

## SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

**Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 3 November 2015 at 6:40pm 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), Bernadette Khan and Mario Creatura

Also in attendance for part or all of the meeting:

Councillor Timothy Godfrey  
Councillor Simon Hall  
Councillor Stephen Mann  
Councillor Joy Prince

#### **A20/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Sherwan Chowdhury during the meeting. Councillor Bernadette Khan was present as his reserve.

Councillor Emily Benn arrived at 6:45pm and apologised for lateness.

#### **A21/15 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2015 were agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

#### **A22/15 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS**

None.

#### **A23/15 URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

#### **A24/15 EXEMPT ITEMS**

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

**CABINET RESPONSES TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS**  
(Agenda item 6)

Present for this item:

Michael Fehilly, Operations Manager, Royal Mail

James Mitchell, Senior Public Affairs Manager, Royal Mail

Councillor Sean Fitzsimons introduced the report stating that it provided Cabinet responses to:

- The Royal Mail mini review
- Transparency Agenda
- Data and Freedom of Information

In addition to a number of recommendations made to Cabinet in the Royal Mail mini review, further recommendations were made to the Royal Mail. Representatives from the Royal Mail were in attendance in order to respond to the recommendations made to the Royal Mail and to answer questions from Members.

The Public Affairs Manager from Royal Mail stated that:

- The Royal Mail had found the mini review to be helpful and that it had noted its positive and negative comments
- The Royal Mail was reviewing the opportunities for a collection point in the town centre or at East Croydon station as part of a national strategy relating to parcel collections, and locally, in response to local demand
- Should a national programme of city centre collection points be introduced, Croydon would be among the first to be considered due to the strength of local feeling on this matter which had been recorded in the mini review report
- The Royal Mail aimed to offer customers a number of redelivery options if first time delivery was not possible including deliver to a Post Office although this attracted a 75p charge
- This 75p charge was made by the Post Office and was a nationally negotiated charge and although it was not possible to vary this locally there were no plans to increase the charge
- It was not possible for the Royal Mail to impose parcel collections on the Post Office, for example at the Central Post Office in Croydon, for a number of reasons including the space available
- As part of the city centre collection point review, the Royal Mail would considered opening one or more offices and decisions would be based on commercial viability
- It was possible that it would be viable to open collection offices in the town centre and a location such as New Addington where there was better access to public transport than at Factory Lane
- All collection points, including the office in South Norwood, were under constant review although there were no plans to close or consolidate collection points

- The number of complaints received by Royal Mail (Factory Lane site) had been reduced by 30% year on year as customers had adapted to the site

Royal Mail's Operations Manager added that:

- Finding sites for parcel collection points was very difficult across London and there were therefore no plans to close or consolidate existing smaller collection offices
- The trial relating to Sunday opening hours had been successfully completed and was now a permanent arrangement
- Similarly, the longer opening hours of the collection office at Factory Lane had been established and were at the higher end of offering by Royal Mail
- Staffing these hours and Sunday opening was now part of the standard resourcing strategy at the collection office and the staff had accepted these arrangements
- There had been no personal attacks on staff in the car park, although some Royal Mail vehicles had been subject to graffiti vandalism

The Royal Mail Operations Manager confirmed to his knowledge that no discussions about leasing car park in its entirety to Royal Mail (Cabinet recommendation 1) had taken place between the Council and the Royal Mail.

Members concluded that further information on the level of complaints, including comparison data would be useful. Members agreed that a follow-up item should be included on the scrutiny work programme 2016-17.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- 1) To seek an update on the level of complaints about parcel collections in Croydon (including year on year comparison data) from the Royal Mail in 12 months
- 2) To seek an update on the situation relating to parcel collection points in the town centre and in New Addington in 12 months
- 3) To ask the Royal Mail to include Croydon in any pilot scheme for town centre collection points in the future

The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the Cabinet response to scrutiny recommendations regarding the Transparency agenda and Data and Freedom of Information.

Councillor Sean Fitzsimons thanked Mr Fehilly and Mr Mitchell for attending the meeting and for their answers to questions from the committee.

**QUESTION TIME: COUNCILLOR TIMOTHY GODFREY, CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORT (Agenda item 7)**

Present for this item:

Councillor Timothy Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport

Councillor Stephen Mann, Deputy Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport

Jane Doyle, Director of Universal People Services

Stephen Tate, Director of District Centres and Regeneration

Aileen Cahill, Head of Libraries Culture and Adult Learning

The Chair suggested that as the Committee was meeting again on 9 November to consider the redevelopment Fairfield Halls, that questions relating to this be postponed until then. Members agreed.

Councillor Timothy Godfrey made a short presentation and circulated additional supporting information. These documents have been added to the council website.

