

COUNCIL MEETING: MONDAY 29TH FEBRUARY 2016

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CQ091-16 **from Councillor Tim Pollard**

Councillor Tony Newman

Please itemise the percentage of the total staffing budget for agency staff in 2016/17 for each of children & families' social care, adult social care and all other services. What were the equivalent percentages for the preceding three financial years?

Reply

The council does not budget explicitly for agency staff. All services have a staffing budget which reflects the overall level of staff expected to be required in the year and the pay levels agreed for the posts.

It is recognised that agency staff will be needed from time to time across the business and these will be funded from agreed staffing budgets.

CQ092-16 from Councillor Tim Pollard

Councillor Tony Newman

In the Advertiser Hustings of 2014 you said "If Labour is elected there would be no council tax increase above inflation - ever". Inflation is currently virtually zero and has been for a considerable time. In your election leaflets you pledged to freeze council tax for the first two years (i.e. 2015/16 and 2016/17). Given that the level of funding for local government 2014-2020 was clearly set out in the Comprehensive Spending Review of 2013 (and that Labour Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls repeatedly said that there would be no more money for local government under an incoming Labour government), how do you justify breaking both those pledges?

Reply

It genuinely saddens me that Cllr Pollard can be so misguided and so misinformed. However it does not surprise me.

The reality of the situation is that is his Conservative government has effectively moved the goalposts on council tax by requiring local authorities to both implement a 1.75% rise on base council tax and to implement their 2% precept for their national responsibilities on Adult Social Care, while taking no account of inflation or population growth. Indeed, the figures from the treasury and from our local Conservative MPs, Gavin Barwell and Chris Philp, are explicitly based on these increases to local Council Tax. Likewise, the increase of 1.89% in council tax bills is lower than his conservative government's own inflation forecasts.

It further saddens me that Cllr Pollard has failed to condemn his Conservative Government for moving the goalposts and centralising control of local council tax levels and for putting Croydon in a position where it will receive no government funding for one in five of our residents.

I counsel Cllr Pollard, Chris Philp and Gavin Barwell not to underestimate Croydon residents who, like Croydon Labour, have had enough of the Conservative assault on public services in our Borough.

CQ093-16

from Councillor Tim Pollard

Councillor Tony Newman

What has been the total cost to date of the Boxpark initiative, taking account of capital, revenue, interest payable and costs of council management time (How many officers are working on it, for what proportion of their time and what is the estimated cost of this)? What future costs are budgeted for under these headings and can we be 100% confident that all sums loaned out by the council will be repaid?

Reply

The council's financial support package for Boxpark has been in the public domain since April last year but to summarise, the council has made a loan of £3m to Boxpark at a commercial rate of interest, and additionally intends to provide funding of £61,500 per annum. Boxpark's business case indicates that the loan principal and loan interest will be paid back in full to the council. The repayment of the interest will mean that the council's grant funding will be more than covered, and it goes without saying that all sums relating to the Boxpark project are budgeted for.

Along with the GLA the council also provided pre-development grant funding to Boxpark, which included preparation and submission of their planning application, and marketing and promotion of the project. The council's contribution was £150,000.

As other Cabinet members have noted in response to similar questions to this, the Boxpark deal originally envisaged the council receiving eight container units for its own use, each charged at the market rent of £20,000 per annum. Due to the phenomenal demand for units we have agreed with Boxpark that it would be better to use those containers to bring in additional businesses and create new jobs, with our £160,000 of funding this year instead being used to commission Boxpark to produce a second year of the Ambition Festival.

Alongside this are the obvious benefits to Croydon arising from Boxpark locating in the borough. The project is set to create over 200 jobs, as well as business rate income of approximately £170,000 per annum. Additionally, the indirect Gross Value Added benefit to the local economy is estimated at between £7-10m, not to mention the positive press and publicity generated for Croydon's regeneration. The presence of Boxpark is known to be having a positive effect in the minds of commercial agents and occupiers when they are considering the town centre as a potential office location, which is one of the reasons the council along with CGLP (Croydon Gateway Limited Partnership, made up of Stanhope and Schroder) agreed to support the introduction of this high-profile meanwhile project in the first place.

Council officers across a number of services are obviously working with Boxpark to help deliver the scheme, as they would with any major regenerative project such as this.

As always, it is a great shame that Cllr Pollard remains obsessed with the cost of everything without having any understanding of the true value that it is being brought to Croydon.

CQ094-16 **from Councillor Lynne Hale**

Councillor Tony Newman

Please advise the full financial cost to the Council of closing the Fairfield Halls this summer

Reply

I have previously welcomed Cllr Hale's more mature and informed approach to the regeneration of the Fairfield Halls and I'd like to remind her that we aren't 'closing' the Fairfield Halls and it is misleading to suggest that we are.

The reality is that after two terms of Conservative inaction, we are investing £30m to renovate the Halls to give them another 50 years of life and restore them to their rightful place as the cultural jewel of not only Croydon but of South London.

This forms part of an overall scheme to revitalise the college green area that will also include a new purpose built College facility, much needed housing and improved pedestrian access routes to and from the green. Development value from this wider scheme will be used to subsidise the £30m spend mentioned above.

CQ097-16 **from Councillor Phil Thomas**

Councillor Tony Newman

Why did you break your promise on Council tax rises ?

Reply

Please see the response to CQ92.

CQ101-16 from Councillor Luke Clancy

Councillor Tony Newman

With the background of the Council facing severe constraints on its budget are you seriously considering spending over £100,000 again on sponsoring a cycle race in the town? Will you at least this time conduct a proper cost-benefit analysis to establish the value for money this brings the council taxpayer, rather than relying on anecdotal evidence of seeing increased footfall in the town's shops and bars?

Reply

It is perhaps unfair of me to single out Councillor Clancy, but as I draft the responses to the questions from Conservative Councillors, I cannot help but note how consistently negative they all are and, collectively, how opposed they are to anything positive happening in Croydon. I counsel the Conservative opposition to be more positive about the many great things our town has to offer and to try and show some enthusiasm for schemes and projects that will make it even greater.

To answer Cllr Clancy's question directly, yes we are seriously considering hosting a global sporting event in our Borough. Who on earth wouldn't? While there is a cost to the Council, there are also many benefits. Those benefits aren't limited to just the economic benefits enjoyed by local traders on the day of the race, but also include the high profile promotion of sports and healthy lifestyles, the great reputational good that delivering a high class event does for Croydon, the inspiration that seeing global sports stars gives to Croydon's children and young people and so on.

In terms of actual cost, last year's event cost the Council £107,721, but this was offset by income of £106,000, so the direct cost to the Council was only £1,721. However the value of hosting the event extends beyond the economic benefit of additional income for Croydon businesses and exceeds the modest investment.

The thrilling evening's racing showcased Croydon in a fresh light. An estimated 12,500 people lined the streets for the races. A range of community events took place on the day, contributing to a celebration of all things cycling in Croydon. One of the prime reasons for hosting the event was to encourage more people to cycle and exercise for fun, sport or as part of their daily routine, in order to combat the rising tide of ill health resulting from increasingly inactive lifestyles. This in turn will help limit the call on Council and health services and the consequences for the public purse resulting from obesity and health problems associated with sedentary lifestyles. The route infrastructure was used in the afternoon to host schools' cycle races. Our own Smarter and Safer Travel team along with local employer AIG, TfL's Cycle Activation Team, British Cycling and Kier used the day to promote more active, healthier and safer travel. Between us we were able to reach far more people than had been through past Bike Week events.

CQ107-16 **from Councillor Steve O'Connell**

Councillor Tony Newman

Does the Leader welcome the 6.44 pc reduction in the GLA element of Council Tax and does he also support low taxing Mayors?

Reply

Yes I do welcome the reduction, although it should be noted that almost two thirds of this reduction is due to the reduced Olympic levy.

CQ141-16 from Councillor Dudley Mead

Councillor Tony Newman

Treasury Management. Temporary investments page 156 of 230 Cabinet agenda 22 February 2016. Is the inference to be concluded from this paragraph that the council, rather than re-investing cash which is attributable to a specific reserve, it may use that cash for Capital expenditure?

Reply

Treasury management is all about ensuring that cash is held safely but also working to generate an appropriate return for the Council and is also available when needed. To this end, at the end of each day, any aggregate cash balance is invested.

'Temporary investments' is a catch-all label used to describe any deposit facility where cash is invested for up to a year. This includes money held at a bank, within a Money Market Fund, or lent to another local authority.

Treasury Management is about ensuring that the Council as a whole always has sufficient cash such that it does not have to take out any short-term loans.

This is looked at on a Council-wide basis. Clearly, it is not in the interest of the Council to borrow money when it has cash above its minimum foreseeable requirements or to borrow money sooner than it needs to.

This principle has been in place for a number of years in order to minimise the net interest the Council has to pay.

In the tough times the Council is in, thanks to the Conservative Government's decisions about funding, it is even more important that we get this right and so there is an increased focus on this.

Councillor Tony Newman

The communities and local government secretary, Greg Clark has recently told that despite austerity there is "generosity" to be found in the Treasury. So much so that the chancellor could find at least £300m as 'transitional fund' as soon as Tory politicians and their relatives started to complain about the impact of Tory cuts on local services. As we know that Croydon council will receive £800,000 from the 'transitional fund' deal, while leafy Surrey will get £24.1m, the highest in the country? Would the leader agree with me that, this is incredible political bias from a government that seems determined to prove its arrogance by saying if you're not a Tory, you're not a priority?

Reply

Councillor Khan you are absolutely correct in highlighting this.

Let us be clear, Chris Philp and Gavin Barwell have failed in their duties to Croydon and our residents. What they have effectively said, is that if it doesn't help their personal political ambitions, it isn't a priority, and they don't care what damage it does to public services in Croydon which they are paid to represent.

Chris Philp, Gavin Barwell and every member of the Conservative opposition in Croydon should all apologise for their cowardly decision. As the Croydon Guardian front page headline recently said when referring to Gavin Barwell and Chris Philp "You Should be Ashamed".

Croydon Guardian
60p where sold February 17, 2016

Mum hurt in truck horror
See page 5

PICTURE PERFECT AS MORNING BREAKS
Golden delight: Graeme Herby took this picture of Couleston chalk pits as the sun began to rise

'YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED'
Angry words exchanged between rival MPs over funding cuts

Dees Ford
UNLEARN THESE DRIVING LESSONS WITH AN EXTRA £500 OFF

CQ153-16 **from Councillor Shafi Khan**

Councillor Tony Newman

This year, for the first time, councils will have to add a 2% adult social care precept – “the Osborne tax” to council tax bills. The government is seeking to remove itself from its historic responsibility for care, shifting the burden to the local taxpayer and is using council cuts to hide what are, in effect, unprecedented cuts to the health system provided by local authorities. Would the leader agree with me that, the government on one hand seeks praise for its claim to have safeguarded the NHS, while on the other it takes the axe to the very services that keep vulnerable people out of hospital?

Reply

The Conservative government's record on the NHS and social care is shameful.

While the NHS is a national responsibility and they cannot hide their failures from the public, most notable recently for bungling contract negotiations with Junior Doctors leading to strike action, they have tried to kick their failures on adult social care into the long grass by introducing the Adult Social Care precept.

In effect, they have abandoned their responsibility for tackling what is a national issue and asked local councils to ‘carry the can’ for their failure to deliver effective policy and funding for issue of an aging population that has more complex care needs.

In Croydon we have little choice but to implement this precept. Our local NHS services are underfunded and the Council is underfunded.

While Steve Reed MP continues to campaign hard for Croydon, the real question is what are our two members of the Conservative Government, Chris Philp and Gavin Barwell, doing for people that require effective and well-funded care services? Sadly the answer is they are neglecting their duties to the people of Croydon by voting for £24m funding for Surrey at the cost of front line services here.

CQ154-16 **from Councillor Shafi Khan**

Councillor Tony Newman

Can the leader tell us the implications of the break of historical link between council tax base and the government top-up grant for Croydon households?

Reply

I am hugely disappointed that the government continues to ignore population changes and demographic changes in the way it allocates grant to local government. This has meant Croydon, as well as having a 56% cut in grant since 2010/11, has also faced demand pressures from both population increase and demographic change that simply are not taken account of by the government in its calculation of grant.

I welcome the government's commitment to a Fair Funding review but note it will not change anything until 2019/20.

CQ155-16 from Councillor Sherwan Chowdhury

Councillor Tony Newman

Could the leader give us a breakdown of how the core services have been affected in Croydon as a result of funds cut by Tory government during the year of 2015-16.

Reply

As a Labour administration in Croydon, we have been clear that we will protect front line services while keeping council tax affordable. We have also been clear that we will not sit idly by and be victims of Tory government funding cuts.

We have protected front line services by making back office functions significantly more efficient, we have reduced the management overhead and reduced the costs of running Council offices.

We have also increased the focus on preventative services, by investing in best start and the gateway service, which improve life chances while reducing dependency on more acute services. We have also accelerated the digital services programme, as well as making charges across the Borough fairer and more equitable.

Looking at 2015-16, where we have had real difficulty is the Conservative government's new dependency on making in-year cuts. Because the Tory government requires us to deliver these additional cuts at short notice, it limits our ability to invest in design and delivering more efficient service models and leads to out and out service cuts. Examples of this include the Government's in-year cuts to the vital public health budget, to funding for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and their targeted cuts to adult learning budgets, that had such a deep impact on CALAT services last year.

As we look to 2016/17, the Government is still yet to provide detail on a number of specific budgets, so it is likely that we will face further Tory attacks on public services in Croydon over the coming year.

