

CROYDON COUNCIL

MINUTES

of the meeting held on Monday 19 October 2015 at 6.30pm.

THE MAYOR COUNCILLOR PATRICIA HAY-JUSTICE PRESIDING

Councillors Ali, Audsley, Avis, Bains, Bashford, Bee, Benn, Bird, Bonner, Brew, Butler, Buttinger, Canning, Chatterjee, Chowdhury, Clancy, Clouder, Collins, Cummings, Fisher, Fitzsimons, Flemming, Gatland, Hale, Hall, Henson, Hollands, Hopley, Jewitt, Kabir, Khan B, Khan S, King, Kyeremeh, Letts, Lewis, Mann, Mansell, Mead D, Mead M, Neal, Newman, O'Connell, Pelling, Pollard H, Pollard T, Prince, Quadir, Rendle, Scott, Selva, Shahul-Hameed, Speakman, Stranack, Thomas, Thompson, Trakas-Lawlor, Watson, Wentworth, Winborn, Wood, Woodley, Wright.

Absent: Councillors Bennett, Creatura, Godfrey, Mohan, Perry and Ryan.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologises were received from Councillors Bennett, Creatura, Godfrey, Mohan, Perry and Ryan.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting and the Special Council Meeting both held on 20th July 2015 be signed as a correct record.

3. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

All Members of the Council confirmed that their interests as listed in their Declaration of Interests Forms were accurate and up-to-date.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

None

5. AWARD OF FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH

Councillor Tony Newman, Leader of the Council, in moving the motion to grant Mr Ian Austen the Freedom of the Borough described him as a legendary figure in the borough and that his 46 years with the Croydon Advertiser was a unique achievement. He went on to say that Ian cared for Croydon, and in a recent interview had expressed his disappointment that he wouldn't be able to report on the future regeneration of the town.

Councillor Tim Pollard, Leader of the Opposition, in seconding the motion, opened saying it was good to see that both sides of the Chamber in total agreement and welcomed Ian to the roll of Honorary Freeman. He went on to say that Ian was respected by politicians and local businesses and that his 46 years with the Croydon Advertiser was an achievement that will be increasingly rare in the future.

The Mayor presented the Honorary Freedom Badge and citation to Mr Ian Austen.

Mr Austen thanked the Council saying he was greatly honoured to receive the award. He thanked the Mayor for her hospitality to him and his family before the meeting. He went on to speak about some of the previous recipient of the award and of the work they had done for the Town. He said that a local newspaper should be part of the local community and reflect what is happening around the area and he hoped he had achieved that over the years.

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor thanked all those who attended her garden party held on 4th August at Heathfield House Gardens in aid of CAYSH and Mind in Croydon charities which she is supporting in her Mayoral year. The Mayor promoted the following future events in aid of those charities:

23 October 2015 – Fairtrade wine tasting
27 October 2015 - McDermott's Fish and Chips
19 November 2015 - Murder Mystery event
4 December 2015 - Mayor's Christmas Dinner

7. PUBLIC QUESTIONS FROM THE PEOPLE OF CROYDON

Under the provisions of the Council Procedure Rules (Croydon Constitution, Part 4A), written questions had been submitted and written replies were given by the relevant Cabinet Member. These were placed in the Chamber and Public Gallery and online. Oral supplementary questions were asked by members of the public.

Oral replies were provided by the relevant Cabinet Members.
[Note: the meeting was soundcast]

Oral Supplementary questions were asked by:

PQ41-15 - Mr Collier
PQ42-15 – Dr Sharma
PQ45-15 – Mr Ward

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PQ46-15 – Mr Johnson
PQ48-15 – Mrs Santosh-Expeditth
PQ49-15 – Mr Cartwright
PQ53-15 – Mr Samuel

[Note the written Public Questions and written replies can be found at www.croydon.gov.uk/democracy/dande/council-questions]

8. PETITIONS PRESENTED BY COUNCILLORS ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF CROYDON

A Petition was presented formally by Councillor Mansell, in accordance with Council Procedure Rules, on behalf of residents requesting a controlled residents parking zone in Somerset Gardens.

This petition was referred to the relevant Cabinet Member. In accordance with the Council's Constitution the reply to this petition will be included in the agenda for the next Council meeting.

9. RESPONSES TO PETITIONS PRESENTED TO COUNCIL ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF CROYDON AT THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 20TH JULY 2015

In accordance with the Council procedure rules, the printed responses were open to questions from Councillors. The following Councillors asked questions:

Councillors Prince, Thomas and Henson.

10. MOTIONS FOR DEBATE

Two motions were submitted for debate in accordance with Council Procedure Rules as follows:

1. The first motion for debate:

Proposed: Councillor Chris Wright
Seconded: Councillor Jason Cummings

'This Council regrets the culture of secrecy and the lack of openness & transparency which has arisen as a result of the constitutional changes made by its new Labour administration.'

Councillor Chris Wright in moving the motion said he had been councillor for 29 years and regretted the sad deterioration in contact between the administration, the Council and the people of the Borough. He went on to give examples of how the previous administration had held meetings with the public on a number of issues. He went on to say that many Councillors no longer have meetings with the officers and that the lack of transparency in some decisions was affecting residents of the Borough. An example of this was the new Croydon Plan, being published in

November; several parts have not been discussed with Councillors e.g. travellers sites proposed on green belt land. He asked Councillor Butler to give assurances that she will not withdraw the Councillor's right of referral of applications to the Planning Committee.

Councillor Cummings seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Alison Butler in opposing the motion spoke about what the administration had done to make the Council more open and transparent, such as the webcasting of meetings, opening up Scrutiny to the public and opening the Town Hall to the public, the offer of officer briefings to all members of the opposition, Members allowances and expenses were now on the web, draft budget had been taken Scrutiny 3 months early. She went on to say that the Croydon Plan was going to consultation and there are no proposals to build on pure green belt land. The Croydon app and Your Croydon increased to weekly under Labour. In summing up she gave examples of the Opposition's lack of transparency when in power in relation to the incinerator, Bernard Weatherill House and CCURV.

Councillor James Thompson speaking for the motion quoted the OECD description that openness and transparency are key ingredients to build accountability and trust for the functioning of democracies and market economies. He gave examples of these secrets and illusions. These included announced plans to raise £1m from parking charges but only 3 brief lines of detail in the recent Cabinet paper, the commitment of free one hour parking in district centres but it had not happened and the fact that Councillor Bee said that parking charges will rise but could not reveal where prices will rise. In summing up he said he wanted to hear how Labour think they have been open and transparent, not how they think the Conservatives were not.

Councillor Oliver Lewis in opposing the motion was glad to be discussing the subject at a meeting that was being webcast worldwide. He said the Council can be proud of its record including opening up the Town Hall, would take no lectures from an opposition who brought an incinerator that no one wanted or fully know the details of how they had spent millions of pounds of Croydonians' money on a luxury headquarters. He then questioned the Conservatives' openness in taking away tax credits from hard working families after the election. He said many hard working Croydon families are £1300 a year worse off. He was proud of the administration's record despite the hardships, with the Fairfield College Green transformation, Westfield Hammerson and regeneration of New Addington district centre.

Councillor Stuart King in opposing the motion said that Labour's record in office shows they have increased openness and transparency, having re-introduced webcasting of Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny meetings, decisions over £500k must come to Cabinet, additional Scrutiny meetings to scrutinise more decisions, Members' allowances published on a monthly basis on the web, the public given more time for public questions at Council meetings. Public Question time introduced at the South London Waste Partnership by Councillor Collins. The Petitions threshold reduced from 10,000 to 1,000 for public petitions for the debate to take place at the Council meeting.

Councillor Jason Cummings in seconding the motion spoke about Councillor Tony Newman refusing to answer a member of the public's question three times at this meeting. He referred to the increasing number of delegated decisions being approved at Cabinet, including one for a small group to make delegated decisions to deal with government grant cuts. He was not sure whether all decisions were published anymore. He compared the different arrangements for the opposition to question the Cabinet under the Conservative and Labour administrations, where a number of questions are now asked before any answers are given, and follow up questions were not allowed. He challenged Councillor Tony Newman to take one question at a time at Cabinet on 20 October and allow a follow up question.

The motion was **put** and lost.

2. The second motion for debate

Proposed: Councillor Tony Newman
Seconded: Councillor Alisa Flemming

'This Council calls upon the government to end the practice of "In year cuts" to the Council's budget such as the 4 million pounds taken from the unaccompanied asylum seeking children's budget.'

Councillor Tony Newman in moving the motion said that he hoped that MPs would turn down the cuts in tax credits affecting around 28000 people in Croydon. He then spoke about the £4m in year cuts unaccompanied asylum seeking children's (UASC) budget and placed on record his thanks to the Leader of the Opposition for supporting the Council's case that Croydon's £4m be returned as a matter of urgency and that the unaccompanied asylum seeking children's budget is properly funded on a fair basis going forward. He spoke about the support received from the Borough's 3 MPs and his forthcoming meeting with the government minister on Wednesday 21 October, and that local government would be looking at that in relation to the wider tragedy of the plight of refugees from Syria and the Prime Minister's limited support. To offer that support Local Government has to have the right financial support from central government. He reported that the Conservative Government, was now supporting in year cuts in grant of £600k to the CALAT service. He called on Gavin Barwell MP and Chris Phelps MP to support the Council in opposing these cuts.

Councillor Alisa Flemming seconded the motion and reserved her right to speak.

