

# Joint Scrutiny & Overview Committee and Health & Social Care Sub-Committee Agenda



To: Councillors Sean Fitzsimons (SOC & HSC Chair), Robert Ward (SOC Vice-Chair), Leila Ben-Hassel (SOC Deputy-Chair), Andy Stranack (HSC Vice-Chair),

Scrutiny & Overview Committee: Jeet Bains, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Joy Prince,

Health & Social Care Sub-Committee: Patsy Cummings, Clive Fraser, Andrew Pelling, Scott Roche and Gordon Kay (HSC Healthwatch Co-optee)

Reserve Members: Jan Buttinger, Richard Chatterjee, Mary Croos, Felicity Flynn, Toni Letts, Stephen Mann, Stuart Millson, Helen Redfern and Callton Young

A joint meeting of the **Scrutiny & Overview Committee** and the **Health & Social Care Sub-Committee** which you are hereby summoned to attend, will be held on **Tuesday, 26 May 2020 at 6.30 pm** in **This meeting will be held remotely.**

Jacqueline Harris Baker  
Council Solicitor & Monitoring Officer  
London Borough of Croydon  
Bernard Weatherill House  
8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA

Simon Trevaskis  
0208 7266000  
simon.trevaskis@croydon.gov.uk  
www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings  
Friday, 15 May 2020

**PLEASE NOTE:** Members of the public are welcome to remotely attend this meeting via a weblink which will be publicised on the Council website at least 24 hours before the meeting.

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If you require any assistance, please contact Simon Trevaskis 0208 7266000 as detailed above.

## **AGENDA – PART A**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

To receive any apologies for absence from any members of the Committee.

**2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 38)**

To approve the minutes of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee meetings held on 10 and 25 February 2020 and the Health & Social Care Sub-Committee meeting held on 10 March 2020 as an accurate record.

**3. Disclosure of Interests**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct and the statutory provisions of the Localism Act, Members and co-opted Members of the Council are reminded that it is a requirement to register disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) and gifts and hospitality to the value of which exceeds £50 or multiple gifts and/or instances of hospitality with a cumulative value of £50 or more when received from a single donor within a rolling twelve month period. In addition, Members and co-opted Members are reminded that unless their disclosable pecuniary interest is registered on the register of interests or is the subject of a pending notification to the Monitoring Officer, they are required to disclose those disclosable pecuniary interests at the meeting. This should be done by completing the Disclosure of Interest form and handing it to the Democratic Services representative at the start of the meeting. The Chair will then invite Members to make their disclosure orally at the commencement of Agenda item 3. Completed disclosure forms will be provided to the Monitoring Officer for inclusion on the Register of Members' Interests.

**4. Urgent Business (if any)**

To receive notice of any business not on the agenda which in the opinion of the Chair, by reason of special circumstances, be considered as a matter of urgency.

**5. Covid-19 Update**

To scrutinise the response to the Covid-19 crisis. (Documents to follow).

**6. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The following motion is to be moved and seconded where it is proposed to exclude the press and public from the remainder of a meeting:

“That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt

information falling within those paragraphs indicated in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.”

## **PART B**

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## Scrutiny & Overview Committee

Meeting held on Monday, 10 February 2020 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillors Sean Fitzsimons (Chair), Robert Ward (Vice-Chair), Leila Ben-Hassel (Deputy-Chair), Jeet Bains Mary Croos (for Joy Prince) and Jerry Fitzpatrick

**Also Present:** Councillor Oliver Lewis – Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure & Sport

**Apologies:** Councillor Joy Prince

### PART A

#### 8/20 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

#### 9/20 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interest made at the meeting.

#### 10/20 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

#### 11/20 **Fairfield Halls**

The Committee considered a report setting out information on both the redevelopment of Fairfield Halls by Brick by Brick and the ongoing operation of the venue by BHLive. A tour of the venue had been arranged for the members of the Committee prior to the meeting. The following were in attendance at the meeting for this item:-

- Councillor Oliver Lewis – Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure & Sport
- Shifa Mustafa – Executive Director for Place, Croydon Council
- Colm Lacey – Brick by Brick
- Neil Chandler – BH Live
- Natasha Bucknor – Talawa Theatre Company

- Sheree Vickers – Savvy Theatre Company

The first part of the item focussed in on the refurbishment of Fairfield Halls, with it confirmed that the current estimated cost for this was £42,600,000, with the project having been delivered by the Council's development company, Brick by Brick. It was also confirmed that cost of the redevelopment had been met through the release of land around the venue for other development and had not required direct funding from the Council.

It was highlighted by a member of the Committee that the original budget for the redevelopment of Fairfield Halls had been £30,000,000 and as such it was questioned why this had increased to £42,600,000 and whether any further increases were expected. In response it was confirmed that no further increases were expected, although the final accounts were still to be signed off with the contractor on the project. There were two main reasons for the increase, the first being design developments during the project such as upgrading the sprinkler system to meet current fire safety standards and secondly unforeseen issues such as the discovery of a significant amount of asbestos which required removal.

In response to a follow up question about whether any further capital expenditure was planned for the venue in the coming eighteen months it was confirmed by the operator, BH Live, that no additional financial expenditure was planned at this stage. It was advised that as part of the ongoing upkeep of the venue the Council would occasionally need to make further investment, but there were no planned works at this time.

Regarding the value of the land funding the development, it was confirmed that this was based on the current valuation which included the development of approximately 420 homes on the site. The previously proposed scheme was for a development of approximately 200 homes. As a result of the increased densification of the site, the value had risen to cover the full cost of the redevelopment.

In response to a question about the key risks identified at the outset of the project it was confirmed that asbestos had been identified. Work was undertaken to investigate the level of asbestos present in the building which established that it was located throughout. Despite this preliminary work, once the redevelopment commenced the level of asbestos found in the building was greater than expected. A decision was taken to completely remove asbestos from the site rather than encapsulating within the building, which was discovered to have previously been the case. Other elements of the project that contributed towards the increased cost included the need to completely replace the cladding on the building, rather than repairing the existing cladding and rebuilding the Arnhem section of the venue which proved to be more cost effective than repairing the existing structure.

Given the associated risks with redeveloping an older building, the Committee suggested that with the benefit of hindsight it may have been better to provide a cost range for the project rather than a specific budget total, which could be viewed as having been optimistic for a scheme on the scale of Fairfield Halls.

It was confirmed that approximately 10% of the total cost of the project had been spent on fees, which had helped to deliver much of the enabling work surrounding the project.

It was highlighted that the car park and landscaping around the venue had not been included in the scope of work (set out in appendix of the main report). As such it was questioned whether this would result in additional expenditure. In response it was confirmed that the budget related directly to the cost of redeveloping the building and not the external public realm and car parking costs.

In regard of the funding of £11,400,000 provided by the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership for the wider Fairfield scheme, it was questioned whether this was included in the budget total or had been allocated to other work. It was confirmed that part of the funding had been spent on the redevelopment of the Halls, with the remainder on the surrounding enabling development.

Although the car park had not been included in the scheduled of works for the Fairfield Halls redevelopment work was underway with it due to be open in eight to ten weeks. It was explained that the car park had originally been included as part of the planning application for the site, but due to Croydon College withdrawing from the scheme, it had meant that this section of the project was delayed as a planning variation was needed. It was confirmed that it was the responsibility of Brick by Brick to deliver the parking spaces.

In response to a question about changes made to the scope of works during the course of the project it was highlighted that delivery of the project had been handed to Brick by Brick following a decision by Cabinet in 2016. Once the decision had been made a full detailed design was undertaken in consultation with the Theatre's Trust and BH Live. There were land ownership changes during the course of the project, as well as Croydon College not proceeded with their proposed project which also led to changes to the scheme. The land ownership of the site had been transferred over to Brick by Brick to deliver enabling development that funded the refurbishment of the venue.

It was noted that the current layout of the public realm at the front of Fairfield Halls was temporary and as such it was questioned when this would be finished. It was advised that the public realm work was the responsibility of the Council who had commissioned a design team for the project, although it was likely to be two years before this was completed as it had to be delivered in conjunction with the next phase in the wider development of the site.

The second part of the item focussed on the ongoing operation of the venue, with it explained that the contract had been awarded to BH Live who would run the venue without cost to the Council. It was highlighted that the contract included provision for a diverse range of shows and as such it was questioned how this had progress since the venue reopened in September 2019. It was confirmed that at present the venue was still in its mobilisation phase, with a lot of work carried out prior to reopening to understand what the local

community wanted from the venue and to work with theatre operators and other performing arts groups to encourage full use of Fairfield Halls once it reopened. There had been challenges since the venue reopened, but BH Live had been realistic that this would be the case when bidding for the contract.

The current challenges were similar to those faced by other venues across the country which was predominately making sure there was an audience for the product provided. There was research undertaken daily on what local audiences wanted, where they live, how far they were willing to travel and how much they would spend which was used to inform the programme of events. However with the venue having been closed for three years, it meant that there was a lack of trust with audiences and a need to build a database of potential customers, both of which were challenging. 90,000 tickets had been sold since the venue reopened in September 2019 up to January 2020, which was only 23% less than the final year before the venue closed when sales had been at their highest level.

As the current occupancy rate was 30% against a project target of 45%, it was questioned whether the target was achievable. It was advised that the target was considered achievable by BH Live who were an established theatre operator with a lot of experience in the field. There had been delays in the completion of the project with the car park not yet reopened and the interior work only just completed, all of which would have had an impact on the initial performance of the venue. However ticket sales were only slightly down on those before the closure when many more events had been hosted. There had also been a significant number of both conference and church events at the venue, all of which pointed towards a positive future.

The representatives from the Talawa and Savvy Theatre Companies were also questioned on their experience of using the venue and their reasons for choosing Fairfield Halls to work with.

Sheree Vickers from the Savvy Theatre Company advised that having studio space in the venue allowed the company to bring groups together in a safe space to create theatre. The venue not only provided a safe studio space, but was as a whole welcoming to groups the theatre company worked such as the homeless and adults with learning disabilities. Having a permanent venue had increased the status of Savvy, allowing them to work with other leading cultural providers and to increase participation.

Natasha Bucknor from the Talawa Theatre Company highlighted that when the company was looking for a permanent home, they found in Croydon partners with similar views on the promotion of culture to address wider social issues. It was advised that the facilities offered at Fairfield Halls were world class, with the studio space allowing the company to develop its work. An unexpected positive of being located in Croydon was becoming part of the cultural and civic community in the borough, which had helped them to feel at home in the Fairfield Halls.

It was confirmed that the concessions contract mentioned in the report was the lease on the venue, which was for an initial ten year period with the



possibility of extending this for an additional five years. The Cabinet Member highlighted that the openness of BH Live to working in partnership with the Council should be commended and that it was welcomed that they shared an artistic and cultural vision for the borough with the Council.

In response to a question about how the performance of BH Live would be monitored, it was explained that a number of key performance indicators were being developed with the Council that would come into effect from April 2020. These would include audience numbers, community engagement, community hires (which were offered at up to 50% of the full hire charge), ticket pricing and the general trading position. It was agreed that performance information on the first full year of trading would be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee after April 2021.

It was highlighted by a Member that from their experience the online ticketing system could be difficult to negotiate, with concern that this may discourage some potential customers from purchasing tickets. In response it was confirmed that BH Live was looking to upgrade their ticketing system which would address these concerns.

It was noted that there was significant public concern about the cost of redevelopment of the venue, which was difficult to allay with a significant proportion of the work hidden from public view. As such it was questioned what could be done to restore public confidence in the venue. In response it was highlighted that the refurbishment of the venue was part of a wider regeneration project, which was using development elsewhere on the site to fund the refurbishment without cost to the Council. The project had also acted as a trigger for other regeneration and development elsewhere in the town centre. It was also highlighted that without the newly refurbished Fairfield Halls it was unlikely that Croydon would have made the shortlist for the London Borough of Culture 2023. It was advised that a photo exhibition detailing the refurbishment work could be staged at the venue to help the public understand the scale of the work that had been required.

At the conclusion of the item the Chair thanked the attendees for their participation in the meeting.

## **Conclusions**

Following discussion of the report, the Committee reached the following conclusions:-

1. That the Fairfield regeneration scheme is complex in nature, with separate but interdependent schemes taking place at the Halls and across the surrounding public realm and amenities. As the different schemes have evolved, it has become increasingly difficult to easily understand what work was being commissioned and at what cost. The Council could have communicated this information more effectively as the scheme evolved to help ensure that there was a better understanding of the scheme.

2. That a definitive value for money judgement can only be made when the final breakdown of all costs is finalised, and at least a year of full site operation, to understand if the Council's objectives of a revitalised Fairfield Halls has been achieved
3. The Committee was reassured that there was a strong community programme in place and that the operator, BH Live, was ensuring that there was a strong community focus at the Halls.
4. That while occupancy levels at the Halls were not as high as immediately prior to their closure for its restoration, they were positive in the context of the building work having only recently been completed and car parking provision not being available. It would take a full year of operation before the Committee could fully assess the performance of the restored Halls.

### **Recommendations**

The Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport that BH Live be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee in the summer of 2021 to update Members on the progress made, to allow the committee to assess their progress against the operator's original business case.

#### 12/20 **Question Time: Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure & Sport**

The Committee considered a report together with a presentation delivered at the meeting from the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure & Sport, Councillor Oliver Lewis, which provided an overview of the key activities within the Culture, Leisure & Sport portfolio over the past year.

A copy of the presentation can be found at the following link:-

<https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/b7156/Question%20Time%20Cabinet%20Member%20for%20Culture%20Leisure%20Sport%20-%20Presentation%2010th-Feb-2020%2018.30%20Scru.pdf?T=9>

During the course of the presentation the following points were noted:-

- £42,600,000 had been invested in the restoration of Fairfield Halls which had resulted in the provision of an inclusive space for all of Croydon.
- There was a growing cultural calendar in the borough with the Pride and Mela events attracting 22,000 people to Wandle Park. There had also been larger events such as the Ends Festival in Lloyd Park. Work continued on growing and developing the local music scene.
- There was a thriving cultural network in the borough with 500 people on the Council's cultural database

- The Council was being held up as an example of best practice for the creation of its Night Time Plan, which had been developed in consultation with the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.
- There had been a £5,000,000 capital investment in the borough's libraries to create modern digitally enabled spaces, with the Selsdon Library the most recently upgraded.
- There were a number of threats to the continued growth of culture in the borough such as the economic uncertainty making finding new investment challenging, historic underinvestment in the cultural sector and the wider economic issues restricting the public's spending on non-essentials such as theatre tickets.
- There were active Friends Groups in the parks across the borough and investment continued to be made in parks with data being used to inform this approach.
- It was due to be confirmed on 11 February whether Croydon had been named the London Borough of Culture for 2023.
- There had been historic underinvestment in sport in the borough which was changing with the Park Life project and the installation of outdoor gym equipment in parks, most recently in Norbury Park. The New Addington Leisure Centre had opened in January, providing a modern sports and leisure facility for the local community.
- The Museum of Croydon was working towards reaccreditation, following the loss of its status in 2013. The future of the museum would be closely linked to the Clocktower development.

