

## Cabinet

Meeting of held on Monday, 7 February 2022 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillors Hamida Ali, Stuart King, Muhammad Ali, Alisa Flemming, Patricia Hay-Justice, Oliver Lewis, Manju Shahul-Hameed and Callton Young OBE.

**Also Present:** Councillors Sean Fitzsimons, Janet Campbell, Lynne Hale, Yvette Hopley, Scott Roche, Robert Ward, Pat Clouder, Clive Fraser

**Apologies:** None received

### PART A

20/22 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosure of interest made at the meeting

21/22 **Urgent Business (If any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

22/22 **Draft Croydon Carbon Neutral Action Plan**

Cllr Hamida Ali (Chair) invited Cllr Muhammad Ali (Cabinet Member for Sustainable Croydon) to introduce the item.

Cllr Ali reminded colleagues of the history of previous recommendations. He outlined wide-ranging actions taken by the council in working towards mitigation of climate change and informed members of current actions underway.

Members noted work around building and enhanced new spaces, and other policies firmly embedded within the council's strategy to deliver on the action plan. Cllr Ali highlighted the challenges and acknowledged that delivery was dependent upon working with strategic partners, residents and political leadership. He pointed out key actions being taken towards enabling delivery, which included:

- Development of a communication, engagement and awareness strategy to raise awareness.

- Schools, key businesses, Tier 1 contractors and public sector organisations in the Borough have been contacted to ask them for their pledge to work collectively towards achievement on delivery.
- Joint working politically to bring climate change to the fore.

Members heard about some of the challenges and that GLA, TFL and Central Government needed to enable local powers and provide financial funding to allow the council to progress successfully.

He asked colleagues to consider the recommendations and the allocation of funding for the work involved.

The Chair and Cabinet congratulated Cllr Ali on his achievements in driving the subject forward and Members were invited to comment. They said:

- What are the key challenges for delivery of the action plan?
  - Cllr Ali took the opportunity to acknowledge the work of officers. He referred to the HRA Business Plan which would be the first opportunity to embed the climate change strategy into building work. He said that engagement with residents was also key, through education about small changes that each individual could make.
- With regards to collective endeavours to achieve these ambitions, what is being done?
  - Cllr Ali outlined details of communication with various stakeholders, and work being done to bring residents and particularly young people to forums. He said that political cooperation was important and had written to colleagues to ask for their commitment in embedding the climate change strategy into all the council's work.
- In reference to the key priorities, what other actions can be taken to ensure green recovery?
  - Cllr Ali responded by referring to his ambitions for Croydon to promote green skills by reaching out to universities to encourage young people with opportunities to achieve carbon neutral goals;
- With reference to work with young people and schools to plant more trees, could the opportunity to include time capsules be included?
  - Cllr Ali agreed that this was an excellent idea. He acknowledged schools as community hubs and said that they would encourage involvement of parents and residents.
- How will the budget be utilised to support the proposed actions?
  - Members heard that plans, subject to approval, were underway to open up opportunities to take forward more

actions locally. Cllr Ali said that the Borough was making decisions that showed how the Council attempted to mitigate climate change.

- Will officers be encouraged to highlight benefits of being more environmentally friendly in reports going forward?  
- Cllr Ali acknowledged that deliberate notice was being taken already and the organisation considered the impact of climate change in everything it was doing. He referred to de-carbonisation of heat as key to success and a lot of work needed to be done.
- With regards to the key aspects of the plan, how can committing to reducing carbon emissions be achieved where some of the schemes that could benefit are not accepted?  
- Cllr Ali referred to some of the issues and collection of data that had led to inform decisions.
- They asked about current pledges and whether targets will be met, given limited resources?  
- Cllr Ali referred to heat pump installation and acknowledged work done thus far. Members noted funding available from the Mayor of London and the importance of development of the strategy in order to ensure that the council would be able to request it. Cllr Ali said that he was confident that the target to plant trees would be achieved by working with community organisations – subject to funding. He agreed to bring further information to colleagues when available.

