

DRAFT MINUTES

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON

**Monday 24 April 2017 at 6:30 p.m. in Council
Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon, CR0
1NX**

Present: Councillor H Ali, Councillor J Audsley, Councillor J Avis, Councillor J Bains, Councillor S Bashford, Councillor S Bennett, Councillor M Bird, Councillor C Bonner, Councillor S Brew, Councillor A Butler, Councillor J Buttinger, Councillor R Canning, Councillor R Chatterjee, Councillor S Chowdhury, Councillor L Clancy, Councillor P Clouder, Councillor S Collins, Councillor M Creatura, Councillor J Cummings, Councillor M Fisher, Councillor S Fitzsimons, Councillor A Flemming, Councillor M Gatland, Councillor T Godfrey, Councillor L Hale, Councillor S Hall, Councillor P Hay-Justice, Councillor M Henson, Councillor Y Hopley, Councillor K Jewitt, Councillor H Kabir, Councillor B Khan, Councillor S Khan, Councillor S King, Councillor M Kyeremeh, Councillor T Letts, Councillor O Lewis, Councillor S Mann, Councillor M Mansell, Councillor D Mead, Councillor M Mead, Councillor V Mohan, Councillor M Neal, Councillor T Newman, Councillor S O'Connell, Councillor A Pelling, Councillor J Perry, Councillor H Pollard, Councillor T Pollard, Councillor J Prince, Councillor B Quadir, Councillor A Rendle, Councillor P Ryan, Councillor P Scott, Councillor M Selva, Councillor M Shahul-Hameed, Councillor D Speakman, Councillor A Stranack, Councillor P Thomas, Councillor W Trakas-Lawlor, Councillor M Watson, Councillor J Wentworth, Councillor S Winborn, Councillor D Wood, Councillor L Woodley, Councillor C Wright, Councillor C Young

MINUTES - PART A

A1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Thompson, Bee and Holland.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Mann and Pelling

A2

Minutes

The Mayor highlighted the following amendments to be made to the minutes:

- Pack page 15, second bullet point, the first sentence to read, “Councillor Hale asked how many new Council homes had been started and completed by May 2018”.
- Pack page 15, second bullet point, the beginning of the second sentence to read, “Councillor Butler responded that Councillor Hale had failed to state...”
- Pack page 15, third bullet point, the first sentence to read “Councillor Hale asked a supplementary question on whether this meant that no new Council houses would be built in Croydon.”

Council **RESOLVED** that, inclusive of the above stated amendments, the minutes be approved as a correct record of that meeting.

A3

Disclosure of Interest

There were none.

A4

Urgent Business (if any)

There was no urgent business to consider.

A5

Announcements

The Mayor opened the item by presenting an award of citation to Mr Deva Ponnoosami. The Mayor stated that Mr Ponnoosami had been the Chair of the Mayor’s Charity fundraising board and had volunteered much of his time throughout the year. The Mayor stated that Mr Ponnoosami was an inspiration and a good friend to Croydon.

The Mayor announced that Jacqueline Harris-Baker had been formally appointed as the Council’s new Director of Law and Monitoring Officer. The Mayor offered his congratulations to Mrs Harris-Baker on behalf of the Council.

The Mayor further announced that the date for the planned fundraising dinner at the Zafran Restaurant would be re-arranged and that all monies raised would be donated to victims of the tram incident.

The Leader announced that BH Live were the intended new operator for the refurbished Fairfield Halls. The Leader passed on his thanks

to Councillor Godfrey and his team who had worked so hard on making the project a reality.

A6

THE CROYDON DEBATE

The Mayor began the item by inviting the lead petitioner, Mr Dave Witcher to introduce the petition.

Mr Witcher stated that the bend in the road that the petition pertained to had seen incidents of drivers losing control for a long time. Historically most incidents had happened in the night time, however a recent spike in incidents had included many during the day time as well. Incidents generally included cars losing control and veering onto the pavement or crashing into residential properties along the road. The road also had a well-used bus stop.

When concerns were raised with the Highways Improvement department, residents were informed that no data was held on incidents on the road and as there had been no fatalities it was considered a low priority.

Residents believed that there was complacency from the Council and a considerable risk of serious injury or death if the situation was allowed to continue. Residents wanted recognition of the frequency of incidents on the road and for action to be taken to address the dangers posed.

Councillor King thanked Mr Witcher for leading on the petition, and remarked that a meeting with him on the previous weekend had been helpful to understand the conditions on the road.

