

## Cabinet

Meeting of held on Wednesday, 20 November 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, Ola Kolade and Scott Roche
- Also Present:** Councillor Christopher Herman, Stuart King, Chrishni Reshekaron, Callton Young

### PART A

229/24 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Katherine Kerswell, Chief Executive; Nick Hibberd, Corporate Director of Sustainable Communities, Regeneration and Economic Recovery and; Debbie Jones, Corporate Director Children, Young People & Education.

230/24 **Minutes of the previous meetings**

The minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on:

16 October 2024 and 30 October 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

231/24 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

232/24 **Urgent Business (If any)**

The Executive Mayor advised the SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) in place for rough sleepers and coordinated by the GLA (Greater London Authority) had been activated on Tuesday 19 November 2024. The council would work closely with Croydon Reach, statutory services and local voluntary organisations to engage with rough sleepers and offer short term accommodation for their safety. 16 individuals had been offered support the previous day, 14 had accepted and 2 had refused and were receiving further support from partners. The pan-London SWEP provision was noted, however the Council had not made any referrals and was supporting individuals locally.

## Scrutiny Stage 2 Responses to Recommendations

Cabinet considered the report on Scrutiny Stage 2 Responses to Recommendations arising from: Children & Young People Sub-Committee on 16 July 2024 (Appendices 1 & 2) and the Streets & Environment Sub-Committee on 22 July 2024 (Appendices 3 & 4).

Chair of Scrutiny and Overview Committee, Councillor Leila Ben-Hassell welcomed the recommendations which had been accepted and noted that the Scrutiny Streets and Environment Sub-Committee had found the contractor not being named within the contract award report challenging.

An update and feedback from Scrutiny & Overview Committee held on 19 November 2024 was provided.

Regarding the Complaints report, Scrutiny and Overview Committee welcomed the simplification of the complaints process and the data provided within the report. It was noted Croydon was one of only a few local authorities publishing the report, which was a positive but presented challenges in access to benchmarking data. The increase in complaints particularly regarding housing was in line with the national trend and opportunity for improvement to the Council's services. The recommendations arising would be presented to the following Cabinet meeting.

Regarding the Equalities Strategy Annual Report, Scrutiny and Overview Committee had welcomed partners to discuss their involvement in the assessment process. The iterative nature of the work and therefore the need for clear priorities had been noted. Ensuring consultation reached 'harder to reach' groups was of high importance. The shift towards greater ownership at leadership level had been positive and the recommendations would include a mechanism of increased involvement by members.

The Council's ongoing challenging financial situation detailed within the Period 5 Financial Performance Report was noted. There had been an in-year improvement of £800k and Scrutiny and Overview Committee had received more detailed information on the recovery plans to identify savings, which illustrated a one Council approach. It had been noted that the Council did not yet have clarity on the implications of the Autumn Budget and market pressures on the Council's in-year position and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

The Executive Mayor and Cabinet, **RESOLVED** to;

1. Approve the responses and action plans attached to this report in Appendices 1, 2, 3 & 4;

2. Delegate authority to the officers identified in Appendices 1, 2, 3 & 4 to report back to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, or relevant Sub-Committee, within the periods specified in the agreed responses and action plans, and on progress made in implementing any action plan.

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### **Housing Supply and New Build Framework**

The Executive Mayor introduced the report noting the complex housing challenges faced in the borough requiring coordinated action. The framework would work alongside the Council's Housing Strategy, Asset Management Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy creating a unified approach to tackling these issues.

Cabinet Member for Homes, Councillor Lynne Hale noted the Council's Housing Strategy sought to increase the number of social rented and affordable homes in the borough whilst also increasing the quality of housing for tenant and leaseholders. Key to this approach was the delivery of new homes.

The purpose of the Housing Supply and New Build Framework was to set out methodology to evaluate, enable and deliver the strategic development of housing supply for Corydon in a transparent way. The two key themes within the Framework were: consultation with estates, residents and communities and transparent decision making in relation to the housing supply pipeline.

It was noted that each new scheme would be subject to Council decision making, procurement processes and resident consultation.

Corporate Director of Housing, Susmita Sen advised the framework provided the foundations for the Council to deliver safe, warm homes and the alignment of the strategies placed Croydon in a proactive position.

Shadow Cabinet Member for Homes, Councillor Reshekaron welcomed the report noting increasing numbers of affordable homes was a priority for residents and the Labour Group's motion regarding this had been successful at Council in April 2024. The regeneration of Regina Road was noted and it was queried what future schemes could be expected via the framework.

The Executive Mayor provided assurance that the Regina Road regeneration was a starting point of improvements.

Corporate Director for Housing, Susmita Sen advised the framework was underpinned by the Council's Asset Management Strategy and the Council was currently collating information regarding its housing stock condition. Once completed this data would inform investment needs and potential regeneration. It was the intention to look at the whole borough, with 60% of stock condition data currently received. The findings of this work would be reported in due course.

The Executive Mayor and Cabinet, **RESOLVED** to;

2.1 Agree the Housing Supply & New Build Framework (HSNBF) attached as Appendix A and which will be the basis for understanding and evaluating substantial investment in Croydon's Housing Estates.

2.2 Note, that each new scheme considered for development and investment will be subject to Council decision-making, procurement processes and resident consultation.

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### **Croydon Local Implementation Plan (LIP) Funding Three Year Delivery Plan (2025/26 to 2027/28)**

The Executive Mayor introduced the report advising the plan was presently a bid to Transport for London (TfL) with the outcome to be determined by March 2025.

The plan illustrated a commitment to making Croydon a borough where sustainable and reliable travel, safer streets and healthier lifestyles were the norm. This included the implementation of plans to support the regeneration of the town centre, support for businesses, reduced carbon emissions and improved transport options for residents.

The plan was aligned with the Mayor's Business Plan and the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy and would work together with other Council initiatives including the Reconnected Croydon Programme and the emerging Town Centre Regeneration Strategy.

Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment, Councillor Scott Roche advised the submission sought over £23million over 3 years. The program focussed on improving road safety, particularly near schools, improving cycling safety, further development of healthy neighbourhoods such as the Addiscombe East and West healthy neighbourhood and a commitment to town centre transport improvements complementing the levelling up funding for this purpose. Funding commitments from TfL remained uncertain going forward and the Council continued to discuss a longer term funding settlement for Croydon with the Department for Transport and TfL.

Thanks were extended to all those involved in the development of the programme, particularly to residents in Addiscombe East and West for their constructive partnership working.

Shadow Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment, Councillor Christopher Herman asked to what extent the plan was an up-to-date representation of residents wishes and why there had not been a consultation on LIP since 2018.

Director of Planning and Sustainable Regeneration, Heather Cheesbrough responded advising that consultation took place for all LIP schemes. Communities and businesses were engaged to ensure schemes delivered their aspirations and requirements whilst also aligning to TfL's strategic priorities and requirements.

The Executive Mayor and Cabinet, **RESOLVED;**

2.1 To agree the 2025/26 to 2027/28 (three years) Local Implementation Plan Delivery Plan including programmes and schemes and attached as Appendix B, to be submitted to Transport for London to grant Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funding for 2025/26.

2.2 To agree to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Sustainable Communities, Regeneration & Economic Recovery (in consultation with the Executive Mayor and the Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment), to finalise and approve the LIP three Year Delivery Plan for 2025/26 to 2027/28 for submission to TfL, making any necessary adjustments to the three year Delivery Plan following TfL's feedback and prior to final submission by the Council to TfL by 13th February 2025.

2.3 To agree to implement the LIP three year Delivery Plan subject to confirmation of TfL funding being granted.

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### **Future Croydon - The Transformation Plan 6-Month Progress Update**

The Executive Mayor introduced the report, advising of the Council's improvement journey to rectify its legacy financial and governance issues.

The Future Croydon Transformation plan had been launched in March 2024 and sought to achieve sustainable change, with the goal for the Council to become the most efficient and cost-effective council in London, whilst ensuring that residents received the services they needed. Over 850 residents and 600 staff had contributed to shaping the Council's transformation. Key priorities identified included improving customer experiences, enhancing housing support, and tackling inefficiencies in service delivery.

A new Target Operating Model was in development and initiatives including Access Croydon improvements and the Adults Living Independently programme had already had an impact.

Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings extended thanks to officers for their efforts and engagement in the improvement work. Transformation was required to meet the Council's financial challenges and the high level of staff engagement was illustrative of the cocreation and buy-in of officers to enable this transformation to take place.

Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Callton Young raised that in regard to financial sustainability, the Council's transformation was secondary to its debt write off negotiations. The report was welcomed and it was asked how the projects detailed within the report were being prioritised and whether there was a commitment to conduct the review of council contracts as a priority. Further detail was sought regarding the new parking policy which was anticipated to raise income of more than £951k.

Cabinet Member for Finance Councillor Jason Cummings responded stating the Council's transformation programme was ahead of any debt write off negotiations. The council could not control negotiations and Council's the focus was to achieve efficiency and service improvement through the Transformation Programme as its top priority.

The prioritisation, interdependencies, resourcing and external support required for the transformation programmes was under careful consideration and there would be a stepped approach to programme roll out.

It was confirmed that parking policy income detailed within the appendix was included in the Period 5 Financial monitoring report.

The Executive Mayor and Cabinet, **RESOLVED** to;

2.1 Note the progress made in the first six months of the "Future Croydon" Transformation Plan (2024-2029) at set out in Appendix 1.

2.2 Note progress made in the Council Improvement Plan (2022-2027) as set out in Appendix 2.

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## **2024/25 Period 5 Financial Performance Report**

The Executive Mayor introduced the report firstly noting the continuing financial challenges due to demand led pressures for local authorities across London and nationally. The council was awaiting details following the Government's budget announcements regarding the additional funding for local government, National Insurance increases and effects of cuts to the winter fuel allowance.

The administration remained committed to tackling the pressures at a local level and following implementation of recovery strategies and spend control measures there was a reduction in the Council's projected year end overspend.

Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings advised of the £800k improvement split between several departments, but also the increased HRA overspend in relation to repairs. The report included an

expanded section regarding the in-year recovery plan as previously requested by Scrutiny and Overview Committee.

Corporate Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, Jane West provided assurance that the Council's Corporate Management Team was focussed on the budget issues and a corporate cross council approach was being taken.

Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Callton Young noted the small reduction to the £20 million projected overspend for 2024/25 detailed within the report. The ongoing demand and challenges to make savings in Housing, Adult and Children's were a risk to achieving a balanced budget. Further information and clarification were sought on the 'Plan B' to achieve a balanced budget.

The Executive Mayor responded the approach to tackling the issues was through financial controls and a one council approach. Fixing the Council's finances was the key focus for members and staff. The additional funding announced by Government was not yet known and the Council had additional financial burdens.

Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings advised the Local Government Finance settlement was expected by 19 December 2024 and along with further detail on the output of the autumn statement, this would enable the Council to make a more accurate forecast of the year end position. The Council was committed to balancing the in-year overspend in departments. There were alternative means available, and these would be reviewed once the settlement and autumn statement details were known. A update on this was expected at Cabinet in January 2025.

The Executive Mayor and Cabinet, **RESOLVED;**

2.1 to note the General Fund revenue budget outturn is forecast to overspend at financial year end by £19.8m at Period 5, 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 through the in-year Financial Recovery Plan as set out from paragraph 4.8.

2.3 to note the progress in Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings achievement of £21.9m (79.1%) against the total savings target of £27.7m as set out in paragraph 4.133.

2.4 to note the work that is continuing on the Council's Transformation Programme as set out from paragraph 4.131.

2.5 to note the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revenue budget outturn is forecast to overspend by £8.0m.

2.6 to note the General Fund capital programme 2024-25 forecast underspend of £18.8m against the revised capital budget of £118.5m.

2.7 to note the HRA capital programme 2024-25 forecast underspend of £8.3m against the capital budget of £57.2m.

2.8 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 4.154. 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.

2.9 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.

2.10 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

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## **THE GAMBLING ACT 2005 - REVIEW OF LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES**

The Executive Mayor introduced the report and advised of the Council's responsibility to update its Gambling Policy to ensure it aligned with current national legislation, community expectations and the specific needs of Croydon's residents.

The proposed updates in the report included enhanced protections for vulnerable individuals, strategies to prevent crime associated with gambling and safeguards to ensure fair practice across all licensed premises.

Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment, Councillor Scott Roche advised it was a statutory requirement for the Council to review and publicly consult on its Gambling Policy every three years. Croydon's policy was last reviewed in 2021 and the Gambling Commission had made no substantial changes since this time.

Shadow Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment, Councillor Christopher Herman thanked the Licensing Committee and council officers for their efforts on this important work.



The Executive Mayor noted the report would be recommended to Council for adoption in December 2024.

The Executive Mayor and Cabinet, **RESOLVED** to;

2.1 Consider and respond to the comments received from Scrutiny and Overview on the 19th November relating to the draft Statement of Principles 2025-2028;

2.2 Endorse the recommendations from Licensing Committee that the draft Statement of Principles 2025-2028, under the Gambling Act 2005 as set out at Appendix 5, be presented to Full Council for adoption.

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**Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 7.20 pm