

## **Council**

Meeting held on Monday, 12 October 2020 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,  
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

### **MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Maddie Henson (Chair);  
Councillor Sherwan Chowdhury (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,  
Luke Clancy, Chris Clark, Pat Clouder, Stuart Collins, Mary Croos,  
Jason Cummings, Patsy Cummings, Mario Creatura, Nina Degrad, s,  
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, Humayun Kabir,  
Bernadette Khan, Shafi Khan, Stuart King, Toni Letts, Oliver Lewis,  
Stephen Mann, Stuart Millson, Vidhi Mohan, Michael Neal, Tony Newman,  
Oni Oviri, Andrew Pelling, Jason Perry, Helen Pollard, Tim Pollard, Joy Prince,  
Helen Redfern, Scott Roche, Pat Ryan, Paul Scott, Manju Shahul-Hameed,  
Andy Stranack, Gareth Streeter, Robert Ward, David Wood, Louisa Woodley  
and Callton Young

Jacqueline Harris Baker, Executive Director – Resources (Council Solicitor and  
Monitoring Officer), Katherine Kerswell, Interim Chief Executive and Stephen  
Rowan (Head of Democratic Services and Scrutiny)

**Apologies:** Councillor Steve O'Connell and Ian Parker

### **PART A**

At the outset of the meeting, before the formal business commenced, Madam Mayor (Councillor Henson), led Members of Council in congratulating officers who had been awarded in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. Rashida Baig, the Council's Head of Social Work with Families, was made MBE in recognition of her services to children's and family social work in addition to racial equality. Val Burrell-Walker, the Council's Fair Access Manager, was also made MBE in recognition of her services to education, after over 15 years supporting children into the right school, including those at risk of permanent exclusion.

Madam Mayor also notified Members of Council that following Councillor Hall's resignation, Councillor Young had been appointed as the Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources. Councillor Young was welcomed to his new position.

120/20 **Disclosure of Interests**

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

121/20 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

122/20 **Announcements**

**Madam Mayor**

Madam Mayor gave her announcements to the Members of Council. Councillor Bernadette Khan was congratulated on the occasion of her 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

Along with other Councillors, Madam Mayor had participated in an online event called, "Creating Conversations: the untold stories of loss". This aimed to encourage familiarity with talking about death. Madam Mayor had also supported a Home Office community improvement project by undertaking a tree planting.

It was highlighted that the anniversary of the Battle of Market Garden had taken place, but due to Covid, 2020 was the first year in a long time that Croydon had been unable to participate in the ceremony in Arnhem. Madam Mayor had invited Burgermaster Marcouch to visit Croydon as soon as it became safe.

Madam Mayor detailed her forthcoming activities including a tour of the borough to be undertaken with Father Christmas and two fundraising events: an online chocolate tasting with Derek Terrell of Delta Chocolate and donations to Madam Mayor's charities from orders placed using a special flyer at The Vujon and Coriander Takeaway.

**The Leader**

Madam Mayor invited the Leader, Councillor Newman, to make his announcements. The Leader welcomed Debbie Jones, the newly appointed Interim Executive Director - Children, Families and Education, to the Council on behalf of Members. Thanks were given to Councillor Hall, who had resigned from the position of Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources, for the work he had done to deliver many manifesto promises.

The Leader described how the rise in Covid cases was putting pressure on London with it anticipated that there would be a move from Tier 1 to Tier 2.

This meant the Council's bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for a capitalisation direction was even more important, with lives depending on the support that the Council was able to offer to residents. Thanks were given to the Interim Chief Executive for the work being done to develop a strong bid. The Leader called for Croydon to come together to support the bid and for it to receive cross-party endorsement.

Members of Council were informed of Councillor Newman's intention to stand down from the position of Leader of the Council. This was to allow a new Leader to come forward who would propose the Croydon Renewal Plan and new budget to Council as the basis for the settlement with MHCLG, and to provide Croydon with a stable future.

## 123/20 **Croydon Question Time**

### **Public Questions**

Madam Mayor explained that Croydon Question Time would commence with 30 minutes of public questions to the Leader and Cabinet Members. In accordance with advice from the Government and Public Health England, it was not possible to hold public meetings in the Town Hall. As a result, members of the public were unable to ask questions from the public gallery in the Council Chamber. Questions had been received by email until 12 noon on Friday 9 October 2020. There had been 11 public questions submitted on the subject of the Low Traffic Network (LTN) in the Upper Norwood/Crystal Palace area which Madam Mayor proceeded to put in turn to Councillor King the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport & Regeneration.

Madam Mayor read a question from Sonia Marinello to the meeting: "Councillor King, you have stated that once the feasibility study into Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras is complete you will be sharing information on how you could amend the LTN and the process for consulting residents on the proposed changes. Can you confirm how you will do that and whether feedback will be sought from businesses and residents of the other boroughs affected?"

In his response, Councillor King gave his thanks for the question. The informal consultation paper was to be published in early November 2020. One of the options to be consulted on would be to replace planters with ANPR cameras and to allow residents within the boundary of the LTN access through these points. It was intended to seek the views of residents from both boroughs as well as local businesses.

Madam Mayor read a question from Roxanne Escobales to the meeting: "In what way are the LTNs in Upper Norwood Ward intended to reduce vehicle emissions?"

In his response, Councillor King gave his thanks for the question. It was highlighted that Croydon was the London Borough with the greatest potential for both walking and cycling. Transport for London (TfL) estimated that there were just over 400,000 motorised trips (mostly using cars) made each weekday by Croydon residents which could readily be cycled and 125,000 which could be walked. Many of the journeys that were undertaken were less than two miles in length, a distance that many people could walk or cycle.

In 2018, 129,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide were emitted by vehicles on Croydon's minor roads. If it was possible to convert just one in five of those journeys from car to active travel modes then emissions caused by vehicles would reduce noticeably.

Madam Mayor read a question from Jane Chandler to the meeting: "Did Councillor King take into account the impact on bus timetables before implementing the LTN scheme on Auckland Rd/Church Rd?"

In his response, Councillor King gave his thanks for the question. It was described how the Council had tried to take bus services into account when deciding on the LTN scheme. The introduction of the bus gate in Auckland Road was in response to concerns about bus service accessibility for route 410. This was particularly focused on older bus users, who were less able to access the detour that was established when planters were originally in place.

In respect of buses using the Triangle, it was believed that the presence of the temporary signals in Church Road had contributed significantly to the congestion that occurred at certain times and had an impact on bus reliability. These signals were due to be removed on or around 20 October 2020, and meant that buses using the Triangle would be able to keep to their timetable more easily.

TfL, which was responsible for London's bus services, urged local authorities to take swift action to implement measures such as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. It wanted to see safe space provided for people to walk and cycle. Social distancing on public transport meant its capacity was much reduced. TfL was keen that people were helped to make shorter journeys by walking or using bikes rather than driving or attempting to use public transport. Local authorities across London – including Croydon - had responded to TfL's request.

