

MINUTES of the **MEETING** of the **CABINET** held on Wednesday, 12 October 2022 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

Present: Executive Mayor Jason Perry (Chair);

Councillors Jeet Bains, Jason Cummings, Maria Gatland, Lynne Hale, Yvette Hopley, Scott Roche and Andy Stranack

PART A

62/22 **Executive Mayor's Announcements**

Before moving to the formal agenda for the meeting, the Executive Mayor provided an update on the response to the fire at Sycamore House over the weekend.

He said that, as Members would know, Sycamore House was one of the Council's temporary accommodation blocks. He said that he and the Deputy Executive Mayor had visited Sycamore House yesterday and it was clear that Saturday's fire had caused significant damage, which meant that the building required a lot of work before it could be reoccupied.

The Executive Mayor said that, whilst thankfully no one had been seriously injured, around 133 people from 63 households had been evacuated. He went on to say that the Council was securing new temporary accommodation options for all of those affected and he wanted to thank all the Councillors and officers who had supported both the initial emergency response over the weekend and those who had been working to support and rehome the affected residents ever since.

In addition, the Executive Mayor highlighted the Thornton Heath Clocktower fire. He said it was clear that the Clocktower had suffered extensive damage and he had instructed officers to carry out a detailed assessment of these damages with a view to restoring this landmark as quickly as possible.

63/22 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Ola Kolade (Cabinet Member for Community Safety).

64/22 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none or the following disclosures of interest were made:

65/22

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that both the Part A (public) and Part B (exempt – not for publication) minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday 21 September 2022 be agreed as an accurate record.

66/22

Urgent Business (If any)

There were no items of urgent business.

67/22

Scrutiny Stages 1 and 2

The Executive Mayor agreed that the Scrutiny Stage 1 and Scrutiny Stage 2 reports be considered together.

Stage 1

Cabinet considered a report, which detailed in Appendix A to the report, recommendations that had been developed from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and its Sub-Committees, since the last Cabinet meeting.

Stage 2

Cabinet considered a report, which provided a formal response to the task and finish group report in relation to inclusion and exclusion and the recommendations from the task and finish group following the extensive focus on this.

The Executive Mayor welcomed to the meeting, and thanked, former Councillor Jerry Fitzpatrick, for the long-awaited review on inclusion and exclusion of children by the task and finish group. He also thanked Members and Officers for their work on this in-depth report.

It was reported that the Council's Education Department welcomed the report and the opportunity to be involved in the process and that, to implement the recommendations within the report, the Education Department would need to work in partnership with school leaders across the sector and would highlight, encourage, and provide support with the application of the recommendations.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Maria Gatland, offered her thanks to all concerned and highlighted that several of the recommendations were not within the gift of the Local Authority to dictate but were linked to individual education providers' decision-making and it was them who would influence how those proposals would be delivered.

At the invitation of the Executive Mayor, Councillor Rowenna Davis, Chair of the Council's Scrutiny and Overview Committee, addressed Cabinet.

Councillor Davis said that, in respect of the Stage 1 report, the recommendations before Cabinet had been raised by her at its last meeting since these had been relevant at that time, in particular, the Committee's review of the Community Safety Partnership's work on tackling violence against women and girls. She said that, following the last meeting, a further recommendation had been proposed by Councillor Nwafar, that the Executive Mayor and the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, consider adopting a programme of domestic abuse champions for Croydon, made up of people who recognised the signs of domestic abuse and given that Croydon had the highest rates of domestic abuse in London, that Cabinet also consider this formal recommendation by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.

Councillor Davis said that, in respect of the Stage 2 report, she echoed the Executive Mayor's thanks to former Councillor Fitzpatrick. She said that the commitments in the report were to be welcomed and the Committee would be revisiting the matter in the New Year.

Councillor Davis then referred to her committee's meeting the previous evening, at which, the Temporary Workers Contract Award, approved by the Executive Mayor in Cabinet at its meeting held on 12 October 2022, had been called in.

Councillor Davis said that the Committee's two main concerns were that the contract may have represented an unacceptable legal risk to the Council and that it might not have offered the best value for money. She said that, despite the unacceptable lateness of the report, the call-in had been a helpful and enlightening process that had helped to provide reassurance about the decision.

Councillor Davis said that the Committee had agreed unanimously that the Executive Mayor's decision of 12 October 2022 did not need to be referred back to this evening's meeting as an urgent item of business. There were, she said, a number of recommendations the Committee would be making to help the Council learn from this process, including the need for greater clarity on why some information had been kept private, rather than been open to all in the public domain. She said that these recommendations would be formally submitted to the next meeting of the Cabinet.

In conclusion, Councillor Davis highlighted the work the Committee had undertaken in respect of Council Tax enforcement. She said that as part of the ongoing cost of living crisis in the Borough, residents and community groups had advised the Committee that enforcement was a serious concern and that the No.1 debt-related concern reported to the Citizens' Advice Bureau by residents, was Council Tax arrears and an online meeting had been convened and dedicated to listening to those concerns, some of which were centred around claims that people were unable to have a meaningful discussion with the Council, that mistakes had often been made and that enforcement had been taken as a first

step, check later approach which, she said had added to the strain placed on those affected who were already vulnerable.

Councillor Davis acknowledged the good work being undertaken by officers in reaching out to voluntary groups and those affected, and for going back to their respective teams to make changes, including guidance on how to train officers in dealing compassionately with enquiries.

Having listened to the contributions and considered the detail in the report, the Executive Mayor, in Cabinet, **RESOLVED** that:

1. In respect of the Stage 1 report, the recommendations arising from the meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on 6 September (Appendix A), be received;
2. That the additional recommendation referred to above be noted and included; and
3. That a substantive response to the recommendations (a Scrutiny Stage 2 Report) be provided within two months at the Cabinet meeting, scheduled to be held on 7 December 2022.

And, in respect of the Stage 2 report:

4. That the draft response to the scrutiny recommendations, as set out at Paragraph 2 to the report, be approved.

68/22

Tackling Graffiti in Croydon

Cabinet considered a report, that presented the Council's approach to an enhanced Graffiti service, which was the fulfilment of a key Manifesto commitment set out by the Executive Mayor.

The report also set out the Council's approach for an increased focus on removing illegal, antisocial and offensive graffiti, including non-offensive graffiti across the Borough.

It was reported that graffiti was an issue, which was seen across the Borough, and which impacted on the image of the town and the report set out the Council's framework and plans to increase resources to tackle and reduce the negative impact graffiti had on the quality of life for residents and businesses. It was anticipated that this new policy direction would allow graffiti enforcement and removal resources to focus on where they were needed, to improve local environmental quality and help reduce the fear of crime, whilst helping increase pride in Croydon.

In response to questions put by Councillor King (Leader of the Labour Group) on behalf of Councillor Nina Degrad (Shadow Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment) in respect of what the £500k allocation

would be spent on, how the service would operate and when it would begin, the Executive Mayor said that the focus would be on using existing contractors in the initial stages. He added that although work had already started on a spot-clean basis, the priority for the Administration was to have a blitz approach to clean up areas and see an immediate improvement with areas then being easier to maintain.

Having listened to the contributions and considered the detail in the report, the Executive Mayor, in Cabinet, **RESOLVED** that:

1. The plans for tackling graffiti across the Borough, be approved.
2. The additional expenditure of £0.5m, as set out in Section 4 of the report, be approved.
3. The additional services being commissioned through the existing highways contract, be approved.
4. A holistic task-force approach to clean up specific areas, which would include graffiti, be approved.
5. That the Council may charge property owners to recover its costs for the removal of graffiti, be approved.
6. The draft Graffiti and Street Art Policy, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.
7. Officers be authorised to explore the options from external providers, which supported Croydon's financial and social value priorities.

