

Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee

Meeting held on Tuesday, 29 September 2020 at 6.30 pm in This meeting is being held remotely; to view the meeting, please click here

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel (Chair);
Councillor Richard Chatterjee (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Jamie Audsley, Luke Clancy, Stephen Mann, Vidhi Mohan and Caragh Skipper

Also Present: Councillor Tony Newman, Leader of the Council
Councillor Paul Scott, Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Regeneration (jobshare)
Councillor Muhammad Ali
Councillor Gareth Streeter
Councillor Sean Fitzsimons
Councillor Joy Prince
Shifa Mustapha, Executive Director of Place
Gavin Hadford, Director Policy & Partnership, Strategy and Partnerships
Yasmin Ahmed, Senior Strategy Officer
Dominick Mennie, Spatial Planning – Plan Making Team Leader
Steve Dennington, Head of Spatial Planning
Elizabeth Cox, Director, Practice & Consulting, NEF Consulting
Joe Duggan, Crystal Palace Transition Town
Kim Oniyah, Commissioner, Citizens Assembly
Nuala O’Neil. Town Planning Expert
Jeremy Gill, Croham Valley Residents Association

Apologies: None

PART A

10/20 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

11/20 Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

12/20 Urgent Business (if any)

There were no items of urgent business.

13/20 Croydon Climate Crisis Commission

The leader of the Council, Tony Newman introduced and outlined the report in a [Presentation](#)

A Guest representative from the Citizens Assembly added that there was a good diverse mix of people on the Assembly. All involved contributed, engaged and voiced their different views and opinions. There was some commonality of ideas and trends such as communication, awareness and engagement with the public.

Following the presentation, Members has the opportunity to raise questions.

A Member expressed that this issue cut across the portfolio of many Cabinet Members and asked what was being done to assign political leadership. The Leader responded that this issue was an important issue and as a Cabinet was everyone's responsibility and not specifically one person. As a result, leadership responsibilities had been assigned to all Cabinet Members.

An invited guest commented that it was difficult to interpret what the ambition of the Commission was through the presentation given and would question if aspirations were ambitious enough. The leader said that the task at hand was a mammoth one and would want to see ambitious recommendations come out of the Commission.

A Member challenged the lack of pace since the Climate emergency was declared in 2019 and that the Corporate Action Plan would not be available till 2021. The Leader acknowledged this point and advised that events of Covid had impacted pace. A draft report or early recommendations which may prompt early intervention or action would be welcomed but it would be down to the Commission to decide the feasibility of this. The Executive Director of Place agreed that there was a need for increased pace and whilst the impact of Covid had slowed down the work of the Commission, there were also positives that had been experienced such as the implementation of Low Traffic neighbourhoods (LTN).

In response to a Member question on what the key opportunities and challenges in light of financial and resource constraints were, officers said that the benefit of Covid had been the environmental impact whilst there had been challenges due to economic impact. Further details would emerge as work progressed and it was important to find a balance in order to achieve the aspiration of a truly sustainable Borough. The Leader added that whilst there has been impact on finance and resources, the true impact would be on attitudes and responses to change. There were proposed changes to the transport network which was underway with improvements to road networks to support pedestrians and cyclists. The challenge to the Mayor and Central Government was for investment in green economy and jobs and it was important for a case to be made collectively on these matters.

A Member commented that more should be done to identify and utilise skills within the community as opposed to paying for consultant expertise where unnecessary. The use of expertise of partnerships such as Croydon College was suggested as a means to counteract financial pressure.

An invited Guest commented that following attendance at the Commission meetings a small gap had been identified in that actions groups would like to be included and have an opportunity to contribute to work streams. The Director of Consulting, NEF welcomed this offer and opportunity presented with and agreed to engage and follow up with the Guest following the meeting.

A Member further commented that alongside the development of the action plan, it was important to identify projects that required limited resources. Officers said that this was an idea that has been supported right from the beginning, and would continue to be built into the work of the Commission. The Commission do not have the resourcing and were reliant on information on work or projects that were occurring from the Council.

In response to a Member question on how it will be ensured that the Carbon baseline assessment is achieved, how its achievements would be assessed and what monitoring framework would be in place to track progress, the Leader said that the Carbon Baseline was critical, air monitoring was currently not where it needed to be nor was it Borough wide. The priority was to look at how to fast track some actions. Officers added that an LGA tool was being used that allowed monitoring of direct emission and enabled working out of current carbon emissions which gave results of activities owned by the Council and those not of the Council to enable comparison. It was important to note that there was currently no baseline data for everything and that the baseline target referred to the whole borough and not just Croydon Council

It was asked how policy conflict would be monitored such as withdrawal of key services and how to balance expectations of the community. Officers say that they recognised the broader challenge of impact of different policies but it was vital that residents took personal responsibility by assessing what sustainability mean for their individual household and how they could play their part in realising outcomes.

A question was raised on what was being done to engage the public and stakeholders whilst ensuring that they were kept up to date and aware of what was happening. Officers said that engagement had been difficult in the last 7 months but they were keen to continue the approach in activities where possible. It was important for the Council form an understanding of developing an effective engagement plan and they were waiting for details to emerge from the Commission to enable this to be completed. The finer details of the engagement plan was still being finalised.

The Chair thanked officers and guests for their attendance and engagement with the Sub-Committee

14/20 **Planning for the future: White Paper**

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Regeneration (job share), Councillor Paul Scott introduced and outlined the report in a [Presentation](#)

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions.

A Member commented that the proposal presented opportunities, with some possibly controversy as the paper was designed to be England wide with ideas that may not work as well in London as they may in other parts of the country. This may present an opportunity for challenge and rethink and it was asked how prepared Croydon was to challenge and be radical and bold in its response. The Cabinet Member responded that they were keen to hear people views and there would always be differences in planning arrangements. It was right that radical change was needed and the difference on cases of London for consideration was welcomed. Whilst there was currently a huge housing crisis, systems needed to be in place to address that crisis. Balance was needed on listening and involving communities against understanding of the task at hand. It was also vital that consideration be given to the production of a national strategy on housing distribution. The pandemic had made people rethink how and where they live. Officers added that the absence of detail of how the proposals would work in London was at the fore front of many Boroughs who would undoubtedly make representation about the absence of London specific detail in the proposals.

A Member asked what was being done by way of an assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the white paper in terms of design of schemes. The Cabinet Member responded that there was serious challenges to deliver on quality of design. Permitted developments have not delivered on design quality to date. It was difficult to enforce on high quality design due to the limited control the Local Authority (LA) had and implementing a design code to cover the whole borough or specific areas would be challenging. There was significant risk of eroding character with the current proposals. Officers added that there was in place national set development policies which was similar in many local plans across the country, with fall-back position on permitted developments. There was opportunity to breach the gap presented by the White Paper but the complexities of doing so could not be underestimated, in particular, how a borough was defined in order to produce the codes.

An invited guest commented that whilst there were difficulties in streamlining the finer details of design codes, it would prove to be beneficial in the end as it would mean that there were detailed guideline in place to be adhered to with more examples of good practice. The Cabinet Member said that one of the challenges is that it may be restrictive on innovative design as the nature of innovative design is that it was undefinable due to fluidity in that what was innovative now may not be in a year or two. General keeping in character of an area whilst allowing for evolution was important and how to introduce that with a design code system would be difficult.

Officers added that the White Paper did not give detail on how communities could engage with production of the codes and would urge Resident Associations to make those comments to the consultation.

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A Member questioned what areas would be classed as low density areas as per the Secretary of State changes to the New London Plan which encourages 'gentle densification' of low density areas. Additionally the proposals allow for Expansion of existing high density areas and apart from the Town centre, were there any areas in the borough under the classification. The Cabinet Member said that in terms of low and mid density areas, there would be changes across all developed areas. Lower density areas, due to lower access to public transport would have lower density of development. The Council was working with partners on increased sustainability in transport accessibility and access in general to services. The Town centre of Purley for example was classed as high density and could be expanded further to provide homes. It was however important to be reminded that the development of homes must be distributed across the whole Borough in order to fulfil the aspiration on numbers and types of homes needed.

In response to a Member question on the impact of the proposals on protection for parks, The Cabinet Member said that every park was protected. The Council recognised the importance of parks to the infrastructure and community of the Borough. It was acknowledged that some open land would need to be released for development in order to establish a balance of places to build additional homes.

It was further asked whether there was an opportunity for more protection of Parks or the ability for bio diversity. The Cabinet Member responded that the protection aspect of the plans were very clear. The Prime Minister had launched an initiative to protect land and that was supported. There was a strategic view on what land was protected such as National Parks. There were some protected land in Croydon that was not very good for bio diversity and Councillors should be lobbying for greater renewal in order to further protect nature and natural spaces across the country.

The Chair thanked officers and invited guests for their engagement with the Sub-Committee.

15/20 Exclusion of the Press and Public

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 10.40 pm

Signed:

Date:

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