

## **Council**

Meeting held on Monday, 13 December 2021 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

### **MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Sherwan Chowdhury (Chair);  
Councillor Felicity Flynn (Deputy Chair)

Councillors Hamida Ali, Muhammad Ali, Jade Appleton, Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel, Sue Bennett, Mike Bonello, Simon Brew, Jan Buttinger, Louis Carserides, Janet Campbell, Robert Canning, Richard Chatterjee, Chris Clark, Mary Croos, Jason Cummings, Mario Creatura, Nina Degrad, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Alisa Flemming, Clive Fraser, Maria Gatland, Lynne Hale, Patricia Hay-Justice, Maddie Henson, Simon Hoar, Yvette Hopley, Karen Jewitt, Humayun Kabir, Bernadette Khan, Stuart King, Oliver Lewis, Toni Letts, Stephen Mann, Stuart Millson, Michael Neal, Ian Parker, Andrew Pelling, Jason Perry, Tim Pollard, Badsha Quadir, Helen Redfern, Scott Roche, Manju Shahul-Hameed, Andy Stranack, David Wood, and Callton Young OBE

**Apologies:** Councillor Jamie Audsley

Before the start of the meeting the Mayor explained that there were 18 Councillors present in the Council Chamber, while all other Councillors had joined online.

For residents watching at home, The Mayor explained that only Councillors present in the Council Chamber were able to vote at this meeting. Members attending remotely were able to ask and answer questions, and to speak during debates.

The Mayor also asked everyone to note that he had agreed to bring Item 11, the Recommendations of Cabinet or Committees to Council for decision, earlier in the agenda. These were heard after Item 7, Council Debate Motions.

### **PART A**

34/21 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

35/21 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

36/21 **Announcements**

## **The Mayor**

The Mayor gave his announcements to the Members of Council.

The Mayor stated that it was tradition for all Councillors to be invited for a mince pie in the Town Hall following the December Full Council meeting. Unfortunately, due to the restrictions in place it was not possible to do this this year. If the restrictions allow us to meet in the New Year, then it was hoped that they could meet following the next Full Council meeting in January.

The Mayor then gave Council an update on recent Mayoral events that he had attended.

- The first round of the Mayoral Awards took place on 2 November, where he handed out 13 certificates.
- Just over £6000 was raised towards the Mayor's Charity Fund at the Camp-Out on 28 November.
- The Mayor took part in a tree planting ceremony last week, which commemorated the Queen's Green canopy Initiative celebrating Her majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 by planting 50 Sakura Cherry trees, which were a gift from Japan, at Sanderstead Recreation Ground.
- Unfortunately, due to the rise in Covid cases, the Christmas Carol Celebration due to have been held on Friday 17 December had had to be cancelled. However, pre recordings of the acts that were scheduled to have been performed would be posted on the Mayor's social media platforms.

The Mayor also informed Members of his upcoming events and asked that if they were interested in attending any of them, to please contact the Mayor's Office:

- A Bollywood dinner and dance fundraiser in January and the date will be confirmed closer to the time.
- The Mayor will be holding an event for Bangladesh Victory Day in January 2022.
- He will be celebrating International Language Week in February 2022.
- The second round of the Mayoral Awards will be held on Tuesday 1 February 2022 and the Mayor asked colleagues to send through any nominations that they may have for these.

## **The Leader**

The Mayor invited the Leader, Councillor Hamida Ali, to make her announcements.

The Leader confirmed a Cabinet decision regarding investment in the voluntary sector and that by using Community Infrastructure Levy funds it had been possible to retain the Community Fund in full for this year and the budget will be £2.2 million.

In addition, the Leader confirmed support for the businesses supporting the evening and night-time economy. The Leader and Councillor Shahul-Hameed have been working with officers on how to use the £850,000 Additional Restrictions Grant to provide new grants to these businesses together with the cultural and leisure sectors. The Leader also

announced details of the Hardship Fund which would be available to those businesses that were severely affected by the restrictions but did not qualify for other forms of support.

## 37/21 The Croydon Debate

### Borough Petition

A Borough-wide Petition had been received by the Monitoring Officer as follows:

*“Croydon Council please re-open Purley Leisure Centre”.*

Mr Richard Willmer introduced the petition by stating that support for retaining Purley Leisure Centre was overwhelming in the community with over 3000 signatures on the petition. This had been further shown by the demonstration before the start of the meeting. He also stated that the assumption that people could use Waddon instead was not the case for many and that as it would be catering for 40% of the borough's residents if it took on Purley's, Waddon's position would become untenable.

Mr Willmer continued by stating that the statement in the Cabinet report that Purley was the oldest leisure centre was not the case as South Norwood had been built about ten years earlier but this site had undergone a refurbishment in 2002. The cost of £3 million to refurbish Purley Leisure Centre was a huge increase from the £200,000 quoted in 2019 and the report made much of losses at Purley Leisure Centre when there had been losses at the other leisure centres. There had also been no mention in the report of the increase in users such as the swimming school and the gym or of any of the opportunities to increase income. For example, the over 60s now pay for swimming or that the contract with GLL had a cost subsidy model built in so that those facilities that make a profit subsidise those that do not.

In his response, Councillor Lewis thanked Mr Willmer and the other campaigners and accepted that there was great sentiment and affection for Purley Pool but that the decision to close the pool had already been taken and it would not be possible to reopen it. It was an aging facility which required a significant investment and it was loss making. It had also been put forward for closure around a decade ago. It would also require ongoing investment over a number of years and there had been degradation of the building which could put public safety at risk. Even if all the work required was carried out to allow it to reopen it would still be a loss making facility.

Possible solutions had been looked at to make the facility more sustainable in the future but this had not been possible due to the layout. It was not possible to keep pumping money into it which is why the decision was made to close it. A consultation had been carried out on ways to mitigate the loss of Purley Leisure Centre and a report will be published in due course. Work will continue with the community to provide them with a new leisure centre in that location in the future. The Local Plan which would be voted on later in the meeting, made provision for a new pool to be provided on this site.

In conclusion Councillor Lewis stated that it had not been an easy decision to make and appreciated that the closure would make it difficult for some residents to access leisure facilities but emphasised that work would continue to deliver a leisure facility on the site.

Councillor Brew stated that it was an outrage that Purley Leisure Centre had not reopened in 2020 when local residents thought that it should. Councillor Perry has pledged to reopen Purley Pool if he is elected as the Mayor in next years' election. Purley Pool had been a focal point for the community since it opened and some groups have not been able to use the alternative sites. Businesses in the Purley BID (Business Improvement District) also want the centre to be reopened to boost footfall locally.

In addition Councillor Brew also stated that he had inspected the building and that the only issues that needed to be addressed were the air handling units and two leaks in the roof which was caused by a lack of maintenance. He suggested that the sum of £3 million was ludicrous.

Councillor Clark joined Councillor Lewis in thanking the residents and stated that every resident should have access to leisure facilities. However, Sport England had expressed concerns at the number of swimming pools that have closed due to a lack of Government funding. He asked Members to remember that the previous Tory administration had planned to close Purley Pool but that the current administration had kept it open until it was forced to close due to Covid.