The Leader of the Council delegated authority to the Cabinet to make the following decisions:

Having carefully read and considered the Part A report, and the requirements of the Council's public sector duty in relation to the issues detailed in the body of the reports, the Cabinet

**RESOLVED: To**

1. Consider the progress made in the creation of the appended draft Croydon Carbon Neutral Action Plan, the scope and scale of detail contained within the Plan and the associated delivery timetable.
2. Approve the adoption of the draft Croydon Carbon Neutral Action Plan, appendix 1 to this report and acknowledge that the plan was a 'live document' which would be updated on an ongoing basis following reports to Members for Page 3 Agenda Item 4 approval.
3. Agree to receive an Annual Report on the Plan and track progress on delivering actions outlined in the proposed Croydon Carbon Neutral Action Plan to achieve its ambition of being carbon neutral by 2030.

4. Note the steps that the Council had taken, and the approach it intended to take, to identify resources and progress funding streams for the delivery of draft Croydon Carbon Neutral Action Plan in response to the Climate Emergency commission's recommendations.
5. Note the proposed allocation of £1.1M from the CIL Local Meaningful Proportion to finance the Sustainable Croydon initiatives split equally over 2022/23 and 2023/24 which was being assessed via internal processes.

23/22

### **Parks and Green Spaces Renewal Strategy 2022-25 and Events Policy and 2022 Calendar Update**

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  - Schools, key businesses, Tier 1 contractors and public sector organisations in the Borough have been contacted to ask them for their pledge to work collectively towards achievement on delivery;
  - Joint working politically to bring climate change to the fore.
- Members heard about some of the challenges and that GLA, TFL and Central Government needed to enable local powers and provide financial funding to allow the council to progress successfully.

He asked colleagues to consider the recommendations and the allocation of funding for the work involved.

The Chair and Cabinet congratulated Cllr Ali on his achievements in driving the subject forward and Members were invited to comment.

They said:

- What are the key challenges for delivery of the action plan?
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The Leader of the Council delegated authority to the Cabinet to make the following decisions:

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5. Note the proposed allocation of £1.1M from the CIL Local Meaningful Proportion to finance the Sustainable Croydon initiatives split equally over 2022/23 and 2023/24 which was being assessed via internal processes.

## **Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020-21**

Cllr Ali asked members to note the additional attendance of Croydon Health colleagues, Police Partners and Independent Scrutiniser, Eleanor Brazil.

Cllr Alisa Fleming (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning) outlined the work set out within the report and referred colleagues to the recommendations proposed. She acknowledged in particular the work of Crystal Palace Football Club who supported the council and delivered training around unconscious bias and the impact on how it had supported delivery to young people in the borough.

Debbie Jones (Executive Director responsible for Children and Young People in Education) informed colleagues of work around support of young people and introduced Eleanor Brazil (Independent Scrutiniser), who provided a summary of examples of how agencies work together to improve practices.

Members noted key areas of focus referred to within the report and the importance of effective partnerships to manage demands and minimise risk to children and young people. All agencies made substantial contributions in setting priorities and were very well engaged. Priority groups had been set up and members noted demand was rising in Croydon with increased referrals to social care.

The Chair invited Elaine Clancy (Croydon Health Services) and Fi Martin (Metropolitan Police Service) to speak. They acknowledged the challenges and strengths of partnerships and relationships and the support in working together to add value to the young people of Croydon. Cllr Ali thanked partner colleagues for their attendance as evidence of their priority in working together and asked for their reflections on the loss of several young people in the borough.

Colleagues heard about the impact of these events and work been done to examine circumstances to look at progress in addressing issues. Guest speakers referred to work around long-term problem solving and how the police were engaged with residents, echoing the benefits of partnerships.

Members were invited to comment and made several points including:

- Concern about unaccompanied Asylum seeking children and young people within the borough and how this impacted best quality service to all young people;
- What input could partnerships provide to ensure efforts were streamlined around the new Community Safety Strategy for a single approach?

- The number of stops for adolescents was still of concern and how would this be improved?

Guest speakers addressed the key points raised which outlined ways in which they were working with schools and colleges and acknowledged issues around disproportionality.

Members discussed the University of Bedfordshire approach and positive advice on how to address certain issues. They felt particularly that evidence of outcomes which deliver changes and partnership working needed to be included within future reports. Concern about children moving between boroughs and increased home schooling were raised.

Colleagues agreed these were significant issues and referred to monitoring vulnerabilities through work within the action plans. Cllr Fleming acknowledged commitment of colleagues in taking recommendations and good practice forward collaboratively and assured Cabinet that this would continue.

Members agreed the recommendations.

25/22

### **Adult Social Care and Health Strategy**

Cllr Janet Campbell (Cabinet Member for Families, Health & Social Care) outlined details of the Strategy, its priorities and objectives to protect the most vulnerable, improve services, reduce expenditure and live within the council's available resources.

In the discussion, members heard about sustainability and support to residents by working together with partnerships and integration with health. Residents and partners were involved in development of the strategy and would be engaged moving forward with continued monitoring of progress and an annual report to ensure accountability and improve performance. Members noted positive case studies within the report and development of a model of services with Active Life to ensure that digital connectivity was available to all. As development continues, it is proposed that this would be a living document to be amended as progress continued.

The Chair invited comments and colleagues raised several points:

- They welcomed the report and asked for a better understanding of delivery of financial benefits;
- How was the customer's voice being heard?
- How would success be measured?



- They were concerned about cuts to funding which had impacted many of the organisations which would have supported this strategy;
- Integration of work around some of the contracts which were out-dated needed to be considered.

Speakers responded to the points raised and informed colleagues that development of re-enablement services, working together with the voluntary sector and health colleagues would enable clients to be supported at the right place and time and ensured that their needs were met appropriately.

Members heard about the importance to facilitate engagement to ensure that they were involved in helping shape social services going forward. Colleagues noted that services would be more person orientated and that there was an opportunity with the Strategy to improve engagement. Alliances would lead to a reduction in cost and staff training and development would be key to this.

Cllr Campbell acknowledged concerns and informed colleagues of contracts under current discussion, particularly around re-design and improvement.

Members agreed the recommendations.

The Leader of the Council delegated authority to the Cabinet to make the following decisions:

Having carefully read and considered the Part A report, and the requirements of the Council's public sector duty in relation to the issues detailed in the body of the reports, the Cabinet

**RESOLVED: To**

1. Adopt the 'adult social care and health strategy' as a key enabler for delivering services to our residents and carers.

26/22

**HRA Rent Setting and Draft Budget 2022/23**

The Chair invited Cllr Hay-Justice (Cabinet Member for Homes) to introduce this item. She outlined the background to the report and the rent-setting policy as previously agreed by Cabinet. The proposal was to increase the rent by 4.1% which would provide vital funds to support most vulnerable residents. Members heard about scrutiny of the policy and the responses to these.

Cllr Hay-Justice informed colleagues of risks of not following government guidance should the rise not be imposed. Comparisons with other councils have been considered and members heard how

Croydon had provided substantive support via assistance to the most vulnerable.

David Padfield (Interim Corporate Director of Housing) addressed the quality impact analysis and referred to Paragraph 9.9 which informed colleagues that work was now complete. He updated members on further work being done alongside that of the housing improvement plan and also information on the assessment process for accessing hardship payments for those in most need.

Cllr Ali invited colleagues to raise any issues and they made the following points:

- They raised concerns about the cost of living crisis and whether the uplift was higher than before;
- What was set out in line with the council's rent setting policy around consultation with residents?
- What assessments had been made on rent-collecting after the rise and impact on residents?