Following the presentation the Committee was given the opportunity to question the Cabinet Member about his portfolio. The first question concerned the provision of cafes in the borough's libraries and how the success of these would be reviewed. It was advised that the provision of café facilities was decided on a case by case basis depending on the space available and whether there were existing alternatives in the near vicinity. As the provision of cafes in libraries was a new approach, each location would be reviewed and if they proved not to be successful the space would be utilised for another purpose.

An update was provided on the installation of three all-weather cricket pitches in the South Norwood, Sanderstead and Norbury parks. Two had been installed, but the installation of the pitch at Norbury Park had been delayed from last summer due to weather conditions damaging the ground. It was still planned that the pitch would be installed this year.

It was highlighted that some of the paths in the borough's parks were not sufficient to support maintenance vehicle, which had resulted in tyre damage on the surrounding grass. As such it was questioned whether there was

anything that could be done to address this. In response it was advised that there would be differing views over widening the paths in parks with some people not in favour of reducing the amount of green space available to do so. There was no budget available to commit to widening the paths in parks across the borough, but the width of any new path could be designed with this provision in mind. As an alternative it was suggested that there could be a conversation with the contractors about the size of the vehicles used to ensure that they were suitable for the space available.

It was confirmed that money had been set aside for the provision of play spaces in parks across the borough with the team working on this at the moment. It was highlighted that as well as affecting the budget, austerity had also had an impact upon the number of staff in the Parks team which meant that projects sometimes took longer to be delivered.

It was advised that groups such as the Local Study Forum were important to promoting and preserving the history and heritage of the borough, and the Cabinet Member was happy to engage with these groups.

It was questioned whether when upgrading Council facilities such as libraries consideration was given to the needs of users with specific sensory sensitivities such as those with certain forms of autism. The Cabinet Member highlighted that he had met with the Minister for Disabled People, Justin Tomlinson MP, at the Fairfield Halls to discuss the inclusive pantomime performances that were being delivered. This example could be used as a good model for other service areas such as gyms and leisure centres. It was acknowledged that further work was needed to understand the needs of the autistic community in the borough which could be informed through the work of the Council's Autism Champion, Councillor Jerry Fitzpatrick.

The community engagement in the Selsdon library was welcomed with it noted that the community was preparing a plan for cultural events at the facility. The Cabinet Member confirmed that he was happy to engage with and support local groups who were taking the initiative to promote culture in their own areas.

As Croydon was bidding to become the London Borough of Culture for 2023, it was questioned what this would mean for the borough should the bid be successful. It was confirmed that should it be awarded it would help to raise the cultural profile of the borough. It would also deliver funding of £1,350,000 from the Greater London Authority as well as opening up additional opportunities to bid for funding from organisations such as the Arts Council, which could result in an externally funded budget for the project of approximately £4,000,000.

Should the Council be successful in being named as the London Borough of Culture for 2023, it was questioned whether there should be a Public Art Strategy created to use as a guide for any newly commissioned public art. It was confirmed that the Council was in a position to reflect on the current public art in the borough, with work underway on the Croydon Collection of Public Art which would help to inform future public art.

It was questioned whether there was a comprehensive strategy for play spaces in the borough. In response it was highlighted that there was over 50 play sites across the borough with a limited budget for maintenance and improvement works. As such work had been undertaken to identify the sites most in need of maintenance or with health & safety issues. This information was then taken into account along with other information such as accessibility and childhood obesity data to draw up a list of the ten sites most in need of investment. It was confirmed that on a wider level the Administration was keen to ensure that the general environment of the borough could be made as child friendly as possible.

In response to a question about the pricing of memberships for the Council's leisure and sports centres it was advised that these facilities were operated by GLL on the Council's behalf and the pricing structure was based on their experience. There had been an increase in the membership fee for the New Addington Leisure Centre as prior to the rebuild the fee had been held at the same level from when GLL took over the contract. Whereas other centres had gradually increased membership fees, the New Addington Leisure Centre had increased from a previously low level to a more standard cost with the opening of the new facility. It was advised that it could be explored with GLL whether there was any support that could be provided to previous users of the old facility who were struggling with the new charges.

Concern was raised about the scope of the Music City project with it highlighted that it only seemed to focus on the musical history of the borough since the late 1970's when there was a significant history prior to this in the 1950's and 1960's. It was confirmed that the list was not definitive and instead outlined the key musical genres that had been highlighted as important for the borough. Other genres of music would also be celebrated through the musical heritage trail and the Music City project.

It was highlighted that the Committee had previously recommended that the by-laws covering the Council's parks be reviewed and as such it was disappointing to note that apart from a couple of small changes a wider review had not been undertaken. In response it was acknowledged that some of the by-laws were outdated, for instance those that prevented cycling in parks as there were many locations where this activity should be encouraged. As such this could be updated on a park by park basis with a wider review undertaken to ensure the Council's parks were available for a wide range of activities.

It was noted that Croydon Central library seemed to be well used by people wanting to find a quiet study space and as such it was questioned whether there were plans to upgrade the facilities and increase the opening hours to include evenings and weekends. In response the importance of the provision of study space in the borough's libraries was acknowledged. It was agreed that the possibility of Sunday opening would be explored and there was a possibility that the Open Plus scheme would allow access to libraries outside of the standard opening hours. Consideration was given to current technology requirements when refurbishing libraries to ensure that the facilities delivered met the expectations of library users. Given the diverse nature of the borough

consideration was also given to the availability of books and other resources in a variety of different languages.

It was noted that £12,000,000 had been raised from the sale of the Riesco Collection which had originally been intended to fund the restoration of the Fairfield Halls. As the cost of the restoration had been met by Brick by Brick, it was questioned whether this money should continue to be allocated for cultural use. In response it was highlighted that the sale of the Riesco Collection in 2013 had a significant negative impact for culture in the borough, which it was only now starting to recover from. The money raised by the sale had not been ring fenced for cultural activity and had instead been transferred to the General Fund by the previous Administration and used for the wider Capital Programme.

At the conclusion of the item the Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for his attendance at the meeting and his engagement with the questions of the Committee.

### **Conclusions**

Following discussion of the report, the Committee reached the following conclusions:-

1. That the portfolio is particularly cross cutting in nature and has interdependencies across the majority of Cabinet portfolios.
2. That there are examples of where more co-ordination between portfolios would be of benefit, such as the use of inappropriate vehicles by other council services in the borough's parks.
3. That while the evolving cultural programme in the Borough was to be commended for promoting Croydon's youth culture, the programme should also be inclusive of all ages and celebrate the many historical aspects of culture in Croydon.
4. That the trailing of extended library opening hours was to be commended and likely to provide a beneficial study environment at evening and weekends.
5. That the previous recommendation requesting a review of the Council's by-laws in parks had not been undertaken and remained outstanding.

### **Recommendations**

The Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport that:-

1. That the musical heritage trial be developed to include Croydon's rich musical heritage in the genres of rock, R&B and folk music.

2. That the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources and the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport expedite the review of by-laws in the Council's park and open spaces.
3. That the Cabinet Member be asked to provide an update in 12 months on the success of the implementation of the Library Plus programme.
4. That the use of Council vehicles in its parks be limited to vehicles that are appropriate and sensitive to the park environment.

