

Cabinet

Meeting of held on Wednesday, 16 October 2024 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Mayor Jason Perry (Chair);

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

Also Present: Councillor Nina Degrad, Amy Foster, Leila Ben-Hassell, Stuart King, Chrishni Reshekaron, Robert Ward and Callton Young

Apologies: Councillor Ola Kolade

PART A

204/24 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Councillor Ola Kolade.

Deputy Cabinet Member for Contract Management, Councillor Robert Ward was present as a non voting representative.

205/24 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

206/24 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 25th September 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

207/24 **Urgent Business (If any)**

Recommendations Arising and Responses arising from Scrutiny was taken as an Item of Urgent Business by the Executive Mayor. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee had met on Monday 14 October to discuss Period 4 Financial Monitoring Report and the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Following the meeting a stage one report from Scrutiny and Overview Committee was published on the day of the Cabinet meeting.

Chair of Scrutiny and Overview Committee, Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel advised the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on 17 September had discussed the financial monitoring reports for Periods 2 & 3. The Committee thanked the Cabinet Member for Finance for the information provided on the evolving situation following the Period 2 financial monitoring report.

Scrutiny and Overview Committee had considered the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Period 4 financial monitoring report at its meeting on 14 October 2024. Details of the ongoing recovery plans work had not been provided however the Committee was reassured by the actions in progress, including the reintroduction of spending panels and had asked to be briefed on the recovery plans once further developed.

It welcomed the £3 million improvement in Period 4, but noted £2 million of the savings were from the release of £2 million unallocated transformation funding and hoped the recovery plans would lead to greater in-year savings across directorates.

It was noted that London Councils had reported a projected £600 million overspend across local authorities in the Capital. The main areas of overspend were Homelessness, Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care, Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Transport.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee had agreed to engage with other Local Authority Scrutiny Chairs across London to explore best practice and shared solutions.

On SEND Transport, the Committee welcomed the Executive's commitment to the exploration of the budget sitting within the Children and Young People's directorate and requested the outcome to be reported back to the Committee as part of the budget setting process.

In regard to the Medium Term Financial Strategy the Committee noted the council's ongoing fragile financial position in the context of the pan London issues and on top of the council's existing debt burden. The Committee had felt the projected savings were currently low, but had been reassured by the Cabinet Member for Finance that more work was to be done and the savings would be more reflective of the requirements.

The Committee commended the transformation work of the Adult Social Care service. Croydon was better placed to manage the demand in comparison to other London local authorities.

The uncertainty of the government's autumn statement and announcement of the local government settlement was noted. It had been recommended that a member's briefing on the financial challenges was arranged in a timely manner. It was also recommended that residents be regularly updated via the email newsletter.

The Committee welcome the implementation of the recommendation following last year's budget, that the LGA would independently review the budget before its publication.

Cabinet Member for Finance Councillor Jason Cummings noted the productivity of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting and advised it was expected that the recommendations could be accepted.

208/24

London Borough of Culture Impact Report

The Executive Mayor set out the success of Croydon's London Borough of Culture programme 'This is Croydon' during 2023/24, noting it had been an opportunity to celebrate Croydon's rich culture and creativity and to attract inward investment to the borough. The initial investment of £1.5 million from the Greater London Authority had seen additional investment of £3.6 million pounds brought into the Borough. The programme had been delivered within budget and had engaged with 2750 artists, 83% of whom were based in Croydon and attracted audiences of over 65,000 people across the events. It had also provided 16,275 opportunities for young people and involved 92% of Croydon schools.

Cabinet Member for Culture and Community Safety, Councillor Andy Strannack noted the ongoing legacy of the programme. Since March 2024, 26 local creative organisations had benefited from 'Croydon Loves You' grants and 40 events had taken place as part of the Open House festival. The 'Come as you are' exhibition had taken over the hobby cave within the Grants complex and illustrated meanwhile use of retail space for creative use.

Creative events funding of over £2 million had been attracted from outside the borough. The Harvest Festival celebrations held the previous weekend had attracted 5,000 people into the borough and indicated the ability of such events to provide increased footfall and retail spend.

Thanks were extended to the team and community sector organisations for their excellent and continuing work.

Chief Executive of Talawa Theatre Company and Vice-Chair of the programme steering group, Carolyn Forsyth advised the programme was an example of the impact of partnership working between local government and its ability to bring about lasting change. The challenges of limited funding for the arts, timing, planning and marketing were noted. A standout success had been the celebration of Croydon's diverse communities, particularly the delivery of meaningful cultural experiences delivered to people where they lived, ensuring no one was left behind. The legacy of the programme was Culture Croydon and the learning which could be taken forward and in plans to join the redevelopment of the town centre with Culture Croydon, ensuring funding opportunities and best use of space for communities and artists were realised.

Zawdie Campell a programme participant, advised of the impact 'This is Croydon' had on their creative career trajectory. It had provided opportunities to undertake creative work in their home borough. Thanks were given to Fashion Makes Music where they had been a project assistant for a fashion show. The programme had also fostered a greater sense of pride in the borough by themselves and their creative peers.

Councillor Nina Degradis thanked officers and partners for their work to make the London Borough of Culture programme a success and recognised the hard work and legacy it had created for arts in Croydon.

Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings thanked Zawdie Campell for sharing their story and the real impact of the programme.

The Executive Mayor thanked Dan Winder, Carolyn Forsyth, Caterina Loriggio and Stephanie Wilson and Croydon's funders, the Arts Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the success of the programme.

Cabinet **RESOLVED**;

2.1 To endorse the findings of the 'This is Croydon London Borough of Culture 2023 Impact Report' as attached as Appendix 1, and note the success of the program and the rich diversity of events offered throughout the borough.

2.2 To endorse the lessons learnt and next steps elements of the Impact report.

2.3 To support the ongoing work with Culture Croydon and the culture sector to build on the success of the new partnership approach.

209/24

Executive Mayor's Business Plan 2022-2026 Performance Report

The Executive Mayor introduced the Executive Mayor's Business Plan Performance Report for 2022-2026 which provided updates on key areas of work across the council.

Whilst there had been progress in areas such as regeneration, housing and the library service review, like many councils Croydon faced significant financial pressures. STAR Chambers had been held with all departments to identify savings and income opportunities. Recovery plans for homelessness, children's placements and SEND transport were in progress to address the projected overspend.

Monthly meetings between the Executive Mayor and Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield (URW) were ongoing. It was announced that permission had been granted for five retail and two food outlets to open on the North End frontage of the Alders building.

Deputy Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes, Councillor Lynne Hale advised housing continued to face significant challenges. Thanks were extended to staff for their efforts to realise the required improvements.

The cost of temporary accommodation was a pressure on the council's general fund and an issue across London Boroughs. The statutory homelessness figures for 2023/24 indicated unprecedented levels of residents seeking homelessness support from their local authority. Households with children in temporary accommodation increased by around 15% and in London households in temporary accommodation were most likely to be in nightly paid, self-contained accommodation or private sector accommodation.

In Croydon, the increased homelessness activity experienced through 2023/24 was continuing with an average of 400 new households requiring homes to support per month since the start of the financial year. Prevention work and controls put in place resulted had resulted in an average of 100 cases per month places into temporary accommodation, 25% of households seeking help. In addition to demand the average cost per night had risen from £56 per night to £64.19 per night. Demand was primarily being met through the nightly paid portfolio, which now represented 50% of the temporary accommodation stock.

Good progress was being made to reduce split households and any decision to place families in separate units was always carefully considered.

Croydon was not currently block booking hotels but the situation remained volatile.

The improvement plan put in place to address the challenges of the scale of outstanding repairs and a lack of investment in council homes was now starting to show some positive results. The contact centre had reduced repeat contacts and call wait times. Work was ongoing to improve repairs contractor performance and significant work had been undertaken to clear the backlog of overdue complaints and member enquiries.

Homelessness prevention figures continued to improve, since implementation of the new ways of working. However, increases in demand and the cost of nightly accommodation continued to impact another KPI's in this area. Housing supply was a constant focus to alleviate pressures.

Following discussion with the Housing Improvement Board and supported by the Executive Mayor and the Improvement Insurance Panel, the Housing Directorate had reviewed some of its performance measures and targets for 2024/25 providing more realistic targets based on sound data. The changes were detailed within Appendix C of the report and would better reflect targets and allow for benchmarking.

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Gatland thanked staff from across the service areas. They highlighted improvements to KPI M57 which whilst below target at 8.4% was the highest in 2 years and important not only for babies and families but also to flag any safeguarding concerns. KPI M58 had suffered due to the priority on newborns, an action plan was in place to work with and monitor the provider. KPI M20 regarding NEET 16 and 17 year olds had been steady and focussed work had been undertaken to ensure this continued. KPI M36 regarding children on a protection plan for 1 year on more, was a challenging area which was improving through focus across the department, by Heads of Service and Team managers.

Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, Councillor Hopley provided an update on the KPI's, more of which were now green. The rigor applied by the directorate to improve across the services was noted. The approach to promote take up of direct payments was expected in January and the contract to provide support for people with learning disabilities noted. Transformation work with Newtons was expected to have a positive impact across performance indicators. The challenges under the requirements to maintain a stringent budget were noted.

Deputy Cabinet Member for Contract Management, Councillor Robert Ward noted the Home Secretary's announcement of a plan to target violence against women and girls using a national strategy using advanced data analysis and algorithms and hoped Croydon would make an enthusiastic contribution.

Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration, Councillor Jeet Bains advised work to reduce the number of terminated planning applications and improve the speed of decision making continued and currently exceeded government targets for both major and minor applications. Numbers of on hand applications had been stabilised to around 650 and the enforcement case load continued to reduce. Regarding Town Centre Regeneration, ILTA remedy payments were approved by Cabinet in September 2024 and the Allders meanwhile use had secured planning permission and works had started on site.

Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment Councillor Scott Roche highlighted KPI M43 which indicated the continued delivery of an efficient fly tipping service across the borough. In July 2024, 98% of requests had been cleared within the required time frame. KPI M44 regarding the percentage of waste rejected as contaminated was marked as red however the situation was improving with a focus on the rounds with higher contamination levels which had been identified as those from communal collections on housing estates, often with shared waste containers. Work was ongoing with housing estate managing agents and ReLondon to manage this.

On KPI M46 regarding streets below grade and rectified within 24 hours, 419 service requests were received this month, Veolia responded to 100% of the requests with 97.94% addressed within the required time frame.

On KPI M47 regarding the percentage of household waste collected on time, the council received 2,123 reports of missed collections, which was less than 1% of the total collections undertaken. This placed Croydon's waste collection service in the top quartile within London.

Thanks were extended to the dedicated and hard-working staff across the council and at Veolia, as work continued to make improvements and progress the aim of repairing the broken windows effect in Croydon.

Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings noted the in-year £3.3 million improvement at Period 4 from Period 3 and advised the council tax in-year collection rate was getting closer to target figure and the non-domestic collection rate continued to exceed the target figure.

Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Stuart King was encouraged by the detailed housing update provided by Councillor Hale including the improvements in reducing the number of split households. It was noted that the amended homelessness and rough sleeping strategy had agreed for a KPI to monitor this area.

Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Stuart King highlighted there were 23 of 26 KPI's listed as partnership indicators without a specific target this potentially reduced accountability and suggested targets should be agreed with providers. Partnership data was in some cases out of date 1-2 years old.

The Executive Mayor advised the intention was to include a KPI on split households to monitor the rolling data. The importance of partnership working was noted and the approach would be to work with partners to consider setting targets.

Interim Deputy Chief Executive, Marie Snelling advised a number of indicators were based upon published data sets which in some cases were out of date however the council was required to use these in many cases.

Councillor Hale thanked Councillor King for their comments and noted the team's hard work to keep larger families together.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** to;

2.1 Note the Mayor's Business Plan performance report (attached as Appendix A and B) with latest data available on 30 June 2024 (unless otherwise stated) regarding overall Council and partnership performance, and actions being taken to improve outputs.

2.2 To consider and approve the amended Housing Measures as detailed in attached Appendix C. Page 56

2.3 Note the enhanced escalation process, and latest position, for areas where performance requires improvement, as detailed in section 6 of this report.

210/24

Period 4 Financial Performance Report

The Executive Mayor introduced the report which outlined the council's financial position as of July 2024. The council was forecasting at year end, a General Fund overspend of £20.6 million, down from £23.9 million last month. This reflected ongoing pressures which many other Councils were facing, particularly in areas such as children's social care, homelessness, and SEND transport. The administration was focused on managing finances responsibly and whilst the projected overspend was a concern, several recovery strategies had been implemented. These included rigorous controls on spending, a review of high-cost areas such as children's placements and further efficiency measures across all service areas. There were early signs of progress in these efforts and there was confidence that the budget would be brought back in line.

Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings noted the £3 million improvement since Period 3, split between £1.3 million of directorate performance improvements and a £2 million corporate adjustment on transformation spend. All previously planned transformation activity was still going ahead. Last year council's forecasting had typically seen a worsening position as the year went on and therefore it was encouraging to see the improvement to the position in Period 4.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Councillor Callton Young noted the report warned readers not to underestimate the challenge to service directorates to reduce their expenditure. With overspend being largely due to price pressures on children's placements and market pressures on temporary accommodation where demand was set to exceed supply, they asked how confident the Mayor was of the recovery plan and asked if there was a 'Plan B' to balance the budget should the recovery plan fall short.

The Executive Mayor responded that there were a number of areas causing financial pressure for local authorities across London boroughs. There was confidence that the measures would deliver results but there was always a 'Plan B' and contingences. The council was monitoring and challenging everything.

Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings reiterated confidence in the recovery plans and advised the council was acting as a whole to rectify the position. There remained several variables and more

would be known following the government's budget statements such as the impact of any increase to employer NI contributions.

Section 151 Officer and Corporate Director of Resources Jane West emphasised this was seen as a corporate issue and no stone was being left unturned across the council.

The Executive Mayor advised whilst the financial pressures were significant, the necessary steps to mitigate the challenges and continue the journey toward financial recovery were being taken. A commitment to responsible financial management remained and decisive action was being taken to ensure a sustainable future for the Council and its residents.

Cabinet **RESOLVED**;

2.1 To note the General Fund revenue budget outturn is forecast to overspend at financial year end by £20.6m at Period 4, after the budgeted utilisation of £38m capitalisation directions requested from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), utilisation of the £5.0m risk contingency budget and utilisation of £13.0m corporate earmarked reserves.

2.2 To note that all service directorates have been asked to reduce their net expenditure so that the annual budget can be balanced at the end of the year. It should not be underestimated what a challenge this will be against the background of increased demand pressures which are continuing to build across local government and increased market prices. Forecast overspend pressures are also demonstrated in the Month 2 and Quarter 1 reports published by other London councils. However, the Council will still strive to bring its 2024-25 budget into balance including through the in-year Financial Recovery Plan as set out from para 4.8.

2.3 To approve the budget movement between directorates to match the movement of the Bereavement and Registrars service from Assistant Chief Executive (ACE) Directorate to Sustainable Communities, Regeneration & Economic Development (SCRER) Directorate (£1.081m).

2.4 To approve the budget movement from Resources Directorate to Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) Directorate to set up the premises cost recharge budget for the Community Equipment Service (£0.502m) as set out in para 4.11.

2.5 To note the progress in Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings achievement of £20.8m (75.1%) against the total savings target of £27.7m as set out in paragraph 4.125.

2.6 To note the work that is continuing on the Council's Transformation Programme as set out from paragraph 4.123.

2.7 To note the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revenue budget outturn is forecast to overspend by £2.0m.

2.8 To note the General Fund capital programme 2024-25 forecast underspend of £7.6m against the revised capital budget of £118.5m.

2.9 To note the HRA capital programme 2024-25 forecast underspend of £8.1m against the revised capital budget of £57.2m.

2.10 To note the Council's historic borrowing and subsequent debt burden continues to be critical to the non-sustainability of the Council's revenue budget as set out from para 4.144. Dialogue with MHCLG continues around options of further financial support from Government in regard to the level of structural indebtedness to ensure the Council can deliver sustainable Local Government services.

2.11 To note that the Council continues to operate Spend Control Panels, and tightened the criteria from July 2024, to ensure that stringent financial control and assurance oversight are maintained.

2.12 To note that current forecasts are based on the best available information at the time and will be subject to review and change during the financial year.

211/24

2025-29 Medium Term Financial Strategy Update

The Executive Mayor introduced the report advising of the administration's commitment to transparency and financial discipline. Whilst progress had been made, the demand-led pressures coupled with the council's £1.6 billion debt burden remained a significant challenge. Servicing the debt would cost £69 million next year, representing 16% of the council's core spending power, double that of the average local authority.

The council remained in dialogue with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) pressing for structural financial support and a Financial Sustainability Plan outlining options had been submitted.

The recently launched in-year Financial Recovery Plan to address the current budget overspend was noted.

The council was continuing strict financial discipline and sound governance which had ensured it was one of three London councils which delivered a balanced budget in the last financial year.

The council's Transformation plan and work with strategic partners Boston Consulting Group, Impower and Newtons aimed to save just under £100m in four years by becoming the most cost-efficient and effective council in London.

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) update outlined the financial outlook for the next three years and marked the beginning of the budget process for next April.

Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings noted the pan London pressures had been built into the MTFS. Several presumptions were built in and therefore a level of variation was anticipated. The best and worst case scenario planning was detailed at Appendix F of the report and provided an indication of the potential impact of these variables. Newham's £175 million MTFS budget pressure forecast illustrated Croydon's position was not exceptional. Updates would be provided as new information became available.

Section 151 Officer and Corporate Director of Resources Jane West noted the uncertainty in Local government finance both due to the pressures discussed and the unknowns in regard to funding from government. Working with these assumptions had made the position very challenging and variation to the figures was expected.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Councillor Callton Young asked for officers to clarify if extraordinary government support in the form of capitalisation direction would increase cumulatively over the course of the MTFS, how this would be managed and if the council's current debt would increase.

Section 151 and Corporate Director of Resources, Jane West advised the report demonstrated scenarios where better case assumptions could come through. If the middle case with additional capitalisation direction was taken, this would put pressure on the council's overall level of borrowing. The capital programme position would be reported to Cabinet in December 2024.

In response to questions, the Executive Mayor advised they had written to the Secretary of State and the council was awaiting a visit to Croydon by the minister. Officers were in regular contact with MHCLG regarding the council's financial position.

Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Stuart King noted the inclusion of the assumption of a 4.99% Council Tax increase and asked if the threshold were higher, would this rise be sought.

The Executive Mayor advised the pledge remained that the administration would not go through the cap again and if the threshold rose above 4.99% this would be reviewed at the time.

Cabinet **RESOLVED**;

1. To note the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and related assumptions set out in this report.

2. To note the positive dialogue to date with MHCLG to develop a further package of support in order to set a sustainable and balanced budget for the future years 2025-26 to 2028-29.
3. To note the changes the Council needs to consider resulting from the work to develop a new target operating model, set out in paragraph 4.58 of this report.
4. To approve a period of public engagement, as set out from paragraph 4.66, on the proposals for returning the Council to financial and operational sustainability including the savings and growth proposals set out in Appendices B and B1.
5. To note the outcome of the public engagement will be reported back to Cabinet as part of the budget and council tax setting decision making.
6. To consider the outcome of the review of the Council Tax Support scheme as set out from paragraph 4.40 of this report.
7. To approve the recommendation to Full Council that the Council Tax Support scheme is not changed from that agreed by Full Council resolution on 6 March 2024.
8. To note the budget timetable set out in Appendix E.

212/24 Report

Croydon Companies Supervision and Monitoring Panel - Update

The Executive Mayor introduced the report, advising the panel, established in response to the Report in the Public Interest 2020, played a crucial role in ensuring that the Council's strategic objectives were met and oversight of the Council's interests in its group of companies was maintained.

The report highlighted the Council's approach to managing key companies, excluding Brick by Brick, which remained subject to a separate process.

The report also outlined key actions being taken to improve debt collection at Croydon Affordable Homes and the steps toward improving governance and transparency in several other Council-related entities.

Cabinet Member for Finance, Jason Cummings noted the progress made across the issues regarding the council's companies and advised this was illustrated by the recommendation for the update report to now come to Cabinet annually.

Section 151 Officer and Corporate Director of Resources Jane West highlighted the importance of the programme of non-executive director

recruitment and training to ensure the council had a cohort of trained people to go into board directorships if necessary.

Regarding Croydon Affordable Homes (CAH) Deputy Leader of the Opposition Councillor Callton Young asked what amount of increased income was anticipated from the action plan and if there had been any debt write off to date, resulting in losses to the council.

Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings advised there had been no debt write off impacting the council. A specific figure regarding the income from CAH could not yet be given. The risk management and work to correct accounting for CAH had been significant. It was advised the council was on the cusp of formal sign off of the 2019/20 accounts and the backstop process required completion.

Ian Geary, Head of Finance, confirmed there had been no debt write off. The CAH Board received updates on savings and projected savings data would be requested. The council still received income from the overall agreement, so it was in its interest for the homes model to work.

Cabinet **RESOLVED**;

2.1 To approve the nominated Council contact named in paragraph 4.6 for the Wetheren Tree Garden and Woodcote Village Green charities

2.2 To note the status of Croydon Council companies as set out in Appendix 1.

2.3 To note the actions proposed by Croydon Affordable Housing to improve debt collection.

2.4 To note the forthcoming shareholding changes to Croydon Central Management Company Ltd.

2.5 To note the status of Croydon Enterprise Loan Fund (CELF) and Non-Executive Director recruitment.

2.6 To approve that update reporting to Cabinet from the Croydon Companies Supervision and Monitoring Panel (CCSMP) changes from twice per year to annually.

213/24

Review of the Housing Allocation Scheme

The Executive Mayor introduced the report advising the revised scheme proposed several changes to the 2019 version to ensure that Council housing was fairly allocated to those in greatest need. The revised version included significant updates such as extending the residency criteria and offering high priority for care experienced young adults. It also proposed the introduction of annual lettings plan to better respond to local housing pressures. It was advised that the scheme would now be reviewed

annually to ensure it aligned with developing trends and more effectively addressed housing needs.

Deputy Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes Councillor Lynne Hale advised of the council's requirement under the Housing Act 1996 to have a housing allocation scheme or policy which set out how relative priority would be determined between applicants and the process to be followed in the allocation of social housing.

The purpose of the allocation scheme policy was to ensure that those who were both applying and qualified for rehousing were treated fairly and equitably when decisions were made. It also set out how a priority was awarded for different types of housing need.

Croydon's council housing register currently had over 8000 applicants with an average of 800 council and housing association properties becoming available each year.

The recommendations in the report aimed to make the Council's housing register more accurately reflective the level of housing need in the borough, ensuring that those with the greatest need continue to be prioritised.

The amended version of the allocation scheme was also shorter and aimed to be more accessible for residents.

Key changes were set out in full in Section 5. of the report and the draft scheme was available in the appendices. The key changes set out included:

- Six years residency requirements, with those in reasonable preference groups excluded to ensure that those in severe need were not negatively impacted
- Young adults supported by children's services to be awarded Priority Band 2 as a minimum.
- Those in employment or training, or where the joint Housing and Children's Services panel considered the application should be prioritised to be awarded Priority Band 1.
- Higher rehousing priority for care experienced young adults.
- Change in age criteria for sheltered housing.
- Changes to reciprocal arrangements.
- Inclusion of a statement to make clear that those who are guilty of domestic abuse or coercive control would be treated as not meeting the qualifying criteria.
- Introduction of an annual lettings plan.
- Clarity around changes in applicant circumstances.
- A change to a more realistic application response time.
- The reinstatement of the annual review of the Housing Register.

It was advised that a 12-week consultation would be undertaken on the amended scheme and the scope of the consultation was set out in Section 7. of the report.

Corporate Director of Housing, Susmita Sen advised the consultation would be full and thorough including Croydon's communities, voluntary sector, private sector landlords, housing associations, public health and client group.

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Maria Gatland welcomed the review noting the commitment it showed to Croydon care leavers and the council's responsibility as a corporate parent.

Shadow Cabinet Member for Homes, Councillor Chrishni Reshekaron supported the update of the housing allocation scheme to ensure that all council housing was prioritised fairly and on the basis of greatest need. They raised concerns regarding the change in residency requirement from three years to six years and asked what proportion of new entrants to the housing register currently met the six year residency requirement.

Shadow Cabinet Member for Homes, Councillor Chrishni Reshekaron also queried the impact of the band change for care experience young adults on waiting times, noting this would provide for a yearly increase of approximately 454 care experienced young adults moving from band 3 to band 2.

Regarding the change to a six year residency requirement the Executive Mayor explained a key issue was other boroughs placing their residents into temporary accommodation in Croydon as set out in Table 5 within the report. Lambeth and Lewisham were the largest placers into Croydon and currently after 3 years these residents became responsibility of Croydon as the host borough. The change was expected to have a dramatic impact on the availability of housing for Croydon residents.

Regarding the band change for care experienced young people, the council recognised its responsibility as corporate parents and whilst there would be a knock on effect, this change showed appropriate care and respect for care leavers.

Deputy Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes Councillor Lynne Hale advised the change to a six year residency requirement was a significant change for Croydon and a review was planned after two years.

Director of Housing, Homelessness Prevention & Accommodation, Beatrice Cingtho-Taylor advised one of the mitigations within the proposal was that the six year requirement would not be implemented retrospectively. Regarding care experienced young people, there were joint Housing and Children's Social care panels which reviewed care

leavers housing needs and there were other options such as supported housing available.

In response to questions the Executive Mayor advised Croydon had challenged the placement of families into Croydon from other boroughs through London Councils. Croydon was a net receiver of placements and there was an ongoing conversation around the agreements which were meant to be in place across London.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** to;

2.1 Approve the proposed changes to the Housing Allocation Scheme 2025 set out in Section 5 and attached in Appendix 1 and authorise Officers to carry out a formal consultation with residents and key partners on the proposed changes.

2.2 Authorise the Corporate Director of Housing to consider the responses and outcome of the consultation on the proposed changes.

2.3 Agree that if there are no significant objections to the proposals following the consultation, authorise the Corporate Director of Housing to make a final decision on the proposals, make any minor amendments, and publish the revised Housing Allocation Scheme 2025.

2.4 Agree that if there are significant objections to the proposals following the consultation, a report on the responses and outcome of the consultation will be brought back to Cabinet for decision.

2.5 Note that feedback has been received from the Resident Scrutiny Panel on the proposed Housing Allocations Scheme which will be considered as part of the consultation process.

214/24 **Placement policy for temporary accommodation and Private Rented Sector Offers (PRSO)**

The Executive Mayor introduced the report advising of the council's statutory responsibility to secure safe and suitable accommodation for specific groups of homeless households. The challenges in securing affordable housing were noted. The proposed Placement Policy for Temporary Accommodation and Private Rented Sector Offers (PRSO) would outline the criteria for prioritising households for housing, both within Croydon and when necessary, in other areas both inside and outside of London. The policy would focus on supporting those most in need, whilst balancing the difficult realities of housing availability and affordability.

Deputy Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes, Councillor Lynne Hale advised of the spiralling costs of private rented accommodation and whilst not a statutory requirement, the good practice of adopting a policy for temporary accommodation and the PRSO. It

would provide transparency and context to the council's approach to accommodating homeless households, particularly regarding out of area placements.

The proposed policy would allow the council to find more homes which are affordable and sustainable and help to prevent repeat incidents of homelessness.

The policy proposed three key objectives:

- Provide wherever reasonably practical, suitable temporary and private rented accommodation within Croydon.
- Otherwise, to make out of area placements as close as possible to the vicinity or near neighbouring boroughs, and where this cannot be avoided;
- To place households in other London boroughs or outside London and to minimise where practical the time spent in accommodation deemed unsuitable, which includes families in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Corporate Director of Housing, Susmita Sen commented that the policy would provide officers with clear guidance and consistency and would also form part of service's recovery plan to manage resources more effectively.

Shadow Cabinet Member for Homes, Councillor Chrishni Reshekaron welcomed the policy but raised concerns regarding the three zones where households could be placed (Zone A - within Croydon, Zone B - within neighbouring boroughs with 90 minutes travel time, Zone C - other London boroughs and outside of London) which did not prioritise families with children attending schools in Croydon within Zone A. They asked if the impact of a 90-minute journey on young children travelling for their education had been considered and if a shorter period such as 45 or 60 minutes included in other London Borough's policies had been considered.

The Executive Mayor responded that the intention of the policy was to support families in Croydon and get them the right accommodation that they need.

Director of Housing, Homelessness Prevention & Accommodation, Beatrice Cingtho-Taylor advised the timings within the policy had been considered and benchmarked to understand what was reasonable. Many policies considered 90 minutes to be within a reasonable period, this was in line with DWP travelling time for employment and was the housing industry standard.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** to;

2.1 Approve the new draft Placement policy for temporary accommodation and Private Rented Sector Offers (PRSO) attached at Appendix A.

2.2 Agree delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Housing to make minor amendments (i.e., slight wording changes to make more accessible, formatting etc.) in consultation with the Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes.

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(PART A)

Accommodation and Support for Care Experienced Young People

The Executive Mayor introduced the report noting that Croydon was home to one of the largest populations of children and young people in all the London boroughs and the report marked an important step towards significantly improving the council's commitment to ensuring these young people have the best possible start in their transitions. Through partnership with the YMCA, the private sector and not-for-profit partners the solution would place young people at the heart of delivery. It would also improve the quality of both accommodation and services in line with the corporate parenting strategy and bring investment into the borough.

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Maria Gatland welcomed the report and commended the joint working between Housing and Children's social care. The positive impact of the proposals for young people was emphasised.

Deputy Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes, Councillor Lynne Hale welcomed the report. The project would deliver on property sale proceeds whilst retaining Council use of the asset and improving provision of accommodation services to care experienced young people as set out in the corporate parenting strategy. The project would also bring an investment into the borough.

A key challenge had been to identify a potential scheme that delivered social value for the council whilst ensuring finance viability for a developer. The YMCA London had agreed to work with the Council to develop the scheme and take on the management of the property and provision of the care and support services.

Thanks were extended to all involved in the cross-directorate project.

Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings commented the project was an example of an innovate approach to asset disposal which also improved outcomes for people in Croydon.

Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education, Debbie Jones echoed the positive comments and commended the cross-directorate

work undertaken on the programme. The positive impact for young people was noted and it was hoped this would be the first of many such initiatives.

Shadow Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education Councillor Amy Foster, welcomed the ambition in the project. It was noted that YMCA and YMCA London were used interchangeably in the report and clarification on the certainty of the project with the YMCA not just the building developer was sought.

The Executive Mayor advised there was certainty on the scheme with development work having been ongoing for some time.

Thanks were extended to officers for their cross departmental work to deliver a fundamental change.

Cabinet **RESOLVED**;

2.1 To approve that the Council disposes of 90 Central Parade to MV Developments and any associated partners (“Investor”), which will be conditional upon receiving planning permission, and enter into Heads of Terms and subsequently a Conditional land sale agreement (or similar) for the value set out in the confidential Part B report; and an Agreement for Headlease with the Investor or an associated entity for the provision of an exempt supported accommodation scheme for care experienced young people.

2.2 To note that the disposal meets best consideration as detailed within the confidential Part B Appendix C.

2.3 To approve that the Council enters into Heads of Terms and subsequently into an agreement for underlease at 90 Central Parade with YMCA.

2.4 To delegate to Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Executive Mayor, Cabinet Member for Finance, Cabinet Member for Homes, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Corporate Director of Resources, Corporate Director of Housing and Director of Commercial Investment and Capital to finalise and enter into all relevant final agreements related to the Conditional sale purchase agreement, Headlease, Underlease and Nomination agreement, including Heads of Terms and Agreement for Leases, subject to final financial and legal due diligence; and to take all steps to implement those agreements.

2.5 To note that the proposal set out in this report can only progress once MV Developments receive necessary planning approval and reach practical completion in relation to the development. The full planning and development risk remains with the developer.

2.6 To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with Corporate Director of Resources, the Executive Mayor, Cabinet Member for Finance and Cabinet Member for Homes, to renegotiate terms of the Headlease or Underlease along with any documents preceding the main leases, should this be required prior to completion, but not to deviate by more than £1 million from reported benefits of this proposal as set out within this report.

2.7 To delegate to Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education in consultation with Cabinet Member for Housing and Corporate Director of Housing to finalise and enter into a Nominations Agreement.

2.8 To note, subject to Recommendation 2.3, 2.4 and 2.7, that the Council will hold 100% Nomination rights for all 34 residential units for the period of the lease.

2.9 To note risks identified as part of this project are detailed within section 10 of this report.

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Exclusion of the Press and Public

This was not required.

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(PART B)

Accommodation and Support for Care Experienced Young People

The meeting ended at 8.09 pm