



CROYDON COUNCIL MEETING: MONDAY 24 MARCH 2014
PUBLIC QUESTION TIME
WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Welcome to a meeting of Croydon Council. Attached are the questions from the public and the replies which will be taken at this meeting.

IF YOU HAVE ASKED A QUESTION, PLEASE MAKE YOURSELF KNOWN TO THE MEMBER OF STAFF WHO IS PRESENT IN THE PUBLIC GALLERY, THEN READ THE REPLY TO YOUR QUESTION AND INDICATE WHETHER YOU INTEND TO ASK A SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION - a roving microphone will be available for that purpose.

Public Question time is usually towards the beginning on the meeting and the process for this item is as follows:

- “ The questions will be taken in the order in which they were received by the Council;
- “ The question and the reply will be taken as read;
- “ The person who asked the question, if present, will then be invited to ask a supplementary question, (if they wish) to clarify a point related to the reply they have been given in the written answer. The **length and detail of such a question should be brief** and at the discretion of the Mayor, allowing for the time available and the number of other questions which need to be dealt with;
- “ Public question time is limited strictly to **15 minutes** - if all the questions and answers have not been reached at the end of that time, the other replies will be taken as read and there will be no further opportunity for asking supplementary questions at that meeting; and
- “ Questions will not be carried over to the following meeting, but it is of course in order for questioners to ask another question on the same or another topic before the next meeting.

After the public question time you are very welcome to stay for the rest of the meeting

Question Number	Question to Cabinet Member	Question From	Subject
PQ17	Cllr D Mead	Mr A Crawley	Council Properties
PQ18	Cllr Thomas	Mr S Kahn	Fracking
PQ19	Cllr T Pollard	Ms R Fernandes	St James the Great School
PQ20	Cllr Mohan	Ms S Khan	BWH Community Space
PQ21	Cllr Fisher	Mr J Cartwright	Behaviour

PQ22	Cllr M Mead	Mr R Canning	life expectancy
PQ23	Cllr T Pollard	Mr S Creighton	Fairfield Halls
PQ24	Cllr Fisher	Mr A Pelling	50th Anniversary of LBC
PQ25	Cllr D Mead	Mrs A Creighton	Temporary accommodation
PQ26	Cllr T Pollard	Mr P Collier	Waddon Youth Club
PQ27	Cllr Hoar	Mr T Martin	Shop street signs
PQ28	Cllr Fisher	Mr M Samuel	Election information
PQ29	Cllr D Mead	Mr C Weaving	Mitcham Road property
PQ30	Cllr T Pollard	Mr A Rendle	SEN
PQ31	Cllr S Hoar	Mrs C Rendle	Fly-tipping
PQ32	Cllr Thomas	Mr S Mann	London Downlands Green Grid
PQ33	Cllr T Pollard	Mr P Sowan	Cultural Quarter

The attached replies are subject to oral amendment by the Cabinet Member or Committee Chair.

From Mr Alan Crawley

Councillor Dudley Mead

**Deputy Leader (Statutory) (Capital Budget and Asset Management)
& Housing**

Question No.

PQ017-14

How many properties, including the new Council offices, have been purchased by the Council in the last 5 years; what was the cost of each property and the reason for each of those purchases; how many of those properties are being used for the purpose they were purchased for and how was each purchase financed?

Reply

The attached table details the acquisitions, price paid and proposed/current use for the acquisitions that have taken place over the last 5 years. Bernard Weatherill House has not been included in the table as the land used for the development was already in the ownership of the Council and the building was constructed under an agreement with the Council's development partners CCURV.

The move to Bernard Weatherill House has generated revenue efficiencies of approx. £2m per annum. These efficiencies are as a result of being located in a modern efficient building and from the relocation of staff from eleven sites in to the one building.

Building location	Reason for Acquisition	Acquisition Price	Current Use
Office Building, South End	Offices and accessible space for provision of the turnaround centre	£1.5m	Turnaround Centre
Edridge Road	To provide an integrated childrens hub	£3.35m	Childrens hub
General Hospital site	Provision of a new secondary school	£6m	To be developed as new secondary school
Office Building High Street Croydon	Investment/office use	£4.5m	Investment/office use
47 Stroud Green Way	Part of site to provide a new primary school expansion	£425k	Part of school redevelopment site for new primary school

Land to the rear of Priory Special School	To enlarge an existing site to provide additional outdoor learning/play space	£0	Incorporated within new school development for outdoor learning/play space
Hayling Road Site	Provision of a new primary school	£1.71m	School redevelopment site for new Primary school
Fairfield Car Park	To provide wider regeneration opportunities	£13.5m	Income generating car park investment
82 Private Houses	To reduce the need for Bed and Breakfast accommodation	£13.52m	Accommodation for homeless people

All of the acquisitions have been funded through the Capital programme

From Mr Sasha Khan

Councillor Phil Thomas

Cabinet Member Highways and Environmental Services.

