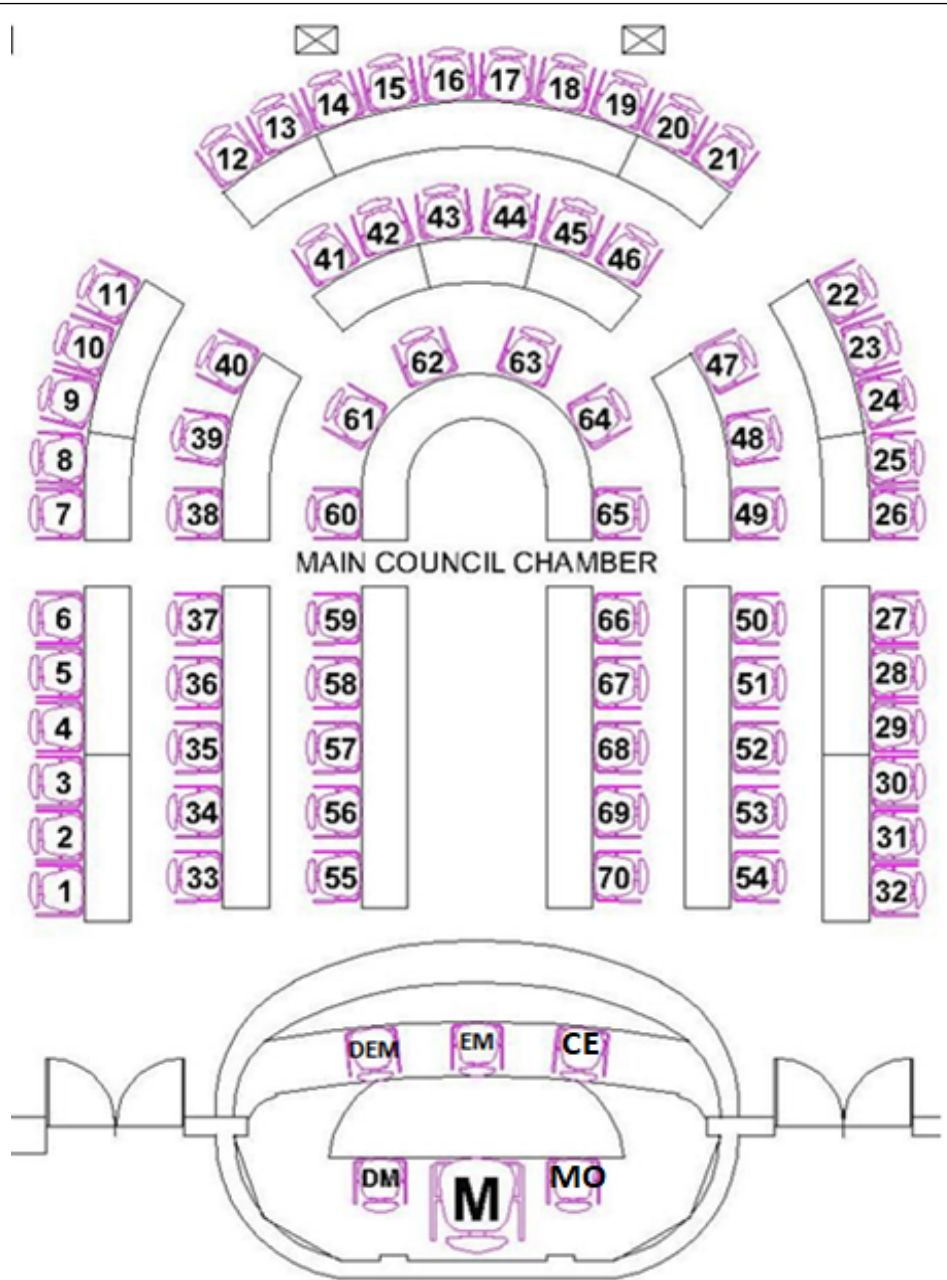




**COUNCIL
AGENDA**
for the meeting
on
19 October 2022 at
6.30 pm

1. Stuart Collins
2. Manju Shahul-Hameed
3. Ellily Ponnuthurai
4. Catherine Wilson
5. Mohammed Islam
6. Appu Srinivasan
7. Clive Fraser
8. Kola Agboola
9. Patricia Hay-Justice
10. Eunice O'Dame
11. Christopher Herman
12. Matthew Griffiths
13. Patsy Cummings
14. Humayan Kabir
15. Sherwan Chowdhury
16. Tamar Nwafor
17. Stella Nabukeera
18. Esther Sutton
19. Ria Patel
- 20.
21. Claire Bonham
22. Adele Benson
23. Luke Shortland
24. Endri Llabuti
25. Mark Johnson
26. Tony Pearson
27. Helen Redfern
28. Gayle Gander
29. Simon Fox
30. Holly Ramsey
31. Joseph Lee
32. Nikhil Sherine Thampi
33. Enid Mollyneaux
34. Chris Clark



- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 35. Amy Foster | 56. Nina Degrad |
| 36. Brigitte Graham | 57. Janet Campbell |
| 37. Mike Bonello | 58. Callton Young |
| 38. Louis Carserides | 59. Stuart King |
| 39. Sean Fitzsimons | 60. Rowenna Davis |
| 40. Leila Ben-Hassel | 61. Richard Chatterjee |
| 41. Maddie Henson | 62. Michael Neal |
| 42. Karen Jewitt | 63. Andy Stranack |
| 43. | 64. Scott Roche |
| 44. | 65. Jeet Bains |
| 45. Danielle Denton | 66. Yvette Hopley |
| 46. Jade Appleton | 67. Ola Kolade |
| 47. | 68. Maria Gatland |
| 48. Ian Parker | 69. Jason Cummings |
| 49. Simon Brew | 70. Mario Creatura |

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 50. Margaret Bird | Notes etc. |
| 51. Samir Dwesar | M – Civic Mayor Councillor Alisa Flemming |
| 52. Lara Fish | DM – Deputy Civic Mayor – Councillor Sue Bennett |
| 53. Alasdair Stewart | EM – Executive Mayor Jason Perry |
| 54. Robert Ward | DEM – Deputy Executive Mayor – Councillor Lynne Hale |
| 55. Chrishni Reshekaron | CE – Chief Executive |
| | MO – Monitoring Officer |
| | Please note that the numbers relate to microphone numbers. |

To: To All Members of the Council

Date: 11 October 2022

A meeting of the **COUNCIL** which you are hereby summoned to attend, will be held on **Wednesday, 19 October 2022 at 6.30 pm** in **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX**

Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense
Monitoring Officer
London Borough of Croydon
Bernard Weatherill House
8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA

Marianna Ritchie, Democratic Services
Democratic Services
Marianna.ritchie@croydon.gov.uk
www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings
11 October 2022

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting, or you can view the webcast both live and after the meeting has completed at <http://webcasting.croydon.gov.uk>

If you would like to record the meeting, we ask that you read the guidance on the recording of public meetings [here](#) before attending.

The agenda papers for all Council meetings are available on the Council website www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings

If you require any assistance, please contact officer as detailed above.

AGENDA – PART A

1. **Apologies for Absence**

To receive any apologies for absence from any Members.

2. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 13 - 142)**

To approve the minutes of the meetings held on:

- 13 December 2021;
- 31 January 2022;
- 3 February 2022;
- 23 March 2022; and,
- 25 July 2022 as accurate records.

3. **Disclosure of Interests**

Members and co-opted Members of the Council are reminded that, in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct and the statutory provisions of the Localism Act, they are required to consider **in advance of each meeting** whether they have a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI), another registrable interest (ORI) or a non-registrable interest (NRI) in relation to any matter on the agenda. If advice is needed, Members should contact the Monitoring Officer **in good time before the meeting**.

If any Member or co-opted Member of the Council identifies a DPI or ORI which they have not already registered on the Council's register of interests or which requires updating, they should complete the disclosure form which can be obtained from Democratic Services at any time, copies of which will be available at the meeting for return to the Monitoring Officer.

Members and co-opted Members are required to disclose any DPis and ORIs at the meeting.

- Where the matter relates to a DPI they may not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not stay in the meeting unless granted a dispensation.
- Where the matter relates to an ORI they may not vote on the matter unless granted a dispensation.
- Where a Member or co-opted Member has an NRI which directly relates to their financial interest or wellbeing, or that of a relative or close associate, they must disclose the interest at the meeting, may not take part in any discussion

or vote on the matter and must not stay in the meeting unless granted a dispensation. Where a matter affects the NRI of a Member or co-opted Member, section 9 of Appendix B of the Code of Conduct sets out the test which must be applied by the Member to decide whether disclosure is required.

The Chair will invite Members to make their disclosure orally at the commencement of Agenda item 3, to be recorded in the minutes.

4. Urgent Business (if any)

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

5. Announcements

To receive Announcements, if any, from the Civic Mayor, the Executive Mayor, Head of Paid Service and Returning Officer.

6. Public Questions

To receive questions submitted by residents in advance of the meeting.

Two Public Questions will be heard at this meeting, which will be responded to. The questioners then will have the opportunity to ask a supplementary question based on the answer received.

The questions are as follows:

1. What is the council doing about fly-tipping in alleyways and other hot spots?
2. What is the council going to do to help residents of Oval Road who have had their bins taken away in March 2020 without their consent and suffered from a dysfunctional bag trial since, and the subsequent increase of rats to the road, which have already done damage to properties on Oval Road.

7. The Croydon Debate

Three types of petitions may be presented to full Council under the Croydon Debate item: Borough Petitions; Local Petitions; and Member Petitions.

Two Member Petitions have been received ahead of this Council meeting from Councillor Humayun Kabir, Bensham Manor Ward. These two petitions are directed to the Mayor and Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment, Councillor Scott Roche.

The petitions have been verified and are worded as follows:

1.1 Petition for resident parking permits: Haslemere Road CR7
7BF / 7BE

For the attention of The Parking Permits Team at Croydon Council

We, the undersigned residents of HASLEMERE ROAD, request the Parking Permit Team to consider resident only parking restrictions on our road. Since the implementation of resident only parking on Lakehall Road, parking outside and around our homes has become a huge problem. With the local hospital, doctor's surgery, local bus depot workers, mechanic's workshops on Haslemere Road and Brigstock Road, as well as the new Whitehorse School site, parking is extremely difficult for those of us who live here, as vehicles from staff at these facilities dominate the parking spaces here. From around 7am until 7pm Monday to Saturday, it is virtually impossible to park out cars on the road that we live on.

As the residents of HASLEMERE ROAD, we request the following:

- Resident parking permits for all residents, along with guest permits, to be effective at times that will avoid local facilities and businesses dominating all parking spaces. FOR EXAMPLE, resident only parking between the hours of 8-6pm, Monday to Saturday.
- The enforcement of the yellow lines at the bend of the road opposite the mechanic's workshop to avoid cars

parking on the corner and obstructing the road, which causes congestion and sometimes damage to other parked vehicles, where drivers try to manoeuvre around this tight bend.

Yours faithfully,

The undersigned residents of Haslemere Road, CR7

1.2 Petition for resident parking permits: Penhurst Road CR7
7EE / 7EA

We, the undersigned residents of PENHURST ROAD, request the Parking Permit Team to consider resident only parking restrictions on our road. Since the implementation of resident only parking on Lakehall Road, parking outside our homes has become a huge problem on this road. With the local hospital, doctor's surgery, local bus depot worker, mechanic's garages on Brigstock Road and Haslemere Road, as well as the new Whitehorse School site, parking is extremely difficult for those of us who live here, as staff and vehicles from these facilities dominate parking spaces here. From around 7am until 7pm Monday to Saturday, it is virtually impossible to park our cars on the road that we live on.

The absence of yellow lines at the junction with Brigstock Road means that two oncoming cars cannot drive down the road, as there is nowhere for either car to pull in. We witness almost daily arguments and 'stand-offs' at this part of the road and a number of parked vehicles have been damaged. Resident parking permits would mean the road can be easily accessed by all road users.

As the residents of PENHURST ROAD, we request the following:

- Resident parking permits for all residents, along with guest permits, to be effective at times that will avoid local facilities and businesses from dominating all parking spaces. FOR EXAMPLE, resident only parking between the hours of 8-6pm, Monday to Saturday.

- Yellow lines at the junction with Brigstock Road, in order to avoid cars having to reverse onto the main road to let oncoming vehicles through and to avoid conflict between all road users and damage to parked vehicles.
- Yellow lines on the bend of the road near numbers 30-46 to avoid cars parking on the corner and obstructing the road, which causes congestion and sometimes damage to other parked vehicles, where drivers try to manoeuvre around this tight bend.

Yours faithfully,

The undersigned residents of Penhurst Road, CR7

8. Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Review (Pages 143 - 166)

9. Use of Special Urgency Procedures for Key Decisions Quarterly Report (Pages 167 - 170)

10. Mayor and Cabinet Questions

For the Mayor and Cabinet to receive questions from members of Council.

11. Maiden Speeches

To hear maiden speeches from up to five Councillors newly elected at the election held on 5 May 2022.

12. Council Debate Motions

To debate any motions submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rules.

The following two Motions, one from the Administration and one from the Leader of the Opposition, will be debated:

Conservative Administration Motion on support for the LGA Debate Not Hate Campaign

The Executive Mayor and this Council believes that:

1. Debating and disagreement is a fundamental part of a healthy democracy, and that this should always be done with respect;
2. It is a privilege to be elected to public office and comes with the responsibility of representing everyone, regardless of how they voted and anyone, regardless of their background or political affiliation, should feel safe to become a councillor and be proud to represent their community.

The Executive Mayor and this Council notes that:

1. The Local Government Association (LGA) has amassed a considerable volume of evidence and personal accounts of the impact of abuse, intimidation, and aggression at a national level. The research showed that seven in 10 councillors reported experiencing abuse and intimidation over the last 12 months and councillors reported feeling that abuse is becoming more common and increasing in severity;
2. If left to continue, this negative and unacceptable behaviour can prevent elected members from representing the communities they serve, deter individuals from standing for election and undermine local democracy.

The Executive Mayor and this Council further notes that:

1. The LGA has launched its “Debate Not Hate” campaign which aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in their communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the responses and support for local politicians facing abuse and intimidation;
2. This research outlines seven recommendations that Councils, the LGA, police forces, the Government and social media companies should take to improve the environment for current and prospective councillors,

ranging from protecting privacy to creating a long-term culture change that de-normalises the abuse of politicians and other high-profile individuals;

3. This campaign has received support from across the political spectrum, as well as representatives from bodies such as the National Association of Local Councils, Compassion in Politics, the Local Government Information Unit and the National Hate Crime Awareness Week.

The Council resolves to:

1. Endorse the LGA Debate Not Hate campaign and call on all political groups to sign the public statement;
2. Support the LGA's proposal for a national working group to produce and implement an action plan that addresses the abuse and intimidation of elected members and candidates and ensures their safety while they fulfil their democratic roles;
3. Assess how it can take greater responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of its members, taking a proactive approach to preventing and handling abuse and intimidation and addressing the impacts of abuse on mental health and wellbeing

As the Executive Mayor and Councillors, we agree to continually promote diversity and inclusion ahead of the 2026 Local Elections and beyond, including diversity of thought – publicly condemning politically fuelled abusive behaviour.

Labour Group Motion

This council acknowledges that we are in the midst of a cost of living crisis that is affecting households right across our borough. We are particularly concerned about the impact on low income families with school aged children.

This council welcomes initiatives such as Challenge Poverty Week, and recognises the financial burden food costs place on families, particularly those on lower incomes. The evidence is the growing number of Croydon primary schools offering food parcels to the families in their communities.

This council notes that currently only pupils in reception and KS1 are entitled to Free School Meals in Croydon. Given the cost of living crisis, this Council is deeply concerned that Nursery children in our maintained schools and nurseries are excluded from this offer.

This council welcomes Croydon Council's existing commitment to ensuring more children grow up eating regular, healthy meals and are a healthy weight, and that tackling childhood obesity is a strategic priority of the authority.

This Council therefore believes that ensuring our youngest students are included in our Free School Meal offer is a critical tool to achieving those goals.

This Council acknowledges the Mayor is forecasting an overspend on this year's budget and that additional costs cannot be incurred lightly. However, given the longer-term benefits a healthy start in life brings, it is right that the potential of such a scheme be explored.

This Council therefore calls upon the Mayor to:

1. Publish a detailed assessment of the issues and costs associated with an extension of Croydon's Free School meal offer to include all 3 and 4 year olds in maintained nursery and primary schools in the Borough, and to do so by the end of November 2022; and,
 2. That the Children and Young People scrutiny committee then considers the Mayor's assessment at its meeting in January 2023.
-

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 Degrads, 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 Leathem.

“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 Leathem 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 under pin 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 explicate 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 110th 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 7th 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 3rd 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:

.....
.....

Public Document Pack

Council

Meeting held on Monday, 31 January 2022 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Sherwan Chowdhury (Chair);
Councillor Felicity Flynn (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Kola Agboda, Hamida Ali, Muhammad Ali, Jade Appleton, Jamie Audsley, Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel, Sue Bennett, Margaret Bird, Mike Bonello, Simon Brew, Alison Butler, Jan Buttinger, Louis Carserides, Janet Campbell, Robert Canning, Richard Chatterjee, Luke Clancy, Chris Clark, Pat Clouder, Stuart Collins, Mary Croos, Jason Cummings, Patsy Cummings, Mario Creatura, Nina Degrad, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Sean Fitzsimons, Alisa Flemming, Clive Fraser, Maria Gatland, Lynne Hale, Patricia Hay-Justice, Maddie Henson, Steve Hollands, Yvette Hopley, Karen Jewitt, Humayun Kabir, Bernadette Khan, Shafi Khan, Stuart King, Ola Kolade, Oliver Lewis, Toni Letts, Stephen Mann, Stuart Millson, Michael Neal, Oni Oviri, Ian Parker, Andrew Pelling, Jason Perry, Helen Pollard, Tim Pollard, Joy Prince, Badsha Quadir, Helen Redfern, Scott Roche, Pat Ryan, Paul Scott, Manju Shahul-Hameed, Caragh Skipper, Andy Stranack, Gareth Streeter, Robert Ward, David Wood, Louisa Woodley and Callton Young

Apologies: Councillor Simon Hoar

PART A

45/21 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

46/21 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

47/21 **Announcements**

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. Seats in the Chamber had been allocated to the two political groups based upon the total number of seats they held on the council overall.

The reason for holding the meeting this way was because the Council was required to hold its meetings in one place, but at the same time it was also required to minimise the risk of anyone transmitting COVID during the meeting. By running the meeting this way the Council had been able to avoid the significant cost of hiring a larger meeting space to accommodate all Councillors safely.

The Mayor also advised that he had agreed with both Groups that the order of the agenda was slightly amended. Item 8, the Recommendations of Cabinet or Committees for Decision, was heard after Item 5, Croydon Question Time.

The Mayor

In his announcements the Mayor thanked everyone who attended the Holocaust Memorial Day the previous Thursday. On Saturday 15 January, the Tamil Harvest and Thanksgiving Festival of Thai-Pongal was celebrated in Braithwaite Hall.

Unfortunately, both the Bollywood Dinner & Dance Fundraiser and the second round of the Mayoral Awards event had been cancelled, but there were a number of upcoming events in February and March.

The first was the International Language Day, honoured by UNESCO, which was being held in Braithwaite Hall on Monday 21 February. This was part of the International Language Week being held at Croydon Library from Monday 21 February to Saturday 26 February 2022.

The Mayor took this opportunity to mention that he would be working with the lead Cabinet Member and officers to bring forward proposals for the Council to agree to recognise and celebrate the Tamil Heritage Month of January and International Language Day every year.

The London Assembly had recently designated January to celebrate Tamil Heritage, which coincided with the Tamil celebration of Thai Pongal and the Mayor looked forward to working with the Cabinet Member and officers on bringing those proposals forwards.

Continuing with Mayoral events, he would be holding a charity fundraiser dinner, organised by the Royal Tandoori Selsdon and the Bangladesh welfare association on Monday 7 March.

This would be followed by a Cake Celebration on Friday 11 March to raise funds for the Mayor's charities.

There would also be a Tree Planting Ceremony at Croydon University Hospital on Wednesday 23 March to mark 'Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee 2022 and Looking to the Future from Covid' through The Queen's Green Canopy Initiative.

Finally, he would be celebrating Bangladesh Independence Day & Victory Day at Braithwaite Hall on a date to be confirmed during March.

The Leader

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

The Leader confirmed that she had no announcements to make.

The Chief Executive

The Mayor invited the Chief Executive, Katherine Kerswell in her capacity as Head of Paid Service, to make her announcements.

The Chief Executive updated Members on the progress of recruitment to the new corporate management team. In addition to the appointments being covered later in the meeting, two further appointments had been made to the post of Corporate Director, Adult Social Care and Health and Annette McPartland had been appointed to that role. The other was to the Chief People Officer to which Dean Shoemsmith had been appointed.

48/21 Council Debate Motions

The Mayor asked the Monitoring Officer, John Jones to read out the First Debate Motion on behalf of the Administration.

"The covid pandemic is the single biggest public health challenge since World War II, and Croydon residents have made tremendous sacrifices over this incredibly difficult and uncertain period.

People have lost loved ones before their time; children have not been able to witness their parents' final breath; and thousands have died alone without anyone by their side.

Over 150,000 people have died in the UK of COVID, with the total registered COVID Deaths in Croydon at 19 January being 1,125.

Colleagues on both sides of the Chamber have suffered the effects of this terrible virus as have their friends and family.

Businesses have been shattered; livelihoods irreversibly destroyed whilst Croydon nurses, teachers, police - and many key workers - have been pushed to their limits working all hours to keep society functioning.

Thousands of people in Croydon have made tremendous sacrifices over the last two years in complying with all legislation and guidance, to keep everyone safe and allow NHS and Council services to function safely for the benefit of all.

This Council applauds everyone who has followed these rules and supported efforts to keep us all safe in Croydon. The Council also calls upon all elected politicians nationally and locally, including the Prime Minister to adhere to all government legislation and guidance with regard to Covid, and to be held publicly accountable in respect of any breaches of Covid safeguarding."

The Mayor invited Councillor Pelling to propose the motion.

Councillor Pelling stated that great pride could be taken from what this council and the public health services had done. However, he continued by stating that there were some people of privilege within the Conservative Party who looked down their noses at Croydon and the way that the Prime Minister had behaved had raised very serious concerns with the people of Croydon.

Councillor Pelling continued by stating that it was now very interesting to see how the people of Croydon had come together and showed that Croydon cared for its neighbours and that the principles of equalities could be more than just a mantra.

In conclusion, Councillor Pelling felt that there was a real opportunity to enhance the community spirit and the willingness to work for the public good, whether Conservative or Labour or any other political persuasion so that the council could build on that consensus for equality.

Councillor Young seconded the motion.

Councillor Perry agreed that Covid-19 had been an unprecedented event in our lifetimes and had had the biggest impact in everyday lives across the world and the people of Croydon had responded with fortitude. Councillor Perry continued by acknowledging how tough it had been on individuals and businesses and stated that the council's frontline services had been amazing with some people literally putting their lives on the line to help others.

Councillor Perry continued by agreeing with Councillor Pelling that there was now a much greater sense of community spirit but that this had been against a backdrop of council cuts which had made the job of the voluntary sector in particular much harder. Councillor Perry listed the packages of support that the Government had provided but acknowledged that not every business had survived and that many thousands of people had died.

In conclusion, Councillor Perry acknowledged that it was disappointing that not all areas of Government had followed the rules and agreed that it was appropriate that those in public office should be held accountable for their actions at every level of Government and therefore supported the motion.

Councillor Kolade stated that this had been the biggest challenge for society in his lifetime and many had suffered as a result especially in regard to mental health, particularly young people. Despite this Councillor Kolade stated that he had been amazed by the resilience of the British public and praised the vaccination programme and the Government's business support packages which had meant that the country currently had the fastest growing economy in the G7.

Councillor Kolade continued by highlighting the Government support that Croydon had received and how this had been making a difference. Over the last 18 months Councillor Kolade had been proud of the leadership shown across the community in Croydon and listed those he wished to thank.

Councillor Kolade supported the motion as he believed that those in public office should be accountable to scrutiny of their actions.

Councillor Jewitt stated that the selfish behaviour of the Prime Minister had caused distress to the citizens of the UK and that whilst HM The Queen was sitting alone at the funeral of her husband and others were in physical and emotional pain, Boris Johnson was partying, and ignoring the rules he laid down for us.

Councillor Jewitt continued by stating that teachers and pupils had struggled to ensure that lessons could be accessed and listed some of the issues that had been encountered with the devices provided by Government. In addition, Councillor Jewitt stated that she believed that the parties had not had the struggle to obtain food that the poor, elderly and vulnerable had endured at the height of the pandemic.

Councillor Jewitt supported the motion and called on the party opposite to join her in saying that enough was enough.

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

The Mayor asked the Monitoring Officer, John Jones, to read out the Second Debate Motion on behalf of the Opposition.

“Croydon is plagued by graffiti and fly tipping right across the borough and it is only getting worse.

It is well known that this Administration has utterly failed the people of Croydon by making choices that have directly led to the bankruptcy of our Council and the massive reduction of services to our residents.

But it is also failing in its basic duty to manage contracts, administer processes and supervise the real-world impact of its choices.

This Council calls on the Administration to apologise for its incompetence.

The choice to disband the graffiti removal team was just one such example.

This Council will commit to reinstating the graffiti removal team as a first step towards restoring pride in our borough.”

The Mayor invited Councillor Perry to propose the motion.

Councillor Perry stated that it was no surprise that residents were being failed by the Labour Administration which had run up huge debts and cut services in the hope of balancing the books. One of the blights on the borough was the increase in fly tipping and graffiti which was left for all to see for weeks at a time. Councillor Perry thanked those groups who persevered in reporting these problems.

Councillor Perry continued by stating that one of the most short-sighted cuts by the Administration was to disband the Graffiti Removal Team that provided such a fantastic service keeping the borough clean. Only offensive graffiti would now be removed but any graffiti was offensive to the businesses and community and deterred inward investment from the borough. In addition, Councillor Perry stated that the Administration did not invest resources into a Future High Streets bid which would have provided additional funding, some of which could have been used towards removal of graffiti and fly tipping. Councillor Perry supported the motion.

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

Councillor Muhammad Ali reminded Members that fly tipping was a crime. However, the majority of Croydon residents cared about their neighbourhoods and it was a small minority of people who continued to drop litter, allowed their dogs to foul and carried out fly tipping. The rise in fly tipping was a national problem which had increased by 16% over the last two years and could result in a fine of up to £50,000 and a five-year prison sentence, and this council did not hesitate to prosecute individuals or businesses responsible where there was evidence. According to the Local Government Association fly tipping cost local authorities £50 million per year.

Councillor Ali continued by highlighting the councils' approach and stated that over 50 vehicles involved in fly tipping had been seized and approximately 1,100 fixed penalty notices had been issued. Councillor Ali reminded Members that it was everyone's responsibility to dispose of the waste they created.

With regards to graffiti, Councillor Ali stated that the council had not stopped the removal of graffiti from public land but from private land at taxpayers' expense.

In conclusion Councillor Ali thanked the army of volunteers who worked with the council and took pride in their streets and parks. Last year alone 2800 volunteers worked with the street champion co-ordinator to clear litter from Croydon's streets and parks.

Councillor Ben-Hassel stated that this motion touched on one of the issues that came up most in councillors' case work. However, this motion made it sound like fly tipping was on the rise because of this council's financial challenges and reminded Members that the fly tipping budget had not been cut. This motion undermined the education work being carried out in encouraging members of the public to report fly tipping.

Councillor Ben-Hassel continued by highlighting some issues caused by the current planning system such as inadequate bin provision for flats above shops which added to the problem. As stated earlier by Councillor Ali the problem had increased nationally and local authorities had lobbied Government for additional funding to tackle litter and fly tipping but had been rebuffed.

Councillor Roche stated that the borough was plagued by fly tipping and graffiti and a Labour Administration which failed to manage contracts. The cuts to services had impacted all residents no matter where they lived in Croydon, particularly regarding waste collection services and fly tipping where residents were not kept informed of progress after reporting an issue.

Councillor Roche continued by stating that the policy to remove only offensive graffiti meant that graffiti was still a blight on many areas, left residents frustrated, and showed that the Administration was out of touch and not fit to govern.

Councillor Roche supported the motion.

The motion was put to the vote and fell.

49/21 **Appointment of Corporate Director of Resources and Chief Finance Officer (S151)**

The Leader proposed the recommendations and congratulated all the successful candidates who had already been appointed the roles covered by the Chief Executive's statement earlier in the meeting.

Councillor Perry seconded the recommendations.

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

RESOLVED: Council **AGREED** the recommendations in the report, to:

- 1.1 Note the decision of the Appointments Committee on 17 January 2022 to permanently appoint to the role of Corporate Director of Resources;
- 1.2 Agree the appointment of Jane West as the Council's Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer under the Local Government Act 1972, and;

- 1.3 Agree the above recommendations subject to the receipt of satisfactory pre-employment clearances.

The Mayor took the opportunity to congratulate Jane West on her appointment as the Council's new Section 151 Officer Chief Finance Officer and Corporate Director of Resources.

50/21 **Recommendations of Cabinet or Committees to Council for decision**

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET HELD ON 24 JANUARY 2022

Review of Council Tax Support Scheme – 2022/23

The Leader proposed the recommendation.

Councillor King seconded the recommendation and the Mayor called on him to introduce the report.

The recommendation was put to the vote and was carried; however, under clause 117 of the Council's Constitution of Council Procedures, Councillor Pelling requested that his opposition was recorded.

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

- 1.1 That the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme be amended to an income band scheme subject to the changes made following the consultation, from 1 April 2022. A full copy of the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme in the form to be recommended, is circulated as Appendix 1 to this report [Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report].

Education Estates Strategy

Councillor Flemming introduced the report and proposed the recommendation.

The Leader seconded the recommendation.

The recommendation was put to the vote and was carried.

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

1.2 To agree the proposed community schools' Admission Arrangements for the 2023/24 academic year attached as Appendix 5 [Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report].

Report in the Public Interest October 2020 – Quarter 3 Update

The Leader introduced the report and proposed the recommendations.

Councillor King seconded the recommendations.

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

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

1.3 To note the progress the Council had made in regard to achieving the recommendations set out by external auditor in the Report in the Public Interest October 2020 with 65 out of 99 actions complete;

1.4 To note the outcome of internal audit of actions delivered to properly evidence what had been achieved so far, in order to provide full assurance to members and residents on the changes achieved;

1.5 To note 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM GENERAL PURPOSES & AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2022

Council Diary 2022-23

The Leader proposed the recommendations.

Councillor King seconded the recommendations.

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

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

1.6 To note the schedule of Full Council meeting dates for 2022/23, as agreed by the General Purposes & Audit Committee.

1.7 To note the schedule of Cabinet meeting dates for 2023/23 as detailed in paragraphs 3.6 and 3.12 of the report; and

1.8 To note the proposed schedule of remaining meeting dates for 2022/23, as recommended by the General Purposes & Audit Committee, as detailed in Appendix 17 and Appendix 18, depending on the outcome from GPAC on 25 January 2022.

51/21 **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.

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 reminded Members that in November Cabinet began a search for a new Brick by Brick Board of Directors which would be led by both council officers and the existing Brick by Brick company directors. They had appointed an Executive Chair, Andrew Percival and a Non-Executive Director, [Griff Marshalsay](#).

The Leader continued by informing Members that at the first Brick by Brick Cabinet Advisory Board members had brought their expertise to the table as they worked towards the decisions that Cabinet had made to complete the existing sites before winding down the company.

In his question, Councillor Perry asked whether the Leader believed that all those responsible had been held accountable, since the two Reports in the Public Interest.

In her response, the Leader stated that in the last 15 months, taking over as Leader the day before the first Report in the Public Interest was published, she believed that significant progress had been made by the council, as stated by the Minister of State.

The Leader continued by reminding Members that the first Report in the Public Interest regarded corporate failures and that everyone in the Chamber had had to reflect on this. The further Report in the Public Interest would be discussed on Thursday (3 February 2022). However, none of the former officers were now in place, had been suspended or had left the council. In addition, Members with responsibility were no longer councillors as they had resigned from their roles.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Perry asked again whether the Leader believed that all those responsible had been held accountable.

In her response, the Leader stated that the council had used the powers that it could to take that action. Everyone shared the anger about what had happened, and all the officers no longer worked for the authority or were suspended, and all the senior councillors had resigned and had been referred to their membership bodies.

In her question, Councillor Henson welcomed the decision to pause the sale of Ashburton Lodge to allow the council and Oasis to explore the possibility of turning the lodge into a youth centre in memory of the young man who lost his life in Ashburton Park at the end of last year.

In her reply, the Leader stated that she was sure that all in the Chamber sent their condolences to the family of Zaian and thanked Councillor Henson for her role in representing the views of the family and the school and working with the Oasis Institution. The Leader also thanked Councillor King for removing Ashburton Lodge from the schedule of properties for auction and officers who had held a constructive meeting with Oasis to take this forward. Oasis had already begun its fundraising drive and the Leader wished it success with this.

In his question, Councillor Perry stated that the recent performance report showed that the Planning Department was trying to avoid special measures, and that the Housing Department was missing all its targets, and asked what the Leader and her Cabinet colleagues were doing to hold departments to account.

In her reply, the Leader stated that the performance report now came to Cabinet every month which highlighted what was going well but also areas

where improvement was necessary. The area for improvement section was a new feature of the report, in light of the Council's improvement and it was important that councillors and residents understood the changes being made and that officers were now being held to account.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Perry stated that the Leader was saying that everything was going as expected but that he had heard this before receiving the two Reports in the Public Interest and the Section 114 notices; so it appeared that this Cabinet was not taking full responsibility for what was happening. He asked once again whether this Council was taking responsibility.

In her response, the Leader stated it was a basic function of the council to look at the way it was performing and there were challenges across some of the services. The Leader continued by outlining the huge amount of activity that had taken place over the last 15 months to confront exactly what had been raised in the first Report in the Public Interest. The Government's appointed Improvement and Assurance Panel whose letters were consistently showing how the council both managerially and politically had been doing the right things to ensure that the necessary decisions were noted, and the council was financially sustainable.

The Leader concluded that the Secretary of State was pleased with the progress made so it was not just her but others outside of the council who were happy with the progress that had been made.

In her question, Councillor Ben-Hassel stated that last week the council's appointed auditors issued a second Report in the Public Interest relating to the Fairfield Halls governance and decisions dating back as far as 2016. Cllr Ben-Hassel asked the Leader to explain how such a publication had come about especially after such an extensive report had been produced by the same auditors in 2020.

In her reply, the Leader stated that in December 2020, she and the Chief Executive raised their concerns with the external auditors about what was emerging from the refurbishment of Fairfield Halls and commissioned the auditors to review this and the Report in the Public Interest that was delivered that previous week was the result. This showed an important shift in the culture as the first report from the auditors raised concerns that the council was not listening but this second report was a result of them being asked to look more closely into this issue. This showed that the council was better placed to raise concerns with the new leadership team that was being appointed.

In conclusion, the Leader stated that this report showed the council as it was previously and did not, in her view, show how the council was at present as those decisions were made more than 5 years ago and would not be taken today.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Ben-Hassel stated that anyone in the business of restoration of heritage buildings knew of the potential for over running costs and Fairfield Halls could be put into the context of the Barbican refurbishment. The issue that she encountered at Scrutiny was trying to obtain evidence that standard project management was being carried out. Councillor Ben-Hassel asked whether the Leader would provide residents with reassurance that such a situation could not happen again.

In reply, the Leader stated that the report had highlighted that £30 million would not be sufficient to deliver that project but agreed that the work carried out over the last 15 months would safeguard against this happening again in further projects. On Thursday (3 February) there would be an opportunity to look at it in more detail and the specific recommendations that the auditors had put forward. The Leader was confident that the changes being put in place would make the difference.

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 Campbell, Councillor Lewis and Councillor Flemming were invited to make their announcements.

The Mayor confirmed that Councillor Mann was deputising for Councillor Campbell at this meeting.

Councillor Mann thanked and celebrated Annette McPartland being appointed as Corporate Director, Adult Social Care and Health on a permanent basis. Councillor Mann also congratulated the team for the work that had been carried out over the last few months and that the feedback from the Improvement Panel had been very strong.

Councillor Alisa Flemming had, with the Director of Social Care, visited Calley Down Crescent which recently won an award for the work that it did to support children and young people in the borough with complex needs and requested that her thanks were put on record.

Secondly Councillor Flemming highlighted the work that had recently restarted, post Covid, again launched in the Chamber, working with the young

people through the Youth Parliament towards championing the voice of young people. They had collectively decided to make mental health their first focus working with partners across the borough to support young people to confidently receive support when required.

Councillor Lewis had no announcements.

Councillor Gatland also thanked Calley Down for its fantastic work. In her question, Councillor Gatland stated that the cuts to Early Help services would damage the life chances of children and families and asked whether the plan to cut Youth Services at a time of such tragic loss and youth violence was a step too far.

In her response, Councillor Flemming stated that she was proud of the investment made by the Administration into youth provision at a time when no one else was, even though it was not a statutory service. In regards to the cuts to Early Help, Councillor Flemming stated that national government had not invested in this area and highlighted the work that the Administration had done.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Gatland stated that her previous question had not been answered and quoted figures showing that referrals had increased as had the number of children in need plans and the number of children with protection plans to above the London average which she put down to the cuts in services. Councillor Gatland asked again whether the Cabinet Member was cutting the funding for youth services.

In her response, Councillor Flemming stated that there were some proposals coming forward and confirmed that it had been expected that the number of referrals would increase post-Covid but that it was being monitored closely.

Councillor Flemming continued by informing Members of some of the key issues that lead to families being unable to cope, such as food poverty, the cost of fuel and the cost of living in the country and the borough, and stated that to be able to provide the support families needed required additional funding from central Government.

In his question, Councillor Clark stated that he had met with a gentleman who was living in supported housing for people receiving support for drug and alcohol addiction. The accommodation was linked to his treatment which had an end date, so he knows that he would be homeless on a given date. He had been told that the only way was to present himself to council offices as homeless on the day and arrangements would be made to place him in temporary accommodation.

Councillor Clark continued by stating that it would make more sense for housing to be arranged in advance in areas such as this where there was a fixed known date rather than being treated as an unforeseen emergency and asked whether this was correct and if so could the system be changed.

In his response, Councillor Mann thanked Councillor Clark for bringing this case to his attention and confirmed that he had already raised this case with officers to see what could be done. He also agreed that when any service provider knows of an issue of this nature then preventative action should be taken to streamline the process and reduce the fear for the service user.

In his question, Councillor Bains stated that there was a Report in the Public Interest regarding the refurbishment of Fairfield Halls under this Administration and asked whether Councillor Lewis would take this opportunity to apologise for what he had done?

In his response, Councillor Lewis stated that like many people across the borough, he felt anger and indignation about what had been said in the Report in the Public Interest and thanked the Leader and the Chief Executive for commissioning the report.

Councillor Lewis continued by stating that he thought it was important to get to the bottom of why this project was overspent by so much and that over a years' work had gone into the report. The auditors had made it very clear where the responsibility for this lay and Councillor Lewis felt that it was important that those responsible for those failures should recognise that fact.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Bains stated again that he felt that Councillor Lewis should apologise as the Cabinet Member who was ultimately responsible for the project.

In his response, Councillor Lewis reiterated that the Report in the Public Interest was very clear, and the responsibility lay with Brick by Brick and the Cabinet Members who oversaw it and a lot of the issues began in 2016 before Councillor Lewis was a Cabinet Member.

Councillor Lewis continued by explaining that as Cabinet Member for Culture his responsibility was not around the capital investment in Fairfield Halls or the council's relationship with Brick by Brick. His portfolio was responsible for the relationship with the operator and the cultural work that took place there.

In his question Councillor Fraser asked the Cabinet Member to comment on the leisure centre usage and activity since the end of lockdown last year and how it compared periods prior to Covid.

In his response, Councillor Lewis stated that the leisure industry had been under severe pressure as a result of the global pandemic and had been poorly supported by Government. However, since restrictions had been relaxed the people of Croydon had been returning to the leisure and sporting facilities and usage was now about 80% of what it was pre-pandemic.

Councillor Lewis continued by stating that although that was a good position to be in, the council would continue to support the leisure operator to continue to operate the centres in a way that was safe, given the nature of the public health emergency. He hoped that as a result, the people of the borough had enough confidence in them to return to the leisure centres in greater numbers going forwards.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Fraser asked what scope was there to encourage those who had not been to a leisure centre for two years to return to improve their level of fitness and what the council could do with its leisure partner to promote the leisure centre offer.

In his response, Councillor Lewis agreed that there was a lot that the council could do to support residents to use the centres and was pleased to confirm that the Administration would be investing £100,000 in Monks Hill Sports Centre to expand the size of the gym to give the residents in the south of the borough a greater fitness offer. The council's leisure partner Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) had also been offering promotions and discounts to engage in fitness for the new year and Councillor Lewis hoped that residents would take advantage of those offers.

In his question, Councillor Streeter asked whether there was any aspect of the Fairfield Halls refurbishment that he would take personal responsibility for.

In his response, Councillor Lewis reiterated his previous answer that a lot of work had gone into preparing the Report in the Public Interest which stated very clearly where responsibility for the failures in this project lay.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Streeter stated that Councillor Lewis had been involved in the Fairfield Halls project for a number of years including under the previous Leader, Councillor Newman, and asked again for him to apologise to the people of Croydon.

In his response, Councillor Lewis stated again that it was important to get to the bottom of why the Fairfield Halls project was so overspent but that the Report in the Public Interest pointed to some significant failures in the governance of the project and how the project was commissioned. It was important that lessons were learned to improve future major projects. The project was always going to cost more than the initial £30 million and the council should now focus on supporting Fairfield Halls and supporting the operator to build an offer that was worthy of the support of the people of Croydon and could deliver top quality culture and entertainment.

In her question, Councillor Ben-Hassel asked whether the requirement for care home staff to have been vaccinated together with current staff sickness due to the Omicron variant was causing issues in council-run care homes or in any privately-run care home in the borough.

In his response, Councillor Mann stated that Croydon had the greatest number of care homes of any London borough so this issue would hit Croydon hard, but at present staffing levels remained strong and he was confident that any outbreaks within homes could be handled.

He continued by stating that the issue of vaccinations was a very delicate one as it affected the health of vulnerable residents and low paid workers, and noted that over the weekend the Government proposed a potential change of direction in this matter. However, vaccination rates amongst staff closely mirrored other London boroughs and was slowly increasing.

In concluding Councillor Mann reiterated the advice to be double vaccinated and to take up the booster as soon as it was offered.

In his question, Councillor Millson stated that Councillor Lewis became the Cabinet Member responsible for Fairfield Halls in May 2018 and asked when he had first questioned the senior leadership team or the Leader and Deputy Leader regarding the governance and over spending on the Fairfield Halls refurbishment.

In his response, Councillor Lewis stated that Councillor Millson was correct that he did become the Cabinet Member for Culture in May 2018 but reminded Members that his responsibility did not cover Brick by Brick. In the report the auditors stated that it had been difficult for Cabinet to obtain information from senior officers of Brick by Brick and the council. Councillor Lewis continued by stating that it was important that officers from both Brick by Brick and the council behaved with integrity and openness and provided councillors with information when requested.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Millson acknowledged that Councillor Lewis was not the Cabinet Member responsible for the refurbishment of Fairfield Halls and his acknowledgement that lessons had to be learnt but stated that in January 2020 Councillor Tim Pollard had presented evidence to Members that the project was going to cost more than double the original budget. Councillor Millson stated that Cabinet Members at the time should have been raising concerns and demanding information from officers and Cabinet colleagues and asked whether the failing of Cabinet Members to raise questions of officers was negligent of their duties to the people of Croydon or whether they were complicit in the unlawful expenditure.

In his response, Councillor Lewis reiterated that the Report in the Public Interest included a very detailed explanation and was very clear in stating where the responsibilities lay and who was at fault for these failings.

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 Hay-Justice, Councillor Shahul-Hameed and Councillor Muhammad Ali were invited to make their announcements.

Councillor Muhammad Ali had no announcements.

Councillor Hay-Justice had no announcements.

Councillor Shahul-Hameed confirmed that the Community Safety Strategy was implemented on 1 January 2022 and performance measures were currently being worked on. With regards to business recovery, Councillor Shahul-Hameed and officers had met with the Croydon Business Network the previous week to hear views on current and future needs of the business community which would inform the council on planning for the next round of Additional Restriction Grant funding. The council had now received £1.68 million in funding to deliver the Omicron Grant to hospitality and leisure businesses. Grants of up to £6000 were available and to apply businesses needed to complete an online application before 28 February 2022. In addition a further £250,000 is available for businesses in the creative industries.

In her question, Councillor Hale stated that in the latest Performance Report, tenant satisfaction with the Housing Service had continued to fall and asked the Cabinet Member why the service was still in trouble with falling satisfaction figures.

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice stated that she was not happy with the current situation; however, she thought it should be acknowledged that improvement was taking place. Officers were working exceptionally hard to ensure that those figures improved, and a recruitment drive was currently underway to fill posts where capacity was low.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Hale stated that in addition to routine repair, urgent repairs and significant jobs had also seen a fall in performance and worryingly the one for urgent repairs was the worst of all with only half having been attended on time. In addition the length of time that properties were empty whilst repairs were carried out had increased. Councillor Hale asked whether in light of all these issues, the Cabinet Member

thought that she was doing a good job as Cabinet Member for Homes in this borough.

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice stated that the most urgent repairs were being done on time but acknowledged that the three other categories were not and that improvements were slower than anticipated. Councillor Hay-Justice continued by stating that she had been pushing hard for improvements and officers had been working additional hours including weekends, so she did believe that she was doing a good job as the Cabinet Member ensuring that residents' homes were safe, warm and dry.

In her question, Councillor Patsy Cummings stated that she was pleased to see the Cabinet report on Croydon Race Matters, now renamed the George Floyd Race Matters and Equalities Pledge and asked how the Cabinet Member was going to ensure that the council continued to work with the voluntary sector partners and others to promote the pledges amongst the organisations within the borough.

In her response, Councillor Shahul-Hameed thanked Councillor Cummings for her help and support regarding the pledges and stated that the Cabinet Report showed how closely the council was working with the voluntary sector in engaging with residents, businesses and the community. Councillor Shahul-Hameed continued by outlining the aims of the pledges and said that the progress would be reported in the annual Equalities Report. Community organisations would also submit an annual report and be monitored, and she welcomed support from Members to promote the pledge.

In her question, Councillor Hopley outlined a number of cuts that she said were affecting the most vulnerable in the borough and that there had been a worrying increase in the number of people who did not have a safe place to live. Councillor Hopley asked what the Cabinet Member intended to do about it.

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice questioned the criteria being used regarding homelessness and confirmed that at the last count there were 16 people registered as homeless. The council had been working with Crisis and that week she attended a meeting of London lead officers from councils who wanted to know about the work that Croydon Council did to reduce the levels of homelessness, in spite of the lack of funding and the national issues imposed by Government. The work was being carried out in conjunction with the voluntary sector as a result of a lack of funding.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Hopley questioned the figure of 16 homeless people and she stated that she knew of more than 16 people in the

underpass at the Whitgift Centre with more people sheltering in car parks, shop doorways and living outside the assistance centres. In light of this, Councillor Hopley asked if Councillor Hay-Justice was ashamed of this situation.

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice stated that her Deputy and officers had visited one site and every individual had been offered accommodation but that there were some people who did not wish to accept that accommodation.

In conclusion, Councillor Hay-Justice offered to ask officers to provide Councillor Hopley with a full report into the visit and asked that if she wanted to raise any particular case then could she do so outside of the meeting so that action could be taken.

In her question, Councillor Henson stated that earlier this year the council had lost some residents to a tragic house fire which was a reminder that all fire protections should be put in place in all forms of public and private buildings and asked the Cabinet Member to advise what was being done in regard to fire safety for council tenants.

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice firstly sent her condolences to the family of those who died for their tragic loss. Councillor Hay-Justice continued by stating that the council had a fire risk assessment programme which was carried out with the frequency based on the risk and in high-risk properties the assessments were carried out annually, medium risk every two years and low risk every three years which complied with industry standard practice. Work was carried out on any issues identified during the assessments. In addition, staff responsible for those buildings could also bring issues to light.

In concluding Councillor Hay-Justice offered to send Councillor Henson more details of the work being carried out including the installation of sprinkler systems.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Henson stated that the case that she referred to was in a private property and asked what the council could do to help residents in private properties.

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice stated that about a third of the council properties were privately rented and the council was able to do work with this sector before the Secretary of State withdrew the council's licence. However, work was still carried out with landlords to ensure that they were complying with their responsibilities. In terms of owner occupiers, Councillor Hay-Justice confirmed that no work had yet been carried out to reach out to these residents. However, it could be possible to consider having a fire prevention

communications strategy and within that a reminder to test fire alarms perhaps to include carbon monoxide alarms.

In his question, Councillor Stranack stated that Croydon had the highest level of serious youth violence in London and very high levels of anti-social behaviour. Fairfield Ward had the highest level of crime and a particular hotspot was the underground car park and asked what the Cabinet Member could do to make the area safe.

In her response, Councillor Shahul-Hameed stated that last year 5 young people had lost their lives as a result of knife crime and working with the Police was one of the priorities. The development of the Community Safety Strategy had been a piece of collaborative working where all the Community Safety Partnership members had an input together with views from the community and those organisations involved in supporting victims or helping to divert people away from crime.

Councillor Shahul-Hameed continued by explaining about the grants that the council had obtained with partners and the work that would be carried out as a result.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Stranack stated the Violence Reduction Unit was formed in 2019 and asked whether the Fairfield car park features within their key strategy for this year.

In her response, Councillor Shahul-Hameed stated that extra police officers had been deployed to the town centre and the council was working with the Metropolitan Police in this area and others which were experiencing rising levels of crime. Further funding for the Violence Reduction unit had been made through The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to replace the current funding which was due to expire in March 2022 and the priority would be around prevention.

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 King and Councillor Young were invited to make their announcements.

Councillor King had intended to announce the work being undertaken with Oasis regarding Ashburton Lodge but the Leader had already covered this in detail earlier in the meeting. However, he did show his appreciation to

Councillor Henson for the support she had given to the project and the residents of Addiscombe East.

Councillor Young had no announcements.

In his question, Councillor Jason Cummings asked whether the reduction in borrowing published in the recent Capital Strategy for the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MFTS) had included the money lent to Brick by Brick and the money that the council had taken on in long term borrowing after the failed Fairfield Hall fiasco.

In his response, Councillor King stated that those figures were not included in the report.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Cummings asked whether it was justified that the report celebrated the borrowing level reduction when the only reason a decrease in borrowing was shown was because the period did not include those amounts which went out immediately prior to its production which had resulted in the loss of millions of pounds to the council.

In his response, Councillor King questioned the use of the word celebrating but the report rightly noted that the council's borrowing was reducing by a not insignificant amount that he hoped Councillor Cummings would welcome.

In his question, Councillor Fraser asked whether the Government's Local Government Settlement finally respond to the cross-party consensus and demand for fair funding, a settlement for over one year and a reversal of underfunding for the last decade, inflicted on this and other local authorities.

In his response, Councillor King stated that the settlement failed on all three counts. It was once again a one-year settlement which undermined local authority's abilities to effectively set three-year budgets. It also failed to deliver on fair funding, which had left residents in places like Croydon disadvantaged compared to other areas.

In conclusion Councillor King stated that the council was now in the second decade of austerity with an 81% cut in grant funding, and he hoped that all Members appreciated that this was not in residents' interests.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Fraser asked whether the Cabinet Member agreed with him, that Croydon and other local authorities had seen a levelling down of their funding in recent years and austerity due to the underfunding from the Government.

In his response, Councillor King reiterated his earlier point regarding being in a second decade of austerity and that this authority and its residents had endured a huge cut in funding which did not reflect the needs of the borough.

Councillor King continued by stating that he applauded the Government's "Levelling Up" agenda but was worried that London would miss out as the perception was that levelling up would apply to the north of England and yet some parts of London had appalling levels of poverty, and he hoped that politicians across London would work together.

In his question, Councillor Kolade stated that in October last year the Cabinet Member talked about the ongoing review of contracts and asked whether he could provide an update on progress of these contract reviews.

In his response, Councillor Young stated that as a result of the work, £18 million of risk assessed savings were due to be made over time through the MTFs, and that £2 million of this was new and the challenge now would be delivery. The Council's commission and procurement function had been reviewed and a new staff structure was now in place with a new Head of Profession post being created, which was headed by Scott Funnell.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Kolade stated that there was a potential £11 million gap in the MTFs and that there should be greater urgency in reviewing the £7 million savings and asked when a plan on these potential savings would be made available.

In his response, Councillor Young stated that all contracts were reviewed, and officers were challenged to find savings. He stated that the £7 million referred to was a random figure which was to be looked at more carefully as there had been some double counting. As stated earlier £18 million of savings were identified with £2 million of new savings; not the £7 million quoted.

In her question, Councillor Croos asked what savings were now expected to be made through council contracts and how the council was approaching this.

In his response, Councillor Young stated that this appeared to be the same question so repeated his previous answer. However, with regards to delivery, Councillor Young explained that the new structure had been put in place with the Head of Profession and that commissioning for Adults and Children sat within those service areas. Being better focussed the system should improve service delivery for residents.

In his question, Councillor Jason Cummings stated that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was under continuing pressure this year principally relating to

repairs which was predicted to cause an overspend which would need to be covered by reserves. Given that this pressure was unlikely to ease over the short term he asked the Cabinet Member how he was intending to bring this back into balance avoiding the erosion of reserves in the HRA.

In his response, Councillor King reminded Members that early in the financial year the possible overspend was why the HRA was initially within the scope of the Spending Control Panel but was removed although still monitored regularly. Councillor King continued that he had discussed with colleagues the possibility of returning the HRA to the Spending Review Panel restrictions, but he personally did not think that it was necessary at this time, although the situation was being monitored closely.

Councillor King also stated that the proposal to increase council tenants' rents by 4.1% was due to come before Cabinet shortly and that this would help to reduce the overspend and that other avenues were also being explored to bring the HRA back within budget.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Cummings asked whether the proposed rent increase would only reduce inflationary pressures and questioned whether it was correct that tenants would be expected to pay for overspends in the system.

In his response, Councillor King confirmed that residents were not going to be expected to pay for the overspend but the council did need to ensure that inflationary pressures did not make the overspend worse. Work was going on to identify areas for savings but reassured Members that there were sufficient reserves to cover the current forecast overspend.

In his question, Councillor Kolade stated that contract inflationary pressures were a growing risk to the MTFs and asked what the Cabinet Member was doing to make sure that this was absorbed.

In his response, Councillor Young stated that no assumptions were being made and that the council would be negotiating hard, but he was aware that it would not be possible in all circumstances; therefore, the Section 151 Officer had ensured reserves were available for inflationary pressures.