13/20 **Pre-Decision Scrutiny: Proposed General Fund Revenue Budget 2020/21**

The Committee considered a report, introduced by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, Councillor Simon Hall, which set out the Administration's budget proposals for 2020-21. During the introduction to the report the following points were noted:-

- It was a challenging environment for the local government finance, with continuing austerity and uncertainty over the longer term funding from central government beyond 2020-21 making it difficult to plan financially.
- The Council will receive a £1,000,000 increase to its grant, which equates to a real term cut when balanced against the ending of the London Business Rates pilot.
- Despite cross party support across the Council, the cost for supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) had not been addressed and was costing the Council £9,000,000 each year due to a shortfall in funding from the Home Office.
- Protecting front line services continued to be a priority in the budget which a focus on new, innovative digital ways of work to deliver improvements for residents.
- Through sound financial management the budget for 2020-21 increases the contingency and also looks to invest £5,000,000 in to Council reserves, along with continued investment over the next few years.
- The budget looks to ensure that services are delivered efficiently through partnership and localities based work. Funding will also be sought from partners in areas where there is considered to be an imbalance.
- Work will start in the next few weeks on monitoring both the budget and the action required to deliver the budget.

Following the introduction by the Cabinet Member, the Committee was given the opportunity to ask questions on the information provided.

The Committee learnt that although there had been periods in the past when the support provided by the Council for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) had been fully funded by the Home Office, due to the way funding was currently administered that was not presently the case and had not been for a number of years. However, the fact that there was cross party support on the Council and from the local MPs on this issue would help to make the case for fair funding for Croydon. Recent conversations with the government about UASC funding had been encouraging, leading to optimism that the current funding shortfall of approximately £9,000,000 per year would be addressed.

The Committee gave consideration to the fees and charges for Council services, noting that there would be an increase to pay and display parking charges for the first time in a number of years, with care being taken to ensure these increases were fair and equitable. The full year effect of implementing the emissions based charging for residents parking permits and increased Building Control charges had also been factored into the budget.

The Committee questioned whether there would be any contract variations with the Council's waste collection providers, Veolia, and learnt that there had been an increase in the cost of the contract of £2,500,000 which had been factored into the budget. The cost had increased due to the growth in the number of properties in the borough and also other contractual issues that had been resolved following negotiations through the South London Waste Partnership.

The Committee questioned the priorities used when setting the capital programme for 2020-21, with it advised that it was focussed on areas outlined in both the Labour Party Manifesto and the Corporate Plan. These included asset investment particularly the provision of new housing, ensuring that the requisite school places were available including the provision of a new Special Educational Needs (SEN) school in New Addington and renewing facilities such as roads and investing in sustainability.

The Committee learned that there continued to be uncertainty over the Government's plans for fair funding for local authorities, which meant it was challenging to plan for the longer term. Once there was additional clarity, an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy would be produced. It was hoped that the outcome from the Fair Funding Review would be positive for Croydon given that the current level of funding provided was based on out of date census data which was no longer reflective of the borough.

In response to a request for clarity about the focus on high risk and high spend services, it was advised that these were predominately people focussed services such as Adults and Children Social Care and SEN Transport, which were demand driven and as such required additional focus to manage potential risks. Monitoring of these service would focus on both what was being delivered and how it was delivered.

As there had been different programmes aimed at delivering savings over a number of years it was questioned whether these had achieved their targets.



It was advised that recent efficiency programmes had achieved significant savings for the Council and had also freed up floor space in Bernard Weatherill House which had been used to deliver a rental income of £4,000,000 per year. The savings delivered had been in the region of £10,000,000, which had enabled the level of reserves to be maintained, unlike many other local authorities.

As there had been an increasing amount of partnership working between the Council and Croydon Health Service NHS Trust over the past few years, the Committee questioned whether it was likely that there would be increasing amounts of partnership working going forward. In response it was highlighted that the One Croydon Alliance had been successful in delivering better outcomes for over 65's in the borough and saving money, as such it was likely to lead more opportunities in this area. These included plans being developed to expand the One Croydon Alliance to all age care and the recent creation of the Health and Care Board which would see even closer integration between health and social care. In doing this it was essential to ensure that savings were shared across health and social care and as such negotiations were underway with health to address the current imbalance.

The Committee welcomed the inclusion in the budget for 2020-21 of £5,000,000 being added to the Council's reserves to address concern about the current level which was perceived to be low. However it was acknowledged that the budget would need to be carefully managed throughout the year to ensure that it could be achieved.

As the budget included savings within Children Services, the Committee questioned how this would be managed without service delivery being negatively affected. Reassurance was given that none of the savings identified within the Children Service would involve any of the permanent staff and a range of performance indicators would be used to ensure any savings did not undermine service delivery.

The Committee asked the Council's Section 151 Officer whether the budget proposed met the requirements for a sound budget. It was confirmed that this was the case, although it was highlighted that there would be a need for continual monitoring of the budget throughout the year along with the agility to respond quickly to any challenges as they arose and address accordingly.

The Committee also sought reassurance that the budget monitoring process would be improved to ensure that issues were quickly responded to and managed appropriately during the year, lessening the need to find in-year savings. It was confirmed that extra resource would be put into finance, including business analytics, to ensure that effective monthly monitoring could take place and forecasting was more accurate. A greater level of monitoring would also be put places in the previously mentioned high risk areas, looking at underlying actions as well as headline budgets.

At the conclusion of the item the Chair thanked both the Cabinet Member and the Section 151 Officer for their attendance at the meeting and their engagement with the questions of the Committee.

## **Conclusions**

At the conclusion of the item the Committee reached the following conclusions:-

1. That the Council was continuing to face significant pressure on its budget position.
2. Supported the proposed increase in balance which will help manage financial uncertainty.
3. That the Council's ability to accurately forecast and monitor the delivery of required savings would be crucial to achieving the budget in the 2020/21 financial year.

## **Recommendation**

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources that an update on the bedding in of the Council's new financial monitoring systems be provided in September 2020.

## **14/20 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This motion was not required.

The meeting ended at 9.35 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:**

## Scrutiny & Overview Committee

Meeting held on Tuesday, 25 February 2020 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillors Sean Fitzsimons (Chair), Robert Ward (Vice-Chair), Leila Ben-Hassel (Deputy Chair), Jeet Bains, Jerry Fitzpatrick and Joy Prince

**Also Present:** Councillors Hamida Ali & David Wood

### PART A

#### 15/20 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interest made at the meeting.

#### 16/20 **Urgent Business (if any)**

The Chair advised the Committee that a vacancy had arisen on the Streets, Environment & Homes Sub Committee. It was proposed that Councillor Caragh Skipper would fill the vacancy.

The Committee **resolved** that Councillor Caragh Skipper be appointed as a member of the Streets, Environment & Homes Sub Committee.

#### 17/20 **Question Time: Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon and Communities**

The Committee considered a report together with a presentation delivered at the meeting from the Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon & Communities, Councillor Hamida Ali, which provided an overview of the key activities within the Safer Croydon & Communities portfolio over the past year.

A copy of the presentation can be found at the following link:-

<https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s21167/Cabinet%20Member%20for%20Safer%20Croydon%20Communities%20-%20Presentation.pdf>

Following the presentation the Committee was given the opportunity to question the Cabinet Member. The first question concerned the grants awarded to community and voluntary groups and whether they were audited to ensure that the proposed benefits were being delivered. It was confirmed that the performance and delivery of schemes in receipt of Council funding were monitored. The level of monitoring would be proportionate to the size of the grant awarded, with those awarded larger grants subject to more rigorous monitoring.

It was noted that the Resilience team had an excellent reputation for responding to emergencies. Given the current risk presented by the Corona Virus, it was questioned whether there were plans in place for responding to a pandemic. It was advised that at present the Director of Public Health was the lead for the virus and was responsible for providing public advice. The Resilience team had a supporting role and had updated the Council's pandemic plan, but it had not yet been activated at this stage.

It was confirmed that out of the £8,000,000 allocated over three years through the Community Grants Fund, 10% was being held back for the Emerging Needs Fund and £100,000 per annum for the Small Grants Fund.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that she worked closely with the Community Safety leads at neighbouring boroughs to provide support for each other and share ideas. The Council also worked closely with other boroughs on a day to day basis on operational matters such as domestic homicide reviews and was in the process of launching a domestic violence scheme with Sutton and Bromley.