Cllr Hay-Justice responded to comments and said the rise was comparable to previous rises in 2013. Whilst the Council had committed to government's guidelines, recommendations to inform residents at an earlier stage were made to allow them to plan their finances. She took the opportunity to acknowledge the work of officers and assured colleagues that individuals had been advised of the potential rise last year.

Cllr Hay-Justice went on to remind colleagues that impediment of rental collections had not been at the level expected during the pandemic and work was underway with residents, the Improvement Board and other partners to look at services including the improvement plan.

Mr Padfield reminded members that the rent setting policy was a guidance and a more detailed discussion and consultation exercise might be considered necessary in the future.

Cllr Ben-Hassal (Chair, Streets Environment and Homes Scrutiny Subcommittee) informed colleagues of feedback from their recent meeting and asked members to consider some of the recommendations made by them.

Members agreed the recommendations.

The Leader of the Council delegated authority to the Cabinet to make the following decisions:

Having carefully read and considered the Part A report, and the requirements of the Council's public sector duty in relation to the issues detailed in the body of the reports, the Cabinet

**RESOLVED: To**

1. Approve the following increases for charges within the HRA:
  - a. Increase rent levels in 2022/23, increase by 4.1% against the 2021/22 rate in line with the Government guidance on the limit on annual rent increases for 2022-23
  - b. Service charges applied to tenants that receive the services will increase by 4.1% against the 2021/22 rates
  - c. Garage rents increase by 4.1% 1.4 Parking spaces rents increase by 4.1%
  - d. Caravan plot rents to increase by 4.1%
  - e. Heating charges to increase by 4.1%

27/22

**London Councils Grants Scheme 2022 - 2026**

Cllr Shahul-Hameed (Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety and Resilience) provided background to the report and asked for Cabinet's approval to the council's contribution, as required by statute to the London Councils Grant Scheme for 2022 – 2026.

The total amount of the scheme for 2022/23 amounted to £6.668m and Croydon's contribution would be £287,809 as recommended by the London Council's Committee at their meeting in December 2021. A strong mandate had been supported by all councils.

Members heard that extensive consultation had taken place to agree priorities which provided support to the most vulnerable, which were:

- Combatting homelessness;
- Tackling domestic violence.

In the following discussion, colleagues welcomed the report and agreed the recommendations.

At this point, the Chair proposed the meeting be extended by 30 minutes to enable completion of the agenda. Members agreed.

28/22

**Stage 1: Recommendations arising from Scrutiny**

Cllr Sean Fitzsimons (Chair, Scrutiny and Overview Committee) reminded Cabinet members of the work of the various committees and asked them to note the second paper which contained responses. He invited Cllr Fitzpatrick to provide more detail on the report, which members noted was written by a cross-party group, unanimously put forward to look at managing secondary school moves.

In the discussion, colleagues heard about adverse experiences and other issues around school changes. Members' attention was drawn particularly to key points within the report at recommendations 10 – 17, which showed in 2019/20:

- A significant upward trend in children being presented to the Fair Access Panel;
- An increase going from a school to alternative provision;
- A surprising number of children identified as having special needs;
- A large proportion of these children had social emotional and mental health issues.

Cllr Ali acknowledged the work of the Task and Finish Group and invited comments. Members endorsed the importance of this work and raised the following points:

- Disproportionality by race is an issue and earlier diagnosis should be supported in schools;
- Re: key findings at 15-17, how do we support impacts on young people who are permanently excluded;
- Concerns about the wording at Recommendation 23;
- Addressing how parents are given a greater voice and a better understanding of how managed moves are handled.

Further discussion followed about ways to avoid exclusions and minimise managed moves. Members spoke about engagement with parents and underlying issues that lead to misdiagnosis and misunderstanding.

The Chair thanked colleagues.

Members agreed to receive the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group, with an update to Cabinet in two months.

Cabinet Members noted the report and agreed the recommendations.

30/22

**Exclusion of the Press and Public**

There were none.

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm