

## Council

Meeting held on Monday, 8 March 2021 at 6.30 pm.  
This meeting was held remotely; to view the meeting, please click [here](#).

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillor Maddie Henson (Chair);  
Councillor Sherwan Chowdhury (Vice-Chair);  
Councillors Hamida Ali, Muhammad Ali, Jamie Audsley, Jane Avis, Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel, Sue Bennett, Margaret Bird, Simon Brew, Alison Butler, Jan Buttinger, Janet Campbell, Robert Canning, Richard Chatterjee, Luke Clancy, Chris Clark, Pat Clouder, Stuart Collins, Jason Cummings, Patsy Cummings, Mario Creatura, Nina Degrads, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Sean Fitzsimons, Alisa Flemming, Felicity Flynn, Clive Fraser, Maria Gatland, Lynne Hale, Simon Hall, Patricia Hay-Justice, Simon Hoar, Steve Hollands, Yvette Hopley, Karen Jewitt, Humayun Kabir, Bernadette Khan, Shafi Khan, Stuart King, Toni Letts, Oliver Lewis, Stephen Mann, Stuart Millson, Vidhi Mohan, Michael Neal, Tony Newman, Oni Oviri, Ian Parker, Andrew Pelling, Helen Pollard, Tim Pollard, Joy Prince, Badsha Quadir, Helen Redfern, Scott Roche, Pat Ryan, Paul Scott, Manju Shahul-Hameed, Andy Stranack, Gareth Streeter, Robert Ward, David Wood, Louisa Woodley and Callton Young

**Apologies:** Councillors Mary Croos, Steve O'Connell and Jason Perry

### PART A

#### 13/21 **Minutes of Previous Meetings**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2020, 30 November 2020 and 1 December 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

#### 14/21 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

#### 15/21 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

#### 16/21 **Announcements**

##### **Madame Mayor**

Madame Mayor, Councillor Maddie Henson, wished the virtual chamber a happy International Women's Day. In the week prior, Croydon was fortunate to receive a visit from the Duchess of Cornwall who attended a local vaccination

centre and received her first dosage, streamed live over Facebook.

Madame Mayor explained that she had two remaining fundraisers planned before the end of her role in May; firstly a virtual bingo night hosted by Simon Edmands, and secondly, a virtual murder mystery evening, which would be written and performed by an acting troop who studied at the Brit School. She described another two events planned; firstly an event called Creating Conversations based on 'coming out', which was supported by Councillors Wood and Campbell, and the final event would be the Mayor's Baby and Toddler Festival which was a two day programme of taste sessions presented by toddler groups from around the borough. These sessions were aimed to help organisations start generating bookings as restrictions were eased and to support people who were pregnant or had given birth during the pandemic, particularly to provide spaces for them to start to socialise with other parents.

### **The Leader**

The Leader, Councillor Hamida Ali, wished Council a happy International Woman's Day. The Leader highlighted that the council had been successful in its application for a capitalisation direction for a total of £120 million, which covers the current and next financial year. A letter from the Minister of State, Luke Hall MP, had been received which set out the details of the offer and attached conditions. The expectations included; making good progress against the Croydon Renewal Improvement Plan; meeting the expectations of the Improvement and Assurance Panel; and a condition that any additional borrowing to the Public Works Loan Board would result in an increase of an additional percentage point to the loan interest rates. This loan was a significant moment to Croydon's recovery and brought stability to the budget position. She stated that an enormous amount of work had been contributed to this successful effort from officers across the council, led by the Interim Chief Executive, and she invited Madame Mayor to join in her thanks to everyone - which was granted.

### **Interim Chief Executive**

The Interim Chief Executive informed Council of three recent appointments: Chris Buss had been appointed as the Council's Interim Section 151 Officer, Asmat Hussain had been appointed as the Council's Interim Executive Director of Resources and Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer and Doutimi Aseh had been appointed as the Interim Council Solicitor and Deputy Monitoring Officer.

17/21

### **Scheme of Members' Allowances 2021-22**

The Leader introduced the item by applauding the productive work the Administration had led on to find a significant level of savings from the members' allowances budget, particularly in relation to the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs). She noted there had been a focus on reducing the London average level. Ward Councillor Budgets would remain, as which was decided given the level of financial remuneration and that those

carrying more a responsibility should contribute more in this exercise. It was clear that these changes in no way would resolve the council's financial position, however left a way in which councillors could make a contribution. The Leader moved and Councillor Clive Fraser seconded the recommendations.

Madam Deputy Mayor put the recommendations to the vote and they were agreed unanimously.

**RESOLVED:** Council AGREED the recommendations contained in the report:

1.1. To approve changes to the Council's existing Members' Allowance Scheme as set out in Appendix 1 to this report with effect from 1 April 2021.

1.2. To authorise the Monitoring Officer to comply with the necessary statutory publicity requirements in respect of the on-going annual publicity of the Members' scheme of allowances which is required, and subject to Members' approval of recommendation 1.1 of this report, the approval of the revised Members' Allowance Scheme as detailed in this report.

## 18/21 **Council Tax and Budget**

### **Questions to the Leader**

Madam Deputy Mayor explained that the Council Tax and Budget item would commence with questions to the Leader, Councillor Hamida Ali, for a total of 15 minutes.

**Councillor Jamie Audsley** congratulated the Leader on the budget and asked how the budget was shaped in terms of listening to the community.

In response, the Leader explained that they ran a public consultation which received a strong 1,800 respondents. The key consideration for that consultation was understanding the impacts on residents of the proposals. There were other processes within the consultation which considered the interest and capacity there might be in the community to discover alternative methods of delivering and continuing to run some of our current services. There was plenty to consider drawn from the consultation, in terms of how savings proposed in the budget could be achieved, and there was a commitment to ongoing important dialogue with the community throughout the challenge ahead.

In his supplementary, Councillor Jamie Audsley commended the commitment to listening and involving the community in financial plans to areas of interest to local residents. He asked the Leader if residents and local businesses who were in their own financial struggles, who may be worried about how they

would pay their council tax and bill, would be offered any support from the council. In response, the Leader said that there was a number of residents who were receiving support from the council and that to name a primary scheme was that 30,000 residents were part of the council tax support across the borough. There was also a tax hardship fund, a government grant, which was benefitting 20,000 residents. Additionally, she told Council that on the onset of the pandemic, the council offered a two month deferral for council tax payments from which 3,381 residents benefitted from. To support businesses, there was government support to local authorities which played the key role in distributing the payments – where in the borough this totalled £15 million across 1000s of businesses in a 12 month period.

**Councillor Jason Cummings** stated that there were a significant number of recommendations following the government’s rapid review into the council, where a number of those were in progress, and he asked the Leader to confirm if the Administration was committed to delivering all of the recommendations.

In response, the Leader stated that many of those recommendations were in train and the Administration was following faithfully through the entire list.

