

Council

Meeting held on Monday, 30 October 2017 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katherine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

- Present:** Councillor Toni Letts (Chair);
;
Councillors Patsy Cummings, Mike Selva, Hamida Ali, Jane Avis,
Sara Bashford, Jeet Bains, Sue Bennett, Margaret Bird, Carole Bonner,
Simon Brew, Alison Butler, Jan Buttinger, Robert Canning, Richard Chatterjee,
Sherwan Chowdhury, Luke Clancy, Pat Clouder, Stuart Collins,
Jason Cummings, Mario Creatura, Mike Fisher, Sean Fitzsimons,
Alisa Flemming, Maria Gatland, Timothy Godfrey, Lynne Hale, Simon Hall,
Patricia Hay-Justice, Maddie Henson, Steve Hollands, Yvette Hopley,
Karen Jewitt, Humayun Kabir, Bernadette Khan, Shafi Khan, Stuart King,
Oliver Lewis, Stephen Mann, Maggie Mansell, Dudley Mead, Margaret Mead,
Vidhi Mohan, Michael Neal, Tony Newman, Steve O'Connell, Andrew Pelling,
Helen Pollard, Joy Prince, Badsha Quadir, Andrew Rendle, Pat Ryan,
Paul Scott, Manju Shahul-Hameed, Donald Speakman, Andy Stranack,
Phil Thomas, James Thompson, Wayne Trakas-Lawlor, Mark Watson,
John Wentworth, Sue Winborn, David Wood, Louisa Woodley, Chris Wright
and Callton Young
- Apologies:** Councillor Jamie Audsley, Jason Perry and Tim Pollard

PART A

1/17 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Ordinary Council meeting held on 26 June 2017 were approved as an accurate record of that meeting.

The minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 18 September 2017 were approved as an accurate record of that meeting.

2/17 Disclosure of Interests

Members present confirmed that their disclosure of interest forms were accurate and up-to-date. No further declarations were made at the meeting.

3/17 Urgent Business (if any)

There were no items of urgent business.

4/17

Announcements

The item began with a presentation to Mark Fowler, Head of the Gateway service at the Council, who was moving from Croydon to Barking and Dagenham Council. Mark was thanked for his 20 years of service at the Council, including leading on the nationally recognised Gateway service, and presented with a citation from the Mayor.

The Chief Executive, in her capacity as Returning Officer, announced the result of the recent by-election that had been held in the South Norwood Ward on 7 September 2017. Councillor Patsy Cummings had been elected with 1,671 votes.

Councillor Newman passed on his sympathies and thoughts to the family of a young man who had lost his life the night before the Council meeting due to a knife attack in the town centre. It was announced that the borough commander would host a Gold command meeting on the murder the following day after the Council meeting.

Councillor Jason Cummings added that the events of the previous night were a terrible tragedy and would hopefully be the last of its kind.

Councillor Newman announced that it was the administration's intention that care leavers would be exempt from Council Tax in the 2018/19 budget. Councillor Newman urged other local authorities to follow suit.

5/17

Croydon Question Time

The Mayor started the item with questions from members of the public.

Blake O'Donnell asked what was being done to combat violent crime in Norbury.

Councillor Ali stated that in response to a violent attack in the area in June 2017 there had been increased police patrols and stepped up youth engagement activities. Serious youth violence was a key priority for the Council, as stated in the community safety strategy. A youth violence plan had recently been adopted with a significant range of activities planned to tackle violent crime, and knife crime in particular.

Ben Joce asked what consideration and support would be given in the new Licensing Policy for residents living in the town centre.

Councillor Ali responded that the policy was out for consultation and it was not proposed to relax the current regulations. Evidence suggested that the borough's night time economy had changed considerably since the last policy was made, and the proposals reflected this change by removing the town centre's cumulative impact zone status. Licensing regulations were enforced by the Council's own team and by the Police; resident concerns about breaches of these rules should be directed to the Council and Police licensing teams.

Ben Joce asked a supplementary question regarding what support was available to town centre residents.

Councillor Ali responded that the Council's Licensing Sub-Committee performed a quasi-judicial role and would treat each application on a case by case basis and must be satisfied that the applicant would uphold the licensing objectives. Processes were in place to ensure residents could report concerns should issues arise.

Kofi Frimpong asked how residents in Broad Green ward could feel safe after the recent Ofsted report on Croydon's children's services.

Councillor Flemming recognised that Broad Green ward was the third most deprived ward in the borough, and that four young people had been reported missing. Outreach was taking place across the borough to address this and included a lot of work on the Handcroft estate and also in Valley Park. Work was also being done in Broad Green around tackling gangs and knife crime.

Robert Ward asked a question on Croydon's recent rating as being the third worst London borough for fly-tipping and in particular an increase in large fly-tipping incidents.

Councillor Collins responded that the high statistics in Croydon were due to the success of the Council's campaign that encouraged residents to report incidents and showed confidence in the system. The increased reporting had allowed for increased prosecutions. Fly-tipping was a national problem and it was stated that the government had failed to provide local authorities with funding to tackle the problem.

Robert Ward asked a supplementary question related to the increase in large fly-tips in the borough.

Councillor Collins responded that the campaign was about raising awareness of the issue and engaging with residents to increase reporting, for example through social media. Covert surveillance teams had been set up and officers had liaised with magistrates and other London boroughs to ensure fly-tippers were caught and prosecuted.

Ola Kolade asked when removed trees in Norbury would be replaced.

Councillor King responded that regular inspections of trees took place and were removed where they were found to be dead, diseased or dangerous. The tree planting season started in December and the Council prioritised planting in areas with poor air quality.

Ola Kolade asked a supplementary question as to whether there could be guarantees that removed trees in Norbury would be replaced.

Councillor King responded that the Council was in the process of a capital bid submission for a five year programme of tree planting across the borough's streets.

Alessia Cesanan asked whether households in the vicinity of the Jubilee Bridge car park could be provided with free permits for that car park to alleviate pressures on neighbouring residential roads.

Councillor King responded that Ward Councillors had brought a petition on the issue to the July 2017 Council meeting and a solution was being delivered. Residents would be consulted on including the area into the central parking zone which would increase the parking controls. In the meantime, residents could apply for an annual permit for the Jubilee Bridge car park to overnight parking.

The Mayor announced that a question submitted by Mark Samuels had been ruled out by the Monitoring Officer due to the content pertaining to issues of a personal nature.

The Mayor then moved to pre-submitted public questions put on behalf of residents who could not attend the meeting.

Ruth Edwards asked why residents could not use recycling centres nearest their homes where the centres were in a different borough.

Councillor Collins responded that the Council had been proactive in reducing the pressure on Croydon's recycling centres by reconfiguring the sites to allow better traffic flow. Croydon did not have a permit system for its system unlike other boroughs and had three centres whereas many boroughs only had one.

Janet Gardner asked why elderly residents and those on benefits were expected to pay for the garden waste service.

Councillor Collins responded that the charge was required due to the funding cuts from government; the Cabinet Member had written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer but had received no response. The garden waste service in Croydon was due to be launched as an all-year round service starting in 2018. It was stated that the service was good value for money given the number of collections provided for.

Carmel Spanswick asked why demolition was allowed on The View public house given its architectural value to the area.

Councillor Butler responded that the partial demolition of the building was undertaken without planning consent. Enforcement officers were sent to the site when the Council became aware of the situation and the work was halted and protective covering set up to protect the site from further damage.

The Mayor moved to Councillor questions to the Leader of the Council.

Councillor Jason Cummings asked when the administration would take political leadership over the failure of Children's Services in the Council.

The Leader responded that since the Ofsted report there had been a scrutiny meeting, a Cabinet, and a Council meeting all dedicated to the issue. There had been numerous meetings with the government appointed Commissioner. It was stated that the administration were taking their share of the responsibility and the opposition needed to do likewise.

Councillor Jason Cummings asked a supplementary question pertaining to what the Leader believed had gone wrong for the Children's Services to receive the rating it did.

The Leader responded that the quality of the information received on the performance of the service was poor and there had been chronic underfunding in the service due to government cuts.