The Council recognised that measures could be taken such as road markings to mitigate the risks, but accepted that further action could be required. Councillor King stated that officers had been asked to review the incidents that had occurred on the road. It was noted that excessive speed was the most likely reason for the majority of the incidents however the Council did not hold enforcement powers to address this; the police were relied upon to do so. Councillor King stated that the Council would feedback the concerns to the police and encouraged residents to report incidents that occur to the police as well. It was also proposed that a community road-watch scheme for the area could be effective, as it had been in other risk areas in the borough.

Councillor Chatterjee welcomed the petition, and agreed with Councillor King that solving the problem was complex. Councillor Chatterjee illustrated to the Council several key incidents that had taken place on the road in the previous year.

The incidents included a car losing control into a residential driveway, and another vehicle crashed into the wall of a residential property. An incident in November 2016 resulted in severe concussion of both the driver and passenger in the vehicle. In all the cases, it was stated, there had been a real risk of severe injury.

Councillor King thanked Councillor Chatterjee for setting out the recent circumstances that had promoted the petition. Residents were assured that there was no complacency from the Council on the issue and a review into the circumstances would take place. Work to address the issues on the road would commence promptly and Ward Councillors would be liaised with as part of the process.

A7

CROYDON QUESTION TIME

The item began with questions from the public gallery.

Peter Collier asked for information on obtaining permits for recycling centres in the borough. Councillor Collins responded that two forms of ID were required to receive a permit however the process was relaxed and few difficulties had been experienced with the process.

Robert Ward asked for an update on the Fairfield Halls development. Councillor Godfrey responded that the asbestos clearance work was expected to be completed by June 2017 and the new operator was due to be confirmed in May 2017. The project was on course for completion in November 2018 as scheduled.

Stephen Pollard asked whether decisions were being properly made at Planning Committee in relation to the Brick by Brick development company. Mr Pollard stated that at the previous Planning Committee 100% of residents were against the application related to Kingsdown Avenue however the application was still approved. Councillor Butler responded that the issue raised had already been explained at the Committee meeting; representations at Planning Committee had to be considered on their content and not on the volume received. There was a government policy framework as well as planning statute that had to be considered by Committee Members, and decisions had to be based on the evidence provided.

Shasha Khan asked whether the Council had concerns related to the new Harris Academy school on the Purley Way, given concerns in the area related to air quality. Councillor Flemming stated that the site had already been designated for educational use and had had a school on that site. Mitigating measures had been put in place to protect the air quality such as special windows and filter systems. It was reiterated that the best interests of the children's health would be forefront.

Councillor King also stated that air quality was a public health crisis in London, with many deaths attributed to it, and the Council was consulting on a major air quality action plan for the borough. It was added that the Planning Committee had recently rejected an application for a new school in Thornton Heath due to poor air quality at the location.

Shasha Khan asked why the site at the London Road and St James

Road junction in West Croydon was still derelict, six years after the riots. Councillor Butler responded that the site was subject to complex land holdings. Immediately following the riots, the Council had been proactive in holding briefings with the owners and encouraging joint work on the site. Unfortunately the owners of the site had elected not to do this but to develop their plots individually. It had taken significant time to finance, design and get planning consent for the site but the Council was doing all it could to help the process.

Mr Whybrow asked where residents could safely dispose of old paint tins and other hazardous waste in the borough. Councillor Collins responded that he was aware of the difficulties raised by Mr Whybrow and was holding discussions with the Environmental Agency around the possibility of allowing one of the borough's centres to receive such waste products. Mr Whybrow would be written to personally to be informed on the progress.

Mora McCarthy asked what the Council response was to an LBC presenter stating that Croydon was a "dump". Councillor Watson responded that he hadn't heard the programme in question but that the attitude expressed was outdated. Croydon had changed enormously with examples such as the redevelopment at Surrey Street, the new Fairfield Halls, Box Park, and the borough's growing tech centre. Croydon was a place that people want to live and work in – evidenced by the demand for homes and office space in the borough.

The Mayor then moved the item on to Councillor questions to the Leader.