Madam Mayor read a question from Jane Mitchell to the meeting: "The vulnerable and disabled are more likely to be dependent on roads for their physical and mental wellbeing because of their dependence on carers, hospice visitors, medical visits, hospital appointments, social worker visits, district nurse visits, community mental health visits, family visits and home deliveries. Did Councillor King undertake a disability impact assessment to understand the impact of the road closures on those groups before implementing the scheme?"

In his response, Councillor King gave his thanks for the question. It was emphasised that the LTN had not prevented access to any of the roads, properties or businesses in the area by any group of people. The purpose of the LTN was to stop through traffic diverting from the Principal Road Network on to less suitable residential roads. This provided quieter and safer space to help people to choose to walk or cycle.

As part of the forthcoming consultation, Councillor King announced at the meeting, that it was hoped to hear from as many people as possible from all walks of life to understand how they believed the Council should proceed in light of their experience of the LTN.

Madam Mayor read a further question from Jane Mitchell to the meeting: "Advice from Crime Prevention agencies to women and those who feel vulnerable walking after dark is that they should avoid travelling through low traffic areas. Local polls suggest that most women (who might ordinarily walk or use public transport) do not feel safe after dark on the closed off roads of Upper Norwood / Crystal Palace. Some have significant distances to walk through dark and deserted streets if they have travelled home by train. I was attacked after dark in Croydon (Upper Norwood) some years ago and luckily my scream attracted a passing motorist who stopped and gave chase. Councillor King, what do you say to women (and others) who do not feel safe after dark on roads with little or no through traffic? Should they stay in?"

In his response, Councillor King gave his thanks for the question and for sharing something that can be so difficult to raise. It was explained that street lighting within Croydon was designed to comply with the British Standard for lighting the highway. Following receipt of concerns of the nature raised checks were made in the area around Warminster Road and Lancaster Road areas, and lighting levels were confirmed as being compliant.

It was explained that there was no desire to compromise the public's sense of safety on their streets, but the Council had the same aim of promoting the safety of those wishing to walk and cycle. Speeding was a criminal act that resulted in significant levels of personal injury as well as death. A great many people, especially children were deterred from walking at any time by the traffic conditions and environment within many of Croydon's streets. The Council was trying to strike a balance between those sometimes competing requirements.

Madam Mayor expressed her personal thanks to Jane Mitchell for sharing such a difficult experience.

Madam Mayor read a question from Claire Plaskasovitis to the meeting: "What evidence is there that controlling or restricting traffic flow on Belfast Road and/or Apsley Road, SE25 will encourage social distancing or promote active travel?"

In his response, Councillor King gave his thanks for the question. A research report called *Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, Car Use and Active Travel in Outer*

*London* published in September 2020 concluded that the larger effects in terms of decreased car ownership and use, increased active travel were in areas where Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) had been introduced. Decreased car ownership and use was only found in such areas.

Madam Mayor read a question from Richard Mearns to the meeting: "Councillor King, you support communities coming together during COVID-19. Yet you have actively placed a wedge between communities because of your inability to realise the effect of the LTN and because you have failed to implement a proper roads strategy.

You have caused divides within communities who live on the same roads. I ask you this: if you are so focussed on communities coming together what do you say to hundreds of Croydon and Bromley neighbours - adults, children, elderly, young, rich and poor - who live on streets like Belvedere Road, Cintra Park, Patterson Road and Milestone Road? You have sent huge amounts of displaced traffic their way. You have admitted "regret" over this but have yet to take any effective action to fix your mistake. What do you say to them? Do their lungs and quality of life not matter - or is it rather that their votes don't count and they are not important to you until 2022? "

In his response, Councillor King gave his thanks for the question. A major aim of the scheme was to prevent much of the through traffic that used Auckland Road, Lancaster Road and Southern Avenue as direct connections between Penge Road in the south and Annerley Hill in the north. At its worst an estimated 15,000 vehicles used these residential roads to rat run through the area. As explained on the Council's webpage, the Council had received numerous concerns over recent years about the levels and speed of traffic on Auckland Road and surrounding streets, such as Lancaster Road and Southern Avenue. Further requests for action were received early in lockdown.

The conditions described were ones experienced for many years by residents of, amongst others, Lancaster Road, Southern Avenue and Auckland Road. The Council had repeatedly communicated to Bromley Council its wish to work collectively to address the conditions described. Action could not be taken on the highway in Bromley without its agreement.

Madam Mayor read a question from Alison McNaught to the meeting: "Traders on the Triangle are reporting a loss of takings. Customers are reporting they will no longer come to the Triangle because of the traffic. Disrupted operations and deliveries, along with increased pollution started from the first week of August, when the road closures on Sylvan Hill, Stambourne Way and Fox Hill were implemented. There was also a pre-existing traffic intervention in the form of temporary traffic lights to accommodate the scaffolding on the shopfront on Church Road. How closely did the Highway Improvements Team work with Croydon's Economic Development Team in the planning of the LTNs in the Upper Norwood Ward to assess the economic impact on the local area's traders?"

In his response, Councillor King gave his thanks for the question. The Council's LTN team had regular contact with colleagues in the Economic Development Team. This was evidenced in the decision to remove the footway widening schemes that were introduced at the Triangle during the early part of the lockdown. This was as a result of direct feedback from businesses and conversations with the Economic Development Team.

The Council was confident that the removal of the scaffold in the next few weeks would improve the situation. The consultation that had been announced would provide a further opportunity for businesses to give their views on which of the options being considered would help most.

Madam Mayor read a question from Stephen Tabberner to the meeting: "Councillor King, can you give assurances that the road closures in Upper Norwood and Crystal Palace will have a positive impact on air quality in the area, which is particularly important during this Covid 19 pandemic?"

In his response, Councillor King gave his thanks for the question. The closures implemented by the Council were intended to give residents greater choice to adopt active/sustainable travel modes. However, the Council was unable to compel people to do so and therefore, it was with regret that it could not be guaranteed that air quality would improve.

In 2018, 129,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide were emitted by vehicles on Croydon's minor roads. If the Council was able to convert just one in five of those journeys from car to active travel modes then emissions caused by vehicles would reduce noticeably.

Trying to be a healthy weight and to improve fitness were also particularly important during the pandemic. In the forward to the Government's recently published vision for cycling and walking the Prime Minister states; "This unprecedented pandemic has also shown many of us, myself very much included, that we need to think harder about our health. We need to think harder about how we can make lifestyle changes that keep us more active and fit – the way we travel is central to this."

Madam Mayor read a question from Stuart Aitken to the meeting: "We are told that the road closures in Upper Norwood/Crystal Palace need time to 'bed in'. Can Councillor King kindly assist in explaining his understanding of the theory of traffic evaporation?"

In his response, Councillor King gave his thanks for the question. All schemes of this nature would require a period of time for people to get used to the changes involved and time to consider changing their own approach to getting around. This hopefully means that people who would not normally choose to adopt active modes of travel may rethink their choices as roads became safer and access to walking and cycling became more attractive. It was this reduction in local traffic that gives rise to the traffic evaporation.