In the course of his presentation and in response to questions from Members the Cabinet Member provided the following information:

- Culture is critical to the place making agenda and helps build confidence in the borough
- Ideas were being sought for the 2016 Ambition festival
- The physical provision of space and venues for cultural events, including at the Fairfield Halls, was important
- Events such as the cycle tour helped demonstrate that Croydon could put on big events successfully and this helped build confidence among promoters
- Savings were not coming from salami slicing but from reviewing how services can be delivered better for less. An example was the Parks Review that aimed to consider how to get the best out of the contract and how working with voluntary groups and others could help
- The council has learned lessons from investing in new facilities and will keep costs down and quality up in the future delivering value for money, on-time projects
- Increases to charges have not been ruled out though nothing has been decided yet
- Culture is not just for middle class families and although more needed to be done, outreach is improving
- The team is talking to public health about delivering some health priorities including through the use of open spaces and outside gyms, for example
- Croydon only has one community engagement officer and it is possible that putting more resource into this would help deliver better use of facilities and more engagement by and with the community

## **Funding**

- The Chief Executive of the Arts Council was due to visit Croydon soon and the relationship is supportive
- The relationship with the Heritage Lottery Fund is a bit more problematic, for example in relation to the funding of Croydon Museum which should have taken place this year
- The belief that Croydon does not get its share of Arts Council or Heritage Lottery funding is based on the fact that we do not put in the same number of applications of other authorities
- Croydon also qualifies for European Funding but in both instances we do not have the resources or expertise to make the applications which would generate funding
- The council did not have spending problems in relation to sport, culture and leisure, it had funding problems and every area of the portfolio is under continual review

## **Leisure centres and parks**

- New leisure centres should deliver services without public subsidy though getting the offer right, including by complementary services such as health services
- The centre at Purley Pool needed to be affordable and one possible element being considered was the addition of a library to the leisure centre and pool
- Although buildings within parks sit within the Finance and Treasury portfolio, there does need to be an integrated approach. There are a number of buildings in parks that are not being used and may never be used again and yet are a drain on resources. There needs to be a protocol in relation to the use of redundant buildings in parks and this will form part of the Parks Review
- The Ambition Festival had demonstrated to the police and to promoters that Croydon can put on large events in parks and the Parks Review will aim to drive more events into parks in the future
- With regard to the site at Ashburton Park, the site has been secured and the options appraisal is underway. The council would prefer the centre to be run by the community as the centre needs to have a community and part centric focus

The Deputy Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport confirmed that the new centre at Ashburton Park was moving forward and would open as a multi-use leisure facility. The Director of District Centres and Regeneration added that options were being considered now with the intention of building commencing in the next financial year and that community use was being considered too.

## **Venues**

- Finding venues for not for profit groups, and other in the borough, was a real issue and a considerable amount has been

achieved in the past year

- Charges for the Braithwaite Hall and Community Space in Bernard Weatherill House are being reviewed
- Using spaces such as libraries and the conference centre on the first floor of Bernard Weatherill House outside normal opening hours was also being considered
- Stanley Halls is now being run by the community and Fairfield Halls provides space to community groups at a discounted rate through the charges are still big
- Many buildings and spaces could be opened up more but there are issues related to staffing and insurance and these need to be taken into account

### **Libraries**

- Huge take up in the use of self-service kiosks in libraries enables staff to spend more time with customers and deliver a better service
- Other local authorities were delivering library services in lots of different ways, for example in cafes and Croydon needed to consider these options in the future

The Head of Libraries Culture and Adult Learning stated that the library contractor hold the Book Fund and that this is stable at £270k per annum. The council owns the books and digital stock purchased by the fund and there is an o-going debate about quality versus coverage.

The Cabinet Member was questioned about whether the council could afford to keep its 13 libraries open given that the costs of maintaining the buildings was more than the fund to stock them. The Cabinet Member stated that there was an ambition to double the Book Fund and that the council would be undertaking a 'visioning' exercise in order to consult the public about priorities for libraries over the next 10 years while also considering redevelopment opportunities. He added that for example, Lambeth has staff-free libraries and that the council could have more pocket libraries by mixing with schools and colleges more.

### **Young people**

- Croydon has the largest youth population in London and therefore puts a lot of effort into providing sporting and cultural activities for them
- Participation in the London Youth Games is not under threat but all activity is being reviewed. However, it was a wonderful event that had provided many young people, including para-sportspersons with an important experience of competing at high level

The Vice Chairman of the Committee added her support for the London Youth Games, stating that it not only helped provide access to a massive, high level sporting event for young people but also provided volunteers with important opportunities to learn useful skills.

The Director of Universal People Services stated that the Croydon Music and Arts service helped provide music lessons to young people and undertook to provide Members with more information about the numbers of children assisted and information about the quality of instruments loaned to them.

Although the Committee had agreed at the beginning of the meeting not to ask questions in relation to the Fairfield Halls redevelopment, Members expressed their concern that some papers requested by the minority group had not yet been made available. The Committee agreed that scrutiny works best when information is available and the Chair asked officers to ensure that papers needed for the meeting are circulated now so that Members have the opportunity to seek clarification if necessary.

The Committee asked the Cabinet Member to return next year and requested that the presentation focus on access to facilities and fair funding including the potential for community involvement and what needs to be done to make progress.