Question No.

PQ018-14

Has this council drawn up a list of parks and green spaces that are likely to be fracked under Northdown Energy's license? Does the council envisage exploratory fracking wells in Farthing Downs or Lloyd Park?

Reply

The Leader of the Council has made it clear that no exploratory fracking wells will be allowed in the borough of Croydon.

From Ms Rose Fernandes

Councillor Tim Pollard

Cabinet Member for Children Families and Learning

Question No.

PQ019-14

As per article in Croydon Guardian why a classroom was built in St James's the Great School, Windsor Road, Thornton Heath without prior planning permission by the Council and why it has not been pulled down yet.

Reply

Planning approval for the classroom which is the subject of this question has now been achieved.

Croydon's demand for additional school places is the proportionately highest in the country. The increased inward migration and decreased outward migration in the borough caused a 78% increase in applications between January and September last year than were received during the same period the previous year. This could not have been forecast as it was created by no single event. The impact of the volatility in demand created challenges in the timescales we had to establish this class. Nonetheless, the Council must provide children with school places by law and this issue took priority in the unusual conflict in the case between sufficiency of school places and planning consent.

From Ms Sophie Khan

Councillor Vidhi Mohan

Cabinet Member Communities and Economic Development

Question No.

PQ020-14

Could the Cabinet Member for Communities give us an update on events that have been held at the BWH Community Space since it has opened.

Reply

Bernard Weatherill House has significantly created opportunities for the community as part of the new Community Space. Since the 6th September 2013 20 community events have taken place including:

Culture Click
Black History
Diwali celebrations
Amicus Horizon Keep Safe
Charity Lunch Disaster Fund
Community Christmas celebration
Ancient Indian Culture Day
Croydon Voluntary Action
International Women's Day

The community space was also utilised throughout the flooding within the Borough and provided support for the community on a number of instances following evacuation from care homes.

From Mr John Cartwright

Councillor Mike Fisher

Leader of the Council

Question No.

PQ021-14

In the period approaching the local election, would it be advisable for councillors of all parties to behave in a reasonable and respectful way towards councillors and candidates of other parties?

Reply

I thank Mr Cartwright for his question.

I believe councillors should always behave in a reasonable and respectful way towards each other, not just as a local election approaches, and this respectful behaviour should of course extend to candidates of all parties.

From Mr Robert Canning

Councillor Margaret Mead

Cabinet Member Adult Services & Health

Question No.

PQ022-14

Figures recently published by the Greater London Authority show that male life expectancy in Waddon is the second lowest in Croydon - approximately 8 years lower than in the ward with the highest male life expectancy. What action is the council taking to improve life expectancy in Waddon?

Reply

Waddon is one of Croydon's most deprived wards. Some parts of the ward are amongst the 20% most deprived areas in the country. There is a clear association between deprivation and illness and early death.

Analysis by the London Health Observatory shows that, in Croydon, the most significant drivers of health inequalities – differences in health outcomes between some communities and others – are heart and circulatory diseases, cancers, and respiratory diseases.

The council is working with its partners in the NHS and the voluntary sector to improve health for all and also to reduce the differences in health between communities. One example of how the council is doing this is the Heart Town programme. The Heart Town aims to reduce ill health and early deaths from heart and circulatory diseases by reducing smoking prevalence, encouraging people to be more active, and to eat a healthier diet. By addressing these lifestyle factors, the Heart Town is also likely to make a contribution to reducing ill health and early deaths from cancers, respiratory diseases and diabetes.

The foundations of good health are laid in the first few years of life. The council aims to improve the life chances of babies and young children through children's centres such as the Aerodrome Children's Centre in Waddon. The council is also working with Aerodrome and Parish Church primary schools through the Healthy Schools programme. This provides curriculum support for schools to deliver a range of health lifestyle interventions, including school travel plans and after schools clubs. The offer to these schools also includes support from Phunky Foods and Alive and Kicking, the two organisations that have been commissioned by the council to support children and their families achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

The new Waddon leisure centre is a focus for promoting sport and physical activity in the ward. Around 60% of the members of the centre receive concessionary rates. The council wants to encourage uptake in areas with high numbers of people on low incomes. It is also a flagship centre for physical activity for people with disabilities.

The council commissions stop smoking support services from a range of providers in the area. These include the only GP practice in the ward, Violet Lane Medical Practice, and three pharmacies serving the local population. The mobile stop smoking clinic also visits the area on a regular basis.