In her question, Councillor Jewitt asked how it could be fair that Croydon received about half as much funding from Central Government compared to inner London boroughs and asked what the current situation regarding cross-party working were.

In his response, Councillor King stated that the Government had consistently failed to deliver on its fair funding commitment since 2010. Councillor King compared Croydon with Lambeth which received £210 per head more despite having similar demography and challenges.

Councillor King continued by outlining the cross-party work which was being co-ordinated by London Councils and despite the political differences much collaborative work was being undertaken to get a better funding deal.

In his question, Councillor Jason Cummings stated in response that there was also a significant number of London boroughs that received less funding per head than Croydon and they had not been issued Section 114 Notices; therefore, not all the issues in Croydon were down to a lack of Government funding.

Councillor Cummings continued by stating that the level of debt taken on regarding the Fairfield Halls refurbishment resulted in an additional £1.5 million of pressure every year. He asked the Cabinet Member what questions he had asked whilst this debt was rising.

In response, Councillor King stated that since he had become Deputy Leader, he had been focussed on addressing the council's finances and assisting the Leader in addressing the problems of the recent past. The independent auditor had spent a year looking into this matter and the report had been very clear in identifying the individuals who were culpable. Councillor King continued by stating that he was confident that the changes put in place would stop this situation happening again.

Councillor King concluded by stating that residents were justified in their anger that their money was not properly safeguarded and as Deputy Leader he apologised for that.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Cummings welcomed Councillor King's apology but stated that his question related to the fact that the Cabinet Member was in Cabinet meetings, not public ones, of which there were no records; so they would not appear in any report; therefore, he asked again what questions Councillor King raised about this issue in Cabinet.

In his response, Councillor King stated that as set out in the report information was not brought before Cabinet in the way that it should have been and that those were the failings that the auditor identified in her report, but that a lot of work had been undertaken to ensure that this could not happen again.

In her question, Councillor Jewitt asked what the guiding principles of the Croydon Interim Asset Disposal Strategy were, and what progress had been made.

In his response, Councillor Young stated that given the financial situation of the council it was important to achieve the best possible results from any disposals and he outlined some of the circumstances which were taken into consideration before agreeing a disposal.

Councillor Young concluded by outlining some of the recent disposals and that further disposals would make an important contribution to balancing the books and to living within the council's means.

With an end to the time allocated to questions to Cabinet Members in the third pool, the Mayor brought Croydon Question Time to a close.

The meeting ended at 9.48 pm

Signed:

Date:

Public Document Pack

Council

Meeting held on Thursday, 3 February 2022 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: ;
Councillor Felicity Flynn (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Kola Agboola, Hamida Ali, Muhammad Ali, Jade Appleton,
Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel, Sue Bennett, Margaret Bird, Mike Bonello,
Alison Butler, Robert Canning, Richard Chatterjee, Chris Clark, Pat Clouder,
Stuart Collins, Mary Croos, Jason Cummings, Patsy Cummings,
Mario Creatura, Nina Degrad, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Sean Fitzsimons,
Clive Fraser, Maria Gatland, Lynne Hale, Patricia Hay-Justice,
Maddie Henson, Simon Hoar, Yvette Hopley, Karen Jewitt, Humayun Kabir,
Stuart King, Ola Kolade, Toni Letts, Oliver Lewis, Stuart Millson, Oni Oviri,
Ian Parker, Joy Prince, Helen Redfern, Scott Roche, Paul Scott, Manju Shahul-
Hameed, Caragh Skipper, Andy Stranack, Gareth Streeter, Robert Ward,
David Wood, Louisa Woodley and Callton Young

Apologies: Councillor Sherwan Chowdhury, Jamie Audsley, Simon Brew, Janet Campbell,
Louis Carserides, Alisa Flemming, Steve Hollands, Jason Perry, Helen Pollard,
Tim Pollard and Badsha Quadir

PART A

52/21 Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

53/21 Report in the Public Interest

Madam Deputy Mayor invited Paul Dossett, Head of Local Government at Grant Thornton to remind Members of the context of the report.

Sarah Ironmonger, Director, Grant Thornton, introduced the report and explained the main issues.

Questions to Grant Thornton

In his question, Councillor Collins stated that it was not unusual for capital projects to overspend and asked what mechanisms could be put in place with the council, working with council officers at the outset of major projects so that auditors could advise and flag up issues throughout the process, to avoid future overspending.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger explained the usual process and agreed that it was not unusual for capital projects to overspend. However, overspends would normally be reported quarterly so that mitigations could be put in place and any large overspends should have been reported upwards to the Growth Board, which did not happen in this case.

Paul Dossett explained that the role of the external auditor was to remain independent at all times.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Collins asked if there was a role for senior officers in terms of training around issues as complex as these and a role for councillors to be working with those senior officers better.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger agreed that there was always a role for training and that was why paid specialist officers were in place. The legal side of this issue was particularly complex and Grant Thornton employed specialist legal advice to ensure that they got to the bottom of it. The role of the council's Monitoring Officer was to ensure that the council was acting lawfully.

In her question, Councillor Hale stated that the final costs shown in the report of £67.5 million was considerably above the sum of £30 million approved by Cabinet. Brick by Brick claimed that this was due to contract variations in specification delays by the council and Councillor Hale asked how accurate that claim was.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that some of that went back to the original legal place where the council was unable to set a clear specification. However, it was clear that there were elements of additional spend such as around an issue with asbestos. There were also choices around items that the council requested, and getting to the bottom of the spend was a significant piece of work.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Hale asked whether the auditors believed that the council missed vital opportunities to manage the increasing costs which have now been imposed on Croydon residents as an additional borrowing burden.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that as there was no reporting back the council did not have the opportunity to challenge in real time decisions that were being made. There were conversations that were happening through the Fairfield Halls Board. The issue of asbestos should have been expected as the council would have carried surveys in the past.

In his question, Councillor Clark asked whether delays and cost increases were unusual in complex construction projects?

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that they were not unusual, but it was what was done about the issues that was important.

In his question, Councillor Ward stated that the business plan approved by Cabinet always said funding by the council would be 25% equity and 75% loan and asked whether, given the risk of the project, Brick by Brick was in breach of its statutory duty by accepting 100% loan funding.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that she had had conversations with the directors of Brick by Brick and that it was their duty to answer that specific question. However, what she had been able to identify through conversations with them and officers involved at the time was, that in their view the equity was coming at the end of the project and as the project had not ended it had not gone through. Where the auditors were concerned was that the equity did not appear on the council's financial plan.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Ward asked whether it was unusual to put the risk capital at the end and whether Grant Thornton had found any plan at all for equity funding for any of the Brick by Brick projects.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger confirmed that she had found no evidence of equity funding being provided.

In his question, Councillor Scott asked that of the £67.5 million cost, what was the actually costed value of the works carried out to refurbish and extend Fairfield Hall and what construction professionals had advised an understanding those costs.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that what had been reported was the amount that Brick by Brick and the council had agreed had been spent on the project and the auditors had not been analysing the construction elements.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Scott asked what consideration had been given to the added value of clearance of the former car park which now benefitted the planning consent given to Brick by Brick.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger confirmed that the £67.5 million excluded any spend on the car park and this was where some of the complexity in reaching the final figure came from as there were three or four projects that made up the College Green scheme.

In his question, Councillor Jason Cummings asked about a couple of specific points in the report.

Firstly at the bottom of page 5, *"We have not been able to identify explicit formal reporting to the Cabinet of the project additional spend."*

And secondly towards the bottom of page 6, *"This group reported to the then Portfolio Holders (the then Portfolio Holders for Homes and Gateway Services, for Finance and Resources and the Leader) who were either not briefed by officers and should have requested briefings on the project given what they appeared to know or did not take effective action in response to concerns raised by the officers."*

Councillor Cummings stated that the wording seemed to suggest that the auditors were not sure whether the leadership of the council was informed about what was going on and asked that, given the investigation whether the auditors told by anybody that they were told.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger confirmed that as part of the report they had consulted with various people, had representations from officers saying that they did brief Members and had representation from Members who said that they were not briefed. However, they had been unable to find any evidence of a briefing so had been unable to reach a conclusion as two district groups had a different view of the situation. Members should have been briefed. Grant Thornton stated clearly that there was no formal reporting through public Cabinet meetings where the decisions could have been scrutinised.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Cummings asked whether the lack of minutes was the reason for there being no evidence of the decisions and scrutiny. He also asked whether the auditors had encountered any reason why the political leadership would not have been informed of what was taking place.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger answered the second point first and stated that she had come across no reason not to inform the political leadership. With regards to the first point her understanding was that at that time informal Cabinet briefings were not minuted or recorded.

In his question, Councillor Fraser asked about the concerns that had been raised by the accountable body for the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership on page 4 of the report asked whether there was any evidence that officers had thought again at that point.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger confirmed that she had seen emails from other local authorities to Croydon officers where that discussion had happened, referencing meetings. There was also a letter from the council's solicitors to the accountable body written in legal language. So it was clear that there was communication answering the other local authorities' questions and a reluctance to give the money directly to Brick by Brick which was what was originally intended, and to overcome this the money was given directly to the council with the risk around procurement sitting with Croydon Council; not with them as the accountable body as far as can be understood from the email chain that she had seen.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Fraser asked whether the concerns raised by the accountable body had been shared with Grant Thornton in their capacity as the council's auditors or as Brick by Brick's auditors at the time it was raised in March 2018. If so what was the auditor's response, and if not, what would the response have been?

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger confirmed that this had been shared with Grant Thornton as the council's auditor and only last year as part of the

investigation. If those concerns had been raised in 2018, the value for money risk assessment would have looked at the arrangements that the council had in place and if issues had been flagged up the auditors would have carried out further work on them. This may have changed the view when the risk assessment was carried out had the emails been known about. Concerns around the governance of Brick by Brick had already been picked up in the audit plan 2019/20 which was presented to the General Purposes and Audit Committee in March 2020.

In her question, Councillor Appleton noted that it had been stated a number of times that the auditors had struggled to find evidence and page 8 of the report stated that repairs had become urgent and asked whether evidence for that had been found.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger said that the evidence for urgency had come from the public papers.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Appleton asked how far back those conversations went, and were the auditors able to establish when the urgency around Fairfield Halls had begun.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that they had gone back as far as 2010 with developing the Cultural Quarter; then by 2014 it had become part of the wider College Green scheme. It had been a developing piece over a number of years.

In his question, Councillor Fitzpatrick, referred to recommendation 9 of the report as follows:

The Chief Executive should work with the Leader to continue to embed

R9.1 a clearly understood distinction between the different roles and responsibilities of Members, officers and representatives of entities akin to Brick by Brick.

Councillor Fitzpatrick stated that the report did not help him in any way to get purchase on what the reporters considered to be the role of non-executive Members of Council in governance issues of this kind and asked what that role was and how non-executive councillors could fulfil that role.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that this goes back to when problems were becoming clear and what should have happened was that information escalated through the governance routes should have continued to be escalated up to Cabinet because the thresholds set out had been breached and it was not clear what had actually taken place. What the auditors would expect is that the Leader and the Chief Executive would work together to be really clear with officers and the Members involved at the executive level around what was happening, when thresholds were breached and when it should be reported. At that point non-executive Members should have visibility

of that as it would be in reports and have the opportunity to take the issue through scrutiny.

Sarah Ironmonger continued by stating that there was another element here of the role of an entity like Brick by Brick because at one point in the report the auditors talked about them commentating on the Terms of Reference of the arrangements the council had put in place to monitor them and questioned whether the organisation the council was monitoring should tell the council what it should be monitoring.

Paul Dossett stated that the Chartered Institute of Public Finance was about to issue a comprehensive report on how local authorities with companies should manage projects in terms of business cases, regular monitoring, governance and oversight and strongly recommended that the guidance was distributed to Members once it was published as it gave a very comprehensive overview about how projects and relationships should be managed.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Fitzpatrick asked if the auditors agreed that in order to fulfil the recommendation the Chief Executive and the Leader were going to make it clear how non-executive Members could play an effective and valuable role in governance in respect to issues of this kind.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that she would expect that in response to this recommendation there would be some sort of briefing where the officer side and the executive member side thought that line sat. Every council struggled to fully understand where that line did sit but it should be expected that discussions would take place with non-executive members.

In his question, Councillor Chatterjee asked whether Grant Thornton had at any time, either in the course of this work or previous audits, found that Brick by Brick was in breach of its Articles of Association.

In reply, Paul Dossett stated that the report was not about Brick by Brick but about the council so it was not a question he could answer.

Councillor Chatterjee then asked whether he had understood correctly that if Grant Thornton had come across a breach of the Articles of Association then it could not be reported at this meeting.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger reiterated that this report was solely looking at the council's arrangements to manage Brick by Brick and manage the Fairfield Halls project and all the auditors looked at within the Articles of Association was whether they had included the ability to carry out the Fairfield Halls refurbishment. To look at the full Articles of Association would need to be a completely different piece of work.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Chatterjee asked what evidence the auditors found of a commercial evaluation of the College Green development by the council or by Brick by Brick.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that Brick by Brick had provided its financial viability assessment before it took on the College Green project. What the auditors did not have was the council's assessment of where the £30 million estimate for works on Fairfield Halls originated and what it covered.

In her question, Councillor Prince stated that the report referred to the different audit regimes of companies and local authorities and asked the auditors to explain further the reasons why no alarm bells were rung during the audits of the consolidated accounts that covered both the council and Brick by Brick.

In reply, Paul Dossett stated that companies were audited under the Companies Act regime which was about giving a fair reflection on the company's accounts. The function of the auditor of the council had wider responsibility which related to the function of the council and its operations, and they did not relate to the component companies of the council's group. Therefore, it was only possible to comment on the activities of the council and not the activities of Brick by Brick or any other companies. Auditors could only operate within the statutory framework.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Prince stated that the response had not really answered her question and asked that if this was a widespread problem with councils which had companies, and whether there was a systemic flaw and the learning that Croydon was experiencing could potentially be used to help similar problems elsewhere in the country.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that as part of the audit Grant Thornton would be checking through the numbers not re-auditing those numbers. The only reason that this depth was reached was through the value for money responsibilities on the council's audit, which was not something that the auditor of a company had the power to do. Additionally, it was only the council's governance of the company that was within their remit.

Sarah Ironmonger continued by agreeing that in term of lessons learnt it was important that learning was shared and referred to the paper that Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) was in the process of producing, as there were a number of councils that had got into some difficulties in the management of companies they set up by not fully understanding where the governance sat, where the risk and responsibilities lay. The CIPFA paper should help to avoid these issues in the future.

In his question, Councillor Parker asked what evidence had been found to support the £30 million estimated spend that was approved by Cabinet in June 2016.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that the auditors had been able to find a paper, but they were not costed and they did not have them broken down as there was no financial analysis behind them which would have been expected

when the Cabinet report was first written, which could have been looked at in future if needed. It was not possible for the auditors to answer whether this should have been a £30 million or a £67 million project as that information was not available.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Parker asked what conclusion should have been drawn from the lack of evidence.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that the conclusion was that the council needed that original analysis to know whether the project was on track or not.

In his question, Councillor Canning stated that the report mentioned the payments made by the council to Brick by Brick raised a significant state aid risk and asked what the likelihood was of there being an investigation into this possible breach of state aid rules, who would undertake such an investigation and how would it be triggered.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that she was not sure how it would be triggered. The council had been trying to address it by including the expenditure to remedy the situation which was the route officers had decided to take, for which the council would have been required to carry out a public procurement. She believed that the council had been considering and trying to mitigate that risk.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Canning asked whether the report had overplayed the state aid risk.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that the legal advice the council received in November 2016 said it was a significant state aid risk and that was why the auditors had used that phrase. It had not been tested by the auditors but they believed the council should have put in mitigations at the time to address it.

In her question, Councillor Oviri stated that the report mentioned value for money more than fifteen times including the auditors own concerns on page 26 and quoted below:

The Council's detailed financial analysis at that time (June 2016 Cabinet) cannot be found by current Council officers and we are unable to conclude on whether the underlying assumptions were reasonable or not.

Councillor Oviri stated that according to the Chief Executive the auditors had asked for the value for money report to be paused and asked why the auditors had come to that conclusion.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that the value for money report looked at the council's arrangements and the reason that the auditors asked for the pause was because it had done a certain amount of work but there were two elements that had not reached an end, one of which was the legality piece. It was paused as the auditor's legal advisors stated that it could be unlawful which turned the report from a value for money report to a Report in the Public

Interest as the council could not identify the legal powers to spend the money in the way that it did, and the fact that the council did not have the ability to understand what the spend was at the time that they could have taken action against it.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Oviri asked whether there would be any circumstances where the value for money report would not be made public as the assessment of risk needed to be understood.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that the auditors did not believe that anything of significance in the paused value for money report was not covered in the Report in the Public Interest but would look to see if an executive summary could be shared publicly.

In his question, Councillor Pelling asked what evidence was found of questioning by the Cabinet on the performance of the Fairfield Halls project.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger confirmed that after the June 2016 Cabinet meeting the auditors could not find any record and therefore were not able to see what questions had been asked by Cabinet.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Pelling stated that officers had advised that this was an area worthy of further investigation and asked whether the auditors thought that this would be for the council or for the auditors to carry out.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger confirmed that how the council chose to respond to the report would be for the council to decide.

In her question, Councillor Redfern stated that according to the Coast to Capital Local Growth Fund business case, of March 2017, there was an undertaking that the council would invest the £40 million Coast to Capital grant as part of its equity funding to Brick by Brick. This had not happened and it was covered by loans. Councillor Redfern asked whether the legality of using the grant in this way been investigated.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger confirmed that the auditors had seen that one part of the grant monies was originally allocated to the Arnhem Gallery and correspondence was sent to Coast to Capital asking for permission to redirect that into the wider scheme. The legality of using grants instead of equity was not an area that the auditors had looked into.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Redfern asked that whether the legality over the use of the funds should be investigated further and, if so, by whom.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger suggested that should be discussed by the council with Coast to Capital as they were the ones who provided the funding.

In her question, Councillor Bird spoke about the role of the then Monitoring Officer on page 14 of the report and asked what the possible illegal actions referred to in not adhering to the November 2016 legal advice were.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that the role of Monitoring Officer was set out in Statute to ensure that the council operated within a lawful framework and what the auditors were saying was that in that example legal advice was obtained which highlighted very significant risks of not remaining within the law and it was therefore the auditor's view that the officer whose role it was to ensure the council remained within the law took that forward.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Bird stated that the word used was illegal rather than unlawful and asked what were the potentially illegal actions?

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger clarified that the report was quoting the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, section 5 regarding the general powers of the Monitoring Officer and that was why the council had a specialist legal team to give advice on such matters.

In his question, Councillor Roche stated that at the meeting of the Coast to Capital Investment Committee in March 2019 it was stated that Croydon Council had been unsuccessful in its purchase of a redundant building from Croydon College; therefore, the building had been sold to a third party developer and it was confirmed that this meant a slight change in scope which would have no significant impact on the output of the entire scheme and asked whether the auditors agreed with this as it was a fundamental part of the College Green site.

In reply, Sarah Ironmonger stated that when a site was lost then the project should have been re-evaluated to check the viability of the project and in this case it reduced the number of houses that could be built which would link into the financial viability. As stated earlier the auditors had been unable to find any evidence of the re-evaluation which would have been expected.

Madam Deputy Mayor thanked Sarah Ironmonger and Paul Dossett for their report and for answering Members' questions.

The Monitoring Officer, John Jones, made a formal reminder to Members of the Monitoring Officer's responsibility under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to report formally to the Council on any proposal, decision or omission by the Council which had given rise to, or was likely to, or would, give rise to, the contravention of any enactment, rule of law or statutory code of practice.

In addition to his report, the Monitoring Officer reminded Members that he had asked that the contents of the external auditor's report be reviewed to identify any concerns or areas that needed further consideration from a fraud perspective in accordance with the Fraud Act.

Madam Deputy Mayor invited the Leader to give her response to the report.

In her response, the Leader Councillor Hamida Ali, thanked Sarah Ironmonger and Paul Dossett for the report, for answering Members' questions and for their ongoing advice. Councillor Ali continued by stating that these were clearly serious matters and the need to agree the action plan to address these issues was clear. Councillor Ali reminded Members that it was herself and the Chief Executive who had asked the auditors to look into concerns around governance which showed a shift in culture and practice.

Councillor Ali continued by once again apologising to the public for the fact that public money had not be safeguarded as it should have been but stated that improvements had been made over the past fifteen months and listed those improvements.

In conclusion, Councillor Ali stated that this report highlighted some really serious issues but described the council as it was previously and not how it was now and that this situation could not happen again and that the Action Plan would help to continue the recovery work.

Madam Deputy Mayor invited Councillor Hale as Deputy Leader of the Opposition to give her response to the report.

In her response, Councillor Hale stated that to have two Reports in the Public Interest (RIPs) within fifteen months was unprecedented and the language used in the report was stark. The report raised very serious questions about the whole project and Councillor Hale listed a number of more serious issues in the report, including failure to ensure that the project was legal.

Councillor Hale continued by stating that scrutiny and challenge had been completely blocked and the report had found fundamental failings by the council in governance, and that Conservative Members who questioned this project had been shut down and their questions were un-answered and some Cabinet Members from the time were still in the current Cabinet. Councillor Hale called for those Cabinet Members to resign.

Councillor Hale concluded by stating that she was proposing to move a motion to add a recommendation to the other recommendations that this report be sent to the police.

Madam Deputy Mayor invited the Independent Chair of the General Purposes and Audit Committee, Dr Olu Olasode, to give his response.

In his response, Dr Olu Olasode reminded Members that his appointment as the Independent Chair of the General Purposes and Audit Committee had been a result of recommendations made in the first RIPI and he had taken up that role in October 2021.

Dr Olasode continued by picking out the points in the report that were most relevant to the General Purposes and Audit Committee and what steps the Committee will take in future to have greater oversight.

In conclusion, Dr Olasode confirmed that at the March meeting the General Purposes and Audit Committee would be updating its Terms of Reference to ensure that it was best placed to meet its requirements.

Questions to the Leader, Cabinet Members, the Chair of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee and the Independent Chair of the General Purposes and Audit Committee

In her question, Councillor Hale asked whether the Leader agreed that failing to act on the legal advice could not have been a worse indictment of the authority.

In her response, the Leader Councillor Hamida Ali stated that the report showed that this project had been extremely badly run and that it was a serious issue for everyone in the chamber. Councillor Ali continued by reiterating her early comments regarding the changes that had been made over the last fifteen months and concluded by stating that those poor decisions would no longer happen.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Hale stated that the Leader had been in the cabinet when this behaviour had been allowed and asked whether the Leader and other Cabinet members should resign.

In her response, the Leader reminded Members that in December 2020 she raised concerns regarding this project following a report from the internal auditors and asked external auditors to investigate. In the external auditor's report a number of references were made to the fact that Cabinet was not able to fully scrutinise the project as set out on page 28 of the report as follows:

".....in our view, the lack of formal update to Cabinet did restrict wider scrutiny of the project by other members of the Cabinet or other members."

In his question, Councillor Fitzpatrick stated that the changes to the way Cabinet functioned were good to hear and asked about the role of the council in achieving its best value duty and whether the Leader agreed with him that it was difficult for non-executive members to fulfil that duty unless they had access to a great deal more information than at present and that information from Brick by Brick would probably never be available.

In her response, the Leader listed the work that had already been carried out within Cabinet and senior officers to increase the transparency of the decision-making process to assist non-executive members to undertake their duty. Cabinet had also formed a Cabinet Advisory Board to specifically look at

Brick by Brick, which had agreed that a regular report on Brick by Brick would come to Cabinet, demonstrating a desire to improve reporting to all Members.

In his supplementary, Councillor Fitzpatrick asked about the internal control boards and to what extent those internal control boards would be in any way public and their papers accessible to the public including non-executive members.

In her response, Councillor Ali agreed that there was now several officer boards or officer and member boards looking at a range of issues. This would relate to the recommendation for the Leader and the Chief Executive to work together to ensure that the divide between officers and councillors was clear. The Chief Executive would have a view on how she wished officer boards to work but reassured members that this would be discussed.

In his question, Councillor Bains asked whether, considering the serious issues raised in the report, Councillor Lewis would resign.

In his response, Councillor Lewis agreed that the report raised serious issues but that these related to the council as it was in the past; not how it was now. He also stated that it was important that the reasons for what happened were fully understood. That was why the Administration had commissioned this report in which the responsibility for the shortcomings was clearly set out.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Bains asked Councillor Lewis to apologise to the people of Croydon for the contents of the RIPI.

In his response, Councillor Lewis stated that it was important to remember what the Fairfield Halls refurbishment had delivered and listed the varied improvements that had been made which supported the cultural sector locally.

In his question, Councillor Bonello asked whether the Cabinet member agreed that after half a century of under investment this much needed and important investment had left one of Croydon's greatest assets greatly enhanced and whether he agreed that the refurbishment was necessary.

In his response, Councillor Young stated that when the decision of Cabinet in 2016 to invest £30 million to refurbish Fairfield Halls was made, there was no doubt that it was necessary. Whether value for money was obtained was not yet known due to the report having been paused.

In his question **Councillor Jason Cummings** stated that the report clearly showed that legal advice to the council flagged the risk of unlawful state aid and asked whether the Leader had at any time seen legal advice or was she told by any officer that such legal advice existed.

In her response, the Leader reminded Members that there were at least three references in the report that stated that Cabinet was not aware of the legal advice and that the Cabinet decision had been made five months before the legal advice regarding unlawful use of state aid. The legal advice should have

come back to Cabinet at that time and clearly the statutory officers at that time did not discharge their duties.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Cummings asked again whether the Leader was aware of the existence of the legal advice.

In her response, the Leader confirmed again that she had not been made aware of the legal advice until the RIPI was published.

In her question, Councillor Clouder asked what lessons from the Report in the Public Interest were there for Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees and what needed to be done in future to ensure that costs on major projects were not hidden from councillors and the public.

In his response, Councillor Fitzsimons Chair of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee, stated that scrutiny needed support and openness from the statutory officers to work properly. Councillor Fitzsimons continued by stating that this was not the first time that he felt the support from officers had been lacking and, in this case, he had been told by those officers that it was not a key decision so it could not be scrutinised.

Councillor Fitzsimons continued by stating that the issue of officers withholding information from councillors was endemic and long term and he felt personally let down on his own behalf and that of the committee on both sides that they were not given the full facts. In conclusion, Councillor Fitzsimons said that the lessons learned resulted in a more transparent council, better record keeping, better support from statutory officers and better support from both political parties to the role of scrutiny and its function in holding the council to account.

In his question, Councillor Creatura stated that in the report the auditors had expected Cabinet to ask for briefings on a project of this type and that Councillor Lewis had stated earlier that this report reflected on the council as it was. However, Councillor Lewis had been Cabinet member responsible for Fairfield Halls since 2018 so asked whether he had inadvertently or deliberately misled the council.

In his response, Councillor Lewis reminded Members that he was the Cabinet Member for Fairfield Halls but his portfolio did not cover Brick by Brick and his focus was on the future operation of Fairfield Halls; not on the refurbishment work being carried out by Brick by Brick.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Creatura asked whether Councillor Lewis had ever asked for a briefing on the progress of the Fairfield Halls refurbishment in the four years that he had held the culture portfolio.

In his response, Councillor Lewis stated that he had been clear in his previous response that his role concentrated on the cultural output of Fairfield Halls and building a relationship with the operator.

In his question, Councillor Fraser asked whether the complexities of the Delivery Framework mitigated against good governance and whether a simpler system allowed for better governance.