Cllr Maria Gatland supported the motion and recalled the difficulties in funding for UASCs in 2006 which did not cover the costs and what the Conservative administration did in response to those cuts, and savage cuts to the CALAT service. She said they managed it through responsible budgeting. She agreed it was unfair to penalise Croydon because the UK border agency is situated here and said Croydon offered a universal service that should be supported by the government. She referred to the inability to manage the budget - £4m overspending on the schools service, the administration's borrowing policies and the cuts to street cleaning, tree pruning and the proposal for a travellers site beside Coombe Woods garden.

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Cllr John Wentworth supported the motion and wanted to focus on the impact of the cuts to UASCs. It wasn't possible to make 20% cuts without having an impact on the children. Was it possible to cut support without impact on their lives? He gave an example of having recently appointed a teacher, Ellis, at his school who had arrived in the UK in 2002 at the age of 12 as a UASC without speaking any English and is now an outstanding teacher and is also mentoring young people. He said that Ellis would want to tell Council Members that without the support he had received when he arrived in the UK he would not be the person he is today. Councillor Wentworth said this cut is disruptive and harmful and will cost more money in the long run.

Cllr Sara Bashford in support of the sentiment of the motion said that in year cuts were always regrettable. Regardless of the cuts to funding, the current administration have to make choices about what is funded or not. The budget is an ongoing process and has to be managed. She gave examples of choices the administration had made including: to spend £1.5m on changing the speed limit in the Borough to 20mph even though the Police said they could not enforce it; £22k spent on the stones of Croydon project; £200k on the Fairness Commission; £100k on the Ambition Festival; the bike ride in the town centre; putting forward 3 green belt locations for traveller sites even though it's against national government policy; encouraging backland development; charging for green garden waste collection; closing Fairfield Halls for 2.5 years with potential loss of 115 jobs.

Cllr Tim Pollard said he supported the view that UASC is a national service and should be funded on a national basis. It had been an ongoing discussion with government on the level of support for UASC and it was right to talk to the government to find a sensible solution. One mitigating factor is that there had been a general election this year, both sides made announcements on priorities for spending and cuts, and the reality is that savings in public spending have to be made. The CALAT announcement was not new, as Councillor Hall had mentioned it in a report several weeks ago. The CALAT service had sustained cuts in funding over many years. In summing up Cllr Pollard said that the Opposition would be supporting the motion.

Cllr Alisa Flemming in seconding the motion asked all to join in unanimously to oppose any further cuts to the Council's budget and to protest against the continued assault on local government finances. She spoke of the unfair financial settlements to Croydon compared to other Boroughs despite increasing levels of deprivation and the further divide in funding between inner and outer London. She went on to speak about the in-year cuts to UASC service, the unfunded costs of caring for unaccompanied young people (up to age 25) in excess of £5m, in-year cuts to the public health grant, and the recent announcement of cuts to the CALAT budget. She called on all Members to support the motion for a fair level of funding for Croydon and all its residents.

The motion was **put** and **carried** unanimously.

11. BUSINESS REPORT OF THE LEADER AND CABINET AND COUNCILLORS' WRITTEN QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS

The Leader presented the Business Report summarising the proceedings of the Cabinet since the last meeting of the Council.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules, written questions had been submitted in advance by Council Members and written replies had been given by the relevant Cabinet Members. The questions and answers had been placed in the Chamber and posted on the Council website. Supplementary questions were asked by Members of the Council and replies were given by the relevant Cabinet Members.

Each Cabinet Member was asked in turn if they had anything to add to their report. Questions were then invited from the Chamber for each Cabinet Member who replied orally to the questions on specific paragraphs or submitted questions.

The following Members asked questions on the Business Report:

Leader: Councillors T. Pollard, Pelling, D. Mead, S. Khan, Hale,
Councillor Mann (deputising for Cllr Godfrey): Councillors Rendle, Hale, H Pollard, Prince, Lewis
Councillor Letts: Councillors Wright, Audsley, Winborn, Buttinger, Hale
Councillor Watson: Councillor O'Connell
Councillor Bee: Councillors Thomas, Prince, Bashford, Audsley
Councillor Flemming: Councillors Gatland, Audsley, Thomas
Councillor Woodley: Councillors M. Mead, Hopley, D. Mead

The following Cabinet Members made announcements:

Councillor Newman: Sent congratulations to Cllr Godfrey and Sinead for becoming parents for the second time on Monday 12th October.

Councillor Letts: Paid tribute to the Croydon Business Awards which had been a success and a sell-out. She also advised that the launch of Business Month on 14 October was very successful for Croydon business, with good feedback received.

Councillor Watson: Acknowledged the good work of the people who organised Croydon's first craft beer festival last weekend in the Braithwaite Hall. It had taken 2 months to set up and supported local businesses, South London breweries and had exceeded expectations.