Councillor Clark continued by acknowledging that people did need to travel further and thanked Councillor Canning, Councillor Pelling and Councillor Prince who had called for better public transport to Waddon and this administration will be putting forward a case for this with TfL (Transport for London) and the council will work with any community groups or schools to provide a solution. The Croydon Local Plan also sets out plans for the redevelopment of the site, which included a new state of the art swimming pool.

Councillor Perry stated that the funds needed to reopen the pool was not £3 million as stated by the Administration but much lower. He continued by saying that the Administration did not apply for funds from the Government to allow Purley Pool to reopen and that it had been a purely political decision, as had the degradation of the building. Some of the most vulnerable in the community had been affected such as the elderly who used it as a social hub and had nowhere else to go and the school children who can no longer have swimming lessons as getting to the alternative facilities involved getting two or three buses.

Councillor Perry continued by stating that the closure had ripped the heart out of Purley and had decreased footfall just at a time when businesses needed more help to survive. Also as part of his Mayoral campaign he pledged to reopen Purley Pool and Leisure Centre as the facility must remain open until any new facilities were brought forward.

Mr Willmer welcomed Councillor Perry's pledge and was disappointed that the council was not looking into the options that were around. Redevelopment would leave this part of the Borough with no facilities for many years and it would not guarantee a six lane 25 metre pool which is what is required for the school children and other users of the pool. He went on to state that with the increase in housing developments coming through in the south of the borough, there would be a need for facilities for these new residents as well as those already living in the area.

Mr Willmer continued by stating that these developments had greatly increased the amount of Community Infrastructure Levy funds that the council had and that the money should be going to provide infrastructure in that part of the borough. There were also other sources of income such as Section 106 money which also had to be spent locally so there were other ways of proceeding other than full redevelopment.

Councillor Lewis reiterated his thanks to Mr Willmer and the other campaigners for their desire to see a pool in Purley. He continued by confirming the national picture given by Councillor Clark where pools could close due to lack of funding nationally.

In conclusion, Councillor Lewis stated that the choice was either to continue putting money into “sticking plaster” measures or choose to have a new state of the art leisure centre.

The Mayor thanked Mr Willmer and all the residents who had signed the petition.

### **Local Petition**

A Local Petition had been received by the Monitoring Officer as follows:

*“We call on Croydon Council to allow access for all. We demand the removal of the road blocks on Holmesdale Road and Albert Road and no replacement with ANPR cameras across South Norwood, Woodside, Addiscombe and Crystal Palace.”*

Ms Carolyn Kellaris introduced the petition by stating that the petition did not just represent the 1250 people who had signed it but the 70% of respondents to the consultation that were being ignored by those elected to represent them. Specifically over 50% of residents on her road did not want ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) cameras and this was clearly apparent when speaking to the residents who signed this petition.

Ms Kellaris continued by stating that the area did not suffer from excessive traffic and that it was difficult to understand why this scheme was put forward and that the residents could not be dismissed as a vocal minority. The scheme would only serve to push more traffic on to already congested roads where vulnerable people live and make side roads unsafe for women at night. She asked how this sits with the Labour Party strapline of “For the Many, Not the Few”.

In conclusion, Ms Kellaris stated that the example of Waltham Forest showed that air quality had worsened following introduction of the LTN (Low Traffic Neighbourhoods) so cautioned on using this as a way of improving air quality and questioned the Council’s motives and presumptions made in wanting to introduce this scheme when no data had been made available or any measurable targets for reduction quoted. She asked the Council to work collaboratively with the community to design a scheme rather than imposing one on the community.

In his response, Councillor Muhammed Ali thanked the petitioner and acknowledged that there were strong views on both sides with this proposal and that he would be taking these into account before making a decision. A decision had not yet been made and the proposal had been put before the Traffic Management Advisory Committee in November and their views were also being taken into account. He confirmed that he intended to make a decision this week and amending the scheme from temporary to experimental to include monitoring which the petitioners had been asking for. This would also allow air quality monitoring to take place. The schemes would still allow direct access for residents living in the Healthy Neighbourhoods along with direct access for emergency vehicles and for disabled people to still be able to use their blue badges and access Dial-a-Ride and taxi services.

The schemes are about ensuring access for all and it should be noted that only a certain proportion of Croydon residents can drive or have access to cars and children and young people have been impacted the most by private cars taking over the streets. In

addition, they are the generation who will benefit the most if we are able to minimise the scale of the climate crisis that the whole country is facing. The Prime Minister had given his support to all councils who want to promote cycling and bus schemes and that those that oppose these schemes need to come up with alternatives.

In conclusion, Councillor Ali stated that moving this scheme from temporary to experimental will give the council the data needed.

Councillor Perry stated that once again this Administration had not been listening to residents whilst still pushing ahead with its own agenda and it was therefore no surprise that yet another petition regarding the removal of road blocks and against the installation of ANPR cameras had been received. He continued by stating that no clear evidence had been presented to show the schemes across the borough were making any tangible difference to air quality or that LTN's had reduced the number of unnecessary car journeys. These schemes had been forced upon communities with no consideration of the impacts on those communities and it was clear that this had been just a money making exercise.

In conclusion, Councillor Perry stated that the residents of Holmesdale Road and Albert Road deserved better.

Councillor Muhammad Ali, in his response stated that he agreed that monitoring and evaluation was important and confirmed that this would be exactly what this scheme had been designed to do and would follow TfL guidance.

Secondly, Councillor Ali stressed the importance of air quality improvements and questioned Councillor Perry's commitment to making improvements.

Councillor Ben-Hassel then requested a point of order regarding the atmosphere in the chamber.

Councillor Ali then reiterated his previous statement that these experimental schemes will give the council the data it needs on improving air quality

The Mayor thanked Ms Kellaris and all the residents who had signed the petition.

## 38/21 **Croydon Question Time**

### **Croydon Question Time**

The Mayor explained that Croydon Question Time would be taken in two parts.

The first part was public questions to the Leader and Cabinet, which was followed by questions from Members to the Leader and Cabinet. Wherever possible, the Cabinet Member provided an answer during the meeting, but if a question required detail that the Cabinet Member did not have with them then a written response would be published on the Council website within the following three weeks.

### **Public Questions**

There were 30 minutes allocated to public questions, firstly from those who were in attendance and had emailed in their questions in advance.

The first question was from Mark Samuel.

*“Will the leader please confirm the time and date when The Queen’s Gardens will be permanently reopened to the public?”*

In her response, the Leader, Councillor Hamida Ali stated that she expected The Queen’s Gardens to reopen in February 2022 upon completion of the final block. There were some ongoing issues with the Planning Department regarding the potential for providing a café and stepped access to the north west corner of the site but it is not expected that those issues would delay the reopening to the public. In addition Councillor Ali stated that she would send further details direct to Mr Samuel.

In his supplementary question, Mr Samuel asked whether the Leader had any plans for the Borough to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty The Queen in 2022.

In her reply, Councillor Ali stated that she attended the tree planting event mentioned by the Mayor earlier and that she had had a conversation with the Deputy Lieutenant, Colonel Ray Wilkinson regarding other opportunities for the community to come together in June 2022.

The next question was from Collette Luke.

*“Would the Council be prepared to provide free transport for schools, elderly residents and disabled groups to access Waddon Pool safely?”*

In his response, the Cabinet Member for Culture & Regeneration, Councillor Lewis stated he had visited year 6 at St Aidan’s School are they were clearly passionate about their swimming lessons and the curriculum more generally. He went on to confirm that the Council was reviewing the responses to the consultation on mitigation following the closure of Purley Pool. Although it would not be possible to offer free transport, the Council did have some transport provision which could be hired outside of SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) drop off and pick up times and would be happy to have that discussion with the school to facilitate transport from the school to Waddon Leisure Centre.

Councillor Lewis continued by reassuring the Council that the students need for a pool in the Purley area was echoed in the revised Local Plan paper that would be discussed later in the meeting stated that any future development of the site should include a new community leisure facility with a swimming pool.

In her supplementary question Mrs Luke asked who should be contacted to book the transport.

In his response, Councillor Lewis stated that officers would be in touch with Mrs Luke to discuss the provision of transport and thanked the students for their work especially regarding the phasing of the traffic lights in Purley Way.

The next question was from Sonia Marinello.

*“How do you measure success or failure if you have not set out some measurable objectives?”*

In her response, the Leader stated that she believed that Councillor Muhammad Ali had been clear in his explanation earlier in response to the local petition the reasons behind the change from a temporary to an experimental scheme. This would give the chance carry out the monitoring, including obtaining the views of the residents in those neighbourhoods.

In her supplementary question, Miss Marinello asked with ANPR fines being set in the budget in March of this year and having no way of knowing in advance what the fines would be, were services being gambled on potential fines and was it truly about the environment.

In her response, the Leader confirmed that during the budget setting process it was necessary to make a number of assumptions. Such as the level of demand on services and inflation and this was just another example. As Councillor Muhammad Ali stated earlier the council takes its responsibilities around the climate emergency seriously and has worked with residents, including the Citizens Assembly on what actions needed to be taken. The aim of the Croydon Healthy Neighbourhoods had always been to improve the air quality locally and to make it safer to walk and cycle.

The next question was from Adele Benson.

*“How long do you think is acceptable for a council tenant to wait for a leak to be repaired inside or outside their property?”*

In her response, the Cabinet Member for Homes, Councillor Hay-Justice stated that the response times depend on the severity of the leak but for urgent leaks it should be within 24 hours, with work to repair being carried out within 15 days.

In her supplementary question, Ms Benson asked what would the Cabinet Member do to help those families who have had issues with damp for over six months and who have been fobbed off by the council.

In reply, Councillor Hay-Justice stated that she was not happy to hear this and agreed that it was not acceptable. However, she continued by acknowledging that there was a capacity issue within the repairs team, partly as a result of staff sickness due to Covid, which had led to longer response times but that she had put pressure on the team to carry out repairs at pace.

The next question was from Lynne Leatham.

*“What do your residents need to do so that you actually hear them, why is it that your councillors are ignoring their residents- local councillors won't listen to us, respond to us and represent us?”*

In her response, the Leader stated that there are a number of examples where residents had been listened to such as the library consultation where all libraries have been kept open and the consultation on children's centres where particular issues had been highlighted by users of the Purley Oaks facility. However, the Leader did acknowledge that there were major issues around funding for local government and that hard decisions on which services should receive that funding needed to be made. It was down to all councillors to balance the competing issues when making those difficult decisions to ensure that residents are not promised services that cannot be delivered which this Administration had done.

In her supplementary question Ms Leatham asked how many children would die as a result



of this poorly implemented fiscal scheme.

In replying, the Leader reiterated what she and Councillor Muhammad Ali had stated earlier that the reason for moving from temporary to experimental had been to allow for data to be collected and analysed, to check whether the scheme was doing what it had been designed to do. The ultimate aim was to improve air quality for all Croydon communities and these experimental schemes allow analysis of the data to see if they were genuinely working.

The next question was from Donald Ekekhomen.

*“When will all the communal doors in Croydon stock be fixed? Many of the doors in blocks in Waddon are broken and pose a security risk to residents.”*

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice stated that tenant safety was of great importance to her and to the ward councillors who had alerted her of this issue. As a result of this issue being brought to her attention, Councillor Hay-Justice confirmed that she had asked officers to carry out an investigation so that all the issues with doors were known about and that a plan of repair would be provided to her and that she was happy to share that with Mr Ekekhomen and the ward councillors so that residents were kept informed.

In his supplementary question Mr Ekekhomen asked how the Council was different to rogue landlords if it cannot provide security for these residents many of whom are frail and elderly.

In replying Councillor Hay-Justice hoped that the Council was not considered as a rogue landlord due to the fact that the front door was not working but acknowledged that it was not a good situation for tenants to be faced with. In the past these blocks had had wardens who would have picked up these issues and also made residents feel safer by patrolling the area but these were removed by the previous Administration.

The next question was from Kostandinos Dexiades.

*“On 20 September I asked you a question and you stated that as it was a long question, that you were going to write to me. It is now December and you haven’t answered my question. When are you going to email me back?”*

In his response, the Cabinet Member for Resources & Financial Governance, Councillor Young stated that he had sent a reply several weeks ago which he had believed had gone through but realised today that it had not gone through. He apologised for that and confirmed that a reply had now been sent.

In his supplementary question Mr Dexiades asked again whether the response had been sent as it was now three months since he had asked his question.

In his reply, Councillor Young confirmed again that he had seen a draft response several weeks ago and that he thought that it had been sent. I had been assured that the response had now been sent.

The Mayor confirmed that a number of written questions from people who were unable to attend had been received and a written response to these will be published on the Council website within the next three weeks.

### **Leader and Cabinet Member Questions**

With the end of time allocated to questions from members of the public in attendance the Mayor moved on to public questions to the Leader and Cabinet Members.

## Questions to the Leader

The Leader confirmed that she had no announcements to add to her announcements earlier.

**Councillor Perry** in his question stated that at a recent GPAC (General Purposes & Audit Committee) meeting the Council had received a draft version of another possible Report in the Public Interest coming from the Grant Thornton review of the Fairfield Halls refurbishment and asked whether the Leader had seen it.

In her response, the Leader reminded Members that the Council had referred this matter to Grant Thornton due to concerns in the previous governance arrangements and the arrangements between the Council and Brick by Brick to undertake the refurbishment. The auditor had conducted a value for money report and at the present time we are awaiting the conclusion of that work.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Perry stated that the Leader was a member of the Cabinet at the time the work was undertaken and shouldn't she and her colleagues who were in the Cabinet at the time be resigning immediately.

In her response, the Leader stated that the council raising its own concerns demonstrated determination to address historic issues around governance and put the council on a more secure foundation, both financially and around governance.

**Councillor Henson**, in her question stated that with the introduction of the Omicron variant of Covid and all the tragic consequences that are already being seen, could the Leader reflect on what the effect of the new restrictions would have on Croydon.

In her response, the Leader agreed that the Omicron variant was already having an impact and was a real concern for the community. The Leader reminded Members of the importance of what everyone could do to keep each other safe and abiding by the new guidance that had just come out. The Leader continued by emphasising the importance of getting vaccinated including boosters and for people to follow the guidance around testing and self-isolation.