CQ161-16 from Councillor Humayun Kabir

Councillor Tony Newman

As a leader of the Council considering the 40% cuts from the Central Government your administration has maintained the vital services going so far. I would be interested to know about the new achievements and new projects taken place in last 2 years and what new project are in the pipeline for next 2 years.

Reply

Labour Croydon has been clear that the Tory government's assault on local services in Croydon will not hamper our ambitions for the Borough.

Amongst our many achievements over the past 21 months, we have:

- Made our streets cleaner and safer, working with our partners to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour, tackle the blight of fly-tipping and prosecuting those who commit this crime
- Made Croydon a London Living Wage Borough
- Held a Fairness and Opportunity Commission to improve equality of opportunity across our diverse Borough
- Improved Financial Inclusion services and relaunched the Croydon Credit Union
- Delivered a balanced budget despite inheriting a £100m funding black hole from the Tories
- Introduced Ward Budgets to allow every Member to deliver priorities in their Wards
- Introduced a Landlord Licensing Scheme to protect tenants and communities from rogue landlords operating in the Borough
- Increased the amount of affordable housing required in new developments in the Borough
- Become a White Ribbon Borough as part of efforts to prevent and deter domestic and sexual violence against women in Croydon
- Launched the Croydon Promise, our commitment to deliver regeneration to every community across Croydon
- Taken measures to be a more open and transparent Council
- Launched a Schools Mutual to deliver more efficient support services to Croydon's ever improving schools
- Launched a new Housing Delivery Company to increase the supply of housing across the Borough
- Prevented new substandard office to residential conversions in the centre of Croydon
- Become a Flagship Food Borough
- Reduced the eye-watering costs of BWH to Croydon residents
- Saved the Queen's Gardens from Conservative plans to build private housing on them

- Introduced the Best Start and Gateway services, helping to pro-actively support families and residents
- Overseen the highest rate of schools judged as good or outstanding on record in Croydon
- Saved Purley Pool from closure following years of chronic underinvestment by the Tories
- Supported local businesses to form a Business Improvement District for Purely
- Begun delivering 20mph zones to reduce deaths and injuries on our roads
- Launched the Go On Croydon programme to reduce digital exclusion across the Borough
- Secured £3m of regeneration funding for Thornton Heath
- Secured the innovative Onside Youth Zone partnership that will deliver millions of pounds of investment in youth services in the north of the Borough.

Those are just some of the highlights, as we look forward to the next two years, we will see many of policies and plans being delivered. These will include:

- A dramatic increase in the supply of housing and affordable housing starts across the Borough
- The delivery of a new swimming pool and leisure facilities in New Addington
- The delivery of a revitalised Fairfield Halls, restoring it to its rightful place as the jewel in the cultural crown of Croydon
- The delivery a brand new college facility
- The delivery of the Croydon Growth Zone, securing long overdue investment in the infrastructure across the metropolitan centre
- New community facilities across our parks and open spaces, including the former library facility at Ashburton Park which the Tories had planned to sell off at a fraction of its Market Value in direct opposition to local residents
- Front line services continuing to be protected from Tory cuts, with an increasing focus on integration and prevention
- Even greater measures to improve participation in local democracy

Again, these are just some of the highlights of our ambitions for Croydon and are in sharp contrast to the discredited track record of closures, sell-offs and under investment from the previous Tory administration.

CQ172-16 from Councillor Oliver Lewis

Councillor Tony Newman

Would the leader agree with me that the government, and local MP's have acted mendaciously in asserting that the spending power of the council will remain the same. Isn't it true that the Tory government is effectively putting up council tax through the George Osborne's Adult Social care precept?

Reply

I couldn't agree more with Cllr Lewis. The Tory Government and our two local Tory MPs have voted to cut funding for Croydon while claiming that the Council's spending power is unaffected.

By the Government's own admission, their calculations are dependent upon Councils:

- Applying a 2% adult social care levy on Council Tax every year for five years
- Increasing base Council Tax by 1.75% every year for five years

They also acknowledge that their calculations do not allow for either inflation or population growth.

So, the reality is that the Conservative Government, including our two local Tory MPs, Gavin Barwell and Chris Philp, have voted in Parliament to put Council Tax up in Croydon by 3.75% every year for five years before the Council has any say in the matter.

It is high time that Gavin Barwell and Chris Philp took responsibility for their actions and started fighting for local services in the communities that they represent.

Unfortunately, this is not a priority for our local Conservative MPs, but you can be rest assured that this Labour Council will continue to fight the Government for a fairer deal for front line services.

CQ173-16 from Councillor Oliver Lewis

Councillor Tony Newman

The opportunity and fairness commission, chaired by the Bishop of Croydon, recently recommended that council tax should increase to protect front line services from Tory Government cuts. Whilst this council reluctantly took the step to modestly increase council tax, isn't it important that this was backed by this comprehensive piece of work, with an independent chair?

Reply

I couldn't agree with you more Cllr Lewis.

The decision by our local Conservative MPs to deliver thirty times more transitional funding to Surrey than to Croydon underlines just how important it was to invest in the commission's work.

While Croydon's Conservative opposition think that funding public services in Surrey is of greater importance than schools, roads and care services in Croydon, this Labour Council is committed to equality of opportunity and fairness across our many and diverse communities.

The decision we have taken on Council Tax very much chimes with the recommendation of the independent opportunity and fairness commission. We have balanced both the cuts and council tax demands of the Conservative Government against the need to protect frontline services, while also factoring in the reduction in the GLA Olympic Precept, delivering only a modest rise in Council Tax that will help to ensure many families and individuals that need help will get it from the Council. Whether that is by helping to prevent homelessness, delivering essential child protection services or supporting people into employment, we firmly believe that we have got the balance right.

It is a shame that the Tory opposition will continue to focus on the cost of the commission, while failing to understand the true value of its work.

CQ175-16 from Councillor John Wentworth

Councillor Tony Newman

Despite significant reductions to the Council's grant made by the Conservative government, how has the Labour council managed to protect front line services?

Reply

I thank Cllr Wentworth for his question.

It is important to remember that it isn't just the Tory Government's 75% cut to Croydon's grant that we have to deal with, but also the self-confessed £100m funding black hole inherited from Cllr Fisher's failed tory administration.

We have protected front line services through four key areas:

- We have dramatically reduced the Council's back office costs, making better use of our assets and accelerating our digital programme;
- We are delivering services more efficiently through innovation, such as our new Gateway and Best Start Services which are focused on supporting people in the round and moving away from the rigid old assessment and entitlement models;
- We have addressed charging inequalities across the Borough; and
- By working hard to get a fairer deal for Croydon from both the Government and the Mayor of London. This strand has helped us to protect Croydon from £4m of in-year cuts to the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children budget as well as securing greater Mayoral investment in regeneration and transport infrastructure projects in Croydon.

As Leader of this Labour administration, we have placed delivery of Value for Money at the heart of all we do, while ensuring that we protect frontline services for our residents.

CQ135-16 from Councillor Jason Cummings

Councillor Simon Hall

What was the Council's borrowing level as a percentage of income in May 2014, what is it now and what is it projected to be in May 2018?

Reply

	March 2014 Actual £'000s	March 2018 Estimated £'000s
Debt	722.3	1,173.0
Gross service income*	668.2	684.6
Ratio	108.1%	171.8%

The increase in debt between March 14 and March 18 represents a combination of issues

1. The level of debt was below the Capital Financing requirement by approx. £100m at March 2014.
2. The capital programme for the period April 14 to March 18 includes over £140m of borrowing for School places.
3. The estimated debt includes £100m for our revolving investment fund where we expect to receive repayment with 24 months.
4. The estimated debt includes an allocation of £45m for the Growth zone where we expect repayment from future business rates income.

It should be noted that, in terms of item 2, the Council has agreed an innovative loan from the European Investment Bank, which has dramatically reduced the Council's borrowing costs for additional school places that the Conservative government refuses to fund.

It should also be noted that, in terms of items 3 and 4, the servicing costs of the debt will be covered by separate income streams (from the development company and from business rates respectively).

Medium term financial forecasts included in the Budget papers take account of interest on forecast borrowings.

Note*:

Gross service income excludes Dedicated Schools Grant and Housing Benefit grants.

CQ136-16 from Councillor Jason Cummings

Councillor Simon Hall

What is the current value the council has allocated to the Taberner house site on its books?

Reply

The site was last valued at 31st March 2015, at a value of £7,100,000. This is the figure currently included in the accounts.

As a site held for sale, it will be re-valued each year, based on prevailing market values.

CQ137-16 from Councillor Jason Cummings

Councillor Simon Hall

Given that the council is consistently complaining about Government cuts will this Labour administration now release the remainder of the near £3m they squirrelled away for their pet projects back into general funds?

Reply

No money has been ‘squirrelled away’ and we do not have ‘pet projects’. After all, we are an open and transparent council – in contrast to the previous administration that, for example, squirrelled away the fact that your then leader took £11,000 in extra allowances.

It is a simple fact that Government cuts to their funding of Councils is taking place and being done in a completely unfair way, as is detailed in the Budget papers and was set out by the Section 151 officer as well as myself at the Cabinet meeting, which I assume you paid attention to as this was before you went off in a huff.

Now, to the earmarked reserve to which I assume you are referring.

A sum of money was identified in the 2013/14 accounts that was earmarked for delivery of administration priorities, consistent with our ambitions and, in many cases, enabling specific manifesto commitments.

I am proud of the difference having this reserve available has made. I will not go through the whole list of items this reserve has been used/ is allocated to, but would highlight areas such as:

- Major improvements on fly-tipping and cleanliness through our Clean & Green and Don't Mess With Croydon programmes
- Additional funding of Upper Norwood Joint Library
- Additional police in New Addington
- Improved Electoral Registration
- Ambition Festival
- Child Sexual Exploitation post
- Promotion of cycling in the borough
- Saving the Fieldway Family Centre from closure

This reserve, most of which is now allocated, continues to assist this administration in driving forward its ambitions for Croydon.

CQ144-16 from Councillor Donald Speakman

Councillor Simon Hall

Will the Cabinet Member please provide the following information concerning financial assistance given by Croydon Council to Youth Groups in Croydon?

Name of Youth Group
Level of Financial Support
Croydon Ward

This information to cover financial years 2015/16 and Budget 2016/17

Reply

The council is making additional investment into young people's services. by investing £3.25 capital and up to £900k revenue over three years on an exciting new Youth Zone in Croydon. This will provide activities and opportunities for at least 3,000 young people from Croydon with approximately 1,500 visits to the facility each week. This is in addition to the current council offer, which includes youth arts projects, school based projects; LDD young people sessions after school and in the evenings tailored specifically for their needs; street-based detached youth work and community based play and youth outreach on estates and isolated communities.

The council currently offers free space for youth clubs and there are commissioned services for services such as young people's self-help mental health group, outreach health sessions, sexual health and relationships sessions in schools, peer mentor support in schools and three community.

There is significant investment by a wide range of voluntary, community and faith groups in Croydon, with a rich and diverse range of provision across the borough. The Council works in partnership with many of these and does a lot of facilitation and sign-posting.

CQ145-16 from Councillor Donald Speakman

Councillor Simon Hall

How is it the current Conservative Mayor of London will be making cuts in taxation whilst Croydon's Labour Council is increasing Council Tax even after promising not to?

Reply

The funding for the Mayor of London is totally different from that of boroughs. The Mayor of London has not been subject to the cuts that London Boroughs have. The budget papers and the Section 151 officer's presentation to Cabinet clearly set out the scale of funding cuts and pressures this council faces.

In addition, he will know that nearly two thirds of the reduction this year in the GLA precept comes from the unwinding of half of the Olympic element of the bill, which was always going to come out this year, whoever the Mayor was.

Croydon Council's increase is below the OBR forecast for inflation for the coming year, so is in line with our manifesto commitment.

Councillor Simon Hall

The total sum for the Box Park deal is in the public domain, cited most recently in the Croydon Guardian (17th February) as 'more than £4 million of taxpayers money'. I'm told by officers that this deal is commercially sensitive so the detail of the deal is less than transparent. This includes not being able to share why the Council is taking eight of the Boxpark units and what the Council plans on using them for.

Can the Cabinet Member please outline a detailed timetable when councillors and members of the public will be able to examine the information about how taxpayer money is being used to subsidise this scheme?

Reply

Details regarding the financial arrangements with Boxpark are already available on the council website within the key decision notice that was published in April 2015:

<https://www.croydon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Public%20notice%20of%20key%20decisions%20made%20by%20the%20Cabinet%20Members%20for%20Homes%20%26%20Regeneration%20and%20Finance%20%26%20Treasury%20on%2013%20April%202015%20v2.pdf>

To summarise, the council has made a loan of £3m to Boxpark at a commercial rate of interest, and additionally intends to provide funding of £61,500 per annum. Boxpark's business case indicates that the loan principal and loan interest will be paid back in full to the council. The repayment of the interest will mean that the council's grant funding will be more than covered, and it goes without saying that all sums relating to the Boxpark project are budgeted for.

Alongside this are the obvious benefits to Croydon arising from Boxpark locating in the borough. The project is set to create over 200 jobs, as well as business rate income of approximately £170,000 per annum. Additionally, the indirect Gross Value Added benefit to the local economy is estimated at between £7-10m, not to mention the positive press and publicity generated for Croydon's regeneration. The presence of Boxpark is known to be having a positive effect in the minds of commercial agents and occupiers when they are considering the town centre as a potential office location, which is one of the reasons the council along with CGLP (Croydon Gateway Limited Partnership, made up of Stanhope and Schroder) agreed to support the introduction of this high profile meanwhile project in the first place.

In terms of the eight containers the council had secured within Boxpark, due to the phenomenal demand for units we have agreed with Boxpark that it would be better to use those containers to bring in additional businesses and create new jobs, with our £160,000 of funding this year instead being used to commission Boxpark to produce a second year of the Ambition Festival.

CQ149-16 from Councillor Andrew Pelling

Councillor Simon Hall

Please provide an estimate of the additional revenue and capital costs, by financial year where appropriate, associated with the following pledges by the Conservative opposition regarding council services

- a) Retention of the previous free garden waste collection system
- b) Renewal of Fairfield Halls whilst retaining a partially open facility
- c) the net cost of services to be provided to new residents and tax receipts lost arising from not providing for the creation of homes in Shirley and Heathfield wards as proposed in the draft Croydon Plan
- d) returning the on street car parking charging prices to those operating before the recent changes to a simplified pricing system
- e) to return to the street cleansing regime as it was before the 2015 adjustments
- f) to undertake consultations across the Borough and to introduce 20 mph restrictions on a road by road basis only
- g) to abolish the comprehensive Landlord Licensing scheme
- h) to provide for the Ashburton Old Library to be sold to members of His Grace Evangelical Outreach church
- i) to continue the 100 % Business rate discount for new companies resident in central Croydon, South End and London Road.
- j) to cancel future runnings of Croydon Pearl Izumi cycle races

Reply

Cllr Pelling, you are absolutely right to draw attention to the financial impact of the many pledges the Conservative opposition has made. **The overall revenue costs of their unfunded pledges are estimated at £4.6m, which would be equivalent to a further 3.4% on Council Tax bills.**

In addition, there would be indirect financial impact, e.g. the failure to deliver sufficient housing would lead to a loss of income and increased costs in areas such as homelessness.

The details

- a) Revenue Cost of £1.6m
- b) Capital cost of £4.8m and £1.5 million funding costs (assuming that the Fairfield Halls would need funding for the period that it was partially open) , which has a revenue cost of approx. £0.350m.
- c) No assumption are made on this in the 16/17 budget however increasing our housing supply is crucial to our medium term financial strategy
- d) Revenue Cost of £1m
- e) No direct saving was made from the changes made to street cleansing. However, it is worthy of note that, in our first year of administration, £0.5m. was spent on improving the look and feel of the borough, which might well need to be spent each year if changes had not been made.
- f) The average cost of consulting and introducing the necessary statutory signage for a 20mph limit in a single road could cost around £6,000 if treated in

isolation. With some 2000 local access roads in the borough this could cost a total of around £12M.

By comparison, the current five area approach is expected to cost around £300,000 per area. With some 400 roads in each area this equates to a cost of around £750 per road and a total cost for the borough of £1.5M, eight times cheaper than dealing with each road individually. The main reason for this is the additional statutory signage required when applying to a single road installation. If this difference of £10.5m. were a capital cost, then the revenue impact would be some £0.550.

- g) No cost directly however any continued poor behaviour by landlords could lead to additional cost for the council.
- h) No direct budget impact but there would be a loss to the community.
- i) £0.600m
- j) No budget impact

CQ156-16 **from Councillor Sherwan Chowdhury**

Councillor Simon Hall

Could the cabinet member provide the information of what level of funds to Croydon have been cut since Tory and Coalition government took over?

Reply

The coalition government came in to effect in May 2010.

The table below details the funding cuts that have been made to Croydon since this date.

The information has been shown in monetary terms and as a percentage both annually and cumulative.

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
PA	% reduction	-	(11.2%)	(8.3%)	(2.9%)	(9.5%)	(9.9%)	(13.2%)
Cummulative	% reduction		11.2%	18.4%	21.9%	33.05%	43.5%	56.0%
£	reduction per annum		(£15.494m)	(£10.105m)	(£4.836m)	(£15.446m)	(£14.467m)	(£17.400m)
£	cummulative reduction		(£15.494m)	(£25.598m)	(£30.434m)	(£45.880m)	(£60.347m)	(£77.747m)

In the same period, we have seen substantial increases in the borough's population, clear demographic pressures, inflation, additional responsibilities, cuts to other funding.

CQ157-16 from Councillor Pat Clouder

Councillor Simon Hall

Would the cabinet member confirm that unlike the Conservatives in 2013/14 this administration will not be raising Council Tax only to give it back to the electorate as an election gimmick as the Conservatives did and then was seen to go back up? Would the Cabinet Member further agree with me that this Labour Administration has provided a true change of direction in delivering for the people of Croydon with real political leadership? It is now clear the Conservative administration had a flawed set of priorities and was incompetent and wasteful?

Reply

These are serious and tough times.

We will not play games with the people of Croydon and the people of Croydon showed in 2014 that they saw through the Conservatives' gimmick! There was a irresponsible £3million electon gimmick when their then Leader had no idea how a Conservative administration would have closed a £100million funding gap over the following four years.

This administration has ensured that the Council is politically led and driven forward a clear direction, showing ambition, courage and determination.

This does indeed totally contrast with the previous administrations that did not recognise the needs and wishes of the people of Croydon and was indeed incompetent and wasteful in so many ways. The work to clear up the mess we inherited goes on and, despite funding cuts and unfair treatment by Central Government, we will continue to deliver for the people of Croydon.

CQ158-16 from Councillor Pat Clouder

Councillor Simon Hall

Would the Cabinet Member not agree with me that looking back on the Conservative management of this council was seen to spend over £140 million of tax payers' money on the Bernard Weatherhall House. Also some £200 million of tax payers' money relating to CCURV, we also witnessed much of the post-riot money spent on areas that were not affected or did not address any of the underlying issues identifies at the time. Would the Cabinet Member not agree with me that Croydon Labour is ambitious for Croydon and have truly invested in Croydon's future?

Reply

You correctly highlight just some of the wrong choices and flawed judgement shown by the previous administration.

This administration is now taking this Council in a totally different direction, including:

- unwinding CCURV and setting up our own development company
- getting value out of Bernard Wetherall House by leasing part of it and transferring staff from another building enabling a capital receipt
- directing capital to projects that really matter, notably education estates, Fairfield Halls, New Addington, new house building
- using our Revolving Investment Fund to fund major development in the borough, notably housing.

CQ162-16 from Councillor Matthew Kyeremeh

Councillor Simon Hall

How much of last year's Council Tax was collected in a ward-by-ward breakdown? What supportive steps is the Council going to take to ensure maximum collections of the next Council Tax year?

Reply

Please see attached a breakdown of the collection position by ward for 2014-15. The data has been collated as at the end of 2014-15 and again as at 13 February 2016, the most recent data available.

Council tax collection and recovery continues after the end of the respective billing year where amounts are outstanding and retrospective changes can also occur, which alter the amount to be collected. As well as the collection of monies the reasons for this include council tax band changes, additional properties brought into billing and backdated and retrospective amendments to council tax support and discount entitlements.

The council seeks to maximise collection as much as possible and already has a number of measures in place to support this. The approach considers whether customers are in arrears because they can't pay or won't pay and next steps are taken as appropriate.

Arrangements to clear arrears are made wherever possible and recovery methods for those who won't pay include attachments to wages or benefit, referral to enforcement agents (bailiffs) and in cases with high arrears, bankruptcy or charging order. For customers who can't pay, we will consider a range of repayment options and periods, where more intensive support is required referral is made to the People's Gateway service who will work with customers to address debt problems, give budgeting support, ensure benefit entitlement is maximised and provide help in finding work. This ensures customers are given a bespoke support package to resolve their financial issues and any cycle of debt is broken so future issues can be avoided.

From 1 April 2016, the council will be operating an internal enforcement agent team which will further support the measures already in place.

Council tax collection for 2015-16 is on track to exceed last year's performance which was the best on record at 96.4%.

2014-15 Collection Position - Year End

Ward No	Name	End of 2014-15 - Post Rollover (1/4/15)			2014-15 - at 13/2/16		
		Amount to Collect	Receipts	% Collected	Amount to Collect	Receipts	% Collected
77	Kenley	9,011,522.72	8,875,842.12	98.49%	9,024,668.40	8,917,413.49	98.81%
76	East Coulsdon	7,448,194.98	7,392,006.41	99.25%	7,447,125.82	7,399,554.44	99.36%
75	Sanderstead	8,052,216.10	8,022,217.49	99.63%	8,058,815.04	8,028,095.12	99.62%
74	Purley	8,981,811.78	8,817,243.54	98.17%	8,983,537.54	8,857,274.69	98.59%
73	West Coulsdon	8,351,863.60	8,229,462.61	98.53%	8,354,605.60	8,266,404.79	98.94%
72	Selsdon/Ballards	7,492,288.07	7,447,957.20	99.41%	7,486,191.19	7,459,176.12	99.64%
71	Croham	9,395,310.93	9,131,344.36	97.19%	9,401,653.37	9,205,744.50	97.92%
70	New Addington	3,382,914.48	3,228,321.21	95.43%	3,384,205.29	3,266,258.02	96.51%
69	Fieldway	2,811,332.96	2,628,507.43	93.50%	2,827,033.74	2,676,346.84	94.67%
68	Heathfield	7,297,886.83	7,151,959.11	98.00%	7,294,701.42	7,177,424.86	98.39%
67	Waddon	7,297,270.59	7,003,935.11	95.98%	7,304,222.05	7,064,826.14	96.72%
66	Shirley	7,678,578.97	7,566,781.64	98.54%	7,671,479.75	7,584,588.51	98.87%
65	Fairfield	10,143,114.82	9,753,115.28	96.16%	10,188,443.25	9,876,430.65	96.94%
63	Ashburton	7,045,104.82	6,926,262.69	98.31%	7,045,836.59	6,940,169.05	98.50%
62	Addiscombe	7,797,039.80	7,500,727.06	96.20%	7,791,619.91	7,571,362.89	97.17%
61	Woodside	6,994,479.20	6,541,057.70	93.52%	6,994,743.60	6,628,753.45	94.77%
59	South Norwood	7,920,506.89	7,425,149.20	93.75%	7,931,135.84	7,527,069.63	94.91%
58	Thornton Heath	6,478,158.86	6,002,366.67	92.66%	6,501,881.90	6,118,626.19	94.11%
57	Upper Norwood	7,577,242.50	7,254,441.36	95.74%	7,582,266.84	7,308,749.82	96.39%
56	Broad Green	6,431,517.26	6,016,013.06	93.54%	6,462,410.97	6,119,894.85	94.70%
55	Selhurst	6,675,373.56	6,102,373.63	91.42%	6,685,895.59	6,231,866.27	93.21%
54	West Thornton	6,211,823.94	5,833,782.77	93.91%	6,240,551.20	5,915,926.66	94.80%
53	Bensham	6,243,750.26	5,838,859.74	93.52%	6,242,611.93	5,937,436.53	95.11%
52	Norbury	7,639,313.99	7,351,008.83	96.23%	7,644,880.41	7,406,318.22	96.88%
	Total	174,358,617.91	168,040,736.22	96.38%	174,550,517.24	169,485,711.73	97.10%

CQ163-16 **from Councillor Matthew Kyeremeh**

Councillor Simon Hall

How much impact has the government cuts had on setting this year's Council Tax and how is the Council going to make this impact known to the people of Croydon?

Reply

The cut to our funding alongside the need to allocate inflation and growth to the budget resulted in a budget gap of £21.7m for 2016/17.

Details of this gap are shown below along with how we have closed the gap, which includes generating £5.5 m from Council Tax Increases.

Issues	2016/17 £m
Grant loss	14.6
Inflation	2.6
Growth	9.0
Council Tax base increase	-4.5
Budget Gap	21.7
Gap Closed by	
Council Tax	5.5
Income options	5.7
Efficiencies - Digital and Enabling, corporate resources	5.2
Adults transformation programme	3.0
Efficiencies in service delivery	2.3
	21.7

To generate this £5.5m. The Council Tax for 2016/17 has been increased by 1.89%.

This increase will be communicated to all residents in a letter being sent out with their Council Tax Bill.

We will also be posting a detailed paper on our Web page.

The increase has also been communicated via social media.

We have written a press release for the local media

The Leader has also written about the increase in his blog.

CQ164-16 **from Councillor Matthew Kyeremeh**

Councillor Simon Hall

How far has the Mayor's portion of the Council Tax benefitted the people of Croydon over the last 5 years?

Reply

The Mayor's portion has provided various valuable services, such as transport services, LIP funding, police and fire services.

However, in this period, it is clear that Croydon has not had the services it deserves from the Mayor. The Mayor has not delivered the promised tram extension, imposed significant fare rises, failed to support the Zone 4 campaign and not given us the police that this borough needs.

CQ165-16 **from Councillor Robert Canning**

Councillor Simon Hall

Does Croydon Council currently have any staff employed on zero hours contracts?

Reply

The term “zero hours contracts” is commonly used to described contracts of employment which require the employee to be available for work and to accept work when it is offered whilst the employer is not obliged to guarantee a minimum amount of paid work. The Council does not use such contracts for its employees.

CQ166-16 from Councillor Robert Canning**Councillor Simon Hall**

How many individuals, couples and families are estimated to have moved to Croydon from inner London as a consequence of the Government's benefit cap and what impact is this having on Croydon Council's finances?

Reply

We are not able to provide the numbers of individual's couple and families that have moved to Croydon from inner London as a consequence of the Government's benefit cap as there are many circumstances that will contribute to someone or a family moving and we do not ask for (or have legal requirements to ask for) reasons or a claimant's previous address when they make a new claim for Housing Benefit, unless the claimant has moved within the borough in which case we will link the applications together.

Below are details of the number of new benefit cap cases by value reduction since the benefit cap was introduced in 2013.

With the exception of the first six months of the benefit cap being introduced the numbers of benefit cap cases have been reducing on average each month. Please see tables below.

Year 2013/14

Reduction in benefits received as a result of the cap	Yearly Total 2013	Average per month April to Sept	Average per month Oct to March
Up to £25	75	12	1
£25.01 to £50	148	30	-6
£50.01 to £75	51	9	-1
£75.01 to £100	42	9	-2
£100.01 to £150	51	13	-4
£150.01 to £200	9	6	-5
£200.01 to £250	7	4	-3
£250.01 to £300	0	0	0
£300.01 to £350	7	0	1

Year 2014/15

Reduction in benefits received as a result of the cap	Yearly Total 2014	Average per month April to Sept	Average per month Oct to March
Up to £25	72	1	-1
£25.01 to £50	84	-6	-5
£50.01 to £75	60	3	-2
£75.01 to £100	23	-2	-2

£100.01 to £150	38	0	-2
£150.01 to £200	13	1	0
£200.01 to £250	6	-1	1
£250.01 to £300	0	0	0
£300.01 to £350	0	0	-1

Year 2015/16

	Yearly Total 2015	Average per month April to Sept	Average per month Oct and Nov
Up to £25	77	2	-4
£25.01 to £50	68	-1	-4
£50.01 to £75	82	3	3
£75.01 to £100	29	1	2
£100.01 to £150	39	0	-1
£150.01 to £200	10	-1	1
£200.01 to £250	6	0	-1
£250.01 to £300	0	0	0
£300.01 to £350	0	0	0

The year on year comparisons confirms that the number of new benefit cap cases we are receiving is very slight, or the number is reducing year on year.

Year on Year Comparisons

	Yearly Total 2013	Yearly Total 2014	Yearly Total As at Nov. 2015
Up to £25	75	72	77
£25.01 to £50	148	84	68
£50.01 to £75	51	60	82
£75.01 to £100	42	23	29
£100.01 to £150	51	38	39
£150.01 to £200	9	13	10
£200.01 to £250	7	6	6
£250.01 to £300	0	0	0
£300.01 to £350	0	0	0

Over and above the figures detailed below on benefit cap, It is clear that welfare reform and increasing rents and property prices in Central London is causing significant flows from Inner London to Croydon. There is no doubt that the benefit cap, welfare reform and the flows of people from Inner London has put additional pressure on many services, notably homelessness and temporary accommodation where there has been a huge increase in net spend and there is further growth in the budget for 16/17.

CQ170-16 **from Councillor David Wood**

Councillor Simon Hall

Please could Cllr Hall detail how much council tax is spent across services a) Per ward (total) b) Per resident (broken down by ward)

Reply

Services are not calculated by ward so I cannot provide these figures.

What I can say is that this administration is committed to delivering more for less. It is determined to meet the needs and ambitions of residents. In doing so, it is developing delivery that is needs-led, rather than the Tory notion of providing the same level of service irrespective of need. This will mean that we properly target our constrained resources to where they are needed.

CQ171-16 from Councillor Oliver Lewis

Councillor Simon Hall

Not only have the Tory Government savagely cut Croydon's grant, of the £300m transition fund, just £400K is coming to Croydon, whilst Bromley receives £1.6m and Surrey a massive £24m. Why is the Government punishing the residents of New Addington and Croydon in this way?

Reply

On the figures, of the £300m., Croydon is getting £800k (£400k in each year) – and this compares to £4.1m. for Bromley and £24.1m. for Surrey.

It is noticeable that 83% of the £300million went to Tory-run authorities.

The onslaught on local government is continuing at an even faster pace under the Conservatives than the previous Conservative-led government.

The refusal of Central Government to recognise the reality of Croydon's circumstances, in terms of historic underfunding, population growth and demographic pressures, is inexplicable. It indicates to me that the Conservatives simply do not care about the people of Croydon and yet the MPs for Croydon Central and Croydon South have supported this approach.

Having said this, this administration is still determined to deliver for the people of Croydon and the way we are transforming services will particularly benefit areas such as New Addington - and we are taking specific steps that are already or will benefit , New Addington, such as improved street cleaning and action on fly-tipping, extra police, public realm works on Central Parade, support for the Fieldway Family Centre and the truly exciting leisure and community centre on Central Parade.

CQ174-16 from Councillor John Wentworth

Councillor Simon Hall

How much has the government cut from Croydon's support grant since 2010-2016? Please list amounts for each year and the accumulative total in cash and percentage terms.

Reply

		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
PA	% reduction	-	(11.2%)	(8.3%)	(2.9%)	(9.5%)	(9.9%)	(13.2%)
Cummulative	% reduction		11.2%	18.4%	21.9%	33.05%	43.5%	56.0%
£	reduction per annum		(£15.494m)	(£10.105m)	(£4.836m)	(£15.446m)	(£14.467m)	(£17.400m)
£	cummulative reduction		(£15.494m)	(£25.598m)	(£30.434m)	(£45.880m)	(£60.347m)	(£77.747m)

In the same period, we have seen substantial increases in the borough's population, clear demographic pressures, inflation, additional responsibilities, cuts to other funding.

CQ176-16 from Councillor John Wentworth

Councillor Simon Hall

How do the rises in council tax in the first 3 years of this administration compare to council tax rises made during the first 3 years (2007, 2008, 2009) of the previous Conservative administration?

Reply

	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
LBC	3.99%	3.99%	3.84%	0.00%	0%	1.99%
GLA	5.29%	1.95%	0	-1.32%	-1.34%	-6.44%
SOCIAL CARE						2%
TOTAL	4.28%	3.53%	2.99%	-0.27%	-0.27%	1.89%

CQ103-16 from Councillor Luke Clancy

Councillor Alison Butler

How much Community Infrastructure levy (CIL) has been received as a result of developments in Coulsdon since May 2014? How much CIL is anticipated to be received as a result of known developments in the pipeline in Coulsdon including Cane Hill? Since May 2014 how much CIL has been spent on improvement projects in Coulsdon?

Reply

In terms of assignment, Community Infrastructure Levy is collected on a borough wide basis and will be assigned on a borough wide basis in accordance with the Council's infrastructure planning as defined in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the Council's Capital Strategy.

To date, no borough Community Infrastructure Levy has been assigned borough wide as the Council is awaiting the outcome of the Growth Zone submission to the Government, which will define the focus for infrastructure investment.

Since May 2014 the Council has received £2,969,644 borough's Community Infrastructure Levy from developments in Coulsdon. The overall borough's CIL income is currently £4,763,135.

If all outstanding planning consents in Coulsdon were commenced approximately £5.3m of borough's Community Infrastructure Levy would be payable. However, this figure should be treated with real caution as not all planning consents are commenced.

CQ118-16 from Councillor Margaret Bird

Councillor Alison Butler

Can the Cabinet member tell me how many leaseholders of ex Council properties have challenged maintenance bills as incorrect, and what is the impact to the budget in 2015 /6 because the Council had overestimated bills?

Reply

We do, on occasion receive challenges from leaseholders about the repairs and maintenance element of their Annual service charge invoice. The bills are based on actual costs and invoiced to the leaseholder in arrears. There is no separate budget for the repairs and maintenance costs for leaseholders as they are recharged an element of the costs for the repairs and maintenance carried out to the whole block.

The last Annual service charge bill which included the repairs and maintenance costs was issued on 30 June 2015 for the period 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015.

During 2015 we did receive a few queries regarding these costs. Most queries related to the leaseholder's dissatisfaction with the quality of the repair, the cost element or that the repair had not been completed. The repairs team investigate any such disputes and, if upheld, advise the Leasehold services team to adjust the leaseholder's bill accordingly. The impact to the budget is minimal, the total amount credited to the leaseholder's accounts during 2015 was £297.24

CQ123-16 from Councillor Jason Perry

Councillor Alison Butler

Will the Cabinet Member assure members across the Chamber that the member referral right to Planning Committee will not be lost, as part of the latest budget decisions?

Reply

The Council now receives over 5,000 planning applications per annum (with trends suggesting that this level of service demand will increase into 2016-17). With the pressure being placed on local planning authorities to reduce time taken to determine planning applications and to reduce overall unit costs. The Council's development management service is under increased pressure and this taken alongside the huge reduction in government funding to local authorities means we must consider the best way of delivering services.

However, it is important that the service continues to provide a transparent and engaging service for customers; facilitating proactive engagement, whilst recognising that the speed of determination will always be an important feature of development management performance. Member Referral process is an important ingredient of required transparency and scrutiny.

Whilst we are not seeking to remove Member Referral rights, there are opportunities to modify existing arrangements to make the process more efficient and proportionate. There are a number of situations where referred cases are not issues for Planning Committee or Planning Sub Committee and should reasonably and proportionately continue to be determined by officers under delegated powers. Unnecessary referrals significantly increase the cost of determining such applications (many of which are minor in scale and complexity) and can significantly delay determination periods.

We are looking at effective ways of dealing with referrals and will shortly be discussing this on a cross-party basis in order to reduce the time taken to determine minor planning applications and reduce overall determination costs.

CQ124-16 from Councillor Jason Perry

Councillor Alison Butler

What efforts has the Cabinet Member made since February last year to convince Government to allow local authorities to set their own planning fees? Please detail meetings and correspondence with ministers.

Reply

Allowing local planning authorities to set their own planning fees (to facilitate full planning application cost recovery and service efficiencies/unit costs reductions) has been an area of debate over a number of years. Planning fees were last updated in 2012 and experience suggests that the planning fee manages to cover around 65% of the overall application processing costs.

Like many other local planning authorities, Croydon is looking at ways to reduce planning application unit costs through streamlining systems and utilising IT solutions to facilitate improvements in the speed and quality of its decision-making process. This will help increase cost recovery, reduce budget pressures and potentially increase competitiveness.

To date, the Conservative Government has been reluctant to raise application fees, with no tangible proposals for the industry to respond to. However, the Government has now issued a consultation document entitled "Technical Consultation on Implementation of Planning Changes" which advises that planning fees might well be increased in line with inflation, but with the increase likely to be linked to the overall performance of that local planning authority. The Government is considering limiting fee increases to poor and high performers (so that fee setting might well introduce an element of competition as part of the system).

It appears that the Government is still considering locally set fees linked to clear service improvements and bespoke/fast track arrangements services.

It is too early to say how these new arrangements might evolve, especially as the Government also appears keen to introduce competition as part of the process. We are currently reviewing this document and working alongside other London Boroughs, we will be making representations, not only in respect of planning fees, but also in relation to the others issues arising out of the Housing and Planning Bill and this consultation document. The period for commenting on the consultation document runs from 18th February to 15th April 2016.

CQ126-16 **from Councillor Helen Pollard**

Councillor Alison Butler

Will job losses in the spatial planning team see them struggle to deal with the 7000 responses to the local plan and keep to schedule?

Reply

As part of the wider Planning and Strategic Transport Directorate's budget setting and management for 2015/16, the Spatial Planning Service's budget setting and management for 2015/16 does not include any loss of posts.

At this stage, the Local Plan programme remains on schedule.

CQ127-16 **from Councillor Helen Pollard**

Councillor Alison Butler

Are job losses in the planning team impacting on case loads and the length of time taken to determine applications?

Reply

As part of the 2016-17 budget process, the development management service has realised projected savings amounting to £375,000.

Whilst the performance against speed of determination is broadly in line with the various Government Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), it is fair to say that the service is currently under some strain; applications numbers are rising, (over 5000 per annum) there is a severe shortage across London of appropriately skilled and experienced planning staff, thus making recruitment and retention an increasing challenge and the Government continues to make changes to the planning system. For example, the likely changes to the National Planning Policy Framework along with the introduction of associated secondary legislation and guidance from the Planning and Housing Bill will mean that the service will need to continue to evolve and develop over the coming year.

Whilst the on-going development management restructure process seeks to reduce the overall number of posts (by 2 FTE) it is primarily seeking to strengthen the team in specific areas, to allow the service to focus more proactively and effectively on the important growth orientated development proposals now being attracted to the borough. Utilising best practice available across London, the service is also identifying ways in which to enhance the effectiveness of existing processes so that the determination and communication processes can become more streamlined, especially with greater use of enhanced IT systems and smarter ways of working.

CQ142-16 from Councillor Dudley Mead

Councillor Alison Butler

Having acknowledged on page 76 of 230 para 12.11 of the cabinet agenda for 22 February 2016 that 100 per cent decent homes standard was achieved for all council stock by 31 March 2011, under the previous administration, is the inference to be drawn from the rest of the paragraph that since May 2014 the standard has not been kept up? In respect of the HRA going forward is 100 per cent decent homes an aspiration?

Reply

When the decent home standard was introduced, there was a government target for all social landlords to bring 100% of their stock up to the standard by 2010/11. Croydon achieved this target by March 2011. The Council is now maintaining its stock to this level.

Over time it is expected that homes will fall below the standard due to the age or wear and tear of certain components, such as windows for example. Through our asset management controls and targeted inspections we are able to plan our capital investment programme to ensure our stock is maintained at the decent homes standard.

CQ143-16 **from Councillor Dudley Mead**

Councillor Alison Butler

Whilst welcoming the completion and occupation of the new flats, started by the previous administration, on the old Employment Exchange site in Fieldway, could the cabinet member confirm that all the incomplete sites started before May 2014 have now been finished and none of them are part of the 2016/17 housing capital budget?

Reply

It can be confirmed that the Council has completed all of the 74 new homes which formed part of the council new build phase 3 and phase 4 programme.

As is standard practice, the retention for these schemes is within the housing capital budget and will be released in 2016/17, following the 12 months end of defects period.

CQ169-16 **from Councillor Paul Scott**

Councillor Alison Butler

To the Cabinet Member responsible for Planning: In setting her budget would the Cabinet Member please confirm what cost she has allowed for the increase in processing, report writing and presenting a minor planning application for say a modest extension to an existing house that is referred to the planning committee instead of being determined under delegated powers?

Reply

Evidence suggests that with minor applications (including minor householder developments), maintaining the delegated process (rather than referring to Planning Committee/Sub Committee) would save in excess of £794 per planning application. Cases referred to Planning Committee and Planning Sub Committee require more officer monitoring time, report writing time, Member engagement, administration, agenda preparation and presentation preparation time which significantly add to the overall processing cost.

Member referrals to Planning Committee and Planning Sub Committee also tend to result in those planning applications being determined outside the statutory period. This may become more of an issue with proposed changes under the Planning and Housing Bill that will continue to drive efficiency and performance.

Furthermore, the differential between delegated and Committee processes is likely to be higher (in pure monetary terms) in the case of more complex cases, where more time and effort (with associated additional cost) is involved when reporting such cases to Planning Committee.

CQ132-16 from Councillor Simon Brew

Councillor Tony Letts

What charge was levied per hereditament in 2015-2016 by the Council for collecting the BID levy in each of the New Addington & Croydon BID areas, stated separately for each BID?

Reply

For the 2016/17 year the cost per hereditament for collection of the BID levy is £32.78 for the Croydon BID and £27.86 for the New Addington and Purley BID's. These fees are based on the additional costs by the council incurred for collection and include recovery and enforcements actions as required. The lower fees for New Addington and Purley reflect the lower level of fees per hereditament for those BID's in relation to the main Croydon Town Centre BID's.

In regards to the 2015/15 year the costs invoiced to the BIDs for collecting the levy are as follows:

New Addington: £820
Croydon: £16,000

CQ133-16 **from Councillor Simon Brew**

Councillor Tony Letts

What charge will be levied per hereditament during 2016-2017 for collecting the BID levy in each of the New Addington, Croydon & Purley BID areas, stated separately for each BID?

Reply

For the 2016/17 year the cost per hereditament for collection of the BID levy is £32.78 for the Croydon BID and £27.86 for the New Addington and Purley BID's. These fees are based on the additional costs by the council incurred for collection and include recovery and enforcements actions as required. The lower fees for New Addington and Purley reflect the lower level of fees per hereditament for those BID's in relation to the main Croydon Town Centre BID's.

In regards to the 2015/15 year the costs invoiced to the BIDs for collecting the levy are as follows:

New Addington: £820
Croydon: £16,000

CQ134-16 from Councillor Simon Brew

Councillor Tony Letts

- 1) Why does the Council plan to switch from a variable charge per hereditament to a fixed charge for collection of the Business Improvement District (BID) levy in 2016-2017?
- 2) Why does the Council plan to switch from a fixed charge to a variable charge for the issue of Street Trader Licences?
- 3) Why are the two policies moving in opposite directions?

Reply

- 1) The Council aims to balance providing the BID levy billing and collection services at a reasonable cost with ensuring relevant costs incurred for levy set-up, billing administration and enforcement process are covered.

The Council continue to base its levy billing and collection service fee for the individual BIDs on a cost per hereditament. This cost per hereditament is derived from the total annual running costs the Council will incur providing the service to all BIDs divided by the total number of hereditaments from all the BIDs, to get the unit cost per hereditament. The cost of set up, running invoices, reporting, levy collection and other miscellaneous costs is the same regardless of the size of the levy (hereditament), e.g. £1 invoice costs as much to create, send and collect as a £1000 invoice.

- 2) This would see a significant increase in fee for a number of current street trading licences but the proposal would not mean a blanket increase in fee of 2500+ % for all traders.

The consultation will shortly close and the Council will assess all responses received. If there are valid concerns with regard to any significant negative impact on SME's then those will be considered.

- 3) We consider this to be fairest way to apportion costs.

CQ090-16

from Councillor Sara Bashford

Councillor Timothy Godfrey

Can Cllr Godfrey please confirm how much has been allocated in FY 16/17 for the summer 2016 Ambition Festival? As the main venue for the festival this year was Fairfield Halls and he is closing that, where has he planned for the main acts to perform? He previously mentioned Box Park, but if this is delayed and not ready in the summer can he please let me know what other venues he is considering.

In addition can he please let us know if there is an allocation in the 17/18 budget for a third festival?

Reply

The 2016 Ambition Festival will be held at Boxpark Croydon and at least two other town centre venues, and Boxpark are in the process of being appointed to produce the festival across all locations. They have a strong track record of events at their existing site, and their new location in Croydon has been designed specifically to facilitate the hosting of various forms of entertainment and events.

Given that Boxpark is scheduled to open in August the festival will be held in September and £160,000 has been allocated in FY 16/17 to cover this cost, a saving on the cost of the 2015 festival.

To note, this £160,000 is in lieu of Boxpark providing eight containers for the use of the council. Due to the phenomenal demand for units we have agreed with Boxpark that it would be better to use those containers to bring in additional businesses and create new jobs, with our funding instead used to produce a second year of Ambition.

The budget for 2017/18 will be set at Council this time next year and any funding decision will follow a review of the success of this year's festival.

It goes without saying that in addition to the Council funded parts of the festival we would welcome the involvement of any town centre venues who wish to take advantage of the successful branding, footfall and publicity that this event will generate. Boxpark will equally be reaching out to local groups and organisations who wish to participate or perform at the festival.

The 2015 festival showed how the town centre can host large scale events. These are an essential element of Croydon's wider cultural and leisure offer to both current and new residents, and we look forward to facilitating and nurturing this element of Croydon's regeneration in the coming years.

CQ095-16 **from Councillor Lynne Hale**

Councillor Timothy Godfrey

Please advise the sum spent by the Council on consultants within the culture, leisure and sport portfolio during the years 2014/15, 2015/16 and that budgeted for 2016/17.

Please advise the sum and purpose for each consultancy spend.

Reply

In 2014/15 £4k was spent on a number of small pieces of consultancy and development work.

The council investigated the options for the development of a Cultural Development Trust for the delivery of culture services and development in the borough. This work was developed with PWC at the cost of £65K

A budget of £47k is available for further consultancy work in 2016.

CQ096-16 from Councillor Lynne Hale

Councillor Timothy Godfrey

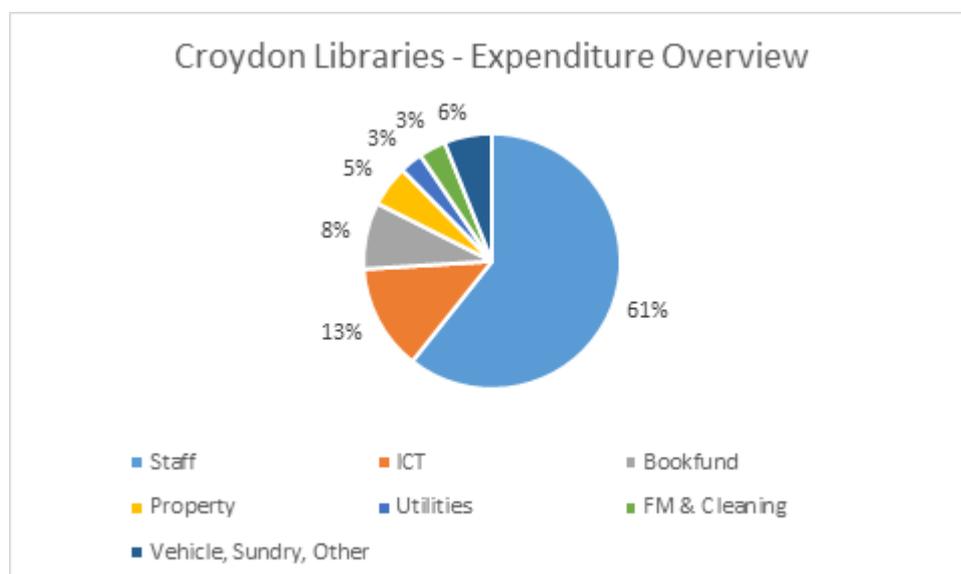
Please advise the staff budgets and FTE staffing levels for each of the Croydon libraries for 2014/15, 2015/16 and for 2016/17. Please advise the staff budgets and FTE staffing levels for leisure services 2014/15, 2015/16 and for 2016/17, giving a breakdown in respect of parks and leisure centres/swimming pools.

Reply

The library service is delivered on behalf of the local authority by Carillion Integrated Services. The breakdown of the budget for library service is below. Please note that the figures for 2015-16 are to October 2015 the most recent dates for which this information is available Detailed breakdown of the staffing costs are not available but the percentage spend is provided below in the form of a pie chart. A structure chart showing the allocation of staffing across all libraries is also attached.

LIBRARIES DIVISION

	2015-16 <i>(to Oct'15)</i>	2014-15
	£	£
Total Employees	54,066.20	117,328.22
Total Premises Related Exp	9,539.74	84,596.75
Total Transport Related Exp	0.00	21.80
Total Supplies and Services *	-14,988.60	6,216.44
Total Third Party Payments **	1,724,370.75	3,273,116.41
Gross Expenditure	1,772,988.09	3,481,279.62
Total Income	0.00	5.00
Net Expenditure	1,772,988.09	3,481,284.62



Croydon Libraries staff structure

Contract support officer	1 FTE
Contract support assistant	0.5 FTE
Contract support officer/rota manager	1 FTE

	Thornton Central	New Heath	Addington	Ashburton	Shirley	Bradmore Green	Coulsdon	Selsdon	Broad Green	Sanderstead	Norbury	South Norwood	Purley	TOTAL
	4.22 FTE	1 FTE	1.28 FTE	1 FTE	1 FTE	1 FTE	1 FTE	1 FTE	0.76 FTE	0.76 FTE	1 FTE	0.76 FTE	1 FTE	15.78 FTE
Supervisors	Supervisor	Supervisor	Supervisors	Supervisor	Supervisors									
	11.15 FTE	4.3 FTE	2.78 FTE	3.58 FTE	1.9 FTE	1.61 FTE	2.36 FTE	3.66 FTE	1.9 FTE	1.19 FTE	3.71 FTE	2.05 FTE	2.6 FTE	42.79 FTE
Customer service assistants	Customer service assistants													

In respect of Parks and Leisure Centres/Swimming Pools the staff budgets and salary costs for 2014/15, 2015/16 and for 2016/17 are as follows

Parks and Leisure Staffing FTE and Budgets			
	Finanical year	FTE	Budget
	2016/17	27.0	£ 1,097,042.41
	2015/16	22.5	£ 981,106.39
	2014/15	23.9	£ 902,588.00

In respect of 2016/2107 the split for Green Spaces and Leisure was as follows:-

Parks Staffing FTE and Budgets			
	Finanical year	FTE	Budget
	2016/17	18.5	£ 697,663.85
Parks Staffing FTE and Budgets			
	Finanical year	FTE	Budget
	2016/17	7.0	£ 399,378.56

These figures are for Council employed staff only and do not take into account staff numbers employed by the respective contractors.

CQ104-16 **from Councillor Richard Chatterjee**

Councillor Timothy Godfrey

Why it was appropriate to more than double the parking charges at Waddon Leisure Centre, please?

This does nothing to help the Health & Wellbeing policy to support young and old to participate in exercise.

Reply

Parking charges for users of Waddon Leisure centre remain free for the 1st hour of parking. This is because the Leisure Centre will still refund the first 1hr of parking, so this is still free for users of the centre.

The purpose of the revised parking charges is to make the tariff structure clearer for customers by standardising charges across the Borough. Hence there are linear charges per 30 minutes for on-street parking and per hour in car parks relating to the demand on the parking space (e.g. 30 minutes = 40p, 1 hour = 80p and 1 hour 30 min = £1.20). The parking charges have resulted in some charges increasing however some have also decreased.

The Council has developed a parking tariff that is aimed to help meet its targets for encouraging other forms of transport such as buses and cycling which have a lower impact on the environment than the private motor car. We have also aimed to encourage turnover of spaces, reducing the demand for parking in areas close to businesses and providing more space for short term parking.

CQ105-16 from Councillor Sara Bashford

Councillor Timothy Godfrey

In 2014 the Old Ashburton Library was due to be taken over and brought back into use by a community group. When the Labour Administration took control of the Council they cancelled this. Subsequently nothing has happened and the building remains empty and unused.

This building has now become a burden on the budget and the Council Tax payer. It has also over the course of the year increased its budget to bring it back into use. Can you please explain why the budget has almost doubled from £500k in last years budget to £925k. What has changed so significantly that needs this huge additional allocation of Council Tax payers money.

Where are the plans for the project and what are the timescales?

Reply

The attempt to flog off key council assets was a hallmark of Cllr Bashfords reign at Croydon Council. Although we were not able to stop the horrific damaging sale of the Riesco collection, we were able to save the former Convent building in Ashburton Park for the whole community and to ensure it operates as an integral part of the park.

I regret that the opposition and the local MP, Gavin Barwell, object so strongly to the concept of being a long term guardian for our parks and open spaces. We have a very strong mandate from the electors in Ashburton to safeguard the character of their area and ensure that Ashburton Park is protected for future generations.

We have always been very clear that regeneration and investment in local communities is as important as the regeneration and investment that takes place in the metropolitan centre. This is an administration that serves the whole of Croydon borough.

As reported at Cabinet, the lodge in the grounds has now become vacant and the option of selling this to help co-fund further works in the project are now being fully explored.

In addition to enhancing the security around the property essential remedial works have been carried out to prevent further deterioration of the building and potentially hazardous material including asbestos has been removed.

A detailed condition survey of the building has been carried out which has provided greater definition regarding future potential of the building and the necessary work required.

A visit to Coulsdon Community Centre has taken place that highlighted how an efficient and straightforward community centre could be replicated for the benefit of the wider community in Ashburton.

It is intended that a pre-planning application is to be submitted in the Spring of 2016 which will help to inform the preparation of the detailed specification to be delivered as part of the refurbishment programme. A planning application will follow. It is

envisaged that works to the building will commence in Autumn 2016 with completion expected by the summer of 2017.

CQ106-16 **from Councillor Steve O'Connell**

Councillor Timothy Godfrey

Could the Cabinet Member give me more details about the £326k savings in Bereavement Services over the next two years?

Reply

Our bereavement & registrars' services are looking to increase income over the next 12 to 24 months. They will do this by introducing new services which include non-service cremations, baby naming and vowel renewal ceremonies.

We are also looking to increase the number of memorial sales, opening hours for registrars to increase the number of nationality checks completed and increased utilisation of the times available when we can provide a cremation.

From these improvements our income will be increased by £171,000 in 2016.17.

CQ122-16 **from Councillor Andy Stranack**

Councillor Timothy Godfrey

The budget proposes significant operational cost savings at Monks Hill Sports Centre, can Cllr. Godfrey outline how the sports centre will be managed in the future.

Reply

The councils budget sets out a growth in income from the centre (as opposed to a cost saving). As you know, the centre opened for business last year and as part of the running of the centre as a commercial concern, we had always planned for growing the business. The staff worked tirelessly last year to establish a good customer base which has seen the centre prosper. Going forward the centre team are continuing to reach out to local clubs and coaching partnerships to bring new customers to the centre.

The council currently has 5 leisure centres which are managed by our partners Fusion, we also operate Monks Hill Sports Centre and Arena internally, Officers are currently undertaking a review of the leisure provision and I will be bringing a report to Cabinet in the near future setting out the councils approach.

CQ098-16 from Councillor Phil Thomas

Councillor Stuart Collins

Why have you broken your promise on improving the street cleaning throughout the Borough whilst cutting the cleaning in the Leafy Centre & South ? Why is there no extra money in your budget to improve street cleaning for all our residents including ones who don't live in Labour Wards ?

Reply

Cllr Thomas, you really do like to embarrass yourself with your forgetfulness. Let's remind you of some of the facts and maybe you'll stop asking the same old nonsense over and over again.

The cuts your government made on your administration forced you to break your pledge of keeping the weekly landfill collection. You also decided to cut the afternoon street cleaning/ pick up rounds, which resulted in Veolia's street cleaners leaving their orange bags on our streets overnight.

You didn't enforce the contract with Veolia, you didn't prosecute fly-tippers and you cut services. Therefore based on your experience in the role and of the financial position the Government has imposed on local government funding, it's a silly question asking where the extra money is!

Since taking office, this Labour administration has been delivering on its pledge to make Croydon's streets cleaner. We immediately invested £500k to clean up the mess we inherited from you. We are clearing fly tips quicker than you could ever have dreamed of. We have worked with Veolia to dramatically improve the service residents get –fewer missed collections, most street cleansing taking place after collections rather than before and through the negotiations for a new SLWP contract we will be concentrating on improved street cleaning standards.

We have done that because we have worked with the current contractor to understand need and to use the limited resources to best meet that need fairly across the borough – not let the contractor do what is easiest for them as you did on your watch.

Your only response to the coalition government's funding cuts was to cut services, had you have stayed in power you would have cut services further under this Conservative Government. This Labour administration's response has been to make them work smarter, fairer and more efficiently, we are doing more with less. We have been strong on enforcement, fined and prosecuted those who think it is ok to fly tip in our borough. We destroy vehicles used to fly tip. We have also supported hundreds of community champions, we have carried out 57 Community cleans ups and our actions have benefitted North, South and Central Croydon.

We have not stopped there – we are continuing to work with our partners and residents and will not stop until we are the cleanest borough in London.

Yes it's a tough challenge but it's one you chose not to take up.

CQ099-16 **from Councillor Phil Thomas**

Councillor Stuart Collins

Are you not ashamed that a pregnant women was fined for leaving recycling materials at an overflowing recycling centre because the service you are responsible for is so incompetent in emptying the containers because of your mismanagement and cuts in the recycling budget? Why are you targeting easy targets, rather than the real culprits?

Reply

It is poor politics on your part to try and personalise the issue of an individual's fine, to do so without checking who devised the policy in the first place and then not to check to see if the frequency of the emptying had actually changed. You also know that Cllrs do not revoke fines for obvious reasons and that there is an appeals process.

Had you have done your homework you would have found out that it was your administration that put the signs up saying use an alternative, it was an offence and that the frequency of emptying the centres has not changed.

There have been no cuts in recycling budget, this NRC receives a daily clean Mon - Sat , The paper bins are emptied Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday and the DMR bins are collected Mon, Weds, Fri. Having said that I am working with Veolia to review the collections at these centres to see if they can work smarter and more efficiently to keep these centres emptied as frequently as possible without charging the Council more, this is something your administration could have done when these problems were first identified.

You are fully aware of the massive cut in Croydon's grant funding made by Central Government and know we have no extra money to throw at this issue, you also know of Central Government's decision to give £4m to Bromley to help cope with their cuts and that Croydon only got £800,000. If you want more spending, your energy would be best spent lobbying your own National party to make sensible funding decisions for local government.

The council does not station neighbourhood safety officers at recycling centres, but because we have prolific problems with fly-tipping at some recycling centres they have been visited and checked on a regular basis. This is overt surveillance and designed to act as a deterrent.

There is also clear signage at the sites explaining to people that it is an offence to leave waste other than as directed, use an alternative and in many cases residents complied with Officers requests and were not fined. Those that didn't were fined.

We do not target people who legitimately want to recycle their waste, unfortunately there has been a huge issue with people dumping domestic and commercial waste at recycling centres, with people from out of the borough dumping their waste, which makes it more difficult for people who want to recycle their waste to do so. Often these centres also see unfolded cardboard boxes strewn around when the containers are half empty because a minority can't be bothered to break down the cardboard so it fits in the containers.

These are very real issues that all Councils are dealing with across London and the future of these unstaffed centres is in doubt across the whole Capital, I recognise this and will be working on increasing residents' capacity to recycle at home.

Finally you shouldn't have to be told again, that our priority is catching fly tippers and litterers then fining or prosecuting them, our record is far better than yours was, which is why our Don't Mess with Croydon , Take Pride campaign has been nominated for a National Award.

CQ119-16 from Councillor Margaret Bird

Councillor Stuart Collins

How much has the Don't Mess with Croydon campaign cost so far versus the amount received in fines?

Reply

Firstly it is wrong to suggest that the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices should fund the Don't Mess with Croydon Campaign.

The campaign seeks to crack down on flytipping in the borough and other environmental crimes. Since launching the campaign we have significantly improved the collection of Flytips within 48 hours from 3% under the Conservative administration to 78%

The "Don't Mess with Croydon" campaign had £500,000 of funding allocated to clean up the mess on our streets inherited from Cllr Thomas. This has been spent on the following amongst others things, focussed operations in hot spot areas using intelligence based planning and utilising a multi-agency approach and associated communications campaigns.

The income from enforcement activities is projected to be £57,687 for the 2015/2106 financial year

Unfortunately when there is a successful prosecution brought by the council the only income that we are able to receive is recovery of costs and additional money is kept by the courts.

CQ120-16 from Councillor Andy Stranack

Councillor Stuart Collins

A key element of the budget is raising income from green garden waste. Please explain to me how an older resident, without internet access or credit card, signs up for this service? The Councils dedicated telephone number for green garden waste presents the caller with a number of options but does not mention green garden waste?

Reply

A key element of the garden waste service is to meet our budget requirements. In part, this is achieved by raising income through sales of the garden waste bin service but also through cost savings delivered by developing the online payment and information services. Residents have a further two months to subscribe to the service and our service uptake is continuing to increase on a daily basis.

Those who are not able to utilise the wider online and support services can telephone on 020 8726 6200 and a form is completed for those who pay by cheque rather than card. 300 pre-registered residents without online access will be receiving a return courtesy call and letter this week to help speed up the register and pay process. Payments for pre-registered residents are being taken over the telephone. In addition to this from 26th February, a new short telephone message within the central telephone system enables an option button to be selected for garden waste to get through faster.

We hope that these planned developments will ensure a robust, direct and helpful service to all residents giving sufficient time to sign up before the 18th April.

CQ148-16 from Councillor Mario Creatura

Councillor Stuart Collins

Could the Cabinet Member please detail how much Council taxpayer funding is spent on enforcing minor fines such as spitting and street littering (not fly-tipping)? Does this figure exceed the sum raised from the fines generated?

Reply

Your Administration employed a private company concentrating almost exclusively on littering not fly tipping and the fines income was kept by the company so was not cost effective in any way to the tax payer. That Administration also ran down the number of Enforcement Officers to 19 in post there are now 40.

Due to the nature of the Neighbourhood Safety Officer's role and the varied duties that each officer encounters within their duties it is not possible to associate a specific cost against any individual activity that is being performed. The duties are much varied than just issuing fines for littering. These officers also working towards education and prevention, they work to tackle anti-social behaviour, highways offences and licensing issues. The total budgeted cost of the Enforcement teams for the current financial year is as below.

Area	Budget
	2015/16
C20425:NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS - HRA	£ 1,187,000
C15565:AREA ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS	£ 1,062,000
	£ 2,249,000

The income that derives from enforcement (non-fly tipping) activities is projected to be £57,687 for the 2015/2106 financial year. These are mainly FPN's (Fixed penalty notices).

	2015/16
Actual to P9 (per Oracle)	£43,265
Pro rata projected from Pd 9 figures	£57,687

Although prosecutions have been brought by the council the only income that derives from these are recovery of costs and additional fines are kept by the courts.

CQ167-16 **from Councillor Robert Canning**

Councillor Stuart Collins

What consideration has been given to the planning of vehicular trips around the borough in order to minimise the cost of collecting bulky waste and the removal of fly-tipping?

Reply

The council's contractor does coordinate resources to minimise unnecessary vehicle trips. There is a challenge for planning of bulky waste collection as it is a demand led service. The scheduling of collections for bulky waste are carried out on the basis of collections being made on an area basis on certain days (bulky and white goods) in order to utilise vehicles and staffing resources more efficiently.

Fly-tips are allocated to collection teams who operate in defined areas, these include known hot spot areas based on intelligence gathering. In addition fly-tipping is removed as seen by all caged vehicles on route to other work or reported fly-tips.

CQ108-16 **from Councillor Steve O'Connell**

Councillor Mark Watson

The Eyes and Ears Project takes out £735k in 16/17. How will this affect the Council's front line safety function and how many redundancies will it produce?

Reply

The Eyes & Ears project will achieve £735K savings in 16/17 through a combination of deletion of vacant posts, realignment of existing fees & charges, other income generation and increased efficiencies through improved ICT systems. There is no intention of creating any redundancies.

The single unified enforcement and street based service that has been created through this project (in 2015/16) enables better & more coordinated problem solving in the community especially with regard to protecting the environment, (i.e. where you live, work and shop) and preventing Anti-Social behaviour issues so that the borough is a safer & cleaner place to live and work. Neighbourhood Safety officers will continue to work as 5 area based teams developing & maintaining good relationships with local people & communities including those on estates.

CQ121-16 **from Councillor Andy Stranack**

Councillor Mark Watson

What impact will the 24% cut in voluntary sector funding have on the network of voluntary groups that provide services for the over 65 population across Croydon?

Reply

There is not a cut of 24% in voluntary sector funding. The change of £200,000 (full year effect £400,000) relates to savings across voluntary sector budgets of £3.5m the reduction is 11.4%. The change to services providing over 65 services is £46k

CQ125-16 **from Councillor Jason Perry**

Councillor Mark Watson

What is the Cabinet Member doing to protect SME's that will be hit by the 2500+% increase in street trading fees. Does she agree with me that this will not be a problem for big business but will be a major problem for small businesses?

Reply

The Council does not currently cover its costs with relation to street trading licensing. The Council currently charges a fixed fee of £89 per annum for a street trading licence. This is irrespective of the nature of the display (be it goods for sale or providing tables and chairs), the location in the borough or the size of the display. This is felt to be inequitable, as it is not only a subsidy to business, but larger businesses (who **often** use more space) are receiving the greatest subsidy.

The proposal in the current consultation is to change the fee structure for street trading so that the size of the display will determine the annual fee. This would see an increase in fee for a number of current street trading licences, who are using a lot of the public highway, but the proposal would not mean a blanket increase in fee of 2500+ % for all traders. ***For example, for an SME using 3sqm, the cost would be just over £1 a day, less than a cup of coffee.***

The consultation will shortly close and the Council will assess all responses received. If there are valid concerns with regard to any significant negative impact on SME's then those will be considered.

CQ128-16

from Councillor Sara Bashford

Councillor Mark Watson

I have spoken to many small businesses who are very concerned about how the "Sunshine Tax" will impact their business. The massive hike in outdoor space licensing will unfairly target those independent traders who are trying to improve what Croydon offers and attract new business to the area. Some are saying they will remove outdoor tables or stop having attractive displays outside their shops. I would urge the Cabinet Member to rethink this scheme.

Can he please provide the financial reasoning behind this proposal and explain what businesses who pay this increase will get in return. Can he please provide the amount included in the budget for this service and the increase as a percentage from the previous years income for the same service.

Reply

The Council is entitled to set fees to cover their estimated costs. The income the Council currently receives does not cover its costs. The current annual fee for a street trading licence, anywhere in the borough irrespective of location, type or size of display, is £89. By obtaining a street trading licence, a business is entitled to effectively requisition an area of the pavement/public highway for their business. Although it is a service, it is also a legal requirement to obtain a street trading licence. The Council incurs administrative and compliance/enforcement costs in providing the service. It is not the intention of the Council to harm small business but we must cover the costs of the service. It is felt that the fairest way to structure fees going forward is by the size of the display. With the current proposed fee structure therefore, the % increase in fee from the current fee will differ for all street trading licence holders. It is proposed that an increase in fees will also enable more compliance/enforcement visits, to the benefit of traders and the wider public and allow the Council to respond to any growing demand for street trading, such as providing advice and assistance to new small markets and street trading at street based community festivals across the borough. The current income is approximately £24,000 per annum. Our estimated current costs are approximately £150,000 per annum.

CQ129-16 from Councillor Vidhi Mohan**Councillor Mark Watson**

The budget papers show a £200,000 cut to voluntary sector funding each in years 2016/17 and 2017/18 (Total cut £400,000). Yet your papers describe this as a '10% cut in funding'. Given that the total Third Party Payments stand at £1.114 million, your cuts represent a 18% cut in 2016/17 and a 36% cut overall. Why do you continue to mislead the voluntary sector by describing this as a 10% cut?

Reply

The change of £200,000 (full year effect £400,000) relates to savings across voluntary sector budgets where some currently sit outside the £1.114m and will be consolidated from 1st October 2016. The total budgets impacted are £3.5m the reduction is 11.4%.

The Community Fund

For the 1st October 2016 the Council is re-commissioning and launching the new Community Fund which is consolidating a number of funding streams including budgets which are currently embedded within the People Department. The new Community Fund will be £1.902m. The areas that will be included are detailed below.

- Active Communities Fund
- Stronger Communities Fund
- Youth Localities
- Estate based youth work
- Housing advice and information
- Carers Fund
- Mobile advice and information
- Sexual health
- Preventative Services (excluding those for people aged over 65)

This fund includes the addition of £70,000 into the Community Fund which currently is commissioned outside the Voluntary Sector. The overall change in terms

Other Changes

In addition there are also changes in relation to services for over 65s which budgets currently sit within the People Department and are part of the Outcomes based Commissioning programme and Healthwatch funding.

CQ151-16 from Councillor Andrew Pelling

Councillor Mark Watson

In the context of the Council budget's inclusion of improved fees for private use of public space on the highway so as to cover the costs of the operation of such licensing please

- a) provide an estimate of the amount of square feet of public space that has been let for private use across the Borough under this licensing provision
- b) the current annual income from such licensing before revision in the rates payable
- c) the number of posts currently occupied in FTE form that provide this service
- d) the expected salaried costs (excluding any redundancy costs) of this service for 2015-16
- e) all other non salaried and non-redundancy costs of this service for 2015-16

Reply

- a) There are currently some 1604 square metres of public highway taken by street trading licences across the borough.
- b) The current annual income from street trading fees is approximately £24,000.
- c) We have approximately 3.5 staff directly involved in street trading.
- d) Salary costs approximately £125,000. Non salary costs approximately £35,000.

CQ100-16 **from Councillor Susan Winborn**

Councillor Louisa Woodley

From 1 February there has been an increase in the price customers pay for their meals through the Meals on Wheels Service. Have many customers either needed assistance in paying the new increase or actually ceased using the service due to cost.

Reply

Overall there have been only 2 people that have cancelled the service since the price increase. We have had no other reports of customers needing assistance in paying the new increase.

CQ138-16 from Councillor Margaret Mead

Councillor Louisa Woodley

What is the current cost of agency staff roles in adult social work? The reduction in reliance on agency staff is key to ensuring long term recruitment and retention of staff and to achieving significant savings. What initiative is in place and what is the budget to reduce agency fees for adult social work staff ?

Reply

1. What is the current cost of agency staff roles in adult social work?

The current cost of Adult Social Care through the agency contract is £2,317,060.34 this financial year.

2. What initiative is in place and what is the budget to reduce agency fees for adult social work staff ?

The transformation of adult social care will seek to enable our workforce to deliver the new operating model using assessments based on peoples abilities and support networks to connect them to their communities as much as possible. Our staff welcome and look forward to working in this way with approx. 30 staff volunteering to help design the approach and the training and development to support it. We expect this programme to lead to more innovative and fulfilling roles for our workforce and reconnect our social workers with core elements of their original training and skills to aid recruitment and retention.

CQ139-16 from Councillor Margaret Mead

Councillor Louisa Woodley

At a recent committee we were told that consultants had been employed for the Transformation of social care programme. Can the Cabinet Member state what are the exact costs of these consultants and do their contracts continue until the completion of the project?

Reply

The Consultants employed in the initial scoping work that has led to the implementation of TRASC are as follows, all other project costs were included within the Cabinet Report dated 18th January 2016

iMPower:	£56.5k	(% of work undertaken on Adults Social Care)
EY:	£115k	(Design and implementation of a Resource allocation System)
Gerald Pilkington	£15k	(Review of Reablement Services)

The iMPower and Gerald Pilkington work has been completed. The Ernst and Young work is due for completion by the end of February 2016.

CQ140-16 from Councillor Margaret Mead

Councillor Louisa Woodley

The budget for 2016/17 includes significant reductions to clients with a Learning Disability. Can the Cabinet Member state if there is a budget to support successful college students with a learning difficulty into work?

Reply

Learning Disabilities have a net budget of £42m in 2015/16. For 2016/17 this budget will receive net growth of £1.970m which is made up of £2.8m growth and £0.840m savings.

The savings will be managed by the Transforming Adult Social Care (TRASC) programme and include a focus on the review of current traditional services and unlocking the potential for more people being helped into employment through very personalised and bespoke support brokerage through personal budgets. The savings are therefore expected to be made from new services that are shaped by, and can respond to individual needs together with more efficient commissioning.

Additionally through the insourcing of the LATC employment support service, we aim to increase and enhance support and dedicated services to people with disabilities in order for them to gain employment. This will be achieved by aligning this service more closely with the Council's Gateway service and the Job Brokerage service

The Employment and Support Service in Croydon Care Solutions has a number of young people with disabilities to help them into work/employment. The Individual Learning Pathways that the Employment and Support Service is delivering for Croydon Council is a one pilot project. It provides a great base to deliver a multi-disciplinary approach to young people and equip them with the life skills they will need in the future and reduce an on-going dependency on traditional services. The service has conducted 50 assessments and supported 14 people in to paid work, 19 people in to voluntary work and a further 12 people on work experience.

The employment and Support Service in Croydon Care Solutions also work with John Ruskin College, Croydon Council and other local colleges and schools to introduce Supported Internships, and it will be the first provider in Croydon to offer this opportunity.

We will also ensure that the dedicated commissioning function within the 0 – 65 service will focus on developing better and local employment opportunities in Croydon for the 16 to 19 age group who currently attend out of borough colleges as we do not have this offer for them locally. We will build on the Croydon Care Solutions Employer Engagement Framework which has been developed over the last year or so and link it to these colleges. The service is constantly engaging with new and old employers in Croydon and this continued networking and engagement along with the improved economy will be able to link to newly developed college/further education offers to young people with disabilities in Croydon.

Going forward, we do intend to contractually include addressing employment options for adults with learning disabilities as part of organisations' social value/ corporate social responsibilities.

CQ159-16 **from Councillor Pat Clouder**

Councillor Louisa Woodley

Would the Cabinet Member not agree with me that this Labour Administration has shown its commitment in protecting the residents of Croydon even through there has been an unprecedented assault on many of our vulnerable and elderly residents with this Conservative Government's policy of cuts and efficiencies that have severely put pressure on the delivery of front –line services?

Reply

I totally agree with you.

The council has seen a 56% reduction in our grant since 2010/11. As Adult Social Care is so inadequately funded by central government they are now expecting council tax to be raised by 2% per year as a way of funding this. I do not agree with the policy and do not think it is a fair way to match need across the country given the changing nature and demographic of the population. However I do not want to see our most vulnerable residents suffer as a result of these funding cuts hence we are recommending we take advantage of this offer.

This Administration has demonstrated through its budget for 2016-17, by providing growth to budgets for vulnerable people beyond the amount raised by the Social Care precept, improving services in a way that continues to delivery efficiencies, and is avoiding making cuts to services for vulnerable people.

CQ160-16 from Councillor Joy Prince

Councillor Louisa Woodley

The "Homecare Deficit" reveals the extent of under-funding for homecare services for older people across the United Kingdom and exposes the level of risk that councils place on a system intended to support elderly and disabled people, who should rightly expect their care needs to be properly supported. Could the cabinet member assure me Croydon will endeavour to ensure that homecare services comply with the councils own London Wage when commissioning Homecare services by the council.

Reply

The Council commissioned an Integrated Framework (IFA) in 2014/15 which included care services for people in their own home provided by Domiciliary Care Agencies. The IFA includes a clause that all staff providing services to Croydon residents will be paid the London Living Wage (LLW). Through a range of contract monitoring, Council officers ensure services purchased through the IFA are paying the LLW. This monitoring includes spot checks at the providers' offices to check staff files, discussions with staff, performance and contract monitoring returns to the Council's Contracts and Quality team and contract meetings with providers.

CQ102-16 **from Councillor Luke Clancy**

Councillor Kathy Bee

What has the cost been in lost parking revenues due to the needless seven-month long closure of the Lion Green Road Car Park?

Reply

The decision to close and redevelop Lion Green Road car park and use CCURV to deliver the redevelopment was taken by the previous Conservative administration. Unfortunately the flawed CCURV model has also failed on this site but on taking control this administration acted in good faith and closed the car park as required for the redevelopment.

The collapse of the deal with CCURV entered into by the previous administration has indeed lost us revenue from the car park which we estimate to be £88,598 of pay and display income and £23,173 of season ticket income.

CQ109-16 from Councillor Yvette Hopley

Councillor Kathy Bee

I refer to your budget papers and phrase “Increase in parking income due to fairer parking policy” where you are attempting to raise 1m in increased parking charges. Could you please explain how can it be fairer to increase parking charges from £4.50 to £4.80 in Southend for two hour parking and 3-4 hours parking has risen astronomically from £2.50 for 3-4 hours to £4.80 in Spices Yard? This will badly affect those businesses who rely on longer stays for people that eat in those restaurants.

Reply

The purpose of the revised parking charges is to make the tariff structure clearer for customers by standardising charges across the Borough. Hence there are linear charges per 30 minutes for on-street parking and per hour in car parks relating to the demand on the parking space (e.g. 30 minutes = 40p, 1 hour = 80p and 1 hour 30 min = £1.20. It had been six years since the council last carried out a comprehensive review of how it delivers parking services.

It should be noted that the linear charges have resulted in some reductions, particularly for short-term parking. For instance, the 30 minute charge in 4 hour maximum stay bays in the Croydon CPZ has decreased from £1.10 to 80p and in the district CPZs from 70p to 40p. Similarly, the 1 hour charge for 8 hour bays in the Croydon CPZ and District CPZs has decreased from £1.10 to 80p and from 60p to 40p respectively. Lower short term parking charges helps to ensure that there is a turn-over of spaces and is especially beneficial to local businesses who rely on passing trade.

Higher charges for long-term parking (including commuter parking) helps the Council to meet its expectations for encouraging other forms of transport such as buses and cycling which have a lower impact on the environment than the private motor car. They also help to reduce the demand for parking in areas close to businesses providing more space for short term parking.

CQ110-16 from Councillor Yvette Hopley**Councillor Kathy Bee**

I refer to your budget papers and phrase “Increase in parking income due to fairer parking policy” where you are attempting to raise 1 m in increased parking charges. Could you please explain what is fair about going back on your manifesto pledge and promise to the people of Croydon by slashing free parking in district centres? This will badly affect those businesses who rely on longer stays for people that use those businesses.

Reply

The purpose of the revised parking charges is to make the tariff structure clearer for customers by standardising charges across the Borough. Hence there are linear charges per 30 minutes for on-street parking and per hour in car parks relating to the demand on the parking space (e.g. 30 minutes = 40p, 1 hour = 80p and 1 hour 30 min = £1.20).

It should be noted that the linear charges have resulted in some reductions, particularly for short-term parking. For instance, the 30 minute charge in 4 hour maximum stay bays in the Croydon CPZ has decreased from £1.10 to 80p and in the district CPZs from 70p to 40p. Similarly, the 1 hour charge for 8 hour bays in the Croydon CPZ and District CPZs has decreased from £1.10 to 80p and from 60p to 40p respectively. Lower short term parking charges helps to ensure that there is a turn-over of spaces and is especially beneficial to local businesses who rely on passing trade.

In addition, to maximise opportunities for businesses the current 30 minute free parking arrangements in the district centres and local centres has been retained.

These include Thornton Heath, London Rd (West Croydon), South Norwood, Addiscombe, Cherry Orchard Rd (East Croydon), South End & Selsdon Rd (South Croydon), Selsdon, New Addington, Purley and Coulsdon.

Higher charges for long-term parking (including commuter parking) helps the Council to meet its expectation for encouraging other forms of transport such as buses and cycling which have a lower impact on the environment than the private motor car. They also help to reduce the demand for parking in areas close to businesses providing more space for short term parking.

CQ111-16 from Councillor Yvette Hopley

Councillor Kathy Bee

What budget allocation have you made for the installation of new pay and display machines to take the new coinage that will be coming into effect next year? I am thinking in particular of the new pound coins. Hopefully the machines won't be all pay by phone thus once more digitally excluding some residents who don't own a mobile phone.

Reply

Parking services are currently drafting a business case to review and replace existing pay and display infrastructure. This will include an assessment of various capital and revenue consequences arising from different options. A number of different options are being considered which will need to factor in customer needs and maximising service efficiency.

The anticipated costs of replacing or upgrading P&D machines are as below:-

	Anticipated Costs
Capital Costs	£1,576,455.00
	£1,576,455
One Off Revenue Costs	
Relocation of Machines	£95,000
New signs replacing machines	£38,500
Directional signs per TMA	£125,000
	£258,500
Total Indicative costs	£1,834,955

CQ115-16 **from Councillor James Thompson**

Councillor Kathy Bee

At the recent TMAC meeting the decision to re-open the Lion Green Road Car park was welcomed. Once open it is possible that the car park will be full of commuters not allowing space for shoppers. Is there allocation in the budget, should this situation arise, to designate some of the spaces on a short-term basis only?

Reply

Given historical use of this car park we think this is unlikely. The reason for making the whole car park long stay was to ensure clarity for customers. There were previously short and long term sections with different tariffs which lead to confusion so we have tried to make things simpler this time. We will keep this under review though.

Furthermore, in October 2015 the CALAT centre car park was opened for short term parking within Coulsdon. This car park is to remain open, even with the re-opening of Lion Green Road car park, in order to offer the option for short term parking for visitors and shoppers to Coulsdon.

CQ116-16 **from Councillor James Thompson**

Councillor Kathy Bee

Could you provide me with an opening date for the Lion Green Road car park and inform me if there are any other associated costs not set out in the TMAC report?

Reply

Lion Green Road car park is already open and available for customers to park free of charge. The Traffic Management Order for the car park is due to commence week beginning 6th March 2016 in which formal charges as advertised and enforcement will commence.

The costs set out in the TMAC report are the expected costs at the time of the report but it has been since identified that a further £720 will be spent on security fencing.

CQ130-16 from Councillor Vidhi Mohan

Councillor Kathy Bee

The budget papers show that you will be fleecing the hardworking residents of Croydon by an additional £1m through increased parking charges. Coming on top of a 4% rise in Council Tax, this is just another example of a Labour administration taxing people to the hilt. Yet you describe this a 'fairer' parking policy. Can you please let me know what improvements in parking services, if any, the residents are going to see from this additional £1m raised?

Reply

The purpose of the revised parking charges is to make the tariff structure clearer for customers by standardising charges across the Borough. Hence there are linear charges per 30 minutes for on-street parking and per hour in car parks relating to the demand on the parking space (e.g. 30 minutes = 40p, 1 hour = 80p and 1 hour 30 min = £1.20).

It should be noted that the linear charges have resulted in some reductions, particularly for short-term parking. For instance, the 30 minute charge in 4 hour maximum stay bays in the Croydon CPZ has decreased from £1.10 to 80p and in the district CPZs from 70p to 40p. Similarly, the 1 hour charge for 8 hour bays in the Croydon CPZ and District CPZs has decreased from £1.10 to 80p and from 60p to 40p respectively. Lower short term parking charges helps to ensure that there is a turn-over of spaces and is especially beneficial to local businesses who rely on passing trade.

Higher charges for long-term parking (including commuter parking) helps the Council to meet its expectations for encouraging other forms of transport such as buses and cycling which have a lower impact on the environment than the private motor car. They also help to reduce the demand for parking in areas close to businesses providing more space for short term parking.

So Croydon residents and visitors should benefit from cheaper short term parking, more availability of spaces and improvements in the use of sustainable transport and the benefits that this will bring on things like congestion and air quality.

The purpose of the review was not to generate additional income and the figure in the budget papers is just an estimate based on historical use on the previous tariffs. Any additional income will be used to offset legitimate transport related costs such as funding for the Freedom Pass.

CQ131-16 **from Councillor Vidhi Mohan**

Councillor Kathy Bee

Your budget papers show 3 job cuts due to a 'Streets Restructure'. Can you tell me how this is going to adversely impact on frontline services?

Reply

As part of the wider restructure of the council the Streets directorate was formed, this brought together a number of the street facing services into one directorate, there are a number of synergies across teams and the review of this service is expected to drive greater efficiencies. I am confident this will not have a negative impact on the front line services.

CQ147-16

from Councillor Mario Creatura

Councillor Kathy Bee

The Coulsdon Community Centre tell me that they have been in discussions with Croydon Council to offer the use of their large car park off Chipstead Valley Road for public use. The car park requires some renovation for this to happen which has been estimated to cost around £40,000 mark. In exchange for the Council funding this initial infrastructure investment, the Centre (which Cllr Godfrey recently complimented for its excellent management) offered to run the car park at no cost to the Council, splitting the cost of the ticket takings 50:50 with the Council.

I'm told the Council has refused this generous offer. Could the Cabinet Member explain why a scheme that is guaranteed to make money for Croydon Council, has no staffing implications and will ease the well-known parking issues in Coulsdon, has not been supported by this administration?

Reply

Coulsdon Community Centre Association is offering a small number of car parking spaces for local businesses that can be acquire parking permits from the Association to park on-site on a weekly or monthly basis. However, proposals to open the car park fully have not been progressed.

Discussions have taken place with Coulsdon Community Centre Association regarding utilising their car park as a privately operated public car park that would be open to restricted users. The proposal was for the car park to be operated and administered by the Coulsdon Community Centre Association with works required to open the car park being undertaken by the Council at the Council's own cost. Improvement works, historically, were estimated to be in the region of £50k for works including installing lighting, drainage, resurfacing and line marking. This cost is likely to have increased and does not provide for any approvals, such as planning permission, that might need to be sought.

With the temporary re-opening of Lion Green Road car park and provision of short stay spaces at the CALAT Centre Car Park, the Council will not be proceeding with these works.

If Cllr Creatura would like any more information on this matter, he can contact Catherine Radziwonik, Senior Regeneration Manager, directly at catherine.radziwonik@croydon.gov.uk.

CQ150-16 from Councillor Andrew Pelling

Councillor Kathy Bee

Please provide an estimate of the annual costs of the authority liaising with public and private bodies providing public transport in the Borough.

Reply

I am afraid I will have to ask the Councillor to be a little more specific.

Transport for London is clearly one of the main public transport providers. Different parts of the Council liaises with TfL on different public transport related matters. Planning and Transport officers will liaise with TfL as part of assessing the effects of major development proposals on buses and trams. However the cost of that liaison is largely met by the developer through planning application fees and pre-planning application service fees. Other officers have been working with TfL to assess the effects on buses and trams of our proposals to construct surface level pedestrian and cycle crossings on the Wellesley Road.

Similarly we are closely engaging with TfL on its proposals for the Dingwall Road tram loop line to ensure that we get the best for Croydon from the project.

If Cllr Pelling would like to discuss any public or private bodies in particular then he can contact Steve Iles directly.

CQ168-16 from Councillor Paul Scott

Councillor Kathy Bee

To the Cabinet Member for Transportation and Environment: Would the Cabinet Member please confirm whether she has included within her budget for the coming year for the further removal of unnecessary and unattractive roadside railings, and so could she please confirm the cost rate for their removal and by way of an indicative cost advise what the cost would be to remove the railings to the south of the railway bridge over the northern end of Portland Road?

Reply

There are no specific budgets within the Council's highways budget or the Transport for London's Local Implementation Plan funding for the removal of guard railing. However, any local highway improvement schemes should look at the wider scope of improvements and can consider the removal of guard railing where this will improve the environment and not detract from road safety. As such, several highway improvement schemes over recent years have included for the removal of guard railing.

In the case of the guard railing on Portland Road to the south of the railway bridge, as part of the public realm improvement scheme for this area we are considering the de-cluttering of street furniture, this will be worked up as part of the scheme and subject to a road safety audit. At this stage it is not possible to provide an indicative cost for these works.

CQ112-16 from Councillor Maria Gatland

Councillor Alisa Flemming

Could Cllr Flemming detail the savings from the Looked After Childrens Review?

Reply

London Borough of Croydon is a committed Corporate Parent to children looked after and care leavers.

We are committed to improving the lives of the children that we care for. We understand that high quality care can transform the lives of some of the most vulnerable children in our society. Research does show that they can have better outcomes than some children with higher levels of need who remain in the community.

Our legal duty is to support children to live with their families wherever possible. Looking after children demands a high level of resources, both financially and in terms of staff time. It is therefore extremely important that we do all we can to ensure that we are looking after those children where we can really improve their lives. By diverting resources from looking after children where they could be supported at home, we will be able to support them in their community and provide a better service to them overall.

LB Croydon is committed to:

- Supporting children to live with their family
- Improving the outcomes for children with high levels of need living within their family and community
- Looking after the right children - where we can really make a difference and improve their life outcomes
- Enable and promote opportunities for children to move to other forms of legal permanence such as adoption and special guardianship

London borough of Croydon is in a nationally unique position in regard to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children. We have much less control over our legal duties to look after such children and fewer options to seek alternatives. This answer is therefore offered regarding looked after children from the local community.

Since April 2014, we have reduced the number of local looked after children from 448 to 386.

We ensure that decisions are taken safely and that support is offered to families where children are returned home. We have also increased the number of children leaving care through adoption and special guardianship, which is positive in terms of achieving legal permanence. We continue to have legal responsibilities to support such children, including in many cases the provision of ongoing financial support.

The outturn for the total budget on placements for looked after children, including adoption and special guardianship, in 2014-15 was £17,820,322.

The projected spend in the current financial year is £17,055,895.

This represents a reduction in spend of £764,427.

CQ113-16 from Councillor Maria Gatland

Councillor Alisa Flemming

Could Cllr Flemming explain how 10 per cent savings will be made from the re procurement of Young Carers Framework?

Reply

The Council is working very closely with Croydon Off The Record to ensure a broad and high quality service offer is delivered to Young Carers, in line with the new Young Carers Regulations 2015.

As part of this process, the Council is opting to award Off The Record with a direct contract for the delivery of its Young Carers Project from 2016-2018, with the option of a year extension. This approach ensures service continuity and providing stability for the organisation so that it can use this core funding to attract further external funding, for which it is generally very successful.

The reduction of the funding available to the Young Carers Project amounts to £12.5k. This saving is in line with other re-procurements the Council is undertaking, where services are asked to seek a 10% efficiency in their overall contract value.

In recognition of the high importance of supporting this cohort of young people, commissioners are working in detail with Off The Record to achieve efficiencies in its service delivery, in order to meet demand within this slightly reduced funding envelope.

These efficiencies are due to be realised in the assessment process, by achieving greater join up with the Early Help Assessment undertaken by the allied professionals in the wider Team Around the Family; and by supporting the service to protect its support programmes and reduce management overheads.

Crucially, the Council is collaborating closely with Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) through the CAMHS Local Transformation Plan, through which in excess of £140k is being invested into Croydon Off the Record from 2016-17. This new investment will enable Off the Record to significantly increase its provision of emotional wellbeing support for young people including young carers and will result in the strengthening of Off The Record as a key local voluntary sector organisation.

CQ114-16 **from Councillor Maria Gatland**

Councillor Alisa Flemming

What cuts will be made to the Youth Service to achieve the savings set out in the budget?

Reply

A new staffing structure is proposed that will bring together a number of management functions that will minimise any reduction of front line delivery of programmes for young people. There will be a loss of 3 full time posts and the equivalent of one part time (18 hour) post.

These proposals remain subject to a staff consultation process that is due to commence imminently.

The Council has made a commitment to the establishment of the Youth Zone in 2018, which will provide services are 3,000 young people in the Borough with significant levels of investment by our funding partners as well as by the Council. This was agreed at Cabinet in January 2016.

CQ117-16 from Councillor Margaret Bird

Councillor Alisa Flemming

Withholding information about which schools are failing is not only an insult to parents and pupils but to Croydon's taxpayers.

Can the Cabinet Member tell me what monetary savings or costs are there to the budget as a result of your actions?

Reply

There are many measurements about school performance that are in the public domain, including Ofsted inspection outcomes, attainment and progress data and the views of parents, as expressed through Ofsted's Parent View.

In order for local authorities to fulfil their school improvement functions, by providing continuous support and challenge to schools, it has been common practice for many years for local authorities to maintain close relationships and discuss rolling performance data with schools.

This information is confidential to the school's Link Adviser, their senior leaders and governors and the LA. Schools share changing information with us that contributes to categorisation "in confidence". To then share that information in the public domain could lead us to having a less accurate view of their performance as school leaders would not have the assurance of confidentiality and may not be prepared to share information so frankly. The Council would therefore be less able to act appropriately and, where necessary, robustly, in order to ensure all our children and young people receive the high quality education they deserve.

Where the LA has significant concerns about a school it has a number of statutory powers to intervene, including issuing Warning Notices, applying for an Interim Executive Board of governors, removing delegated financial budget control or, in the case of an Academy or free school, raising issues directly with the Regional Schools Commissioner. The LA has used, and will continue to use, these statutory powers.

This is not a matter of finance but of school improvement. There are no monetary savings or costs involved for the Council in sharing or withholding information.