as the Renters' Rights Bill, the Crime and Policing Bill, and the Equality, Race, and Disability Bill, aimed at addressing inequality and improving workers' rights. Past emphasized the significance of these changes for local residents facing the cost of living crisis and commended the government's efforts to ban zero-hour contracts and enhance protections for working people. She also highlighted Labour's commitment to addressing violence against women and girls, affordable housing, and border security, among other priorities.

Councillor Samir Dwesar expressed cautious optimism toward the new government but criticized the motion's language, particularly its reference to "14 years of failure." He acknowledged the achievements of the previous administration, such as the national living wage, improved unemployment figures, and higher educational outcomes, while stressing the importance of a fair assessment of the past 14 years. He noted that although he would abstain from voting on the motion, he looked forward to working collaboratively with the new government.

Councillor Matt Griffiths concluded by expressing hope for cross-party cooperation and stating that despite the challenges ahead, he looked forward to a government that prioritised competence and public service over political spectacle.

The motion was put to the vote and

This Council **RESOLVED** that:

This Council congratulates Sir Keir Starmer on his election as Prime Minister and welcomes his new Government's decisive mandate, seeing it as a long overdue opportunity to bring change to this country and to Croydon after 14 years of failure.

This Council welcomes the opportunities the new Government's manifesto will offer Croydon and its residents, including:

- Rebuilding Britain with wealth created in every community, including Croydon.
- Getting our NHS back on its feet, facing the future.
- Making our streets safer.
- Creating workplaces where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

This Council endorses the new Government's commitment that public service is a privilege, and that the new government will treat every single person in this country with respect, ensuring that people's voices are listened to by decision makers at every level of government.

This Council welcomes that Croydon now has hope for a better future with a Labour government that will put governing back at the service of working people.

Mayor Jason Perry responding to the motion, congratulated the new Prime Minister and acknowledged the Labour government's strong mandate. He expressed his willingness to work with the new administration to restore hope and pride in the local area.

Mayor Perry outlined several initiatives already underway, such as local economic plans, youth programs, infrastructure investments, and collaborations with the NHS to improve public services. He reaffirmed his

commitment to public service and community engagement, noting that this collaborative, people-first approach would continue under his leadership.

Mayor Jason Perry emphasised the importance of building on existing progress while working constructively with the new government to improve outcomes for the local community.

143/24 **Executive Mayor's Scheme of Delegation**

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Luke Shortland and Council **RESOLVED**: to note the Executive Mayor's Scheme of Delegation

The meeting ended at Time 9.40PM

Signed:

.....

Date:

.....

This page is intentionally left blank