Councillor Chowdhury asked a question pertaining to the steps the Council had taken since the Grenfell tower tragedy.

The Leader responded that the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government had only provided words, and not actions, to support local authorities in taking steps to address fire safety in their boroughs. The Leader stated he was proud of the proactive steps taken in Croydon but that more support from central government was needed.

Councillor Wright asked why Labour Councillors had failed to attend meetings with the Local Plan Inspectorate to protect the status of green spaces in the borough.

The Leader responded that there were Labour Councillors at the meetings in question, but that Labour were the administration and the Local Plan was the administration's plan, which the Inspector was reviewing. It was thus the opposition's job to raise objections with the Inspector if they did not agree with aspects of the Local Plan.

Councillor Wright asked a supplementary question asking the Leader to apologise for not supporting voluntary groups who protect green spaces in the borough.

The Leader responded that the question was factually incorrect as green spaces were protected in the Local Plan.

Councillor Butler added that the administration had sought additional protection to green spaces in the Plan, and these areas were also protected by the London Plan and the national planning framework. Despite this, the government appointed Inspector had modified the plan and there had been a cross-party response to this change.

Councillor Pelling asked whether the borough's Islamic community could be represented in the Remembrance Day events taking place in Croydon, in recognition of the hundreds of thousands of Muslims who fought for Britain in the First World War.

The Leader responded that he hoped this would take place in future events to reflect the diversity of the borough and in recognition of the contribution Muslim people had made to this country.

The Mayor then moved to Councillor questions to the first Cabinet Member pool.

Councillor Butler announced that the Gateway service had recently won national awards in recognition of the unique and pioneering work undertaken to support families affected by the recent welfare reforms.

Councillor Dudley Mead asked if the Cabinet Member could point to sites in the borough that were being developed by the Brick by Brick development company.

Councillor Butler responded that planning permission had recently been granted on a number of sites in the borough, which included a high proportion of affordable housing, and development would begin soon.

Councillor Dudley Mead asked a supplementary question pertaining to the record of the previous Conservative administration building Council homes, compared to the current Labour administration who had not.

Councillor Butler responded that the previous administration had built homes through funding provided by the then Labour Mayor of London. It was stated that, by contrast, the following Conservative Mayor and central government had undertaken policies that made building and retaining council homes difficult for local authorities. It was further stated that housing associations were missing from the statistics used in the question, which were a form of social housing as well.

Councillor Canning asked for an update on the roll out of sprinklers in the Council's high rise housing blocks.

Councillor Butler responded that the administration remained committed to installing sprinklers in the borough's tallest Council blocks and work had already started. Twenty-six blocks were expected to be completed by the spring of 2018. Councillor Butler also expressed her disappointment that the government had not delivered on its promise to help finance these initiatives.

Councillor Canning asked a supplementary question pertaining to the lack of government funding for local fire safety works.

Councillor Butler responded that the government lack of action was disappointing given previous promises made by Ministers.

Councillor Hale asked whether the Cabinet Member supported the government initiative regarding the housing allowance cap, that would not be applied to supported or social housing.

Councillor Butler responded that she welcomed the government's U-turn on the policy and stated that it was disappointing that supported housing development had stalled due to the uncertain government position on funding.

Councillor Hale asked a supplementary question regarding how many Croydon residents would benefit from the policy.

Councillor Butler responded that many residents would benefit and it was important the uncertainty around the issue could be resolved.

Councillor Canning asked what plans there were for development of a master plan in the Waddon area around Fiveways.

Councillor Butler responded that given the developments taking place, it was an area that required a masterplan and this would be looked into.

Councillor Gatland asked a question on the partial demolition of The View Public House and the suggestion that residents had warned Council officers that it was at risk.

Councillor Butler responded that it was a difficult situation and that planning officers received a lot of notifications from residents of suspected issues or concerns. Officers were in pre-application discussions with the developers of the site and advised that permissions were needed before demolition could take place. Despite this the illegal action took place and was stopped by enforcement officers as soon as the Council became aware.

Councillor Gatland asked a supplementary question pertaining to lessons that could be learnt from the incident.

Councillor Butler responded that the planning process would be made tighter to reduce the risk of such rogue actions happening again.