- Councillor Tim Pollard asked whether measures would be undertaken to restore the public's trust in the Planning Committee. Councillor Newman stated that excellent Council officers and lawyers were advising the Committee, with robust debates at the meeting, and the decision making process had already been explained by Councillor Butler. The Council was providing affordable housing through Brick by Brick yet the Conservatives appeared to be opposing it. Councillor Newman stated that the Committee was well respected but that there would always be some disappointed groups of residents for some developments. Despite this there were laws that had to be followed for the Committee's decision making process.
- Councillor Tim Pollard asked a supplementary question on whether the Leader accepted that there was a perception that the Planning Committee was not being conducted properly. Councillor Newman responded that there were misogynistic

undertones to the suggestion of bias between Councillor Butler as the Cabinet Member for Homes, Regeneration and Planning and Councillor Scott as Chair of the Planning Committee. Marriage between the two did not cloud either Councillors' judgement. The Leader stated that there were no such questions posed when Councillor Tim Pollard was the Cabinet Member responsible for Fairfield Halls and Councillor Helen Pollard sat on the Fairfield Halls Board.

- Councillor Tim Pollard made a point of personal explanation stating that when he became the Cabinet Member responsible for Fairfield halls, Councillor Helen Pollard resigned from her position on the Fairfield Halls Board.
- Councillor Butler made a point of personal explanation, stating that Labour Councillors stood on shared values, and one of the values was the delivery of affordable housing. Councillor Butler stated that the accusations made were disgraceful, and that she was an independent person.
- Councillor Scott made a point of personal explanation, stating that the issue of his relationship with Councillor Butler vis-à-vis his position as the Planning Committee Chair had been considered by legal officers and deemed not relevant. Councillor Scott stated that all decisions at the Planning Committee were made in an appropriate manner.
- Councillor Prince welcomed the announcement of the new Fairfield Halls operator and questioned the reasons behind the opposition calling-in the decision and thus causing delay. Councillor Newman responded that Councillor Tim Pollard had casted aspersions when the plans for Fairfield had first been announced at Cabinet. Since that time the Conservatives had at Planning Committee opposed the residential plans as part of the development, and had now sought to delay the process by calling it in. Councillor Newman stated that this conduct suggested that the Conservatives did not want development in the borough.
- Councillor Prince asked a supplementary question related to Councillor Helen Pollard's decision to step down from the Board of Fairfield Halls. Councillor Newman responded that he paid tribute to Councillor Dudley Mead who, it was claimed, had pressured the previous Conservative administration to develop Fairfield Halls. Councillor Newman stated that the venue was not fit for purpose and the works being undertaken would secure it for future generations.

- Councillor Brew asked why Councillors Flemming and Woodley had not attended a Health and Wellbeing Board meeting for several months. Councillor Newman responded that the Board was new and there had to be a balanced approach on how effectively Cabinet Members' time should be spent. It was a challenge, especially given the cuts to the Council's budgets, and was something that was being looked into.
- Councillor Brew asked a supplementary question on what changes were being considered. Councillor Newman responded that the political representation on the Health and Wellbeing Board would be reviewed and in due course those changes would be announced.
- Councillor Pelling asked what challenges the Council faced with the current funding cuts from central government. Councillor Newman stated that it was a huge challenge, with adult social services being particularly badly affected, yet central government allocating additional money to neighbouring Surrey County Council.

At this point in the meeting the Chief Executive reminded Members to adhere to the pre-election period guidance that had been issued.

- Councillor Pelling asked a supplementary question related to what advantage could be gained from the increased growth witnessed in the borough. Councillor Newman responded that such advantages were already taking place and included Croydon being a London Living Wage Borough, an increased cultural offer and large employers moving into Croydon.

The Mayor then moved the item to Councillor questions to the first pool of Cabinet Members.

Councillor Collins announced that the organisation Keep Britain Tidy had recognised Croydon as an exemplary council.

Councillor King announced that earlier in the year Cabinet had received the air quality action plan and a summit would be launched, with a new date pending due to the general election. Councillor King also shared positive feedback from a South Norwood resident related to Council work undertaken on a pot hole near his home.

Councillor Hall announced that the previous financial year had seen the highest collection rate of business and council tax ever and the

officers involved were congratulated. Croydon had received a Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) award for social value, through the London Living Wage and other schemes. It was further reported that one month into the financial year, some important funding areas, such as adult social care and unaccompanied asylum seekers, had not been agreed with central government, and consequently the Council was having to manage unknowns that were out of local authority control.

- Councillor Bashford asked whether evidence was taken into account when making decisions. Councillor King responded that evidence is taken seriously along with a wide range of factors such as officer evidence.
- Councillor Bashford asked a supplementary question related to the Labour-run Manchester City Council's decision to withdraw 20mph zones in the city. Councillor King responded that Croydon was not Manchester, and that Conservative-run Wandsworth had implemented 20mph zones in that borough.
- Councillor Thomas asked whether the traffic surrounding the Purely Oaks recycling centre would be addressed by the Council. Councillor Collins – responded that a recent survey conducted by the South London Waste Partnership evidenced a 98% satisfaction rate from the public. The centre had been reconfigured to make it more efficient but there would inevitably be some traffic at peak times.
- Councillor Thomas asked a supplementary question related to whether the centre could be enlarged by expanding the site. Councillor Collins responded that the previous administration had been in power for eight years and had made no improvements to the centre. By contrast it was stated that in the three years of the current administration the site had been reconfigured, and plans were in place for improvement works on the other two centres in the borough.
- Councillor Lewis asked how the recent record business rate collection levels had been achieved. Councillor Hall paid tribute to the officers involved and noted that the system for collection had been overhauled with the implementation of new procedures. The Gateway service had also helped with payment plans provided for residents struggling to pay. The additional monies collected would help fund Council services that were under pressure.

- Councillor Lewis asked a supplementary question related to how the collection performance compared to the previous administration. Councillor Hall informed the Council of the figures and noted that the current administration's collection rate performance was better than the previous administration and was also high in the league table of other London Councils.
- Councillor Hale asked whether there had been any real changes to the East Croydon bus station after the £5.4m development work. Councillor King responded that the bus station works were the final phase of a wider £5.4m project which included improvements to the wider public realm in and around East Croydon. The area was the main gateway for many visitors from outside Croydon and the bus station had received an upgrade which had made it both more attractive and accessible.
- Councillor Hale asked a supplementary question regarding the apparent absence of electronic boards at the bus station. Councillor King confirmed that there was one large countdown board at the station for live bus schedules.
- Councillor Clouder asked whether the allocated £1.2bn from central government would provide for enough funding to deal with the backlog of pot hole resurfacing required. Councillor King responded that with the current allocated central government funding, the backlog would take over ten years to be completed. It was further noted that only £74m of that money would be available to London Councils.
- Councillor Mohan, asked whether the borough's streets were being cleaned to the "A" rated standard. Councillor Collins responded that the terms of the current contract did not require this standard, instead performance was measured on frequency of shifts. In the new contract for 2018 the standard would be met and the policy behind this contract would be measuring performance by outcome, not output. The Council's monitoring officers were working with the contractors to ensure this standard would be met. It was also stated that new equipment due to be introduced would provide both increased quality and efficiency.
- Councillor Mohan asked a supplementary question on whether this meant the borough would continue to get a "B" standard in the meantime. Councillor Collins stated that the contractor had implemented training with their street sweeping staff and the Council's monitoring officers had been working hard on

monitoring improvements. Residents had fed back that in bad areas they had seen significant improvements. It was also highlighted that there would be no loss of street sweepers in the new contract; staff would work more efficiently with the roll out of new equipment.

- Councillor Audsley asked how recent findings that 30 Croydon schools were positioned in the vicinity of high polluting roads would be built into the Council's air quality action review. Councillor King responded that the report's findings were important as young people were the most vulnerable to poor air quality. The information obtained from the investigation would influence the approach of the action review, particularly on policy for schools, which could take the form of supplementary planning guidance.
- Councillor Audsley asked a supplementary question related to what the Council could do to improve air quality in the borough. Councillor King responded that the Council was looking into what action it would take to tackle air quality and show leadership on the issue. An example was the upcoming procurement for the Council's Zip Cars in which it was hoped the provision of electric and hybrid cars would be provided as part of the new contract.
- Councillor Buttinger asked whether the Council had run out of money for repairing potholes. Councillor King responded that the extent of repairs was limited to how much money was available to undertake them. The Council continued to monitor Croydon's roads twice a year and where defects were identified, they were scheduled for repair work. With additional funding repair work could be implemented more promptly.
- Councillor Buttinger asked a supplementary question related to a letter a resident received from the Council that suggested there was no money available for pot hole repairs. Councillor King responded that the timing of the letter would provide the context and that it was likely referring to in-year budgets at that particular time.
- Councillor Mann asked what action the Council was taking on the recycling of coffee cups and plastic water bottles. Councillor Collins responded that the Council would look into what other local authorities were doing on this issue such as the use of special bins. It was also important to work with coffee shops on the matter and explore options such as sponsorship of such bins. Councillor Collins committed that officers would produce a paper on the matter and seek

support and guidance from relevant organisations.

Councillor Pelling made a point of order as to whether use of the Council Wi-Fi services would fall under the scope of the pre-election period.

The Chief Executive advised that the specific issue of Wi-Fi was not relevant to the Council meeting, and requested that the Councillor contact officers after the meeting for further information on the guidance issued to Members.

- Councillor Fisher asked how many residents had visited the Purley Oaks recycling centre since the introduction of the permit scheme. Councillor Collins responded that the data had not been collated yet but would provide such information to the Councillor when it had been collated.
- Councillor Fisher asked a supplementary question related to whether the Cabinet Member could be confident that the new scheme was popular with residents without this data. Councillor Collins responded that he held regular briefings with officers and had received positive emails from residents.

The Mayor then moved on to questions to Cabinet Members from the second pool.

Councillor Godfrey announced that the Council's archives service had been awarded accreditation from the National Archives. It was also announced that the selected operator for the new Fairfield Halls had been announced that week and a meet and greet between Councillors and representatives from the new operator would be arranged for the near future.

Councillor Flemming announced that the new vision for children's services had recently been launched and would promote the vision of safe and happy young people in the borough. In addition there were ongoing improvements in Croydon's secondary schools Ofsted ratings and Croydon was the sixth best London borough for providing children with one of their top three preferred school choices. Finally, progress was being made to deliver a new Special Educational Needs (SEN) school in the borough.

Councillor Woodley announced that she had submitted a letter of complaint in relation to comments made at the last Council meeting by Councillor Hopley. It was claimed that the Cabinet Member was responsible for an £11m overspend in the People department when in fact the overspend she was responsible for was £2.393m. Councillor Woodley stated that contrary to comments made, she held

a 100% attendance record for the meetings she was required to attend. Additionally, it was announced that the Alliance agreement had been signed and a successful Food Borough event had been held at City Hall, with details due to go to the next Cabinet meeting.

- Councillor Gatland asked whether the Cabinet Member would ensure that there would not be a repeat of the situation the previous year whereby the Council returned unspent pupil premium funding back to central government. Councillor Flemming responded that the funding was received late in the year, hence why some of the money was not spent. Assurance was made that there would not be an underspend in the current year and Councillor Flemming reiterated the administration's strong commitment to young people.
- Councillor Gatland asked a supplementary question related to the Times Education Supplement naming the Council for the return of some of the pupil premium funding. Councillor Flemming stated that nothing new had been raised in the question and that assurances had already been made and reiterated the ambitions the Council had for young people.
- Councillor Rendle asked whether the Cabinet Member welcomed the developments in Ashburton Park that were making the area a focal point for the local community. Councillor Godfrey congratulated the three Ward Councillors for successfully lobbying to ensure the changes were made at Ashburton Park. The next stage would be the creation of a masterplan for the park and the Council would involve residents in that process.
- Councillor O'Connell asked what the Council was doing to tackle youth knife crime in the borough. Councillor Flemming responded that the Croydon Congress in July 2017 would focus on young people and the agenda would be determined by young people. It would be an opportunity to listen to the issues being faced by young people. The Cabinet Member had held meetings with the police borough commander and it was hoped that the Congress would provide a platform for young people to feed into the policing and safety strategies.
- Councillor O'Connell asked a supplementary question related to the emphasis of meetings and strategies rather than action for young people. Councillor Flemming responded that a lot of work had been undertaken to support young people and identifying the many issues that caused youth crime. The Council was committed to listening to the voices of young

people.

- Councillor Pelling asked whether the Cabinet Member was concerned by the CCG's proposals to remove funding to voluntary groups who support people suffering from mental health. Councillor Woodley responded that she was extremely concerned by the proposals, and that the proposed cuts were being planned for without looking in detail at the potential consequences. The Council had been lobbying the CCG to provide details of the services intended to be cut, and if possible for the proposals to be dropped altogether.
- Councillor Pelling asked a supplementary question related to the possible consequences of funding being withdrawn from organisations such as Mind. Councillor Woodley responded that she was impressed by the extent of the work Mind undertook in the community. There was serious concern over the potential loss of the support Mind gave to vulnerable residents who could not fill in benefit forms, and in the long term such cuts would cost more in the long run.
- Councillor Hopley asked why CASSUP members had not been consulted with for the respite care review undertaken by the Council. Councillor Woodley responded that on 3 April 2017 she had attended a meeting on the consultation that had been undertaken for the review and members of CASSUP were present and everyone present at the event expressed their satisfaction with the process. In addition a video of that event had been produced.
- Councillor Hopley asked a supplementary question regarding emails received from CASSUP members stating they had not been consulted, and shock at the cost of the review totalling £70,000. Councillor Woodley responded that CASSUP panel members were present at the 3 April 2017 event, and this could be evidenced in the video of the meeting.
- Councillor Audsley asked what action was being taken to oppose the proposals to introduce grammar schools into Croydon. Councillor Flemming responded that the executive head teacher of the Folio Education Trust which had been linked to the grammar school proposals in Croydon had released a statement denying such claims.
- Councillor Creatura asked a question related to the decision making process over the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee writing to the Secretary of State over