In regard to the funding allocated for youth engagement, it was questioned how this was split between delivering current activities and setting up the structure to deliver the long term vision. It was confirmed that it was important to have a balance of both. Funds were being invested into setting up the long term vision, but there were immediate issues that needed a response. A key aim was to influence practice both across the Council and of others in the partnership to support a more preventative approach.

In response to a question about the availability of grassroots funding it was advised that some of the changes made to the Community Fund had been made to improve access for grassroots organisations. As a result the main challenge was now having to adjudicate the many worthy applications due to oversubscription to the fund.

The Committee welcomed the confirmation that a social worker was in post specifically to deal with the issue of female genital mutilation (FGM). It was noted that there was a wide range of understanding of the issue and questioned whether consideration had been given to undertaking an investigation to improve understanding. It was confirmed that having one of eight FGM clinics in the country located in Croydon allowed facilitated collaboration amongst partners on the issues involved. An FGM Steering Group had also been set up to bring partners together to share expertise. It was suggested that there may be a role for the Scrutiny and Overview Committee to feed into the upcoming review of the FGM Strategy during 2020-21.

Given the limited amount of funding available, it was questioned whether the Council worked with other grant providers to pool its funds and whether there was support available for community based organisations to help them grow their funding base. It was confirmed that the Council had worked with other voluntary sector funds when commissioning the Community Fund, but it was acknowledged that further work could be done in this area. It was also

confirmed that there was a dedicated officer at the Council whose role it was to assist the voluntary sector with accessing funding streams.

The work with domestic violence perpetrators and the implementation of the trauma based approach with schools was welcomed, but it was noted that these had been funded through external sources. As the issues involved were entrenched it was agreed that it would be essential to be able to carry on this work once the funding streams had ceased.

At the conclusion of the item the Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for the information provided and her engagement with the questions of the Committee.

### **Information Requests**

It was agreed that further information on the Council's ability to remove abandoned vehicles kept on private land would be provided for the Committee.

### **Conclusions**

Following discussion of the report, the Committee concluded that the progress made on sharing pots of funding was to be welcomed, with it agreed that given the limited funds available that it would be important to encourage further work in this area in order to maximise the funding available for the voluntary and community sector.

### **Recommendations**

The Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon and Communities that further work be undertaken on the pooling of grant funding with other partners in order to maximise the amount available for local community and voluntary organisation.

18/20

### **Review of Safer Croydon Partnership & Violence Reduction Network**

The Committee considered a presentation delivered at the meeting from the Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon & Communities, Councillor Hamida Ali, along with information provided in the report for the prior item, on the Safer Croydon Partnership (SCP) and the Violence Reduction Network (VRN). The Committee was asked to review the information provided and question the representatives in attendance with a view to reaching conclusions on the performance of both the SCP and VRN. In addition to the Cabinet Member the following representatives were also in attendance at the meeting:-

- Chief Superintendent Dave Stringer – Metropolitan Police
- Superintendent Andy Britton – Metropolitan Police
- Andrew Brown – BME Forum

- Sarah Haywood – Director of the Violence Reduction Network
- Christopher Rowney – Head of the Violence Reduction Network
- Gavin Handford – Director of Policy and Partnerships
- Velvet Dibley – National Management Trainee

The presentations delivered by the Cabinet Member can be viewed on the following links:-

Safer Croydon Partnership

<https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s21168/Safer%20Croydon%20Partnership%20-%20Presentation.pdf>

Violence Reduction Network

<https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s21169/Violence%20Reduction%20Network%20-%20Presentation.pdf>

Following the presentations the representatives from the Police and the BME Forum were given an opportunity to provide their own insight into the work of SCP and VRN. During the introduction by the Police the following was noted:-

- The SCP was considered to be a strong partnership with representation from both statutory agencies and the local communities. Many of the problems being encountered were long terms ones, such as the willingness to carry weapons, the congregation of young people in the town centre and the changing night time economy.
- The Police Commissioner defined how the Metropolitan Police approached law enforcement on violence.
- Croydon was fortunate that it had one of the lowest levels of knife crime in London, but other pressures still remained, with the theft of mobile phones in particular being a critical issue.
- The Police sat at both the acute and long term end of the public health approach to violent crime reduction, working closely with partners such as the youth offending team and others to prevent reoffending.
- The Government had committed to delivering an uplift in police numbers. In the first year this would be focussed towards tackling violence and the drugs market, which would result in increased visibility in the town centre. There would be an emphasis on having a friendly but firm presence to ensure people felt safe.
- In the longer term the Police were investing in schools to ensure pupils in Croydon felt safe, with a meeting due to be held with head teachers to discuss the issue.

The BME Forum highlighted to the Committee that it was good to have the Director of the Violence Reduction Network in place. It was also good from a community perspective that everyone was working together and it was their view that the partnership was working.

Following the presentation the Committee questioned the representatives on the performance of the SCP and VRN. The first question related to the trauma informed approach and what could be done to persuade schools to adopt this approach. In response it was advised that feedback from schools had been both positive and constructive with many already dealing with the issues involved on a daily basis. It felt to be important that there was an open discussion on the best method for using the trauma informed approach rather than the Police advising schools what to do. It was highlighted that £1,200,000 of funding had recently been awarded through the Mayor of London's Young Londoners Fund to provide support for school leaders in developing this work stream. Issues often arose following school exclusions, which meant that it was important for the Police to work with schools prior to any exclusions to try to find a positive resolution.

It was agreed that there needed to be a meaningful evaluation developed to be able to judge the success of the trauma informed approach. It was highlighted that the need for meaningful evaluation was one of the key aspects of the public health approach, with analysis needed to identify shortfalls that needed to be addressed.

It was confirmed that an approach for trauma informed training had been developed and would be rolled out across the borough. Schools who had already started using this approach had found they were saving money, which would hopefully encourage others to follow the approach.

As the sharing of data was crucial to success of the partnership, it was questioned how good the data sharing arrangements were. It was confirmed that there were existing arrangements in place such as the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub that provided the opportunity to share data. The sharing of community data between the Council and the Police was considered to be good with monthly meetings of the partners focussed on antisocial behaviour, which reviewed different data sets. There was more of an issue sharing data with other organisations such as the Fire and Ambulance Services which needed to be resolved. It was highlighted that incidents not being reported was a more significant concern with work required to investigate how people could be encouraged to report crimes.

It was queried whether there was sufficient resource available to be able to process the longitudinal data needed to properly inform the work of the SCP and VRN. In response it was highlighted that a senior analyst had recently been employed by the Council to help direct the use of data, but given the large amount of data available this still needed to be prioritised.

As a follow up it was questioned whether the scope for involving academic institutions such as universities to assist with research and data analysis had

been explored. It was acknowledged that this could be an option, but it would usually require funding to undertake any detailed work.

In response to a question about the importance of being located in the local community, it was advised that most of the issues occurred in Croydon town centre. The Chief Superintendent went on regular walkabouts with colleagues to meet with local businesses and residents to gain an understanding of the communities' views. Good quality engagement with schools was also critical to understanding why violence was taking place amongst young people and to establish where pupils felt secure.

It was acknowledged that the promotion of community engagement events by the Police could always be better, but in certain instances the need for speed prevented the wide spread promotion of events.

It was questioned whether the Police were provided with the right level of training to deal with domestic violence issues or to support people with mental health issues. In response it was confirmed that police officers received an enormous amount of training including on domestic violence and mental health issues. However, it was important to remember that the Police were not experts on mental health issues and as such worked closely with the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) to use their expertise during incidents to assess the situation from a mental health perspective, reducing the need for sectioning.

In response to a question about how to judge the performance of the SCP it was advised that crime statistics would be a good indicator as it was unlikely that there would be a sustained decrease in crime without activity to deliver improvement.

As the Government had announced extra funding for policing, it was queried how this would benefit the local area. It was advised that in recent years police funding had been challenging with the number of police in London at its lowest level since 2003 and even though increased funding had for recruitment had been announced, training new officers took time. Furthermore although additional funding had been announced for the Police, partners continued to face funding challenges and as such it was essential to explore creative solutions on how to keep young people out of trouble. It was acknowledged that although the government supported the use of the public health approach to violence reduction, long term funding had not been forthcoming with authorities often having to compete against each other for the limited amount of funding available.

It was noted that a key aspect of the public health approach was evaluating projects to establish what does and does not work, as such it was questioned whether Croydon was following this approach. In response it was advised that although the public health approach was still in the early stages of development, it was essential to have a robust framework of evaluation in place to ensure that interventions were achieving their aims. The Committee agreed that any evaluation framework would need to include a system of ranking to demonstrate why projects had been chosen instance, outline the



key outcomes and a measurable evaluation on whether these have been achieved.

It was confirmed that a Community Safety Strategy was in the process of being developed, which would include high level objectives that were SMART and measurable. The strategy would include provision for setting up project boards to lead on specific areas. The Committee agreed that it would be keen to have the opportunity to feed into the development of the strategy at the appropriate time.

The involvement of local communities was a key aspect of the VRN, with a Network Community Navigators scheme being developed which would work with people in the community to identify those who may be at risk. Community representatives were also involved with other areas of the Network, attending workshops and participating in the Trauma Informed Working Group. It was highlighted that it would be difficult to develop the Network without the community being involved in its co-production.

It was confirmed that the introduction of new software for the VRN had included the input from the Police, health and children services to ensure that it would be able to work across the different agencies involved.

It was noted that the lack of support for victims of domestic violence living in the private rented sector in comparison to the social rented sector was an area of weakness, with a Pan London agreement for secure tenancies available for those in social rented properties. Support available included the Sanctuary scheme which helped to strengthen security for victims of domestic abuse staying in their own home and there was also a number of refuge places provided by the Council. The Council had signed up to a pledge to do all it could to prevent domestic violence, with an ongoing dialogue between the Family Justice Centre and Council Services on specific issues.

It was confirmed that at present there were eight vacancies out of 35 posts in the Neighbourhood Safety Team, who were responsible for monitoring and reporting antisocial behaviour in parks.

At the conclusion of the item the Chair thanked the attendees for giving up their time to attend the Committee meeting and providing their insight into the Safer Croydon Partnership and the Violence Reduction Network.

### **Information Requests**

The Committee agreed to request further information on Safer Neighbourhood Boards in the borough, particularly how often they were held and attendance.

### **Conclusions**

Following discussion of the report, the Committee reached the following conclusions:-

1. While the Committee welcomed confirmation that schools in the borough were engaged with the Trauma Informed Approach, it was

agreed that further evidence would be needed to provide reassurance that there was ownership of the trauma informed approach amongst the senior leadership of schools in the borough.

2. The Committee welcomed confirmation that the Annual Strategic Assessments were due to be published on the Council's website.
3. The Committee agreed that the Government's current approach of providing short term funding for schemes, when the public health approach was a long term project was unhelpful.
4. The Committee agreed that it was essential to have quantifiable measurements such as an Evaluation Framework in place to allow qualified judgements to be made on the success of schemes commissioned by the Violence Reduction Network in delivering their intended outcomes.
5. The Committee welcomed the move to a more integrated approach to data sharing with partners as this was key to informing the work of the Violence Reduction Network and it was agreed that options for funding the expansion of work on data analysis needed to be explored.
6. The Committee agreed that the use of data should be ingrained throughout the work of the Violence Reduction Network and looked forward to seeing how this was being implemented when the performance of the Network was next reviewed.
7. The Committee acknowledged that the Safer Croydon Partnership seemed to be working well, but agreed that it was difficult to reach any concrete conclusions without quantifiable data being provided to demonstrate that outcomes were being achieved.

## **Recommendations**

The Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon and Communities that:-

1. When the Committee next reviews the work of the Violence Reduction Network it is requested that evidence is provided to demonstrate the ownership of the trauma informed approach amongst the senior leadership of schools in the borough.
2. An evaluation framework needs to be developed to allow quantifiable judgement on the success of schemes commissioned by the Violence Reduction Network in delivering their intended outcomes.
3. Options for expanding the Violence Reduction Network's capacity for data analysis should be explored.
4. When the Committee next reviews the work of the Violence Reduction Network evidence should be provided to demonstrate how the use of data has informed the work of the Network.

5. Consideration should be given to what quantifiable data on outcomes can be provided when the Safer Croydon Partnership is next reviewed by the Committee to allow a judgement to be made on the performance of the Partnership.

19/20 **Scrutiny Work Programme 2019-20**

The Committee received a report for its approval setting out its work programme for those for the three Scrutiny Sub-Committees namely:-

- Children and Young People
- Health and Social Care
- Streets, Environment and Homes

It was noted that Equalities Strategy coming to the next meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 7 April 2020. The work programme for the Children and Young People Sub-Committee had changed with the safeguarding item moving to their April meeting. It was also still to be confirmed whether a climate change item would be included on the Streets, Environment and Homes Sub-Committee agenda for their meeting in April or later in the year.

The Committee **resolved** to note the work programme.

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

This motion was not required.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:** .....

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## Scrutiny Health & Social Care Sub-Committee

Meeting held on Tuesday, 10 March 2020 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillors Sean Fitzsimons (Chair), Andy Stranack (Vice-Chair), Patsy Cummings, Clive Fraser, Andrew Pelling, Scott Roche and Edwina Morris (for Gordon Kay)

**Apologies:** Gordon Kay – Healthwatch Co-optee

### PART A

#### 8/20 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

#### 9/20 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interest made at the meeting.

#### 10/20 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

#### 11/20 **Croydon Council Emergency Preparedness**

The Committee considered a report which provided an overview of the Council's emergency preparedness and in particular its readiness to respond to the potential threat from Covid-19. The Director of Public Health, Rachel Flowers, introduced the report, during which the following was noted:-

- It was highlighted to the Sub-Committee that the situation surrounding Covid-19 was rapidly developing, with the update provided at the meeting based on the latest information available as of 10 March 2020.

**(NOTE:** The information provided at the meeting has since changed. The latest updates and guidance on Covid-19 can be found on the Public Health England website – <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

- Croydon Council had a good reputation for responding to emergencies such as the riots in 2011 and flooding in 2014. The Council had also provided support for other London boroughs dealing with emergencies such as the Grenfell Tower fire.

- Covid-19 was a new strain of the Corona Virus, with instances first recorded in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The Corona Virus was common throughout the world, but Covid-19 was a new strain, which in most cases had mild effects.
- Both NHS and Public Health England were well placed to deal with the outbreak of the new virus, with NHS 111 providing online guidance on Covid-19 to advise when treatment was needed.
- In order to prevent the spread of the virus it was recommended that anyone displaying the symptoms of Covid-19 should call 111 rather than visit their GP or local hospital, as it was passed on through close contact.
- It was important for people to follow public health advice, which was to wash their hands for 20 seconds, with hand sanitiser considered to be not as effective. It was also important to use tissues for cough and sneezes, and to avoid touching your eyes and mouth. The risk from Covid-19 remained low, but it was important to follow the guidance to minimise the risk of the virus spreading.
- To date there had been 373 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in the UK, with one in Croydon.
- One of the key challenges for Public Health England was how the virus was reported in the media, with a need to provide reassurance for the public.