Councillor Ali expressed her condolences to the family of the young man who was killed the night before the Council meeting in a knife attack. The Cabinet Member had spoken to the borough commander and received an update on the Police investigation, and urged residents with information to come forward to the Police. Youth engagement teams had been tasked to go into the North End area to engage with young people after school in the coming weeks.

Councillor Rendle asked whether businesses should be supported by the Council to recruit more disabled people into the workforce.

Councillor Watson responded that the second Reverse Jobs Fayre in Croydon had been inspiring. The Cabinet Member advocated the business case for equality as there was wasted talent in the borough, and feedback from employers involved in the Fayre were that employees recruited through the scheme had been excellent.

Councillor Rendle asked a supplementary question regarding the third week of the borough's disability self-employment course.

Councillor Watson responded that there had also been a pop-up business school for potential self-employed people, and a similar type of support should be made available for disabled people.

Councillor O'Connell asked whether the Council would support the application by Matthew's Yard for the Mayor of London's good growth fund.

Councillor Watson responded that Matthew's Yard had transformed an under-used area of Croydon and that the building it was situated in had been put forward for planning permission which would include demolition of the building. The developers have stated their intention to keep a venue similar to Matthew's Yard on the new site. In the meantime, the venue Project B had been identified as a space for creative groups who may be displaced from Matthew's Yard while the works are undertaken.

Councillor O'Connell asked a supplementary question regarding support for a campaign for fair business rates in the borough.

Councillor Watson responded that the government's re-evaluation of businesses had been bad for London, and Purley had been particularly hard hit. The Council would support businesses as much as it could, and would campaign for a fairer system of business rates.

Councillor Lewis asked a question related to the New Addington BID renewal that had been submitted to a recent Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Watson responded that he was a supporter of BIDs and was supporting new BIDs being set up in Coulsdon, Addiscombe and Norbury. It

was stated that the New Addington BID document was excellent and the Cabinet Member applauded the organisation's work in the previous five years.

Councillor O'Connell asked a question on the balance required in the Licensing Policy between encouraging a night time economy whilst protecting town centre residents from the disruption that such an economy can cause.

Councillor Ali responded that the policy was out for consultation and that only a small handful of changes were being proposed in the document. The situation in 2017 was different to 15 years ago; the night time economy of 2017 was a more food-centred offer, rather than in the early-noughties where the offer was more focussed on alcohol and late night music.

The Mayor then moved the item to the second Cabinet Member pool.

Councillor Collins announced he had been working with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Treasury to fund new street cleansing teams in the borough's district centres. It was also announced that officers in the street cleansing teams had been nominated for a residents' award and this highlighted the positive resident feedback on the service.

Councillor King announced that, after concerns raised by the Council, Transport for London (TfL) had put on hold their proposed changes to the tram network service. Assurances were being sought that such unilateral action would not happen again. It was also announced that for the second year running, Love Land had been awarded Play Street of the Year. Congratulations were passed to the lead officer.

Councillor Hall announced that over 700 care leavers would benefit from the Council Tax exemption announced by the Leader. In addition, £2.5m had been set aside for schemes related to the improvement of children's services.

Councillor Thomas asked why Croydon had been rated the third worst borough in London for fly tipping.

Councillor Collins responded that some opposition Councillors had been wrongly reporting fly-tipping and that officers always got back to residents quickly when fly tips were reported. The Council could control its response to fly-tipping but could not stop offenders fly-tipping in the first place. Long-term education was needed to tackle the issue and the Council was working with schools as part of this initiative. A national campaign was needed to make fly-tipping a social stigma in the same manner as was done with drink driving.

Councillor Thomas asked a supplementary question related to Labour manifesto promises of going to war with fly tipping in Croydon.

Councillor Collins responded that he had worked with residents' associations to support community clean ups and promote street champions. The number of enforcement officers had also been increased considerably and a dashboard set up to provide transparency of the statistics around fly-tipping.

Councillor Canning asked what the latest figured for fly-tipping related prosecutions were.

Councillor Collins responded that there had been 87 and that part of the success had been targeting key hot-spots in the borough. Many other offenders had been caught and paid the fine to avoid prosecution in the courts. A recent Freedom of Information Request (FOI) highlighted that in nearly every ward, fly-tips were down.

Councillor Canning asked a question pertaining to the Waddon Safer Neighbourhood Team's work around checking vehicle permits for waste removal.

Councillor Collins responded that the team had done a fantastic job, as had the three local Ward Members.

Councillor Pelling asked what the Council were doing to ensure charity shops stopped selling second hand safety items such as helmets and baby seats, which posed a safety risk to users.

Council King responded that the Council would look at positive ways to engage with charity shops on this issue and would talk with officers to move it forward.

Councillor Jason Cummings asked whether the accounts of the Brick by Brick development company were in line with the legal comments of the Council Solicitor, that the company should not receive more than 50% of its funding from the Council, as stated in the Cabinet report from March 2015.

Councillor Hall responded that the structure of the Brick by Brick had changed considerably since the time of the original report at the March 2015 Cabinet meeting, and that a full written response to the question would be provided to the Councillor.

Councillor Jason Cummings asked a supplementary question on the accounts that suggested all funding for Brick by Brick had been borrowed from the Council.

Councillor Hall responded that the exact details to answer the question would be provided in a written response to the Councillor.

Councillor Rendle asked if the Cabinet Member would undertake a site visit of Lower Addiscombe Road to look at street parking issues in the area.

Councillor King responded that he would do so and would look into freeing up additional parking spaces in the area.

Councillor Rendle asked a supplementary question pertaining to the TfL works on Blackhorse Lane bridge that were causing severe disruption in the vicinity.

Councillor King responded that the Council were concerned at the length of time the bridge had been closed for, but that the works were complicated and a recent safety report had judged the bridge to be at risk of a “catastrophic incident”. The Cabinet Member would continue to raise the issue with TfL officers.

Councillor Dudley Mead asked whether the recently published trading accounts of the Brick by Brick development company suggested that the company was insolvent. It was further asked whether the company’s directors were receiving remuneration and had been offered indemnity towards their personal liabilities to the company.

Councillor Hall responded that remuneration for directors related only to independent directors, not Council officers sitting as directors. It was further stated that when taking into account the asset base and when liabilities were due, the Brick by Brick accounts made clear that the company was not insolvent.

Councillor Dudley Mead asked a supplementary question regarding the appropriateness and accountability of the sole funding of the company coming from a Council loan. Questions were also asked of supposed irregularities with the co-terminus year end of the company.

Councillor Hall responded that the accounting date had been set by the independent company board. The funding arrangement was suitable as it would deliver affordable homes for the borough and was value for taxpayer’s money. The loan arrangement was externally tested and reviewed by auditors of both the company and the Council, the terms of which would be kept under review.

Councillor Scott asked when the Council would move to completely paperless meetings, as had been successfully implemented in Planning Committee.

Councillor Hall responded that the paperless roll-out was easier at Planning Committee due to the regularity of meetings. However assurance was made that the paperless rollout was in progress, but would take longer on Committees that met less frequently. Significant savings would be made and the roll-out was expected to be completed in the coming six months.

The Mayor moved the item to the final pool of Cabinet Members.

Councillor Godfrey announced that measures were in place regarding the possibility that Carillion could collapse; the library services currently run by that contractor would be brought back in house.

Councillor Flemming announced that there were many upcoming training opportunities for Members on Children's Services. It was also announced that the Children in Care Council had been launched. Members were invited to the graduation of first year social workers that was due to take place shortly. Two heads of service had also been recruited for Early Help and the Multi-Agency Services Hub (MASH) departments. Finally, condolences were made to the family of the young man who died from a violent knife attack in the town centre the evening before the Council meeting.

Councillor Woodley announced that the BBC had been present in the Council filming a Croydon project related to hoarding that dealt with the issue as a social care matter, whereas it had traditionally been considered a housing matter.

Councillor Gatland asked what concerns had been raised by the Chair of the Safeguarding Board in 2015.

Councillor Flemming stated that the previous Chair of the Board had raised concerns over how data was being accessed by the Council's partner agencies. Discussions were had with the Local Government Association (LGA) regarding whether a peer review was required and a Joint Targeted Area Review (JTAR) was launched which considered that the MASH service was sufficient.

Councillor Gatland asked a supplementary question on whether those concerns raised were taken seriously at the time.

Councillor Flemming responded that the concerns raised at the time were considered by the JTAR and a report was taken to Cabinet on the matters raised and the provision was considered sufficient.

Councillor Pelling complemented the organisers of the Wandle Park Mela and asked whether the event may take place at the park the following year. Councillor Godfrey thanked all those involved with the organisation of the Mela and stated it was the first major partnership with the Arts Council to put the event on. There were plans to bring the event to Wandle Park again in 2018.

Councillor Pelling asked a supplementary question around the success of Wandle Park as an event venue, and whether Ward Councillors would be consulted on future events held there.

Councillor Godfrey responded that working with Ward Councillors and other areas of the Council such as the Pollution Team ensured that the views of residents were considered.

Councillor Gatland asked whether the Cabinet Member's remarks that the Ofsted report was an "opportunity" were insensitive.

Councillor Flemming responded that the response was that the Council must not rehearse the report but move forward in creating a service that meets the needs of young people in the borough.

Councillor Gatland asked a supplementary question regarding what the Cabinet Member would say to young people in light of the Ofsted findings.

Councillor Flemming responded that she would say the Council was committed to ensuring that young people receive the best support possible.

Councillor Lewis asked what the ambitions were for the operator of the new leisure facility in New Addington.

Councillor Godfrey responded that the new facility would be better quality and better value for money than the previous centre. Bids for the operator role would be open soon and a customer-focussed business plan would be a key requirement.

Councillor Lewis asked a supplementary question on the role of resident engagement in the shaping of the service provided.

Councillor Godfrey responded that there would be a user panel for the services provided which would meet regularly. A proper partnership approach was required which would reduce the risk of the problems experienced under the Fusion contract for the previous centre.

Councillor Stranack asked what accounted for the large rise in number of missing children in Croydon in the past year.

Councillor Flemming responded that the issue had been heard in considerable depth at a recent scrutiny sub-committee. There were policies that needed to be properly followed such as conversations with young people after they return from going missing. There were a number of complex factors such as a high number being unaccompanied asylum seeking children and many children placed in Croydon from other London boroughs.

Councillor Stranack asked a supplementary question pertaining to data on missing children that he had brought to the recent scrutiny meeting.

Councillor Flemming responded that Councillor Stranack was advised at the meeting that it was not appropriate to provide data on the day of the meeting to be scrutinised.

Councillor Rendle asked what work was being done to develop services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Councillor Flemming responded that the Council was reviewing the local offer for young people with disabilities, and there were plans for a new service model which would integrate the different partners into one multi-agency service. More school places were needed for children with special education needs (SEN) and the regeneration of the borough would support such initiatives.

Councillor Rendle asked a supplementary question pertaining to a recent report that stated that 85% of headteachers had cut funding for SEN support in their schools.

Councillor Flemming responded that this was an increasing concern that had to be stopped. Young people with SEN should be provided with access to support in mainstream schools, and there was a worrying practice of schools using exclusion policies to remove SEN children.

Councillor Speakman expressed sympathy for the position Councillor Flemming found herself in, which it was claimed was due to senior officers lying to the Cabinet Member to protect their position in the Council. It was asked what the definition of a corporate parent was, and the Cabinet Member was urged to ensure that action was taken to deliver the change needed.

Councillor Flemming responded that performance indicators would be monitored on a regular basis and a newly constituted safeguarding board had been set up with a new Chair in post. The forward plan of the Corporate Parenting Panel was also being reviewed. Members were recommended to attend sessions in which they could meet with social workers to hear directly from the front line of the service.

6/17

Member Petitions

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

"Petition to London Borough of Croydon for parking to be permitted on the pavement on one side of Hillier Gardens CR0 4EH with parking signalled with white paint on the pavement as is already in place on neighbouring roads such as Coldharbour Road."

Councillor King responded that consideration would be given to a signed and lined footway parking scheme for Hillier Gardens although the scope could be limited due to the narrowness of the road and footway. Initial findings from an Ordinance survey suggested that there may be insufficient space for a formal footway parking scheme. The Councillor would be kept updated and a pragmatic solution would be sought to deal with the issue.

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

“Petition for permit parking in Lower Road, Kenley Surrey.”

Councillor King responded that Lower Road has been identified for a consultation, but due to the number already identified in the parking design programme, this would be most likely considered in the summer of 2018.

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

“It is currently extremely difficult for residents of South Drive, Coulsdon to park on the street due to parking by non-residents.
We would like Croydon Council to make parking on South Drive available to residents only, using a Pay and Display system.
We understand that those residents wishing to participate in this scheme would incur charges of £80, £126 & £305 per annum for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd permit issued to a household.”

Councillor King responded that South Drive had been identified for consultation however was in a similar situation to the previous Member Petition and thus would be most likely out for consultation in the summer of 2018 at the earliest.

7/17

Maiden Speeches

Councillor Patsy Cummings, delivering her maiden speech, stated that Croydon was one of the most dynamic boroughs in London. The fifth anniversary of the passing away of the widely respected Croydon North MP Malcolm Wicks had recently taken place; he had pledged to relieve poverty through education. Homage was paid to Councillor Cummings’ parents who advised that anything was possible. Being in an environment still dominated by white men was a motivation to succeed. Politics needed to be collaborative to deal with residents’ issues, such as the deaths of young people due to knife crime. As a symbol of the collaborative approach advocated for, Councillor Cummings invited Councillor Jason Cummings to join her in the centre of the Chamber to shake hands as a sign of unity to support the young people of Croydon.

The two Councillors shook hands on the Chamber floor and Councillor Jason Cummings added that he endorsed such an approach, and that whilst the parties may disagree on tactics, both were in agreement to support the people of Croydon.

8/17

Council Debate Motions

The item began with the Administration motion which read:

“In light of the cruelty and hardship the government’s universal credit program is inflicting on many people, both in Croydon and across the country, this council calls for an immediate halt and review of the policy. Any review should also have direct input from local authorities who have experience of how this is affecting people on the ground and the implications for social landlords.”

Councillor Butler, proposing the motion, stated that the roll out of universal credit in Croydon had had a hugely detrimental impact to the residents of the borough. Since it was launched as a pilot roll out, the scheme should be reviewed and if necessary should be stopped so as to listen to those who have been negatively affected.

Over 2,500 Croydon council tenants were claiming universal credit, and the number in rent arrears was nearly 2,000, amounting to approximately £2million owed to the Council. This was due to the position claimants had been put in by the universal credit scheme. The same issues had been experienced across the country where it had been rolled out, and thus there was something fundamentally wrong with the system. These problems were causing landlords to become less likely to take on tenants who were claimants, further pushing these people into the risk of homelessness. The motion called for the government to stop and listen to those residents negatively affected by Universal Credit.

Councillor Ali seconded the motion and reserved her right to speak.

Councillor Jason Cummings, opposing the motion, stated that this was a national issue that the local authority could not change, and was another example of the administration blaming other people for issues in the borough. The universal credit scheme was not perfect and problems had been identified and changes made. The motion was not a call for improvement of the scheme but to halt it altogether. It was stated that under the Labour government people were worse off in work than benefits, and universal credit sought to address this. It would result in thousands of people getting off benefits and into employment. Whilst improvements were needed to the scheme, the motion was worded so as to leave the Opposition no choice but to oppose it.

Councillor Hale, speaking against the motion, stated that universal credit was launched to address the flawed system left by the previous Labour government. There was cross party support for the merging of benefits into one system which mirrored the reality of work. Croydon was a pilot borough for the scheme and the high rate of rent arrears was worrying. However, it was stated, the issue was complex and rent arrears were caused by many issues – an example was given of a claimant who was withholding his rent until urgent repairs were made to the property. Many tenants had been in arrears prior to the roll out of universal credit. Mark Fowler and the Gateway service were commended for their work in supporting residents who were in arrears. The message to residents struggling with rent and debt was that help was there to support them; as much communication as possible to residents was

needed to ensure they knew where to go for help. Landlords with tenants claiming universal credit could also access support, such as the Alternative Payment Arrangement and Discretionary Housing Payments from the Council. All these issues raised the question of whether Universal Credit really was the root of tenancy arrears in Croydon.

Councillor Ali, speaking in favour of the motion, stated that the United Nations had described the Universal Credit roll out as a human catastrophe, yet the Prime Minister stated it was working. The Citizens Advice Bureau, Trussell Trust, and even some Conservative MPs had all spoken out against the scheme. Councillor Ali stated that the objectives of Universal Credit were not being met. The scheme was pushing residents into debt, and tribute was paid to the Gateway service officers supporting those people. In Croydon, there had been cases where claimants were waiting 12 weeks for their first payment. It was stated that the inclusion of emergency and temporary accommodation within Universal Credit made no sense and urgently needed to be reversed. The scheme was causing human misery for residents and financial difficulties for local authorities dealing with rent arrears.

At the request of Councillor Butler, the motion was re-read to the Chamber by the Chief Executive to clarify the wording.

The motion was put to the vote and carried.

The Mayor then moved to the Opposition motion which read:

“Croydon's incredible carers make considerable sacrifices to care for loved ones within their home. That's why the Conservative manifesto for the 2018 election will contain a pledge to use council tax discounts to support many carers and specifically to introduce a scheme similar to that run in Bournemouth (and other councils) which exempts some carers from council tax entirely. This Council commits to endorsing this Croydon Conservative manifesto pledge and the introduction of such a scheme.”

Councillor Hopley, proposing the motion, stated that being a carer was difficult and in many cases a full time job with no respite. The care centre in Croydon estimated that millions of pounds were saved by carers and the Council should support those residents. The joint-commissioning work undertaken by Councillor Margaret Mead was beginning to bear fruit and linking with the voluntary sector was an important part of this. To this end, it was stated that it was disappointing that the Health and Wellbeing Board had been brought to a standstill. The motion presented a small way in which the Council could support the many carers in the borough whom undertook such difficult work.

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

Councillor Hall paid tribute to the thousands of carers in Croydon, many of whom went unnoticed. The administration, it was claimed, had a tradition of supporting carers through protecting services for the most vulnerable and had recently included the extension of the Council Tax waiver to carers. It was stated that the policy proposed in the motion had many deficiencies, with many carers being unable to benefit from it. It was further stated that the motion was hypocritical as the opposition had voted against the adult social care precept and had supported the government's 70% cuts to Croydon's funding that have caused a huge national gap in adult care funding.

Councillor Henson stated that carers were extraordinary people that undertook emotionally and physically draining work. It was stated that carers were a high percentage of the Councillor's work load and examples were given of such cases. The cases were proffered as in those examples the carers would not qualify for the scheme proposed in the motion. It was stated that the scheme was ill-thought out and did not help many carers who needed the support. The administration had done a huge amount of work to support carers before crisis hit; it was claimed that no such support had existed under the previous administration.

Councillor Stranack stated that Councillor Margaret Mead, under the previous administration, had set out a vision to unite the myriad partnerships to serve residents over 65s, which eventually became what is now the Outcome Based Commissioning. It was claimed that the new administration had slowed this process to a standstill, like had happened on other scheme like the Fairfield Halls development and Westfield Hammerson. The Alliance contract was forging a community-focussed approach to care provision, and discarding the old mentality. A vision was required for creative ways to support the army of carers in the borough, that prevent elderly people from becoming lonely and isolated; there was a real financial and emotional cost to this care. The motion was another example of building on this vision and supporting those who volunteer to help elderly residents.

The motion was put to the vote. The Minority Group voted in favour *en bloc*. The Majority Group abstained *en bloc*.

The Motion was carried.

9/17

Recommendations of Cabinet or Committee referred to Council for decision

Councillor Ali, moved the recommendations in the report that the Community Safety Strategy be adopted by the Council.

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Councillor Wood seconded the recommendations.

The motion was carried unanimously.

10/17 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The meeting ended at 9.42 pm

Signed:

Date: