

SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9 June 2015 at 6:30pm in the Council Chamber, the Town Hall, Croydon

This meeting was filmed for broadcast on the council's internet site at:
<http://www.croydon.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

MINUTES – PART A

Present: Councillor Sean Fitzsimons
Councillors Sara Bashford (Vice Chairman), Emily Benn,
Carole Bonner (Deputy Chair), Sherwan Chowdhury and
Mario Creatura

Also in attendance for part or all of the meeting:
Councillor Maddie Henson
Councillor Stuart King
Councillor Bernadette Khan
Councillor Tony Newman, Leader of the Council
Councillor Joy Prince

A03/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Nathan Elvery, Chief Executive.

A04/15 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 14 April and 21 May 2015 were agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

A05/15 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

None. Under Agenda Item 7 and during discussion about 'Right to Buy' proposals, Councillor Sean Fitzsimons informed the Committee that as detailed on his Register of Interests, he worked for a Housing Association.

A06/15 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

A07/15 EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED – that the allocation of business on Part A of the Agenda be confirmed.

A08/15

COMMITTEE CHAIRMANSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE
(Agenda item 6)

The Head of Democratic Services and Scrutiny introduced the item stating that the report provided Members with information relating to scrutiny appointments made at Annual Council on 21 May 2015.

The Chair expressed his disappointment that the Committee resolution (Minute number A35/15) from the Scrutiny and Strategic Overview Committee meeting of 14 April 2015 to support proposals that all scrutiny Committees, except the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee, were to be composed of four majority Members and three minority Members plus co-optees had not been taken in to account at Annual Council and that he, as Chair, had not been informed ahead of time. The Chair informed Members that he hoped this would be addressed as part of a wider constitutional review in the Autumn.

The Chair also asked Members to note that the name of the Overview Committee had been changed to remove the word 'Strategic' in order to enable it to consider issues of day-to-day importance.

The Chair summarised the background to the decision in 2014 not to co-opt a crime and disorder representative.

RESOLVED – To:

- Note the nominations of appointments to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee
- Note the Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and its Sub-Committees
- Agree not to appoint a crime and disorder co-optee to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee for the 2015-16 municipal year
- Continue to invite contributors from the community, partnership organisations, stakeholders and other interested parties to provide information, make presentations and ask questions at scrutiny meetings in 2015-16

A09/15

QUESTION TIME: COUNCILLOR TONY NEWMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (Agenda item 7)

Present for this item:

Councillor Tony Newman, Leader of the Council

Richard Simpson, Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Resources and S151 Officer)

The Leader introduced the items with a short statement, adding that when he came back to the Committee in December with a pre-decision item on the proposed Budget 2016-17 he would prepare a presentation for the Committee.

In his introduction and in answers to questions from the Committee, the Leader included the following information:

Budget pressures

- Croydon is facing a tough time against a backdrop of local government funding cuts
- The announcement last week which saw £200m taken out of the health budget was likely to cost Croydon £1.5 million in lost funding for preventative projects
- The council was in initial discussions with Lambeth about sharing services
- The council and NHS were making the case for fair funding due to the changes of the demographics in the borough and the resulting pressure on services
- The previous administration had decided to move towards a position of providing statutory services only and to withdraw support for events such as the recent bike race in the town centre and the food festival. The current administration believed that investing in these activities encourages economic development, growth and jobs and that a vibrant and ambitious cultural offer will make Croydon a place people want to work, live and go out in
- The council would like to see a new, fairer grant settlement which allowed it to deliver services to local residents and that it was unfair that an arbitrary line meant that other boroughs received more funding than Croydon
- Benefit reforms were having a considerable impact on Croydon

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Resources) added that based on the experiences of the past 4 years, the next 4 years will continue to be tough for local government; that there had been a 45% cumulative drop in the grant; that a further 30% cut to the grant was expected over the next 3 years; that the council was more reliant on local income such as business rates than the needs based grant; and that despite these cuts in funding demand for vital statutory services was increasing. He added that local taxation or further un-ring-fencing of budgets could work well in enabling the council to deliver services.

Transport infrastructure

- The potential second runway 2 at Gatwick would be hugely beneficial to the regeneration and growth of the borough
- Transport for London (TfL) and Network Rail need to address transport infrastructure in and around Croydon over the next 3-5 years as this has significant impact on economic growth and regeneration
- Councils need to present a collective case to mayoral candidates to ensure that outer London transport infrastructure issues form part of their election manifestoes
- The council was working to encourage cycling in Croydon

South London Partnership

- The Council has agreed to participate in the South London Partnership with the boroughs of Bromley, Kingston upon Thames, Merton, Richmond upon Thames, Sutton and Wandsworth
- The Partnership enabled councils to take a collective look at South London and its needs, for example, in relation to housing and transport infrastructure

Homes and Right to Buy

- There were high level concerns about the Right to Buy proposals and that it had been estimated that housing associations could lose up to 10% of their housing stock as a result
- Croydon faced significant housing pressures and that the proposals were a distraction from the need to provide more affordable housing stock
- The council was under considerable pressure in relation to temporary accommodation and Councillor Alison Butler, as Cabinet Member for Homes, was taking steps to increase the supply of affordable stock

'Village' style waste collections and street cleaning

- The village style model for waste collections and street cleaning had been launched earlier in the week
- The council was leafleting every household with information and was seeking information and feedback to help solve any teething problems
- There had been a positive response so far and it was hoped that village style team working and the development of local knowledge and relationships with residents would prove beneficial including in helping to clear fly-tipping hot spots

Structure of the Council

- The leadership and workforce of the council needs to reflect the diversity seen in the community
- The council was moving away from function-based services to help deliver services and the way services were commissioned and procured was changing to accommodate this
- Post 2010 the administration salami-sliced services to save money but this could not continue and the current administration was restructuring to do things differently and in a more joined-up way, for example, by offering services online
- Staff were rightly concerned about potential job losses

Partnership working with communities

- Community budgets are a start in devolving spending decisions to local communities through their ward councillors
- The council hoped that greater community control over assets will come in the future and that the greater use of technology would encourage more residents to become involved in decision-making

Fairness Commission

Mr Robert Ward had submitted a statement setting out some concerns about the Fairness Commission including lack of public engagement opportunities at the New Addington meeting; lack of dates and publicity for meetings in Central Croydon (June) and Croydon South (July); perceived poor project management and concerns about what the Fairness Commission would deliver.

The Leader responded that he had not been at the New Addington meet, that he was aware that dates for meetings in Central and South Croydon were being arranged and that it was early days for the Commission. He added that he would provide Mr Ward's feedback to the chair of the Commission, the Bishop of Croydon.

The Chair stated that the outcomes of the Fairness Commission could inform the scrutiny work programme in the future. He thanked the Leader for his full and comprehensive answers to wide-ranging questions.

Members noted that the Leader had undertaken to provide Members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee with additional information on the following items:

- Cycling event (2 June 2015) – to provide further information about levels of participation and publicity achieved
- Planning – to ask the Chair of the Planning Committee to contact Members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee with information and clarification about the potential removal of Member referral rights which was listed as a possible 2016-17 budget saving in the Budget agreed in February 2015
- Queen's Gardens stage – to provide costs and further information (including policing anti-social behaviour)
- Fairness Commission – to provide feedback to the Commission about Mr Ward's concerns (see above for details)

Members concluded that the right transport infrastructure was crucial to the economic development of the borough and that this would be even more important should Gatwick be given permission for a second runway.

A10/15 INITIAL SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2015-16 (Agenda item 8)

The Head of Democratic Services and Scrutiny introduced this item. He asked Members to note that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting now scheduled for 19 January 2016 had originally been due to take place on 12 January. This date had now been taken by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee so that it could consider a report on school standards and inclusion before it went to the Cabinet on 18 January 2016.

The Chair of the Committee suggested that an item on **Surrey Street market** be considered, either as a Local Action Mini Review or an item for the Scrutiny and Overview Committee to consider. The Chair also stated that there was an opportunity for a Task and Finish Group review on the **revitalising the evening/ night time economy** in Croydon.

The Deputy Chair (and Chair of the Health, Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee) informed Members that in addition to a heavy work programme of meetings, Health scrutiny Members were involved in a number of visits to health settings throughout the year and that they would also be participating in a joint meeting with the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee in September 2015 to consider the **impact of domestic violence on children**.

Members asked that the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees give consideration to including items on **HMOs** (houses of multiple occupancy) and **the Landlords Licensing Scheme** (at least 6 months after launch) in the work programme.

Members agreed the initial overall work programme set out in Appendix 1 attached to the report (all scrutiny committees) and the initial work programme for the Scrutiny and Overview Committee (Appendix 2).

The Head of Democratic Services and Scrutiny asked Members for their assistance in providing access to residents' association newsletters as a means of publicising scrutiny meetings to a wider audience. Members agreed to forward details to the Head of Democratic Services and Scrutiny.

RESOLVED – To:

- Agree the scrutiny work programme overview for 2015-16 as set out in Appendix 1, Scrutiny Work Programme Overview 2015-16 (all committees) and to ask the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees to continue to develop a balanced work programme including pre- and post-decision scrutiny, monitoring and external scrutiny
- Agree the initial scrutiny work programme for the Scrutiny and Overview Committee 2015-16 (Appendix 2)

PART B



None



The meeting closed at 8:40pm.