It was confirmed that the Croydon Health Service NHS Trust (CHS) had been testing patients displaying symptoms of Covid-19 for the past three weeks at the Croydon University Hospital. Testing had now been extended to the community to help contain the virus. The facilities at the hospital could be upscaled as required should it be needed in the coming months.

It was highlighted that there had been a similar experience in 2009 with Swine Flu, with the guidance focussed on ensuring a measured response. As the virus had only been identified in December 2019, healthcare professionals were still learning how to identify and treat Covid-19, with the genome for the virus recently mapped by Public Health England. At the moment there was a reasonable level of confidence that the systems were in place should there be an escalation in the number of cases.

It was questioned whether there was medical evidence to demonstrate that Covid-19 was as serious a threat as regular seasonal flu and why there seemed to be such a significant media focus on the virus. In response it was highlighted that a key difference was that there was an inoculation for seasonal flu. New infectious diseases were discovered all the time, but in this instance it had captured the attention of the media.

In response to a question on the communication with care homes and home carers about Covid-19, it was confirmed that vulnerable people would be in

contact with Council staff enabling the spread of the message on the importance of good hygiene. Public Health England was providing the guidance in a variety of different formats including sign language, an easy read version and a version specifically targeted towards rough sleepers. Further guidance for carers was due to be published in the coming days.

It was confirmed that if there was an instance where a carer needed to self-isolate to prevent the potential spread of the virus, the Council would provide respite care. At present carers were not being specifically tested, with the same process in place for everyone.

It was highlighted that there was a multi-agency response to communication on Covid-19, which included the community and voluntary sector. It was also highlighted that two recent messages had been sent to Councillors to provide reassurance, however it was important for the level of communication to be proportional, with the risk of heightening concern with too frequent communication. The Sub-Committee agreed that it would be useful to share the dashboard, which was update daily, with Members to keep them informed of the latest situation.

In response to a question about which hospital you would be admitted to should you be suffering from complications from Covid-19, it was confirmed that to date specialist units had been used. Should the situation escalate and capacity in these units was exceeded, then staff in other units who were trained would provide support.

A question submitted to the Sub-Committee by a member of the public asked what plans were in place in the event of a large outbreak, for ensuring social and healthcare services could be maintained both at the hospital and within the community, specifically in relation to any potential closures of GP practices or large numbers of healthcare workers ill or isolated at home?

In response it was confirmed that there were business continuity plans in place for all GP practices and across the primary care networks, with planning taking place on how to safeguard staff who were considered to be at a higher risk of infection. Alternative ways of working were also being explored including the possibility of GPs working from home using video consultations.

The hospital offered a range of different services that could be impacted if there was a large outbreak of the virus. Should there be staffing issues due to either infection or caring responsibilities then in the first instance the possibility of temporary replacements would be explored. Should this not be possible then consideration would be given to stopping some services to free up capacity, as it was essential to be flexible in responding to the outbreak.

The Council had reviewed its business continuity plans and tested different scenarios. Staff could be redirected if required and there was already flexibility in terms of the majority of staff being able to work from home, with anyone displaying the symptoms of Covid-19 encouraged to do so. Guidance had also been provided to contractors who delivered services on behalf of the Council. At present the Council was hold twice weekly meetings of a

Coordination Group to review all the issues and risks involved and direct a response accordingly.

In response to a question about the capacity of the intensive care unit at the hospital to deal with an influx of cases, it was confirmed that at present there was fifteen beds available, but if needed it would be possible to double the amount of beds at the hospital. It was highlighted that the most recently published study on Covid-19 had provided more guidance on supporting patients before their symptoms became severe enough to need intensive care and as such it was likely that as more was learnt about the virus less intensive care treatment would be needed.

Given that Croydon had the highest number of care homes of any borough in London, it was questioned how the potential risks for this sector were being managed. It was confirmed that regular updates were being sent to care homes, there was a Provider Forum to help disseminate information and networking was being encouraged to enable providers to support each other.

As mentioned above, there was a multi-agency communications response being deployed to ensure that a consistent message was provided to the public and to combat any misinformation that was being spread through social media. The Government was also working with social media providers to ensure the promotion of the correct guidance on their platforms as well.

In response to a question about whether the local health service was in a position to cope financially with a potential outbreak, it was confirmed that the response was being coordinated by Public Health England with procedures in place to capture costs which normally in emergency situations could be reclaimed.

In light of the Mayoral and Greater London Authority elections in May 2020, it was questioned whether the Council should be encouraging postal voting. It was advised that at present all options were being considered, but it would be for the Electoral Commission and the Government to direct any variation to normal electoral procedures.

Although the current fatality rate was 1% it was highlighted that as Covid-19 was a new virus only the seriously ill tended to become known to the healthcare system, with the number of people having a milder form unknown. At present the infection rate was 35% with a fatality rate of 1%. However this was likely to reduce as more became known about how best to treat the condition.

It was confirmed that CHS already held regular meetings with undertakers, bereavement services and mortuaries which would continue.

The importance of taking up the immunisation against seasonal flu was highlighted, as there were still significant numbers who opted not to.

At the conclusion of the item the Chair thanked the officers for their attendance at the meeting, noting that the Sub-Committee had been



reasonably reassured that local services were in a good position to respond to any potential outbreak.

### **Information Request**

The Sub-Committee would like to request that the dashboard providing information on Covid-19 and any other appropriate updates be shared with Members to keep them informed of the situation as it developed.

### **Conclusions**

Following discussion of the report, the Sub-Committee reached the following conclusions, whilst acknowledging that Croydon is in the mid of a rapidly evolving situation, and some may be time-limited in terms of their relevance:-

1. Having listened to the evidence, the Sub-Committee was reassured by the current level of communication, the co-ordination of effort and that robust Business Continuity Plans were in place.
2. It was agreed that Croydon public services were as well prepared as they could be considering the current circumstances, and that there was capacity within the system to ramp up the response should infection rates increase.
3. The Sub-Committee recognised that as a trusted provider of information, the Council and local health services played a key role in keeping people informed and supported the key messages that were relayed during the meeting. However it was recognised that people also wanted reassurance that Croydon could cope should there be a large scale outbreak and would encourage more information to be provided on Croydon's ability to ramp up its response.
4. The Sub-Committee considered there to be a risk to Croydon's public sector finances should the Government not fund the additional costs required.
5. The Sub-Committee was concerned that despite the information being provided by national and local health organisations, misinformation continued to be circulated within communities and through social media, and welcomed any steps to counteract this.
6. The Sub-Committee was particularly interested in how public services were supporting those residents in high risk groups, such as the very elderly, those with health issues, those living in care homes, or who are receiving domiciliary care and reliant on carers for support.
7. The Sub-Committee agreed that further re-assurance would be sought about those who received support from private care providers or lived in private care homes that recommended standards of care and cleanliness were being maintained over the course of the outbreak for these vulnerable group of residents.

8. Given the rapidly developing situation, the Sub-Committee agreed that an update on the situation would be needed at their next meeting on 21 April 2020.

### **Recommendations**

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to Leader of the Council and Cabinet-

- 1) Ensures Croydon Council continues to provide information and support to the people of Croydon during these difficult times.
- 2) Communication from Croydon Council, especially the use of social media, be ramped up to provide reassurance to the public on Croydon ability to cope with a large-scale outbreak of Covid-19, and should resource this increased level of communication accordingly.
- 3) That there should be regular updates to all members on how the Council and local health services are coping, including when services are being change or stopped.
- 4) The Council should not hesitate to request additional funding from Central Government to ensure that essential services are maintained, and vulnerable residents are protected.
- 5) Consider how democratic accountability continues through this time.

