

Extraordinary Council Meeting

Meeting was held remotely on Thursday, 22 October 2020 at 6.00 pm.

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 Degrads, Jerry Fitzpatrick, 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, Oliver Lewis, Stephen Mann, Stuart Millson, Vidhi Mohan, Michael Neal, Tony Newman, Oni Oviri, Ian Parker, Andrew Pelling, Jason Perry, Helen Pollard, Tim Pollard, Joy Prince, Helen Redfern, Scott Roche, Pat Ryan, Paul Scott, Manju Shahul-Hameed, Andy Stranack, Gareth Streeter, Robert Ward, David Wood 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 Sean Fitzsimons, Toni Letts, Steve O'Connell, Badsha Quadir and Louisa Woodley

PART A

Before the formal business of the meeting commenced, in response to the death of Samuel Paty in Paris on 16 October 2020, Madam Mayor expressed solidarity with all those around the world who were subject to terror attacks. It was reiterated that the Council stood together with all its communities and would not let hate bring division. It was reaffirmed that there was pride in the Borough's many faiths, cultures and communities.

129/20 **Disclosure of Interests**

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

130/20 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

131/20 **Election of the Leader**

Madam Mayor informed Council that in accordance with Article 7.3 of the Constitution, the Extraordinary Council Meeting had been called within ten working days of receiving Councillor Newman's resignation to elect a new Leader of the Council. The new Leader was to be elected for the period up until the day of the Annual Council meeting following the local elections in May 2020.

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Collins to move a nomination for the election of the Leader of the Council. Councillor Collins thanked Madam Mayor and nominated Councillor Hamida Ali.

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Ben-Hassel to second the motion. Councillor Ben-Hassel thanked Madam Mayor and seconded the nomination of Councillor Hamida Ali for election as the Leader of the Council.

Madam Mayor invited all Members in favour of the motion to indicate their agreement verbally by saying yes. All Labour Group Members gave their assent.

Madam Mayor invited all Members not in favour of the motion to indicate their dissent verbally by saying no. All Conservative Group Members gave their dissent.

Before the vote was declared, Madam Mayor informed the meeting that there were 38 Labour Members and 27 Conservative Members in attendance at that point in the meeting.

On this basis Madam Mayor notified the meeting that the motion had been carried and congratulated Councillor Hamida Ali on having been elected as the Leader of the Council. Madam Mayor invited the Leader to make her first address to the Council.

In her address, the Leader described how it was an honour and privilege to be elected to lead the Council and to serve her own community. This built on the 20 years she had spent working in the public sector to advance equality. The Leader described how life chances of the local community could be supported through local and national democracy. Councillor Hamida Ali highlighted that she was the Council's first BAME Leader which was not only significant for those with the same background but also for the Borough.

Councillor Newman was recognised for his leadership during two Administrations including the aftermath of the Sandilands tram crash.

The scale of the challenge facing the Council was described as immense not just because of the pandemic but also because of the Council's financial situation. Further concerns were expected to come forward in the immediate

period following the meeting. These were expected to be shocking to staff and residents.

The Leader described her priority as being to retain local democratic control over the Borough which was not something that could be guaranteed. It was not known if the Council would be able to secure the agreement on the Croydon Renewal Plan from Government, whether a Section 114 Notice would need to be issued or if the Government would intervene.

Emphasis was placed on working together to achieve the systemic change required. It was noted that change was needed from all parties involved, including Cabinet, across the Chamber and in the officer core. It was stressed that every Member of Council had a role to play. The Leader was committed to working with all who had a stake in making Croydon an even better place for residents to live.

Keeping Croydon in local hands was described as the only way to ensure that the Borough would thrive. It was Members, with their local knowledge, who had the understanding of what was needed locally. Collective endeavour was required with all Members involved in tackling the challenges faced.

The Opposition was called on to consider what role it could play. That included achieving a fair support package from Government to enable a sustainable financial plan to be developed for the future. The Leader noted the letter received from the Leader of the Opposition. It was hoped a meeting with Councillor Perry might happen soon and for there to be a discussion of how the two political Groups might work constructively together.

The Leader announced her new Cabinet. This was noted to reflect the diversity of the Borough and be constructed in order to address the urgent challenges faced:

- i. Croydon Renewal: Councillor Stuart King
- ii. Resources & Financial Governance: Councillor Callton Young
- iii. Economic Recovery & Skills: Councillor Manju Shahul-Hameed
- iv. Sustainable Croydon: Councillor Muhammad Ali
- v. Children, Young People and Learning: Councillor Alisa Flemming
- vi. Families, Health & Social Care: Councillor Janet Campbell
- vii. Homes and Gateway Services: Councillor Jane Avis
- viii. Safety, Communities and Resilience: Councillor David Wood
- ix. Culture and Regeneration: Councillor Oliver Lewis

The Leader thanked those outgoing Cabinet Members for their service to the Borough.

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Collectively, her Administration would be resolutely focused on the changes needed for the benefit of the Borough and its residents. It would seek to be open, responsive, self-reflective, listening and it would seek to recognise where the Council had got things wrong.

The Administration would not forget the residents it had been elected to serve right across the Borough. Residents expected differences to be put aside to focus on delivering the changes they wanted to see. Despite the challenges, the Leader expressed her belief that Croydon's best days lay ahead of it and anticipated working with the whole Council in the coming years for these better days to be realised

132/20 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This item was not required.

The meeting ended at 6.12 pm

Signed:

Date: