

**For general release**

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Scrutiny &amp; Overview Committee</b> <b>11 June 2019</b>
<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	<b>Leader' Scrutiny</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member Question Time</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICERS:</b>	<b>Jo Negrini - Chief Executive</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>Councillor Tony Newman</b> <b>Leader of the Council</b>
<b>PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:</b>	<b>Councillor Tony Newman</b>

<b>ORIGIN OF ITEM:</b>	The Leader's Office
<b>BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:</b>	Delivering for Croydon – Investing in People. To provide updates on progress against priorities identified in the Manifesto and Corporate plan since January 2019.

## **1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. This report provides a progress update and response to the conclusions and recommendations made at meetings concerning the areas of this portfolio since the last Scrutiny report given at the beginning of this year.

## **2 CONTEXT**

- 2.1. I am proud as Council Leader to introduce my second scrutiny report following our Administration's successful re-election in May 2018.
- 2.2. This report highlights how we are already delivering on many of the Manifesto commitments from May last year;
- Ensuring everyone has the opportunity to benefit from the economic investment coming to our town. Nobody and no community should be left behind;
  - Culture will continue to be at the heart of regeneration in Croydon;
  - Our ongoing growth must be sustainable;
  - Work with partners and residents to ensure Croydon's infrastructure is fit for purpose in the twenty-first century.
- 2.3. These are reflected in the Councils Corporate Plan that was adopted in October 2018.

- 2.4. The Corporate Plan gives emphasis to delivering services that help residents and businesses thrive in Croydon. This includes reducing inequalities, supporting health, happiness, independence and maintaining a safe, clean place with sustainable growth that benefits our residents.
- 2.5. Delivering a safer, healthier and more sustainable Croydon with culture at the heart of regeneration is our priority, along with ensuring everyone in Croydon has the opportunity to benefit from the growth that is happening across our borough.

### **Delivering For Croydon – Investing In People 2019**

- 2.6. Croydon is a wonderfully diverse place and has the highest number of young people in London. This makes for a creative and exciting place for our residents to live and work. We are committed to investing in our borough to provide opportunities for everyone.

## **3 CULTURAL CROYDON**

- 3.1. In the Corporate Plan 2018 – 22, culture was listed as one of the priorities for Croydon over the next four years. Culture and sport are integral to a healthy, vibrant borough and important drivers for the economy. This report details updates in line with the expectations set out in the Corporate Plan.
- 3.2. Croydon's Culture Plan for the next 5 years – Croydon Creates, was agreed last month. This sets out our ambition of seeing culture on every doorstep; in every locality, in every community, and in every life.
- 3.3. As described in the Cabinet Report, the Culture Plan sets out six cultural ambitions for Croydon – a place where culture is for everyone; a place where people come first; a place with a stunning, inspirational public realm; a place that is energising and dynamic; a place that celebrates its past, present and future; a place of cultural entrepreneurialism and creative business.
- 3.4. The Council is in a strong position to deliver on these ambitions over the next 5 years as we are building on good successes over the last 5 years. Arts Council lottery funding has increased year on year for the last 5 years coming in to Croydon. Our cultural calendar is continuing to strengthen with an increasing range of events and programmes.

### **Fairfield Halls Regeneration**

- 3.5. The Fairfield Halls is due to reopen this September starting with an open day for the public on Monday 16th September. The programme continues to develop and more events are coming on line for sale.
- 3.6. The programme of events at Fairfield Halls will offer something for everyone. A number of shows are already booked, including national touring programmes. These will offer theatre, music, comedy, family shows and talks.

- 3.7. Public realm improvements will also be delivered around the reopened venue, ensuring it is a destination location for all.

### **Mayor of London's Growth Fund, Creative Enterprise Zone Bids and Events Programme**

- 3.8. The Mayor of London's Growth Fund and Creative Enterprise Zones aligns strongly with our vision and ambition for Croydon. The Council has now started delivering on the programme.
- 3.9. Croydon was announced as one of the first Creative Enterprise Zones in December last year. Croydon's Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ) sits mainly in the centre of Croydon, an area which is at the very heart of the large scale and transformational change the borough is undergoing over the next few years. The plans for our CEZ put a framework and set of actions in place that will support keeping creative production and cultural activity as a central part of that change.
- 3.10. There are a number of event organisers interested in the potential of Croydon, such as Metropolis Music who organised the first The Ends festival for Croydon at the beginning of this month. The event was a great success.
- 3.11. We have now started delivering on the Creative Enterprise Zone programme, offering support to small scale venues, discounts for studio spaces for under 25s and looking to raise our profile as a place to do creative business.
- 3.12. The challenges ahead will be how to maintain momentum and growth of this kind of activity, finding sustainable funding models for cultural programmes and events. The importance of free events within the annual programme is key in terms of access for everyone to a vibrant cultural offer.

