

COUNCILLOR GODFREY'S BRIEFING FOR QUESTION TIME AT SCRUTINY AND STRATEGIC OVERVIEW COMMITTEE 3 NOVEMBER 2015

Within a borough that prides itself on its work/life balance, there should be plenty of opportunities for everyone to get involved, however casually, in the 'Croydon scene' – maybe by singing or dancing at one of the community's many cultural events, playing football in the park, entering an open competition in one of the borough's art galleries, or, just as importantly - simply taking time to enjoy the fun on offer.

*Croydon Vision 2020

CULTURE

Vision

My vision for culture is to have a thriving culture and arts scene which attracts, engages and inspires residents, visitors and businesses by providing something of quality and interest to everyone. Local people will be at the heart of Croydon's Ambition and we will encourage others to deliver, participate and to offer new opportunities across a wide range of delivery

Successes of the past 12 months

- **Ambition Festival July 2015** - The borough's new festival of music and performing arts was launched declaring Croydon open for cultural business. Talented musicians, dancers, comedians and actors from across the country performed in venues and open spaces across the town. As well as using established spaces, less usual venues such as the Croydon Minster, The Friends Meeting House and a double decker bus were successfully used. In total there were nearly 200 separate performances. Ambition Festival proves Croydon has the capacity to once again become a centre for live entertainment. **Ambition** has been nominated for 'best new festival' and 'best metropolitan festival' at the UK Festival Awards, which is the biggest date on the festival industry calendar, giving organisers a chance to be recognised and rewarded for their creativity and success.
- **New facilities at Fairfield** thanks to the Council capital funding programme. A new cinema showing a range of films and streaming live events was launched. Events such as Disney's Frozen sing-along was a sell-out. The refurbishment of the Green Room and the Arnhem Gallery has brought new opportunities and new audiences. The provision of an up to date box office system has allowed for increased on-line activity and for easier analysis of ticket sales.
- **In the Museum of Croydon** the 'Moving to London' exhibition, opened on 1 April 2015 to mark the 50th anniversary of the formation of the London Borough of Croydon. The exhibition explores, through objects, photographs and personal stories, the regeneration of the 1960s and its impact on the County Borough of Croydon and Urban District Council of Coulsdon & Purley, prior to their amalgamation to form the London Borough of Croydon in 1965.

- Since 2012, the museum has been supported by a team of 30 - 40 front of house volunteers, who provide customer service in the galleries and Research Room. It is particularly pleasing that in August 2015, two volunteers were recruited to the role of Collections Access Officer within the Museum & Archives team.
- We have continued to support Club Soda to deliver arts participation events for people with learning disabilities. The Club Soda programme is developed by its service users and includes a range of weekly skills development workshops and a seasonal programme of major events run for and by its users. Between April and September 2015 there have been over 1,500 instances of participation in this programme and it continues to be seen as a model of best practice in the community and wider cultural sector.
- Over the last year work has been carried out to ensure the **Clocktower Complex** is in tip top condition from a resident's point of view. Lighting throughout the complex has been cleaned repaired and replaced. Carpets have been cleaned and the main entrance has had a lot of work done on refurbishing hand rails and the display cabinets. The public toilets have all been fully refurbished. A new signage scheme is being introduced to remove the current sometimes confusing existing arrangements.
- With at least two screenings each week, the recent sale of the 10,000th ticket demonstrates that the **David Lean Cinema** has been operating at near-capacity since re-opening. Offering tickets at just £7.50 per film, many of them screened soon after release it seems the demand may be based on price as well as the programme of films chosen. Apsara Arts recently delivered a programme of critically acclaimed Bollywood films, all connected to London.
- **Libraries** - Visits to the Croydon libraries continue to rise; during July 2015 there were a total of 176,719 visits compared to 161,345 in 2014, an increase of 9.53%. According to recorded data, this month has witnessed the highest footfall in Croydon libraries since 2012. The service is well on target to receive two million visits this year and provide nearly one million book issues.
- In collaboration with **LEGO Education** the library service has introduced a new interactive and exciting creative hub in the Children's library at the Clocktower. Early feedback from customers has been phenomenal and it is very exciting to be working in partnership with LEGO Education UK.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=je780FFsE3k
- **Libraries and the Arts Council** - the library development team has been successful in an Arts Council grant application for Croydon. The grant is for £35,700 to work in partnership with Stories in the Street, CALAT, Museum of Croydon, the Hive and community groups in Broad Green; New Addington and the central library. Croydon is encouraging the community to share stories but also to train some storytellers in the community offering them an accredited qualification.
- **Croydon Music and Arts**, Fairfield Halls and Croydon Council Youth Arts have been awarded funding from A New Direction, the Arts Council England Bridge Organisation, to form a local Cultural Education Partnership. This is one of the 50 pilot partnerships the Arts Council wish to develop to address the recently launched Cultural Education Challenge, which calls on the cultural and education sectors to work together to enable all children and young people to have a rich and rewarding cultural education. Croydon's approach is to use the voice of young people to advocate to their peers, schools, the council, third sector organisations and the business community to put Croydon's youth voice at the fore-front of decision-making as Croydon undergoes a dramatic period of regeneration.

Following a consultation with young people aged 11 – 19 regarding cultural provision in the borough, a young people's group consisting of ten core members called the 'Croydon Youth Arts Collective' has been formed. They aim to support the expansion of the group to include a Youth Representative from each Croydon secondary school to advocate for, and often be involved in promoting, cultural events and workshops for young people in Croydon.

Priorities for the next 12 months to help deliver the vision

Culture

- Building on the success of the **Ambition Festival 2015** and on the lessons learned we plan to deliver a dynamic event in summer 2016.
- We are reviewing our approach to the **library service** with a view to maximize the use of our assets and ensuring we have a flexible model where each library specifically caters to the needs of its local community
- We are currently in negotiation with the **Library Team, Tech City and the Healthy Living Hub** to develop a range of interactive opportunities and fun activities that nurtures both creative and STEM/tech skills. Allowing the children's library to facilitate a new range of popular family activities in a contemporary context. Even more crucially, the experience also lays the foundation for the analytical mind-set which will underpin long term learning and eventually even employability. And we'll be sure to add in some fun stuff as well with interactive screens offering some inspiring opportunities. This will be funded partly by S106 monies and by the service provider Carillion.
- **Fairfield Halls & College Green** – the planned development of the area places the Fairfield Halls at the heart of the new Cultural Quarter. The high quality facility will not only enhance the borough's cultural provision but also promote the economic development and regeneration of Croydon. The aim is for the creation of a beautiful, highly flexible building which is commercially self-sufficient by enhancing the food and beverage, conferencing and theatre facilities. The building will be fully integrated with the surrounding area, and will feature a new outward facing element to the north onto College Green which will encourage additional visitors and customers.
- A visit from the **Director of the Arts Council** is planned in early December to showcase the council's vision for culture as a driver for regeneration outline the opportunities being developed in Croydon and to discuss joint initiatives and funding opportunities.
- The Exhibition Gallery and Research Room in the **Museum of Croydon** is currently closed for a two week period for a major refurbishment, re-opening to the public on Tuesday 10 November. The first exhibition in our newly configured space, designed to improve sightlines from the Clocktower court area, will be 'Croydon Recreated', which uses three groups of material within the Museum of Croydon's collections to explore what Croydon was like at the beginning of the 20th century. At the same time a new online collections catalogue will be launched. This will improve access to and exploit the learning potential of our archives and local studies collections. We are also working to improve the organisation of our map and photographic collections, making it easier to search across these collections by area. These improvements will form part of the re-launch of the Research Room and Exhibition Gallery, when it re-opens to the public in November 2015

- **Affordable venues for amateur groups** –we have supported the increase in affordable venues for use by amateur groups – examples being Stanley Halls and Selsdon Halls. We will continue to take opportunities through our partnerships and any funding it provides as a lever for commercial venues to develop more opportunities for amateur groups to access free or low cost performance space.
- **Arts participation** - we have supported two of our associate artist organisations to write bids that included elements of delivery for Club Soda members. Drunken Chorus’s successfully bid to the Arts Councils Awards for All. The company will work with Club Soda performers across a period of 20 weeks to create 2 live performances that will both take place in pubs in Shoreditch, East London. We hope to present one of these performances at Fairfield Halls as well, in spring 2016. TURF also applied to Arts Council for a Grant for the Arts. If successful, they will deliver 10 sessions with Club Soda artists leading to the creation of new work and an exhibition.
- **Croydon Music & Arts** - as the lead organisation of the Croydon Music Education Hub and in partnership with the Grand Union Orchestra, will be delivering a project funded by the Mayor of London’s Fund for Young Musicians culminating in a performance at Fairfield on 10 March 2016. The project will involve schools and CMA music groups exploring the different musical heritages represented in Croydon and the process by which exciting new and original music is created from that diversity.
- The **Croydon Youth Arts Collective**, newly formed by the CMA/Fairfield/Youth Arts partnership, will be undertaking a period of research and development to engage with other young people and schools and other settings which support their educational and cultural development. From this a more detailed picture will emerge of the activities and cultural learning young people are able to access and where there are gaps. The next stage will be to advocate across the local educational and cultural sector for improvements and additional opportunities; to develop an online and offline strategy for better signposting of opportunities; and to create new opportunities which begin to fill the gaps in provision which emerge from the wider consultation.

Sports and Leisure

Vision

The vision for sports and physical activity is to make people more active and contribute towards healthier and happier lives, by making it easier for residents to become active, by targeting those who are inactive and by making day to day activity a permanent part of residents' lives. To achieve this we will:

- partner with volunteer sports clubs and organisations to increase participation and strengthen communities
- encourage the take-up of sports through ‘open house’ weekends
- promote our leisure centres and make them accessible to more people, keeping prices affordable

- work together with local sports clubs to host more county and regional sports events at venues around the borough
- hire sports development staff to encourage volunteers and help unlock funding for the benefit of our local clubs and schools
- ensure the provision of a decent swimming pool and new leisure centre in New Addington

Successes for the past 12 months

- Croydon hosted the Men's Pearl Izumi Tour Series and women's Matrix Fitness Grand Prix cycling races in June 2015, demonstrating Croydon's ability to host a world class sporting event. An estimated 12,500 lined the streets for the races and a range of community events took place on the day, contributing to a celebration of all things cycling in Croydon.
- The new Monks Hill Sport Centre was completed which now offers modern, high-quality facilities, including a full-size sports hall, dance/exercise studio and community room and kitchen; at the same time the operating contractor (Fusion Leisure) has been replaced with a team operated by Croydon Council. The centre is now attracting an influx of new users and generating a positive revenue position.
- The PING Croydon project was launched for 8 weeks this summer in conjunction with Table Tennis England, using National Lottery funding provided by Sport England. Over 15,000 residents picked up a bat and events were ran across the borough utilising the free to play, fun, nature of this scheme.
- Hundreds of children with disabilities and additional needs were given the opportunity to participate in a wide range of sports activities through the RAP scheme. This year, a new RAP+ initiative was launched for people with additional needs up to the age of 25.
- A successful programme of sports events has taken place at Croydon Arena including hosting 30 + schools sports days, all of the Croydon Schools Championships, Croydon Harriers athletics fixtures and Croydon FC 1st team, reserves and youth team games, plus an overhaul of the club-house, reception, and office facilities is underway.
- Visits to Croydon's leisure centres to use facilities including Pools, Gyms, Fitness Studio's, Indoor Racquet Courts and Sports Halls, were up by 14%, increasing from 821,861 in 2013 to 934,931 in 2014; recent investment in the facilities at South Norwood, Thornton Heath and Waddon is bringing in more customers and increasing attendance numbers for studio classes and gym facilities.
- Free swimming for young people 16 was re-instated for the Summer Holidays 2015, funded by the Council.
- Hundreds of people have benefitted from the MI change exercise on referral scheme which enables GPs to refer people for specialist consultation and tailored physical activity programmes designed by leisure centre personal trainers

- Young people received opportunities to participate in London-wide events such as the London Youth Games, the London mini-Marathon, and inter-borough athletics.

