

Council

Meeting held on Monday, 7 October 2019 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Humayun Kabir (Chair);
Councillor Maddie Henson (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Hamida Ali, Muhammad Ali, Jamie Audsley, Jane Avis, Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel, Sue Bennett, Margaret Bird, Simon Brew, Alison Butler, Jan Buttinger, Janet Campbell, Robert Canning, Richard Chatterjee, Sherwan Chowdhury, Chris Clark, Pat Clouder, Stuart Collins, Mary Croos, Jason Cummings, Patsy Cummings, Mario Creatura, Nina Degrads, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Sean Fitzsimons, Alisa Flemming, Felicity Flynn, Clive Fraser, Maria Gatland, Lynne Hale, Simon Hall, Patricia Hay-Justice, Simon Hoar, Steve Hollands, Yvette Hopley, Karen Jewitt, Bernadette Khan, Shafi Khan, Toni Letts, Oliver Lewis, Stephen Mann, Stuart Millson, Vidhi Mohan, Michael Neal, Tony Newman, Oni Oviri, Ian Parker, Andrew Pelling, Jason Perry, Helen Pollard, Tim Pollard, Joy Prince, Badsha Quadir, Helen Redfern, Scott Roche, Pat Ryan, Paul Scott, Manju Shahul-Hameed, Andy Stranack, Gareth Streeter, Robert Ward, David Wood, Louisa Woodley and Callton Young

Apologies: Councillor Luke Clancy, Stuart King and Steve O'Connell

PART A

55/19 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

Councillor Ryan raised a point of order regarding receipt of the response to the Beulah Hill petition presented at the Council meeting on 15 July 2019. It was confirmed that the response had been made available online on the Council's website. Democratic Services were to ensure that the Councillor was aware of this response.

56/19 Disclosure of Interests

There were no disclosures of interests. Members confirmed their disclosure of interest forms were accurate and up-to-date.

57/19 Urgent Business (if any)

There were no items of urgent business.

58/19

Announcements

The Mayor

The Mayor, Councillor Kabir, provided Council with his announcements. These included an overview of the 102 engagements the Mayor had undertaken since the previous Council meeting in July 2019. Specific mention was made of the Mayor's trip to Arnhem for the annual commemoration of the 75th anniversary of Operation Market Garden. Other events mentioned included the openings of Fairfield Halls and the Legacy Youth Zone. The Mayor described how he had hosted of a number of seminars to raise awareness of topical issues such as domestic violence, social prescribing and mental health.

The Mayor's forthcoming charitable events were detailed including a dinner night at Chat House (28 October 2019), a West End Gala event at Fairfield Halls (3 November 2019), an Asian cultural evening (9 November 2019) and a One Croydon concert in the Phoenix concert hall at Fairfield Halls (27 November 2019). All Members were encouraged to attend.

The Mayor's Civic Awards were promoted. These provided recognition for volunteers and community organisations in the borough. Nominations were to open on 15 October 2019 with Members urged to consider who from their wards should be entered.

The Leader

The Mayor invited the Leader, Councillor Newman, to make his announcements. Councillor Newman informed Council of the sad news of the death of Stephen Aselford. The powerful contribution Mr Aselford made as a disability and transport campaigner was recorded and sympathies from across the political divide extended to his family.

The Leader updated Council on the cross party efforts to lobby the Government to address the funding gap for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). Regret and disappointment were expressed that the latest action involving Councillor Butler and Chris Philp MP had not been successful with a letter received in response from the Minister stating the same position. Thanks were expressed for the support received across the Chamber. The Leader stressed the need to address the underfunding of UASC and highlighted that until this happened it was Croydon's tax payers who were funding this provision on behalf of all tax payers across the country.

The Chief Executive

The Mayor invited the Chief Executive to make her announcements in her capacity as the Head of Paid Service and Returning Officer for the Borough of Croydon.

The Chief Executive, Jo Negrini, made three announcements:

- i. A by-election in Fairfield Ward was to be held on Thursday 7 November 2019 as per the published notice of election following the resignation of Councillor Niroshan Sirisena. Residents living in Fairfield Ward who were British, Commonwealth, Irish or European Union Citizens and aged 18 or over on Thursday 7 November 2019 would be able to vote in the by-election but only if they were registered to vote. The deadline for new applications to register to vote in the election was midnight on Tuesday 22 October 2019. The venue for the count would be Braithwaite Hall. Access to the election count was restricted to candidates, their guests and agents. Appointments as a counting agent or guest were to be made in writing to the Chief Executive in her capacity as Returning Officer by the candidate or their election agent. The result of the election would be announced following the close of the poll on Thursday 7 November 2019;
- ii. In response to recent threats made to Members, the Chief Executive was working closely with the Council's lead security officer and the Metropolitan Police Service on updated advice and guidance to be provided to Members subsequent to the meeting;
- iii. Members of Council were asked to note the appointment of an Executive Officer and Chief Officer. Guy Van Dichele had been appointed to the post of Executive Director Health, Wellbeing and Adults on a fixed term contract until 31 December 2022. Lisa Taylor had been assigned the duties of the Statutory Section 151 Officer in addition to her substantive role as the Director of Finance, Investment and Risk.

59/19 Croydon Question Time

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Mayor explained that Croydon Question Time would commence with thirty minutes of public questions to the Leader and Cabinet Members with preference being given to those who had questions who were in attendance at the meeting.

Croydon resident, **Mr Tim Coombe** asked the Leader, Councillor Tony Newman, about the Council's continued support for the expansion of Gatwick Airport within the context of having declared a climate emergency at the Council meeting held in July 2019. Mr Coombe noted that whilst airlines were making claims of increased efficiency, emissions from aviation were continuing to climb.