concerns on IVF treatment provision in Croydon. Councillor Fitzsimons responded that scrutiny was independent of the executive and political parties and did not fall under the portfolio of the Cabinet Member. Any issues over scrutiny were to be raised through the scrutiny leads for the respective groups.

The Mayor moved the item to Councillor questions to Cabinet Members from the third pool.

Councillor Butler stated that the Council had been announced as the winners of the public sector category awards at the National Urban Design Awards 2017 for the delivery of the Connected Croydon programme in central Croydon. Thanks were made to the staff involved in the project.

Councillor Watson announced that the Council had been named the digital council of the year at the LGC awards for its work in getting residents online and increasing digital skills. It was a testament to both the staff and organisations involved for the excellent work undertaken.

- Councillor Perry asked why the special planning meeting for the Westfield Hammerson development had been cancelled. Councillor Butler responded that officers from Croydon Council, the Greater London Authority (GLA), the Mayor of London's Office and central government were all involved in the scheme. There were outstanding negotiations with Westfield Hammerson that needed to be concluded to ensure that Croydon got the best deal out of the scheme.
- Councillor Perry asked a supplementary question related to why there had been a lack of publicly available information to update residents on progress. Councillor Butler responded that the current period had been very sensitive with regard to negotiations and therefore time was required to conclude the outstanding issues before moving forward.
- Councillor Clouder asked a question regarding the Homelessness Reduction Bill that was before Parliament and whether legislation alone would address homelessness. Councillor Butler responded that prevention of homelessness was one of the most important steps the Council was undertaking. The Gateway service empowered residents to

keep their current accommodation as well as support residents in securing future accommodation. The Gateway also assisted those at risk of homelessness in areas such as debt and money management, finding work, providing rent loans, and the introduction of a choice-based letting scheme. The last quarter showed applications for homelessness reduced by 20% compared to the previous year. Councillor Butler further stated that while there was support for the Homelessness Reduction Bill, the proposed funding was inadequate for the task, as was evidenced in the roll-out in Wales.

- Councillor Bains, asked how the Council could increase public confidence in the Planning Committee. Councillor Butler responded that it was a difficult challenge as planning was an important and emotional issue for many residents. However, the Committee was independent, held in public and both officers and lawyers were present in an advisory capacity. Councillor Butler stated that she was confident that the Committee acted fairly and those involved should be thanked for their services.
- Councillor Bains asked a supplementary question as to whether future Planning Committee meetings would be webcast. Councillor Butler responded that it was the previous Conservative administration that had stopped webcasting the meetings. In addition the previous administration had stopped sending letters to neighbours of a proposed planning application, which under the current administration had been reintroduced. Councillor Butler stated that consideration would be given to the webcasting proposal.
- Councillor Canning asked what steps the Council had taken to oppose the business rate hikes from central government. Councillor Watson responded that he had lobbied against the business rate increase as it disadvantaged Croydon businesses. The Council had applied for transitional relief however the delays in implementation had created uncertainty. Councillor Watson believed that it should be local authorities who should set the rates and relief and not central government. The Council had established its own relief scheme for small businesses.
- Councillor Clancy, asked for details on the Place Review Panel such as running costs and number of meetings held. Councillor Butler responded that the Panel had met monthly since its inception and was a self-funding committee.

- Councillor Clancy asked a supplementary question regarding whether the Panel added value for money given the very early stage it considered applications and raised concerns over the transparency of the reports that went to the Panel. Councillor Butler responded that the point raised over what stage in planning the Panel should consider applications was a valid one, with positives and negatives on being earlier or later in the process. The success of the Panel would be reviewed to look at whether it was aiding the planning process.
- Councillor Rendle asked if the Cabinet Member could support businesses in Lower Addiscombe Road who were badly affected by the rise in business rates. Councillor Watson responded that the Council was aware of the effects of the business rate hike across the borough and would do all it could to support businesses.
- Councillor Rendle asked a supplementary question on what could be done to increase the percentage of autistic people in employment. Councillor Watson responded that it was important to promote the business case for equality and to get disabled people back into employment. To this end, a number of schemes were being supported, such as the reverse jobs fayre. There was untapped potential that businesses were missing out on, with some of the best workers being those with disabilities.
- Councillor O'Connell asked why there had been little Council focus on knife crime, despite the significant rise of incidents amongst young people in the borough. Councillor Ali responded that the Safer Croydon Board had discussed the issue and it was not solely an issue in Croydon. The Council was working closely with the Police and a lot of actions were being taken such as the training of front line Council staff to undertake weapon sweeps that had resulted in the confiscation of a number of weapons. There needed to be a stronger focus on prevention and a communication strategy was being formulated for young people with the central message that carrying a knife puts a person at more risk, not less, of crime. There was also a need to challenge the misconception that the rise in knife crime was connected to gangs.
- Councillor O'Connell asked a supplementary question on whether the Cabinet Member would make knife crime the number one priority of the portfolio. Councillor Ali responded that her previous answer set out how seriously the issue was being taken and that updates would be delivered to the Council on progress in tackling the issue.

At this point of the meeting the Mayor left the Chamber and the Deputy Mayor took the role of Chair of the meeting.

- Councillor Bennett asked when funding would be secured for the borough's project combatting Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

At this point in the meeting the Mayor returned to the Chamber and took the Chair again.

- Councillor Ali responded that the Council had met the funding for the project when the CCG had announced their withdrawal of the money. The Council was looking to ensure the staff post remained, however there were issues over who would technically be the staff member's employer. Croydon had been recognised nationally as leading the fight against FGM with many initiatives undertaken by the Council.
- Councillor Bennett asked a supplementary question stating concerns that the project worker post had not been guaranteed funding from June 2017. Councillor Ali responded that she was aware of the situation and was working to ensure the post was funded. Croydon University Hospital had recently taken over funding for an independent domestic violence advisor which the Council had previously funded, which had freed up Council resources that could be allocated to other areas such as FGM work.

A8

MEMBER PETITIONS

The Mayor invited Councillor Canning to read out the title of the submitted Member petition which read:

"We, the petitioners below, call upon Croydon council to improve pedestrian safety by providing a zebra crossing on Bramley Hill near its junction with the Southbridge and Tanfield Roads."

Councillor King responded by commending the Ward Councillors for their leadership on the issue. It was announced that a Zebra crossing had been secured for that financial year and was scheduled to be in place by the end of 2017.

The Mayor invited Councillor Hay-Justice to read out the title of the submitted Member petition which read:

“We the undersigned, demand that Croydon Council and TFL Buses put a zebra crossing across Davidson Road to aid the safe crossing of children and families getting to and from school to prevent an otherwise inevitable road traffic accident.

Demand that other traffic calming measures be put in place, including visible road signage that states the 20mph zone and school signage and that there is proper enforcement of speed limits and illegal parking on Davidson Road, Brampton Road and Northway Road.

Demand that there is a reduction in traffic on Brampton Road, through the introduction resident parking permits and additional measures such as a one-way system if that proves necessary.

Demand that Croydon Council ban car parking along the stretch of Davidson Road that the school is on (between Brampton Road and Northway Road and on the side that the school is on only).

Demand that the Council work with local people (perhaps in partnership with Sustrans) to encourage them to use walking/biking/scooting/taking the bus to school as an alternative to driving as this will have a big impact on traffic volume around school drop off and pick up times. If barriers alternatives can be identified, then they can be addressed.”

Councillor King responded by commending the Ward Councillors for their leadership on the issue, and announced that there would be a zebra crossing at the position by Davidson Primary Academy school in the near future.

The Mayor invited Councillor Young to read out the title of the submitted Member petition which read:

“We, the residents of Dovercourt Avenue, Thornton Heath in the London Borough of Croydon, petition the Croydon Council to consider making ‘Dovercourt Avenue’ one-way working.

Traffic access into Dovercourt Avenue, is extremely difficult to travel in either direction due to number of vehicles parked on either side of the road, especially at the two bends. It is extremely difficult to manoeuvre also. Even delivery people refuse to deliver because they can't have access to ones' house.

We submit this petition with a view that the Council will carry out our wishes in order to solve the above mentioned problem.”

Councillor King responded that the Council received a high volume of such requests, but due to the particular problems faced by residents at Dovercourt Avenue, the work required would be accommodated into the work programme for that year.

COUNCIL DEBATE MOTIONS

One motion, with cross party support, was submitted for debate.

"This Council along with the overwhelming majority of Croydon residents stands in solidarity with Rekar Ahmed and celebrates Croydon's diversity, and pledges to never allow hate to divide us."

Councillor Newman proposed the motion and stated that Rekar was a 17 year old Kurdish Iranian, who had come to Croydon to seek safety and instead found himself the victim of a brutal attack. The police were commended for their swift response to the incident and the ongoing reassurance provided to the community. Councillor Newman also highlighted the local residents who expressed their opposition to what had taken place. Politicians from both sides were thanked and it was declared that hate would never be allowed to divide the community. Croydon celebrated its diversity and stood in solidarity with Rekar.

Councillor Tim Pollard seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

Councillor O'Connell stated that Rekar had travelled thousands of miles to escape the horrors he had experienced and, despite the terrible events, he was amongst friends in Croydon. That is why the motion was important, to make that point clear. Councillor O'Connell had been to community events across the borough which have highlighted the beauty and strength of Croydon's diversity. A very important event was held by the Croydon Voluntary Action organisation that highlighted the complexity surrounding hate crime; it was important to establish why those young people acted as they did. The following months would see high emotion and debate between the political parties during the election, however the motion was an example of politicians at their best.

Councillor Ali stated that the vicious attack on Rekar had taken place only a month after the previous Council meeting. The events had shocked everyone and parallels had been drawn with the attack on Stephen Lawrence, with the resulting Macpherson inquiry of his murder concluding that the metropolitan police were institutionally racist. This had led to sweeping reform in the police and the response to the attack on Rekar showed how far the police had come since that time. Tribute was paid to the police for their swift response to the incident and the dedication shown by officers. Praise was also extended to the local community, who had come forward as witnesses to the attack, held a vigil within two days of the incident and held a unity protest in the centre of town the following week. The Shirley Community Centre had also held a special Good Friday service. The Bishop of Croydon, the Metropolitan Police

Borough Commander, local Councillors and Kurdish community representatives had all stood together against hate and division. The rise in reported hate crime highlighted the fragility of this diversity; however, following the Bishop of Croydon's words, "love was the opposite of hate", and should be the focus.

Councillor Bennett stated it was sad that such a debate was necessary, and shone an unwanted spotlight on Croydon. The Shrublands Estate where the attack took place was not a problem estate, it was an estate with problems. A Kurdish community in Shrublands had been established for many years, with 50 languages spoken in the area and a vibrant diversity. There were over a thousand households in Shrublands and a small group of violent people should not bring the reputation of the area down. The local residents' associations were commended for their work in the aftermath of the incident. Practical solutions were now required to nurture the community and bring it together, such as improvements to the community centre and supporting the local youth groups. It would be local people who would know the best solutions for the area, and the best part of being a Councillor was meeting the extraordinary residents who achieved extraordinary things.

Councillor Wood stated that it was a sad privilege to speak on the motion, and was shocked and disgusted when he heard the news of the attack. However, a few days after the attack Councillor Wood stated that he had witnessed the real Croydon. Near a local shop he had witnessed a Polish nurse who had been injured, and whilst waiting for the ambulance to arrive, a group of people from diverse backgrounds came to her support. That was an example of the real Croydon, of people from different backgrounds with too much in common to be divided. That was the great strength of Croydon. Croydon welcomed refugees and rejected those who would act to divide the community. There was not a "them" only an "us".

Councillor Tim Pollard stated that the events were shocking and joined in the praise of the police for their swift and appropriate response. It was also shocking that the attack happened in Shrublands, a diverse community that welcomed people from across the world. It was good to see the community coming together in the aftermath of the attack and stating that violence was never the answer. The efforts of schools to promote integration and tolerance were recognised, and a particularly important aspect of this was the concept of rights and responsibilities. As schools promoted the right to not be bullied and the responsibility to not bully, so wider society should take the responsibility to stand together against intolerance.

The motion was put to the vote and was **carried** unanimously.

A10

Camera Resolution

Not required.

MINUTES - PART B

None

The meeting ended at 9.23pm