The Leader continued by stating that the further restrictions would have an effect on Croydon's businesses but as stated earlier she was working with officers on how to best use Additional Restrictions Grant to support businesses.

**Councillor Bains**, in his question stated that he was constantly being asked by the public about the disciplinary action on those involved in the actions that led to the bankruptcy. He asked the Leader to let us know when will the public see a full and frank account of which councillors, past and present, and which staff members, past and present, did what and when to cause the bankruptcy.

In her response, the Leader stated that the Appointments Committee had commissioned an Investigation and Disciplinary Committee to launch an investigation into members of staff who were at the time suspended. That investigation was still live and underway and she offered to supply Councillor Bains with a written update.

The Leader continued by reminding Councillor Bains that two members of the Council had resigned over the events of last year.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Bains confirmed that he would like a copy of the

interim report.

At this point, the Interim Monitoring Officer, John Jones interceded to state that as this was an active investigation it would not be possible to supply this information until the investigation was complete. However, he was sure that the Leader would supply what information she could.

**Councillor Ben-Hassel**, in her question stated that Norbury was well connected to the Afghan community and that one of the hotels housing Afghan refugees was in her ward. She had been contacted by the Croydon Afghan Women's Association raising concerns regarding family members with statuses that were still in limbo or who were still at risk stuck in Afghanistan. Would the Leader advice on what support we are able to give as a local authority to the Afghan refugee community in Croydon.

In her response, the Leader stated that there were a number of hotels within Croydon that were being used to house Afghan asylum seekers whilst their applications were being processed and that it was a challenge for the council to fully support these people as no additional Government funding had been made available. The council had also taken on the duty of supporting the unaccompanied children within that group.

The Leader continued by stating that officers had raised concerns regarding the living conditions of some of these refugees and she shared these concerns. She continued by thanking the voluntary sector who had been working to provide additional support and stressed that it was a national duty to provide support, which should be spread more widely across the country.

**Councillor Hopley**, in her question asked that as there were still budgetary pressures around adult social care and health and a great reliance placed on health partners to take up some of this, what contractual arrangements had been signed to give assurance that there would not be an overspend and departmental budgets would not spiral out of control.

In her response, the Leader stated that the NHS was not picking up costs that the council had incurred. The Leader continued by referring Councillor Hopley to the monthly Cabinet reports and to the figures for period 7 which showed that the council was on track to deliver within budget.

## **Pool 1**

With the end of the time allocated for questions to the Leader, the Mayor moved to questions to the Cabinet Members in the first pool. Councillor King and Councillor Young were invited to make their announcements.

Councillor King, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Croydon Renewal, informed members that the Council was still waiting for the announcement from Government on the local government spending settlement.

In his question, **Councillor Jason Cummings** stated that next years' budget was currently £13 million short of being balanced even with another £25 million of borrowing and contained within that was £12 million which had been marked down as coming from local health. How much of that some had been agreed by them.

In his response. Councillor King confirmed that the council was in constructive discussions with the local NHS which had been ongoing for some time and that the council was keen to see a more realistic cost sharing with the NHS for the discharge of high needs patients from

hospital. In addition, the council was seeking to obtain some of this revenue via NHS funds which were delivered sub locally and at regional level and these budgets are not confirmed until February 2022 and therefore cannot finalise a budget for next year until those budgets are confirmed.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Cummings asked whether it was fair that council mismanagement of finances was going to take money away from the NHS.

In reply, Councillor King stated that it was perfectly reasonable for the council to seek fair allocations of costs and that hoped that he would be supported by councillors to seek any funding that the council was entitled to from a variety of sources. He continued by saying that the conversations with the NHS had been amicable and constructive.

In her question, **Councillor Ben-Hassel**, asked about what were the key assumptions that underpin the budget and the Medium Term Financial Strategy that was presented to Cabinet on 6 December 2021.

In his response. Councillor King confirmed that there were a number of assumptions detailed within the report that had been discussed at that meeting, including the 1.99% rise in Council Tax together with the additional 1% allowed through the Adult Social Care Levy. An additional assumption included related to the New Homes Bonus which it was hoped the Government would be continuing.

In concluding Councillor King, reminded members that the capitalisation had not yet been confirmed by Government and that this funding could be withdrawn if the Government did not think that the tough financial decisions were being taken.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Ben-Hassel asked what were the key risks associated with this budget.

In reply, Councillor King stated that there were risks associated with the pandemic such as an increase in demand for services and the wider impact on the economy and how that would affect the council and the services that are provided. In continuing Councillor King reiterated his previous answer that the NHS budget would not be known until February 2022.

In concluding, Councillor King stated that there were 41 members who had been determined to make the decisions necessary to balance the budget but that as the Opposition had voted against every savings proposal there would be a real risk that the Opposition would not do what was necessary.

In his question, **Councillor Jason Cummings**, stated that the Non-Statutory Review which took place recently, reported back that the Croydon Park Hotel was being sold for a price significantly below what was paid for it. Additionally it reported that for the two years it was sitting empty, it cost £1 million a year to maintain and asked Councillor King whether these two statements were correct.

In his response. Councillor King stated then when this issue had been discussed by Cabinet he did not take part due to a perceived conflict of interest and deferred the response to Councillor Callton Young.

In response, Cabinet Member for Resources & Financial Governance, Councillor Young referred members to the Cabinet report as Part A and Part B gave set out the details.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Cummings asked whether the Labour

Administration should not have bought that hotel.

In his response, Councillor King states that with hindsight no one would buy anything that would subsequently be sold for less than was paid for it. He regretted that the council did not receive the sum that it paid for it but that with the reasons highlighted in that paper there was a case for its disposal that the Assurance and Improvement Panel recognised.

In her question, **Councillor Jewitt** asked what members needed to do to get the Government to treat the citizens of Croydon with the same respect as those of Kensington and Chelsea, for example, when allocating the borough's settlement. The latest wave of Covid was being dealt with but with no additional funding. What did the Deputy Leader consider to be the likely impact for the current year and for the budget in 2022/23 in terms of costs and deliverability of the savings?

In his response, Councillor King stated that Councillor Jewitt was quite right to point out that the council was not fairly funded as were a number of other outer London boroughs. There were a number of inner London challenges that were not being addressed as a result of this underfunding. Kensington and Chelsea received £400 per resident compared to Croydon's £220 but the Government needed to honour its pledge for fair funding that reflected the needs and challenges for Croydon.

Councillor King continued by stating that the Covid pandemic presented a huge public health challenge but also budgetary risks as there could be increased demand for services and also present a threat to capacity as an organisation. At the start of the pandemic local government had been told to spend whatever was necessary to protect communities and councils would be properly reimbursed. However, Croydon experienced a £43 million shortfall in funding from Government so in the future spending in this area would be much more cautious.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Jewitt asked whether the Deputy Leader shared her concerns that Pharmacy was accepting so many booster bookings, for example, 30 for each 5 minute slot that residents had to queue in the street for up to two hours. Did he agree that the Government needed to do more to sort out this situation?

In his response, Councillor King agreed as he had seen the long queues for himself and that he would bring it to the attention of the Director of Public Health. He also agreed that it was important that as many people as possible take up the offer of a booster vaccine and that people needed to be able to do so in a safe way.

