

QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS

Question Number	Question asked by Councillor:	Subject
CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFER CROYDON & COMMUNITIES Councillor Hamida Ali		
CQ048-18	Bennett, S	Empowerment of Residents
CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMY & JOBS Councillor Manju Shahul-Hameed		
CQ101-18	Creatura, M	House of Fraser

from Councillor Sue Bennett

Councillor Hamida Ali

Question No. CQ048-18

In your 2014 manifesto you said 'A Labour Council will empower residents in our areas and neighbourhoods to improve their local area by providing new powers and responsibilities around the delivery and monitoring of local services' did you do this? What powers have you devolved and where in the borough is this actually happening?

Reply

Amongst the measures introduced to devolve powers in the borough, the Council has introduced community ward budgets where each Councillor this year has been allocated £8,000 per annum to be spent within their ward.

Further to this, the Council has been working to establish 3 devolution early adopter areas in South Norwood, Purley and New Addington, to further enhance opportunities to enable local community engagement and involvement. £20k of the Community Infrastructure Levy (Meaningful Local Proportion) is being made available to each area for seed or feasibility funding. Decisions in relation to how this is spent will be taken at a local level with ward councillors having the final decision, but being informed by a local steering group and wider community engagement. Each of the early adopter areas is now taking a member led approach to establish and constitute their local steering group.

In a similar vein, Croydon Council has committed to working with Croydon Citizens and London Community Land Trust to explore opportunities for affordable housing delivery through a Community Land Trust. London CLT and Croydon Citizens are engaging with residents on the Shrublands Estate about the type of housing they would like to see and the sites where they would like housing to be located. This has involved a meeting with representatives of the residents association and informal engagement with residents by Croydon Citizens during a walk around the estate to visit potential sites. Further engagement with residents will take place in 2018.

Once a site has been identified, Croydon Citizens and London Community Land Trust will undertake a feasibility study for a CLT scheme that is likely to be for around 20 homes.

If a scheme is viable, it will then be progressed through the design, development and planning stages. This will include a formal land agreement between the Council and the CLT which is likely to involve the long term lease of land. As part of any scheme that comes forward the CLT would be responsible for building permanently affordable housing to meet local needs both now and in the future.

from Councillor Mario Creatura

Councillor Manju-Shahul-Hameed

Question No. CQ101-18

For some months now there has been speculation about the future viability of House of Fraser, a business you'll know has a base in the Croydon Centrale Shopping Centre.

A planned rescue deal worth some £70m has recently collapsed, putting the business and its 6,000 direct members of staff nationally in danger of permanent closure.

Could you please outline what meetings you have personally had with House of Fraser to assess the impact of recent events on the Croydon store?

Could you please outline all that you are doing to try to safeguard the future of the store in Croydon?

Should House of Fraser fall into administration, can you release any information about what you understand will happen to replace its very large footprint in the Centrale Centre?

What impact will the closure of House of Fraser have on the Westfield/Hammerson development that's currently in process?

Reply

Croydon remains a viable and popular shopping destination. The Westfield and Hammerson scheme is testament to the continuing and growing confidence of Croydon as a retail location and destination for businesses. The future of retail and the high street is a thorny issue and one with which public bodies and commercial partners at a national, regional and local level continue to grapple. Several well-known brands have disappeared from the high street over recent years as they have battled against rising costs, reduced retail spending, internet shopping and, in the final analysis, unsustainable commercial models.

At the time of preparing this response House of Fraser Croydon is not at risk of closure - what Mike Ashley intends is not yet clear but the purchase offers a lifeline to the brand as a whole. I have been in regular contact with James Lancaster-Carpenter the Croydon House of Fraser Store Manager through our work on Croydon BID Board and I will continue to liaise locally with businesses large and small across the borough to offer the support of the council.

The future of House of Fraser is unlikely to have a direct impact on the Westfield /Hammerson development – the plan has always been that House of Fraser with Debenhams remain anchor tenants in Centrale – Centrale is key to plans for the decant of the Whitgift Centre ahead of the redevelopment.

Should the positive direction of recent days fail and House of Fraser Croydon face closure the council and partners are ready to support affected residents and businesses. As with the collapse of Carillion the council will be on hand to support our residents to retrain and gain new skills through CALAT and local colleges, to seek and secure new jobs through Croydon Works, and to support local suppliers affected by the closure through Croydon Business Network. Over the coming months the council with Croydon BID and retail partners also be hosting a suite of workshops and events exploring the future of the high street so that together we can futureproof Croydon's town centres.