The Leader thanked Mr Coombe for his question and reiterated the Council's commitment to tackling the climate emergency including the need to reduce demand at airports. However, Councillor Newman also noted the need for the

Council to work with Gatwick to benefit from the economic and employment advantages that would result from the airport's expansion. It was noted that an expansion of Gatwick was preferable to Heathrow which was far more of an immediate climate emergency.

Mr Kosta Deiades asked Councillor Collins, the Cabinet Member for Clean, Green Croydon, why it takes the intervention of a Councillor to get jobs completed by the Council.

Councillor Collins thanked Mr Deiades for his question. The Cabinet Member noted that officers had a strict rotation for tree cutting and that the request made by Mr Deiades would be completed in the first week of November 2019. It was acknowledged that the overgrowth had attracted rubbish. Councillor Collins described how it was right for him to be involved with staff in the Department. It was explained that there was often a multitude of agencies involved in fulfilling resident requests and therefore these can appear to take time. The Cabinet Member recommended use of the Council's App to report cases and informed Council that 97% of cases reported using the App were addressed within 24 hours. It was noted that cases involving private land could take longer to address as legal permission would be needed to give the Council the right to act. The Cabinet Member praised the Council's workers but noted it could be more of a challenge when a third party such as Veolia was involved.

In his supplementary question, Mr Deiades highlighted that reports to the App didn't always result in action within 24 hours and called for this to be addressed by the Cabinet Member. In response, Councillor Collins explained that it was part of his role to ensure the Council was delivering the right service and that he would consult with the Director as well as ensuring Veolia staff were monitored in the same way as those workers directly employed by the Council.

Croydon resident, **Mr Bernard Mickleburgh** asked Councillor Muhammad Ali, the Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Urban Regeneration if the replacement of signage in Surrey Street meant that the Council had recognised the original signage wasn't adequate. Mr Mickleburgh went on to state that in his opinion the upgraded signage was also not fit for purpose and that a further adjustment of the signage was required. Therefore, all fines applied under this new signage had been improperly enforced.

In his response, Councillor Muhammad Ali acknowledged the new signage and described how this was a little bigger than that which had originally been in place. As a result, it was hoped this would help with driver compliance. The Cabinet Member stated that he did not agree that the previous signage was not fit for purpose. If this had been the case, three quarters of appeals would not have been awarded in the Council's favour.

In his supplementary question, Mr Mickleburgh recommended the Council consult with other authorities that had achieved low levels of parking fines by improving the quality of signage sufficiently to prevent parking infringements.

In response, Councillor Muhammad Ali explained that the rise in the number of penalty charges issued was correlated to the increase in parking time restrictions and the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition for capturing parking infringements. Therefore, out of 166 appeals against parking fines, 121 had been found in favour of the Council. The Deputy Cabinet Member stated that if motorists did not follow the parking instructions they would receive a penalty charge.

Croydon resident, **Mr Ian Morris** asked the Leader, Councillor Newman, if it was possible to achieve the 2030 climate emergency target earlier given this was the latest date by which to achieve climate change and avoid a climate disaster.

The Leader explained that the date of 2030 was specified based on the understanding that this was the earliest date by which all the necessary changes could be realistically achieved; it was preferable not to specify an unrealistic date. Councillor Newman described how both a *Citizen's Assembly* and *Climate Change Commission* would be established to consider how Croydon would act on the climate emergency. However, it was noted that if it were possible to achieve the changes needed earlier, then there was nothing to stop this happening.

In his supplementary question, Mr Morris asked that all be done that was necessary rather than what was politically expedient to tackle the climate emergency. Airport expansion, incinerators and car park spaces at Westfield were cited as forthcoming policies that would not support achievement of the 2030 target.

The Leader acknowledged the points made by Mr Morris but also highlighted how the Council was introducing charges for car parking linked to the emissions of vehicles and how future building projects would encourage less not more associated car parking spaces.

The Mayor moved on to questions submitted by email by those unable to attend the meeting. The Mayor read out a question from Croydon resident **Mr Michael Hembest**. This referred to the opening of Fairfield Halls following its refurbishment and expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of some of the works and the preparedness of the venue for opening. Mr Hembest questioned how the £40m budget allocation had been spent.

In response, Councillor Lewis expressed his delight that Fairfield Halls had reopened following the benefit of a £40 million investment in its refurbishment. The Cabinet Member described the arts venue as the jewel in Croydon's crown providing the full splendour of world class acoustics which had been left undiminished by the refurbishment works.

It was highlighted that most of the refurbishment works had happened behind the scenes with specific mention being made to the removal of asbestos. As a result the future of the venue had been secured for the next 60 years.

The Cabinet Member pointed to the tangible improvements made to Fairfield Halls as a result of the refurbishment such as the residence of Tower Theatre Company, the additional studio space, café, Changing Places facility and new lifts. The Council's investment was described as having provided additional functionality and that it would take time to get the venue back up and fully running again following the works. The Council was working with the contractor so that this would be achieved. The Cabinet Member described himself as very proud in what had been achieved and regarded the refurbishment an investment for the next 60 years.

QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER

The Mayor invited the Leader, Councillor Tony Newman, to make his announcements.

The Leader provided an update following the declaration of a climate emergency at the Council meeting in July 2019. Council was informed that a Citizen's Assembly would be convened. To this end, a variety of groups including *Extinction Rebellion* and the *New Economics Foundation* were being consulted. The Leader described how Croydon was going further than many other authorities by also setting-up a Climate Commission to provide a longer term view whereas the assembly would focus on what could be done urgently in the short term.

The Leader of the Opposition, **Councillor Tim Pollard**, asked what had been done over the past four months to improve the Council's performance on Freedom of Information (FOIs) requests. It was noted that the Councillor had raised the Council's performance on FOIs at the Council meeting in July 2019. In response, the Leader noted the work being undertaken to improve response times and rates with the objective being to address all requests promptly. The suggestion was made that further information could be provided directly.

In his supplementary, Councillor Tim Pollard asked the Leader to clarify what he achieved in his role. The Leader responded by noting that the Councillor had not been at the opening of the Legacy Youth Zone, housing schemes or Fairfield Halls. Councillor Newman described how he was very proud of the Council and his role in its delivery against a background of 70% cuts to Government funding for local authorities.

Councillor Ryan asked about the impact of cuts to the police service in Crystal Palace & Upper Norwood ward. In response, the Leader described how he had been out on patrol with police officers in the ward who were doing an amazing job making communities feel safe despite the cuts to police numbers.

During the exchange around Councillor Ryan's question, clarification on political sensitivities during the pre-election period as a result of the by-election in Fairfield Ward was provided. Councillor Redfern requested that

time lost as a result be added back into the time allocated to questions to the Leader. The Mayor, as provided in the Constitution (Part 4A Council Procedure Rules, paragraph 1.2 – Powers of the Chair), determined not to allow this request and the agenda item continued as originally scheduled.

Councillor Creatura asked the Leader about his commitment to being open and transparent. In response, the Leader noted that the Council meeting was being webcast which he compared to arrangements under the previous Conservative administration when Council meetings had not been made accessible in this way. Rather, during the previous administration, residents had to wait to read the written minutes. Under his administration, residents could view meetings held in the Council Chamber online both live and recorded.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Creatura asked the Leader to explain in a factual manner the reason for the resignation of former Councillor Sirisena. Councillor Newman responded that the reason for former Councillor Sirisena's resignation was subject to investigation by the police. To make any further comment would be wrong.

Councillor Audsley asked the Leader to provide specific details on the resource being dedicated to addressing the climate emergency in Croydon. The Leader explained that a detailed outline of the Council's response to the climate emergency would be presented at the Cabinet meeting to be held on 21 October 2019. Additionally, that the commitment to addressing the climate emergency had been made at the highest level. This included ensuring the allocation of sufficient resources.

POOL 1

With the end to the time allocated to questions to the Leader, the Mayor signalled that he was moving on to questions to the Cabinet Members in the first pool. Councillors Collins, Muhammad Ali and Hall were invited to make their announcements.

Councillor Collins, the Cabinet Member for Clean Green Croydon, highlighted that the Council had supported National Recycling Week through a variety of events and activities including a piece from communications that had looked at the recycling journey. The Cabinet Member expressed his disappointment that he had not received a response to his letter to the Secretary of State regarding a national campaign on fly tipping. This had been followed-up with a letter to the new Secretary of State, Theresa Villiers. Opposition Members with links to the Secretary of State were asked to lend their support to the request.

Councillor Hall, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, expressed his congratulations to Lisa Taylor whose duties had recently been confirmed to include the Statutory Role of the Section 151 Officer. The Cabinet Member highlighted that the shortfall in funding for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children had exceeded £20m over the last three years. This

had been funded by Croydon despite it being a national responsibility. It was also noted that Grant Thornton, in its audit of the Council's accounts, had confirmed it had no concerns about the disposals of land to *Brick by Brick*.

Councillor Mohan noted that, at the Council meeting in January 2019, Councillor Collins had said he would detail the level of the fines being applied to the Council's waste contractor, Veolia. Councillor Mohan stated that this information had still not been provided and called on the Cabinet Member to be open and transparent. Councillor Collins stated he was unsure any commitment had been given to provide an exact figure and that rather than imposing a fine the Council was withholding payment in lieu of performance issues. However, this figure was commercially sensitive and therefore could not be shared publicly. Councillor Collins noted that Veolia's performance had improved significantly.

In his supplementary question Councillor Mohan questioned why the Cabinet Member was more interested in protecting the commercial interests of a large business rather than focusing on the 17,000 missed bin collections in the borough. In response, Councillor Collins referenced his trade union credentials and noted it was Prime Minister Thatcher who was responsible for introducing the contracting out of core Council services. Veolia was being held to account through the withholding of a six figure sum. However, the Cabinet Member also noted the need to retain perspective on the number of missed bin collections which was less than one percent of all those collected and equated to about two missed bin collections per crew per day. It was also noted that the service being provided by Veolia was still improving and that there would be discussion with all partners in advance of the forthcoming contract break. It was emphasised that it would be hard for Veolia to retain the contract if performance wasn't good enough.

Councillor Canning ask Councillor Hall about the record rate achieved in the collection of Council Tax. In response, Councillor Hall expressed his delight with this achievement which was both above the national average and one of the highest achieved by all Councils. The hard work of officers was noted including their efforts to ensure payment despite the impact of Universal Credit; whilst the Council wanted to ensure Council Tax collections it was doing this in a responsible fashion.

In his supplementary question Councillor Canning asked the Cabinet Member to provide clarification on the ethical approach being taken for Council Tax collection. Councillor Hall described how the Council had signed the Citizens Advice Bureau charter and that the processes employed were continually under review. Distinction was drawn between those unable as opposed to those unwilling to pay. The use of bailiffs was avoided where possible as it was acknowledged this approach was not always in the best interests of residents. It was described how the bailiff service was being brought in-house. The Council's approach to non-payment was suitably sympathetic with underhand means avoided.

Councillor Jason Cummings asked Councillor Hall for clarification on the treatment of the costs for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children in the budget; whether or not these were being treated as exceptional and over and above the burden assumed in the budget. Councillor Hall responded that the total burden of the costs that Government was making the Council bare was reflected in the budget.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Jason Cummings asked whether it was being acknowledged that money being used to fund Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children was being taken from and would not be repaid to reserves. Councillor Hall responded that if funding was not forthcoming from the Home Office then the costs had to be funded by other means. As a result, funds wouldn't necessarily be able to be earmarked back to the reserves. The Cabinet Member called on cross party support for the continued lobbying of Government to secure adequate and fair funding.

Councillor Prince asked Councillor Muhammad Ali about the implementation of the *Liveable Neighbourhood Fund*. In response, Councillor Muhammad Ali described how the implementation was being progressed by officers including through a feasibility study working with partners and stakeholders. Delivery was anticipated to take place from 2020 to 2023 with the aim of making Croydon better for cycling and walking.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Prince acknowledged the time needed to implement complicated transport schemes. However, she requested that Councillor Muhammad Ali do his best to advance the flyover scheme in her ward. The Deputy Cabinet Member emphasised the size of the scheme and committed to share further details in a written response.

Councillor Hoar requested that Councillor Muhammad Ali provide support to the independent investigation into the Croydon Tram crash. Councillor Muhammad Ali noted that this has been addressed by the Public Transport Liaison Committee with *Transport for London* having committed to respond in writing.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Hoar encourage the Deputy Cabinet Member to go further. Councillor Hoar requested the Deputy Cabinet Member take a lead on behalf of the borough. Councillor Muhammad Ali reported that *Transport for London* was doing all in its power which he was fully supporting.

Councillor Mann asked Councillor Muhammad Ali about the tram extension to Crystal Palace. Councillor Muhammad Ali stated that support was being given to the tram extension with correspondence taking place with Bromley to encourage the safeguarding of sites. This had elicited a reassuring response and indication that the development was still going ahead. Work with *Transport for London* was also acknowledged. This was focused on optimising the scheme to benefit the town centre. It was noted that the Deputy Cabinet Member would be writing to the Deputy Mayor for Transport at the Greater London Assembly.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Mann noted the firm promise made by the Mayor of London to deliver the scheme and requested to know what was being done to keep delivery of the scheme to time. Councillor Muhammad Ali reiterated that he would be writing to the Deputy Member for Transport at the Greater London Assembly seeking further information on the development plan.

Councillor Parker asked Councillor Collins to comment on the ability of the Council to deliver a bin collection service should Veolia's operatives work a four day week. The Cabinet Member responded that all operatives were paid the London Living Wage which formed a good basis for any discussion should there be an employment dispute.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Parker asked about the impact of a four day working week on Croydon. Councillor Collins noted that this had been something that had been discussed at the Labour Party Conference and whilst it may well have some benefit it was simply an aspiration which was quite admirable. The Cabinet Member thought it positive to get more enjoyment out of life rather than focusing on maximising working hours.

Councillor Audsley asked Councillor Collins about the increased recycling rates which were reported as at 48%. The Cabinet Member thanked residents for their role in delivering the new bin system and noted that the increase in recycling meant that waste was being diverted from landfill. Credit was given to Veolia staff with Croydon being ranked fourth out of all London boroughs by Friends of the Earth for action on climate change. It was explained that it was intended to introduce schemes to give residents in flats the opportunity to recycle. This meant some modernisation and offering support to landlords with properties in the private rented sector. Councillor Collins also described how work was happening in schools to reinforce the recycling message.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Audsley asked about the importance of reducing waste as opposed to just recycling. Councillor Collins concurred; reducing waste had to be the first priority. This was being looked at in partnership with organisations like *Transition Town*. Initiatives included the use of refillables in preference over single use plastics. The Council's communication channels would be used to promote messages such as to shop locally and look at what was being purchased.

POOL 2

With the end to the time allocated to questions to the Cabinet Members in the first pool, the Mayor signalled he was moving on to questions to the Cabinet Members in the second pool. Councillors Lewis, Alisa Flemming and Avis were invited to make their announcements.

Councillor Lewis, the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport, informed Council that Councillor Flynn had been appointed to the deputy role for his Cabinet portfolio. Additionally, that Selsdon Library had been opened following investment in its redevelopment. The Cabinet Member also noted

that he had attended the opening of Fairfield Halls along with the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and Dame Judy Dench. Banksy's pop-up shop in Fairfield ward was noted with encouragement given to visit. Councillor Lewis also informed Council that Croydon would be making a bid to become the London Borough of Culture in 2023.

Councillor Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning, highlighted the opening of the Legacy Youth Zone that took place on 7 September 2019. It was described how this had been attended by over a thousand young people. This had shown what happens when young people are put at the heart of the community. This had been achieved despite stretched budgets. The key message given to Croydon's young people was how the Council was supporting their futures. The new Special Educational Needs and Disability strategy was launched at the same venue. This had drawn first hand on the experience of young people. It was focused on pathways to enable access and the provision of real opportunities.

Councillor Avis, the Cabinet Member for Families, Health and Social Care, expressed her own tribute to Stephen Aselford who had been a friend and advisor. It was noted how Mr Aselford had played a significant role in the borough's social care as a member of forums on mobility, disability and learning disability. This was supported by the applause of Members. The Mayor expressed sympathy on behalf of himself and the Deputy Mayor.