From Mr Sean Creighton

Councillor Tim Pollard

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Children, Young People and Learning.

Question No.

PQ023-14

What are the conclusions of the Charity Commission's Operational Compliance Report published on 25 February on the Council's decisions on the governance of the Fairfield Halls charity, when will they be reported to the relevant Committee, and who are the current charitable Trustees?

Reply

The Fairfield is the responsible organisation for this work so we direct the questioner to that organisation.

The Charity Commission's Operational Compliance Report is published at http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/media/598002/ocr_fairfield_-_croydon-_limited.pdf.

The council's nominees to the board of Fairfield (Croydon) Ltd in 2013/14 are Councillors George Ayres, David Fitze, Timothy Godfrey, Lynne Hale and Dudley Mead.

From Mr Andrew Pelling

Councillor Mike Fisher

Leader of the Council

Question No.

PQ024-14

Please detail how the local authority intends to mark the 50th anniversary of the creation of the London Borough of Croydon under the London Government Act 1963.

Reply

I thank Mr Pelling for his question.

The wording of your question suggests that you consider the 50th anniversary of the creation of the London Borough of Croydon to be fast approaching. Unsurprisingly, you have misunderstood how Acts of Parliament are passed and enforced. Please allow me to explain; an Act might be passed by Parliament in a given year, however, it is often only enforced sometime later.

Considering this, it amazes me that you have failed to recognise that although the creation of the London Borough of Croydon is based on the London Government Act 1963; Croydon did not actually become a borough until 1965 and the Council's 50th anniversary is not until 2015.

In regards to a celebration to mark this anniversary; I should think that our residents and customers would prefer us to focus on delivering efficient and effective services for their benefit rather than diverting resources towards marking such an anniversary.

Keeping this in mind, I find it somewhat worrying that you are standing to be a Labour Party Councillor at the next election. Fear not; I am worried for you, not for the residents of Waddon ward; they are far too intelligent to elect a Councillor who would be so willing to prioritise a 'celebration' over their needs.

From Mrs Ann Creighton

Councillor Dudley Mead

Cabinet Member for Housing

Question No.

PQ025-14

Please explain policies and procedures regarding the acceptance of homeless families into temporary accommodation with regard to the length of time they are accommodated, what governs their eviction and if they remain homeless whether their children are taken into care, setting out numbers involved each quarter 2013 and the first two months of 2014.

Reply

Decisions made on homeless families are made in line with the homeless legislation (Housing Act Part 7 1996). For applicants to be accepted they need to be homeless, eligible, in priority need and not intentionally homeless. The duty to these households is only a temporary duty to house with no obligation to provide long term housing. However the duty can only be ended by providing longer term accommodation, such as private sector tenancy that lasts for at least 1 year, or an offer of the housing waiting list. Given the current demand for housing and the shortage of supply we cannot give approximate times people will be in temporary accommodation.

There are a number of applicants who are found intentionally homeless and they will only be accommodated for a very limited period. For applicants who have children, and if they agree, a referral will be made to Children services for an assessment to be made under the children's act 1989 (amended in 2004). In these cases Children's services will work with the family to find alternative accommodation in the private sector sometimes providing deposits to assist. No children have been taken into care because a family has been found intentionally homeless.

From Mr Peter Collier

Councillor Tim Pollard

Cabinet Member Children Families and Learning

Question No.

PQ026-14

What future programmes of activities and events for young people from the Waddon Estate at the Waddon Youth Club, especially NOW that so much money has been invested in upgrading it.

Also will it be open during the Easter and Summer school holidays for youth club activities?

Reply

Waddon Youth Hub has a variety of youth provision currently running. There are over five hours of specialist provision with learning difficulty and disability provision for young people over two nights a week provided by the Croydon LDD and practice development team, they also provide an extensive school holidays programme during half terms, Easter, summer. There are also (alternate) weekly Saturday sessions provided by Phab Croydon Club and the National Autistic Society. The centre benefits from specially adapted rooms and activities within the building that facilitate ease of access for those with physical disabilities. There are also appropriate spaces to ensure that personal care needs can be supported.

There are sessions for young people accessing alternative education provision provided in partnership with Croydon Arts team, Croydon Outdoor and Wellbeing team and Springboard (short term tuition service), these account for a day a week and extra sessions during the school holidays or additional special project work.

Family Lives are providing a monthly parent training programme and a weekly client meeting opportunity for a day a week until the end of May. StreetGames are providing an evening a week of sports activities for young people, focusing on table tennis, street golf and martial arts. We have also been approached by the Police Cadets to use the centre for an evening a week and another community organisation to run some sessions in the mornings for families and children.