Priorities for the next 12 months

- The PING project will be back in the summer with more tables and more events. Many of the table tennis tables will be donated to community groups to provide indoor play opportunities during the winter months.
- Plans to host a repeat of this year's successful cycle event in 2016 are currently being discussed
- Proposals are being worked up for a new two year sports participation project to increase physical activity through sport, targeting women of all ages and men over 40, subject to a successful funding bid.
- At Croydon Sports Arena, in the short-term, there are plans to repair the track and organise new Duathlon events. Longer-term plans for the Arena will be drawn up and an initiative with Croydon College could see a link into Chelsea FC
- Further work to improve staffing levels, staff development and training, and customer-focussed activity, building upon work commenced this year, will continue to improve the customer experience for leisure centre users, alongside improved contract-focussed marketing strategies.
- Ongoing improvement of marketing and outreach at all of the leisure centres, aiming towards a dynamic and regularly updated website and increased use of social media (while maintaining and improving more traditional approaches including printed material and press involvement).
- Increasing attention to innovative and progressive programming of activities, reaching out to a wider and more diverse range of groups and building on links with the Council's Sport & Physical Activity team, schools, clubs and national organisations, e.g. expanding swimming sessions, RAP and RAP+ provision, Open Taster weekends, women only and Muslim community sessions, Friday night project for 16-18 year olds, wheelchair basketball, Toddler's World to meet demand.

Progress development plans and submit planning for a new replacement leisure centre in New Addington, as part of a comprehensive redevelopment plan for Central Parade.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Vision

Croydon has 1,000 hectares of parks and open spaces ranging from formal parks and gardens, to urban countryside sites with woodland, to more natural ponds and meadows. It also has 15 allotment sites for residents to grow their own food, and indulge their passion for horticulture. Parks and open spaces play an important role in improving health and wellbeing, making a place somewhere great to live or spend time, and we know that our residents place a high value on them. The vision for Croydon's parks and open spaces is to ensure that these highly valued assets are maintained for future generations, and we aim to achieve this by moving

away from the traditional model of municipal subsidy, ownership and maintenance. We will explore a more inclusive approach to parks and open spaces, engaging with residents to get their views and priorities as we do so, and we will work towards a service that places our parks and open spaces at the centre of local communities. Our vision for parks will encourage healthier lifestyles, provide the space for exciting cultural events, for sports and physical activity, and it will seek to attract visitors to the borough support our retailers, bars, restaurants and the evening economy. It will also enable volunteers and friends of parks groups to participate, shape and even to take over management of parks where they have the commitment to do so .

Successes for the past 12 months

Over the past twelve months there have been a number of achievements concerning parks and open spaces in Croydon

- **A new Parks and Green Spaces forum for Croydon**

On Tuesday 24th March 2015 the first forum for friends groups of the borough's Parks and Green Spaces was held at the Fairfield Halls. A further follow up meeting took place on the 19th August 2015 with representatives from 17 local groups attending. The majority of people attending agreed to the formation of a borough forum. The forum will depend on group representatives to take forward and will be fully supported by the Council.

- **7000 days of volunteer activity in the boroughs parks**

Croydon is extremely fortunate to have committed groups of volunteers willing to give up their time and expend an enormous amount of effort in maintaining our parks and open spaces to a standard that we can all enjoy. It is estimated that over 7000 days of volunteer work is donated by members of a wide range of groups and organisations, including the Conservation Trust (TCV), Parks Friends Groups, Community Gardeners, and London Wildlife Trust.

- **Parks review**

Over the past four months Council officers have been undertaking a review of the borough's parks services which will, when completed, provide a clear understanding the current provision, and will identify a range of options for providing a different kind of service in the future. The findings from the review will be shared with residents, friends groups, voluntary groups and others over the coming months with a view to providing more opportunities for volunteers to become involved in parks, to provide more sporting and physical activities, to hold more events and festivals, and to move towards a more flexible and sustainable model of service for the future.