In her response, the Leader agreed that governance was clearly poor and the additional expenditure of £37.5 million not coming back to Cabinet should not have happened and listed the specific issues highlighted in the report and the progress made over the last fifteen months.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Fraser asked whether the Leader agreed that it was better to keep project management and governance simple when it came to projects of this nature in future.

In her response, the Leader agreed that the ambition was to regain the higher standards of project management that had been seen in the past.

In his question, Councillor Streeter asked whether the Leader was now confident that she was on top of what went wrong, any future ramifications, and that there would be no more nasty surprises for the people of Croydon.

In her response, the Leader reiterated her previous comments that she had spent the last fifteen months working with Cabinet colleagues and officers to make the improvements required which had been a continual process and Cabinet would continue to ask questions of officers.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Streeter asked the Leader to give her word that she believed no criminal activity had taken place.

The Monitoring Officer reminded Members that it was for the police to decide if anything illegal or unlawful had taken place.

In her response, the Leader confirmed that the discussion focussed on the report from the auditors which showed that there were aspects which were outside the delegated powers and referred to section 1.5 of the covering report which went into more detail. In addition, the Leader confirmed that the police had seen the report so it was now with them to decide on appropriate action.

In her question, Councillor Patsy Cummings asked the Leader to expand on any issues that the staff raised at the meeting held with them regarding the Report in the Public Interest which were of particular concern to them.

In her response, the Leader stated that she and the Chief Executive had held two virtual meetings with staff and another with partners. The staff had asked similar questions to residents particularly around redundancies and cuts to services. The meetings had highlighted the need for regular communication with both staff and residents.

In her question, Councillor Gatland asked that considering the narrow scope of the report, what the Cabinet Member thought should happen and what consequences should those responsible for the unlawful practices face.

In his response, Councillor Lewis stated that post-pandemic it was important to continue to support the cultural community and raise confidence in the sector.

In response to Councillor Gatland's second point, Councillor Lewis stated that it was only to be expected that those responsible for wrongdoing were held accountable for their actions and that he was sure that the appropriate authorities would act if they decided it was necessary.

In his question, Councillor Canning asked what governance arrangements were now in place to manage large capital projects to ensure that they remained within budget and how they had been strengthened since Councillor Young had become the Cabinet Member.

Councillor King stated that this issue fell within his portfolio and confirmed that a review of internal governance for capital projects had already taken place. In addition, an interim Director for Capital and Commercial Investment had been appointed, and the successful candidate had a wealth of experience. Councillor King then listed other areas where work had been carried out.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Canning asked what additional measures were being taken.

In his response, Councillor King confirmed that he and Councillor Young now had monthly meetings with officers who had written reports to challenge decisions in a transparent manner and that there were further measures proposed which were set out in the recommendations.

In his question, Councillor Millson quoted from the report "*Rather it is our view that the licence was (at least in part) intended to circumvent procurement law*" and asked what action the Leader had taken to corroborate this finding.

In her response, the Leader reminded Members that this report was the view of the auditors, and it was not for her to corroborate their findings. The auditors had had to employ their own legal experts due to the complexities. The Leader continued by reminding members that it was the role of statutory officers to ensure that the council operated legally and that the officers involved had either left the council or were suspended and the previous Leader and Cabinet Member were no longer councillors.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Millson stated that he believed that other officers not mentioned in the report would have had knowledge of what was happening and asked the Leader whether the culture had been an issue here.

In her response, the Leader stated that it was the role of the Chief Executive to deal with workforce issues but confirmed that the culture had been a major part of the review that had been going on for the past fifteen months. The Leader acknowledged that more work was required so that staff felt able to speak out.

In her question, Councillor Prince asked about the new assurance framework (6.4 on the Action Plan) and what the Independent Chairman would want to see in that framework.

In his response, Dr Olasode stated that officers were working on it, but that it would be down to the committee to decide on the exact details of the framework.

Before the recommendations were debated the Conservative Group asked that an additional recommendation was added.

Councillor Fitzsimons raised a point of order as he was concerned that the proposed amendment to involve the police would then remove this issue from the public domain.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the proposed amendment was in order as the Action Plan which was being debated at the meeting was within the public domain.

Madam Deputy Mayor asked that a member of the Opposition propose the additional recommendation.

Councillor Hale proposed the amendment.

“That the Report in the Public Interest be sent to the Police.”

Councillor Jason Cummings seconded the proposed amendment.

Councillor King stated that the covering report stated that “The external auditor has not made any suggestion that any act has taken place that is prohibited by law.” Therefore, the most senior officers of the council had not seen anything within the external auditor’s report that would warrant involving the police.

Councillor Hale stated that it was very rare for two Reports in the Public Interest to cover the same issues around governance and financial accountability. The report being debated at this meeting did not cover all the issues which was why the Opposition felt that the report should be sent to the police.

Councillor Fitzsimons clarified Members’ responsibilities regarding fraud and the council’s constitution that requirement for suspicions needed to be raised with the Head of Internal Audit.

Councillor Young stated that the Opposition were suggesting that something illegal had gone on when the external auditors report had used the term unlawful which was an important distinction. The Leader had already confirmed that a copy of the report had been sent to the borough commander and therefore it was up to them to decide if the law was broken.

Councillor Canning stated that if Councillor Hale had evidence then she should go to the police directly rather than putting forward this additional recommendation.

The Leader stated that the evidence that supported a police referral should be put in front of councillors. The Leader reiterated her earlier statement that she had sent a copy on the day of publication to the borough commander.

Councillor Jason Cummings stated that the additional recommendation was to send the report to the police and that it would then be down to them to decide whether anything illegal had taken place. Councillor Cummings continued by stating that the public wanted more than a debate between councillors.

A recorded vote was requested and supported by ten councillors. The recorded vote is attached to the signed minutes. The motion was lost.

Councillor King moved the motion on the recommendations and spoke about the work that had been done over the past fifteen months to put things right and the report and recommendations reflected that. However, Councillor King acknowledged that there was still much work to do to rebuild trust in the council with residents but that the acceptance of the recommendations would be a step towards that.

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

Councillor Ward stated that as far back as April 2017 he could see that the project had problems and he had asked questions at the time, before he became a councillor, and he outlined the responses that he had received, including Freedom of Information requests.

Councillor Bains stated that the Report in the Public Interest showed that the council had behaved unlawfully and that the public rightfully needed answers to their questions.

Councillor Young thanked the Leader and the Chief Executive for their tenacity in trying to get to the bottom of this and he reminded Members that the first Report in the Public Interest published in October 2020 stated that councillors had a collective responsibility. Councillor Young continued by stating the importance of Fairfield Halls and listed the activities that take place.

Councillor Young concluded by listing the areas of failure that the report had highlighted and that the second report acknowledged the improvements that had already been made as a result of the first report.

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

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

- 1.1 Fully accept the findings of the Report in the Public Interest and the external auditor's recommendations;
- 1.2 Note that recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9 and 11 have been identified by the external auditor as S24 statutory recommendations as detailed in appendix 1 to the report;
- 1.3 Note the range of corrective actions that have already been taken to date as detailed in paragraph 2 of the report;
- 1.4 Note that the financial issues detailed in the report have already been fully taken into account in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy as agreed by Council in March 2021 and that the report does not create any significant additional financial pressures that have not already been dealt with by the Council.
- 1.5 Consider and agree with the opinion contained in the Council's Chief Finance Officer's (Section 151 Officer) report set out in paragraph 4 of this report;
- 1.6 Consider and agree with the opinion contained in the Council's Monitoring Officer's report set out in paragraph 5 of this report;
- 1.7 Consider and agree the action plan detailed at appendix 2 to this report, that includes a response to each of the external auditor's recommendations, and the indicative timeline for actions and accountabilities;
- 1.8 Agree that the action plan be presented to both the General Purposes & Audit Committee and the Scrutiny & Overview Committee at their next meetings to consider and review the plan from their differing constitutional positions and report any feedback to Cabinet.

- 1.9 Request that Cabinet receives a report that includes any feedback on the action plan from the Scrutiny & Overview Committee and the General Purposes & Audit Committee and provides further detail on the delivery of the Action Plan, including the anticipated costs of implementing the recommendations;

- 1.10 Agree that the action plan be incorporated into the Croydon Renewal and Improvement Plan as part of the refresh currently underway;

- 1.11 That progress on implementing the external auditor's recommendations be included in the existing Croydon Renewal Improvement Plan update reports that are presented to Cabinet, the Scrutiny & Overview Committee, General Purposes and Audit Committee and Council;

- 1.12 Note that a report detailing proposals to finalise any further refurbishment of the Fairfield Halls will be presented to Cabinet in March 2022.

- 1.13 Note that the Chief Executive has written to the Directors of Brick by Brick to request that they review and explain the charge made to the Council in relation to the project management of the refurbishment of the Fairfield Halls and the variations.

- 1.14 Note that the Council will continue to maintain an open dialogue with the external auditor, Independent Chair of the General Purposes and Audit Committee, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Improvement and Assurance Panel to keep them apprised of the progress in implementing the Action Plan.

The meeting ended at 10.10 pm

Signed:

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Date:

Public Document Pack

Council

Meeting held on Wednesday, 23 March 2022 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Sherwan Chowdhury (Chair);
Councillor Felicity Flynn (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Kola Agboola, Hamida Ali, Muhammad Ali, Jade Appleton,
Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel, Sue Bennett, Margaret Bird, Mike Bonello,
Simon Brew, Alison Butler, Jan Buttinger, Janet Campbell, Robert Canning,
Louis Carserides, Richard Chatterjee, Luke Clancy, Chris Clark, Pat Clouder,
Stuart Collins, Mary Croos, Jason Cummings, Patsy Cummings,
Mario Creatura, Nina Degrads, Sean Fitzsimons, Alisa Flemming, Clive Fraser,
Maria Gatland, Lynne Hale, Patricia Hay-Justice, Maddie Henson,
Steve Hollands, Yvette Hopley, Karen Jewitt, Bernadette Khan, Shafi Khan,
Stuart King, Ola Kolade, Toni Letts, Oliver Lewis, Stephen Mann,
Stuart Millson, Michael Neal, Oni Oviri, Ian Parker, Andrew Pelling,
Jason Perry, Helen Pollard, Tim Pollard, Joy Prince, Badsha Quadir,
Helen Redfern, Scott Roche, Pat Ryan, Manju Shahul-Hameed,
Caragh Skipper, Andy Stranack, Gareth Streeter, Robert Ward, David Wood,
Louisa Woodley and Callton Young

Apologies: Councillor Jamie Audsley, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Simon Hoar and Humayun Kabir

PART A

8/21 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

9/21 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

10/21 **Announcements**

Before the start of the meeting for the benefit of 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. Seats in the

Chamber had been allocated to the two political groups based upon the total number of seats they held on the council overall.

The Mayor

In his announcements the Mayor started by inviting all Councillors to the annual Mayoral charity Gala dinner. This would take place on Thursday 31 March at the Grand Sapphire Hotel. Anyone wishing to attend was asked to contact the Mayor's office.

The Mayor also reminded all Members that an event to mark Bangladesh Independence day was taking place on 31 March at 12.30 pm in the Town Hall.

The Leader

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

The Leader confirmed that she would not be standing as a candidate in the forthcoming elections and took the opportunity to thank the people and community groups in Woodside whom she had worked with over the last eight years.

The Leader also thanked her Cabinet and Group colleagues for their support and challenge over her time as the Leader as well as the staff who had worked collaboratively to deliver the budget savings required.

The Chief Executive

The Mayor invited the Chief Executive, Katherine Kerswell, in her capacity as Head of Paid Service, to make her announcements.

The Chief Executive informed Members that this was the Interim Monitoring Officer, John Jones's, last meeting and that he would be leaving Croydon Council on 31 March. She thanked John for everything that he had done over the last six months.

The Chief Executive confirmed that Andrew Hunkin would take on the role of Interim Monitoring Officer and that the recruitment process for appointing a new permanent Monitoring Officer was underway.

The Chief Executive also informed Members that earlier in March Justin Hunt was appointed as the Interim Director of Tenancy Services.

11/21 **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:

“As a licenced radio amateur and to celebrate the love and affection of Her Majesty the Queen’s Jubilee would she agree to lend her written support to Ofcom for use of a special call sign within Croydon particularly all the green and open spaces. Could she also ask the Leader of the Opposition to do the same. ”

In her response the Leader, Councillor Hamida Ali stated that the Platinum Jubilee was an opportunity to celebrate lifelong service across the Commonwealth and outlined some of the events that had already taken place.

The Leader continued by stating that Ofcom had already given their support to having dedicated call signs but that she was very happy to lend her support to Mr Samuel for a call sign for use in Croydon.

In his supplementary question Mr Samuel asked:

“Would you be able to confirm that the Queen’s Gardens would be open sometime this year, as I visited this afternoon and they were still closed and being one of the principle parks in this area that would be a superb location to air a special call sign that I will be applying for. Thank you for undertaking your research into call signs but I am just hoping that the Queen’s Gardens will be open as I was told that they won’t be open until after the elections in

three (sic) months' time because of storage space. So if you could assist with that I would be very grateful."

In her response, the Leader confirmed that she would ask when the Queen's Gardens would reopen and get back to Mr Samuel and that the Platinum Jubilee weekend would be after the election.

The next question was from Tony Pearson:

"Will the Leader outline the plans that have been made to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty, the Queen?"

In her response, the Leader confirmed that street parties would be facilitated and the usual fees were being waived to enable as many communities as possible to celebrate in the ways that they wished.

In his supplementary question Mr Pearson asked whether the Leader agreed that the only way this Jubilee would be celebrated in Croydon was for this morally bankrupt authority to be replaced by a Conservative administration and Conservative Mayor.

In her response, the Leader stated that she had hoped that this would have been a genuine question about this important civic event, and that it was rather unseemly to be politicising Her Majesty's role.

The next question was from Amy Foster.

"My children attend Oasis Academy Ryelands in Oakley Road, South Norwood. I have been very impressed by how the school students and their teachers have encouraged active travel within their community, surveying their peers on how they get to school, creating a video as part of the COP26 Conference here in Croydon. However, what has made the true difference is the School Streets Scheme which has removed excess traffic from outside the school. Could the Cabinet Member please confirm when the School Streets Scheme will be returned to opening in Sandown Road so that the students and their parents can get to school safely?"

In his response, Councillor Muhammad Ali was pleased to announce that the Traffic Management Advisory Committee unanimously agreed to reintroduce the ten schemes that were temporarily suspended. In addition the council had received funding to introduce two additional School Streets which would be put in place subject to consultation after May this year and further funding had been received for ten more from Transport for London (TfL), subject to

consultation. Any school that wished to be considered should contact the council.

The next question was from Kofi Frimpong.

“As this Labour council is about to make cuts of £470,000 to street lighting what provisions are being made to ensure that hotbeds of crime such as Norbury Avenue, Green Lane and Georgia Road are safe at night to walk through?”

In his response, Councillor Muhammad Ali stated that one of the council's top priorities was to keep communities safe and the lighting upgrade completed in 2016 led to improved safety. Councillor Ali confirmed that in January this year a new lighting regime was introduced which had not led to an increase in crime levels and any areas where CCTV cameras were present would remain at 100% functionality. The results of this trial would be discussed at a future Cabinet meeting.

In his supplementary question Mr Frimpong stated that back in November he had been informed that light levels at a particular junction were below guidance levels, and asked whether the guidance on light levels were no longer suitable and whether the council would be consulting residents after the trial period.

In his response, Councillor Muhammad Ali confirmed that all changes in light levels were within the British guidance and confirmed that any future changes to this policy would be consulted on.

The next question was from Sangeeta Gobidaas.

“Asking the Cabinet Member for Homes now that we are nearing the one year anniversary of the Regina Road housing airing, what actions have been taken by the council to improve the lives of residents since last year?”

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice confirmed that the one year on report had been discussed at great length and she summarised the improvements that had been made including greater engagement with residents and structural surveys.

In her supplementary question Ms Gobidaas asked what the Cabinet's future plans were for improving the lives of residents.

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice stated that the Improvement Plan would ensure that improvements were ongoing.

The next question was from Simon Fox.

“Why have residents in supported living blocks and council homes in Waddon been so neglected and unable to get answers from the Labour councillors and Labour council to fix major problems in their homes?”

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice stated that this question had been raised at Council at the end of last year and she referred Mr Fox to the webcast in which she had explained the situation following a visit that she had made with the Ward Councillors. Councillor Hay-Justice believed that all the issues had now been addressed apart from one door, for which parts had been ordered, and asked Mr Fox to make her or the Ward Councillors aware if there were any other issues.

In his supplementary question, Mr Fox highlighted cases where he believed work was outstanding and stated that if anyone still believed that Labour would help them with housing why should they continue to do so.

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice stated that Layton Crescent works had been completed and reminded Mr Fox to use the Ward Councillors as a route to report issues.

The next question was from Richard Harris:

“Fly tipping, graffiti and street litter blights this borough in its entirety but especially in the north of the borough. However, it is increasingly clear that this council is repeatedly ignoring residents’ reports of fly tipping in the north of the borough leading to a loss of confidence in local democracy and a loss of pride in this borough. Can we have a commitment that reports are responded to in a timely manner in order to restore confidence from with community”.

In his response, Councillor Muhammad Ali explained the differences in response to fly tipping on public and private land and asked Mr Harris to contact him with any specific cases that were outstanding.

In his supplementary question, Mr Harris asked whether there was a reason that the streets in the borough were such a mess down to the fact that the council could not afford to provide basic services to the residents anymore due to financial mismanagement of the Labour Group.

In his response, Councillor Ali confirmed that nothing had been removed from the waste management contract.

The next question was from Blake O'Donnell:

“Fly-tipping has been a continual blight in Norbury Park. It has been raised time and again at Council Meetings and yet the problem persists with no sign of any improvement. Does Labour like fly tipping or have they simply given up?”

In his response, Councillor Ali reassured Mr O'Donnell that the council proactively dealt with fly tipping and stated that more than 95% of reports were removed within 24 hours and that the council had issued over 1800 fixed penalty notices and had achieved 106 successful prosecutions.

In his supplementary question, Mr O'Donnell asked why the council did not undertake more on the ground measures such as installing a skip on public land, informing the residents that it existed and putting up notices in fly tipping hotspots saying that there will be prosecutions for doing it.

In his response, Councillor Ali stated that he could not place skips in public parks and confirmed that there were plenty of bins in all the parks with additional provision in the summer time and signs were already up in hot spot areas.

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 questions from members to the Leader and Cabinet Members.

Questions to the Leader

In his question, Councillor Perry asked whether the Local Plan would still be submitted to the Planning Inspector later this month and questioned whether now was the right time to be doing so at a time of a change of governance of the council.

In her response, the Leader reminded Members that Council had made the decision on how to respond.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Perry acknowledged the Leader's personal effort in stepping up as Leader and wished her well in her future endeavours.

In her response, the Leader thanked Councillor Perry for his kind words.

In his question, Councillor Fraser asked how the Leader had turned adversity into progressive change.

In her response, the Leader stated that maintaining local control had been vital and outlined a number of steps that had been taken and reiterated some of the points she had made earlier. The leader continued by listing the services that had been protected.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Fraser asked how the Turnaround Brick by Brick programme would be added to affordable homes in Croydon this year and next.

In her response, the Leader stated that there would be 337 more genuinely affordable homes through Brick by Brick's programme and that the delivery of affordable homes in the borough was a great achievement in tackling the borough's housing crisis.

In his question, Councillor Jason Cummings asked why the Labour group felt that it was appropriate for the Chair of Scrutiny to be from the same party as the elected Mayor.

In her response, the Leader stated that it seemed that the Opposition had already conceded defeat in the Mayoral election.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Cummings stated that when they won the election the Conservative Group would like the Chairman to be from a different party as that would be a better way to hold the Mayor to account and asked again why was it blocked.

In her response, the Leader stated that Scrutiny had been invested in an independent chair of the General Purposes and Audit Committee and given it the resources to carry out its function without party politics.

In his question, Councillor Mann thanked those community champions with whom he had worked and asked how the successors could maintain and build upon the progress made in Crystal Palace and Upper Norwood.

In her response, the Leader hoped that after the election there would be a direct link to the permanency he sought.

In her question, Councillor Oviri asked whether the Leader still felt that having an elected Mayor was a bad idea.

In her reply, the Leader reminded Members that it had been important to put that view to the people of Croydon and there was an emphatic vote in favour of an elected Mayor.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Oviri asked whether the Leader shared the electorate's enthusiasm for the upcoming election.

In her response, the Leader stated that she was in favour of the democratic response that the people of Croydon had chosen and she hoped that having an elected Mayor would elevate its voice in the London-wide conversation.

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 Hay-Justice, Councillor Shahul-Hameed and Councillor Muhammad Ali were invited to make their announcements.

Councillor Hay-Justice had no announcements.

Councillor Shahul-Hameed made her announcements regarding the Business Expo which had taken place and the Big Lunch events which were due to take place over the Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend.

Councillor Muhammad Ali made his announcements regarding the installation of electric vehicle charging points and the new business low emission scheme along London Road. In addition, Councillor Ali confirmed that the tree planting drive was continuing including the school tree planting project.

Councillor Ali concluded by confirming that he would not be seeking re-election and thanked all those who had supported him over the years.

In her question, Councillor Hale asked how the Cabinet Member could state that the Housing Service was one of the best when the Housing Improvement Board Report had stated that not enough improvements had been made in the last year or whether the Board was wrong in its assessment.

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice clarified that the aim was to be the best through setting up the Improvement Board and that the Board's report was not where the council had hoped to be and that the pace of improvement needed to be faster.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Hale stated that tenants had not been consulted on the 4.1% rise in rent.

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice confirmed that tenants and leaseholders had been consulted on the increase which was in line with Central Government's recommendations and reminded Members that the consultation was not mandatory.

In his question, Councillor Carserides asked what support the council provided to help businesses recover from the pandemic.

In her reply, Councillor Shahul-Hameed confirmed that some businesses had been adversely affected by the pandemic particularly those in the night-time economy, hospitality, culture, and leisure. Councillor Shahul-Hameed continued by listing the support that was being provided by the council and the business groups that they were working with to deliver this funding.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Carserides asked what further support was required from Government to support businesses.

In her response, Councillor Shahul-Hameed stated that she would continue to campaign for further support, such as rate relief and VAT reductions.

In his question, Councillor Millson asked which were the four Priority 1 and Priority 2 issues that were still outstanding from the Air Quality Audit carried out in 2018/19 and why they had not been closed after such a long period of time.

In his response, Councillor Muhammad Ali stated that the Air Quality Action Plan was currently under review and that the updated Air Quality Strategy and Action Plan would be going out to the public in due course and offered to speak to Councillor Millson directly to give him more specific details.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Millson stated that he believed that the Air Quality Action Plan had not been monitored and this had been picked up by Internal Audit and asked why this audit point had not been tracked by Cabinet Members.

In his response, Councillor Muhammad Ali stated that air quality was being tracked and that the revised Strategy and Action Plan would link to other strategies related to the environment and climate change.

Councillor Canning asked when the new bus shelters would be installed as the previous ones had been removed ten months ago.

In response, Councillor Muhammad Ali reminded Members that a contract had been signed with VALO four months ago and 53 sites had been submitted for planning; some shelters were expected to be installed within the next few weeks. The delay had been due to ensuring that the design of the shelters was right.

Councillor Stranack stated that the decision to close the Addington Community Centre would leave the New Addington Boxing Club homeless and that next year's budget would cut two police officers from the New Addington Safer Neighbourhood Team. Councillor Stranack also asked whether Councillor Shahul-Hameed and the rest of the Cabinet felt that they had let the residents of New Addington down.

In her response, Councillor Shahul-Hameed reminded Members that the council worked very closely with the Police and the community to make sure that there were enough Police, and that involvement with the Safer Neighbourhood Team ensured that these issues were tackled collaboratively.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Stranack stated that the community of New Addington was very disappointed by this decision and asked that the Cabinet Member worked with Councillor Young to consult with the community before making the decision to sell the valued community asset.

In her response, Councillor Shahul-Hameed acknowledged the community's concern at the lack of community spaces for young people and outlined some of the support that was being given to community and voluntary organisations.

Councillor Jewitt asked the Cabinet Member to confirm that the concerns of the Grange Road residents about speeding vehicles would be monitored as a matter of urgency.

In his response, Councillor Muhammad Ali stated that the signage installed in 2020 had been effective but where motorists insisted on travelling at speed enforcement would be needed and the council must rely on this to be carried out by the Metropolitan Police. Councillor Ali continued by stating that he would raise the concerns with the Metropolitan Police and request some additional enforcement was carried out.

Councillor Ali concluded by giving some information on the Roadwatch Scheme which he would pass on to Councillor Jewitt.

Councillor Redfern stated that there had been a homeless community in the Wellesley Road subway and asked why this was being allowed to happen.

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice confirmed that she had been approached by several councillors who were concerned about particular individuals and that officers had been working with partners to provide a wraparound service. However, it had been difficult to encourage some individuals to move at this time.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Redfern asked for more specific actions that would be undertaken in the next few weeks.

In her response, Councillor Hay-Justice stated that this issue was not as easy to resolve as many people thought as some of these individuals had complex issues and there were a number of agencies working closely together to provide support. In addition those agencies ensured that the wellbeing of the individuals was maintained and not all of them chose to accept the accommodation that was available.

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 King and Councillor Young were invited to make their announcements.

Councillor King used his announcement to pay tribute to all those councillors who had chosen to step aside at the elections in May and especially to the Leader whom he was proud to have served alongside.

Councillor Young had no announcements.

In his question, Councillor Jason Cummings stated that during the period that Croydon Affordable Housing was identified as having a £73 million risk an ex-Labour councillor in Croydon was appointed as a Director and the appointment had never been brought forward to council. He asked who had made that appointment.

In his reply, Councillor King stated that the appointment had been made before he had become the Cabinet Member.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Cummings stated that the website was not updated for fifteen months so no one knew that he had been appointed as a director of Croydon Affordable Housing and asked again

whether the Cabinet Member felt it was appropriate to appoint a Labour politician to a Director post.

In his response, Councillor King stated that as he had not been involved in the process he did not know what criteria were applied to the appointment, the experience or skills required. However, Councillor King reminded Members that the governance arrangements had been improved and more training provided since this appointment had been made.

In her question, Councillor Jewitt asked what assumptions the council had made regarding inflation the next year and for the remainder of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

In his reply, Councillor King stated that when the MTFS was agreed in March 2021 it had been assumed that wage and contract inflation would be 2% but this had been raised during the course of the year.

Councillor King reminded Members that in the recently agreed budget, contract inflation was assumed at 5% and wage inflation at 3% and thought that these were prudent assumptions but acknowledged that should inflation continue to rise then the situation may need to be reviewed.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Jewitt asked what the consequences of rising inflation were for the council.

In his response, Councillor King stated that the cost for the year 2022/23 of rising inflation was £20 million and for the term of the MTFS is would be £50 million and that this would lead to less funding for resident priorities.

Councillor Roche asked whether the Cabinet Member thought that it was morally acceptable to set a budget based on fixed penalty notices.

In his reply, Councillor King stated that he did not believe that the issuing of fines was a question of morality.

Councillor Prince asked what was the forecast for this years' council budget and what the implications were for the next year as a result.

In his reply, Councillor King stated that the latest forecast was a broadly positive one with a £1.6 million predicted underspend. Any underspend would go into reserves to give additional relief against some of the uncertainties next year such as inflation.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Prince asked whether the difficult decisions that had been necessary to produce a balanced budget had been supported by the Opposition.

In his response, Councillor King stated that none of the difficult decisions taken had been supported by the Opposition.

In his question, Councillor Ward asked when the public would hear the results of the three investigations currently being undertaken.

In his response, Councillor King confirmed that the work was ongoing and believed that the Chief Executive would brief Councillors when she was in a position to do so.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Ward asked for assurances that evidence would not be lost.

In his response, Councillor King acknowledged that Councillor Ward was an early advocate for better retention of documentation and hoped that he would state that the situation had improved.

Councillor Agboola asked the Cabinet Member for assurance that when property assets had been sold, that the monies were ploughed back into the communities where these sales had taken place.

In his reply, Councillor Young stated that he could not give that assurance as the funds became capital receipts which were then used ahead of any borrowing due to the interest costs incurred on borrowing.

In his question, Councillor Kolade asked when the last time was that the external review of the council's internal audit function took place and when the next one was due.

In his reply, Councillor Young stated that he did not know the exact date but would write to Councillor Kolade giving him full details.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Kolade asked in light of the issues that had been raised by external auditors, what confidence the Cabinet member had in the internal audit processes.

In his response, Councillor Young stated that he had absolute confidence in the internal audit function of the council.

In her question, Councillor Jewitt asked whether the council's commissioning and procurement function was fit for purpose as the current council term came to an end and how prepared it was to make the budget savings required in 2022/23.

In his response, Councillor Young explained that the work that had been undertaken in reviewing all the contracts and improving governance had already led to savings being made.

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 Campbell, Councillor Lewis and Councillor Flemming were invited to make their announcements.

Councillor Campbell thanked the Leader for her service and Councillors Bernadette Khan and Louise Woodley for their support to social care. Councillor Campbell thanked the staff of Freeman Court for their work which had been reflected in the most recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection.

Councillor Campbell continued by giving Members an update on the work of the Autism Partnership.

Councillor Flemming reminded Members of the achievements made within her portfolio over the last four years. Councillor Flemming gave her thanks to Councillor Shafi Khan for his work in supporting her throughout and also listed others councillors on both sides of the chamber and ex-councillors for their support and encouragement.

Councillor Lewis reflected on the last eight years and stated that there had been significant investment in the culture sector over that time. In addition, the borough had been awarded nearly £250,000 of Heritage Lottery Funding for a music trail within the borough which was in addition to the £250,000 already pledged by Heritage Lottery Fund.

In addition, Councillor Lewis clarified a response given earlier in the meeting, regarding the Local Plan review timetable.

Councillor Bains asked for details on the proposal for the new leisure centre in the south of the borough.

In his response, Councillor Lewis stated that he had long been an advocate of a new leisure centre in the south of the borough but that it would be down to the new Administration to decide on a plan for delivery.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Bains asked for the specific date of when the leisure centre would open.

In his response, Councillor Lewis stated that it would be up to the electorate to decide at the election which option they preferred.

Councillor Carserides asked how within the Authorised Contractual Scheme (ACS) Strategy how demand would be reduced without harming the most vulnerable.

In her response, Councillor Campbell stated that the model being used ensured that people received the right level of support and the right time to reduce the demand.

Councillor Campbell continued by informing Members of the reporting mechanisms including annually by the Care Quality Commission.

Councillor Chatterjee asked how much the proposed new leisure centre in the south of the borough was going to cost.

In his response, Councillor Lewis reiterated that it would be up to the future Administration to decide on the options and that should the Labour candidate for Mayor be elected then a feasibility study would be undertaken.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Chatterjee asked whether the costs would be cost neutral or similar to the Fairfield Halls refurbishment costs.

In his response, Councillor Lewis confirmed that Fairfield Halls was in a better place as a result of the investment and was looking forward to being able to support the cultural sector in Croydon.

In his question, Councillor Bonello asked that following the death of Kyrell Matthews what assurances the Cabinet Member could give that Children's Services in Croydon were well placed to ensure that the children and young people were adequately safeguarded.

In her response, Councillor Flemming stated that this case had been discussed at Scrutiny and listed the learning that had arisen and some of the changes that had occurred in working with other partners to join up information.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Bonello asked what had changed in the way the department operated since Kyrell's death.

In her response, Councillor Flemming stated that the referral thresholds had been reviewed and all cases were now reviewed independently by the Safeguarding Partnership.

In her question, Councillor Appleton asked whether the labour Party Mayoral candidate had shared fully costed plans for the new leisure centre with Labour Councillors.

In his response, Councillor Lewis stated that he had made clear the choice that the electorate could make on 5 May.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Appleton stated that her question had not been answered and asked again whether fully costed plans had been shared by the labour mayoral candidate.

In his response, Councillor Lewis stated that there was a fully costed plan to deliver a new leisure centre in Purley.

In his question, Councillor Bonello asked whether the Cabinet Member would join him in thanking the social workers for their tireless work going above and beyond to keep the borough's young people safe and whether she agreed that Croydon was fortunate to have such a dedicated and child focussed workforce.

In her response, Councillor Flemming agreed wholeheartedly with Councillor Bonello and that it was both a stressful and rewarding role. All Members, as Corporate Parents needed to applaud them for their dedication.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Bonello asked what impact a decade of austerity had had on the way Children's Services worked in this borough.

In her response, Councillor Flemming confirmed that austerity had blighted Children's Services in the borough and had added pressure right across the country. She stated that it cost money to support the most vulnerable children and so commitment was required from the Government.

In his question, Councillor Parker stated that Purley Pool and Leisure was a well-loved and well used facility and that the Conservative Mayoral candidate had put forward a plan to refurbish and reopen Purley Pool and asked the

Cabinet Member to explain the Labour position on a proposed new leisure centre in Purley.

In his response, Councillor Lewis agreed that Purley Pool was a much-loved facility which was at the end of its life and patching it up was not considered an option.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Parker stated that the Administration had let the people of Croydon down and their refusal to refurbish Purley Pool showed that they had learnt no lessons from Fairfield Halls.

In his response, Councillor Lewis reiterated that there would be a clear choice for voters on 5 May.

With an end to the time allocated to questions to Cabinet Members in the third pool, the Mayor brought Croydon Question Time to a close.

12/21 **Member Petitions**

The following petition was presented by Councillor Perry of behalf of residents:

'St Thomas Becket RC Primary School sits on the busy Birchanger Road in South Norwood. The road is particularly dangerous during drop-off and pick-up times with poor driving, irresponsible parking and speeding vehicles. There have been a number of near misses, and we feel it is only a matter of time before a serious injury occurs.

We the undersigned therefore call on Croydon Council to install a safe crossing outside St Thomas Becket RC Primary School as soon as possible.'

In his response, Councillor Muhammad Ali stated that it was important to work with the school to enforce any of the parking and speeding issues and he was also happy to add the school to the list of possible School Street sites. Councillor Ali agreed to look into this and respond back with more details.

13/21 **Council Debate Motions**

The Mayor asked the Monitoring Officer, John Jones, to read out the first Debate Motion on behalf of the Administration.

“This council welcomes the fact that the people of Croydon stand in unity and solidarity with the people of Ukraine, whose great cities and centres of population are under attack from the armed aggression of the Russian State.

This council welcomes the effort of Croydon residents who are raising funds to provide aid to Ukraine and applauds those of our citizens who are opening their homes to refugees fleeing the war.

This council is proud of the support provided to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people, acknowledging that high quality social care services have enabled children to thrive and reach their potential.

We believe the positive actions taken by the council, our voluntary and community sector and, most of all, our residents, over many years to make refugees and asylum seekers welcome in this town, is evidence of the warmth and generosity of Croydon and its citizens.

This Council welcomes and endorses the application that is being prepared for Croydon to apply for Borough of Sanctuary status”.

The Mayor asked Councillor Wood to propose the motion.

Councillor Wood expressed his views on the situation in Ukraine and how the people across the borough and nation were coming together to welcome refugees. Councillor Wood stated that this needed to be properly funded and that proper borough recognition would be entirely fitting.

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

Councillor Gatland expressed her horror at the scenes of destruction from Ukraine and the queues of women and children queuing at the Polish border seeking sanctuary and was proud of the support being given both nationally and locally.

Councillor Gatland supported the motion.

Councillor Streeter echoed the shock and the tragedy that everyone had seen over the past weeks and was encouraged by the international community coming together and acknowledged the great efforts being undertaken but stated that more needed to be done.

Councillor Streeter continued to say that whilst the focus was currently on Ukraine it should be remembered that there were people throughout the world living in fear and terror.

Councillor Streeter supported the motion.

Councillor Carserides stated that the invasion of Ukraine was not just an attack on that country but an attack on sovereignty, democracy and freedom; values that all in the chamber stood for.

Councillor Carserides continued by relating the situation for one woman and her children trying to link up with their sponsor in Croydon. Croydon had taken more refugees than any other local authority but that had come at a financial cost to the authority.

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

The Mayor asked the Monitoring Officer, John Jones to read out the second Debate Motion on behalf of the Opposition.

“The last eight years have been a humiliation for Croydon and its people, as this failing Council has lurched from one disaster to another.

Two Reports in the Public Interest, two S114 notices, unheard of in local government history, the financial meltdowns of the borough, the botched and unlawful refurbishment of Fairfield Halls, Council tenants living in squalor because of systemic failures in maintenance, inappropriate development across the borough inflicted through a deeply unpopular Local Plan, the Council-owned developer Brick by Brick building on much needed green spaces, streets flowing with rubbish and fly tips and an explosion in graffiti, residents feel unsafe on our streets and we have a town centre that has been allowed to wither and decay.

This, sadly, is the reality of life in Croydon for tens of thousands of our residents, from the very north to the very south of our borough.

It does not need to be this way. Croydon is a fantastic place with wonderful communities and organisations that make such a difference every day. They give hope for a brighter tomorrow and in partnership with the Council, we can restore pride in our borough.

The Council must fix our finances. The Council must introduce a Tenants’ Charter that respects our tenants. The Council must drop the planning design guide that destroys family homes and the character of communities. The Council must clean our streets and restore the graffiti removal team. The Council can better support the Police and mentor our young people. The

Council must re-imagine our Town Centre which will bring inward investment to revitalise our whole borough. There is hope for Croydon.

In the meantime, this Council apologises to the people of Croydon for the abject failings inflicted on them by the current arrogant Administration that has failed to take responsibility or listen to Croydon over the past eight years.”

The Mayor asked Councillor Pollard to propose the motion.

Councillor Pollard stated that this motion asked for the Administration to apologise for the catastrophic failures. Councillor Pollard continued by stating that he knew that some councillors on the Labour benches were equally as angry about the state of affairs as he was and he apologised for his small part in this. Councillor Pollard then listed a number of issues which were particularly hated by the people of Croydon.

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

The Leader stated that the motion did not reflect the full story of the situation as over the past seventeen months a great deal of work had happened to balance the council's finances. The Leader continued by listing all of the services that were being kept open and running and asked the Opposition how they were intending to fund their elections pledges when the Tory Government had spent the last twelve years cutting funding to all local authorities.

The Leader opposed the motion.

Councillor Ben-Hassel stated that when she first became a councillor she was shocked at the lax financial controls but could now see how the situation had improved over the last eighteen months. However, more needed to be done to embed those new processes.

Councillor Ben-Hassel continued by reminding Members that the Administration had taken collective responsibility over budgetary decisions that had to be made as a result of Government underfunding and that the Government had suggested greater commercialisation by councils to make up for the reduction in grant funding. Councillor Ben-Hassel listed some of the areas of the public services that had been worst affected.

Councillor Ben-Hassel opposed the motion.

Councillor Perry stated that over the last eight years the Labour council had lurched from one disaster to another including bankrupting the council and listed a number of those projects.

Councillor Perry continued by listing the services that had been reduced and accused the Administration of failing to listen to residents and listed the priorities that the incoming Mayor must do.

The motion was put to the vote and was lost.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the time for the meeting was approaching and asked if the Leader was happy to extend the meeting by twenty minutes.

The Leader proposed the motion.

Councillor Perry seconded the motion.

All Members were in favour of the motion to extend the meeting by up to twenty minutes.

14/21 **Recommendations of Cabinet or Committees to Council for decision**

The Mayor explained that in order to make time for retiring Members to make final addresses to council, the administration had agreed to forego the time permitted to them to introduce each set of recommendations and both political groups had agreed that they were content for Council to vote on all four sets of recommendations together.

The Mayor invited the Leader to move all the recommendations.

The Leader moved the recommendations.

Councillor King seconded the recommendations.

The recommendations were put to the vote and were carried.

RESOLVED: Council **AGREED** the recommendations in the reports as set out below:

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM GENERAL PURPOSES & AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2022

Revisions to the Council's Constitution

- 1.1 To approve the changes to the Constitution as detailed in section 2 of the report (Appendix 1) and set out more fully in Appendix 1.1.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM GENERAL PURPOSES & AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON 3 MARCH 2022

Revisions to the Council's Constitution

- 1.2 To approve the changes to the Constitution as detailed in section 2 of the report (Appendix 2) and set out more fully in Appendix 2.1 and that:

- i) The following changes shall be implemented with immediate effect:
- Section 4.22 (Emergency or extreme urgency) of Part 3 - Responsibility for Functions; and
 - Part 4I - Tender and Contract Regulations
- ii) All other changes shall be implemented with effect from 00.01 hours on the third day after the day of declaration of the result of the poll at the first election of the Mayor.

Review of the Scheme of Members' Allowances

- 1.3 To consider the options detailed in the report on an updated scheme of Members' allowances to full Council, informed by the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel and to agree the proposal detailed in Appendix 3.2 of the report (Appendix 3);
- 1.4 To agree the proposal to reintroduce directly provided ICT to Members and the elected Mayor as described in section four of the report (Appendix 3);

- 1.5 To authorise the Monitoring Officer to comply with the necessary statutory publicity requirements in respect of the Independent Review Panel report 2022; the on-going annual publicity of the Members' scheme of allowances which is required; and the approval of the revised Members' Allowance Scheme following consideration of the proposal recommended by the Committee (as per recommendation 1.3 above)
- 1.6 To delegate to the General Purposes and Audit Committee authority to agree an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to the annual local government staff pay settlement where the only change made to the Scheme in any year is that effected by such annual adjustment; and
- 1.7 To agree that a further review of the scheme be undertaken either following the May 2022 local elections, if required, or following the publication of the further review of the remuneration of councillors due to be undertaken by London Councils' Independent Remuneration Panel during 2022-23.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET HELD ON 21 MARCH 2022

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30 Year Business Plan 2021- 2051 and HRA Capital Programme 2022/23

- 1.8 To approve the HRA Capital Programme for 2022/23 as set out in Appendix 4.6.

15/21 Vote of Thanks

The Mayor explained that this was the last meeting of the Council before the elections in May and that there was a number of Councillors for whom this was the final Council meeting.

With the agreement of both Groups, time was made available to invite nine of those councillors to make a short final speech to the Council meeting.

Councillor Mann outlined some of the projects in his ward and thanked those councillors who had supported him during his time as a councillor. In conclusion Councillor Mann thanked those in the community and officers for wanting to deliver services to the residents of Croydon.

Councillor Hollands thanked the residents of his ward who had supported him for the 32 years that he had been a councillor. Councillor Hollands continued by listing those committees that he had been part of and thanked those Cabinet Members and officers who had supported him.

Councillor Prince thanked councillors who had supported her through the eight years that she had been a councillor and listed some of the committees and other bodies that she had been a part of. Councillor Prince thanked the officers who supported those bodies and to all officers who put so much effort into supporting the people of Croydon.

Councillor Helen Pollard reflected on some of the highlights of her time as a councillor as well as some of the challenges. Councillor Pollard continued by thanking all the diverse groups and their events that she had been able to attend and concluded by thanking her fellow ward councillors.

Councillor Woodley highlighted some of the high points in her nearly 24 years as a councillor and the people with whom she had worked. A particular highlight was the founding of the One Croydon Alliance. Councillor Woodley concluded by thanking officers for their work and support and to the people of New Addington.

Councillor Oviri stated that although she would no longer be a councillor it would not mean that she no longer cared about the people of Croydon. Councillor Oviri continued by thanking the people who had supported her, fellow councillors, officers and members of the community.

Councillor Bernadette Khan stated that it had been a privilege to serve the people in her ward and to work alongside the diverse communities in the borough. Councillor Khan expressed her huge thanks to the officers who were dealing with the day-to-day situations and especially the staff on the front desk at the Town Hall.

Councillor Millson thanked the people of his ward who elected him but also to those people who provided such great support to the community during the Covid pandemic. In addition, Councillor Millson thanked his ward colleague, Councillor Stranack.

In conclusion, Councillor Millson stated that they hoped that the new constitutional arrangements would be an opportunity to change how the politics in the chamber would operate in future.

Councillor Letts stated what a pleasure it had been to serve the people of Croydon for 36 years as a councillor and highlighted some of the changes that had taken place over those years. Councillor Letts continued by recalling some of the work that she had done to help the people of Croydon.

In conclusion, Councillor Letts hoped that whoever sat in the chamber after 5 May inspired the children and young people of the borough to make Croydon great again.

As the time for the conclusion of the meeting had passed, the Monitoring Officer asked whether Council would support suspending Standing Orders.

This was proposed by Councillor Henson and seconded.

All members were in favour.

The Mayor passed the Chair to the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Felicity Flynn, who presided over the vote of thanks to the outgoing Mayor of Croydon.

The Deputy Mayor invited the Mayor to give his farewell address.

The Mayor stated that it had been a great honour and pleasure to become the First Citizen and Mayor of Croydon after 40 years of community work.

His mayoral year started during the height of the Pandemic and as everything gradually, slowly started to open up again, he had had the opportunity to attend engagements in Croydon as well as some outside of the borough.

Initially the Mayor was bit worried about how he would be able to manage without any support from the Macebearer or chauffeur, with no car, only one member of staff instead of the previous three, and with less than 50% of the budget compared to previous years because of the savings that the Council had had to make.

However, during the pandemic all had needed to develop new ways of working and the Mayor's Office, as the first citizen of Croydon, had been no different.

He said reaching out to the community and meeting with them, representing Croydon, being an ambassador for Croydon had been a great honour.

So far, the Mayor had attended hundreds of engagements and had enjoyed every one of them. While a chauffeur driven car would have been nice, his chosen method of travel was his own car and also Taxi.

Every one of his visits was worth the trip as it gave him the opportunity to learn first-hand about the amazing work that the public sector, NHS, Voluntary and charity sector organisations had all been doing to help the community in Croydon.

Throughout the year, as well as meeting local, public sector, voluntary sector and charity sector organisations, he also had the opportunity to meet the business community which Croydon hosted, especially small business owners, who were affected dramatically by the pandemic.

The council supported them with all resources available and as it slowly came out of the pandemic it was great to see that so many of them had survived. However, the council needed to promote and use its small businesses more, which were so important to the local economy, giving them an opportunity to grow.

The Mayor had visited many schools in the town and had greatly enjoyed the hustings that the pupils participated in. he stated that they had so much talent, and with the support of their parents and the teachers in Croydon's schools and colleges the Mayor looked forward to seeing what they could achieve in the future.

The Emperor of Japan Gifted 1000 cherry trees to Prince Charles during his tenure who in turn gave 100 trees to Croydon. The Mayor personally planted 50 of them in Sanderstead recreation ground where Japan's Embassy Counsel was present.

The Mayor had also planted more cherry trees outside Croydon University Hospital that day as part of Her Majesty's Platinum year celebration and in memory of the over 1000 of Croydon residents who had tragically died during the Covid pandemic.

Throughout the year the Mayor was also honoured and privileged to open, with the wife of the late Malcolm Wicks, Malcolm Wicks House, which provided 90 affordable flats in the heart of Croydon. Malcolm Wicks was a very popular MP for Croydon North. Having worked with him for over 20

years, the Mayor confirmed that housing was a great passion for him and he was sure he would be proud of the homes Malcom Wicks House would provide to Croydon residents.

As well as attending numerous exhibitions at the Clock Tower Café this year, the Mayor also had the opportunity to meet so many artists that lived and worked in Croydon - artists and creatives that made Croydon a vibrant place to live.

Sadly Croydon had lost a number of young people through knife crime throughout his time as Mayor. The Mayor attended numerous meetings with the community, the Police and also family members of the victims. There was so much more to do to decrease knife crime in the region.

The Mayor paid tribute to the amazing work that doctors, nurses, other NHS employees and social care workers had done during the pandemic. The Mayor also had the opportunity to visit the care homes in Croydon, and enjoyed seeing first hand throughout the year the essential work they did.

The Town Hall had celebrated many occasions this year and the Mayor had had the opportunity to raise many flags. For the first time the Mayor had arranged for the celebration of Pongal, which is a Tamil thanksgiving harvest festival.

It was also a great pleasure to organise Mother Tongue International Language Day which was recognised by The United Nations General Assembly. The day was especially poignant for a multicultural town like Croydon that had so many diverse people who called the town their home, people who made the place they lived in so exciting and vibrant, people in Croydon where the Mayor was proud to call his home.

During his tenure the Mayor was invited as a special guest to the opening of the Non-Resident Bangladeshi World Conference. It was held in Dhaka Bangladesh which was organised by the Centre for Research Non-Resident Bangladeshi. During his visits the Mayor met many Bangladeshi Government Ministers and officials, and had the opportunity to promote Croydon and shared how Bangladeshi non-residents were contributing to UK life and to Croydon Life.

The Mayor also had the opportunity to attend hustings by university students on how local authorities compared between both countries.

The Mayor also organised a fund raising dinner where many high-profile dignitaries including the British High Commissioner and the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh were present.

The Mayor had three charities that he raised funds for, two of them for cancer and one for the homeless people. Cancer was a killer disease, and it was in his heart because he had lost three siblings to the disease.

There were number of colleagues stepping down from the council at the 5 May elections that year. In fact, there were so many stepping down that the Mayor did not have time to mention them all. He paid particular tribute to those with whom he had worked over the years: Shafi Khan, Toni Lets, Bernadette Khan, Pat Ryan, Pat Clouder, Paul Scott and his Ward colleague, Alison Butler.

The Mayor thanked his wife Rohema for supporting him during the year, Deva Ponnosami and his team of charity board advisors, Anwar Hussain and his Executive Committee members, the Bangladesh Welfare Association, Abul Hussain his second consort, fellow councillors, past mayors, community leaders, Seth Alker the Head of Mayoral services and finally again special thanks to Hema Basanthkumar the Mayoral Executive officer without whose support he would not have managed.

The Deputy Mayor thanked the Mayor for his address and invited the Leader, Councillor Hamida Ali to move the vote of thanks to the Mayor. In doing so she acknowledged that the Mayor would be the last under the current system and acknowledged that Covid restrictions had meant that the role of civic mayor had had to adapt.

The Leader continued by thanking the Mayor for his support of the ethnic minority communities in the borough and additionally through his chosen charities.

The Deputy Mayor invited the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Perry, to second the motion and he thanked the Mayor for inviting him to a number of events and for the fantastic amount of money raised for his charities during the Mayoral year.

The Deputy Mayor put the motion as set out in the papers to the vote with the vote of thanks, which was passed unanimously.

The meeting ended at 10.31 pm

Signed:

Date:

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.....

Public Document Pack

Council

Meeting held on Monday, 25 July 2022 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair);
Councillor Sue Bennett (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Kola Agboola, Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel, Adele Benson, Margaret Bird, Claire Bonham, Mike Bonello, Simon Brew, Janet Campbell, Louis Carserides, Richard Chatterjee, Chris Clark, Sherwan Chowdhury, Stuart Collins, Mario Creatura, Jason Cummings, Nina Degrad, Rowenna Davis, Danielle Denton, Lara Fish, Sean Fitzsimons, Clive Fraser, Amy Foster, Simon Fox, Maria Gatland, Brigitte Graham, Lynne Hale, Patricia Hay-Justice, Christopher Herman, Yvette Hopley, Mohammed Islam, Karen Jewitt, Mark Johnson, Humayun Kabir, Stuart King, Ola Kolade, Lee, Llabuti, Enid Mollyneaux, Stella Nabukeera, Tamar Nwafor, Eunice O'Dame, Ian Parker, Ria Patel, Tony Pearson, Jason Perry, Ellily Ponnuthurai, Badsha Quadir, Holly Ramsey, Helen Redfern, Reshekaron, Scott Roche, Manju Shahul-Hameed, Nikhil Sherine Thampi, Luke Shortland, Srinivasan, Andy Stranack, Stewart, Sutton, Catherine Wilson and Callton Young

Apologies: Councillor Jade Appleton, Samir Dwesar, Gayle Gander and Michael Neal

PART A

12/21 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meetings held on:

- 16 December 2020;
- 16 December 2020 (2);
- 29 March 2021;
- 4 May 2021;
- 11 October 2021;
- 11 October 2021 (2);
- 7 March 2022, and;
- 25 May 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2021 were agreed as an accurate record with the following amendment:

The removal of councillors Lara Fish, Amy Foster, and Rowenna Davis from the attendance list as they were not Members of the Council at that meeting.

13/21 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

14/21 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

15/21 **Announcements**

The Mayor gave her announcements to the Members of Council by noting the passing of Richard Billington, a former Councillor and honorary alderman who had passed away on the 20 May 2022.

The Mayor also noted the passing of Rosemary Bromwich, who was a former mayoress who had passed away on the 20 June 2022.

Members paused for a moment of silence.

The Mayor informed Council that she had met with the Director of Education, who had supported the Mayor with writing to all of the schools and colleges in Croydon to find out which charities they would like the Council to support.

The Mayor stated that she would be meeting to consider the charities that had been proposed to the council and she would provide an update on the name of the chosen charity via email ahead of the next full council meeting.

The Mayor also informed Members of the upcoming civic mayoral events:

- The Croydon Carnival Auction on Sunday 31 July 2022
- Jamaica Independence Day, Charity Fundraising Dinner and Dance on Friday 5 August 2022
- The Mayor's Inaugural Dinner (the date was yet to be confirmed)
- The Charity Golf Day on the 6 October 2022.

The Mayor proposed to reduce the allocated time of a number of the standing items in order to ensure that the Members could conduct all of the necessary business. The Mayor moved to suspend Council procedure rules in the following ways:

- At item 9, to suspend council procedure rules (3.59 of Section 4A of the Constitution) to allow the presentation of the report on the South Norwood Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.
- At item 12, the Annual Scrutiny Report, to suspend council procedure rules (3.51 of Section 4A) to limit discussion of this item to 20 minutes.
- At item 14, Mayor and Cabinet Questions, to suspend council procedure rules (3.29 to 3.32 of Section 4A) to reduce the three pools of Cabinet Members to one pool allocated to the Mayor, who could call upon Cabinet Members individually to support answering questions where necessary.
- At item 15, Maiden Speeches, to suspend council procedure rules (3.7 of Section 4A) to limit the time allocated to each speech to two minutes.

This motion was seconded by Councillor Creatura.

The motion was taken to a vote and carried with all Members voting in favour.

The Mayor invited the Chief Executive, Katherine Kerswell, to make her announcements.

The Chief Executive in her role as the Head of Paid Service asked the Council to note the appointment of Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense as the Monitoring Officer. The Chief Executive thanked Andrew Hunkin for his work as the interim Monitoring Officer.

In her role as Returning Officer the Chief Executive also informed the Council that Danielle Denton had won the South Croydon by-election held on the 30 June 2022, which had brought the total Conservative party membership at the Council to 34 including the Executive Mayor.

16/21 **Political Balance following by-election**

The Civic Mayor introduced the item and informed the Members that it had been proposed to appoint Councillor Denton as an additional Member of the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Executive Mayor moved the recommendation which also sought to appoint Councillor Sherine Thampi as the reserve Member for the Committee.

The motion was seconded by Councillor King.

The motion was taken to a vote and carried with all Members voting in favour.

RESOLVED, to:

- 1.1 Note that there were now 34 Labour Group Members; 34 Conservative Group Members (including the Executive Mayor); 2 Green Group Members and 1 Liberal Democrat Member.
- 1.2 Agree the amended size of committees and the allocation of seats on committees in accordance with the principles set out in the report and, in particular, at paragraph 3.16. The amendment increased the size of the Audit and Governance Committee by one seat.
- 1.3 Appoint Councillor Danielle Denton to the Audit and Governance Committee, and one other Conservative Member as a substitute member, in accordance with the wishes of the Conservative Group.
- 1.4 Subject to 1.2, authorise the Monitoring Officer to amend the Constitution to reflect the increase in the size of the Audit and Governance Committee.

17/21 **Appointment of an Independent Panel**

The Mayor introduced the item and asked Councillor Jason Cummings to introduce the report to the Members.

Councillor Jason Cummings informed the Council that the report sought the council's approval to establish an independent panel which consisted of all of the council's independent persons and to authorise the Monitoring Officer to invite three independent persons to form a panel when required.

Councillor Jason Cummings then went on to state that the Monitoring Officer would need authorisation to include the establishment of the independent panel in the Constitution.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Creatura.

The motion was taken to a vote and carried with all Members voting in favour.

RESOLVED, to:

1. Establish an Independent Panel, comprising three Independent Persons, and approve the terms of reference set out at paragraph 1.10.

2. Appoint all the Council's Independent Persons to the Independent Panel and authorise the Monitoring Officer to invite, in accordance with the statutory rules, three such Independent Persons to form a Panel from time to time.
3. Authorise the Monitoring Officer to include the establishment of the Independent Panel in the Constitution and to make any necessary consequential changes.

18/21 **Public Questions**

The Mayor informed Members that they had received one question from a member of the public. The Mayor read the question on behalf of the member of the public as they were unable to attend the meeting.

The question was from Catherine Bradler.

I would like to request a site meeting with Cllr Roche/relevant officers to agree ways for traffic management on Southern Avenue. It has become a notorious rat run to avoid traffic lights at the bottom of South Norwood Hill.

- *Cars break the speed limit, drive recklessly along street causing risk to residents. It's only a matter of time someone is killed.*
- *Vibration from heavy vehicles causes structural damage.*

Councillors have visited Southern Avenue, they agree the situation is unacceptable and something needs to be done, but no action has happened! Please commit to a site meeting, to discuss ways to this serious safety issue.

In his response, the Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment, Councillor Roche stated the following:

"Thank you for your question, Catherine. I'm sorry to hear about the frustration you and your neighbours have experienced from poor driver behaviour and excessive speeding in your local area. The council, under the previous administration, introduced a temporary healthy neighbourhood scheme enforced by planters in May 2020, which subsequently had to be removed in February 2021, following informal public consultation exercise and decision made by the then Cabinet Member. We, the new administration, are still considering the next steps for the LTN programme. Officers are currently working with neighbouring boroughs, the Greater London Authority, Transport for London and relevant partners but as yet we are not in a position to bring this scheme forward nor are we able to confirm a likely timeframe. I would be

happy to arrange a site visit to meet with you and other residents with the relevant officers to discuss potential solutions to the serious safety issues you have described. In the meantime, I have asked officers to contact the Police's Road Safety Engineering Unit and ask for enforcement to be carried out in your local area."

The Mayor confirmed that the response was submitted to the questioner and a resolution had been reached in advance of the meeting.

19/21 **Recommendations from the Executive Mayor in Cabinet to Council for Decision**

The Mayor introduced the item and invited the Executive Mayor to move the first recommendation to council.

The Executive Mayor informed Members that removing the Croydon Suburban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD2) would represent the start of a reset of the planning policy in Croydon. The Executive Mayor felt as though SPD2 had been used to force inappropriate and unwanted development in the borough and whilst housing demands were a real issue, it was important that this challenge was met with solutions that worked for residents.

The Executive Mayor went on to state that he would like to put design and respect of the local character of areas within the borough at the heart of any future planning policy. The Executive Mayor notified Members that in the coming months, he would be looking at what further changes could be made to the local plan.

The Executive Mayor **MOVED** the recommendations in the report.

The Motion was **SECONDED** by Councillor Bains.

The recommendation was **DEFERRED** until item 10 on the agenda.

The Mayor invited the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration, Councillor Bains to introduce the second set of recommendations to Council.

Councillor Bains stated that the report proposed to provide protection for historical characteristics of the local area and would also enable the Planning Department at the council to be more efficient by providing them with clearer regulations to refer to. Councillor Bains also welcomed further engagement

from the community if they felt as though there were any other important historical characteristics which required protection.

Councillor Bains moved the recommendations in the report.

This was seconded by the Executive Mayor.

The recommendations were taken to a vote and carried with all Members voting in favour.

RESOLVED, to:

- 1.3 Consider the report at Appendix B and note the Consultation Statement for the South Norwood Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) (set out in Appendix 2 of the report at Appendix B), including the list of comments, responses and (where applicable) amendments at Appendix 1 of the report at Appendix B.
- 1.4 Agree the adoption of the South Norwood Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) 2022 (set out in Appendix 2 of the report at Appendix B) as a Supplementary Planning Document in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, particularly regulation 14; and,
- 1.5 Agree the changes to the South Norwood Conservation Area boundary as described in the report at Appendix B and in the South Norwood Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) (set out in Appendix 2 of the report at Appendix B); and,
- 1.6 Agree the revocation of the South Norwood Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) 2007 (set out in Appendix 3 of the report at Appendix B) in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, particularly regulation 15(3).
- 1.7 Agree the delegation to the Director of Planning and Sustainable Regeneration, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning & Regeneration, in relation to the making of minor factual, editorial and image changes to the South Norwood Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) (set out in Appendix 2 of the report at Appendix B) prior to adoption.

20/21 **Recommendations deferred for Debate**

The Mayor introduced the item and invited Councillor Clark to address the Council in regards to the Croydon Suburban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD2).

Councillor Clark informed the Council that at the annual Council meeting, Councillor King had made it clear that the opposition would work with the administration to ensure that SPD2 was replaced with new local design guidance that attracted the support of residents across the borough.

Councillor Clark stated that there were concerns from the Scrutiny Streets, Environments and Homes Sub Committee about the withdrawal of SPD2 without replacement design guidance being put in place.

Councillor Clark also asked Members to consider the equality analysis report, which flagged the risk of the slowing down of the time that the council had to consider Planning applications and with less guidance for applications it may be difficult to determine whether an application was acceptable and for applicants to know what would be deemed as acceptable. Councillor Clark went on to explain that this may result in more applications being taken to appeal which would further delay outcomes.

Councillor Clark noted that appeals could prove costly for the Council and that it was important to avoid using taxpayer money to cover legal expenses and that the risk of delays in processing applications effectively may affect housing delivery which would impact the availability of affordable and specialist housing.

The Mayor invited Councillor Sutton to address the Council.

Councillor Sutton stated that there would need to be a process in place to mitigate and ensure that groups of people with protected characteristics were not negatively impacted by delays to access to affordable or specialist housing because of the revocation of SPD2.

Councillor Sutton explained that she would welcome an appropriate design led approach working with communities to have sustainable planning to meet housing targets across the borough. Councillor Sutton was also concerned that the revocation of SPD2 would lead to overcrowding and over intensification in areas that were already congested with development. However, Councillor Sutton did accept that the revocation of SPD2 would mitigate the number of planned developments that would impact green spaces.

The Executive Mayor welcomed the commitment of colleagues who supported the proposal to revoke SPD2. The Executive Mayor stated that the council was delivering more than their current housing target and that there would be a full consultation regarding the replacement supplementary planning document and any issues raised would be taken into account.

The Executive Mayor proposed the motion to revoke SPD2.

The motion was taken to a vote and carried with all Members voting in favour.

RESOLVED, to:

- 1.1 Consider the report at Appendix A and agree the revocation of the Croydon Suburban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD2) (set out in Appendix 1 of the report at Appendix A) in accordance with Regulation 15 (2) and (3) of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 1.2 Note the decision of the Executive Mayor to produce the residential extensions and alterations chapter of the Croydon suburban design guide supplementary planning document (SPD2) as a supplementary planning document and report this to Council for adoption after consultation.

21/21 **In-year Appointments**

The Mayor introduced the item and informed Members that the Church Tenements Charity, to which Council had appointed three members at the Annual meeting in May, had since reduced its membership requirements from three members to two and Councillor Bonello, who was appointed, had agreed to step down from the outside body.

This recommendation was taken to a vote and carried with all Members voting in favour.

RESOLVED, to:

- 1.1 Note that Councillor Mike Bonello volunteered to step down from his appointment as a Council Trustee to the Church Tenements Charity following notification from the Charity that its membership requirements had changed resulting in no need for this appointment which had been made at the Annual Meeting in May 2022.

22/21 **Annual Scrutiny Report**

The Mayor introduced the item and invited Councillor Rowenna Davis to present the report.

Councillor Davis thanked the Chairs and Members for their work over the past year, particularly the work on the community safety strategy, the call-ins, the budget, the work on exclusions and the housing improvement plan.

Councillor Davis explained that the function of Scrutiny was to hold Members and officers to account and that this was central to the Council's recovery. Councillor Davis highlighted that the Chief Executive had acknowledged that, in the past, Scrutiny had been abused and this had contributed to the Council's position in the recent years.

Councillor Davis continued by stating that she would like two principles to guide Scrutiny's work in the year ahead, which were community engagement and impact.

The first principle was community engagement. During the scrutiny on the Housing Repairs contract one pensioner told her his story about a leak in his property which took a while to fix. This was an example of the feedback which Scrutiny would need to create better recommendations.

Councillor Davis then explained that the second principle was impact, she stated that she wanted recommendations to be tracked and evaluated.

Councillor Davis continued stating that there were two themes for the work programme over the coming year; these were the Council's finances and the people's finances. The work programmes for the three sub committees could be found online.

Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee would focus on the town centre and the Veolia contract, which would be overseen by Councillor Ben-Hassel.

Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee would focus on safeguarding and sound finances, which would be overseen by Councillor Richard Chatterjee.

Scrutiny Health & Social Care Sub-Committee would focus on the new integrated care partnership and mental health, which would be overseen by Councillor Sean Fitzsimons.

Councillor Nwafor was invited to ask a question and stated that she was pleased to see the increased engagement from Scrutiny to ensure that the voice of the community was kept at the centre of decision making at the Council. Councillor Nwafor then asked what key concerns had been identified regarding the current cost of living crisis and what the main solutions that Councillor Davis would recommend to the Council were.

In response to Councillor Nwafor's question, Councillor Davis stated that Scrutiny had held a community meeting with voluntary groups, food bank leaders, soup kitchen leaders and advice groups to hear what they considered to be the key issues facing the community. Councillor Davis informed the Council that Scrutiny had also had a meeting with officers to hear about the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the Council. The key findings from these meetings were that the issues would concern rent, fuel and energy costs, cost of food, difficulty for residents seeking help from the Council and how hard voluntary groups found it to work with the Council.

Councillor Nabukeera was invited to ask a question and asked, in light of the Mayor's decision not to delegate decision-making powers, what Councillor Davis's recommendations and conclusions were.

Councillor Davis stated that scrutiny had welcomed the Mayor's top priority being to listen to Croydon to hold Cabinet roadshows. Councillor Davis went on to explain that she had asked the Mayor for more detail about putting residents at the heart of decision-making. Councillor Davis expressed concerns around finances and recommended that the Mayor sought guidance on how to remunerate his Cabinet Members as they had more of an advisory role. Another concern was the scale of the challenge facing the Council's Members and the risks facing its residents.

Councillor Ponnuthurai asked whether Councillor Davis thought that the new housing repairs contract would result in the Council providing respectful, appropriate, and good quality services to its tenants and leaseholders.

In response, Councillor Davis stated that the chance to change the housing repairs contract was a massive opportunity as she felt that Axis provided a shocking and disgraceful service citing Regina Road as an example. Councillor Davis then went on to commend Stephen Tate and the Housing department for their work engaging with Scrutiny Members and residents. Councillor Davis informed the Council that Stephen Tate had suggested changes such as bringing the call centre in-house and splitting the repairs contract into three parts to help to diversify risk. Councillor Davis expressed concerns that residents would not get the full transformational service that they deserved and that the change in contract would not necessarily mean a change in council culture, contract management or staff.

Councillor Davis noted that scrutiny recommended the introduction of compensation schemes for residents if there were missed appointments or insufficient work carried out on a property.

Councillor Jason Cummings asked whether Councillor Davis had read the independent remuneration panel report that went to full Council that listed all the independent recommendations for SRAs.

In response to Councillor Jason Cummings's question, Councillor Davis stated that Scrutiny members had decided to look at the best practice elsewhere considering the different levels of responsibility that had been assigned to Cabinet Members who had not been fully completing their areas of responsibility.

Councillor Bonham asked Councillor Davis whether there was a further commitment to address the imbalance in resources within the council.

In response to Councillor Bonham's question, Councillor Davis stated that there had been a discussion with the Mayor about the provision of extra resources for Scrutiny, particularly if Scrutiny was going to continue with the increased levels of community engagement.

Councillor Stewart was invited to ask a question and asked Councillor Davis what she had learnt from her review of the past work of Scrutiny which would enable her to scrutinise the Mayor's priority of improving the Council's customer service.

In response, Councillor Davis stated that the most important thing that Scrutiny could do to help the Council to move forward would be to bring the community voice into discussions by increasing community engagement and resident involvement.

Councillor Davis moved the recommendations as laid out in the report.

This motion was seconded.

This was taken to a vote and carried with a unanimous vote in favour.

RESOLVED, to:

1.1 Receive and consider the Annual Report presented at the meeting as listed in paragraph four of the report.

23/21 **Use of Special Urgency Procedures for Key Decisions 2021-22**

The Civic Mayor introduced the item and informed the Council that the report noted that Special Urgency Procedures were used in four instances, and that these were related to ensuring the continuity of provision of statutory services to residents, and to reduce costs or the loss of savings to the council.

The Chair moved to agree the recommendations in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Creatura.

This was taken to a vote and carried with a unanimous vote in favour.

RESOLVED, to:

- 1.1. To note the use of Special Urgency for the key decisions listed at section 3.4 of the report during the 2021/22 municipal year.

24/21 **Mayor and Cabinet Questions**

In the Executive Mayors announcements, the Mayor welcomed and congratulated Councillor Denton on her appointment as the Ward Councillor for South Croydon following the recent by-election. The Executive Mayor then informed Council that Croydon had two fires in the recent heatwave resulting in the loss of wildlife; however, there was no loss of life or property and he thanked the emergency services for their efforts.

Councillor King asked the Executive Mayor whether he would accept the recommendation in the Opposition motion to develop and publish a comprehensive strategy to support Croydon's residents and businesses impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the cost-of-living crisis had affected many countries across Europe and the Western world. The Executive Mayor informed Council that the council was currently in a poor financial position; however, it would do everything to support its residents during this difficult time. The Executive Mayor stated that he had written to the Secretary of State about the cost-of-living crisis. The Executive Mayor felt it was important for the council to use the £3 million hardship fund to help those in need, the £1 million of hardship fund for those that fell outside of statutory demands as well as other measures of government funding.

Councillor King asked a supplementary question, which queried whether the Mayor's failure to provide a straight answer was evidence that he was unable to listen to the residents of the borough. Councillor King also stated that the Mayor was not listening to Croydon on matters such as the livelihood of residents throughout the borough.

In response the Executive Mayor stated that the previous Administration had failed to listen to financial advice which led to the poor financial situation that the Council was currently faced with.

Councillor Benson asked the Executive Mayor what the new administration had done to help the council to tackle the grass-cutting situation across the borough.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that he knew that grass cutting was a problem across the borough but particularly in the New Addington ward. The Executive Mayor went on to explain that this was a result of poor financial management by the previous administration. The Executive Mayor informed Council that he was pleased that seasonal staff had been put in place and he stated that every area of grass would be cut and the Council would go back to a regular cutting cycle.

Councillor Benson asked a supplementary question and queried how the Council could manage the frustration throughout the borough regarding the frequency of the grass cutting considering the backlog without putting pressure on already limited services.

The Executive Mayor stated that the Council would put extra measures in place to manage the grass cutting. The Executive Mayor went on to explain that weather would have an impact on any proposed schedule for grass cutting and so he preferred a rough guide to a strict timetable. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Roche to address Councillor Benson, who stated that it was one of his priorities to ensure that the schedule was more transparent.

Councillor Sutton asked the Executive Mayor when he would identify the priority neighbourhoods for climate adaptation and when he would unveil his plan of action to the Council.

In his response, the Executive Mayor stated that the council would need assess adaptations when they considered the local plan and dealt with contract renewals. The Executive Mayor informed the Council that he had signed up to the climate pledge.

Councillor Bonham asked the Executive Mayor whether he intended to provide a proper commitment to clean parks throughout the borough.

In response, the Executive Mayor acknowledged that grass cutting was an issue in the parks across the borough and informed the Council that there had been conversations with local Friends groups about how parks would be run and managed moving forward. The Executive Mayor also stated that he would like to continue to have green flag parks in the borough. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Roche to speak, who stated that he had met an external group (London Bloom) which had offered assistance with funding for local groups to manage the parks in the borough.

Councillor Campbell asked the Executive Mayor how he would ensure that vulnerable residents would have their health needs met.

In response, the Executive Mayor acknowledged that the cost-of-living crisis would affect the most vulnerable residents in the borough more than any other group. The Executive Mayor stated that the council would look to the government to see what support they could provide to address the energy crisis. The Executive Mayor went on to explain that the Council would need to get control of its finances as this would enable them to help those who needed assistance through the cost-of-living crisis. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Cummings to speak, who stated that on the Council's website there was a 'help with the cost-of-living page' which provided information on a range of subjects.

Councillor Campbell asked a supplementary question and queried how the Executive Mayor would utilise the information about the most vulnerable residents in the borough.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that they would use this information to acquire more funding for the borough and that he would be working with Croydon University Trust to secure funding.

Councillor Lee asked the Executive Mayor how residents could claim their energy rebate.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the government had set a strict criterion for the £150 rebate to be issued to residents. The Executive Mayor acknowledged that this process was frustrating as those in need found it difficult to receive the rebate. The Executive Mayor informed the Council that many residents had failed security checks which had made the process longer; however, 80% of residents had received their rebates.

Councillor Young asked the Executive Mayor why he was withholding funds allocated for the day and activity program from vulnerable residents during the cost-of-living crisis.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated the Council had received the holiday funding from the government and that this had been used to support groups over the summer and the only funds that had been withdrawn had been to pay officers to run the scheme. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Stranack to speak, who stated that the money that had been allocated was for the easter, summer and Christmas holidays. Councillor Stranack then informed the Council that the reason that some of the funds had been held back was because money had been allocated for the Christmas break. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Cummings to speak, who stated that the financial situation at the council meant that they did not have the resources to address every issue immediately.

Councillor Young asked a supplementary question and queried whether spin was in contradiction to the 7 Nolan principles.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the council had withheld the holiday funds and that they had allocated funds for the Christmas holidays. He stated that there was also additional money available.

Councillor Fox asked the Executive Mayor what he would do about the graffiti in Waddon ward.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that he knew that a huge amount of effort had gone into cleaning graffiti in the ward. The Executive Mayor informed the Council that it was still trying to clean the streets and graffiti to restore hope and pride to residents across the borough. The Executive Mayor explained that the graffiti removal service had been removed by the previous Administration and that he was working with contractors to secure a deal to reintroduce it. The Executive Mayor stated that the Council's 'Love Streets' app would allow residents to report graffiti.

Councillor Fox asked a supplementary question about what proactive measures had been put in place to address anti-social behaviour.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that he was working to clean the streets and to introduce public space protection orders to deal with antisocial behaviour on all levels across the borough.

Councillor Reshekaron asked the Executive Mayor how he planned to provide financial support for the borough's most vulnerable residents.

In his response, the Executive Mayor stated that temporary accommodation and housing was a huge problem within the borough. The Executive Mayor informed the Council that he was working on using government grants to improve the homelessness situation. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Hale to speak, who stated that plans had been shared with the Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee and that she wanted to place the residents at risk in temporary accommodation at the right time which would require the Council to help vulnerable residents at the first opportunity.

Councillor Reshekaron asked a supplementary question and queried how the Executive Mayor planned to help residents in social housing who had accrued rent arrears due to the cost-of-living crisis.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated whilst the Council had funds and initiatives in place, they would be seeking more help from the government to help residents across the borough.

Councillor Ramsey asked the Executive Mayor about his views on the Planning department and what immediate action the current administration had taken.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the current Planning regime was in place to suit developers rather than residents. The Executive Mayor informed the Council that he would seek to implement better design guides and change the local plan.

Councillor Ramsey asked a supplementary question and queried how the revocation of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD2) would impact the Planning department's role and their approach in determining the viability of planning applications.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD2) would not be part of the guidance used moving forward and that the inappropriate design guide led to issues across the borough and the local plan would help to prevent out-of-character developments.

Councillor Graham asked the Executive Mayor whether he believed that reopening Purely Pool during the cost-of-living crisis was a good use of public funds.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that he had written to the Secretary of State about energy costs, and he was chasing the government for assistance in dealing with the costs that the Council would be taking on. The Executive Mayor concluded by proclaiming that the reopening of Purley Pool

was a key election pledge and that it would be re-opened by the Administration.

Councillor Shortland asked the Executive Mayor how he would regenerate the town centre.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that he had had conversations with Westfield, Hammersen and the Whitgift foundation and that they were committed to delivering a rejuvenated town centre. The Executive Mayor informed the Council that Westfield had brought forward their plan for the former Alders building which would bring much more pedestrian traffic.

Councillor Shortland asked a supplementary question and queried whether the backtracking on the previous plans for Westfield by the former Administration had made an impact on the number of jobs and new homes available for the younger residents within the borough.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that there would be small pockets of regeneration in Croydon which would lead to more investment in future and help to rebuild the town centre.

Councillor Degrad asked the Executive Mayor whether he had a plan to support struggling families immediately and over the next six weeks as schools were closed for the summer holiday.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the Council was supporting families through government funding and holiday clubs would be running throughout the summer period. The hardship fund would be used to support families that were on the Free School Meals scheme.

Councillor Degrad asked a supplementary question about what advice the Executive Mayor could provide to struggling families and how they could be encouraged to develop skills to improve their futures.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that there were several funds including the holiday fund which were being advertised. The Executive Mayor also informed the Council that there were additional funds for those who fell just outside of the system who may be suffering and he suggested that Members direct those struggling to the various grants and funds detailed on the Council's website.

Councillor Denton asked the Executive Mayor about the progress in completing and selling the houses and flats constructed by Brick by Brick.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that there were two major sites that were nearly completed. The Executive Mayor informed the Council that there were around 21-23 other sites which had some issues around planning obligations and that many of these obligations had now been dealt with so several sites would be up for sale soon.

Councillor Denton asked a supplementary question and queried whether the Executive Mayor thought that the removal of SPD2 would help to preserve the character of South Croydon ward, and whether he would restore areas of special character which were removed by the previous Administration.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the removal of SPD2 would help to prevent overdevelopment and that the review of the local plan would strengthen character across the borough.

Councillor Srinivasan asked the Executive Mayor about the action he would take to support vulnerable households which were at risk of falling into poverty.

In response, the Executive Mayor acknowledged that the cost-of-living crisis would affect a number of people within the borough and that there were measures in place including a number of government funds immediately available. He also mentioned that there was a section on the council's webpage which provided information for residents about the funds that were available.

Councillor Srinivasan asked a supplementary question which queried the conversations the Executive Mayor had had with government officials to raise concerns about the disproportionate impact of food poverty on vulnerable households.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that he had written to the government about this issue, and that he would look to manage the Council's finances properly to ensure that they were in a better position to deal with these crises when they occurred.

Councillor Pearson asked the Executive Mayor about the scope to introduce Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) in other areas of the borough, particularly in New Addington.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that Public Space Protection Orders were an important tool to use in dealing with antisocial behaviour. The Executive Mayor informed the Council that he had taken steps to introduce the town centre Public Space Protection Order, and that this would go out to

consultation shortly. The Executive Mayor concluded, saying that he would look to restore Public Space Protection Orders in New Addington, Thornton Heath and Norbury to help police officers to deal with antisocial behaviour.

Councillor Pearson asked a supplementary question about the other initiatives that would be introduced to make the borough safer and more pleasant to live and work within.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that cleaning the streets, removing graffiti, and dealing with low level antisocial behaviour were the first steps in improving the borough and that Public Space Protection Orders were the next step to empower the police.

Councillor Foster asked the Executive Mayor to confirm that the Council planned to be digitally inclusive moving forward.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the Council would want to ensure that they were digitally inclusive particularly for those with limited access to the internet. The Executive Mayor suggested that having better access to libraries and providing more open services to residents would help the Council to be more digitally inclusive.

Councillor Foster asked a supplementary question about how the Council could ensure that it stood alongside third sector groups so that it could continue its work across the borough.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the Council was in the process of rebuilding its relationship with the third sector and creating a new environment to work out how to deliver for residents moving forwards. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Stranack to speak, who stated that he had recently visited Selsdon Baptist church and through the King's Fund they provided community hubs. They were also providing health advice and information about housing and other issues.

Councillor Redfern asked the Executive Mayor what Croydon Council was doing to address child sexual exploitation in the borough.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the Council had mechanisms in place to recognise this issue and respond effectively to prevent child exploitation from taking place. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Gatland to speak, who stated that the governance of their safeguarding was down to the Safeguarding Children's partnership.

Councillor Redfern asked a supplementary question and queried whether the Executive Mayor could categorically state that the opinions expressed about

the victims being the 'wrong sort of girls' were not tolerated in Croydon's Children's Services.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that those opinions were not tolerated by him, and that the Council would not support that position. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Gatland to speak, who highlighted that there were children who were missing from care and how vulnerable they may have been. Councillor Gatland stated that it was important that everybody looked out for indicators around returning home interviews.

Councillor Bonello asked the Executive Mayor why he thought that the Children's Services department was underspent.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that there was an underspend as there had not been a need to grow the budget further; however, he would be keen to investigate whether the Council was covering all its bases. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Gatland to speak, who stated that the underspend was down to the reduction of children in care and the number of vacancies in the department.

Councillor Bonello asked a supplementary question and queried whether the Executive Mayor would commit to not reducing the department's budget further.

In his response, the Executive Mayor stated that the Council would like to maintain its good Ofsted rating in Children's Services. The Executive Mayor explained that he would not commit to not changing the budgets due to the serious financial situation at the Council; however, he was willing to re-evaluate the way in which the department worked. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Cummings to speak, who stated that the underspend within the department happened under the previous Administration and that there would be reasons detailed for any future budget changes.

Councillor Brew asked the Executive Mayor whether he would provide him with a progress report on the re-opening of Purely Pool.

In response, the Executive Mayor explained that Purley Pool should have re-opened after the pandemic and that there had been grants available that had not been used and the pool remained closed. The Executive Mayor stated that the Administration would look at the most sustainable way to re-open Purley Pool.

Councillor O'Dame asked the Executive Mayor what measures would be implemented to ensure appropriate conditions for residents who were not eligible for Croydon Council's discretionary support.

In response, the Executive Mayor explained that the discretionary fund was available for families who were not due to receive benefits. The Executive Mayor stated that the Administration would need to focus on initiatives which helped to upskill residents for them to move out of low paid jobs.

Councillor O'Dame asked a supplementary question which queried what immediate support the Executive Mayor would provide to residents who fell outside of the target range to receive support from the hardship fund and benefits.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that there were government grants that the Council would be using to support residents most in need.

The chair asked for the remainder of the Councillor to submit their questions in written form to receive responses electronically due to time constraints.

25/21 **Maiden Speeches**

Delivering her Maiden Speech, Councillor Denton thanked her predecessor, the Executive Mayor, and commended him for his work in the South Croydon ward. Councillor Denton went on to say that, through her work she had connected with the local businesses, residents, faith organisations and charities and as a founding member of the South Croydon Business Association she had a platform to carry her work forward in collaboration with the Council.

Councillor Foster spoke about her experience as a teacher and explained that this experience had taught her about inequality. Councillor Foster stated that during the pandemic inequalities were amplified and the burden placed upon the borough left residents with another crisis. Councillor Foster expressed her desire to build on the legacy of her predecessors and that she wanted to ensure that the opportunities on offer were captured by children and young people within the borough.

Councillor Sherine Thampi thanked his predecessor Councillor Steven Hollands. Councillor Sherine Thampi stated that Old Coulsdon was blessed with great heritage sites such as a monument dedicated to the First World

War. Councillor Sherine Thampi concluded that he would ensure that residents' voices were heard within the council.

Councillor Herman thanked his predecessors, Councillors Clive Fraser and Patsy Cummings. Councillor Herman stated that residents had asked him to make the Council work for them and he stated that it was his duty to deliver for his residents.

Councillor Patel stated that she was honoured to be one of Croydon's first Green Councillors. Councillor Patel promised to raise the voices of residents within the Council and felt that it was clear that residents wanted change due to the old duopoly being broken up. Councillor Patel concluded by asserting that Members must ensure that the climate emergency was factored into every decision taken by the council.

26/21 **Council Debate Motions**

The Executive Mayor read out the first Council Debate Motion:

*"This Council would like to praise its staff for the way they have worked and supported our residents through the Covid pandemic and Croydon Council's financial difficulties. It has been an unprecedented time of disruption and change. Whilst accepting that the process is ongoing and that there are more changes and difficult decisions to come it is right to pause and thank those who in many cases have borne the brunt of the effects of the decisions and failures of others.
To all Croydon Council's staff. Thank you."*

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

Councillor Campbell stated that many officers within the Council were residents of the borough, some of whom faced many issues such as increase in National Insurance contributions, the energy crisis or the reduction in Police services and resulting rise in crime. Councillor Campbell asked whether Members were aware of how many officers were accessing food banks and topping up salaries using universal credit. Councillor Campbell informed Members that a 'thank you' did not address the issues that officers faced and advocated for anonymous surveys on how the administration was doing in terms of leadership to improve outcomes.

Councillor Ben-Hassel stated that under the previous Head of Paid Service restructures within the Council could have been handled better and she hoped that the new executive team would handle restructures more efficiently. Councillor Ben-Hassel informed Members that as the Chair of the Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee she looked forward to the work force strategy update in September, where she would be able to assess

the impact of the pressures placed upon officers. Councillor Ben-Hassel concluded by stating that there was an issue with recruitment and the number of vacant posts which had caused many officers to work under unnecessary pressure.

Councillor Hale exercised her right to speak and acknowledged that the Council's workforce had the terrible financial and leadership issues to contend whilst supporting residents through the Covid pandemic. Councillor Hale accepted that there were numerous issues within the Council which left staff working through backlogs, having to make critical decisions with untrustworthy data and many departments had had several interim appointments at senior and Corporate Director level. Councillor Hale stated that the administration would seek to fix the Council's finances and that the Cabinet paper, 'Opening the Books', which set out plans to deep-dive into the Council finances, would be key to finding a solution to the Council's financial situation.

Councillor Hale seconded the motion.

This was put to a vote and carried unanimously.

The second debate motion was introduced by Cllr King.

"This council is alarmed at the deepening Cost of Living crisis facing residents and businesses in our Borough.

This council notes that Croydon's voluntary sector, which works directly with Croydon families in or at the edges of poverty, are reporting desperate increases in demand from residents struggling to meet their rents, pay for fuel and feed their families. They predict a terrifying winter if action isn't taken now before further increases - particularly on energy bills - begin to bite. Many of our residents are suffering real hardship and are looking to the council and Mayor to take action to support them. The Mayor has the power and authority to provide tangible and real help.

This council also acknowledges the pressure the national Cost of Living crisis will place on the council's budget, both directly and indirectly, as demand for services grows and budgets are eroded by rampant inflation. This pressure will also be felt by the borough's voluntary and community sector.

This council calls upon the Mayor to develop and publish a comprehensive strategy and package of measures to support Croydon residents and businesses impacted by the national Cost of Living crisis, and to publish it no later than 31st October 2022."

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

Councillor Jason Cummings stated that the current cost of living crises affected people at all levels, and that they had to re-evaluate their personal budgets. Councillor Cummings explained that the recent financial situation at the Council made it difficult to manage the rising cost of utilities and that the

Council website had a section dedicated to help with the cost of living. Councillor Jason Cummings concluded by stating that he supported most of the motion that had been proposed and seconded it as the Mayor had the power and authority to make a difference; however, he said that no report would be forthcoming.

Councillor Stranack stated that he agreed with most of the motion. Councillor Stranack explained that the war in Ukraine had put a massive strain on the Council's resources and highlighted Voluntary and Business Sector partners were delivering help to residents. Councillor Stranack stated that his work with voluntary sector groups had allowed the opening of many holiday camps for those receiving free school meals and that the business sector had provided cheap school meals over the summer holidays.

Councillor Young exercised his right to speak and stated that inflation in the UK had hit a 40 year high at 9% and this was forecast to rise as high as 12% later in the year. Councillor Young expressed concern that the most vulnerable residents in the borough would be badly affected if appropriate action was not taken in a timely manner. Councillor Young concluded by stating that the Executive Mayor had failed to process the energy rebate for residents who needed it most and that a strategic approach was required ahead of October.

Councillor Young seconded the motion.

This was put to a vote and carried unanimously.

The meeting ended at 9.23 pm

Signed:

.....

Date:

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| | |
|----------------------|--|
| REPORT TO: | COUNCIL 19 October 2022 |
| SUBJECT: | Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report |
| LEAD MEMBERS: | Cllr Maria Gatland, Chair, Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) Cllr Alisa Flemming, CPP Chair for report period 2021-22 |
| LEAD OFFICER: | Roisin Madden, Director of Children’s Social Care |
| WARDS: | ALL |

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 1. | RECOMMENDATIONS |
| 1.1 | The Council is asked to receive and note the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report (Appendix 1). |

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 In accordance with Part 4A of the Council’s Constitution, Council can receive Annual Reports from Committees. The Constitution also prescribes how these Annual Reports are treated by Council.

3. PROCEDURE FOR ANNUAL REPORTS

Corporate Parenting Panel’s Annual Report

3.1 In accordance with para 3.55 of Part 4A of the Council’s Constitution, the overall time which may be devoted to question the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report shall be not more than 10 minutes.

3.2 The Chair of the Committee (or in absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair) shall introduce and answer questions on the report. The Chair of the Committee shall not have more than 3 minutes speaking time to introduce the report.

3.3 For clarity, whilst the report relates to 2021-2022, it will be the 2022-2023 Chair who is scheduled to present the report.

3.4 It has been established practice for the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report to be received annually at Croydon Council meetings.

3.5 For the remaining time available, the report will be open to questions.

3.6 Any Member, except the Secunder of the Report, may ask the Chair or Vice-Chair, as appropriate, not more than two questions on each paragraph of the report.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 As the annual report is for noting at Council, there are no financial implications directly arising from the decision.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 As the annual report is for noting at Council, there are no legal implications directly arising from the decision.

5.2 The Council Constitution process is as described above.

6. Equalities Implications

6.1 As the annual report is for noting at Council, there are no equalities implications directly arising from the decision. Equality issues on the subject are however articulated within the report.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Michelle Ossei-Gerning
Democratic Services and Governance Officer

APPENDIX 1:

Corporate Parenting Panel's Annual Report 2021-2022

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2021 - 2022

be the change
for children and young people in croydon



Forward



Councillor Alisa Flemming
Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel
Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning

Welcome to our Corporate Parenting Annual Report, which details the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel and our services to children looked after and care experienced young people. During the last two years the Corporate Parenting Panel has embraced the virtual meeting environment and the challenges presented. The involvement of children and young people in the meetings has been invaluable in providing new perspectives and keeping our focus upon what matters.

As elected Members, the role of a 'Corporate Parent' is a collective responsibility that we all share. Many of our children looked after and care experienced young people will have faced difficulties in their early years that will place them amongst the most disadvantaged in our society if we do not provide the care, stability and support needed to help them achieve their ambitions.

The work of E.M.P.I.R.E [which stands for Empowerment. Memories. Positivity. Interesting. Respect & Education], who are our Children in Care Council, and the feedback we receive from other children and young people, play an integral part in how we continue to improve services for children. Listening and acting upon the voices of our children with care experience help us to keep focus on what really matters in order to influence development and delivery of services in the right way.

As Lead Member and Corporate Parent, I want the best for all our children. I am proud of their achievements, and we must continue to create opportunities to celebrate their successes with them at every level. It is often said that the small things are the greatest and we must never underestimate how important a word of encouragement can be. I am extremely grateful to the members of EMPIRE for the regular attendance at the Panel, it has been a real privilege to work with them throughout the year.

As a council it remains important that we continue to be ambitious and strive to be the best Corporate Parents and Corporate Family we can be. We must remain committed to doing everything that we can to support our children so that they can benefit from the many opportunities our borough has to offer.

Our ambition is that all children and young people in Croydon will be safe, healthy and happy, and will aspire to be the best they can be. The future is theirs.

Everyone can play their part in this – from businesses and the voluntary sector to families who can offer a foster home to those children who need one.

Our annual report is a summary of the work presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in 2021-2022 and is a celebration of the success, achievements and areas of improvement.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the achievements, progress and challenges in meeting the needs of Croydon's Children Looked After and Care Leavers in 2021/2022. This year saw the gradual lifting of Lockdown and new challenges for everyone, as we learnt to live with the impact of Covid. Children Looked After and Care Experienced Young People have been remarkable in the way they have managed the uncertainty that Covid presents, and their achievements at school, college and through groups such as EMPIRE show that their lives have not been 'on hold'.
- 1.2. 2021 saw the Children Looked After, Care Leavers and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Teams (UASC) restructured to focus on children under 16 and Young People aged 16 and above. We continue to provide support to UASC at the home office, undertake age assessments and look after unaccompanied children before they move to their long term homes across the country.
- 1.3. Despite the uncertainty and challenges of Covid performance for social work and personal adviser teams has been maintained or improved. Ensuring that plans are updated on time has been a struggle, however this has been improving since August. Children and Young People have been keen to meet face to face and EMPIRE has organised some popular and helpful events.
- 1.4. The Corporate Parenting Panel has been curious about disparities in children and young people's experience of care based on ethnic background. Nearly two thirds of Croydon's supported care leavers (care experienced) have been unaccompanied asylum seeking children. The needs and experience of Asian and Black children and young people will be a focus for our work in 2022/23.



2. Corporate Parenting Panel

- 2.1. The statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning, states that the Council has a responsibility to act as an effective and caring corporate parent for all children looked after and care leavers. There is a strong emphasis on improving educational attainment, providing stable and high quality placements and proper planning for when young people leave care. The council takes its responsibility for Children looked after and care leavers very seriously and closely monitors the services provided to these young people to ensure that all Children looked after and care leavers are safe, healthy and happy and aspire to be the best they can be.
- 2.2. The term 'Child Looked after' refers to any child or young person for whom the local authority has, or shares, parental responsibility, or for whom care and accommodation is provided on behalf of their parent/s. The term "child" can refer to any child or young person aged 0 to 18 years. The council also has a duty and responsibility to those young people who leave their long-term care from the age of 16 years until they reach the age of 25 years. In line with national developments, we are increasingly referring to our care leaver young people as 'care experienced'.
- 2.3. A cross-party Croydon Corporate Parenting Panel of elected members, looked after young people, foster carers and cross council senior officers has been in place since 2007. The panel provides governance and challenge to ensure that outcomes for Children looked after continue to improve via regular panel meetings throughout the year, meeting with young people to hear directly from them their views and experiences of service offered.
- 2.4. The panel will review outcomes for services to Children Looked After and Care Experienced Young People, including Management Information and Performance Indicators monitoring all aspects of Children in Care. The information reviewed by the panel includes:

The number and age range of Children Looked After;
Health information;

Distance children are placed from their home address;
Education attainment and attendance;
Personal Education Plan compliance;
The number of young people not in Education,
Employment or Training (NEET);
The number of statutory visits completed within the timeframe;
The number of Children and Young People who have up-to
date plans.

2.6. Our priorities for 2022-2023 are based on the analysis in this annual report, Ofsted recommendations and our broader understanding of our children looked after and care leavers we have identified the following actions as our priorities for the year ahead that we are already working on:

- Understand the experience of care that children and young people have and identify any disparity in experience based upon factors such as race.
- Improve our support and care for children and young people aged 16-25. Recognising their continued vulnerability alongside greater independence. (see Care Experienced Focus for 2022 p16)
- Ensure that there is a better understanding of why children and young people go missing, and identify what needs to change for individual children and young people.
- Continue to develop and work from a systemic understanding of children and young people's situation and experience, and understand behaviours through a Trauma Informed approach.
- Further increase the provision of local foster placements for children and young people so that they can be Happy, Health and 'Here'.

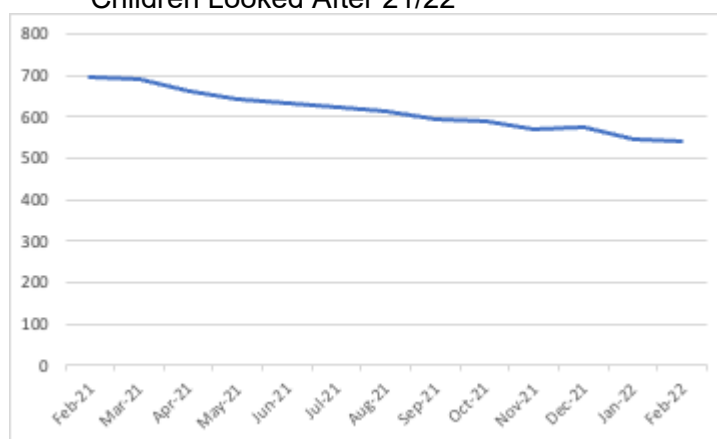
3. Children looked after: Demographics, health and education

3.1. The number of children that are looked after has reduced by 20% during 2021/22. With a rate of 56.7 children per 10,000 being looked after in Croydon. This continues to be higher than the statistical neighbour average of 51.8 per 10,000. If our Looked After Population is adjusted to include only the statutory number of UASC expected of local authorities (0.07% of child population) then Croydon's Looked After Population is the same as the statistical neighbours' average for 20/21-51.8 (500 children, compared to 540 children as at 28/2/2022)

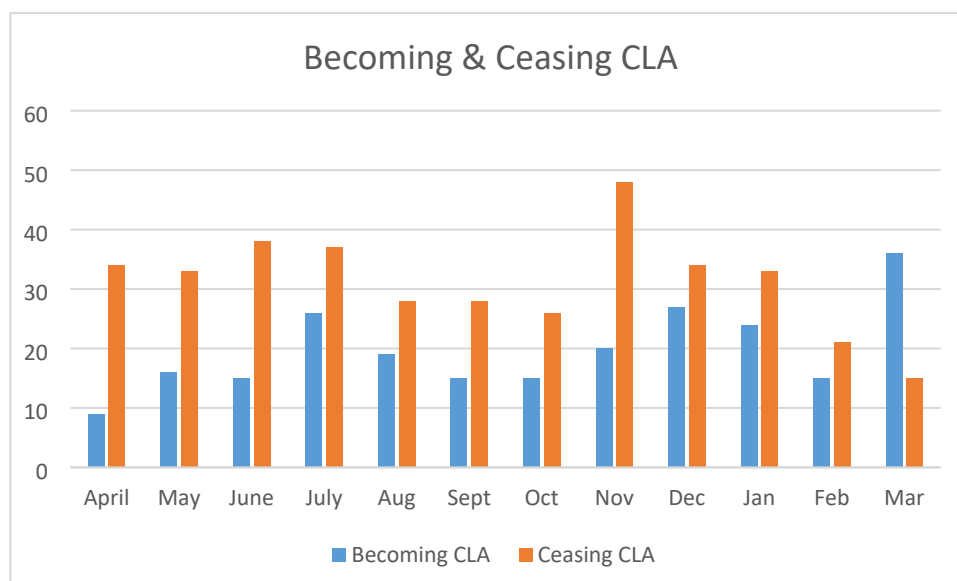


| | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Croydon | 87.00 | 83.00 | 81.00 | 86.00 | 85.00 | 72.8 | 56.7 |
| Statistical Neighbours | 56.30 | 54.20 | 54.60 | 53.70 | 52.8 | 51.8 | Not published |
| England | 60.00 | 62.00 | 64.00 | 65.00 | 67.00 | 67.00 | Not published |

Children Looked After 21/22



- 3.2. The number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children remaining looked after by Croydon has reduced again this year and is the main factor in the overall number of Children Looked After decreasing. With the National Transfer Scheme now mandatory for all local authorities' children and young people are moving quickly to the local authority that will provide care for them. This has seen UASC that are looked after by Croydon drop from 205 in April 2021 to 114 in March 2022, a reduction of 56%.
- 3.3. The overall reduction in children Looked after can be seen in the comparison of the number of children becoming looked after each month alongside the number of children ceasing to be looked after. Children reaching 18 will cease to be looked after and are then supported as a care leaver.



3.4. **Age & Gender:** The majority of our CLA are between 10-17 years old. Male children account for the majority of children looked after, however there has been an upturn of 6% in the proportion of female children looked after compared to the previous year.

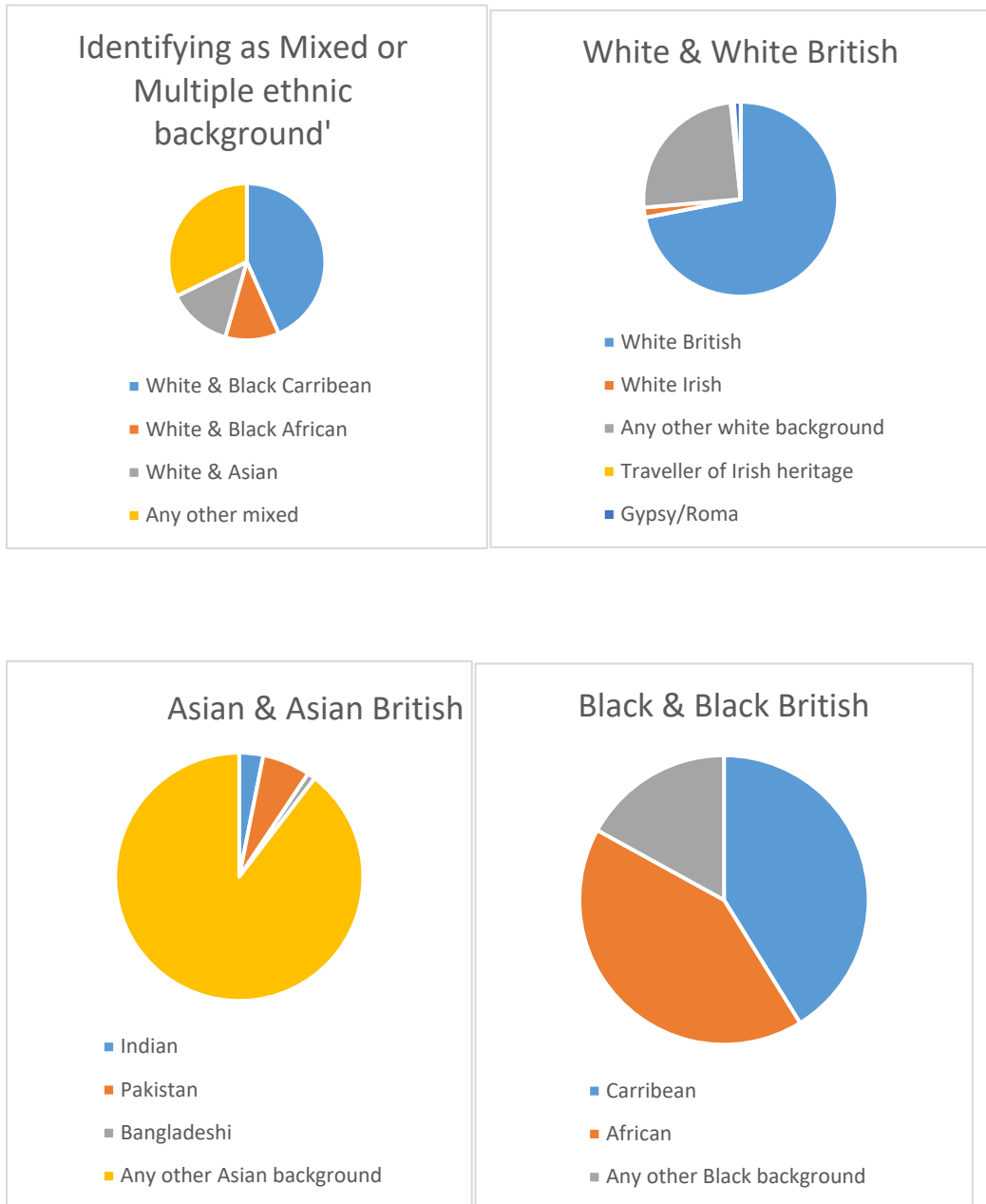
| AGE AT 31 MARCH 2021 | | | |
|----------------------|-----|------------|-----|
| MALE 59% | | FEMALE 41% | |
| Under 10: | 23% | Under 10: | 29% |
| 10 - 17: | 77% | 10 - 17: | 71% |

When compared to the ONS 2020 general population figures for Croydon girls make up 48% of the population and boys 52%.

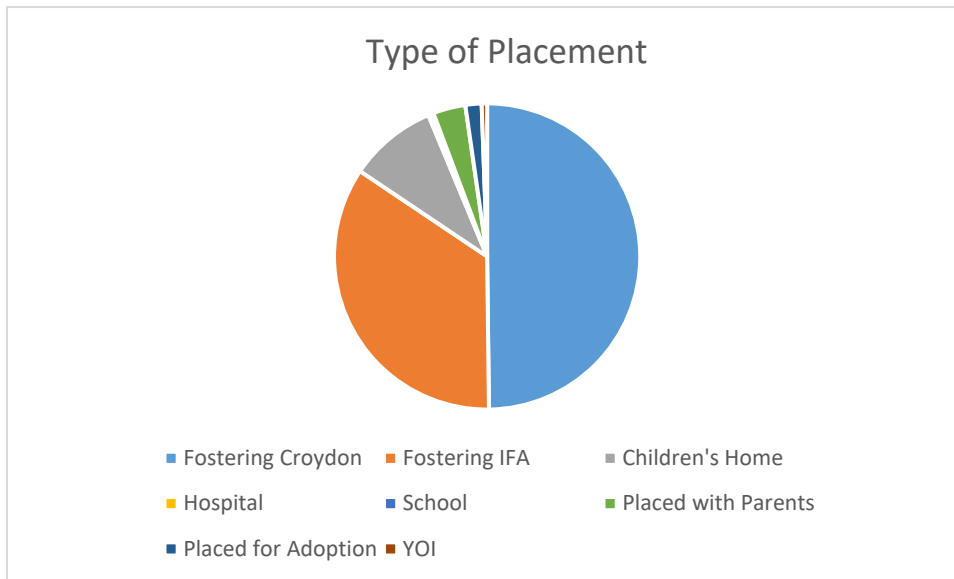
3.5. **Ethnicity:** There have been some small changes in the ethnic background of children looked after, compared to the previous year. White and White British Children have decreased overall by 4%, whilst those identifying as 'mixed' has increased by 3% and Black and Black British children have increased by 2%.

| ETHNIC BACKGROUND OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER | | Mar 2022 | Not UASC Mar 2022 | UASC Mar 2022 |
|--|------|----------|-------------------|---------------|
| | 2021 | | | |
| White and White British | 37% | 33% | 37% | 20% |
| Black and Black British | 27% | 29% | 33% | 12% |
| Asian and Asian British | 19% | 18% | 6% | 64% |
| Mixed | 14% | 17% | 21% | 0% |
| Other ethnic groups | 3% | 3% | 3% | 4% |

A further analysis of this data using ethnicity classification used in the 2021 Census reveals more detail of the diversity in each of the above groups:



3.6. **Type of placement:** In March 2022, 84% of our children were placed in foster placements (compared with 74% of SNs and 71% England Average data 2020/21). Of those children living with foster carers 50% are with Croydon foster carers, which is slightly better than statistical neighbours (39%) and the England average (48%).



3.7. Children missing from care:

124 Children Looked After had at least one recorded missing incident during 2021/22; this represents 17% of all children looked after and whilst this is lower than pre-Covid (22%) it is higher than statistical neighbours (12%). When a child is found they are offered a 'return home interview' to help ascertain the reasons why a child/young person went missing and to help prevent a future episode. The average take up of a return home interview for children looked after was 56% and is an area that requires significant improvement during 2022/23.

4. Health for Children Looked After

- 4.1. The Health Operational Group instituted in 2020/21 continues to monitor the timeliness of Health Assessments for children looked after. Although timeliness can be variable by month, as of 31st March 2022 93% of children looked after for more than 12 months had an updated Health Assessment on time.
- 4.2. The Health Operational Group is guided by the CLA Health Action Plan in its focus. Whilst Health reviews have improved, audit activity has shown that there needs to be more consistency in quality and greater timeliness for the initial health assessment.



| Looked after children | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|--|------|------|------|
| Percentage of children with health assessments on time @31st March | 84% | 90% | 93% |

- 4.3. The last two years of living through Covid has brought in to focus children and young people's physical and emotional health needs. The Clinical Therapists, based within Children's Social Care, have worked alongside Social Workers and Personal Advisers to provide consultation, direct support and developed the services knowledge and skills in working with young people's emotional wellbeing.
- 4.4 There have been a small number of children that have required a hospital admission, due to their mental health deteriorating. Alongside the impact of changes in the registration of some care/support providers work is underway to develop a range of suitable support for children following discharge.
- 4.5. Care Leavers now benefit from a 'Health Passport' which helps them to have a greater understanding of their health needs and to access information.

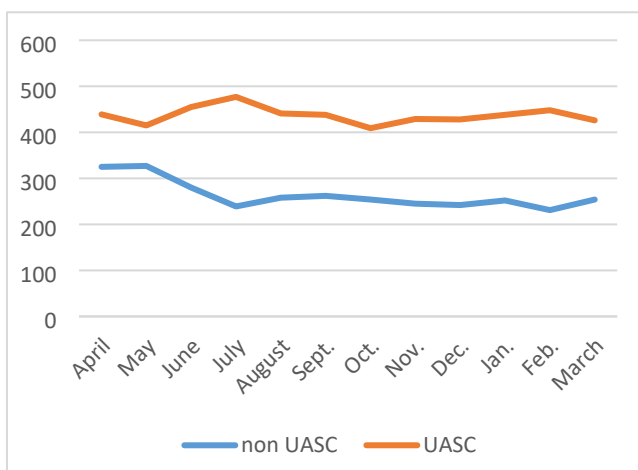


5. Care Leavers:

5.1. The Children & Social Work Act 2017 introduced a new duty on local authorities, to provide Personal Adviser (PA) support to all care leavers up to age 25, if they want this support.

Profile

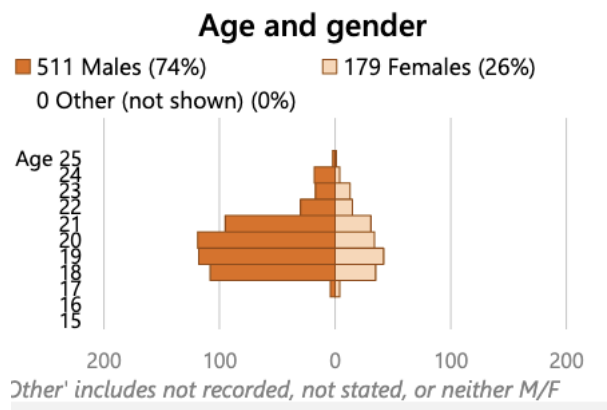
As of the 31st March 2022, there were 683 Care Experienced young people, aged 18-25, eligible for support via a pathway plan. The majority of these young people (62%) have been unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.



During 2022/23 we can expect a further 123 current children looked after to become care leavers and approximately 20 current care leavers to become 25, we can therefore expect an overall increase in the number of care leavers during 2022/23.

5.2. Age & Gender:

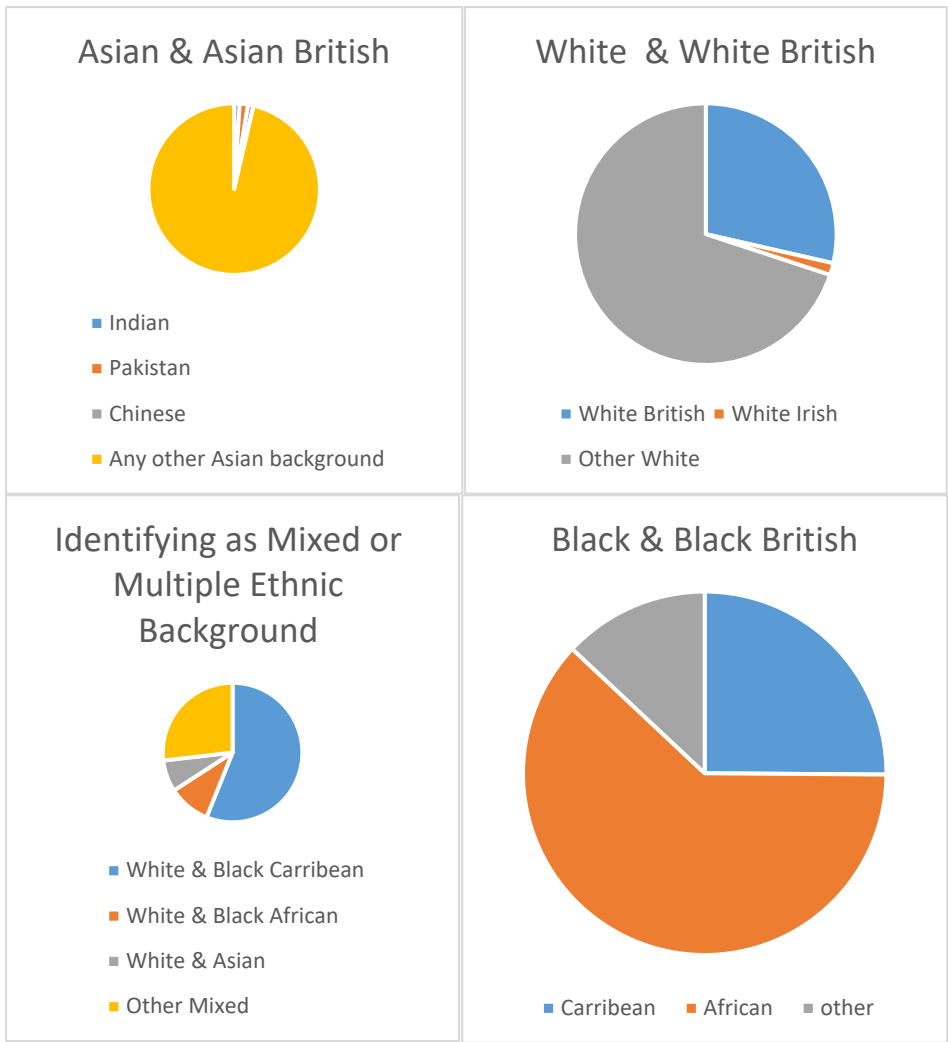
Croydon's care experienced population continues to be disproportionately identified as male. This is due to the overwhelming number of unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the UK being male. The majority of these care leavers are aged 18-21.



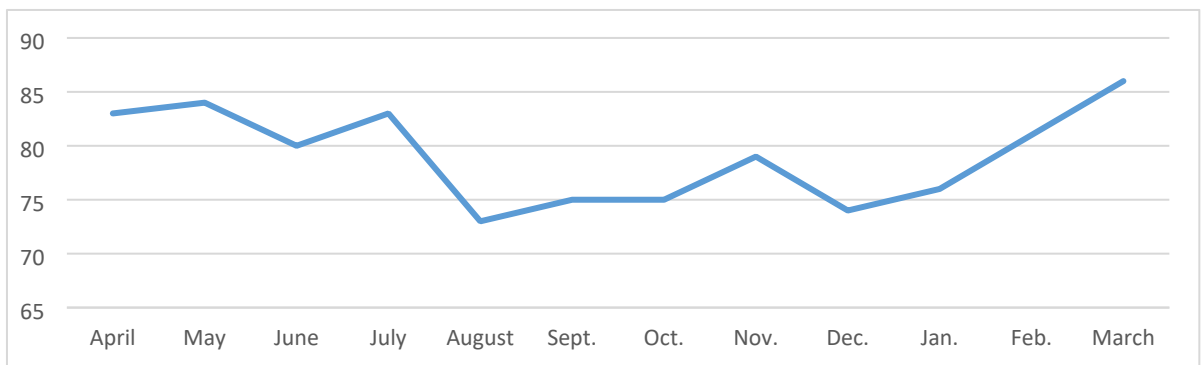
5.3. Ethnicity:

The ethnic background profile for our care experienced young people is different from that of children looked after, with more identifying as 'any other Asian background' and less as mixed. Croydon's history of looking after more unaccompanied asylum seeking children than most other local authorities is reflected in the diversity of the care leavers that we continue to support.

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------|--|
| White and White British | 30% | 142 (70%) categorised as 'Other White' |
| Black & Black British | 33% | 138 (62%) categorised as 'African' |
| Asian and Asian British | 28% | 185 (96%) Categorised as 'any other Asian background' |
| Mixed | 6% | |
| Other ethnic groups | 3% | |



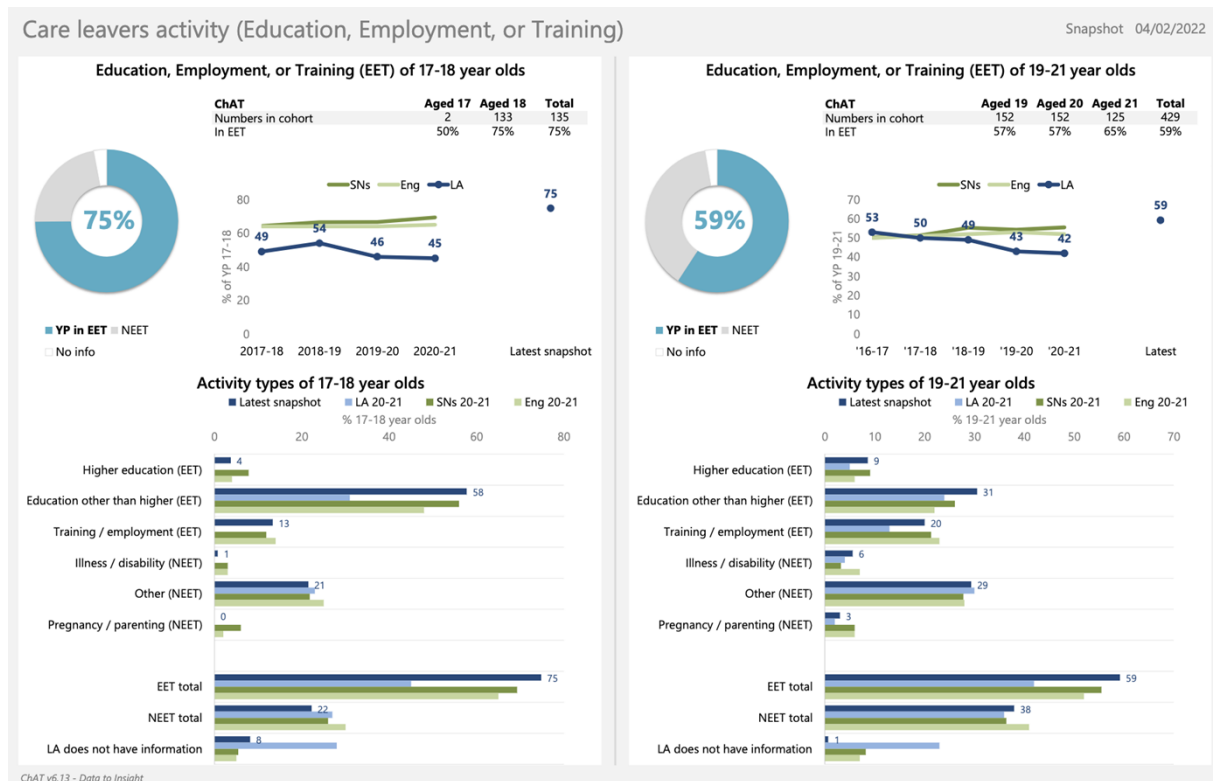
5.4. Pathway Plans:



Pathway plans are required to be updated, at least, every six months. Within Croydon our aim is to achieve this for at least 85% of young people. Performance dropped in this year, particularly as we came out of lockdown. Tighter performance monitoring arrangements are now in place and a gradual improvement can be seen.

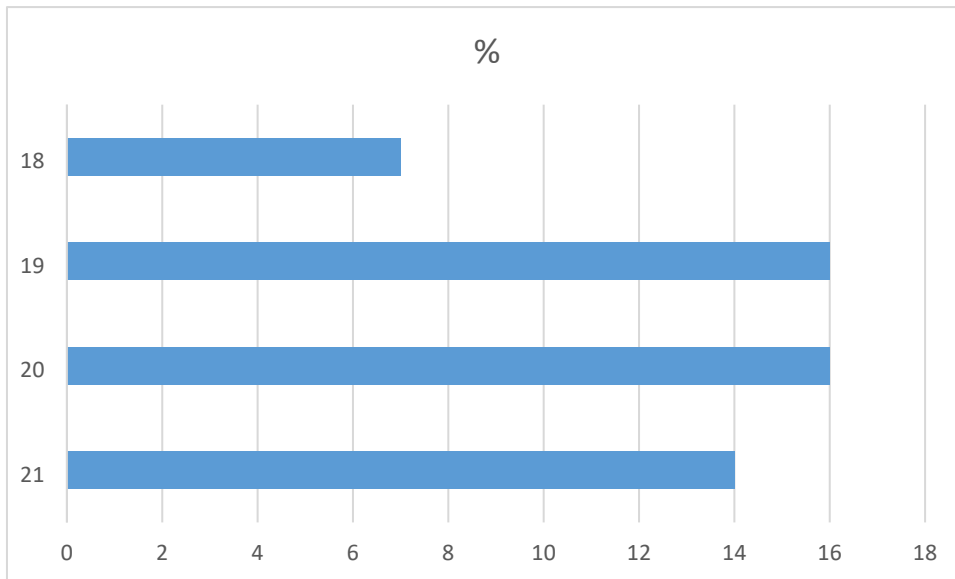
5.5. Education, Employment and Training (EET):

Education, Employment & Training



As at the end of February 2022 the percentage of care experienced young people who are in Education, Employment or Training is now comparable with local and national statistics, this is an improvement on 20/21. This still means that 40% of those aged 19-21 and nearly 25% of those aged 17-18 are not in education, employment or training. Some of these young people have unresolved immigration matters which prevents them progressing to Education, Employment or Training (38 young people- 6%).

For some young people there are other factors that can prevent them being able to access EET (e.g., Custody; Parent to under-five; immigration status). When these factors are taken in to account the % that are NEET by age are:



This is below the national average reported figures.

Some first-hand examples of the challenges and support provided to improve this vital aspect of young people's lives are provided in the quotes below:

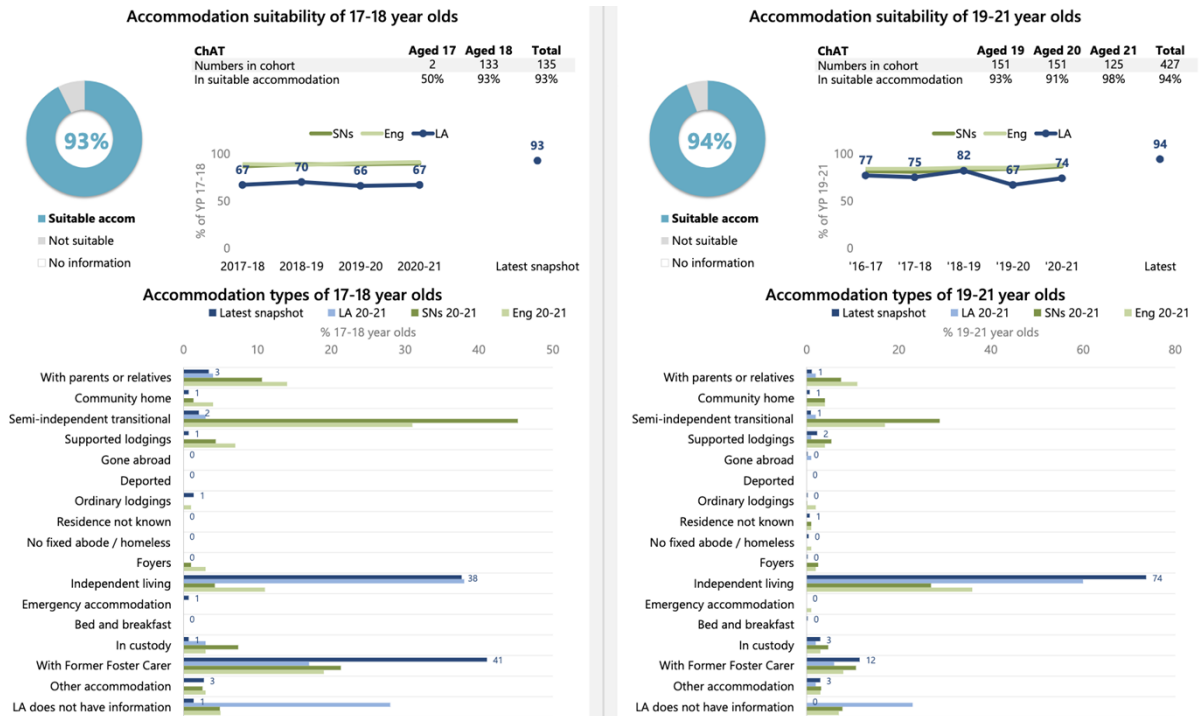
I'm really proud of what this young person has achieved... they've removed themselves from

University wasn't for them, and they have now successfully gained employment in Croydon.

Despite issues with health and housinggraduating with a

They were going to walk out after a week; however, we worked together, found alternative

Accommodation



The work to ensure that more young people can stay with their carers is something we are proud of. Independent Living is higher than other local authorities and we are working hard to ensure that for our vulnerable young people the quality of this accommodation is suitable as well. There are currently 15 priority Croydon tenancies per annum for us to make use of, we would like this to increase.

Care Experienced Focus for 2022:

- Ensure caseloads remain as low as possible to enable the best support for an increasing number of Care Experienced young people.
- Further develop peer support and a 'Care Experienced Club' to focus on the needs of young people entering work and becoming independent.
- Understand better the support needs and risks for our Care Experienced young people, particularly for our asylum-seeking population.
- Expand training opportunities and learn from young people's experiences.
- Improve the accommodation offer for young people to ensure the right help is available to enable young people to achieve independence that is not isolated and unsupported.

6. Fostering

6.1. As of March 2022, the Fostering Service supports 207 Foster Carer households and cares for 43% of our children looked after. During the year there have been 27 Fostering Assessments undertaken, with 12 new foster families approved so far. There have been 17 foster families leave Croydon for a variety of reasons.

6.2. These fostering households offer short break care, short term foster carers and long term foster carers. This include the “Connected Persons Foster Carers” who are approved to care for specific children.

6.3. The independent Fostering Reviewing Officers have continued to ensure that foster carers annual reviews have been held on time (95% on time). This allows opportunities to identify support needs for both carers and children with additional scrutiny.

6.4. The Fostering Panel considered 123 fostering arrangements during 2021/22. Membership of the Fostering Panel was refreshed , in line with national guidance, to provide a mix of new and experienced perspectives. All panel members received an appraisal during 2021. Panels have been undertaken virtually during Covid and feedback has been positive regarding how the panel functions and is experienced by attendees.

6.5. Croydon Foster Carers have continued to provide outstanding support, care and love for our children looked after and an increasing number of young people remain with their foster carers after they turn 18.



7. Adoption & Permanence

- 7.1. Croydon Council no longer operates as an Adoption Agency. Adopt London South (ALS) is our Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) and was established in July 2019. ALS is one of the four RAAs that provides adoption services across 23 London Boroughs.
- 7.2. ALS is the largest partnership involving 9 Local Authority services: **Croydon**, Kingston and Richmond operating as AFC, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Sutton, Merton and Wandsworth. ALS recruits and assesses new adoptive families and finds families for children in partnership with the LA's.
- 7.3. ALS also provides post adoption support to families, children and adopted adults. Services are also available for birth parents and a letterbox system enables indirect contact between birth families and children.
- 7.4. During 2020-2021, 14 Croydon children were adopted. Throughout the year there were an average of 10 children waiting to be matched with a prospective adoptive family at any point. Average time between entering care and moving in with an adoptive family, for children who were adopted (491 days) has reduced from the previous year (536) and remains better than our SN's (549).



8. Voice of children and young people in our care

- 8.1. Croydon's Children in Care Council (E.M.P.I.R.E.) has an active membership and continued to meet virtually throughout the pandemic. With the lifting of lockdown more opportunities to meet face to face have taken place. The appointment of a Young Director and apprentices is assisting in ensure that children's views are heard and valued. The group has provided invaluable feedback throughout the year. A summary from E.M.P.I.R.E is provided below:

Over the last two years, E.M.P.I.R.E'S reputation within the local voluntary and statutory sector has grown considerably, most notably through our work with high-risk young people. Alongside this, we are seen by many as a beacon of good practice in terms of our youth work, systemic practice and finding creative solutions to some of the most complex issues facing young people today.

For some young people, simply taking part in activities when emotions and feelings are not declared off-limits is very important. We have a system which allows young people to find a level of involvement that suits them. This could mean attending weekly sessions, taking part in Corporate Parenting Panel or simply attending one activity.

Overview of activities:

- **Vision Board Session** - This was a powerful session as all the young people were able to make physical vision boards to map out their goals no matter how big or small. The young people then had the opportunity to work with staff 1-1 to map out the steps that need to be put in place and the support that is required to make all their goals achievable.
- **Goal Setting Workshop** - Linking into Vision Board session as a follow up.
- **Pan London Children in Care Council** - The E.M.P.I.R.E staff and young people regularly attend the Pan London Children In Care Council meeting along with all Children in Care Council's across London.
- **Online Mental Health Wellbeing Sessions**
- **Youth Hub (Weekly)** – These sessions take place every week at the Council owned Youth Centre – Samuel Coleridge Taylor Centre
- **Cookery** – We hosted 4 cookery session to support the young people build up their independent living skills
- **Accredited Money Management Course** – All children looked after and care leavers were given the opportunity to gain a level 1 qualification in Money Management
- **Pancake Day**
- **Easter Egg Hunt**
- **Go-Karting**
- **National Association of Virtual School Heads** - 3 E.M.P.I.R.E young people were selected to represent all children looked after and care leavers from the Croydon Borough. They had the opportunity to sit down at a round table with the virtual school head teachers and ask them questions on what they are doing to help improve and support young people in their schools. This was an amazing opportunity for the young people which helped them use their voice to implement change for all young people and generation coming up behind them. The young people had the privilege to openly challenge thoughts and behaviours of Virtual School Heads to give them an insight and some struggles of what various children looked after face during their time in education.
- <https://lbcccloudadcroydongov.sharepoint.com/:v:/s/srv-129/es/vs/EYaNf4Xd8oBAJWEM4X5Ib4BTAIX5PvQWPiXnjY5Utzkaw?e=wXDE83>



9. Independent visiting & Mentoring & Advocacy

- 9.1. The Independent visiting service has continued to provide an independent contact for children. During 2021-2022 there was an average of 73 children and young people matched with an Independent Visitor and the service has expanded to support 21 care experienced young people as well.
- 9.2. The three Independent Visitor co-ordinators are managed by the IRO Service Manager, building on the external scrutiny and support that the roles provide.
- 9.3. Many of our children looked after and care leavers, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children access services from Bernardo's and other community Advocacy Services, which increases their social network and provides safety and support
- 9.4. Our Children access mentoring, independent visitors or community services from:
 - Independent Visitor Service
 - Learning Mentor Volunteer Scheme
 - Young Roots- Department for Education grant funded mentoring Scheme
 - Croydon Council UASC mentoring scheme (run by YP from migrant background)
 - Community Services: Red Cross, Refugee Council etc.



10. Key Achievements & Conclusion

- 10.1. 2021/22 was marked by the continuing impact of Covid and a need to adjust again to more freedoms and returning to a 'new normal'. Many of our children and young people have coped amazingly well, however for some the continued uncertainty has impacted significantly. The improved partnership working through the Health Operational Group and the in-house clinical service has helped identify and implement support quickly. We still have work to do in identifying carers that can manage the needs of children and young people coming out of hospital.
- 10.2. We have maintained statutory visiting frequencies and view this as central to providing meaningful support for children and young people. The restructure of the service is now in place and providing focussed support for younger children (under 16) and for those aged 16-25.
- 10.3. The introduction of the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children has assisted in ensuring that Croydon does not continue to look after a disproportionate number of children. Overall numbers of Looked After Children (under 18) have decreased because of this, enabling more manageable caseloads, and ensuring that children make connections in the area they are going to live as soon as possible.
- 10.4. We have continued to provide a significant number of foster homes locally for our children, ensuring that they remain connected to Croydon and their community.

- 10.5. Once again, the real praise needs to go to all our children Looked After and Care Experienced Young People who have engaged with their education and further training whilst managing the uncertainty of Covid.
- 10.6. Our continued aim for 2022/23 is to ensure that we increase our local provision so that all our children looked after and care experienced young people remain Happy, Healthy and Here.

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|----------------------|---|
| REPORT TO: | COUNCIL 19 OCTOBER 2022 |
| SUBJECT: | QUARTERLY REPORT ON THE USE OF SPECIAL URGENCY FOR KEY DECISIONS JULY TO OCTOBER 2021/22 |
| LEAD OFFICER: | Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer |
| WARDS: | ALL |

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1. To note the use of Special Urgency for the key decision listed at section 3.4 of this report during the quarter July to October 2021/22.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1. In accordance with the Access to Information Procedure Rules (Part 4B of the Constitution), the Executive Mayor is required to submit a report to Council on the use of Special Urgency for key decisions.
- 2.2. This report details the single case where Special Urgency has been used between July and October 2022.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The proposed making of a key decision requires the giving of 28 days' prior public notice. Where the giving of such notice is impracticable the Constitution provides both General Exception and Special Urgency provisions. The General Exception provisions require, amongst other things, a period of five clear working days' notice to be given. Where compliance with the General Exception principle is impractical the decision can be taken under the Special Urgency provisions. In cases of Special Urgency the decision may only be made where the decision maker has obtained agreement that the making of the decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred from:
 - a. The Chair of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee; or
 - b. If there is not such person, or if the Chair of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee is unable to act, the Chair of the Council; or

- c. Where there is no Chair of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee or Chair of the Council, the Deputy Chair of the Council.
- 3.2. There has been one case of the use of Special Urgency procedures during this period which the Chair of Scrutiny & Overview Committee approved after consideration.
- 3.3. Following the approval of the Chair of Scrutiny & Overview Committee two notices were published and circulated to all Members of the Council:
- A notice that a decision would be made under Special Urgency which included the reason for urgency; and
 - A further notice stating the decision had been made and included the report upon which the decision was based.
- 3.4. During this period the provision of Special Urgency has been used for the following:

| Decision Title | Decision number | Decision maker | Reason for Special Urgency | Date SU notice published | Date decision notice published |
|--|-----------------|--|---|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Issue details - UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Investment Plan Proposal Croydon Council | 6322EM | Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration | This decision was taken under special urgency because of the short time scale that was given by the Greater London Authority for the submission of Croydon's Investment Plan for "Community & Place" and "Supporting Local Business" which must be submitted by 7 October 2022. | 6 October 2022 | 6 October 2022 |

- 3.5. The Special Urgency procedure was used to reduce costs or the loss of savings to the council.
- 3.6. More detail on each decision is available by clicking on the links in the table above or by visiting the website at: [Decision - UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Investment Plan Proposal | Croydon Council](#)
- 3.7. Members will note that Council agreed at its meeting on 23 March 2022 to amend the Access to Information Procedure Rules set out in Part 4B of the Constitution. One of the agreed amendments, set out in rule 34.1 of Part 4B was to increase the frequency of any future reports to Council by the Executive

Mayor on the use of Special Urgency from annually to quarterly. Reports are now presented to full Council on a quarterly basis by the Executive Mayor containing details of each executive decision taken during the period since the last report was submitted to Council where the making of the decision was agreed as urgent in accordance with Special Urgency requirements set out in rule 32.

4. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial consequences of this report. Each decision taken under the special urgency framework was supported by a report that set out the financial implications of that decision and was subject to financial review as part of the decision making process.

Approved by: Lesley Shields Head of Finance – Assistant Chief Executive and Resources

5. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The Head of Litigation and Corporate Law comments on behalf of the Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer that the statutory definition of a 'key decision' is set out in regulation 8 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 as a decision which is likely:
- a) to result in the local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
 - b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the local authority.
- 5.2 Guidance issued under the Local Government Act 2000 section 38 provides that the council shall agree as a full council limits above which items are 'significant' and publish those limits which the council has done via its Constitution.
- 5.3 The Constitution defines a "key decision" as defined in Article 13.2(d) namely an executive decision, which is likely to—
- a) result in the Council incurring expenditure, or making savings, of more than £1,000,000 or such smaller sum which the decision-taker considers is significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
 - b) be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more Wards in the Borough.

- 5.4 The Access to Information Procedure Rules in Part 4B of the Constitution paragraphs 31 and 32 set out specific requirements including publicity in relation to the taking of ‘key decisions’ and in particular exceptions to the usual publicity requirements on the grounds of General Exception and cases of Special Urgency. Paragraph 34 makes specific provision for a quarterly report on the use of the Special Urgency provisions by the Executive Mayor to be made to full council.

Approved by: Sandra Herbert Head of Litigation and Corporate Law for and on behalf of the Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer.

6. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 6.1 There are no direct workforce implications arising from this report. Should any workforce implications arise, these will be dealt with in accordance with the Council’s HR policies and procedures.

Approved by: Gillian Bevan, Head of HR, Resources and Assistant Chief Executives on behalf of the Chief People Officer.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 7.1 There are no direct equalities implications from this report. Each decision taken under special urgency provision was supported by a report that set out the equalities impact of that decision and was subject to an equality analysis as part of the decision-making process. This is in line with the Equality Strategy 2020-2024 which states that all key decisions should be supported by an equality impact assessment and that equality impact assessments must be data driven.

Approved by: Denise McCausland – Equalities Programme Manager

CONTACT OFFICER: Marianna Ritchie
Senior Democratic Services and Governance Officer
– Council and Regulations

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None