In addition to the provision within the Waddon hub, Croydon also commissions three projects in the West area that provide services for young people; BELS are working with NEET young people, Acorns 2 Oaks providing a youth club at the Peppermint Centre and Lives Not Knives providing a schools based education programme.

Waddon youth hub has an important place in the Waddon community and is

recognised by young people and parents alike as being a place to access services and signposting to other support if needed. It has brilliant resources for young people inside the building, the hard court outside and access to the park and play area next door. As part of the development of a shared Youth Offer, the premises are likely to attract interest from a range of youth and community organisation which will help to ensure that the Waddon community continue to receive the levels of support previously experienced. Whilst we will not be directly delivering open access holiday provision we would expect that there will be significant interest in using the centre for this purpose by partner agencies.

From Mr Tony Martin

Councillor Simon Hoar

Cabinet Member Community safety and Public Protection

Question No.

PQ027-14

What is the council doing to stop shops from annexing the pavement outside their shops? How many fines have been given out in the past year? And how much are the fines for?

Reply

A number of shops in the borough are permitted to have street trading licences that allow them to display goods or tables and chairs on the pavement outside of their shop. Shops are not permitted to exceed the permitted dimensions of their pitch and if they do, they can have their licence revoked by the Council.

Compliance with licence conditions is on the whole very good but where overspreading has occurred, we have issued warning letters and this has rectified the problem. To date, we have not had the need to prosecute any licence holders and/or revoke licences.

From Mr Mark Samuel

Councillor Mike Fisher

Leader of the Council

Question No.

PQ028-14

At the time of writing, there is still no information on www.croydon.gov.uk, about the forthcoming Croydon council and European parliamentary elections. Lewisham has done so and once again we are apparently kept in the dark.

Will the leader therefore publish now, for the avoidance of doubt, the timetables for both?

Reply

I thank Mr Samuel for his question.

The combined timetable for the European and local government elections will be published very soon. The reason why it has yet to be published is due to awaiting confirmation on the recent changes to election rules brought about by very recent legislation. This new legislation applies to the deadline for nominations and changing the dates for withdrawals of candidature, the appointment of election agents and dates around publication of various notices. The Returning Officer decided, quite rightly, to be certain of these facts before publication of the timetable, to avoid any confusion if these key dates were to later change.

The elections web pages will go live as soon as the final dates are clarified.

From Mr Colin Weaving

Councillor Dudley Mead

Cabinet Member for Housing

Question No.

PQ029-14

At the last PQT the deputy leader said he was unaware of problems relating to property in Mitcham Road. Can he tell us what he is aware of, and what budgetary controls he has over his department?

Reply

As stated before, Council officers are fully aware of the position regarding this property and have taken appropriate action to resolve the particular issues at this address.

From Mr Andrew Rendle

Councillor Tim Pollard

Cabinet Member for Children Families and Learning

Question No.

PQ030-14

Is councillor Pollard happy with the new SEN home to school transport provision, remembering that parents and teachers have expressed concerns over some aspects of the new service, and some families are still refusing to use the transport. Also why have some of the excellent guides that have built up a relationship with parents and children not been re hired by the new suppliers.

Reply

Since Tuesday 25 February 100% of children affected have had transport available to them.

Ruskin Private Hire Limited went into administration on the 14th February. The Council worked closely with the administrators to support a solution that Ruskin continued to trade as a going concern. Despite some expressions of interest for the business and assets of the company, regrettably a solution could not be found. The joint administrators therefore decided to cease the trading of the company on 21st February. The Council had no option at that point to mobilise its business continuity contingency plans to secure a service for Monday 24th February.

The Council's priority throughout the administration period and transition has been to minimise any interruption in routine for children who use the service, whilst appreciating that due to the nature of the event there was likely to be some unavoidable change and disruption.

Our remaining suppliers have delivered alternative provision for all 245 children on 57 routes to 23 schools. Only 9 children did not have transport on the first Monday back after half term (Monday 24th February). Since Tuesday 25th February, all children have transport available to them. Only one family is currently refusing to use the offered transport, and this family have been taking their child (who is under the statutory school age) into the children's centre themselves.

Within the context of this scale of change, brought about by the collapse of Ruskin, this has been an extremely successful transition. I would like to thank parents, schools, suppliers and staff for working together to make this happen in the best possible way in the circumstances.

The Council has no control over whether new suppliers hire previous employees of Ruskin. Decisions in relation to resources deployed to provide the transport for the routes are the decisions of providers, as long as they continue to meet the standards and obligations set out within the contract terms and conditions in terms of safeguarding and quality.