This Council's experience of introducing School Streets is a helpful example. It provided evidence that the overall number of journeys had reduced.

TfL's research indicates that there were just over 125,000 motorised trips (mostly car) made by Croydon residents each weekday that could be readily walked and just over 400,000 that could be cycled. This perhaps gives some indication as to the level of potential 'evaporation'.

Madam Mayor read a question from Eliska Finlay to the meeting: "Can Councillor King clarify how the Upper Norwood Crystal Palace Road closures fit with the vision guidance provided by Transport for London?"

In his response, Councillor King gave his thanks for the question. It was explained that a more detailed response would be published. However, TfL's *London Streetspace Plan – Interim Guidance to Boroughs* published in May 2020, refers London local authorities to the Department for Transport Covid related Guidance in the first instance. That Guidance states: "Local authorities in areas with high levels of public transport use should take measures to reallocate road space to people walking and cycling, both to encourage active travel and to enable social distancing during restart. Measures should be taken as swiftly as possible, and in any event within weeks, given the urgent need to change travel habits before the restart takes full effect. None of these measures are new – they are interventions that are a standard part of the traffic management toolkit, but a step-change in their roll-out is needed to ensure a green restart."

### **Questions to the Leader**

Having been invited by Madam Mayor to ask his question, the Leader of the Opposition, **Councillor Perry**, highlighted how two weeks prior to the meeting all Labour Group Councillors had supported the Leader in a vote of no confidence. The Leader was asked to confirm when he would be standing down to allow a new leadership team to deal with the bid to MHCLG.

In response, the Leader stated it was for the Labour Group to determine the process and timeframe for selecting a new Leader. Additionally, he was ultimately answerable to the electorate.

Councillor Perry used his supplementary question to suggest that the Leader was not taking his question seriously. The Council was £1.5bn in debt, housing and shopping centres had been bought against policy and the Council's debt had increased by £15k for each hour the Leader had been in charge. Councillor Perry asked the Leader why he thought things would change when his Group had supported him unanimously two weeks previously. The Leader expressed his responsibility and stated that the best chance of gaining a MHCLG settlement was with cross-party support. The Leader described how the Prime Minister was just about to take to the airwaves. Meanwhile Test & Trace was in tatters, London Boroughs were underfunded to the tune of £1.4bn for Covid despite Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick, telling

Councils to do whatever it took. Having a new Leader was about trying to put politics aside in order that the best deal from Government could be secured. The Leader called on both Groups to raise their game.

**Councillor Audsley** thanked the Leader for his Service and asked how the Croydon Renewal Plan would tackle inequalities.

In response the Leader expressed the importance of this question at a time when Covid was re-emerging. Whilst the collective impact of the pandemic were evident it was also clear that it was exacerbating existing inequalities. Black Lives Matter had also raised awareness of further inequalities. It was clear that the Council had to address this despite having less resource. Equality and sustainability needed to run as a thread through all the Council's future action. Equality could not be an afterthought.

In his supplementary, Councillor Audsley asked how the Council might use its wider influence to address inequality. For example, through its supply chain and the London Living Wage. In response, the Leader noted that at some point the Covid emergency would end and that the temptation for a race to the bottom should be resisted. Working conditions and initiatives such as the London Living Wage had to be maintained. It was the Council's role to lead on the economic recovery and to prevent exploitation. Whilst the Council's powers were limited, the Leader was proud of the Council's support for the London Living Wage and what it had done to prevent the use of zero hours contracts. It was acknowledged that there was more to do.

**Councillor Hale** asked the Leader why all those nominated by the Council to the Brick By Brick board had resigned.

In his response, the Leader explained that this was for a variety of reasons, including some that were personal. PwC had been commissioned to undertake an independent strategic review of group companies. This was to be undertaken rapidly and report within weeks and not months with the objective of achieving a stable governance structure. There was a need to wait for the outcome of the review to become available with it being noted that the Opposition had also sought for the review to happen.

In her supplementary, Councillor Hall expressed the importance that MHCLG be given all the information it needed to make a decision about supporting the Council. Concern was expressed about there being too much secrecy, especially regarding Brick By Brick. The Leader was asked if he agreed that it was inappropriate to continue in such a way. In response, the Leader reiterated that the Opposition had asked for a review of group companies and this was being conducted. However, significant demand for housing was going to remain and that this still had to be fulfilled. The Leader described how he was therefore gently pushing back at the Government's planning reforms, which would not assist and were undermining democracy.

**Councillor Fraser** expressed his thanks to the Leader for his service and asked about the Co-operative Council Innovation Network in addition to the role of equality and equity in shaping the Council's future.

In response, the Leader agreed and expressed his support for co-operative values. It was noted that Croydon was the first Fair Trade borough in London. It was important to look at services being delivered differently and that the co-operative model should be embraced with greater devolution to the community.

## **Pool 1**

With the end of the time allocated for questions to the Leader, Madam Mayor signalled that she was moving to questions to the Cabinet Members in the first pool. Councillors Lewis, Flemming and Campbell were invited to make their announcements.

Councillor Lewis, the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure & Sport, informed Members that the Council had been awarded two Tree Oscars. Congratulations and thanks was given to the in-house team and the community groups that had made this possible. Madam Mayor added her thanks.

Councillor Flemming, the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning, added her congratulations to the officers who had been awarded MBEs. Both Rashida Baig and Val Burrell-Walker were officers within the Children's Department and both were committed to improving the lives of residents. It was stated that Council was occurring during Children's Service practice week. This was being used to look at how to drive up quality and standards to achieve the shift from good to the outstanding target. The Department was also supporting schools dealing with the impact of the pandemic, including when pupils needed to self-isolate. Councillor Flemming welcomed Debbie Jones to the role of Interim Executive Director Children, Families and Education. It was explained that work was ongoing to appoint to the role permanently.

Councillor Campbell, the Cabinet Member for Families, Health & Social care, gave thanks to Kevin Oakhill, who as a representative of the autistic community was helping Croydon become an autism friendly borough. This work was being supported by Councillor Fitzpatrick, who was the Council's Autism Champion. Councillor Campbell also thanked Patricia Clark for her work looking at mental health and Black History. A handbook had been developed to look at stereotypes and to address inequalities of access to provision.

**Councillor Gatland** also expressed her congratulations to those officers who had been awarded MBE. Councillor Flemming was asked to explain why she had failed to control spending by the Children, Families and Education Department and therefore whether she would resign.

In response, Councillor Flemming expressed her disappointment at the question posed. It was noted that Councillor Gatland was on the Improvement Board and therefore had taken part in the Council's journey. There was first hand understanding of the underfunding of children's and adult's social care. It was explained how the costs of placements were being increased by services bidding against each other. The Council's Foster Care service had been taken back in-house and the Council was increasing the number of Foster Carers locally although specialist provision could still only be fulfilled outside of the borough. The focus was now on early intervention because it was known that outcomes were better when children remained with their families. It was being considered how to invest in the service but the first priority was to ensure children were safe.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Gatland expressed her willingness to participate in the Improvement Board and that she had welcome the Chief Executive's invitation to participate in this and provide challenge. However, further cuts were needed which would mean having to lose loyal workers when the service was on a difficult journey. Councillor Gatland feared further turmoil and the impact of this on future Ofsted inspections. In response, Councillor Flemming noted that Councillor Gatland had been invited to join the Improvement Board on her request. The impact of inadequate funding for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) on the overspend was highlighted. This had been the subject of Council Debate Motion which had sought cross-party agreement to ask for additional Government funding. Councillor Gatland was asked if she supported this and whether looking after the most vulnerable was the most important thing the Council could do as corporate parents. If so, then support should be given to writing to the Government to seek additional funding.