Councillor Flemming: Took the opportunity to congratulate the over 50,000 young people in Croydon's primary and secondary schools, showing improvements in A levels results, and early indications show 61% achieved GCSE 5 A-Cs in English and Maths, higher than the national average.

Councillor Hall: Highlighted how unfair the government's in year grant cuts are, and the impact of the proposed cuts in tax credits on homelessness.

Councillor Butler: Highlighted her responses to questions on the government's attack on affordable housing.

Councillor Collins: Further to his response to CQ405-15 pointed out to Councillor Thomas that the fly tipping statistics he referred to relate to 2013/14 during the Conservative administration, not 2014/15. The report for the 2014/15 would be out in a couple of weeks.

At 21.30 Councillor Newman moved a procedure motion 1.11.9 to move to the next item of business. This was seconded by Councillor Collins and agreed by Council.

Council **RESOLVED** to note the business report of the Leader and Cabinet.

11. COUNCILLORS' OPEN SESSION ON WARD MATTERS ON BEHALF OF OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Councillor Paul Scott speaking about Woodside Ward, updated the Council on the regeneration work being carried out in the South Norwood area. He thanked the organisers, volunteers and sponsors of 'SNAF' – South Norwood Arts Festival, which was being held on Saturday 24 October. He spoke about the re-opening of Stanley Halls and thanked the trustees for their hard work. A full-time centre manager had been appointed and a £3m Heritage Lottery bid was planned in 2016. He also spoke about the improvements at the main crossroads at Station Road, with street art, places to meet and an avenue of trees.

Councillor Andrew Stranack spoke about Heathfield Ward, and the Coloma Trust academy which opened in Monks Hill in September 2010. New facilities had been opened in 2014 and Ofsted had awarded it a good rating. Disputes in management of the community sports facility had delayed it from opening till April 2015 because of the Labour administration. He went on to say that the Trust were willing to open to the public at nil cost to the local taxpayer in 2014, via a dual use agreement. Under Council management of the facilities, the Trust has to hire the sports facilities to hold exams there and had been refused access to the facilities for a recent parents evening. He asked that the Council work with the Academy Trust to get a dual use agreement in place.

Councillor Pat Clouder spoke about Thornton Heath ward where she had lived for 30 years and was proud to have represented for 18 years. She said she had never been so excited for the future of the area, including funding of £2.7m on better homes fund, better shopping environment for the district centre, and much needed recreation for a deprived ward. The business community are looking forward to the improvements and estate agents are inundated with inquiries. A packed programme of activities for the area has included Jazz concerts, the Thornton Heath festival, and other community events which have been a huge success. The proceeds of the festival will fund the Xmas lights in High Street.

Councillor Jeet Bains spoke about Coulsdon West ward, and gave examples of where the administration had failed locally since May 2014. A toilet that needed repair since December 2014, with no water supply, a door that won't shut, and issues with the lighting and electricity. A contractor had disconnected everything when highway works were being carried out in the area. He spoke of the lack of parking in Coulsdon West, and the effect of local regeneration including Aldi and Waitrose. He spoke about the previous administration arrangements for the former CALAT centre to be used for additional parking, but that this had now been reversed. He asked that Cllr Newman commit to providing parking at the CALAT centre.

Councillor Andrew Pelling spoke about Waddon ward and of the prospective flyover at Waddon which would be a 'monstrosity' and would take part of Duppas Hill recreation ground. He preferred the 2nd option, with the Waddon Hotel, a historical building, being retained, and Fiveways improvement. He went on to say that there was local concern about the additional traffic from these new developments. A complaint about the planning process for the incinerator had been made to Sutton Police who are investigating. He also spoke about the Connect Croydon application across Roman Way to Wandle Park and the likely reduced level of Police enforcement with the prospect of the PCO team being cut or deleted.

12. BUSINESS REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Councillor Sean Fitzsimons, Chair of Scrutiny & Strategic Overview Committee, presented a written report to Council summarising the proceedings of that Committee since the last ordinary meeting of the Council, including matters considered by the Scrutiny Sub-Committees.

Council RESOLVED

- 1.1 To note the Scrutiny work programme for 2015-16 and scrutiny activity since the 30 June 2015.
- 1.2 That all Members are asked to consider the opportunities offered by Local Action Mini Reviews and what contribution they or their constituents can make to these or to the topics selected for Scrutiny as part of the 2015-16 scrutiny work programme.
- 1.3 To note the Lines of Enquiry for each review and consider whether they or their constituents may be able to contribute comments or questions for consideration and to tweet/facebook the topics to their followers

The Meeting ended at 21.57

Due to a technical error this meeting was not webcast. The meeting soundcast can be accessed here:

<https://m.soundcloud.com/croydon-press-office/croydon-council-meeting-19-oct-2015>