**RESOLVED** – to note the information contained in the presentation, supplementary information and information provided during the course of the meeting.

## **A27/15      CAPITAL BUDGETS (Agenda item 8)**

Present for this item:

Councillor Simon Hall, Cabinet Member for Treasury and Finance  
Richard Simpson, Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer)

Louise Phillips, Finance Business Partner  
Emma Lindsell, Head of Programme Assurance  
Tim Naylor, Head of Spatial Planning

The Cabinet Member for Treasury and Finance introduced the report stating that the capital programme is having to be prioritised with choices between 'spend to save' projects, those that deliver statutory services or 'ambition' projects being made. There are, he said, tough choices ahead and that options will come to scrutiny in December 2015 when it considers a pre-decision item on the proposed budget 2016-17.

The Assistant Chief Executive added that in the context of education estates, the council will meet its statutory duties in relation to the provision of school places including by deploying some temporary solutions.

The Cabinet Member for Treasury and Finance provided the following information in response to questions:

- Interest on borrowing accounts for about 10% of net expenditure of council spending
- Capital projects are prioritised and a number of projects, such as Connected Croydon schemes, are funded externally or others like Box Park are based on a loan with an income stream attached which will pay it back
- The budget proposals were being reviewed currently to see what can be done differently or where external funding can be leveraged in but projects will only be progressed when funding is in place
- There are no easy answers and the council has to balance priorities against a back drop of huge on-going cuts to the revenue budget and huge unfunded demand growth for services
- The council has learned lessons and Bernard Weatherill House, which is highly specified, would not be built now. The council has a different approach to capital spending now and looks to use module solutions where appropriate and will 'value engineer' projects
- The Disabled Facilities Grant (see appendix 1) has been maintained at £1.6m for a number of years
- New contracts for building homes for people are tighter and there are greater controls on supplier selection now. When contracts run late there is a huge human cost and an impact on reducing homelessness in the borough due to the lack of homes being completed

#### **Education estate**

- If the work needed on the education estate was properly funded by the Department for Education, the council would be able to do more elsewhere, for example on highways
- The grant which the council receives from central government was frozen four years ago and it was based on data from the last census so does not reflect the current demographic or needs of the borough
- Croydon has an increasingly young population and the system for funding by central government is flawed
- The council needs to ensure there are sufficient school places available and deliver other services too and it is therefore considering free schools as a way of protecting front line services

#### **CIL and S106 funding**

The Head of Spatial Planning informed the Committee that:

- The CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funding needs to be spent on strategic projects which link to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- S106 funding was linked to specific development and was due to taper down as CIL takes over
- The council has tightened up on its processes for the collection and allocation of S106 funding and it is being allocated at a faster rate than in the past



- Appendix 2 attached to the report provides a snapshot of the funding available and the types of projects it is being allocated to, for example bus countdown screens, green spaces, replacement play facilities, cycling etc.
- In terms of allocating S106 funding, officers should liaise with Ward Councillors although any applications need to marry up with the legal agreement linked to the development and these can be specific
- With regard to CIL funding, nothing has been allocated yet although £1.8m has been collected to date
- Originally it had been intended that the allocation of the CIL 'Local Meaningful Proportion' be made to the 16 places of Croydon but this was being reconsidered and refined to so that the allocation would be through the 6 place regeneration plan areas. Any decision about this will be made by Cabinet

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Treasury added that the allocation of funding will be prioritised according to statutory needs and the ambitious strategy and themes in the manifesto.

The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that CIL is an income stream that will help reduced the amount the council needs to borrow to deliver capital projects.

Members of the Committee expressed concern about the allocation of CIL funding and the apparent move to focus this on the 6 regeneration areas rather than across the borough.

**RESOLVED** – To monitor the capital budget and the policies that underpin capital decision making as part of the Scrutiny work programme each year, and to ask Cabinet to:

- 1) Ensure that Ward Members are informed when s106 agreements have been negotiated in their ward and for what purpose the funds are secured
- 2) Consult the Scrutiny and Overview Committee before a decision about the allocation of the CIL '*Local Meaningful Proportion*' is made, specifically with regard to the suggestion that the original allocation through the 16 places of Croydon be refined to reflect allocation through a smaller number of place regeneration plans
- 3) Provide Members of the Committee with an update of the s106 summary balance sheet and allocation (as in appendix 2 of the report) in 12 months (Autumn 2016)

Councillor Sean Fitzsimons thanked all those present for attending and for their contributions to the meeting. He stated that the item on Capital Budgets concluded the main business of the meeting and that the Committee would now discuss the scrutiny work programme and timetabling matters.

**A28/15      SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2015-16** (Agenda item 9)

Following a short discussion about topics and timetabling items on the initial work programme, Members **RESOLVED** - to:

- 1) Agree the scrutiny work programme overview for 2015-16 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- 2) Agree the scrutiny work programme for the Scrutiny and Overview Committee 2015-16 – Appendix 2 of the report.

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PART B

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None

The meeting closed at 9:31pm.