**Councillor Ben-Hassel** asked Councillor Lewis about the role of culture and arts as a driver for economic recovery. Clarification was sought on how this was being supported by the Council.

In response, Councillor Lewis highlighted that Croydon had been awarded as the 2023 London Borough of Culture. At the outset of the pandemic, the Council had moved quickly to support the borough's culture and arts organisations establishing a £135k fund with awards averaging just over £3k being allocated to local creative organisations. These were being used to support the production of content during the pandemic when it was not possible to perform in the usual way.

In her supplementary, Councillor Ben-Hassel asked how it was possible to make the best possible use of Fairfield Halls to support the arts and the community during the pandemic. In response, Councillor Lewis described the unprecedented nature of the pandemic and how this was having an impact on big and small organisation. The Council had worked with BH Live to put Fairfield Halls into an extended period of hibernation with further clarity awaited from the Government. It was felt that the risks were too great for it to open. However, it was still being used by the groups based there. The London

Mozart Players, which were resident at the Halls, had used it undertake a radio recording.

**Councillor Bennett** asked Councillor Flemming to clarify from which departments the 47 agency social workers, whose employment with the Council had been terminated, had been lost.

Councillor Flemming stated that she was not able to provide the specifics. However, Councillor Flemming had consulted with the Director of Children's Social Services and was able to confirm that that Children's Social Care workforce comprised 20% agency and 80% permanent staff. Staff reductions were only being made where there had been a decrease in demand with it being explained that the number of those in care was falling.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Bennett sought reassurance that remaining social workers would not have an unacceptable increase in caseloads. Councillor Flemming explained that whilst there had been a slight increase in the number of cases per social worker, this was still below the maximum target of 16 applied during the Ofsted monitoring period. This was included in the key data being monitored by the Children's Improvement Board to ensure quality.

**Councillor Mann** asked what was being done to see the return of Croydon Football Club, the Trams.

In response, Councillor Lewis expressed his regret that, due to financial implications, the Croydon Sports Arena was unable to reopen, putting Croydon Football Club at a disadvantage. However, it was hoped that the club could be accommodated at the Crystal Palace National Sports Centre. Councillor Lewis described how he planned to work with Councillor Young to gain capital investment for the Croydon Sports Arena, making it a more sustainable site and to allow Croydon Football Club to move back into the borough.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Mann asked about Wanders Football Club which was at risk of losing its home at Virgo Fidelis School, which was under threat of closure. Councillor Lewis was asked to meet with the club to assist it in making plans for the future. Councillor Lewis described the illustrious history of Wanders FC and stated that he would be happy to attend a meeting. It was thought that there was potential for both football clubs to be accommodated at Crystal Palace National Sports Arena.

**Councillor Hopley** asked Councillor Campbell about the Adult Social Services Review Panel which had not meet since the beginning of the pandemic. This meant that important information could not be accessed. Councillor Campbell was asked what she was trying to hide and why this information could not be provided and discussed.

In response, Councillor Campbell expressed her disappointed at the question asked; Councillor Campbell had spoken with Councillor Hopley and explained

that information had not been provided due to a data migration issue. The Adult Social Services Review Panel had not been held due to Covid.

Councillor Hopley used her supplementary question to express her disappointment and stressed the importance of the information being available and discussed. In response, Councillor Campbell expressed her willingness to work with the Opposition at any time and that there was nothing to hide.

**Councillor Clouder** asked Councillor Campbell if the pandemic was increasing demand on mental health services and how services were able to meet needs.

In response, Councillor Campbell explained how some Public Health contingency funds had been ring-fenced and would be used to tackle the inequalities exacerbated by Covid; these included obesity, take-up of immunisation, substance misuse, emotional health and suicide. It was described how mental health support services were being provided through telephone and online provision with escalation where needed. The support provided by the voluntary sector was acknowledged.

**Councillor Mohan** asked Councillor Lewis about the promise made at the Council meeting held on 28 September 2020 to provide further information regarding the 40% of Croydon's GLL run leisure centres that had not reopened and why this contact had not been forthcoming.

In response, Councillor Lewis explained that Councillor Oviri's request had not been made to him and that he would respond to the email received on the matter. Councillor Lewis described how there were different models employed by local authorities for the provision of leisure centres. With regard to Croydon, those centres that were economically viable had been reopened. Monks Hill and Ashburton Hall had open since the last Council meeting. The economic interests of the contract and partnership with GLL had to come first and it was not possible to reopen those centres that were loss making as this would have an impact on the partnership and budget.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Mohan asked about the refurbishment and reopening of Purley Pool. In response, Councillor Lewis confirmed that there had been investment in Purley Pool but that more was needed. Whether or not this would be forthcoming would need to be determined based on consideration of the wider budget.

## **Pool 2**

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

Councillor Butler, the Cabinet Member for Homes & Gateway Services, described her pleasure at attending the topping out ceremony for 90 Council flats at the Taberner House site which had been named Malcolm Wicks House.

Councillor Hamida Ali, the Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon & Communities, highlighted two important events. Hate Crime Awareness Week gave access to support which was important given the rise in violence experienced during lockdown. Councillor Hamida Ali signposted the Stop Hate UK 24 hour helpline. Members of Council were encouraged to lend their support to and publicise Black History Month which was helping to learn from the past for an equal future.

Councillor Shahul-Hameed, the Cabinet Member for Economy & Jobs, highlighted how the Council had won two apprenticeship awards – one for how the Council had supported apprenticeships through its supply chain and the other for the best progression by an apprentice. A young food market had also been held to support learning about cooking different foods and to give experience of street trading.

**Councillor Hale** referenced her question to the Leader regarding the directors of Brick By Brick. Councillor Butler was asked why none of the six directors who had resigned had been replaced.

In response, Councillor Butler noted that some director appointments had been made by the Council and some by Brick By Brick and it was for the organisation to comment on its own appointments. It was explained that most of the resignations reflected that Council officers had changed roles. For example, Lisa Taylor had stepped down to become the Council's Section 151 Officer and Shifa Mustafa's role did not align with the Brick By Brick directorship. It was reiterated that Brick By Brick and the Council's other companies were subject to an independent review. Whilst it was appropriate for the Council to resume its role on the board of Brick By Brick, the outcome of the review was awaited.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Hale expressed her concern and asked how many directors were required to support an organisation with £230m debt. Councillor Butler was asked if she still gave her support to Brick By Brick. In her response, Councillor Butler again referenced that a full and thorough review was being conducted including of governance and finance as well as looking at how the organisation operated. It was appropriate to wait for this to become available before further action was taken.