However the Council did take various steps to help former Ruskin staff. This included directing them to the new suppliers. Unfortunately whether alternative providers of the former Ruskin routes take on ex Ruskin staff has been their decision although we have attempted to facilitate such an outcome. There will undoubtedly be disappointment where changes have had to be made.

The Council's Policy for Travel Assistance is clear that, when travel assistance is provided, the Council will make every effort to ensure the same Passenger Assistant is used on a regular basis because we fully understand the impact change has on this cohort of children, although this may not always be possible.

We are pleased to report that providers are informing us how most parents, understanding the situation in which the Council finds itself, have made efforts to work with the new crews in a constructive and positive manner.

From Mrs Caroline Rendle

Councillor Simon Hoar

**Cabinet Member Community Safety and Public Protection.
Question No.**

PQ031-14

Why has fly-tipping in Ashburton more than tripled between 2009-10 & 2012-13? Why can't this council keep the streets of Croydon Central clean?

Reply

The rise in fly tips for this period coincides with a change in process for reporting and recording them. Previously, many of the Boroughs fly tips were just sent on to Council's contractor to clear without any record being kept. A new process now means that every fly tip now gets recorded so that we have a much better understanding of the issue. So, although it looks as though there has been a large increase in fly tipping, we believe that this is not the case.

The Council has also changed its approach to dealing with fly tipping. Previously the response was focussed on getting the rubbish removed rather than working on trying to catch who was responsible or trying to find other long term solutions. Over the last couple of years this approach has changed completely. The Area Enforcement team were brought in so that the Council could deliver more enforcement against the people who are blighting our Borough. Since the team rolled out there has been an increase in Fixed Penalty Notices for fly tipping and the use of legislation to enforce against residents that was not previously used in the Borough. Since April 2013 the AEOs have issued 141 FPNs for fly tipping with 108 of these being issued since the fly tip project began in November so there has been a significant increase in enforcement activity over the last couple of months.

Fly tipping continues to be removed within 72 hours of it being reported to the Council and there is a programme of engagement with residents to find the most appropriate solutions to the storage of waste including education on acceptable waste disposal and recycling. If these actions are not successful then the team will look to enforce against the people that are responsible. Tactics include going through rubbish to try to find identifiable information, regular patrols and, in some circumstances CCTV and late night surveillance is used.

We are also rolling out a new structure that will see more permanent officers dedicated to tackling fly tipping, which will provide a long term solution to this issue.

In the meantime the Council has invested an additional £127,000 to:

- increase capacity in the enforcement team so that more surveillance and

targeted operations can take place

- purchase new CCTV cameras so that we can identify who is responsible and increase the number of prosecutions
- put in place a programme of preventative measures such as new signage, educational literature, alley gates and reviews of bin storage arrangements across the worst affected parts of the Borough

All of this extra work has been undertaken despite the opposition of the Labour Party who pretend to be concerned by fly tipping but have opposed the increase of the enforcement budget and opposed the Council bringing in a pilot programme to tackle littering, whilst at the same time refusing to even bother to report fly tipping themselves.

From Mr Stephen Mann

Councillor Phil Thomas

Cabinet Member Highways and Environmental Services

Question No.

PQ032-14

Can the council tell us how bad the floods were in Croydon and if the London downlands green grid area framework helped reduce the damage.

Reply

The floods in the Kenley, Purley and Coulsdon areas were significant and saw a number of properties affected. A number of multi-agency organisations came together to help alleviate the effects of the flooding and those efforts are still on-going.

Whilst ground water levels were extraordinarily high, the London downlands green grid areas in the vicinity of the Caterham Bourne and Merstham Bourne would have contributed to reducing the level of damage that resulted from the excessive rainfall experienced during the period.

From Mr Paul Sowan

Councillor Tim Pollard

Cabinet Member Children Families and Learning

Question No.

PQ033-14

Which of the twelve or so senses in which the word 'culture' has been used, recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary, is the one the Council had in mind in connection with, for example, its designated 'Cultural Quarter'?

Reply

The purpose of spatially referencing 'culture' in Croydon is to promote, enable and allow for the future consolidation of the existing cultural provision within context of the growth needs of the metropolitan centre. The Clocktower – including the Town Hall, Library, Museum and cultural offer by CALAT along with the College and the Fairfield Halls broadly represent the current cultural offer. These assets are set against the open space of the Queens and Fairfield Gardens and provide much potential for the growth and expansion of cultural provision within this area.

We are very ambitious for the town's business centre which will support an increasingly large residential community over the next few years. We recognise that the area will better thrive with a strong cultural offer and we are delivering this through our enabling role.