Priorities for the next 12 months to help deliver the vision

- Involving residents in decisions on type and extent of services they most value
- Improving the ways the parks service is marketed, and extending the communication channels used to let people know what's going on in our parks and open spaces.
- Seeking out and bidding for external funding and in working with volunteer groups and Friends of Parks groups in securing additional funding
- Preparing parks identified as suitable and appropriate for cultural, sporting and leisure events with the required facilities and infrastructure to make this

possible.

Registrars and bereavement services

The vision for the registrars & bereavement service is to successfully assist residents at the point of life changing events. Through keeping the customer at the centre of the services we provide we will improve satisfaction, whilst will also increasing income to the council.

Successes for the last 12 months

- In bereavement we met the increasing demand (14% increase on the previous year 298 burials 1897 cremations) in the number of burials and cremations undertaken. This has also been achieved with reducing resource
- Our income in bereavement increased by 15% compared to the previous year, £2.3million.
- As part of the of the Keep Britain Tidy national awards we received the green flag award for our crematorium and cemetery site
- We registered over 2,400 deaths and 3,000 births, a 5% increase on the previous year. 97% of births were registered within the statutory timeframe compared to 95% regionally.
- We provided over 3,100 notices of marriage and carried out over 700 marriage ceremonies, an increase over 8% on the previous year.
- Our income in registrars also increased, achieving over £420,000 last year

Priorities for the next 12 months to help deliver the vision

- Increasing burial space at Greenlawns Cemetery, current capacity will only last up to 2017
- Increasing income by over £200,000 per annum
- Introducing baby naming and vow renewal ceremonies
- Develop further online services for bereavement, such as online web access for friends and family that cannot personally attend

What pressures does your portfolio face (including financial)?

- The challenge continues to be how to develop thriving cultural, leisure and sporting services with minimum public sector subsidy.
- The need to find ways of updating and developing modern, attractive leisure facilities, to replace older facilities, in a period of constrained financial resources and pressure on capital budgets.
- Pressure to ensure leisure facilities generate sufficient income to cover their costs but at the same time remain affordable.
- Reconciling the move towards more commercial, private sector values and senior staff sourced from commercial backgrounds, driven by financial

pressures, with the commitment to meet the needs of local communities and disadvantaged groups.

- Financial pressures faced by the operating contractor which have become evident in all aspects of staffing (numbers, speed of recruitment, pressure on existing staff, absence cover, management strategies), equipment repair/replacement, maintenance works requiring significant expenditure.
- Parks and open spaces are highly valued and play a significant role in what makes a place somewhere that's nice to live, work and spend time, however, they are a discretionary service and are under pressure to find savings, become more efficient and generate more income.
- Parks and open spaces also face demands to meet other needs, including increasing housing need and homelessness, as well as community provision such as leisure centres (indoor sports provision – sports halls)

How do you intend to deal with financial and other pressures?

- We will support the development of joined up community initiatives that draw on group and individual strength both in service delivery and in the development of funding plans.
- We must adopt a more commercial approach to ensure sustainability in order to deliver on our ambitions.
- We will listen and learn from experience to make sure we enable what people want in a way that they want it.
- Explore scope for designing leisure facilities that will generate an income for the council which can be invested to support other facilities
- Development of a leisure strategy for the borough, working with Sport England, to strengthen our ability to attract funding for new/improved leisure facilities
- The current leisure operation and maintenance contract with Fusion will expire in 2017 which provides an opportunity to consider alternative operational models, including bringing this function back in-house.
- We will explore ways of using our parks more creatively and at the potential for generating income from them to subsidise the parks service.
- We will classify our parks to ensure we have a consistent method for allocating grounds maintenance services and other resources in line with our objectives and the needs of the community.
- We will work closely with colleagues in Public Health to increase sports and physical activity in our parks with the assistance of volunteers and community organisations
- We will work with volunteers and “Friends of Parks” groups to increase their involvement in the management of parks up to and including community management/transfer.
- We will investigate ways of increasing the income from our parks buildings, sports facilities and land, and look at the feasibility of hosting a music concert or festival in the borough