**Councillor Prince** asked Councillor Butler if she was pleased to see new Council houses coming through and to what extent these had benefited from external funding.

In response, Councillor Butler expressed her delight that funding from the London Mayor had come forward from the Building Council Homes for Londoners which meant it had been possible to reduce borrowing and allowed

for the stock of housing to be increased with more coming forward through Brick By Brick.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Prince asked where the next schemes coming forward for residents would be located. Councillor Butler explained that these would be available across the borough, providing opportunities for residents on the housing waiting list from the centre of the borough to the north and the south. Councillor Butler highlighted the quality of the schemes being delivered.

**Councillor Hoar** asked Councillor Shahul-Hameed about the £60m of Government funding available for small businesses in Croydon and the £8m of this that remained unallocated.

In response, Councillor Shahul-Hameed explained that there were a total of 3,981 small businesses that were eligible to claim a small business grant under the scheme of which 3,944 were in receipt of funds. In total, £53m had been distributed to 99.1% of all those businesses that qualified, with just 37 missed. These included those businesses that did not wish to make a claim as they did not believe that they required this funding. With regard to the discretionary business grants scheme, 598 businesses had benefited receiving up to £25k. Overall, this meant that of the funding available for businesses only £4.9m remained unallocated. Additionally, funding for businesses affected was anticipated for local lockdowns. The Economic Development Team was thanked for its hard work supporting local businesses.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Hoar expressed his relief that some of the funding allocated was getting out to local businesses. It was acknowledged that Croydon's position on funding to small businesses had improved. However, the distribution of funds was described as slow and unresponsive compared to the speed at which other Councils had distributed their funding. The Council's response was therefore another failure. In response, Councillor Shahul-Hameed stated that Councillor Hoar needed to get his figures correct and that the Council had successfully managed to distribute the funding to small businesses which was reflected in the most recent league tables.

**Councillor Canning** asked Councillor Butler about how the Council's award winning Gateway Service had responded to the pandemic.

In response, Councillor Butler described how the Gateway Service had been incredibly busy and had responded to a significant increase in the number of requests. This was exemplified by a threefold increase in the requests for Free School Meals. Councillor Butler highlighted that it was not the only service that had experienced an increase in demand; Croydon Adult Support, Rough Sleeping and Bereavement were all examples of services that had experienced a significant increase and had coped well.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Canning gave his thanks to officers and asked about the likely impact of Universal Credit being cut. In her

response, Council Butler highlighted that the increase to Universal Credit at the start of the lockdown in March 2020 had been welcomed. The increase acknowledged that the system of Universal Credit was not fit for purpose and not providing sufficient support given the circumstances being faced. It was therefore a shock that this was being taken away. Those on Universal Credit were already on the lowest income and the decrease would have an effect on homelessness.

**Councillor Millson** asked Councillor Butler about the hard fought campaign that has resulted in the first rejection of a Brick By Brick planning application. Against the Council's record of concreting over green spaces, Councillor Butler was asked to pledge not to concrete anymore of the borough.

In response, Councillor Butler expressed her disappointed that Councillor Millson and other Members of the Opposition, never spoke about the people affected. The focus on concrete failed to look at the homes desperately needed. The application had been considered by the Planning Committee which had refused to grant permission. Brick By Brick was onsite across the borough. The need for homes was also being impacted by Covid which brought stark contrast between those who did and those who did not have a home.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Millson ask if the Council's approach to home building was reckless. It was highlighted that more homes were being built than required by the local plan at the cost of greenspaces. In response, Councillor Butler stressed that no greenspaces had lost their designations and greenspaces remained protected. There had been no applications by the Council or Brick By Brick to build on any land with a designation.

**Councillor Jewitt** asked Councillor Hamida Ali about the increased incidence of domestic violence.

In response, Councillor Hamida Ali welcomed the opportunity to raise awareness of domestic violence. There had been a 7.4% increase in enquiries related to domestic violence and a 16% increase in the number of incidents reported regarded as high risk. Data provided to the Safer Croydon Board ranked Croydon first in London for the number of incidents and offences and fourth in terms of population. Croydon was ranked higher than the London average which placed even greater importance on the Family Justice Centre. The Council had undertaken awareness raising campaigns since the start of lockdown, with the Centre open seven days a week with longer opening hours offered twice a week.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Jewitt asked about reciprocal agreements with other boroughs to allow those who had experienced domestic violence to be moved out of the area. In her response, Councillor Hamida Ali highlighted the importance of such arrangements that allowed all survivors with a social tenancy to move to another borough to be safe. It was stressed to the meeting that other forms of domestic violence were also the

focus. This included domestic violence that was honour based and Female Genital Mutilation.

**Councillor Stranack** asked Councillor Hamida Ali about the safety of the community fund. The 38 charities relying on this and that had signed up to it in 2020/21 for three years were concerned about the subsequent two years of funding.

In response, Councillor Hamida Ali explained how despite the amendment to the budget agreed at Council on 28 September 2020, the funding had been guaranteed for 2020/21. Conversations were taking place with regard to the future of the community fund.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Stranack highlighted that the Councillor had not been able to confirm the future of the community fund. The situation of the Croydon Mosque & Islamic Centre was given as an illustration. Its income had reduced from £300k to £40k with Councillor Hamida Ali being asked how she was able to assist. In her response, Councillor Hamida Ali explained that she did not want to be misrepresented. She had not said no to the community fund. Rather she had acknowledged the difficulties and that discussions were ongoing with regard to the Council's budget. It was also described how the Council had provided an emergency fund during the pandemic to support the voluntary sector.

### **Pool 3**

With the end of the time allocated to questions to the Cabinet Members in the second pool, Madam Mayor signalled she was moving on to questions to Cabinet Members in the third pool. Councillors Collins, King and Young were invited to make their announcements.

Councillor Collins, Cabinet Member for Clean Green Croydon, stated that a petition had been launched to get Parliament to hold a debate on having a fly-tipping campaign. The petition was supported by Clean Up Britain and the South and East London Borough Waste Partnerships.

Councillor Young, Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources, gave his thanks to his predecessor, Councillor Hall, for services to the Council. It was emphasised to Members of Council, that this was Councillor Young's first day in his role as the Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources. A reminder was provided that Council had approved the budget in March 2020 with lockdown commencing 22 days later. Many public bodies had struggled to manage the impact of the pandemic such that all needed to roll sleeves up and do the work. It was described how there was now a new team in place to spearhead this work and that Councillor Young would be calling on his personal experience of leading a £900m Treasury review. Councillor Young thought it would have been remiss of him not to have stepped up to the plate.

**Councillor Jason Cummings** welcomed Councillor Young to his new position which it was acknowledged had been taken on at a challenging time.

It was highlighted that under Councillor Young's predecessor there had been 3 – 4 years of significant overspends and a continual failure to achieve budgeted savings. It was stressed that achieving agreed savings would be critical for the Council at such a difficult point. Councillor Young was therefore asked to explain what he was going to do differently to ensure budgeted savings were achieved.

In response, Councillor Young described how it was known what the savings were and what had to be achieved. It was explained how Councillor Young would be working with officers including the Interim Chief Executive and Director of Finance, Investment & Risk. A line by line review was to be undertaken to determine what expenditure would remain and what would be removed.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Jason Cummings described how every time savings came forward, Council was told that they would be achieved. However, this never happened. Rather Council was informed that savings had not been achieved and others were blamed for this failure. Councillor Young was asked how he was going to ensure that it would be different on this occasion. In response, Councillor Young referred to his track record. It was described how each savings option would be considered on its own merits with careful prioritisation needing to take place.

**Councillor Jewitt** asked Councillor Collins about his plans to expand the pet food pouch recycling scheme.

In response, Councillor Collins highlighted that the Council had been shortlist in the National Recycling Awards for 2020. As a result of the scheme, 6,000 pet food pouches had been recycled through the collection point in Morrisons, Waddon. Councillor Collins detailed the plan to use his ward budget to expand the number of collection points with volunteers being sought to deal with the despatch.

**Councillor Millson** welcomed Councillor Young to his new role which was acknowledged as starting during difficult circumstances. It was detailed how the Financial Consultant had attended the General Purposes and Audit Committee (GPAC) where the arrangements for financing the purchase of the Colonnades and the Croydon Park Hotel had been considered. Councillor Young was asked when he had realised their purchase had been in breach of financial regulations.

In his response, Councillor Young described how he had watched the GPAC meeting and had been surprised that the correct infrastructure had not been in place to make those decisions. As a result, there was a need to work with the auditors to make sure this was addressed. Councillor Young called for a better line of communication straight from the auditor to GPAC.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Millson described how MHCLG would want to be assured that the Council was capable of delivering as part of its consideration of whether or not to agree the request for a capitalisation

direction. At the GPAC meeting, it had also been detailed how the performance of internal audits had been deteriorating year on year over the last five years such that over half of all internal audits in 2019/20 had a limited or no outcome. Councillor Millson stressed that it was important to recognise the mistakes that had been made and that these had not only resulted because of Covid. In response, Councillor Young concurred and agreed that this would need to be addressed.

Madam Mayor permitted Councillor Hall to make a point of personal explanation. This was for Councillor Hall to state that he had confirmed with Council's Monitoring Officer that the appropriate processes had been undertaken for the purchases of the Colonnades and the Croydon Park Hotel. Councillor Hall gave his best wishes to Councillor Young for his new role and highlighted the necessity of the financial regulations work that had taken place. Councillor Young thanked Councillor Hall for the offer made to support the handover process.

**Councillor Fraser** asked Councillor Scott to comment on Croydon's planning performance against the annual planning target.

In response Councillor Scott highlighted that the Council was meeting housing supply targets which meant that there would be a good level of supply for five years based on the current London plan. With regard to the emerging London plan, it was explained that the Council would not have the full level of consents needed. However, it was thought that the 13,000 needed would be covered if the allocations were cut. It was stressed that there could not be any slowing down in the granting of permissions at any point given the extent of the housing crisis.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Fraser asked why, given the annual targets and pipeline process, the Government was introducing reform of the planning process. It was stressed that the planning process addressed each application and was not whipped. It was suggested that the reforms being put forward by the Government were because of the funding the Conservative Party received from developers. In response, Councillor Scott agreed and stated that the Government was trying to blame the planning system for the housing crisis when there were in excess of a million developments that had been given planning permission that had not been delivered. It was in fact the delivery system that was broken or faulty. The Government was accused of not understanding the problems or manipulating the system for its own purposes. This was illustrated by the three year delay in the development of the Purley Baptist Church site which had been caused by Government action.

**Councillor Ovir** highlighted the history of over and misspending that characterised the failure to control spending. Councillor Young was asked how he could be trusted to make this different.

In response, Councillor Young highlighted that there was truly a new team in control of the Council's budget. This included a new Chief Executive who recognised what was needed to get on top of the challenge. The diligence of

the approach being taken was highlighted. There was a focus on some things having to stop whilst others would have to be delivered more efficiently. Everything would have to be examined; all the facts and figures were needed in order to balance the budget in line with the statutory requirement.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Oviri called for an investigation of Councillor Young's predecessor and, given the failure of financial management, for Councillor Young himself to resign. Councillor Young characterised Councillor Oviri's comments as cheeky. Past failings were acknowledged but largely linked to Covid with London Councils underfunded by £1.4bn for their response to the pandemic. A systematic response to the Council's financial situation was required and this would not be achieved by the Cabinet Member resigning on his first day in post. Councillors were asked to show each other respect especially where they have a good track record. Councillor Young called on Councillor Oviri to reflect on her question.

**Councillor Audsley** asked Councillor King about the Council's ability to achieve a green recovery to the pandemic.

In response, Councillor King acknowledged the ongoing commitment to achieving a Sustainable Croydon with a paper going to the Cabinet meeting in the week following Council. This was to detail the work the Council had been doing and would continue to do to tackle the climate emergency. Councillor King brought attention to the leadership of Councillor Newman in this area and his first hand personal commitment and authority. In his supplementary question, Councillor Audsley highlighted the importance of social justice when considering the response to the climate emergency. He called for this to be prioritised by the new Leader.

**Councillor Ward** thanked Councillor Young for his service to children and young people through his former membership of the Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee with Councillor Young being noted as an independent thinker. Councillor Ward highlighted that Council's accounts for 2019/20 were still outstanding with it having been noted that the auditor had raised concerns about the treatment of up to £8m. Councillor Young was asked to advise Members of Council on this situation and that the accounts would be addressed as soon as possible. In response, Councillor Young noted that he was aware that there was a qualification on £8m of the 2019/20 accounts but needed to be in his new role for longer to be able to comment further. Councillor Ward was thanked for his comments regarding Councillor Young's approach which would continue. Councillor Young wanted the best for Croydon and was committed to seeing things through in his new role.

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

The meeting received the Scrutiny & Overview Annual Report for 2019 - 2020. Madame Mayor invited Councillor Fitzsimons in his capacity as the Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee to provide an introduction to the report.

Councillor Fitzsimons thanked Council for having the opportunity to speak on the Scrutiny & Overview Annual Report for 2019 – 2020. It was highlighted that the world had gone through a challenge that had fundamentally reshaped Croydon and it was therefore right to rethink how scrutiny would operate. The Government's new guidance on the operation of the scrutiny function had informed the Governance Review and a dedicated review of scrutiny had been commissioned. Croydon was described as an authority that welcomed challenge and would reap the benefits of a governance review of its finances. It was highlighted that chairing scrutiny was shared with the Opposition and that for the most part scrutiny avoided party politics. Councillor Fitzsimons thanked those Councillors who were the scrutiny Vice Chairs as well as the Democratic Services Officers who supported scrutiny: Simon Trevaskis and Stephanie Davis. The variety of subjects covered by scrutiny during 2019 – 2020 was rehearsed; there had been call-ins on the decision to close St Andrew High School and emissions based parking charges. From March 2020, scrutiny had turned its focus to Covid. Unlike the Government, scrutiny at Croydon had identified the risk to care homes. The pandemic had an impact on the Council's finances as well as the scrutiny work programme. The Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Croydon Renewal Plan would both be a focus for scrutiny going forward. It was emphasised that with both needing to be comprehensive and deliverable at pace, Scrutiny had a role in ensuring that the voice of the local community was heard in delivering services that were needed and valued.

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Ward, in his capacity as Chair of the Children & Young People Sub-Committee to provide his introduction to the report.

Councillor Ward described how he felt encouraged to read the report and gave his thanks to all the Members and officers involved in the scrutiny process with special mention going to the support provided by Democratic Services. The ground covered by scrutiny during 2019/20 was described as pleasing with effectiveness having improved and the non-partisan approach welcomed. The other scrutiny chairs were thanked for their contribution. The Children's Improvement Plan had been a feature of the work of the Children & Young People Sub-Committee with thanks being given to Rob Henderson, the previous Executive Director for Children, Families and Education, and his team. In the face of the Council's financial challenges it needed to be ensured that the gains made by the service were not lost. The Task and Finish group on exclusions being led by Councillor Fitzpatrick was focusing on getting its conclusions right and would be delivered before the end of Council year. More needed to be done to involve front line service users in the scrutiny process. This was even more important because of the potential risk to standards that may result from the Council's financial challenges.

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Ben-Hassel, in her capacity as Chair of the Streets, Environment and Homes Sub-Committee to provide her introduction to the report.

Councillor Ben-Hassel described how she had been newly appointed as the Chair of the Streets, Environment and Homes Sub-Committee at the beginning of the 2019/20 municipal year. Thanks was given to officers for their support including those from Democratic Services; Stephanie Davis and Simon Trevaskis were thanked for their patience and for being prepared to go above and beyond. It was described how services had been held to account through question and answer sessions with a focus on the financial challenges. A flexible approach had been taken allowing the sub-committee to respond to issues as they evolved. Data was paramount to scrutiny to enable it to do its job. However, much of this was held in silos such that Councillor Ben-Hassel appealed for a corporate overview to be provided that would enable a monitoring framework to be established. Decision-making should be informed by data with the public and voluntary sector needing to be more involved in the work of scrutiny. There was a call for more attention to be given to corporate risk management and to the issues of individual service users. The new Members joining scrutiny were welcomed with Councillor Ben-Hassel looking forward to all working effectively together to achieve a forensic approach to their work.

**Councillor Chatterjee** was invited to put his question to all three Chairs of the scrutiny committees. Councillor Chatterjee asked all three chairs what they had learned from their scrutiny of the Council's finances about how they might do things differently in the future.

In his response, Councillor Ward focused specifically on the experience of the call-in that had been conducted and was mindful of the tone of communication and how this needed to be different from that used at Council or Cabinet. Councillor Ward thought he might ask different questions than he had at the time and highlighted that there was a need for these to be asked simply and straight forwardly. The issue of whether the information requested was provided was also stressed with it being noted that in some instances this was not provided or only supplied when it had lost its relevance. For those in new roles, this was something that they also needed to think about with openness and access to information being stressed as paramount.

Councillor Ben-Hassel agreed with Councillor Ward that scrutiny was an area where there was cross-party agreement. Councillor Ben-Hassel described that what she had learned from the call-in process was the need for a shift in the political culture, and for the Council to improve transparency and communication. The challenges faced by the Council needed to be better explained to residents in order to take them on the improvement journey. Councillor Ben-Hassel again emphasised the need for data to be collected at a corporate level in order that scrutiny could be more effective.

Councillor Fitzsimons endorsed the comments made by the other scrutiny chairs. Timely access to data including on performance was required. It had

been learnt from the Governance Review that that the introduction of the strong leader model had been a negative constitutional change shifting the focus away from 70 Councillors with responsibility and access to be replaced by information being drip fed to Councillors. Councillor Fitzsimons called for cultural change with scrutiny roles being seen as framed by the guidance provided by CIPFA and the Centre for Public Scrutiny. Scrutiny had two potential roles; budget and performance. But scrutiny did not go far enough with more focus needed on the in-year budget performance. It was stressed that scrutiny could only succeed if support was provided by the political leadership. Parity of esteem and legitimacy was needed to enable a culture of respect to benefit all 70 Councillor and not just those in the Cabinet and senior positions.

Councillor Audsley noted that there had been a gap of eight months between scrutiny's review of the budget in February and September 2020 and asked if this should have been consider with more frequency.

In response, Councillor Fitzsimons noted the limitations of the resources available and that scrutiny would take different actions in retrospect. It was acknowledged that budget setting needed to substantially change. Recommendations had been made about how financial governance needed to change with scrutiny's role included in these new processes.

Madam Mayor explained that no further questions had been submitted regarding the report and that therefore, this concluded Council's consideration of the report's contents.

## 125/20 **Governance Review implementation progress update**

The meeting received a report on the implementation of the Government Review. Madam Mayor invited the Leader to move the recommendations in the report. The Leader highlighted that how, in light the discussions already had at the meeting, these recommendations were even more important including the role of scrutiny in providing opportunity for greater challenge. Whilst the committee structure was put on a pedestal it was not without its own issues including how it gave the power to those Councillors who were responsible for setting the committee agenda. What was being proposed through the review and the recommendations in the report was a hybrid model including a reinforced scrutiny function which was the way forward.

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Perry to second the recommendations in the report. Councillor Perry highlighted that he was in support and happy to second the recommendations in the report. These were described as many months in the making with thanks being given to all the colleagues involved and for the cross-party approach taken. The Governance Review had laudable aims in seeking to ensure the decision-making process worked better for residents. It was in the gift of the Administration to ensure it recommendations were implemented and worked successful which would be judged on its action. Thanks was given to Agnieszka Kutek for her support of

the panel and its work including for all the extensive research undertaken and papers written.

Prior to the vote, Madam Mayor noted that there were 41 Labour Members and 26 Conservative Members in attendance at the meeting. Madam Mayor put the motion to the vote which was unanimously agreed.

**RESOLVED:** Council **AGREED** the following recommendations:

1. Agreed to establish Cabinet Member Advisory Committees within the Constitution as detailed in appendix 1 and to note the approach to the implementation of CMAC meetings as detailed in paragraphs 5.1 - 5.17;
2. Approved the amended definition of Key Decisions as detailed in appendix 1 and paragraphs 5.18 - 5.25;
3. Approved the Forward Plan protocol attached in appendix 5 and introduce a new forward planning process for managing and publicising forthcoming decisions as detailed in paragraphs 5.26 - 5.33;
4. Approved the changes to the procedure rules for Council meetings as detailed in appendix 1 and paragraphs 5.34-5.40; and
5. Noted the updated overarching approach to the delivery of the governance review recommendations, including changes to, and impact of, the budgetary context, as detailed in the report.

## 126/20 Council Debate Motions

The Mayor read out the first Council Debate Motion on behalf of the Administration:

*“This council is seriously concerned that the Government’s Planning White Paper will silence the voices of local people in the Planning process and reduce the ability of democratically elected councillors to require developers to improve local infrastructure and provide much needed affordable homes.”*

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Clark to propose the motion. Councillor Clark stated that the UK had a housing crisis. There was a lack of affordable homes and that a Government was needed that was fit to address this by providing decent homes to live in that were net carbon neutral. The Government’s Planning White Paper was not the plan to achieve this objective. It fundamentally misdiagnosed the issues because it contained no measures to force developers to use unimplemented permissions. Councillor Clark, the Chair of the Planning Committee, wanted to give residents the opportunity to have more say and not less on planning applications. To this end, changes were planned to the Council’s constitution to allow objectors to answer questions. The Government’s White Paper showed its lack of commitment to local infrastructure by increasing from 40 to 50 homes the threshold for developer contributions to the Community Infrastructure Levy with no clear plan for replacing the local funds lost. The Government was accused of sidelining local community in exchange for the £11m of donations received from developers to the Conservative Party. *The Planning for the Future White*

*Paper* had been dictated by property developers with the Council Debate Motion providing all Members with the opportunity to reject its proposals.

Councillor Ben-Hassel seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Streeter to speak. Councillor Streeter stated how it had been known for many years that Croydon Labour was Blairite and friends with big business. It was described how the White Paper was the basis for a consultation with the Government looking for input and MPs debating its content. There was every indication that Ministers were listening and had acknowledged the sensitivities involved in applying the proposals suggested. It was being suggested that there was a need to treat London differently. This was compared to the operation of the planning system in Croydon where consultations were conducted with a foregone conclusion and a suburban character assassination was ongoing. The Administration was described as reluctant to listen to its own Mayor of London when it had been judged that its development targets were too high. Croydon Labour was described as having undermined trust in the planning system and that things could only get better.

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Perry to speak. Councillor Perry highlighted that whilst the Administration claimed to value local views it rode rough shod over the views of residents expressed about Local Transport Neighbourhoods and at the Planning Committee. The Administration's Council Debate Motion was described as grand standing. The approach to the planning system in Croydon was described as a developers' charter and that the Administration had spent six years silencing the people of Croydon and allowing the character of the borough to be destroyed. Brick By Brick was permitted to build on the green spaces vital to counter the effects of climate change and to support health and wellbeing especially during the pandemic. The Conservative Group had already met to discuss White Paper. The group would be making its own response to the consultation as part of the democratic process and expressing its concerns. The Group would therefore be supporting the motion but would not take any lectures.

Councillor Ben-Hassel exercised her right to speak. Whilst this was an opportunity for reform, Councillor Ben-Hassel described how alarm had been raised. With the reduction in the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 monies, fewer homes would be built with less affordable homes available. Whilst sustainable and mix communities could have been the objective, the zoning approach would lead to permitted development rights and substandard schemes. The main barrier to improving the planning system was the lack of resources in local authorities. A zonal approach would mean that schemes which were policy compliant could not be refused. This would work to prevent residents from being at the centre of development. The Opposition was called on to use its influence to encourage the Government to reconsider its plans.

The motion was put to the vote and was approved unanimously.

The Mayor read out the second Council Debate Motion on behalf of the Opposition:

*“This Labour Administration has consistently failed to listen to local residents, takes no notice of their views on any local issue and cannot be trusted to act in the interests of Croydon.”*

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Bennett to propose the motion. Councillor Bennett described how she did this in sorrow rather than anger. The Administration had brought Croydon to its knees. There had been a refusal to listen to advisers, officers and electorate. This had led to over 10,000 residents expressing their voice by signing a petition to hold a referendum on having a directly elected Mayor. They had been asking for a democratic vote which had been denied under Covid regulations. Brick By Brick was sucking up every green space in the borough despite the impact that this would have on the wellbeing of residents. Whilst more homes were needed, hundreds of one bedroom flats were not good enough. The Administration was paying lip service to saving the planet; the traffic restrictions brought in with Local Traffic Neighbourhoods did not make sense because they concentrated traffic on the main roads with more travel caused by having to circumnavigate restricted roads. Councillor Bennett described how anger was rising but that the Administration was not listening and was not replying to emails.

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

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Newman to speak. The Leader stated that the Administration did listen to the people including those in the Opposition. The local elections in 2018 saw a record 41 Labour Councillors elected. Now in the mid-term period, the Conservative Group was making its attacks. The Leader acknowledged that the Administration would not get everything right and that it needed to learn including on governance. The Leader cited a range of initiatives that demonstrated the Administration listened including the Legacy Youth Zone, the fully funded Family Justice Centre, the refurbished Fairfield Halls, increased recycling rates and environmental measures including improving air quality. The Conservative Group was described as making plenty more noise but with no constructive ideas. The Leader anticipated that once the people of Croydon were listened to again through the ballot box, there would be another Labour victory.

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Degrad to speak. Councillor Degrad expressed how she was unsure what the Opposition meant as she was able to give numerous examples of how the Administration was listening. This included setting up a Citizen's Assembly to listen to concerns about the climate emergency. Advice and suggestions had been gathered in response to concerns about heavy polluting vehicles that had fed into setting up Local Traffic Neighbourhoods. Further steps were envisaged to ensure all voices were heard. The Opposition's Council Debate Motion was described as dangerous rhetoric with the accusation made of political point scoring during a pandemic. Councillor Degrad called on Members of Council to unite to be able to support residents to the best of their ability and not to add to the

distress being caused by Covid. The Conservative Group was called on to support the Council on its improvement journey.

Councillor Roche exercised his right to speak and described how the operation of the Planning Committee proved the Administration did not listen to residents when it was choosing to ignore valid objections in addition to local planning policies. The Leader was choosing to ignore the thousands who had requested a referendum on a directly elected Mayor. The poor implementation of Local Traffic Neighbourhoods, which Councillor Roche had witnessed first-hand had caused chaos and damage to local business at a time when the Council should be aiding small business recovery. It was described how the implementation of the Local Traffic Neighbourhood on Stambourne Way had prevented a fire engine responding to an emergency. This was a scheme that had been implemented without any prior consultation, demonstrating that the Administration was not capable of listening. It may ask for views but these were not what it wanted.

The motion was put to the vote and fell.

127/20 **Recommendation of the Appointments Committees to Council for decision**

Madam Mayor invited the Leader, to move the recommendation referred by the Appointments Committee on 6 October 2020 related to the Pay Policy for 2020/21. The Leader moved the motion. Councillor Butler seconded the motion.

Madam Mayor moved the vote and Council unanimously agreed the recommendation in the report.

**RESOLVED:** Council **AGREED** the following recommendations:

1. That the Pay Policy for the year 2020/21 be updated to include the revised spot salary for the permanent position of Executive Director Children Families & Education of £147,000 p.a.

128/20 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This item was not required.

The meeting ended at 9.41 pm

**Signed:**

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**Date:**

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