### **Music City**

- 3.13. Building on our existing grass roots that produced Stormzy, Krept & Konan, etc. earlier last year the council revealed its aim to develop the borough as a music city in the style of Nashville or Seattle – a place where music-making and music production is at the heart of the local culture and economy.
- 3.14. Croydon Music City is becoming a reality with Croydon being recognised as a destination for great music with new festivals such as Cro Cro Land and The Ends playing in our local venues and parks. These events have attracted a huge amount of interest from festival makers and goers and so we can expect that Croydon will be seen as the place to go for music in the near future.

### **Investing in our Libraries**

- 3.15. Croydon's Library Service underwent a major change when in January last year. Following the announcement of liquidation by Carillion PLC, the Council terminated the service contract and brought the statutory library service back in

house.

- 3.16. We immediately developed the Libraries Plan 2019-2208 which was approved by cabinet in May. The plan sets out the council vision for Croydon's libraries, including the commitment to keep all 13 of the borough's libraries open as vibrant centres of creativity and learning.
- 3.17. Norbury is among the first phase of the council's ambitious programme of refurbishment for all Croydon's libraries, transforming them into modern, welcoming, inspirational spaces that meet local needs now and in the future. The programme is already under way, with South Norwood's new library opening in spring 2020. Selsdon, Norbury and Thornton Heath libraries will all be refurbished over the next year.
- 3.18. Residents gave their backing to Norbury Library's £1m refurbishment this week as part of council plans to transform and improve the borough's network of 13 libraries.
- 3.19. More than 150 people attended an open day event hosted by councillors and council staff this month, with more than 100 filling out feedback forms to give their views on a new look library for the area. There was overwhelming local support for the plans, which will bring longer opening hours, improved Wi-Fi and new furniture, shelving and lighting to the library.
- 3.20. To give residents longer access to their new library spaces and services, the council will pilot new technology, Open+, which will allow them to access the building with their library card.
- 3.21. Libraries are a key element of our locality working. Investment is creating new community hubs which can better serve our local residents with our key partners, including voluntary and community sector organisation.
- 3.22. The refurbishment, which is due to start over the summer, will include a full roof replacement, upgraded ICT, redecoration and new furniture. An accessible lift will be installed to the first floor community room, bringing this space back into use. The room will be named after long-serving Norbury councillor Maggie Mansell, who died in January this year.
- 3.23. Already this year, the council has committed £5m to the refurbishment of libraries and has increased the book fund by 9%.
- 3.24. To get more people involved with Croydon's libraries, the council will develop its volunteer programme, and partnerships with the voluntary and community sector. The network of volunteers will be in addition to current staffing numbers, and there are no plans for any library to be staffed entirely by volunteers..

### **New Addington Regeneration**

- 3.25. New Addington residents and businesses have backed plans for new homes and improved community facilities around Central Parade.
- 3.26. In September, the council asked residents for their views about the area's future, with options including a new wellbeing centre, improved open space in front of the new leisure centre, new homes and shops.

- 3.27. More than 200 residents, including local businesses and partners discussed their views on initial proposals at events, including pop-up stalls at the market square and a New Addington Fun Day. There were also two interactive workshops carried out with young people from the area and questionnaires were available at the Fieldway Family Centre, the Timebridge Centre and Addington Community Centre. Responses were also accepted through the council's Get Involved service.
- 3.28. Results showed:
- Respondents supported the idea of a new multi-use wellbeing centre in New Addington
  - Three quarters of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with proposals to build new homes, with particular support for affordable housing and homes designed for older people
  - Nearly half of respondents strongly agreed with the provision of new business space
  - Around 70% of respondents would like to see more trees, plants and flowers in Central Parade, with similar percentages wanting play equipment and seating.
- 3.29. Council officers will now review the findings and develop more detailed plans. Community engagement will continue to help inform the emerging detailed design proposals.