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Families, Health & Social Care that:-

1. Evidence be provided to the Sub-Committee to give reassurance that public and private care providers are maintaining standards of care and cleanliness that reduces exposure to infection, to minimise the potential risk of an outbreak amongst vulnerable residents in the borough, especially in Croydon Care Homes and those receiving domiciliary care.

### 12/20 **Update on Urgent & Emergency Care**

The Committee considered a report which provided an overview on the current performance of the urgent and emergency care department at Croydon University Hospital. The report was introduced by the Chief Operating Officer for Croydon Health Services NHS Trust (CHS), Lee McPhail. During the introduction the following was noted.

- The report provided an overview of the outcomes from a high impact Improvement Programme that originally commenced twelve months ago and was targeted towards improving the responsiveness of urgent and emergency care for patients from the front door and throughout the service,

- The programme had been developed in response to a particularly difficult January and February 2019 and had seen month on month improvement in most areas throughout the summer and autumn, while also highlighting key areas of weakness such as the length of stay for patients.
- As a result, performance on the number of patients having to stay in hospital longer than 3 weeks had notably improved, with the service at one point being the most improved in London for this indicator.
- CHS had been successful in its bid for the AEC Accelerator Programme which would deliver further improvement for same day emergency care, with an increased number of patients being treated in an ambulatory environment rather than in the emergency department.
- The winter period had seen some of the progress made go backwards, with a difficult December and January. This was in part to pressures at other hospitals having a knock on effect on Croydon University Hospital. As a result the additional bed capacity available at the hospital had been opened for an extended period.
- Initial data for February indicated that progress was starting to be made again, with the length of patients stays improving.
- It had been indicated by the Government that the target waiting time of four hours for emergency care was likely to remain in place, along with other targets focused on the quality of care to patients.
- Two of the key areas going forward were to ensure that the hospital was in a position to meet the new clinical standards and continuing to drive down the length of patient stay. Another part of the national mandate was for hospitals in normal circumstances to be operating at 92% capacity.

Following up from the introduction the Sub-Committee questioned how whether the capacity target was achievable. It was acknowledged that this would be a challenge for most hospitals, with Croydon University Hospital's own capacity often nearer to 98%.

Regarding the performance data provided on London Ambulance Service handover times of over 30 minutes, which were currently above 20%, it was questioned whether the 5% target was achievable. It was advised that for the majority of the past year the figures were closer to the 5% target with the performance at Croydon University Hospital one of the most improved in London. However during the winter period there had been issues with congestion in the emergency unit and also spikes in attendance that had increased handover times.

A key area of focus was the whole pathway through the healthcare system as a means of alleviating pressure on urgent and emergency care. For instance the uptake of GPs appointments available on Sundays had increased from

20% to approximately 60%. Other initiatives such as having paramedics working in the emergency department were being trialled, with the possibility of having physio therapists available as well being explored.

The Sub-Committee noted from the information provided that there seemed to be a constant level of pressure on services throughout the year, with it confirmed that this was the case, although the acuity profile of patients changed throughout the year with sicker patients in the winter bringing different pressures.

Although the number of seasonal flu case had been lower, it had still been challenging as these patients tended to slow the emergency pathway due to the need to mitigate against the risk of infection. The use of rapid screening had improved over the past year, with the best course of action being to treat the patient at the hospital and for them to recover at home.

In response to a question about hospital staff taking up the flu vaccination, it was confirmed that the current rate was 79% against an 80% target. The number of staff having the vaccination earlier in the flu season had increased this year which helped to make a difference. The ongoing work to encourage people to take up the flu vaccination was welcomed by the Sub-Committee, particularly as statistics showed that 26,000 people died from the virus last year.

It was highlighted that anecdotally there seemed to have been a number of instances where patients had their regular appointments cancelled and it was questioned whether this had been planned to increase capacity at the hospital. It was confirmed that there was not a policy in place at the moment, however this could change should there be a need to create additional capacity to deal with emergency pressures.

In summarising the item, the Chair acknowledged that the improvement work being delivered at the hospital was reassuring, but felt that the new clinical guidance would provide additional challenges. It was recognised that the ongoing integration programme would also lead to improvements and as such it would be important to revisit the performance of urgent and emergency care at Croydon University Hospital later in the year.

At the conclusion of the item the Chair thanked the officers for their attendance at the meeting.

## **Conclusions**

Following discussion of the report, the Sub-Committee reached the following conclusions:-

1. The Sub-Committee welcomed the update on the provision of urgent and emergency care, in particular the outcomes from the improvement programme that were making a difference to the level of care provided to patients.

2. The Sub-Committee recognised that it would significant challenge to meet the 92% capacity target, in light of the fact that the hospital had been operating at nearer to 98% of its capacity.
3. The Sub-Committee agreed that it would continue to review the performance of urgent and emergency care periodically to ensure that the improvement programme continued to deliver improved services and to monitor the impact from the Integration Programme.
4. The Sub-Committee also agreed that a review of the extended length of stay for patients and health pathways would be considered for inclusion in their work programme for 2020-21.

13/20 **Croydon's Integration Journey - update**

The Sub-Committee considered a report which provided an update on the ongoing health integration programme in the borough. The report was introduced by the Joint Croydon Health Services Chief Executive and Place-Based Leader for Health, Matthew Kershaw, during which it was confirmed that the next phase of the integration programme would commence from 1 April 2020.

From April the newly merged South West London Clinical Commissioning Group (SWCCG) would go live, along with the introduction of the Committee in Common between SWCCG and the Croydon Health Services NHS Trust (CHS) which would be chaired by Mike Bell and Agnelo Fernandes. There would also be a shadow Health and Care Board established, which would include representation from the care sector, prior to the launch of a full board in 2021. The introduction of the Health and Care Board would follow a phased approach with representatives from the Adults service involved in the first instance before expanding to include representation from Children services.

Reassurance was given to the Sub-Committee that GPs were on board with the proposals and were working closely with others to develop the integration programme as it progressed, building on the work of the One Croydon Alliance. It was also highlighted that approximately 80% of GP's in the borough had voted in support of the SWCCG proposals.

Regarding the ongoing consultation over the Improving Healthcare Together proposals that would affect acute care provision at Epsom, St Helier and Sutton Hospitals, it was highlighted that Healthwatch were planning to hold a community meeting later in March to discuss the potential impact upon people in Croydon.

The CHS response to the consultation had been based upon modelling of the three proposed options, which had indicated that should the acute site be located at St Helier the impact would be largely neutral, if it went to Sutton it would slightly reduce demand, with the biggest impact arising if the service was located at Epsom, which would require additional resources to build capacity at the Croydon University Hospital.

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It was confirmed that the Vice-Chair was due to attend a meeting of the South West London & Surrey Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Sub-Committee on Improving Healthcare Together and would be able to report back at the Sub-Committee's next meeting on 21 April 2020.

It was advised that the three aims of the Integration Programme were to deliver effective services that delivered outcomes for residents, efficient services that made the most of existing resources across health and care including the possibility of transferring resource between organisation, and ethical services that placed the NHS as an anchor institution influencing regeneration and tackling health inequalities in the borough.

In summarising the item the Chair noted that given the importance of the integration programme to the provision of both health and care in the borough, it was agreed that the Sub-Committee would need to continue to monitor its implementation throughout 2020-21 to ensure that the new governance arrangements were working and that improved outcomes for residents were being delivered.

### **Conclusion**

At the close of the discussion of this item the Sub-Committee reached the conclusion that given the importance of the Integration Programme to the provision of both health and care in the borough, it would be important to have a standing item at each meeting in 2020-21 to provide an update on the latest position on the implementation of the programme.

### **14/20 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This motion was not required.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:** .....