In his supplementary, Councillor Jason Cummings asked when arrangements would be made for the chair of the General Purposes and Audit Committee (GPAC) to be appointed outside of the majority group. In response, the Leader stated that there was not currently a timeline in place for this process, however they were bringing plans for the GPAC chair forward and in due course that post would be appointed by Council. The recommendation from the RIPI stated that the chair should be outside the majority group, however the report had challenged the whole council in its capacity, from a governance point of view, therefore the Administration was looking potentially to appoint an external chair.

**Councillor Jeet Bains** stated that the Leader formerly held the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources in 2016; had been a Cabinet Member for five years along with five other Cabinet Members who sat on the former Leaders Cabinet; and she had partaken in all of the budget and financial decision making during that period. He asked why the Leader had not resigned because decisions throughout those roles meant that the most vulnerable residents across the borough would be paying for the mistakes of the Executive members and he stated that fresh leadership was needed.

In response, the Leader stated that the new leadership which was recognised by external bodies had been in place since October 2020. The rapid review team had inspected the authority during November 2020 and the resulting report acknowledged the new leadership, understanding the nature of the council’s situation and its demonstration to tackle it. Additionally, the Improvement and Assurance Panel were content with the Cabinet’s approach, from a political perspective, that they recognised the situation and that they were taking the appropriate steps. The council had been granted the capitalisation direction from central government of the amount requested for

2021-22 and 2022-23, which demonstrated the openness and commitment to tackle the council's situation. The Administration presented a balanced budget to the Council which was comprised of a delicate balance between investment and savings to deliver, whilst replenishing reserves and limiting liabilities. The proposed budget this evening responded to a range of challenges raised by the RIPI and offered a route out of the situation towards a sustainable financial footing prescribed by the external auditors.

**Councillor Jerry Fitzpatrick** stated that there were wide exchanges discussing the assumption of responsibility for past and forthcoming budgets. He asked the Leader what she understood about those assumptions of responsibility and what constraints there might have been beyond the control of the Administration.

In response, the Leader stated that the budget responded to a range of challenges within and outside the local authority's control. Those factors beyond was the emergency response to the pandemic, in unison with other authorities, and the vital support to the unaccompanied children and young people who arrived in the borough to which Croydon provided significantly more support and resource than other authorities. There were factors that contributed to the situation which were within the council's control, but the core tenants of the proposed budget was strong financial discipline throughout the organisation going forward and delivering the balanced budget.

In relation to the savings strategy, **Councillor Yvette Hopley** raised her concerns over the impacts to the social care sector. She stated that the focus of the strategy would affect 7,000 residents in receipt of care packages and 2,500 in receipt of complex care, in tandem to the reduction in funding to the voluntary sector partners. She said that residents were worried about the implications of the spending reduction proposals and asked the Leader how the Administration came to decide those policies.

In response, the Leader challenged the alarmist language of the Opposition to the social care budget proposals, which were not factually supported and were misleading for residents, and stated that the budget proposals included additional investment into adult social care services. The Administration would continue to ensure those services were of the best quality and that the appropriate concerns rested with why the current spending on those services was disproportionate to other London borough authorities and how the council should be achieving the maximum value for money and demonstrating the best outcomes for residents as a result of investment. They were working with external partners who were assisting the council in understanding the services and benchmarking data to identify how to bring investment into line to ensure residents were supported.

### **Questions to the Cabinet Members for Croydon Renewal and Resources & Financial Governance on the Budget**

Madame Mayor opened questions to Cabinet Members Councillors Stuart King and Callton Young. She firstly invited them to make any announcements

, which there were none.

**Councillor Lynne Hale** asked the Cabinet Member for confirmation that much of the problem of the budget setting was centred around the council's significant overspends, lack of reserves and the additional risks to the financial brought by commercial property acquisitions and Brick by Brick. Councillor Stuart King, Cabinet Member for Croydon Renewal, agreed and added that in addition to those problems the authority had not displayed sufficient financial discipline which was an underlying root cause of the challenges.

In her supplementary and in light of the response, Councillor Lynne Hale asked if it would be understandable to the Cabinet Member that residents would be questioning why Labour councillors who were largely responsible for the decisions leading up to the situation were proposing a budget tonight which meant residents were paying for the mistakes made. Whilst appreciating that the former Leader and lead Cabinet Member finance were now independent members, Councillor Lynne Hale asked why the other councillors who sat on Cabinet setting the previous budgets were still part of the Labour group and were voting for the budget as part of the Administration. In response, the Cabinet Member for Croydon Renewal stated that the RIPI had been critical of the behaviour of all councillors, that it was true that some members would share a greater level of responsibility, however it was wrong of the Opposition to avoid understanding the true nature of the issues the council was facing. All councillors voted through the previous budget, which included the asset investment strategy, and the Opposition leadership had never explained their reasons for doing so.

**Councillor Karen Jewitt** asked how Cabinet Members had sought to reflect the RIPI recommendation in the budget proposals.

Councillor Callton Young, Cabinet Member for Resources and Financial Governance, replied that the recommendations from that report were wide ranging and were embraced within the proposals. He described his role to improve the financial governance which this budget reflected. The budget set to advance the robustness of the financial resource functions and to encompass the mechanicals, staff and training to build the organisation's capacity to the deliver the Croydon Renewal Plan.

Following comments from **Councillor Andy Stranack** stating that the councillor ward budgets were removed within the budget proposals and listing a number of further cuts in the budget's millions of savings, the Cabinet Member for Croydon Renewal replied this was false and not within the report. He corrected the councillor and said that ward budgets were only being slimmed in the proposals, adding that there would also be change in how they were governed. He stated that the council was currently operating above its spending capacity and needed to reduce its expenditure, therefore this reduction was necessary; the Croydon Renewal Plan meant that the organisation had to live within its means and be prepared to make tough decisions.

As a follow up to the Cabinet Members response, Councillor David Wood, the Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety and Resilience, stated that the council tried to minimise the impact on the voluntary sector in the process of planning the spending reductions. They had gone to lengths so as to not follow other London boroughs who did not assist the voluntary sector in any capacity. Instead, there have been many constructive and engaging discussions with the sector as to how they can find savings and explore alternative routes of support, whilst enabling partners in continuing to support residents.

In his supplementary, Councillor Andy Stranack raised concern over the proposed budget cuts set of: £100,000 to night-time noise reduction, £250,000 to violence reduction units, £200,000 to community teams and £400,000 to the Community Safety Fund. He also commented on the introduction of charges to bulky waste collection, which he stated would result in increased fly tipping. He asked the Cabinet Member if residents would still be safe living in Croydon following the budget cuts. In response, the Cabinet Member for Croydon Renewal firstly stated that residents would be safe. Secondly, he stated that the charges to bulky waste collection were already in place and were not related to the budget proposals. He noted that no feedback was recorded by services which indicated a huge rise in fly tipping as the Opposition predicted. There were difficult but necessary decisions ahead and they were implementing them in a way as to mitigate the legitimate concern that existed.

**Councillor Joy Prince** asked the Cabinet Member to set out the key risks facing the successful delivery of the budget proposals.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Croydon Renewal stated that there were two types of risks they faced, ranging internal and external factors. The single most challenging risk to the council was the pandemic, similarly to most other authorities, and the impact of the potential economic downturn that was likely to follow of the ending of the furlough scheme, the Universal Credit uplift and the end to the ban on evictions. These factors were likely to increase the demand for council services and which they needed to mitigate and manage. The second most challenging risk, following the capitalisation direction and agreement of the budget, was the council to operate within its means. This risk was mitigated by the talented executive staff team in place to manage the departmental approach and the political determination from the Leader and Cabinet team.

### **Questions to the Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee on the Scrutiny Budget Report**

Madame Mayor opened questions to Councillors Sean Fitzsimons as the Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee (SOC) on the Scrutiny Budget Report. She firstly invited him to make any announcements.

Councillor Sean Fitzsimons gave an overview on how the SOC reviewed the proposed budget. He referred to page 7 of the agenda which set out the

business reports and provided feedback to the 16 February 2021 SOC meeting. He explained that backbench members of both parties were involved in the review of the proposals, including the Sub-Committees, receiving briefings from the Section 151 Officer, the Leader and Cabinet Members. As a Committee they had also reviewed the council's strategies underpinning the budget approach, including the Croydon Renewal Plan and both stages of the PwC strategic review of companies. Overall, scrutiny members supported the budget, however that came with reservations.

**Councillor Ian Parker** stated that following the failure of the council's scrutiny function to notice what was happening to the organisation's finances, he asked if the Chair of scrutiny should be elected by Council and not just the Labour Group. He also noted that the scrutiny chair had not changed since 2014.

In response, Councillor Sean Fitzsimons noted that the Opposition Leader appointed their scrutiny leads and the Administration's backbenches voted on theirs. Croydon Labour would be developing their manifesto towards the 2022 local elections and if Croydon Labour would continue the current system for electing their chair of scrutiny he said he would support that, but at the current time the focus was to ensure the council delivered the balanced budget. He urged the Councillor to attend the SOC and see for himself the hard work contributed by cross-party.

In his supplementary, Councillor Ian Parker stated that the Grant Thornton Report highlighted a number of areas where SOC had failed the task of holding Cabinet to account, listing the specific failings of the Committee. He said that the Labour Group should have the rights of chairing the committee revoked as it had demonstrated its inability to properly run this function on which Croydon residents depended. He stated that it was not too late for the Chair to resign and support a better system of electoral replacement. In response, Councillor Sean Fitzsimons stated that he was proud of the cross-party group of councillors, noting that the Opposition Vice-Chair, Councillor Robert Ward, was an excellent councillor and scrutineer.

The Chamber noted the point raised by Councillor Gareth Streeter, as a point of personal explanation on behalf of Councillor Ian Parker, that it was improper for Councillor Sean Fitzsimons to accuse Councillor Ian Parker of being negligent in his duties because he was not a member of any scrutiny committees.

In relation to the work that scrutiny committees had completed in the past year, **Councillor Clive Fraser** asked if there had been an appropriate balance struck between financial and non-financial matters, particularly in the lead up to the budget setting period.

In response, Councillor Sean Fitzsimons stated that the primary focus since July 2020 was the scrutiny of the finances. During this period, they had also been responding to the consequences of the pandemic, particularly in the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee, and he stated that nearly

1000 residents from Croydon had sadly lost their lives to Covid. The financial crisis was important to scrutiny, but they had to balance that with ensuring the council's health services were responding well to the pandemic, including the economic fallout which was and would continue to devastate the local economy. The third area they were focussing on was the economic recovery, which all members would want scrutinised. Looking at Croydon's town centre, where trends in the previous years indicated the need for an economic rethink and focus.

In his supplementary, Councillor Clive Fraser asked how the SOC would work alongside the new Cabinet Member Advisory Committees (CMACs) in monitoring the delivery of the budget and developing new budget options. In response, Councillor Sean Fitzsimons stated that the coming municipal year would be important for GPAC and CMACs, whilst managing the prevention of duplicating workload. It would be important for the chairs of the committees to work together constructively to build an agreed work programme. CMACs would provide backbenchers, including Opposition members, room for more robust political debates on the merits of council proposals. Both groups of committees would work alongside each other to assure that the proposed budget would be delivered.

**Councillor Vidhi Mohan** stated that the external auditors report made it clear that the scrutiny function in Croydon held a poor record in holding the Administration to account, particularly on the matter of council finances. He asked what the Chair of the SOC would specifically do to improve that record and asked whether it was time for him to consider his position and allow for new scrutiny leadership, in light of the fact he had held that post since 2014.

In response, Councillor Sean Fitzsimons stated that his role in taking the position of the chair of scrutiny was to rebuild the function of scrutiny in the council following the devastation and side-lining it experienced during the previous leadership. He stated that during this time he had worked hard with his Opposition colleagues and Labour Group backbenchers to support scrutiny and to ensure Conservative councillors chaired committees. Looking forward, scrutiny had a role to ensure that the council's budget would be delivered, and that in regard to his own role, he has never held the presumption it would roll on to the next year as it was elected by the Labour Group backbench members. He noted that Opposition members in this meeting were more interested in the single role of the chair of the SOC, rather than the Scrutiny Budget Report for consideration in the agenda this evening. He stated he would be working with Conservative colleagues in a non-party political approach to hold the council to financial account over the next year.

In his supplementary, Councillor Vidhi Mohan rejected the claim that the scrutiny function was left in devastation following the previous leadership. He asked the chair of scrutiny to outline what new approaches would be adopted, and for himself as chair to ensure it would happen, for scrutiny to effectively hold the Administration to account. He stated that new ideas were required otherwise the chair should step down in their role to make way for a member who would bring change.

In response, Councillor Sean Fitzsimons stated that the approach of scrutiny had changed since September 2020, which also had to be adapted due to the challenges of the pandemic. Scrutiny committee members had engaged in many online meetings, received a number of detailed briefings and councillors from both parties had actively been involved in developing new questioning strategies. During scrutiny committee meetings, it was clear that members thoroughly read the report papers and put forward considered questions to Cabinet Members and officers. The agendas for scrutiny had been redefined and shortened to enable a streamlined function. Councillor Sean Fitzsimons stated that, under his request, the council invited the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) to undertake a review of the scrutiny process within Croydon, which would be reported in due course. Arising from that report, would be lessons that would need to be understood and addressed and he welcomed the opportunity to present the subsequent work programme to a future meeting.

### **Council Tax Debate**

Madam Deputy Mayor introduced the start of the Council Tax debate and invited the Leader, Councillor Hamida Ali to speak.

The Leader stated that it was with great pride that she made this speech as a female council leader on International Women's Day to move the council's budget. The Administration put forward a balanced budget, having secured the capitalisation direction from central government to stabilise the council's position. This was a significant moment in the organisation's recovery, relieved of the Section 114 Notice, and able to move forward with confidence to deliver the balanced budget. This would offer reassurance to residents of the borough, who relied on the council for vital services, and the hard working staff who were among hidden heroes of public sector working in the pandemic. Reassurance was also offered to the council's partners across all sectors, who together worked closely in the best interests of the borough to improve the collective opportunity and prosperity of all the residents and businesses.

With almost 1000s lives lost to the pandemic in the borough, the Leader wanted to pause and reflect on the last 12 months and the remarkable work from council staff in the borough and across the country during this period to support communities. Examples of the support provided by this authority included protecting care homes by coordinating access across the borough to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); setting up a food delivery hub within one week; extending the domestic violence services to open seven days per week; securing access to tonnes of food every week to food banks; providing over £200,000 pounds of emergency funding to the voluntary sector; keeping schools open all year round; distributing over £15 million to local businesses; supplying food to families during school holidays; and delivering surge testing in the borough. The Leader gave her sincere thanks to the workforce who enabled the support to protect communities throughout the pandemic and serve the residents of Croydon.

Looking ahead, the Administration had set a new set of priorities for the

council to live within its means and focus on delivering the best quality services and continue the important work of tackling structural inequality and poverty in the borough. Given those priorities, the proposed budget was an important milestone in achieving those objectives and bringing stability to the borough. The government's decision to grant the capitalisation direction reflected the confidence in this new Administration's drive and commitment to forward the council's improvement journey. The government's rapid review report described the strong commitment from all quarters, with members and officers working energetically on the recovery, and the Minister for State recognised the Administration's openness and commitment.

The Leader stated that it was only the Opposition who spoke out of line to their national counterparts and she expected them to continue their ongoing hypocrisy; simultaneously protesting the council's financial position, by opposing any steps to improve resilience by raising concerns about the impact of budget savings, whilst protesting any proposals to increase income.

This year had been difficult for everyone, families and businesses, and the Administration did not take the decision to propose a raise in the council tax lightly. This move was in-line with the majority of local authorities across London and nationally and there was little alternative choice. The central government's financial settlement for local government both nationally and for Croydon provided an increase in the core spending power of the council, which described the combined total of the range of funding sources which made up the council's budget, whether this be through council tax or government grants. However, that spending power was entirely predicated on all local authorities raising their council tax by 5%. That together with the Mayor of London's targets to provide more police officers and help to pay for concessionary travel, in practice will mean the council will need an additional £2 per week per household across the borough of additional income. The central government's policy direction in recent years was that local government should be funded locally, which still left questions on how social care would be funded in the years ahead.

The proposed budget this evening offered continued protection for Croydon's communities and continued investment in vital services across the financial plan for the next three years, which included investing additional funding to social care services. Over that period, in the contrary to the Opposition's inaccurate narratives, there would be £84 million of growth to Children's and Adult's Social Care services. The savings to be delivered were not at expense of investment and it was important to plan the budgets right.

There were still savings to find over the next few years and from now to the end of 2023-24, the council had to find an additional £80 million on top of the £45 million next for 2022-23 and £35 million for 2021-22. Further savings would become increasingly harder to identify and would continue to be challenging to the communities' expectation of the council. The relationship and dialogue with residents was all too important to retain and build an understating of the position of the council and communities.

The Leader stated that the Section 151 Officers assessment was clear that delivering this budget was dependant on a number of factors, including the political will to build the financial discipline required to stay within budget, and the Administration was determined to deliver and reflect the core political objectives. Moving forward, it could not be political and executive leadership alone to deliver the budget and the discipline required for the council to live within the margins; the entire organisational workforce and backbench members would have their role to play. Beyond the processes and systems being fit for purpose, the plans for this recovery encompassed the need to address cultural and behavioural shifts, weighted as important in this journey.

The Leader moved the Council Tax Debate motion and Councillor Stuart King seconded and reserved his right to speak.

**Councillor Jason Cummings**, Shadow Cabinet Member for Croydon Renewal, stated that the Conservative government had finally agreed to bail out Croydon from the disaster that the Administration caused to the finances, which was an indictment of what had gone on over the previous years and the scale of the capitalisation direction was unprecedented. Despite the Administration's claims that other local authorities were in similar positions, it should be made clear that the situation Croydon was much worse.

Central to the delivery of this budget would be the council's political leadership. The former Leader and former Cabinet member for Finance and Resources were clearly to blame for the council's position, who were now sitting as independent members and should have had the whip removed by the Leader sooner. There was clear evidence of mismanagement that had cost Croydon millions of pounds and a culture of bullying and secrecy. The current leadership was not strong enough to act, even their national party had taken action which was indicative of the weakness of their position.

Councillor Jason Cummings told Council that he found it shocking that he now lived in a borough where a council tax strike was openly discussed. There were many decisions approaching for Croydon Labour in what sort of party they were and what they stood for, which would be followed closely by the people of Croydon. The budget represented a huge failure of the Administration's mismanagement, with very few positives to draw from, where the depth of financial mess continually increases as it was previously said that there were £80 million of savings still to be found.

Croydon had one of the most expensive council taxes in London and in future years was set to hike to the maximum increases. Residents would bear the brunt of balancing the books, not only through council tax, but through penalty charge notices which were set to increase by millions of pounds. The increased income was being squeezed out of the same residents who were losing their services at the fault of the Administration.

There was a vast and varied set of recommendations for the council to turn its fortunes around, which all had a similar theme of prescribing change. At this time two of the council's key committees had not changed their leadership,

GPAC and SOC, despite the auditor's reports making deep criticisms of their functions. The fact that the chair of SOC did not resign following the report's findings was outrageous and it would be a test to the Labour Group as to whether they regard their own interest above the public's if they were to elect the same chair again. The case for change in scrutiny was overwhelmingly clear in the RIPI and was vital to deliver the proposed budget. For GPAC, the recommendations from the rapid review was to appoint a chair outside of the majority group, one that the council had fully accepted. However, instead of immediately and easily appointing a member of the Opposition who would be able to effectively apply scrutiny, the intention was to read the recommendation differently and decide to appoint the post externally because it suited the Administration politically.

The worst part of the budget this evening was the costs and cuts to the local residents of Croydon, which Conservative colleagues would be speaking to this evening. An example of the impacts to local people was the uncertain future of the new Addington boxing club which had been run by volunteers. This club's history crossed 50 years and served the residents of new Addington and beyond, providing a healthy sports activity and a sense of discipline to the young and older alike. It would be a tragedy if this wonderful institution was lost due to the council's financial mismanagement and subsequent inability to provide any assistance. As a council, they should not be reduced in to a position where they could not provide support to local volunteer led organisations who relied upon assistance for survival.

The capitalisation directive received from national government was conditional and the council would only receive additional spending capacity if they delivered a balanced budget for 2021-22 and made sufficient progress on the Croydon Renewal Plan. National government, nor the Conservative Opposition, trusted the Labour Administration to deliver the budget. Councillor Jason Cummings said he did not support the motion.

As a point of personal explanation, **Councillor Karen Jewitt**, the chair of GPAC, stated that she had only been acting as the chair of the Committee since May 2020. She stated that she had a good working relationship with the Opposition members of the Committee and at this stage there was no benefit from Councillor Jason Cumming speaking as he did because the running and leadership of the GPAC was clearly changing. She stated that at the recent GPAC training, the independent member spoke about what they would bring to the Committee.

**Councillor Callton Young**, the Cabinet Member for Resources and Financial Governance stated that the RIPI issued by the independent auditors on 23 October 2020 was a wakeup call to the council as it pointed to the collective corporate blindness and missed opportunities to tackle the council's financial position. Since then, there has been clear change to set the council on a path to renewal, which could not be encapsulated in a three minute speech, however he said it would be remiss not to praise the stewardship of the new Leader and executive leadership during these difficult times.

The Minister of State's letter on 5 March 2021 to the new Leader was an essential milestone at this early stage of Croydon's path to renewal. The capitalisation direction secured from MHCLG by the new Leader and Interim Chief Executive left the Cabinet in a position able to recommend a balanced budget to Council and to fulfil the council's legal duty. The letter from the MHCLG had a balanced approach by acknowledging and displaying appreciation for the council's cooperation with central government.

Agreeing the budget recommended for 2021-22 would allow the council to focus on the delivering to meet the conditions of the loan and provide assurance in the context of the Croydon Renewal Plan. Going forward, there would be an enhanced focus in bringing demand led spending in Adult Social Care closer in-line with the London borough average per head. By in way of contribution, the Administration would like to see a clear and measurable contribution made to the savings from the council's commissioning and procurement function because too many contracts were outdated, which meant the council was not able to say they were obtaining the best value for money for their services. Due to this, the council would be initiating a review of those processes, set to improve the function and oversight of contract management and would reach to the market for more than a third of the council's 460 contracts over the course of the year to eliminate avoidable costs. The council spent £395 million per year to these contracts therefore the level of spending power meant that it could create markets that better met the council's needs to provide quality services at the best value for residents.

Councillor Callton Young concluded, the balanced budget presented would allow the council to deliver its new priorities set out in the Croydon Renewal Plan and he would be voting for the budget, noting that the council tax increase proposed were in-line with most London boroughs.

**Councillor Maria Gatland** stated that it had been a difficult year for many due to the pandemic where children and young people had been profoundly affected. Residents would expect a responsible council to safeguard vulnerable families. Due to the council's reckless investments and financial incompetence, Croydon's reputation had been damaged nationally. The Administration had announced a series of cuts to services to vulnerable residents despite the bailout from central government. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning played her role leading to this crisis and it was clear she was unable to financially run her department because they had seen budget growth from 2016 and the event of her refusing to act on the external auditor's past recommendations or use of transformation funding as intended. This lack of action had left a weakened department having to cut loyal staff and vital services.

She stated that Councillor Stuart King was correct in the fact that the council was left with no other choice but to slash those services, but this was due to the Administration's failure since 2014. Councillor Andy Stranack was also correct, there were cuts to vital early help services and adolescent teams preventing early intervention to vulnerable families and support to adolescents at risk of exploitation and violence and there were cuts to vital centres, care

packages and SEN transport. The cost to children in this borough were high.

In agreement with the belief that children being returned back safely into a stable home was the best outcome where possible, Councillor Maria Gatland stated that she trusted the hard working staff in the department responsible. However, it was difficult to trust that process under the assurance of the discredited Administration. As corporate parents it should not be forgotten that under the leadership of Councillor Alisa Flemming, children had been left at risk of significant harm and further reduction to services would only raise that risk level. There was still £20 million of growth in the department which raised questions as to how she was directing the department to live within its means and deliver the Improvement and Assurance Board recommendations, where clearly the culture of overspend remained.

Councillor Maria Gatland stated that Labour members spoke of social justice, however in reality would be delivering the opposite and would leave children to pay the price of their failings. After stating the budget situation was shameful, she opposed the budget.

**Councillor Alisa Flemming**, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Learning, stated that past year had seen changes internationally, nationally and locally against a backdrop of a pandemic that had claimed the lives of so many loved ones across the world. Against that backdrop, she spoke in support of the budget presented this evening with a particular focus on Children's Social Care. Following the successful request of the capitalisation direction, the council was now able to present a balanced budget and was the first platform to continue the work to build a financially stable council that provided good value for money services to the residents of Croydon.

Children's and Adult's Social Care accounted for more than 60% of the council's total budget which was used to protect the most vulnerable. Within the paper, it was set that the departmental savings and growth request in Children's Social Care and education, and the right sizing of budgets, would help meet the underlying historic pressures. These pressures included structurally inappropriate funding to services because Croydon received funding of an outer London authority, however the makeup and characteristics were equivalent to an inner London Borough in terms of the levels of need and deprivation.

The council was continuing assessments to ensure they were looking after the right children in care, reviewing care packages where appropriate and insuring the delivering the best value for money services for the Croydon taxpayer. In relation to children in care, Councillor Alisa Flemming stated that the focus to reduce looked after children had been a priority far prior to this financial crisis and firmly lay in the best interests of young people.

Councillor Alisa Flemming stated that the Children's Services the Administration inherited in 2014 also included cuts, particularly to the youth services, when Councillor Gatland was responsible. Councillor Alisa Flemming stated that it was important to highlight that on a national level, there were

problems ahead in the uncertainty of how social care would be funded moving forward, which was apparent in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech stating that there was still no final decision. She went on to say that the Administration would continue to work collectively, both as a Cabinet and a council, alongside partners to ensure that with the Department for Education and Ofsted they would be delivering the best value for money within Croydon's means whilst keeping the most vulnerable residents at the forefront of interests.

**Councillor Gareth Streeter** expressed disappointment over the clear consequences in the budget of years of mismanagement and dangerous speculation. This was another meeting whereby the Labour Administration refused, and displayed classic attempts to evade, taking responsibility for their actions blaming everyone but themselves. The residents and businesses of Croydon would not let the Administration get away with that responsibility as it was them who would have to pay highly through cuts and taxes.

The country would soon be reopening, high streets would be opening their business and local authorities across the nation would be doing everything they could to support business during the most difficult period in living memory. For Croydon however, not only did the budget not offer any hope or support, but instead would be squeezing an additional £8 million of income from motorists and creating a hostile environment for customers and the highstreets. Following this budget, they would see parking charges increase, where the free parking measures were so important to the Labour Group in the run up to the 2018 election, where unsuspecting motorists would be landed with fines together with there being no evidence that would suggest an improvement to local air quality.

Councillor Gareth Streeter stated that the Labour Administration budget was not only bad for businesses, but also bad for residents, and if the track record were to follow they would not stick to their budget. He urged other members to reject the proposed budget presented.

**Councillor Janet Campbell**, Cabinet Member for Families, Health and Social Care, stated that it was no secret to the public that social care had been greatly underfunded by national government, serving temporary fixes to the sector and in a backdrop of 10 years of austerity. Despite the inevitable increasing costs and demand to care services, the council had ended Quarter 3 with an overspend of approximately £21 million. Following the announcement of the successful receipt of the capitalisation direction, they had requested £23 million in Quarter 1 to increase the baseline budget. This was a stance which the council had been in the past, which now put the council in good stead to safely and wisely make the cuts necessary to eventually adjust spending in-line with other local authorities. Those 5% budget cuts would be achieved by working closely with the commissioning team and reviewing and decreasing contracts, placements and care packages.

Councillor Campbell explained that the departments had made several cultural financial measure changes, including a challenge panel, a spending review

panel and making direct payments made by default. The council's social workers empowered people to identify their support network. They were promoting resilience, determination and strength rather than looking at care packages as immediate solutions. To this date this approach saw £150,000 of savings which reduced spending by Quarter 2.

Councillor Campbell told Council that she was keen to see the progress of the locality and integrated care networks to work more closely with the Clinical Care Commission (CCG), the NHS and the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM). In these organisations, there was great potential of local staff, local knowledge and bespoke budget to achieve good outcomes working together. Those factors working together would see long term savings, aiming at the focus of achieving the budgetary savings, whilst improving residents experience. Councillor Campbell moved on to say that the council was clear on the risks that long term Covid could bring to the carer sector and that she was keen to listen to residents through the Croydon Listening Campaign, which was launched last month to hear resident's health concerns. She lastly stated that it was important to challenge the proposed budget with facts and not to misinform residents as an attempt of scaremongering.

**Councillor Yvette Hopley** stated that the proposed budget disproportionately impacted the most vulnerable and poorest in the borough; those who were sick, mentally ill, disabled and those who relied on the council to help them navigate through services and support them in everyday life. The Labour Administration had chosen to make decisions that would impact the availability of services for desperate residents who were simultaneously trying to get through the pandemic, and where in many cases had not left their homes in nearly a year. It was the residents who were not able to care for themselves and were in receipt of complex care packages who were going to be hardest hit by these decisions. Following these proposals, over 7,000 residents would see their complex care packages impacted, and in particular a huge hit to 2,500 residents where that change would be significant. Those were the residents who would bear the brunt of the 20% savings forecasted in this area; £17 million for 2021-22, £10.7 million in 2022-23 and £9.5 million in 2023-24. The overspend in Quarter 3 alone was £21.3 million.

Savage cuts had already been experienced by the departments supporting those vulnerable residents, such as the abolition of the Disability Employment Team and the Welfare Rights Team. Many other services were set to be cut, including the transportation service which supported elderly residents who were housebound, care beds were being removed for sick residents being discharged from hospital, the support centre, the voluntary sector and the Peter Sylvester Centre's future was now uncertain.

The Labour Administration should not expect health partners or the voluntary sector, who were expecting further cuts, to bail out their situation. Despite the Administration receiving a £120 million capitalisation direction from the Conservative central government, they persisted to attack the most vulnerable in the borough. Councillor Hopley said she opposed the budget.

**Councillor Patricia Hay-Justice**, Cabinet Member for Homes, stated that a key factor to a person's success was having a place to call home. Councillor Patricia Hay-Justice said that the Housing Resident Account (HRA) was ambitious for residents of Croydon and she shared the work of the HRA with Council. She explained that despite the government edict that reduced the HRA income by £34 million over four years, the council continued to make difficult, responsible but humane decisions in delivering a great service to tenants. Following the tragedy of Grenfell, the Administration prioritised the safety of the borough's tenants, independent of the government's promise of recompense. Croydon was the first local authority to install sprinklers in their high-risk housing blocks, where the true value of the decisions was demonstrated when two potentially fatal fires were extinguished by the new defence pioneering installation of ground source heat pumps - which was also a step closer to the council's ambition of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. Tenants of those blocks were now benefitting from a 60% reduction in their bills by their energy being harnessed from the earth's heat and thus providing natural cheap energy; which would contribute to a healthier environment for future generations.

Councillor Patricia Hay-Justice described the success of Croydon Affordable Homes LLP (CAH) and said the charity had provided Croydon with 350 genuinely affordable homes, with more plans to come. CAH's additional value was the profit generated which injected into the HRA, where over the relatively new organisation's operation had generated £1.5 million that had benefitted all citizens of Croydon. Councillor Patricia Hay-Justice explained that without a home a downward spiral of poverty would continue for a person and she was proud to say that the council had reversed this trend over the years for many by increasing the housing supply in the borough, by 800 homes which was more than the Opposition's time in office. The council would continue their hard work, whilst being cognisant of cost. She said the borough should pay attention the quote from the UK Ambassador to the UN of that how society treated its most vulnerable was a measure of its humanity. Councillor Patricia Hay-Justice supported the budget.

**Councillor Stuart Milson** stated the bail-out of this council was the biggest in history of local authorities and was not one caused by the pandemic, but from errors and incompetence over many years. This budget was the start of that payback, but it was not the Labour Administration who were still yet to take the pay cuts that all members voted through in November 2020. The payback was on current residents who would be asked to pay higher taxes and see vital services cut to the bone or scrapped entirely. It was true that Croydon received less funding from central government than it statistically should, but therefore needed to be led with human literacy and pragmatism. Unfortunately the necessary tough decisions for the council had been made much harder, because since 2014, the watchwords of Croydon Labour had been arrogant, bullying and incompetent. There was a vast amount to cover on the Administration's incompetence relating to the management of Brick-by Brick and the Croydon Park Hotel. The Labour Administration's had made desperate attempts to manipulate to balance the council's accounts.

Over the years, GPAC had asked the council to accept that, while funding may not be where it should be for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), the budget gap could not be wished away. The 2019-20 account claimed that the gap between what credit was received from government and what it spent on UASC was unpaid revenue, and that the government was a debtor who would pay money to the council when asked. A similar event happened in Quarter 3 during 2020 when £7.7 million of spending shifted from the revenue account to the capital account, which Councillor Cummings highlighted at February 2020 Cabinet. After GPAC on 4 March 2021, it was abundantly clear that the 2019-20 accounts would need to be adjusted and to address those movements. The Administration's bad decisions were not hard to find.

Brick-by-Brick was troubled since the set-up and the Croydon Park Hotel was always going to be an enormous risk, as pointed out at the time by the Opposition. Anyone who questioned the Labour Administration's decisions were at best belittled, but were also led to believe, threatened and bullied behind the backdrop. Councillor Stuart Millson asked how the people who made these decisions keep their positions as councillors and further stated that there were members of Cabinet who voted on these past decisions claiming moral authority to continue to lead the council. This budget was a punishment on residents for the failings of Croydon Labour.

**Councillor Andrew Pelling** thanked the Labour Group for a third opportunity to speak at Council since the May 2014 elections and stated that as an infrequent speaker he could share a detached viewpoint to others. He told Council that the Leader, Councillor Hamida Ali, had shown great sagacity since the beginning of the crisis saying that both parties needed to reflect on their contribution to events. There was a time where the Opposition would move an alternative budget and at this time it was not sufficient for opposition members to oppose the Administration's budget, but they should move an alternative if the party wanted to be elected in the 2022 Local Elections.

Considering that the Opposition were not clear of historical extravagant expenditure, due to the expense of Bernard Wetherill House, they showed disproportionate glee. This included central government by imposing a penal rate of interest to the council, costing £24 million, which could be described as a Conservative tax to the Administration. Councillor Pelling stated that he did not wish to blame the government for the circumstances, however many problems routed to the distortions that came with the council tax system; an emergency measure following the failure of the poll tax. Since, councils were driven to take risks and make investments in areas their expertise could not compete. Croydon was treated with the same level of funding it received when once a dormitory suburban outer city town, which could be described as poor treatment when comparing those funding figure to inner borough's.

Councillor Pelling stated that it was important to recognise problems from the Labour Administration which included a culture of bullying and a culture of boycotting whistle-blowers in the public domain. To conclude, this was the

second crisis Labour had faced whilst in power, the first being the 27% council tax increase. As described by the Leader, Councillor Pelling said that it would be a tough task for the Administration to win back trust, particularly in the eve of the Local Elections. Lastly, he was encouraged that Labour was offering more in terms of aspiration, demonstrating proper growth in the real stress areas of adults and children's services.

**Councillor Lynne Hale** welcomed news that the government announced they would help the Labour Administration to balance their budget and said that it was a pity that the Administration had not expressed much gratitude for providing that essential support. She stated that this evening there had been misdirected anger from some members at the Opposition for daring to challenge and ask the important questions around the ongoing poor decision-making and overspending of the Labour Administration.

It was clear that the government had acted with caution about giving the Administration access to any more public money, particularly with the largest bailout request in history of local authorities, therefore significant conditions were attached. The latest financial figures show that Labour had been hiding details they did not want to be known. It was clear that Labour were incapable of grasping the fact that the council needed to live within its means and not spend money it did not have. Labour Cabinet Members who were paid by the Croydon taxpayer had been overseeing council departments which were regularly over spending public money, representing a clear lack of oversight and control. The monumental risks taken by the Administration using taxpayer's money was shocking; buying a hotel and a retail park, ignoring continuing warnings about Brick by Brick and its failure to repay its loans and deliver the homes promised and running the council's financial reserves down to a dangerously low level.

Croydon residents would now have to pay the price for the Labour council's lack of financial discipline and face rising tax bills, reduction to services and hardworking council officers would pay with their jobs. Lastly, Councillor Lynne Hale expressed her dismay with the audacity of the four councillor's chiefly responsible, previously holding Cabinet positions, for the financial mess poised to vote for this council budget this evening and backing residents having to pay the bill for their failings. Councillor Lynne Hale stated that she did not support the motion.

**Councillor Stuart King**, The Cabinet Member for Croydon Renewal and Deputy Leader, told Council that he was pleased to respond to the debate and demonstrate a culmination of determined action by the Administration to fix the council's finances. The setting of this budget was an important step towards the council's financial strength and stability, and the government's acknowledgement of the willingness to take the necessary tough decisions. During this debate, it was clear that the Opposition was either in denial about the need for difficult decisions or they were standing in the side-lines for political gain; whilst the majority group were continuing their vital work. There were signs from the minority group of political analysis, however no apparent action and they had only opposed millions of savings whilst failing to produce

an alternative budget. The Opposition say that the budget spending was too high, whilst at the same time criticising the savings proposed. The Secretary of State was clear in their letter to the Administration that the council must meet all identified budget gaps without any additional borrowing and therefore the savings plan within the budget must be delivered.

Whilst the council welcomed the capitalisation direction as positive news, the financial position of the council would continue to be challenging. There was no allowance for complacency on the part of the new Administration and the responsibility tasked was in its early stages on the road to recovery. Councillor Stuart King supported the budget for approval.

### **Council Tax and budget vote**

Recommendations 1.2 to 1.4, as detailed in the report, were taken as three separate recorded votes.

The first recorded vote was for recommendation 1.2: a 1.99% increase in the Council Tax for Croydon Services (a level of increase Central Government has assumed in all Councils' spending power calculation).

The members who voted in favour were: Councillors Hamida Ali, Muhammed Ali, Jamie Audsley, Jane Avis, Leila Ben-Hassel, Alison Butler, Janet Campbell, Robert Canning, Sherwan Chowdhury, Chris Clark, Pat Clouder, Stuart Collins, Patsy Cummings, Nina Degrad, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Sean Fitzsimons, Alisa Flemming, Felicity Flynn, Clive Fraser, Simon Hall, Patricia Hay-Justice, Karen Jewitt, Humayun Kabir, Bernadette Khan, Shafi Khan, Stuart King, Toni Letts, Oliver Lewis, Stephen Mann, Tony Newman, Andrew Pelling, Joy Prince, Pat Ryan, Paul Scott, Manju Shahul-Hameed, Caragh Skipper, David Wood, Louisa Woodley, Callton Young and Maddie Henson.

The members who voted against were: Councillors Jeet Bains, Sue Bennett, Margaret Bird, Simon Brew, Jan Buttinger, Richard Chatterjee, Luke Clancy, Mario Creatura, Jason Cummings, Maria Gatland, Lynne Hale, Simon Hoar, Steve Hollands, Yvette Hopley, Stuart Milson, Vidhi Mohan, Michael Neal, Oni Oviri, Ian Parker, Helen Pollard, Badsha Quadir, Tim Pollard, Helen Redfern, Scott Roche, Andy Stranack, Gareth Streeter and Robert Ward.

The recommendation was carried; 40 votes in favour and 27 against.

The second recorded vote was for recommendation 1.3: a 3.00% increase in the Adult Social Care precept (a charge Central Government has assumed all councils' will levy in its spending power calculations).

The members who voted in favour were: Councillors Hamida Ali, Muhammad Ali, Jamie Audsley, Jane Avis, Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel, Sue Bennett, Margaret Bird, Simon Brew, Alison Butler, Jan Buttinger, Janet Campbell, Robert Canning, Sherwan Chowdhury, Richard Chatterjee, Luke Clancy, Chris Clark, Pat Clouder, Stuart Collins, Jason Cummings, Patsy Cummings, Mario Creatura, Nina Degrad, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Sean Fitzsimons, Alisa Flemming,

Felicity Flynn, Clive Fraser, Maria Gatland, Lynne Hale, Simon Hall, Patricia Hay-Justice, Simon Hoar, Steve Hollands, Yvette Hopley, Karen Jewitt, Humayun Kabir, Bernadette Khan, Shafi Khan, Stuart King, Toni Letts, Oliver Lewis, Stephen Mann, Stuart Millson, Vidhi Mohan, Michael Neal, Tony Newman, Oni Oviri, Ian Parker, Andrew Pelling, Helen Pollard, Tim Pollard, Joy Prince, Badsha Quadir, Helen Redfern, Scott Roche, Pat Ryan, Paul Scott, Manju Shahul-Hameed, Andy Stranack, Gareth Streeter, Robert Ward, David Wood, Louisa Woodley, Callton Young and Maddie Henson.

The recommendation was carried unanimously.

The third recorded vote was for recommendation 1.4: to note the draft GLA increase of 9.5% on the Council Tax precept for 2021/22.

The members who voted in favour were: Councillors Hamida Ali, Muhammed Ali, Jamie Audsley, Jane Avis, Leila Ben-Hassel, Alison Butler, Janet Campbell, Robert Canning, Sherwan Chowdhury, Chris Clark, Pat Clouder, Stuart Collins, Patsy Cummings, Nina Degrads, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Sean Fitzsimons, Alisa Flemming, Felicity Flynn, Clive Fraser, Simon Hall, Patricia Hay-Justice, Karen Jewitt, Humayun Kabir, Bernadette Khan, Shafi Khan, Stuart King, Toni Letts, Oliver Lewis, Stephen Mann, Tony Newman, Andrew Pelling, Joy Prince, Pat Ryan, Paul Scott, Manju Shahul-Hameed, Caragh Skipper, David Wood, Louisa Woodley, Callton Young and Maddie Henson.

The members who voted against were: Councillors Jeet Bains, Sue Bennett, Margaret Bird, Simon Brew, Jan Buttinger, Richard Chatterjee, Luke Clancy, Mario Creatura, Jason Cummings, Maria Gatland, Lynne Hale, Simon Hoar, Steve Hollands, Yvette Hopley, Stuart Milson, Vidhi Mohan, Michael Neal, Oni Oviri, Ian Parker, Helen Pollard, Badsha Quadir, Tim Pollard, Helen Redfern, Scott Roche, Andy Stranack, Gareth Streeter and Robert Ward.

The recommendation was carried; 40 votes in favour and 27 against.

The remaining recommendations (1.1 and 1.5 to 1.13, as detailed in the report) were taken en block and were carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED:** The Members of Council resolved to agree the following recommendations:

- 1.1. Council's request for a Capitalisation Direction of £150m covering financial years 2020/21 to 2023/24.
- 1.2. A 1.99% increase in the Council Tax for Croydon Services (a level of increase Central Government has assumed in all Councils' spending power calculation).
- 1.3. A 3.00% increase in the Adult Social Care precept (a charge Central Government has assumed all councils' will levy in its spending power calculations).
- 1.4. To note the draft GLA increase of 9.5% on the Council Tax precept for

2021/22.

- 1.5. With reference to the principles for 2021/22 determined by the Secretary of State under Section 52ZC (1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) confirm that in accordance with s.52ZB (1) the Council Tax and GLA precept referred to above are not excessive in terms of the most recently issued principles and as such to note that no referendum is required. This is detailed further in section 3.8 of this report.
- 1.6. The calculation of budget requirement and council tax as set out in Appendix C and D including the GLA increase this will result in a total increase of 5.83% in the overall council tax bill for Croydon.
- 1.7. The revenue budget assumptions as detailed in this report and the associated appendices
- 1.8. The programme of revenue savings, income and growth by department for Financial Years 2021/22 to 2023/24 (Appendix A).
- 1.9. The Capital Programme as set out in Section 18, table 17 and 18 of this report, except where noted for specific programmes are subject to separate Cabinet reports.
- 1.10. To agree that in light of the impact on the Council's revenue budget no Capital contractual commitment should be entered into until a review of revenue affordability has been concluded.
- 1.11. To approve that any receipts that come from the Council's Housing company Brick by Brick will first be applied to the accrued interest and any subsequent receipts will be used to pay down the principle loan balance.
- 1.12. To note there are no proposed amendments to the Council's existing Council Tax Support Scheme for the financial year 2021/22.
- 1.13. The adoption of the Pay Policy statement at Appendix G.

19/21 **Recommendations of Cabinet or Committees to Council for decision**

*Cabinet, 1 March 2021*

**i) Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy 2021/2022;**

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Stuart King to move the recommendation referred from Cabinet on 1 March 2021 relating to the treasury management objective for the forthcoming year. Councillor Stuart King moved the motion

and Councillor Callton Young seconded.

Madam Mayor moved the vote and Council agreed the recommendation in the report.

*Cabinet, 18 February 2021*

**ii) Rent Setting Policy for Council Homes;**

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Jane Avis to move the recommendation referred from Cabinet on 18 February 2021 relating to the rent setting policies for council homes. Councillor Jane Avis moved the motion and Councillor Patricia Hay-Justice seconded.

Madam Mayor moved the vote and Council unanimously agreed the recommendation in the report.

**iii) Review of Brick by Brick Croydon Ltd: Brick by Brick Shareholder decision – the future of the company;**

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Hamida Ali to move the recommendation referred from Cabinet on 18 February 2021 relating to Brick by Brick. Councillor Hamida Ali moved the motion and Councillor Callton Young seconded.

Madam Mayor moved the vote and Council agreed the recommendation in the report.

**iv) Croydon Equalities Strategy;**

Madam Mayor invited Councillor David Wood to move the recommendation referred from Cabinet on 18 February 2021 relating to the Equalities Strategy. Councillor David Wood moved the motion and Councillor Patsy Cummings seconded.

Madam Mayor moved the vote and Council unanimously agreed the recommendation in the report.

*Ethics Committee, 11 February 2021*

**v) Succession Planning for and Recruitment and Appointment of Further Independent Persons; and**

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Clive Fraser to move the recommendation referred from Ethics Committee on 11 February 2021 relating to the appointment of independent members to the committee. Councillor Clive Fraser moved the motion and Councillor Pat Clouder seconded.

Madam Mayor moved the vote and Council unanimously agreed the recommendation in the report.

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*Ethics Committee, 19 February 2021*

**vi) Complaint under the Councillor Code of Conduct**

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Clive Fraser to move the recommendation referred from Ethics Committee on 19 February 2021 relating to the Councillor Code of Conduct. Councillor Clive Fraser moved the motion and Councillor Pat Clouder seconded.

Madam Mayor moved the vote and Council unanimously agreed the recommendation in the report.

20/21 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This item was not required.

The meeting ended at 9.15 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:** .....