The Cabinet Member informed Council of an event to be held on 10 October 2019 for World Mental Health Day. This would focus on the five ways to wellbeing supported by Minding Croydon and would offer the opportunity for fundraising for mental health. Lastly, Councillor Avis took the opportunity to welcome the Executive Director, Health, Wellbeing and Adults, who whilst not new to the role had been confirmed in his post for a fixed term with thanks being given for his continued commitment.

Councillor Gatland thanked Councillor Alisa Flemming for her update on the Legacy Youth Zone and expressed her own sympathies and those of the Opposition Group for the loss of Stephen Aselford. Councillor Gatland then went on to ask why Children's Services had been subject to a seventh Ofsted monitoring visit rather than being reinspected.

In response, Councillor Alisa Flemming noted that Councillor Gatland was a member of the Children's Improvement Board which had discussed the seventh Ofsted monitoring visit. The Cabinet Member explained that the Council was not privy to when reinspection would happen but that it would be advised. The seventh monitoring visit would happen under the existing inspection regime with any subsequent visit happening under the incoming inspection arrangements. Monitoring visits already conducted by Ofsted had been a success and very positive. The Cabinet Member explained that the focus of the forthcoming visit would be children on child protection plans with the offer made to provide additional information outside of the Council meeting.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Gatland asked why a seventh Ofsted monitoring visit had been requested and whether this request had been directly made by the Council. The Councillor noted the investment made in Children's Services and asked when a rating of good across the board could be expected.

Councillor Flemming stated that it was not possible to pre-empt Ofsted and expressed her gratitude for the investment in Children's Services which had been used to address the underfunding of the service over many preceding years. It was stated that investment was needed across the country from the national Government for the benefit of all children's futures.

Councillor Jewitt asked Councillor Avis about cuts to Council budgets and the misery caused. The Councillor's question was based on the caring experience of one of her ward residents. Councillor Avis thanked Councillor Jewitt and her ward resident. The Cabinet Member noted that a lot of hope and trust was placed in the 30,000 carers in Croydon. The impact of budget cuts was stressed and whilst the £1.5 billion of funding for social care announced by the Government was welcomed this was set against a funding deficit of £2.5 billion as calculated by the Local Government Association. It was highlighted that despite the cuts new ways of working had been developed to provide a strengthened service as demonstrated through the *One Croydon Alliance*. It was hoped that the benefits of this restructuring of services was helping Councillor Jewitt's ward resident.

Councillor Creatura asked Councillor Alisa Flemming if she was in support of the abolition of Ofsted. Councillor Flemming offered to provide a detailed response to the Councillor's question following the Council meeting. In his supplementary question, Councillor Creature welcomed Ofsted's monitoring visits and how these had helped the service to improve. Councillor Creatura suggested that if this view was shared by Councillor Flemming, then they could write jointly to the Shadow Secretary of State for Education.

Councillor Flemming reiterated that she could provide a full response on Ofsted following the Council meeting. However, she also explained her view that children, their care and achieving their ambitions was determined more widely for example by the education system, access to housing, income and investment in their future. Therefore this was about a lot more than a system of monitors and measures.

The Mayor interjected at this point to remind Members of the need not to stray into areas of national party policy given that the Council meeting was happening during a period of heightened political sensitivity in the run up to the Fairfield ward by-election.

Councillor Campbell asked Councillor Alisa Flemming whether the inclusion of mental health criteria in the Ofsted framework for inspections was having a positive benefit on the way this was being addressed by schools. The Cabinet Member acknowledged this as a very important subject area which if not tackled early could have longer term repercussions into adulthood as well as

a wider impact on family members. However, it was noted that the focus on mental health needed to be provided not just in secondary schools but also in the primary sector giving the opportunity to tackle issues around bullying.

Councillor Hopley expressed her own condolences for Stephen Aselford who the Councillor described as a great spokesman for the local community who would be greatly missed by all in the Opposition Group. Congratulations were also expressed to Guy Van Dichele for being appointed to the post of Executive Director Health, Wellbeing and Adults for a fixed term.

Councillor Hopley asked Councillor Avis whether it was a good idea to bring the Council's assisted living provision back in-house. Councillor Avis highlighted that this had been a manifesto pledge and that whilst some of this provision had been judged good by *Care UK*, the Council wanted to achieve better with the aspiration for all to be back in-house by January 2020. A dedicated officer had been appointed to consult with residents with the aim of delivering a service going beyond care with a focus on community and the environment. The Cabinet Member described how residents would be able to tell that change was happening.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Hopley asked about the quality of care provided and how this had been judged by the Care Quality Commission. Councillor Avis highlighted the good rating received from *Care UK*. Overgrown gardens had been addressed and whilst health and safety concerns had caused a kitchen closure this was being addressed and would be reopened. Bringing the service in-house would provide a better environment and enable the London Living Wage to be paid to care workers.

Councillor Fitzpatrick highlighted how the Opposition had committed to spend £20 million on Fairfield Halls with no tangible outcome. Councillor Lewis noted that Councillor Fitzpatrick's comments were straight to the point and that when the Opposition left power three and a half years later there had been no tangible outcome. This was in contrast to the Labour administration. It had delivered a refurbished venue which had hosted top quality performances, demonstrating the level of ambition for culture in Croydon.

Councillor Gatland asked Councillor Lewis if he was aware that permission had been granted to Network Rail to dismantle and replace the Sanderstead Road Bridge and the potential disruption this would cause. In response, the Cabinet Member highlighted that the works were necessary. Councillor Gatland agreed that the works were essential but that residents were facing up to six months of disruption with poor communication from Network Rail. The Councillor used her supplementary question to ask if funding would be used to make improvements to the South Croydon Recreation Ground which would be closed in order to carry out the replacement bridge works. Councillor Lewis agreed that parks need more investment due to 10 years of austerity. The Cabinet Member stated he would be happy to meet residents and friends groups of the recreation group to look at how to invest in the facility.

POOL 3

With the end to the time allocated to questions to the Cabinet Members in the second pool, the Mayor signalled he was moving on to questions to the Cabinet Members in the third pool. Councillors Butler, Hamida Ali and Shahul-Hameed were invited to make their announcements.

Councillor Butler, Cabinet Member for Homes and Gateway Services gave special thanks to the Gateway Team, schools and voluntary sector partners that had provided food and fun clubs during the school holidays. It was highlighted that these were needed to avoid hunger when schools were not open.

The Cabinet Member noted that it was *Brick by Brick* that had managed the Fairfield Halls refurbishment which was mainly focused on aspects of the venue which weren't visible. For example, the removal of asbestos and improving the lighting. This was about securing the fabric of the building so that it was safe as well as being a fabulous venue.

Councillor Hamida Ali, Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon and Communities highlighted national hate crime awareness week. The Safer Croydon Partnership would be working with individuals and organisations in solidarity against hate crime. This initiative had been launched at *Croydon Pride* and had gathered 30,000 signatures. Credit was given to the officers who led the work.

The Civic Awards celebrating volunteers across the borough were promoted with all Members encouraged to nominate individuals from their wards. Nominations were to open on 15 October 2019 with the awards to be presented in March 2020.

Lastly, the Cabinet Member noted Black History Month and encouraged as many Members as possible to participate in activities.

Councillor Shahul-Hameed, Cabinet Member for Economy and Jobs noted the economic summit that had been held and was attended by over 350 businesses. Additionally, that the Croydon Business Excellence Awards for 2019 had been held including two awards sponsored by the Council: Love Your Local Trader and Enterprising Young Person of the Year. It was highlighted that a BME Market Day was being held on 19 October 2019 in Surrey Street.

Councillor Perry asked Councillor Shahul-Hameed if she would join him in opposing the restriction of loading and unloading on Brighton Road due to the impact on struggling independent traders.

In response, the Cabinet Member explained that a number of measures were being considered to support independent traders in the area for which a survey was being organised. This would include seeking to understand the hours loading bays were used. The results of the survey would inform conversations with business owners.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Perry noted his disappointment stating that this was about deliveries being made in the mornings and afternoons and any restriction would impact on supply to customers. He stated that it appeared the Cabinet Member wasn't supporting local trade with potential losses to businesses and employment. The Cabinet Member stressed that the Council was working in collaboration with local businesses and stressed the support being supplied to independent traders. It was explained that the recent business summit had discussed how to support existing businesses. It was noted that support was being sought from the Opposition.

Councillor Canning noted that Croydon was the first Council to decide to install sprinklers in all its tower blocks following the Grenfell tragedy. He asked Councillor Butler to provide an update on the progress of the works.

The Cabinet Member stressed the importance of the sprinkler decision in the light of the Grenfell fire and reported that installation had been completed in 22 blocks. This had been achieved with the support of the London Fire Brigade that had been providing appropriate checks on the work. At a further four blocks, work was still in progress. Planning permission was awaited for the placement of the water tanks. All the piping was in place with the expectation that all would be fully commissioned within weeks of the meeting.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Canning asked how the sprinkler installation had been funded and whether the costs had been met by the Council. Councillor Butler confirmed that all associated costs had been met by the Council and the Housing Revenue Account in full with no funding provided from elsewhere.

Councillor Hale also gave thanks to the Gateway Team, schools and voluntary sector partners for the provision of food and fun clubs during the school holidays. The dedication to helping others was noted. In her question to Councillor Butler, Councillor Hale asked about *Brick by Brick*. It was noted that this had been set-up to build affordable homes but it was thought sales were struggling with dozens of unsold properties available in Upper Norwood. It was asked if the Council was facing having to reduce prices and/or sell to those who weren't residents in Croydon.

Councillor Butler explained that 50% of *Brick by Brick* properties would be sold to fund affordable rent homes. It was acknowledged that in uncertain times, the housing market was being effected. However, prices had not been reduced and an up-to-date sales list was awaited. The property market was being carefully watched. *Brick by Brick* had a long standing commitment to the *local first policy* which continued to be the case. A timescale would be determined for the existing approach to be reviewed.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Hale wanted clarification on the purchase by *Brick by Brick* of land from the Council. For example, the large Kingsdown site. It was questioned if this was reasonable and best value.

Councillor Butler referenced the statement made by Councillor Hall; that the auditor had been satisfied this was best value. It was noted that there were lots of arguments about the value of land. However, this was set against a backdrop of private developers that spent all their funds on buying land and then couldn't afford to finance the development. The Council's priority was to ensure affordable rent homes came forward.

Councillor Chowdhury asked Councillor Butler to clarify the likely impact of a recent announcement on housing policy on the delivery of affordable homes in Croydon.

Councillor Butler thought the Councillor was referring to a recent policy announcement that would allow affordable rent homes to be immediately flipped to shared ownership. Whilst the Cabinet Member acknowledged the opportunity for all to build shared ownership was a good thing, she expressed her concern about a policy that would see affordable rent homes moving to shared ownership.

Councillor Helen Pollard asked Councillor Butler about the refurbishment of Fairfield Halls. The Cabinet Member was described as the driving force behind the development and therefore her clarification was sought on who had approved the budget increase from £30 to £42 million and whether a rigorous process had been used to manage the budget increase.

Councillor Butler disagreed with the suggestion that she had been the main driving force behind the refurbishment of Fairfield Halls; rather this was a manifesto promise delivered by the whole administration. The increase in the budget reflected that structural issues, such as the asbestos, were far greater than initially understood and had only been fully discovered during the works. The works were to ensure a safe venue that was fit for purpose. Councillor Butler described how the refurbishment would enable the venue's fantastic facilities to be utilised for the next 50 to 60 years.

In her supplementary question Councillor Helen Pollard expressed her dissatisfaction with the answer given and called on the Cabinet to provide a written response giving details on the budget increase including when permission for each increase was given, by whom and for what reason. Councillor Butler agreed to provide this response but also noted the refurbishment and accompanying budget had been a continuous process.

Councillor Mann asked Councillor Shahul-Hameed about the closure of a 90 year old business in Crystal Palace that had resulted from a hike in rent. Councillor Mann asked what the Council would do to tell landlords enough is enough.

In response, Councillor Shahul-Hameed highlighted the support that was available from the Council for local small businesses including financial support through the loan fund and discretionary business rate relief. It was highlighted that the Council had won a business award for the support it offered. The Cabinet Member further noted that planning policy was being

considered in order to provide affordable commercial spaces. The Council's work with the organisation *Save The High Street* was also referenced along with the support being offered to the district centres.

Councillor Streeter asked Councillor Shahul-Hameed to be updated on unemployment figures for Croydon Central and Croydon North. With limited time remaining for Councillor questions to Cabinet Members in pool 3, the Cabinet Member started to detail the role of *Croydon Works* in upskilling the Croydon workforce. The economic summit that had just taken place was referenced and how this had been delivered in partnership with Croydon College. It was emphasised how work was ongoing to bring universities to Croydon.

With the end to the time allocated to questions to the Cabinet Members in the third pool, the Mayor brought Croydon Question Time to a close.

60/19 **Member Petitions**

There were three Member petitions presented at Council. The Mayor invited Councillor Fitzpatrick to read out his petition. This was noted as stated in the agenda report: *"In order to prevent the further misuse of the parking bays on the northern side of Gordon Crescent and to ensure their use by residents as is intended, we the affected residents, would like to recommend a gate be installed across the car park entrance to prohibit entry which would put us in the same position as residents on the southern side of Gordon Crescent who already have the benefit of a parking gate"*. Councillor Allison Butler, Cabinet Member for Homes and Gateway Services, thanked Councillor Fitzpatrick for his petition and noted that she would look with officers at alleviating the problems.

The Mayor invited Councillor Perry to read out his petition. This was noted as stated in the agenda report: *"Please introduce traffic calming measure into St Peter's Street, South Croydon, in order to reduce speeding vehicles which are causing accidents and could lead to the loss of life"*. Councillor Muhammad Ali, the Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport & Urban Regeneration, thanked the Councillor for his petition. However, it was noted that physical traffic calming was not always the best solution and could cause more issues in terms of noise and vibrations as well as restricting access by emergency vehicles. The Deputy Cabinet Member committed that officers would contact the police to request additional enforcement of existing restrictions be undertaken. It was reported that data had been requested on personal injuries resulting from traffic incidents in St Peter's Street but none had been recorded. The Deputy Cabinet Member explained that officers would look at the road signage in St Peter's Street to ensure this was sufficient to make motorists aware of the speed limit.

The Mayor invited Councillor Shafi Khan to read out his petition. This was noted as stated in the agenda report: *"We, the residents of Oakhill Road, Norbury [SW16 5RG], call on Croydon Council to:*

1. *implement a trial one way traffic scheme for Oakhill Road [southwards from Croindene Road to Stanford Road];*
2. *erect two large 20 mph speed limit signs at the northern entrance of Oakhill Road; and*
3. *create a narrowing of the exit of Oakhill Road into Stanford Road with a large 'No entry' sign and a 10 yard wide 'Keep Clear' boxed area painted onto the surface of Stanford Road next to the exit of Oakhill Road. This would allow cars exiting Oakhill Road to turn right when there is queuing traffic in Stanford Road towards the London Road.*

These measures are to reduce congestion and bad tempered incidents which are now happening on a daily basis due to vehicles being unable to pass each other resulting from parking on both sides of the road. During week day rush hour periods over 1,200 vehicles use Oakhill Road with many of them speeding. These measures will help protect our elderly residents and the children attending Norbury Manor School. Oakhill Road had a temporary one way system during 2015 which was shown to greatly improve traffic flow".

Councillor Muhammad Ali, the Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport & Urban Regeneration notified the Members of Council that this scheme would be included in a list of bids to *Transport for London*. However, the Deputy Cabinet Member expressed a note of caution and stated that such schemes do not always achieve the intended benefits and that there could be repercussions for surrounding streets.

61/19 **Council Debate Motions**

The Mayor requested the Chief Executive read the first Council Debate Motion made on behalf of the Administration:

"October 2019 marks 25 years since the FAIRTRADE Mark was launched in the UK.

Croydon was the first London Borough to obtain Fairtrade status in 2003, and has renewed it ever since. Today, Croydon Council is proud to renew its Fairtrade status, and agrees to an annual programme and review of Fairtrade activity, to include:

- *Actively promoting Fairtrade locally, through support for local groups, in the media including social media, and events, including during Fairtrade Fortnight.*
- *Supporting local Fairtrade Schools and Universities, and actively promote Fairtrade teaching materials in local schools, and educational institutions*
- *Promoting Fairtrade in Council sponsored Youth Centres and Cultural venues.*
- *Celebrating and incentivising businesses championing Fairtrade products in the local community.*
- *Continuing to promote Fairtrade as part of its procurement policy, including its catering offer."*

The Mayor invited Councillor Fraser to propose the motion.

Councillor Fraser stated Croydon had been the first *Fairtrade* borough, a status that had been held for 25 years. He emphasised that those communities benefitting from *Fairtrade* were all represented in the borough and that support for *Fairtrade* had been driven by consumer choice. *Fairtrade* was described as an internationalist socialist movement driven by local demand. Councillor Fraser highlighted how the Council was supporting the movement through procurement with examples given of the Clock Tower restaurant, Fairfield Halls and the borough's schools. The Councillor described himself as being a proud *Fairtrade* champion.

Councillor Patsy Cummings seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

The Mayor invited Councillor Chatterjee to speak who recommended the motion describing it as a way of being kind to people you don't meet. He called for platform signs in Croydon to acknowledge the borough's *Fairtrade* status, described his experience of *Fairtrade* wine tasting and how the movement allowed for better bargaining power.

Councillor Streeter was invited to speak by the Mayor and described how he was proud to support the motion and that he was pleased both parties were standing together on the issue of *Fairtrade*. He gave thanks to the Churches for their early work on getting *Fairtrade* adopted and also acknowledged the work of past Prime Ministers Major, Blair and May who had promoted the movement.

Councillor Patsy Cummings exercised her right to speak and highlighted how *Fairtrade* had brought stability to production for many. It had allowed producers to learn about market conditions and trends and to take more control over their lives. The link between *Fairtrade* standards and action to address environmental damage along with better working conditions was stressed and how this was preventing the use of force and/or underage labour. It was noted that by buying *Fairtrade* support was being given for brothers and sisters around the world.

The motion was put to the vote and carried unanimously.

The Mayor requested the Chief Executive read the second Council Debate Motion made on behalf of the Opposition:

"This Council recognises the huge contribution made to education standards in the Borough by its academies and free schools, which complement and extend the offer made by its maintained and independent schools. It also recognises the very significant contribution made to Children's Services and school standards by Ofsted, which provides parents with impartial information about success or failure. This Council pledges its support for these education partners and welcomes the improvement in standards that these national initiatives have produced in our Borough".

The Mayor invited Councillor Gatland to propose the motion. The Councillor highlighted the reassurance provided to parents by schools having a good Ofsted judgement or above. Additionally, the role of Ofsted in the improvement journey of the Council's Children Services was stressed. It was noted that all Members wanted the very best for the children for which the Council had responsibility. Councillor Gatland stressed that it was right for the Ofsted inspection process to provide challenge to the service.

Councillor Creatura seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

The Mayor invited Councillor Shafi Khan to respond to the motion. It was highlighted that the motion failed to acknowledge the role of various partners, such as children, teachers, support staff, link advisers, in the improvement journey. It was suggested that the motion was mischievous especially as proposed during the pre-election period of heightened political sensitivity. High profile academy failures demonstrated the limitations of the school inspection regime and the potentially negative effect of Ofsted's inspections on teacher mental health and wellbeing was raised.

The Mayor invited Councillor Alisa Flemming to respond to the motion. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning highlighted that the Council meeting was being held during Black History Month which celebrated the diverse and vibrant community in Croydon. The Cabinet Member stressed the need for the education sector to reflect all of the Croydon community. However, as a black student you were more likely than your white peers to be excluded from school, a risk that increased with age. There was also a higher risk of leaving without qualifications. Councillor Flemming called for the mandatory teaching of black history and stressed the need for schools to be more tolerant and outward focused to reflect everyone and that all our children mattered. The Cabinet Member stated that it took a village to raise a child but that some of Croydon's children were not valued by the village. It was explained that real social justice happens when the community can achieve for all. The Cabinet Member announced that Labour Group Members would be abstaining on the motion until it was possible to create an education system that could represent all children. Until this was achieved, it was not possible to say that the education system was fit for purpose.

Councillor Creatura exercised his right to speak and highlighted the contribution made by Academies and Free Schools. Also that there was a large number of children in the borough attending independent schools and how this offered choice to parents. The Special Education Needs and Disability offer delivered through the independent sector was stressed. It was emphasised that any attempt to curtail the independent sector would have a big impact on education in Croydon. Likewise, the Councillor highlighted that if it was decided to abolish Ofsted this would have a big impact on education. The motion praised Academies and Free Schools, independent schools and school inspections in addition to pledging support for education partners. Councillor Creatura called on the Council to send a strong message.

The motion was put to the vote and carried with all the Labour Group Members abstaining.

62/19 **Recommendations of Cabinet to Council for decision**

The Mayor invited Councillor Hall, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, to move the recommendations referred from Cabinet on 19 September 2019 relating to the Quarter 1 Financial Performance for 2019/20. The Cabinet Member explained that as part of the action being taken to address Government cuts to the budget, it was being proposed to increase the budget of the capital programme. This had been used to invest in Croydon Park Hotel with income being generated from long leases. It was planned to increase this budget so that the Council could act on additional schemes coming forward. Additionally, the recommendation to increase borrowing limits was about borrowing for a purpose for income generation and development. This would enable the Council to unlock investment in the borough for the benefit of Croydon's economy by increasing the asset investment fund.

The recommendations in the report were seconded by Councillor Patsy Cummings, the Deputy Member for Finance and Resources.

The motion was put to the vote and carried.

RESOLVED: Council AGREED the recommendations and approved:

- i. the increase to the capital programme by £112.816m as set out in Table 6 of the officer's report; and
- ii. the increase to the Operational Boundary for borrowing and Authorising Borrowing Limit of £219.296m as set out in Table 7 of the officer's report.

63/19 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This item was not required.

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm

Signed:

Date:

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