## **4 ENSURING CROYDON'S YOUNG PEOPLE THRIVE**

- 4.1. Croydon has the highest number of young people in London. The council, along with partners, residents and communities is committed to ensuring they get the best possible start in life. All major partners such as police, health services, voluntary organisations, local colleges and faith groups are signed up through the Local Strategic Partnership to making young people a key priority.
- 4.2. After a disappointing Ofsted judgement of our children's social care services in 2017, the Council continues to work extremely hard to improve the services we are responsible for, supported by our partners, and will deliver our ambitious improvement programme. This is a key priority and I'm pleased with the progress to date/

### **Ofsted preparation**

- 4.3. The sixth monitoring visit is on 10th and 11th July and will focus on the children with disabilities service, the front door for children's services (SPOC) and provision for children privately fostered. Three inspectors will be on site, including the lead inspector from the 2017 inspection.
- 4.4. 'Mocksted' service reviews have taken place in the appropriate services to prepare for the official monitoring visits. These have been planned and executed jointly with Camden lead officers, who have been providing support in our improvement programme.
- 4.5. The outcomes and recommendations of these service reviews will be captured in service improvement plans; these have already been drafted and will now be

finalised with these outcomes.

- 4.6. The bi-monthly case audits in May have been focused on the 3 service areas under scrutiny. All have been completed. The themes and key issues from the audits will be summarised into a learning overview to ensure practice continues to improve for children and families
- 4.7. The outcomes of the latest case audits reflect what we know about the overall quality of practice. Whilst we are generally seeing fewer inadequate examples, we still have a lot of progress to make to be consistently good.
- 4.8. Outcomes from all of the above activities inform the detailed preparation for the visit and form the basis of the self-assessment provided to inspectors at the start of the visit.

### **Legacy Onside Youth Zone**

- 4.9. The Youth Zone has been looking for the first round of volunteers to staff Legacy. There have been 137 enquiries, 59 applications received and 31 interviews to date. The first training session took place in late May.
- 4.10. They have had an extremely successful recruitment round so far. 97 candidates attended for the sessional roles and around 90% of staff recruitment is completed. A training programme is in planning for them all.
- 4.11. 19 founder patrons have been secured and the Legacy Partner Development Manager is now in place, who will be working with David Mellis (OnSide) and will eventually take over from him when he moves onto his next OnSide project. Legacy plan to increase their resources in this area.
- 4.12. In terms of delivery, coordinators are in place who have been planning all the delivery and placing the recent recruits into their different roles.
- 4.13. Membership is now open and the 100 day countdown to opening started on 31 May. Assemblies have been booked in with schools as well as soft opening sessions to engage with the local young community.
- 4.14. The Grand opening will be Saturday 7th September.

## **5 HEALTH**

- 5.1. Croydon is already leading the way in terms of policy in integrating health and social care for residents with the innovative One Croydon Alliance and over 65s outcomes based commissioning.
- 5.2. The One Croydon Alliance is a partnership between the council, Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group, Croydon Health Services NHS Trust, Croydon GP Collaborative, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, and Age UK Croydon. It was set up to deliver an integrated health and social care system, starting with prevention work to reduce unnecessary hospital stays for elderly residents and boost their independence.

- 5.3. The Council, Croydon Health Services (CHS) Trust and the Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have made the case for devolving local decision making to GPs, hospitals and trusts and avoid situations where services are cancelled/delayed (e.g. recent change of IVF services).
- 5.4. The current position that, in principal, has support from NHS England and NHS London, is for the hospital and CCG to effectively align by having a jointly appointed chief executive and to set up a Croydon Health Board in 2020; a sub-committee of the regional CCG that will have representatives from the Council, hospital and CCG.
- 5.5. All of this has resulted from work done to integrate health and social care that initially gave way to the hugely successful One Croydon Alliance and has now led to the CHS and Croydon University Hospital aligning and a single CCG and NHS Plan for South West London and having local place boards to delegate NHS resources to. We still have a way to go but I'm pleased with our journey so far.

### **Croydon Health & Wellbeing Strategy**

- 5.6. The Croydon Health and Wellbeing Strategy has now been published and has a clear vision that 'Croydon will be a health and caring borough where good health is the default not the exception and those that experience the worst health improve their health the fastest'.
- 5.7. The strategy aims to achieve this by reducing inequality, focussing on prevention and increasing integration. Eight priorities have been identified and targeted in this strategy:
  - A better start in life
  - Strong, engaged, inclusive and well connected communities
  - Housing and the environment enable all people of Croydon to be healthy
  - Mental wellbeing and good mental health are seen as a driver of health
  - A strong local economy with quality, local jobs
  - Get more people more active, more often
  - A stronger focus on prevention
  - The right people, in the right place, at the right time
- 5.8. The Health and Wellbeing Board will be working to achieve outcomes identified in this strategy with the other LSP boards and groups, people in the communities and other health and care organisations in Croydon.

## **6 AFFORDABLE HOUSING: BRICK BY BRICK**

- 6.1. Croydon Council has welcomed the first batch of affordable homes now available to borough residents through developer Brick by Brick. Work is being finalised on turning the site of a derelict former care home off Chipstead Avenue in Thornton Heath into Flora Court, a scheme consisting of 24 shared ownership flats and three affordable rented flats.

- 6.2. From today, the shared ownership part of the scheme goes on sale, meaning that homes starting from £315,000 will cost £78,750 for those buying a 25% share. The three affordable rented homes will go to people on the council's housing waiting list.
- 6.3. The council set up the developer in 2016 to boost local housing supply by developing more than 2,000 good-quality homes, including affordable homes, with any profits from development to be returned to the council to reinvest in the borough.
- 6.4. The first Brick by Brick homes went on sale at the Auckland and Ravensdale sites in Upper Norwood in March. Brick by Brick is also building another 24 schemes which are either on site or coming into contract. Many more sites are at various stages of the planning process and are delivering or aim to boost the local housing supply.

## **7 CREATING A MORE SUSTAINABLE PLACE: SUSTAINABLE CROYDON**

- 7.1. A priority for Croydon is to become more sustainable. Clean and accessible streets as well as a variety of reliable transport services and support are important to residents for their wellbeing and the success of the local economy.
- 7.2. The ambition is for Croydon to become the most Sustainable, Green Borough of London. In order for this to happen, a lot of work must be done to improve transport, increase infrastructure and encourage recycling. The Council has already started this work with partners and the community; recycling borough-wide is up by 9%, Croydon's five-year Air Quality Action Plan 2017 – 22 has been published, and plenty more activity underway.
- 7.3. More still must be done to make Croydon a more sustainable, clean and green borough. With this in mind, a Sustainable Croydon Summit is being held on 27 June this year to secure wider commitment to this vision and identify further actions and opportunities with partners and stakeholders. Residents, schools and businesses have been invited to take part in the conversation.

### **Croydon Local Plan Review**

- 7.4. Croydon Council is reviewing part of its Local Plan to update the vision and strategy for Croydon's growth up to 2040, and set out how the borough will continue to deliver much-needed new homes, jobs and community facilities.
- 7.5. The review is being undertaken as the Mayor of London finalises the London Plan, which is expected to require all outer London boroughs to provide more homes.
- 7.6. The plan aims to strengthen Croydon's sustainability, create healthier places and support local employment, leisure and retail.



- 7.7. As part of the review, the council will explore a range of options to minimise the impact of growth on the character and nature of Croydon's suburbs, looking at alternative and suitable locations for new homes and community facilities.
- 7.8. The review will also include a section on the Purley Way, where the council has received funding from the Greater London Authority (GLA)'s Home Building Capacity Fund. It will look at protecting the commercial future of the area, while providing units for smaller businesses, community facilities and homes in an improved environment.
- 7.9. The council is required to review its local plan every five years to ensure it meets changing needs. It is anticipated it will not be adopted until 2022.
- 7.10. Residents, stakeholders and developers will be invited to engage as the partial review is drawn up. During June and July the council will open up a call for information on development sites and valued green spaces across the borough to help shape the review. In November, Croydon's draft partial review will be available to comment on.

### **Emissions Based Parking Charges**

- 7.11. Croydon is continuing its journey to become a greener borough as a consultation on new emissions-based parking charges, offering major discounts to drivers with less polluting cars, launched at the end of May.
- 7.12. The scheme would offer significant parking permit discounts for the least polluting vehicles with some drivers only paying £6.50 for an annual resident's parking permit.
- 7.13. Other initiatives to help Croydon achieve its green ambitions include transforming Old Town into a Liveable Neighbourhood, installing electric vehicle charging points and bike hangars as well as introducing dockless e-bikes across the borough.
- 7.14. A survey for the Local Implementation Plan in September 2018 found nearly three quarters of respondents were concerned about air quality in the borough.
- 7.15. The new parking scheme would see different parking charges for vehicles depending on how much CO<sub>2</sub> they produce per kilometre. A separate surcharge could be applied to older diesel vehicles registered before September 2015. If introduced the new model would be introduced in three stages. The first round would see the model introduced for residents' parking permits later this year. Business and all other permits would be introduced in 2020 and on and off street parking restrictions could be introduced the following year.
- 7.16. A formal public consultation on the changes to residents' parking permits and business permits ran until Thursday 20 June. A separate consultation around on and off street changes will take place at a later date.

## **8 COMMUNITY SAFETY: VIOLENCE REDUCTION NETWORK**

- 8.1. Tackling violence and the causes of violence is a priority for the Council and its partner organisations that form the Safer Croydon Partnership. The significant rise in knife crime in 2017/8 highlighted the importance of taking an approach that focuses on the causes of violence, rather than the symptoms. Whilst Croydon has seen reductions of 21% in serious youth violence and 17% in knife related offences in the financial year 2018/19, compared to 2017/18, achieving long term reductions in violence remains a priority for the Borough.
- 8.2. In response, the administration has made it a top priority to treat violence, including serious youth violence and knife crime, as a public health issue to make Croydon the safest borough for young people. The Council is also committed to remain as a lead borough in tackling Modern Day Slavery and domestic and sexual violence and all forms of violence against women and girls.
- 8.3. The transformation of the Community Safety team into the Violence Reduction Network is nearing completion. An Interim Director for the Violence Reduction Network is in post to drive the work programme forward, with permanent recruitment nearly complete.
- 8.4. Following extensive consultation a Framework for Croydon's Public Health Approach to Reducing Violence, which sets out the key themes and priorities for the Council and wider partnership to achieve long term reductions in violence in the Borough, is due to be considered at Cabinet on the 10th June 2019 and will remain at the centre of our approach in the medium to long term.
- 8.5. Importantly, the Framework makes it clear that a Public Health Approach to Reducing Violence means that everyone has a role to play in preventing and reducing violence; it is a societal issue as opposed to the responsibility of a single agency or group of agencies and enables partner organisations from across all sectors to identify where they can directly contribute to preventing and addressing violence.
- 8.6. The Violence Reduction Network will work with existing boards, partners, voluntary and community organisations and locality leads to ensure the priorities that are set out in the Framework are delivered and external funding opportunities are maximised. As such it will have a greater influencing role across existing boards holding them to account for the priorities and outcomes.
- 8.7. Delivery of the themes and priorities set out in the Framework will have a direct and positive impact in the reduction of serious youth violence, knife and weapon related offences, by identifying and addressing the underlying causes of violence and delivering interventions which support those most affected by violence.
- 8.8. Following extensive consultation a number of key themes and priorities have been developed. The themes are the broad areas that will remain at the centre of the Croydon's violence reduction approach for the next 3-5 years. They

enable partner organisations from across all sectors to identify where they can directly contribute to preventing and addressing violence. The themes are: -

- Theme One - Using Data to drive our approach
- Theme Two - Preventing Violence before It Occurs
- Theme Three - Community Based Support
- Theme Four - Targeted Interventions
- Theme Five – Intensive Interventions and Enforcement

8.9. The Priorities set out in the framework for Croydon’s public health approach to violence reduction are the key areas of delivery for the next 12-18 months. They reflect the issues that have been raised throughout the consultation period across the range of agencies, in the public, commercial and voluntary sectors. They are also the key priorities that have been consistently voiced at community meetings, with young people and by those directly affected by violence; offenders, victims and families.

- Every person understands the role they can play in reducing
- Developing community-based networks to help those impacted by violence navigate the challenges they face
- Focusing on the vocabulary of inclusion
- Recognition of the importance of culture and identity for families and young people
- Social media and violence

8.10. The Governance of the violence reduction activities will remain a function of the Council and regular reports on progress in terms implementation and progress against the key themes and priorities and performance in terms of achieving a reduction in violence will be made to Cabinet.

8.11. In terms of delivering the themes and priorities of the Public Health Approach to Violence Reduction, the Framework a Delivery Plan is being developed through engagement with the existing structures of the Local Strategic Partnership including the Health and wellbeing Board, Safer Croydon Partnership, Children and Families Board, Safeguarding Children and Safeguarding Adults Board and Future Place Board. Each theme or priority within the Delivery Plan will have a Strategic Lead identified who will be held accountable for the ensuring delivery and monitoring progress, based on their expertise. This approach will embed the ownership of Public health Approach to Violence Reduction across a wider range of organisations, maximising the skills and knowledge of the strategic partnerships.

8.12. The Framework recognises the value of the localities approach in terms of delivering the key actions at a local level. In recognition of the intention to involve as wide an audience as possible in delivering long term reductions in violence the Public Health Approach to Violence Reduction in Croydon will be referred to as the “Croydon Violence Reduction Network”.

8.13. Finally, the Framework highlights the direct link between Croydon’s approach to violence reduction and the current delivery model being developed by the London Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) established by the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC). It recognises the importance of aligning the

themes and priorities set out above, with the priorities that emerge from the London VRU, whilst recognising the local borough context.

## **9 BUSINESS & SKILLS**

### **Small Business Friendly Borough Awards**

- 9.1. The support offered by Croydon Council to get hundreds of residents into jobs and enable small businesses to grow has been awarded as the best in the capital. Croydon Council won the Best All-Round Small Business Friendly Borough category at the Small Business Friendly Borough Awards, supported by the London region of the Federation of Small Businesses and London Councils.
- 9.2. Croydon Council has focussed its efforts in introducing a number of initiatives in order to support the borough's small businesses, including:
  - Last year's Croydon Means Business programme, which delivered support to more than 4,500 business delegates
  - Free job brokerage service Croydon Works, which has got 700 of the borough's residents into work
  - Croydon Enterprise Loan Fund, which supports businesses to start, develop and grow, offering investment finance to companies that may not be able to get it elsewhere.
- 9.3. These initiatives were built on following the introduction of the business-led small business commission, which led to improvements in offers to employers.
- 9.4. The council was nominated in two other categories at the awards held at the Bloomsbury Hotel in London: Best Small Business Friendly Procurement to Support Local Trade and Best Programme to Reduce Impact of Crime on Small Businesses (in partnership with Croydon Business Improvement District (BID)).

### **South Bank University**

- 9.5. A new partnership between Croydon Council and London South Bank University (LSBU) has been revealed as the next exciting step in the borough's regeneration, as the town centre further develops as a centre of business, culture and learning.
- 9.6. The partnership could see LSBU establish a centre for higher education in the heart of the town centre – a move which would significantly increase learning and training opportunities for residents of all ages, particularly the borough's 93,000 under-18s.
- 9.7. It would also provide a significant boost to the borough's economy, enhancing the skills of the local workforce, forging links with local businesses and building on the success of the council's award-winning apprenticeships scheme, which is part of the Choose your Future campaign.

- 9.8. LSBU's business incubation facility houses 90 businesses and is ranked among the top 15 university-run incubators in the world, while its employer-supported learning framework has made it a leading UK university for graduate employment. Nearly 89% of graduates are in professional graduate-level jobs or further study six months after graduation.
- 9.9. The new partnership is the first step in the council's ambition to develop the Croydon Creative Campus, which would see the town centre develop as a global centre of higher education.

## **10 GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

- 10.1. A cross-party panel has been established to undertake an independent review of the Council's governance structure and to report its findings to the Council.
- 10.2. The panel is led by an Independent Chair, Dame Moira Gibb and panel membership includes: Councillors Hamida Ali, Richard Chatterjee, Sean Fitzsimons, Clive Fraser, Simon Hall, Jason Perry, Joy Prince, Helen Redfern, Scott Roche; and Anne Smith (Independent Member from the Ethics Committee). The Panel can also involve independent experts to support the review.
- 10.3. The scope of the review is to assess and review the Council's governance arrangements, to bring together best practice and to develop a model tailored to the needs and aspirations of Croydon's residents and stakeholders.
- 10.4. The main goals of the review are to:
- Improve councillor involvement
  - Improve local democracy and community participation
  - Consider if a change in arrangements could improve the quality of decision making and members' involvement and participation.
- 10.5. The Panel's key tasks are to:
- Hear the views of councillors and other stakeholders including residents, community and voluntary groups, business, MPs and other participants in local democracy;
  - Hear the views and seek advice from experts on participation in local democracy;
  - Identify those aspects of the council's governance that works well and identify opportunities to improve councillor and other stakeholder participation in the local democratic processes;
  - Benchmark good practice from areas with higher levels of participation and consider how this can be delivered in Croydon;
  - Identify the cost and value for money implications of any recommendations that it makes.
- 10.6. The Panel will submit their final report detailing options and recommendations in December 2019. The Panel hopes to present some early indications of findings and recommendations in a progress report to the July council meeting.