In her question, Councillor Hopley stated that the Cabinet meeting on 6 December had approved a reduction in employee contributions to the pension fund, which had gone against the advice of the fund actuary and asked whether the Cabinet Member had been aware of this.

In his response, Councillor Young stated that he had made it clear that the recommendations in report were the views of the actuary and he had asked the actuary to come back with a fuller response.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Hopley stated that the actuary had been explicit in their recommendation that the reduction should only go ahead if the property transfer also went ahead. She continued by stating that she found it concerning that the paper went ahead in spite of the concerns that had been raised and that people's pensions needed to be protected not put at risk by not listening to the actuary's advice.

In his response, Councillor Young stated that Councillor Hopley was scaremongering.

A point of order was then made by Councillor Hopley which the Interim Monitoring Officer confirmed was not accepted.

Councillor Young continued by saying that the council staff needed to be reassured that the risks were not as Councillor Hopley described them. The offer on the table had come from the Pension Committee and came with the advice of the actuary and what the Cabinet did was to invite the actuary to confirm the recommendation. He continued by accepting that there was an issue regarding the deferment of the properties that will have to be addressed at a different time, but confirmed that at the current time there was no risk.

In his question, Councillor Fraser, asked whether the Cabinet Member considered that the council should give due regard to the tax practices of the firms it contracts with, so that as a public body it did not engage with those firms that practice tax avoidance and thus weaken the public purse.

In his response, Councillor Young welcomed the question which supported the Labour and Co-operative values which believed that all businesses should pay their taxes. This was imperative of Government to fund public services. He continued by stating that this practice had cost Croydon residents and services £96 million per year since 2010. Croydon Council should not enter into contracts with any company known to be engaged in tax evasion and the council was under a legal duty not to do so under the Public Contract Regulations 2015. However, there was no scope for councils to take similar action against companies believed to be practicing tax avoidance as it was legal although morally questionable and was a matter for HMRC (HM Revenue & Customs).

In his supplementary question, Councillor Fraser asked where did the council have scope to ask for fair tax statements which some retailers have already done along with ethical businesses and some other councils. Could this be something that the Cabinet Member would look at for the future as to how the issue could be resolved?

In his response, Councillor Young stated that if that course of action was to be taken, he would want to ensure that the statements were enforceable and had to mean something. However, he continued by stating that this would have to wait until the council had the capacity to take on new ideas.

## **Pool 2**

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

Cabinet Member for Families, Health & Social Care Councillor Campbell announced that social services workers within adult social care had received two awards and one recommendation from the Teacher Partnership Board. Firstly Natasha won on outstanding contributor and support to equality and diversity. Natasha was also runner-up for Social Worker of the Year. Secondly Lambert won Team Leader of the Year for her work on the Integrated Care Networks Plus in Thornton Heath. Congratulations and well done to both.

The Cabinet Member for Culture & Regeneration, Councillor Lewis informed Members that the Planning Advisory Service had been asked to come in and review performance and resourcing in the Development Management Planning Team and looked forward to receiving their constructive challenge on areas where improvements could be made.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning, Councillor Flemming

informed Members of the recent publication of the results of the SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disability) inspection which was carried out jointly by OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) and the Care Quality Commission. She encouraged all Members to have a look at the report as there were some encouraging highlights within the report and sets out how the service can improve.

In her question, Councillor Hale stated that a judicial review had recently found against the Council's Planning Department with respect to a Sanderstead Ward application and asked how many other planning cases had been put on notice for or were currently subject to legal action.

In his response, Councillor Lewis stated that the council took this matter very seriously and endeavours to work within the regulations and where that had not happened to take action to rectify those cases.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Hale stated residents had raised legitimate concerns that were ignored which had now been shown to be valid. The planners had been told about these issues but the residents have now been left with the consequences. She asked the Cabinet Member whether he cared about residents and what he was going to do to put right this situation.

In his reply, Councillor Lewis stated that he believed it was very important for residents' voices to be heard as part of the planning process however the Government does not allow that to happen often enough. He paid tribute to Councillor Clark and Councillor Ben-Hassel who had worked very hard over the last year on the Planning Committee to ensure that residents' views were heard and aired. The community development legislation being brought forward by the Government will remove any ability for residents to comment on proposals.

In her question, Councillor Jewitt asked what were the current issues around the discharge of vulnerable adults from hospital and what would the council doing to help address these problems.

In her response, Councillor Campbell stated that the current issues related to the new variant of Covid which was also leading to staff sickness and was in addition to the usual winter pressures. In response there was a drive to expand the booster programme, as mentioned earlier, and vaccine centres had increased staff numbers in order to achieve this. In addition the council had a winter plan in place and will be working as a multi-disciplinary team with colleagues from health and the CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group) to ensure efficient discharge from hospital. In addition, the council will also be working closely with care homes and carers and where there are gaps will seek to take action with the multi-disciplinary team to minimise risk.

In his question, Councillor Bains stated that the Labour administration was proposing to build thousands of new homes but the Planning Department was in disarray and a Judicial Review had been made against it. He asked how could the public take this administration seriously when they want to do this high amount of building and intensification when they had a department that already cannot enforce on illegal buildings that already exist.

In his response, Councillor Lewis explained that the aim of the Local Plan was to rise to the challenges that had been set. There was a housing crisis, not just in Croydon but across London and across the country. The Local Plan will help to meet that challenge in a sustainable way that would also address the climate emergency and that the Administration felt that it was important to take local action to address a global problem. There would be an opportunity to vote on the Local Plan Review later in the meeting which he would be

commending to Members as it will help to address these really important challenges and would do so in a sustainable and manageable way.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Bains stated that members of the public had expressed deep concern about the uncontrolled, cheap and unenforced development and asked the Cabinet Member to give an example of when he had changed his policy after having heard what the public had said.

In his reply, Councillor Lewis stated that Councillor Bains' comments sounded like he was referring to permitted development where Government had said that it was OK for property developments to come in and wreck high streets which in Croydon had led to shoddy conversions and poor quality accommodation. The Local Plan was trying to sustainably grow the town to provide accommodation for young people and families. The Government is defending speculative property developers who want to come in and wreck the town.

In his question, Councillor Bonello asked that following the death of Jermaine Stills, what steps were being taken to enhance preventative services for young people in Croydon.

In her response, Councillor Flemming offered her condolences to the family again and continued by outlining the services that were provided including the Complex Adolescence Panel which works alongside children who are on the edge of care but are not in the children's social care system.

Councillor Flemming continued by stating that the council worked in partnership with the Police and Youth Offending Service to provide wrap around support and reminded Members that although youth services were not statutory the administration had chosen to invest £6.5 million, alongside its partners, including in the Legacy Youth Zone. The causes of knife crime needed to be tackled including the ingrained poverty in the borough

In his supplementary question, Councillor Bonello asked whether a decade of austerity had had an impact of the capacity of the council to deliver preventative services for children and young people.

In her reply Councillor Flemming stated that budgets had been cut nationally by 76% and in Croydon two thirds of the budget was spent on protecting the most vulnerable. She continuing by returning to her earlier point regarding the ingrained poverty and used the example from "Guiding Hands" to illustrate the problems caused during the school holidays in particular. Local authorities needed to be properly funded or this situation will not change.