69/22

Report on the Results of Informal Public Consultations on 11 Healthy School Streets (Pedestrian and Cycle Zone only)

Cabinet considered a report, which presented the results of the informal consultation, which sought the public's view on the possible introduction of 11 new Healthy School Streets under Experimental Traffic Management Orders (ETMOs) for a maximum period of 18 months.

It was noted that the consultation had been carried out over a one-month period between 1 July 2022 to 30 July 2022 and had been undertaken across multiple channels, including the distribution of 8,345 letters and messaging on the Council's website and social media channels. However, the Council only received 531 responses (which represented a 6% response rate).

Although, the Council had consulted on 11 Healthy School Street schemes, it was recommended that only nine be taken forward for implementation, with two schemes not being taken forward, as detailed in the report.

It was reported that the importance of community feedback was recognised and to ensure the Council was listening to the community, the recommendation was that the proposed schemes were taken forward as experiments to allow the community to assess the “real” impacts of the schemes.

In response to questions put by Councillor King (Leader of the Labour Group) on behalf of Councillor Nina Degrad (Shadow Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment) in respect of revenue generated from Penalty Charge Notices and the overall income for the scheme and a request for Ward Members to receive feedback on such schemes within their wards, the Executive Mayor said that the report was centred around policy rather than finance and that it was important for the Council to collate the data and that arrangements could be put in place to provide appropriate ward members with six-monthly updates on feedback received.

Having listened to the contributions and considered the detail in the report, the Executive Mayor, in Cabinet, **RESOLVED** that:

1. the following nine Healthy School Street schemes be taken forward for implementation under Experimental Traffic Management Orders, with proposed amendments to Healthy School Streets 10 scheme as detailed in this report:

Ref.	School Name(s)	Affected Road(s)	Ward(s)
HSS1	The Crescent Primary School and Brit School	The Crescent and Saracen Close	Selhurst
HSS3	South Norwood Primary School	Birchanger Road, Crowther Road and Gresham Road	South Norwood
HSS4	St Cyprians Greek Orthodox Primary School	Ingram Road and Springfield Road	Norbury Park
HSS5	Howard Primary School	Dering Place and Barham Road	Waddon
HSS6	Oasis Shirley Park	Stroud Green Way	Shirley North
HSS7	Good Shepherd Catholic School	Dunley Drive and Walker Close	New Addington North
HSS8	Kenley Primary School	Mosslea Road and New Barn Lane	Kenley
HSS9	Gonville Academy	Gonville Road	West Thornton
HSS10	Park Hill Junior and Infants School	Stanhope Road and The Avenue <i>(as amended)</i>	Park Hill and Whitgift

2. The Council's Road Space Manager, Sustainable Communities Division, be authorised to make the required ETMOs, which would be valid for a maximum period of 18 months, with the first six months serving as the statutory objection period.
3. Officers be authorised to implement relevant parking, waiting and/or loading restrictions required to support the successful operation of the experimental school street schemes.
4. Officers be authorised to install the relevant equipment that allowed the collection of traffic and air quality data for the nine School Street sites.

70/22

Period 5 Financial Performance Report

Cabinet considered a report, which provided the Council's annual forecast as at Month 5 (August 2022) for the Council's General Fund (GF), Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Capital Programme (CP).

The report formed part of the Council's financial management process for publicly reporting financial performance against its budgets monthly.

In introducing the report, the Executive Mayor said that the Council faced massive in year problems, such as the Borough's parking revenue shortfall of c.£10m and that the Council was ill-prepared to handle these financial problems.

- The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Cummings, said that the Council was now forecasting a £10.4m overspend at financial year-end but there were opportunities identified also.

He said that whilst the Children and Young People and Assistant Chief Executive's Directorates had reported improvements, there had been negative movement in Housing.

Councillor Cummings said that there was a £9.2m resources overspend and that the previous Administration had known about this for 18 months. He added that the Capital Programme continued to forecast an underspend position.

In response to questions put by Councillor Callton Young (Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance) in respect of variances and the provision of £700k additional money, the Executive Mayor said that the Council's finances had clearly gotten out of control under the previous administration and that he did not yet know what the risks would be.