10.7. The Panel is at the stage of evidence gathering and as the review progresses it will be seeking the views of many groups in the borough as well as experts in the governance field and those with experience of other models of governance.

## **11 PARTNERSHIP WORKING: VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR STRATEGY**

11.1. Partnership working is integral to how the Council works and provides better services to the community. To support this, Croydon has developed its Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy to better work with the local groups and partners.

11.2. The strategy outlines how the Council wants to work in partnership with voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations and groups. It has been informed by research and engagement across the sector and by the priorities of the council and its partnerships. The strategy can be found on the Council website at:

[https://www.croydon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/articles/downloads/Voluntary\\_and\\_Community\\_Sector\\_Strategy\\_2019-2023.pdf](https://www.croydon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/articles/downloads/Voluntary_and_Community_Sector_Strategy_2019-2023.pdf)

11.3. The aim is to see a thriving VCS, with improved community cohesion and the foundations of wellbeing and resilient, empowered, supportive communities. The Council will play its part to support the sector. However, this strategy is not about telling the VCS how to operate. Instead, the priority outcomes set out are intended to provide an open and honest framework for prioritising support and resources for working with the sector to deliver for Croydon.

11.4. The policies and commissioning prospectuses will be developed within the framework of this strategy in consultation with the sector.

## **12 FINANCIAL CONTEXT**

12.1. Once again, despite ongoing real term cuts from Central Government, we have set a balanced budget for 2019/20 that protects vital frontline services this year.

12.2. Thanks to sound financial management, tough decisions already taken and the proposed increase in council tax and adult social care precept, we can protect the services that residents tell us matter most to them.

12.3. Croydon continues to suffer from a lack of funding from the Government with a 76% cut in government funding since 2011 and last year Croydon funded £10.6m of UASC costs due to shortfall in funding from the Home Office.

### **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)**

12.4. Local Authorities are responsible for supporting UASC in the same way as Looked After Children with the Home Office providing a fixed rate funding to support UASC.

- 12.5. This funding does not adequately consider the volume of UASC within a given area, which are significantly higher in point of entry authorities such as Croydon which leaves the Council with a funding deficit of £10.6m.
- 12.6. The National Transfer Scheme (NTS), designed to disperse USAC across local authorities, is not working as it is not mandatory and almost all London Councils are at or above the threshold of 0.07% of local 0-18 year olds in the borough population. Croydon has 6 times the NTS threshold
- 281 open USAC cases as at 1 May 2019
  - 513 Care Leavers (who are former USACs)
  - 1 in 3 LAC are USAC
  - 92 Under 16 UASC arrivals in 2018/19 – only one transferred under NTS
- 12.7. Even if the NTS improves, the Council cannot relocate those that are already settled.
- 12.8. The main objectives for the Council are to continue to support some of the most vulnerable people in the country, secure fair funding that enables this support to be provided without impacting on resources for local services and to secure changes to the National Transfer Scheme to ensure UASC are distributed fairly across local authorities
- 12.9. The Council is working with Croydon MPs, London Councils and the LGA to raise awareness of the unfair costs facing Croydon Council and campaign for a fairer approach. Ultimately we will pursue legal challenge if Government is unwilling to review the current arrangements.
- 12.10. Croydon is proud of its long track record in welcoming and caring for these vulnerable young people, having looked after more than 5000 children in the past ten years, but the funding needs to be fair for this to continue.

### **13 CONCLUSION**

- 13.1. The last six months have been very positive for Croydon. We are constantly changing as a Council and seeking to improve our services for our residents by working to and delivering our manifesto commitments.
- 13.2. This report summarises some of the major work streams for delivery against manifesto commitments and the priorities of the Corporate Plan.
- 13.3. Regular reports will be provided regarding progress against the plan the first of which will be going to July Cabinet.