In her question, Councillor Gatland stated that there had been some disappointing concerns highlighted within the SEND inspection report particularly around Educational Healthcare Plans and the lack of information parents received around Personal Care Budgets and how to apply for them and asked when would that change.

In her response, Councillor Flemming thanked Councillor Gatland for the support she had given to the children and young people over the years and agreed that more needed to be done to make parents and carers aware of the Educational Healthcare Plans and Personal Care Budgets. She had heard first-hand the frustration that parents had felt. As a result. One of the actions being taken included additional staff training to allow staff to give far more support to parents and carers through the application process.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Gatland stated that millions of pounds had been taken out of the contract and asked when would that transformation, spoken about earlier, take place.



In her reply, Councillor Flemming stated that she would not comment on the statement regarding taking funding out of the contract having inherited a service where money had been stripped out. However the care package review work had already begun. She continued by stating that children and young people in the borough will always be at the forefront of any decisions that are made and that they will be in the best interests of the child or young person.

In concluding, Councillor Flemming stated that the transformation process was a continuing one which had already begun.

### **Pool 3**

With the end of time allocated to questions to the Cabinet Members in the second pool, the Mayor signalled he was moving on to questions to Cabinet Members in the third pool. Councillor Hay-Justice, Councillor Shahul-Hameed and Councillor Muhammad Ali were invited to make their announcements.

The Cabinet Member for Homes, Councillor Hay-Justice announced that she had been to visit a Mrs Smith who was 109 years old and had been a tenant of Croydon Council for 50 years and who was one of the oldest residents in the borough. She was pleased to say that Mrs Smith was in great spirits and good health and Mrs Smith stated that she never been happier.

Councillor Hay-Justice continued by wishing Mrs Smith on behalf of the council best wishes for her future years.

The Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety & Business Recovery, Councillor Shahul-Hameed gave an update on the extra business support available due to the new Covid variant and the additional restrictions as a result. This was targeted support to those sectors such retail, hospitality and leisure where the pre-Christmas period was particularly important and the Cabinet Member was working with stakeholder organisations to identify those businesses.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Croydon, Councillor Muhammad Ali stated that COP26 came to a close last month with a somewhat disappointing end with more to be done nationally and locally. However, he announced that Croydon was stepping up and taking action and that last month its first community reuse shop was opened at Fishers Farm Household Waste and Recycling Centre. He continued by encouraging residents to bring items to be reused and to check out items for sale.

Secondly, Councillor Muhammad Ali stated that Croydon Council was making the switch to greener travel easier and last month enabled to installation of 60 new electric vehicle charging points in the borough with 20 more expected by February 2022 and the council was on target to install more than 400 by the end of this term. In addition, the council was on target to plant more than 3500 trees, also by the end of this term to help improve air quality.

Firstly, Councillor Hale passed on her best wishes from the Opposition to Mrs Smith as she began her 110<sup>th</sup> year. In her question, Councillor Hale asked whether she was surprised that the regulator had found that the council had breached the Homes Standard and the Tenant Improvement and Empowerment Standard.

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice stated that after what had been seen in March she could not have expected anything else. However, since that time the council had moved

forward with the regulator who was happy with the progress made. Part of these improvements was the setting up of the Housing Improvement Board where the Administration and officers were being held to account by residents.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Hale stated that the report had highlighted that tenants were at serious risk of harm as a result of long standing failures in relation to the repairs and maintenance service including staffing and cultural issues, how tenants concerns and complaints were handled and weak performance management. Councillor Hale asked why did the Cabinet Member not know what was going on when she had been the Deputy Cabinet Member or Cabinet Member for many years.

In her reply, Councillor Hay-Justice stated that while what had been seen was no in any way acceptable, there were over 14,000 home in Croydon. Two reports had been received from ITV News and she had subsequently been out to visit many of those residents highlighted.

Councillor Hay-Justice continued by once again asked that all Members to report anything that they believed to be unacceptable. In her time as a Cabinet Member, she had not seen anything like those showed on the television and hoped that put it into perspective. She acknowledged that there were issues with the repairs contract and the culture that had developed over many years and went back to before the current administration took over.

Councillor Hay-Justice reminded Members that she had been out with officers on inspections visits in April but that these only took place externally and that work was being undertaken to turn this around.

In his question, Councillor Canning stated that many residents in Waddon relied on public transport and were worried about reports that Transport for London (TfL) had run out of money due to Covid and asked what consideration had the Cabinet Member given to how this might affect Croydon if TfL was forced into managed decline should support from Government not be forthcoming.

In his response, Councillor Muhammad Ali stated he believed that everyone was aware of how Covid had affected TfL's finances which was in turn affecting public transport provision across the capital and its ability to fund local authorities capital projects such as the Local Implementation Programme.

Councillor Ali continued by confirming that the current funding regime had been extended to 17 December but it lacked long term planning by the Government. TfL's Finance Committee considered an urgent report on 24 November which highlighted a number of issues such as a reduction in bus routes, a reduction in frequency of remaining routes and reduced frequency of tube services. All these reduction proposals would have consequences for Croydon.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Canning stated that this was a worrying development when the council was trying to encourage alternative travel methods to the car and asked what lobbying had been taking place to Government to continue to provide the cash that TfL needs and was the Cabinet Member receiving any help from Conservative members of the council to help secure this money.

In his reply, Councillor Ali confirmed that Croydon Council was lobbying central government at an official and political level. At a political level the matter was raised at the London Councils and the Leader had written directly to the Transport Secretary. No one from the Opposition had currently come forward to lobby government on behalf of the borough but stated that lobbying would continue by the Administration.

In her question, Councillor Hopley stated that she was pleased to hear that Mrs Smith was happy in her home but sadly residents of Regina Road, Layton Crescent, Waddon, Kuala Gardens, Norbury Park and Toldene were not. Some had no hot water or heating which had been going on for two months and others had no security doors and a lack of garden maintenance. Councillor Hopley continued by asking when these residents would have secure homes and would the work be carried out by Christmas.

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice stated that she was very concerned to hear that some residents had had no hot water or heating for two months and asked Councillor Hopley to give her the details. Both Kuala Gardens and Layton Crescent had already been raised with her and she had recently visited. The leak at Kuala Gardens had been repaired and the room redecorated. In addition, the carpet would be shampooed and it was hoped that the ward councillors would work with her to see if there can be a Christmas meal in that communal space.

Councillor Hay-Justice continued that the communal space in Layton Crescent is an under used space as many of the residents are frail and do not have anyone to organise events within that space. However, there had also been an issue with the doors which had now been fixed and a further issue with two of the washing machines in the laundry room requiring repair.

In concluding Councillor Hay-Justice repeated her request to Councillor Hopley to share with her the details of the issues at Toldene.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Hopley stated that she had raised the issues at Toldene with officers via another Councillor as these come under Special Assisted Living and she asked again would the 40 issues raised with officers in the last month be completed by Christmas.

In reply, Councillor Hay-Justice stated that she was not aware of all 40 but requested that Councillor Hopley set aside some time to go through them all with her and could not promise that the work would be completed by Christmas until she knew what work was required.

In his question, Councillor Fraser asked the Cabinet Member to comment on the first meeting of the Housing Improvement Board which had taken place the previous Tuesday (7 December 2021), and whether the Board had given sufficient weight to Croydon Housing tenants in its make-up.

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice stated that she was proud that the Housing Improvement Board had now started to meet and that it currently included three tenant representatives and three industry-based representatives. The Chair had ensured that everyone's views were heard and that tenants felt empowered to speak. The initial set up was what the administration had felt was appropriate at the time and that it was now up to the membership to decide its future membership requirements.

With the end of time allocated to questions to the Cabinet Members in the third pool, the Mayor announced that the time had been reached for the meeting to have ended and therefore put to the meeting a request for the time to be extended by 20 minutes to allow the further items on the agenda to be concluded.

The Leader proposed the motion to extend the meeting.

The Leader of the Opposition seconded the motion.

A vote on the motion was held and was carried.

## 39/21 Council Debate Motions

**The Mayor invited the Monitoring Officer to read out the first motion on behalf of the Administration.**

*“This Council expressed alarm at the rise of Islamophobia in recent years across the UK, and around the world. In Croydon we have seen an increase in reports of hate crime, including Islamophobic hate crime incidents, of 35% between 2017-2020. (Croydon Community Safety Strategy 2022-24).*

*This Council is committed to fighting Islamophobia in all its forms. We welcome the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims’ definition of Islamophobia, which has been backed by hundreds of organisations and institutions.*

*The APPG on British Muslims working definition of Islamophobia reads as follows and includes the subsequent contemporary examples of Islamophobia:*

*“Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.”*

*Contemporary examples of Islamophobia in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in encounters between religions and non-religions in the public sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:*

- *Calling for, aiding, instigating or justifying the killing or harming of Muslims in the name of a racist/fascist ideology, or an extremist view of religion.*
- *Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Muslims as such, or of Muslims as a collective group, such as, especially but not exclusively, conspiracies about Muslim entryism in politics, government or other societal institutions; the myth of Muslim identity having a unique propensity for terrorism, and claims of a demographic ‘threat’ posed by Muslims or of a ‘Muslim takeover’.*
- *Accusing Muslims as a group of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Muslim person or group of Muslim individuals, or even for acts committed by non-Muslims.*
- *Accusing Muslims as a group, or Muslim majority states, of inventing or exaggerating Islamophobia, ethnic cleansing or genocide perpetrated against Muslims.*
- *Accusing Muslim citizens of being more loyal to the ‘Ummah’ (transnational Muslim community) or to their countries of origin, or to the alleged priorities of Muslims worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.*
- *Denying Muslim populations the right to self-determination e.g., by claiming that the*

*existence of an independent Palestine or Kashmir is a terrorist endeavour.*

- *Applying double standards by requiring of Muslims behaviours that are not expected or demanded of any other groups in society, e.g. loyalty tests.*
- *Using the symbols and images associated with classic Islamophobia (e.g. Muhammad being a paedophile, claims of Muslims spreading Islam by the sword or subjugating minority groups under their rule) to characterize Muslims as being 'sex groomers', inherently violent or incapable of living harmoniously in plural societies.*
- *Holding Muslims collectively responsible for the actions of any Muslim majority state, whether secular or constitutionally Islamic.*

*This Council supports the Executive's intention to adopt the above definition of Islamophobia as set out by the APPG on British Muslims and will continue to engage with local Muslim community groups and organisations to combat this hatred. This Council calls on the government to follow suit and adopt the APPG definition, sending a clear message that any and all forms of Islamophobia will not be tolerated in our communities."*

The Mayor invited Councillor Ben-Hassel to propose the motion.

Councillor Ben-Hassel stated that research had shown that 35% of Britons think that Islam was a general threat to the British way of life. However, it should be noted that Muslims were also subject to terrorist attacks particularly in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Councillor Ben-Hassel continued by recounting her experience of growing up in a multi faith family and that these faiths shared a lot in common around tolerance, supporting the most vulnerable and social justice. In addition, the local Muslim community in her own ward had been supplying hot food to the rest of the community during Covid.

In concluding, Councillor Ben-Hassel stated that the existing anti-racism measures in law were not equipped to deal with Islamophobia and that defining Islamophobia was a first step towards addressing it. The APPG on British Muslim definition had been backed by hundreds of organisations including the Muslim Council of Britain, yet there were still no changes in law.

Councillor FitzPatrick seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Quadir also spoke of his personal experience and that of the Muslim community in highlighting the fear that was experienced in just going about in the community. There was also a feeling amongst younger member of the Muslim community that there would never be acceptance of them in wider society. He continued by stating that he was proud that the borough had tabled this motion and supported it.

Councillor Stranack stated how proud he was to be standing with Councillor Quadir in next May's elections and how the Abrahamic faiths had much in common. He continued by stating that it was necessary to be careful when designing legislation and highlighted instances where legislation had led to unintended consequences.

Councillor Stranack supported the motion.

Councillor Fitzpatrick started speaking by stating that he was proud to be joining the debate as a member of the Jewish community and was happy to speak in solidarity with

the Muslim community. In particular, Councillor Fitzpatrick highlighted the online Islamophobia abuse with a huge number of people using fake identities and the widespread availability of white supremacist culture and the spread of fake news accusing the Muslim community of spreading Covid.

Councillor Fitzpatrick continued by stating that these people were fascists seeking to exploit ignorance and prejudice with the aim of taking society back to a barbaric age. He additionally hoped that the Online Security Bill would be strong and allow people to carry on their lives with freedom from hate.

Councillor Fitzpatrick supported the motion.

Before the vote was taken the Mayor reminded the public that only those Members who were present in the Council Chamber could vote. This was due to the legislation at the time specifying that only those present in the room were able to vote.

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

**The Mayor invited the Monitoring Officer to read out the second motion on behalf of the Opposition.**

*“This Council regrets that the political choices and budgetary proposals of the current Administration are directly causing pain and anguish to the most vulnerable within our borough.*

*These choices include: buying a worthless hotel and selling it at a multi-million pound loss; creating a failing developer that went bust; closing popular local facilities ignoring the clear wishes of local people; cutting Council Tax benefits which increase the cost of living for those on the lowest incomes; using LTNs and other schemes not to help communities but to generate revenue to bail out the Administration’s financial black hole; failing to invest enough in repairing Council-owned properties, resulting in residents living in squalid conditions; and cutting care packages for those desperately in need of support – to name a few.*

*This Council acknowledges these errors and apologises to every resident affected.”*

The Mayor invited Councillor Perry to propose the motion.

Councillor Perry stated that it was the choices made by the Labour Administration that brought the borough to bankruptcy. The Report in the Public Interest had made it abundantly clear that the problems occurred before Covid and that Covid had been the final straw. Where other local authorities had been able to rely on reserves to see them through Croydon had none.

Councillor Perry continued by stating that as time had gone by the Administration had repeatedly blamed the Government or Covid for the problems. Whilst there had been a change for leadership the problem had continued and those now in charge already sat at the table and had been part of the decision making process that brought the borough to its knees. In addition the current leadership had allowed the culture of bullying to continue as shown by local Labour members setting up petitions to attempt to rescind the deselection of Councillor Pelling.

In concluding Councillor Perry talked about the poor financial decisions that the Labour Administration had made such as the purchase of a hotel for £30 million, the purchase of a shopping centre for £50 million, the setting up of a development company and the use of an unproven developer to refurbish Fairfield Halls. Yet again it was the most vulnerable who were paying for these poor decisions through, for example, the cuts to support for young and old and cuts to voluntary sector grants. The Administration had failed the borough and its residents.

Councillor Hale seconded the motion and reserved her right to speak.

The Leader, Councillor Hamida Ali stated that this motion was the same story from the Tory Opposition but that for the 7<sup>th</sup> month in a row the Administration had been able to show that it was on track for a broadly balanced budget. The follow up report from the Government's Independent Non-Statutory Rapid Review spoke of good progress and signs of greater budgetary control. The Improvement and Assurance Panel's 3<sup>rd</sup> Report also stated that significant improvement around financial management.

In continuing, Councillor Ali stated that although the Opposition regretted the changes made by the Administration but the Administration was rightly proud of its values and delivering change in the borough such as the Legacy Youth Service, paying the London Living Wage, investing in and protecting the cultural industries, investing in the voluntary sector and domestic violence service and responding to the climate emergency. The budget for next year represented a £300 million investment in the community.

In concluding, Councillor Ali reminded Members that since 2010 there had been an 81% cut in the Revenue Support Grant and that chronic underfunding since had led to this situation and that the Opposition had failed to state how they proposed to fund services. This had led to a lack of transparency and it was time that the Opposition were honest with the people of Croydon.

Councillor King quoted from the Independent Report from Chris Wood which stated that the "Council's Administration had demonstrated its preparedness to take difficult decisions, with some notable high profile issues determined." Councillor King continued by stating that report could not state "the Council" as the opposition had voted or spoken against every proposal made. Another independent voice from outside the council, the Government's Independent Panel had also stated that difficult decisions were required.

Councillor King continued by stating that the motion did not face up to the difficult decisions required and that the Conservative Mayoral candidate himself was incapable of facing up to those difficult decisions and had no plan or idea of how to balance the Council's budget. This was in contrast to the Administration who had made those tough decisions by committing to make the council more efficient but protecting frontline services at the same time. A large proportion of the proposed budget savings will come from making services more efficient, reducing back office costs and seeking new external funding and income.

In conclusion, Councillor King stated that the Opposition motion was not a substitute for a plan and should be rejected.

Councillor Hale stated that 2021 had been another terrible year for the residents of Croydon as the Labour Administration tried to distance themselves from the terrible financial situation which they had created. The people of Croydon had not forgotten the disgrace some Labour councillors had brought to the town with the largest ever Government bailout when Croydon was once again shown on TV screens with pictures of squalid, mouldy, fungal infested sopping wet homes in Regina Road.

Councillor Hale continued by stating that the Labour Administration had failed to learn and had continued to ignore residents, failed to get a proper grip on the budget, leaving callers on the phone for hours to speak to the Council Tax Team who do not pick up the phone, allowing developers to get away with planning breaches and relying on car drivers to incurring sufficient penalties to balance the books. Councillor Hale asked why multi-million pound contracts had been extended despite failing to deliver the services residents had paid for. Also why with so much development funding coming why was there no money available for Purley Pool.

In conclusion Councillor Hale stated that the residents deserved so much more than this and therefore supported the motion.

The motion was put to the vote and defeated.

#### 40/21 **Health & Wellbeing Board Annual Report**

The recommendation was put to the vote and was unanimously carried.

**RESOLVED:** Council **AGREED** the recommendation in the report as below:

The Council received and considered the Health & Wellbeing Board's 2020-21 Annual Report.

#### 41/21 **Director of Public Health Report 2020/21**

The recommendations were put to the vote and were unanimously carried.

**RESOLVED:** Council **AGREED** the recommendations in the report as below:

- 1.1 Note the content of the Director of Public Health's independent Annual Report and
- 1.2 Approve the publication of the Annual Report.

#### 42/21 **Polling Places and Polling Districts**

The recommendations were put to the vote and were unanimously carried.

**RESOLVED:** Council **AGREED** the recommendations in the report below:

- 1) Approve the amendments to the existing schedule of polling districts set out in Appendix A.
- 2) Approve the revised schedule of polling places set out in Appendix B.



- 3) Delegate to the Returning Officer authority to approve an alternative polling place in the event that any polling place becomes unavailable or found to be unsuitable in the run up to an election and to make this change on a permanent basis following the election.

43/21 **Recommendations of Cabinet or Committees to Council for decision**

- **Report in the Public Interest – Quarter 2 Update**

The recommendations were put to the vote and were unanimously carried.

**RESOLVED:** Council **AGREED** the recommendations in the report below:

- 1.1 Note and agree on the progress the Council has made in regard to achieving the recommendations set out by external auditor in the Report in the Public Interest in Appendix 2 [Appendix 1 of the Cabinet report] with 62 out of 99 actions complete;
- 1.2 Note the outcome of the first tranche of work to properly evidence what has been achieved so far following the initial internal audit of actions delivered to provide full assurance to members and residents on the changes achieved;
- 1.3 Agree the Refreshed Action Plan including actions marked complete, progress updates against open actions and identification of actions to be embedded going forward as business as usual.

- **Community Safety Strategy**

The recommendation was put to the vote and was unanimously carried.

**RESOLVED:** Council **AGREED** the recommendation in the report below:

- 1.4 To adopt the Community Safety Strategy, Appendix 5 [Appendix 1 of the Cabinet report].

- iii. **2022/23 Budget and Three-Year Medium Term Financial Strategy**

The recommendation was put to the vote and was carried.

**RESOLVED:** Council **AGREED** the recommendation in the report below:

- 1.5 To approve the growth and savings schedules included at Appendix 7 [Appendix 1 of the Cabinet Report] as part of the budget approval process. To note that officers will commence planning for the implementation from April 2022 where appropriate, but that any such proposals are subject to approval at February Council.

- iv. **Croydon Local Plan Review – Publication of the Proposed Submission draft**

The recommendations were put to the vote and were carried.

**RESOLVED:** Council **AGREED** the recommendations in the report below:

- 1.6 Approve the submission of the Proposed Submission draft of the Croydon Local Plan review (Appendix 1) to the Secretary of State following the conclusion of the statutory 6-week publication period in accordance with Section 20(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004;
- 1.7 Delegate the agreement of any Main Modifications required by the appointed Planning Inspector to make the Croydon Local Plan Review sound to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Regeneration, in consultation with the Director of Planning and Sustainable Regeneration;
- 1.8 Delegate the publication of any Main Modifications required by the appointed Planning Inspector for formal consultation to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Regeneration, in consultation with the Director of Planning and Sustainable Regeneration; and
- 1.9 Delegate minor modifications and factual corrections (that are not required to make the draft Croydon Local Plan Review sound) to the Director of Planning and Sustainable Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Culture and Regeneration.

**v. The Gambling Act 2005 – Review of London Borough of Croydon Statement of Principles**

The recommendation was put to the vote and was unanimously carried.

**RESOLVED:** Council **AGREED** the recommendation in the report below:

To adopt the Statement of Principles in Appendix 11 [Appendix 5 to the Licensing Committee report].

44/21 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 10.14 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:**

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