Councillor Cummings said that there were figures that were wrong and unachievable and the pressures the Council faced this year were because

the figures were simply unachievable and almost impossible to have gotten any worse.

He said that there was an additional £700k provided for inflation, which the Council had to allow for.

Having listened to the contributions and considered the detail in the report, the Executive Mayor, in Cabinet, **RESOLVED:**

1. To note that the General Fund was projecting a net overspend of £10.547m as at Month 5, or £3.6m assuming the budgeted contribution to reserves was moved from opportunities into the projected outturn. *(Service directorates were indicating a £25.316m overspend with a £14.769m underspend corporately.)*
2. To note that a further number of risks and compensating opportunities may materialise, which would see the forecast year-end variance change. *(These indicated a net opportunity of £1.838m (risks £10.769m and opportunities of £12.607m) and were reported within Section 3 of this report. Should all these risks materialise, and none of the mitigations be effective, the Council was forecast to overspend by £21.316m. However, if none of the risks materialised and all the opportunities were delivered, the Council would underspend by £2.060m.)*
3. To note the further actions being taken, through development of the Deficit Recovery Plan, to mitigate the projected overspend with a view to eliminating it by the end of the financial year. *(Further details were in paragraph 2.15 to the report.)*
4. That the non-delivery of the MTFs savings, as indicated within Table 2b to the report, be approved.
5. To note the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was projecting an end of year position of a £3.210m overspend, mainly due to inflation in energy costs.
6. To note the Capital Programme spend to date for the General Fund of £7.644m (against a budget of £112.069m) with a projected forecast underspend of £7.715m for the end of the year.
7. To note the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme spend to date of £4.978m (against a budget of £22.083m), with a projected forecast underspend of £3.050m for the end of the year.
8. To note, the above figures were predicated on forecasts from Month 5 to the year end and therefore could be subject to change as forecasts were made based on the best available information at this time.

9. To note, the Council continued to operate a Spend Control Panel to ensure that tight financial control and assurance oversight were maintained. *(A new financial management culture was being implemented across the organisation through increased scrutiny, such as the Assurance meetings, improved communication, and budget manager training from CIPFA.)*

71/22

Review of Council Tax Support Scheme 2023-2024

Cabinet considered a report, which sought authorisation to undertake statutory consultation with both the public and the Major Precepting Authorities (the GLA) in respect of proposed changes to Croydon's Council Tax Reduction (Support) Scheme (CTS), which would take effect from 1st April 2023.

It was reported that each financial year, the Council was required to review its CTS scheme in accordance with the requirements of Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and to either maintain the scheme or amend it. Further, an income banded CTS scheme was introduced from 1 April 2022 to simplify the scheme and to achieve MTFS cost reductions of £4.3m for Croydon.

It was further reported that, as of July 2022, Croydon had awarded £28.4m for the financial year of Council Tax Support to residents. This was a decrease in CTS awarded of £6.7m compared to last year, with the financial impact to Croydon being a saving of £5.4m. Compared to the MTFS estimate of £4.3m, it was on track to cost £1.1m less than originally planned.

The report set out proposals to review the CTS scheme and to make changes, which would impact the level of expenditure by varying amounts.

The Executive Mayor said that this was a tidying-up process following amendments that had been made to the Scheme last year and that the proposed amendments to the Scheme would bring the Council into line with neighbouring Merton, Sutton and Bromley London Boroughs, who took non-dependant reductions within their Council Tax Support Schemes.

The report set out examples of how each of these changes could impact on different claimants and further information would be part of the consultation. The Executive Mayor asked that Members promote the consultation to their constituents as the Council wanted to hear what residents thought about the proposals and how they could possibly impact them before any final decisions were made.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings, detailed the three proposed changes which were going out to consultation and

highlighted one of the examples provided in the report and how this might impact upon a claimant.

In response to a question put by Councillor Callton Young (Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance) in respect of the third recommendation in the report, the Executive Mayor said that this was a Council Tax support scheme and what the Cabinet had before it was a scheme to support Council Tax and therefore it tracked Council Tax and that if Council Tax went up, the level of support would also go up accordingly.

Having listened to the contributions and considered the detail in the report, the Executive Mayor, in Cabinet, **RESOLVED** that:

1. A statutory consultation on changes to the income banded Council Tax Reduction (Support) Scheme for working age claimants from 1 April 2023, specifically consultation with the GLA, publication of a draft revised Scheme, and consultation with other persons likely to have an interest in the operation of the Scheme, as set out in this report, be approved; and
2. The following recommended changes to be consulted on, be agreed:
 - a) Removing the application of the minimum income floor to disabled working households.
 - b) Introducing non-dependent deductions to disabled not working households.
 - c) Changing the level at which the current income bands are increased annually from CPI to the same percentage increase as Council Tax.

72/22

South London Work and Health Job Entry target (JET) Programme Extension

Cabinet considered a report which sought the Executive Mayor's approval of the recommendation to vary the existing Contract with Reed in Partnership for the continuation of the WHP until 30 November 2026 and to increase the aggregate value of the Contract to include DWP funding of £3,202,023.36 in respect of WHP and £300,000 for the JETS Programme (the latter programme having been included via previously agreed variations to the Contract).

The report detailed the work of the Work and Health Programme to date, including the Job Entry Targeted Support Programme and set out how the additional government funding of £3.2m, made available by the Department for Work and Pensions, would be utilised to extend the Programme.

It was noted that the Programme was intended to support residents from Croydon, Merton, Kingston, Sutton and Richmond into sustainable employment, targeting residents with disabilities and health conditions, the long-term unemployed and specified disadvantaged groups.

The Executive Mayor was pleased to note that under Croydon's leadership, the Programme had been one of the highest performing of its kind in the Country helping residents who had the most difficulty accessing jobs with job opportunities. He said that the extension of the Job Entry Programme for the Borough's residents who found it hard to access job opportunities, was a testament to the excellent work of the Council's officers, the employment services and the Borough's local business partners and was a great example of partnership working which he hoped to see elsewhere in the Council.

The Executive Mayor reminded Members that there was also a Part B (exempt) report associated with the report, which set out certain exempt legal advice. He asked if any Member wished to ask a question regarding the Part B material, to indicate in advance since the meeting would be required to formally move to consider such matters in private.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration, Councillor Jeet Bains, said that the Programme offered intensive employment support for participants and that in Croydon alone, almost 2,500 residents had joined the Programme between 2018 and 2022 and of those, 839 had started work. He said that referrals to the Programme remained strong and that this demonstrated an ongoing need to continue with this support, the need for which, was likely to increase.

Councillor Bains said that the extension would be funded by the DWP and at no cost to the Council, with the exception of recharged internal legal costs associated with the extension and these would be shared proportionately between the five boroughs.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings, said that Croydon was the biggest beneficiary of this given its size and level of need.

In response to a question from Councillor Chris Clark (Shadow Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration) in respect of whether the Cabinet would work with all Members to lobby Government to secure further funding to continue the important work in seeking employment for Croydon residents, the Executive Mayor said that his Administration would always push the Government for additional funding for the Borough.

Having listened to the contributions and considered the detail in the report, the Executive Mayor, in Cabinet, **RESOLVED** that a variation of the contract between the London Borough of Croydon (as Lead

Accountable Body on behalf of the South London Partnership) and Reed in Partnership ("Contract") in order to:

- a) extend the term of the Contract for the continued delivery of the South London Work and Health Programme (WHP) which also incorporates the Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) Programme, until 30th November 2026. This means the referrals for WHP will continue until September 2024 with a tail off period until 30th November 2026 and referrals for JETS until September 2022 with a tail off period until April 2023, and
- b) increase the Contract value from £20,015,610 to incorporate DWP funding of £3,202,023.36 in respect of WHP and £300,000 for JETS, for a new aggregate contract value of £23,517,633.36, be approved.

73/22

Exclusion of the Press and Public

This was not required.

The meeting was declared closed at 7.58pm.