

Cabinet

Meeting of held on Wednesday, 30 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, Ola Kolade, Scott Roche and Andy Stranack

Also present: Councillor Ben-Hassel, Janet Campbell, Amy Foster, Stuart King, Enid Mollyneaux, Ria Patel and Callton Young

PART A

218/24 **Apologies for Absence**

There were none.

219/24 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

220/24 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

Minutes of the 16th October 2024 would be presented at Cabinet on the 20th November 2024 for approval.

221/24 **Urgent Business (If any)**

The Executive Mayor noted the Chancellor of Exchequer had announced the new Government's budget earlier in the day.

Whilst the £1 billion extension of the Household Support Fund, discretionary household payments and the £1.3 billion in grant funding for local authorities were welcomed. The budget posed challenges for local businesses in Croydon and the Executive Mayor urged the Government to recognise that economic growth depended on a thriving business community.

It was advised the council would continue to work with the Government to find a sustainable financial solution for Croydon.

222/24 **Scrutiny Stage 2 Responses to Recommendations arising from Scrutiny & Overview Committee on 14 October 2024**

Chair of Scrutiny Overview Committee, Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel advised of the additional Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting arranged to discuss the Period 4 Financial monitoring report and the draft 2025-26 budget as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy report.

Thanks were extended to the Cabinet Member for Finance for keeping Scrutiny and Overview Committee informed regarding the concerning financial situation and for providing updates on movement during Period 5 via email. Although detail had not been provided regarding the recovery plans, the committee was reassured by various actions in including the reintroduction of spending control panels and had asked to be briefed on the recovery plans once further developed in November.

Overspends in key areas of Homelessness, Children's Social Care and SEND Transport would be subject to in depth scrutiny by the Scrutiny Sub-Committees. All Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs would meet to plan the best approach and to consider learning from other local authorities Scrutiny functions.

Regarding the Period 4 Financial monitoring report, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee was pleased to see its recommendation had been accepted for the Administration to explore moving the SEND Transport budget to the Children and Young People's department and to report back on this as part of the budget setting process.

Following the Committee's review of the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) it was recognised that the council's financial position remained extremely fragile. The Committee shared concerns regarding the risks to service delivery in Croydon due to savings requirements coupled with the cost of servicing the council's debt.

A number of cross-party recommendations had been made, focused on enhancing Member and Resident's understanding of the in-year financial challenges as well as the MTFS more generally.

The Committee also welcomed the inclusion of the LGA review as part of the budget setting process.

Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings welcomed Scrutiny and Overview Committee's focussed approach on the key issues facing the council.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** to;

2.1.1 Approve the responses and action plans attached to this report as Appendices 1, 2; and

2.1.2 Delegate authority to the officers identified in Appendices 1, 2, 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.

223/24

Croydon Safeguarding Annual Reports 2023/24 (Adults Board (CSAB) and Children's Partnership (CSCP))

The Executive Mayor introduced the report noting Croydon's significant population of both under 18's and elderly residents and the council's responsibility to safeguard and care for both children and adults.

The annual reports for the Croydon Safeguarding Adults Board (CSAB) and the Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP) included key highlights from across the services including Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Quality Assurance Initiatives and development of the service's Learning Offers.

The focus on community safety prioritisation and the alignment of this to making the borough a safer and more supportive community by taking a preventative approach to Social Care was noted.

The new approach to reporting saw both the CSAB and CSCP reports brought together and was illustrative of the One Croydon approach and best practice in regard to governance and alignment of priorities.

Thanks were extended to the Chair of CSAB David Williams, the Independent Scrutineer of CSCP Keith Makin and to partners in health services, the police and the voluntary sector.

Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Councillor Yvette Hopley advised there had been important improvements to cross departmental working between Adults and Childrens social care. Thanks were extended to the Chair and Vice Chair of CSAB and for the collaborative approach by all partners.

Cabinet Member for Children and Yong People, Councillor Maria Gatland welcomed the presentation of the CSCP Annual Report. The partnership working between the police, health partners and the council was noted and the report provided assurance around the multi-agency arrangements to safeguard children and improve their outcomes.

It was advised that the quality of safeguarding practice reviews had improved, with positive feedback from the panel and one of Croydon's cases taken to the national panel to share good practice.

The success of the work with family hubs as part of the learning offer was noted along with improvements in quality assurance of partner agencies, particularly in regard to the use of data. However the capacity of partner agencies to fully engage with CSCP remained a challenge.

The CSCP Business Plan 2024/25 was set out at Paragraph 5.22 of the report and the inclusion of children and families voices had now been embedded into the Partnership following the appointment of two young scrutineers.

David Williams, Independent Chair of CSAB advised the report demonstrated partnership working, reflected the continuing strength of the board whilst recognising there was still more work to be done. An update report on the progress made would be presented to Scrutiny in the new year.

Key areas of progress included:

- The Voice of the People subgroup. Thanks were extended to the Chair of the group Nicky Selwyn.
- The development of the learning and practice group.
- Learning from SARs and monitoring of the Action Plan.

A challenge event was being held on the 28th of November 2024 and would assist the Board in setting priorities, recognising successes, challenges and learning from SARs, making safeguarding personal and by offering challenge across the partnership.

Joint working projects included transition, asylum seekers, the development of an all-age exploitation strategy, work between DHRs and SARs and suicide and self-harm prevention.

The newly established Joint Executives Partnership Network would meet bi-annually and included members from CSAB, CSCP and Community Safety.

Detective Superintendent, Fiona Martin noted Keith Makin, Independent Scrutineer of CSCP's apologies. The close working between the CSCP Board, Education and other partners was commended. The report detailed how the three main agencies, Police, Health and the Local Authority discharged their duty to work together and a team approach was taken to promote the welfare of all children in Croydon.

The two Young Scrutineers attendance at the executive meetings had a positive impact on the board's focus and they were working on a draft copy of the Annual Report for children and young people and a podcast to increase accessibility.

The three core processes of safeguarding and assurance were highlighted as:

- The learning and development program, which this year had been successfully updated to a new platform.

- The review process, which went beyond the statutory requirements to seek learning and systems change for below threshold incidents, as well as statutory ones.
- A good quality assurance process, which following recruitment to the role had made a significant impact on how safeguarding arrangements were evidenced.

Positive highlights detailed within the report were summarised and included:

- Two cases of concern had been concluded.
- Four local safeguarding practice reviews were published, and three rapid reviews were completed.
- The Board had become more evidence based.
- The National Panel had requested Croydon to share examples of safeguarding review work.

Chief Nursing Officer, Deborah Kelly advised their first year in Croydon and as part of the partnership had been a positive one. The strong representation of Health within the partnership was noted along with good executive challenge around culture and practice from a Health perspective. The main three areas of focus as set out in the report were Children out of Borough, MASH and attendance at case conferences.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care, Councillor Janet Campbell commended the approach of having both Adult and Children's social care reported together.

It was asked how the Board would ensure that communication and actions were carried out efficiently across partner agencies and what approach ensured frontline workers could quickly escalate concerns and track the outcomes of referrals.

Corporate Director of Adult Social Care and Health, Annette McPartland advised safeguarding was prioritised in triage and risk assessed at the front door. Escalation was based upon need and all cases were tracked with data presented to the Board for scrutiny. The last Board had seen reporting on the increased number of referrals received, along with increased satisfaction levels of people receiving a service via Adult Social Care and Safeguarding.

It was advised work to improve statutory duty data had been undertaken and that best practice was shared both locally and nationally. Regarding Children's the front door saw robust and swift action and the Executive had oversight via the MASH operating group.

Shadow Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Amy Foster sought assurance that the underspend of public health grants of £3.4 million reported in 2023/24 would not be repeated 2024/25.

The Executive Mayor responded there was a plan to spend the under spend in public health and the LGA Peer Review previously reported to Cabinet had outlined an action plan. Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Councillor Yvette Hopley advised considerable work had been undertaken to align public health work to the council's joint strategic needs assessment and preventative work. It was confirmed future reporting would be provided, detailing how the money would be spent.

The Executive Mayor thanked guests for their attendance at the meeting.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** to;

2.1 Consider and note the Annual Reports of the Croydon Safeguarding Adult Board 2023-24 (as attached as Appendix 1)

2.2 Consider and note the Annual Report of the Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership 2023-24 (as attached as Appendix 2).

2.3 Note the proposed development of the process of presenting annual reports for the CSAB, CSCP and Community Safety Partnership (as detailed in Sections 4.5 and 4.6 of this report).

224/24

Principal Social Workers Annual Reports 2023-2024

The Executive Mayor introduced the report noting it was an opportunity to celebrate the achievements over the last year and recognise the ongoing work to prepare for the upcoming CQC assurance programme and the continued delivery of the council's statutory services.

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Maria Gatland highlighted that 82.5% of social workers were permanent members of staff which was a testament to the department and principle social worker's work and the experience and commitment of the council's social workers.

The breadth of responsibility under the council's Principal Social Worker was noted. Key achievements were detailed in the report and included designing and launching trauma informed practice workshops for the fostering service, organising and leading multiple staff conferences and the development of the Assessed and Supported In Year Employment (ASYE) programme.

Thanks were extended to Principal Social Worker, Jo George and all of the social workers for their work for Croydon families.

Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Councillor Yvette Hopley thanked Principle Social Worker, Sharon Judd and the team for their hard work. The importance of developing effective conditions for practice and

retaining excellent staff was highlighted. It was noted that the achievements across the service were set out at Paragraph 2.4 of the report and the reporting was an example of good governance for the department and would support any future CQC inspection.

Principle Social Worker, Jo George thanked the Executive Mayor, Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team for their continued support for the Children's department. The stability of the department's leadership was noted as having had a positive impact for its transformation and development.

The high percentage of permanent staff and staff retention rates were highlighted. Staff retention had been supplemented by development opportunities and initiatives for more experienced staff. The provision of accredited training delivered in-house was welcomed by staff and supported improvements to practice standards.

The Executive Mayor thanked Principle Social Worker, Jo George for their hard work.

Principle Social Worker, Sharon Judd explained the principal social worker role within Croydon for Adults was relatively new and development across the directorate had been the key focus over the last two years.

Key achievements and areas of development were highlighted within the report and included:

- The development of an audit program to establish any gaps in practice or knowledge.
- The establishment of the ASYE program, through which 11 newly qualified social workers had graduated.
- Development of Practice workshops, Conferences and Reflective workshop.

The Executive Mayor thanked Principal Social Worker, Sharon Judd for their development of the role and commitment to improving the team.

Shadow Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Amy Foster noted an upcoming awareness period regarding violence against women and girls and a training need around supporting families in regard to coercive control. It was asked how staff could be enabled rather than encouraged to undertake training.

The Executive Mayor responded that there were already training programs in place and the 80% staff retention rate highlighted the positive working environment in Croydon.

It was advised the Principle Social Worker was developing and maintaining a group of Domestic Abuse Champions, embedded within the Restart service and working with perpetrators and victims.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care Councillor Janet Campbell noted the extensive role of the Adults Principal Social worker particularly in embedding a strength-based culture and practice. It was asked whether there had been implementation challenges and also how the role had influenced the integration of Mental Health Social Work statutory functions.

It was also asked how the Principal Social Worker was able to balance these demands with their personal wellbeing.

It was advised the culture change towards adoption of a strength-based practice had been a challenge. This was being realised by embedding resident and carers voices in a positive way, supported by the audit process and by recognising staff strengths and areas for development.

There were challenges to integrate Mental Health practitioners into the service as they currently operated under the medical model. There would be a review of the functions undertaken by Mental Health Social Workers under the Care Act along with staff integration and shadowing. Time was being spent to share learning and understanding.

It was advised the new Principal Social Worker role in adults had created a framework of trust and accountability, their role and influence extended to all staff within the service.

A small team had been developed to enable the Principal Social Worker to delegate task and protect their own passion and wellbeing.

The Executive Mayor noted the importance of personal wellbeing and consciousness around mental health and thanked Councillor Campbell for their question.

The Executive Mayor thanked and commended the teams for the work.

Cabinet **RESOLVED**;

2.1.1. To note the Annual Report of the Principal Social Worker for Adult Social Care 2023-24 (as attached at Appendix A).

2.1.2. To note the Annual Report of the Principal Social Worker for Children's Social Care 2023-24 (as attached at Appendix B).

225/24

Youth Justice Plan 2024/25

The Executive Mayor introduced the report explaining The Youth Justice Plan 2024/25 worked to prevent and reduce offending among young people and fulfilled the council's statutory obligations under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. It also set out achievements in 2023/24 including significant reductions in re-offending rates, first-time entrants and youth

custody figures. The plan aligned with a Child First Approach and placed emphasis on prevention, addressing disproportionality and the council's responsibility as Corporate Parents to ensure rehabilitation and positive outcomes. Partnership working with statutory and non-statutory partners was also detailed within the report.

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Maria Gatland advised the report highlighted the achievements over the past year and set out the next year's priorities. There had been wide consultation with all primary partners and the plan had been presented to Scrutiny during the summer and work responding to their recommendations was ongoing.

Looking forward there would be an emphasis on disproportionality, including the disproportion of care experience young people in the youth justice system.

Shadow Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Amy Foster noted practices had been changed in response to feedback from young people. It was asked why young people's voices were not heard directly in the report and whether there was greater opportunity for them to be included.

It was advised the intention was to develop and include young people voice much more in the next year's report. Consultation with young people had been undertaken to develop the plan and had informed intervention delivery. Young people were generally satisfied with the support offered by Youth Justice and the team worked advocate on their behalf. The Croydon Youth Justice Voice Participation Strategy detailed how children would be incorporated into all areas of operation.

The Executive Mayor congratulated the team on their hard work and support for young people.

Cabinet **RESOLVED**;

2.1 To endorse the Youth Justice Plan 2024/25 (attached as Appendix A) and recommend to Full Council for approval.

226/24

Update on the Housing Transformation Programme

The Executive Mayor noted the letter from Martin Wheatley, Chair of the Independent Housing Improvement Board and available within the meetings supplementary agenda. It was advised that the Housing Transformation Programme was central to addressing the legacy of unresolved issues left by the previous Administration.

There had been several areas of progress including approval of the Asset Management Strategy, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Resident Engagement Strategy and the establishment of a dedicated

Housing Compliance Team and strengthening of fire safety and building protocols.

The Housing Improvement Board ensures that residents' perspectives are central to this transformation, guiding us in returning to full compliance with the standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing.

The Executive Mayor thanked Martin Wheatley, Chair of the Independent Housing Improvement Board for their observations and recognition of the progress made and acknowledges the feedback on the need for sustained focus, stronger corporate engagement and continued support across council services to embed and maintain these improvements.

Deputy Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes Councillor Lynne Hale advised a number of projects has been completed since the last reporting update in March 2024. There had been some positive changes to the experiences of residents and partners and engagement on strategy developments.

Oversight by the Housing Improvement Board continued and provided challenging insight from a resident's perspective. Work still to be done included the improvement of services such as grounds maintenance on estates and complaint handling. Feedback from the Housing Improvement Board on the report was welcomed and taken seriously.

Regarding regeneration of Regina Road, the first iteration of regeneration plans would be reported to Planning Committee the following week. This would provide opportunity for Members to view and comment on the proposals at pre application stage and residents of the estate would also be informed. It was the intention to present pre-application report to Planning Committee twice.

Thanks were extended to staff within the housing service for their hard work to deliver the improvements for residents.

Corporate Director of Housing, Susmita Sen highlighted the new Internal Control Boards set up between Housing, Children's and Adults to enable collaborative working across projects as listed at Paragraph 5.4 of the report.

Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Stuart King acknowledged the wide ranging improvement achievements within Housing but raised concerns regarding the Chair of the Housing Improvement Board's open letter. It was questioned how the corporate centre of the council would show commitment to the required improvements in the Housing department for tenants.

The Executive Mayor noted the importance of the Housing Improvement Board and the impact of having their independent voice. Work was already ongoing to bring directorates together with housing and there was

further work planned with Sustainable Communities, Regeneration & Economic Recovery (SCRER) teams around the look and feel of estates. There was corporate support to the Housing department and the council would seek to better demonstrate this, to evidence the ongoing improvements to both tenants and the Housing Improvement Board.

Corporate Director of Housing, Susmita Sen provided reassurance that work was already underway on grounds maintenance, with SCRER due to present to the Housing Improvement Board in November. It was also the intention to involve residents in the process.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** to;

2.1 Note the progress (set out in sections 4 and 5) since March 2024 on the Housing Transformation Programme.

227/24

Procurement Pipeline

The Executive Mayor introduced the report advising effective procurement was central to ensuring Value for Money and the effective delivery of council services. The report detailed procurement plans from October 2024 onwards, covering contracts above the Government Procurement threshold.

The report introduced an 18-month pipeline updated biannually which supported transparency and was expected to reduce unnecessary contract variations and increase opportunities for collaboration across sectors.

Cabinet Member for Finance Councillor Jason Cummings highlighted it was positive to see the inclusion of the Regina Road scheme contract within Appendix A of the report.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance Councillor Callton Young noted the extension to an 18-month pipeline report was a requirement under the new Procurement Act 2023.

It was asked why the report did not make clear which version of the procurement pipeline was attached or how the pipeline was being used strategically to secure the benefits envisaged under the act.

It was asked whether there was a fuller version of the procurement pipeline available and if this could be made available to Cabinet under Part B as part of good governance.

It was asked if Cabinet would receive a report explaining how the council would meet its best practice obligations under the new Procurement Act 2023.

Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings responded that whilst a requirement under the Procurement Act the 18-month pipeline also aligned with fiscal responsibility, efficiency and transparency priorities.

It was advised there was a complete list of all contracts, whereas this report showed the 18-month period and there was no separate Part B report.

Section 151 Officer and Corporate Director of Resources Jane West clarified that there had been a delay in implementation of the Procurement Act until 2025. Work was underway to prepare for the new requirements, which the next Procurement Pipeline reporting would be in line with.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance Councillor Callton Young clarified their query had been whether there would be more detailed information made available about each contract.

Cabinet **RESOLVED**;

2.1 to note the 18-month Procurement Pipeline (as set out in Appendix A), planned Contract Extensions (as set out in Appendix B) and planned Contract Variations (as set out in Appendix C).

2.2 to note that decisions in relation to these contracts are now delegated in line with the Executive Mayor's Scheme of Delegation and the Tender and Contracts Regulations 2024.

228/24

Exclusion of the Press and Public

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 7.57 pm