

## **Council**

Meeting held on Wednesday, 11 October 2023 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,  
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

### **MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Tony Pearson (Chair);

Councillors Appu Srinivasan, Kola Agboola, Jade Appleton, Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel, Sue Bennett, Adele Benson, Margaret Bird, Claire Bonham, Mike Bonello, Simon Brew, Janet Campbell, Louis Carserides, Richard Chatterjee, Chris Clark, Sherwan Chowdhury, Mario Creatura, Jason Cummings, Patsy Cummings, Nina Degrad, Rowenna Davis, Danielle Denton, Samir Dwesar, Lara Fish, Sean Fitzsimons, Alisa Flemming, Clive Fraser, Amy Foster, Simon Fox, Gayle Gander, Maria Gatland, Brigitte Graham, Matt Griffiths, Lynne Hale, Patricia Hay-Justice, Maddie Henson, Christopher Herman, Yvette Hopley, Mohammed Islam, Karen Jewitt, Mark Johnson, Humayun Kabir, Stuart King, Ola Kolade, Joseph Lee, Endri Llabuti, Enid Mollyneaux, Stella Nabukeera, Michael Neal, Tamar Barrett, Eunice O'Dame, Ian Parker, Ria Patel, Jason Perry, Ellily Ponnuthurai, Holly Ramsey, Helen Redfern, Chrishni Reshekaron, Scott Roche, Manju Shahul-Hameed, Nikhil Sherine Thampi, Luke Shortland, Andy Stranack, Aladair Stewart, Esther Sutton, Catherine Wilson, Robert Ward, Callton Young and Fatima Zaman

**Apologies:** Councillor Stuart Collins

### **PART A**

69/21 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

70/21 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

71/21 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

72/21 **Council meeting dates**

The Civic Mayor moved that the budget and council tax meeting on 21 February 2024 be moved to 28 February to allow for negotiations with central government and a preliminary second budget meeting be scheduled on 6 March 2024.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Mario Creatura, put to the vote and CARRIED.

**RESOLVED:**

That the budget council tax meeting on 21 February 2024 be moved to 28 February 2024 and a preliminary second budget meeting be scheduled on 6 March 2024.

73/21 **Announcements**

The Chair paid respects to the recent deaths of Bradley Hutchins on 12 September and Elieanne Andam on 27 September 2023. He stated the deaths had caused deep sadness in the community and asked for a minute's silence as a mark of respect for their lives, the loss to their families and the community.

Council then held a minute silence.

In his announcements, the Chair thanked Members for the success of the two events held to raise money for his charities. He stated that the events, a curry night at Royal Tandoori in Selsdon and a golf day at Farleigh Golf Club had cross party support and past Mayors, visiting Mayors from other Boroughs and a variety of businesses as guests. He expressed gratitude for the support and confirmed that details of future charity events, the Chinese New Year, a beer festival and a gala dinner would be circulated when finalised.

The Executive Mayor in his announcements, expressed deep shock at the recent tragic loss of young lives in the borough. He advised that significant investment had been made in community intervention programmes to guide those at risk away from violence, but it was clear more needed to be done. He advised the Council would work closely with partners to increase efforts to make Croydon a safer place for young people.

The Executive Mayor then expressed sympathy with those affected by the recent conflict between Israel and Gaza especially those anxiously awaiting news about the safety of their loved ones.

Finally, the Executive Mayor advised Members of the results of the independent review of arrangements for the election count in May 2022. He stated that the review had concluded that the election was transparent, safe, and secure, identified areas for improvement and the action plan to implement

the Panel's eleven recommendations was approved by the General Purposes Committee on 9 October 2023. The Executive Mayor then invited the Chair of the General Purposes Committee to make further comments.

Councillor Sean Fitzsimons, the Chair of the General Purposes Committee advised the independent review panel had recommended an action plan for future elections in the borough and although the report had criticised the Returning Officer (RO) and staff, it also contained many positive comments. He advised resources were needed to meet democratic requirements to ensure confidence of all stakeholders in the election and better logistics on the day of the count.

The Executive Mayor proposed to reduce the allocated time to a number of the standing items in order to ensure that the Members could conduct all of the necessary business of the meeting. The Civic Mayor moved to suspend Council procedure rules in the following:

- At Item 9a, Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report, to suspend council procedure rules (3.70-3.71 of Section 4A) to move the recommendations without questions.
- At Item 9b, Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report to suspend council procedure rules (3.66 of Section 4A) to allow the Chair of Scrutiny to introduce the report on behalf of all the sub-committee chairs.
- At Item 12, Maiden Speeches (3.7 of Section 4A), to defer the item to next Council meeting.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Mario Creatura, put to the vote and CARRIED.

**RESOLVED to reduce the time allocated to the items of business in the agenda to ensure all business of the meeting could be completed.**

#### 74/21 **Croydon Question Time**

Before the Croydon Question Time, the Chair informed Council that many residents had submitted questions about knife crime and community safety due to the recent tragic events in the Borough. He advised that in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules similar questions had been grouped together and the first question had been allocated to this topic. He advised that residents who still had questions following the response at the meeting should contact Democratic Services via the online form.

## Public Questions

1. The answer was given and printed in the agenda. The questioner had no supplementary question.
2. In response to the answer given and printed in the agenda, the questioner asked a supplementary question about how penalty notices would be issued if the identity of the perpetrators were unknown as there were no cameras to help identify them.

The Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment, Councillor Scott Roche, advised the NSL service had been cancelled and forcibly taken away. The Council was looking into other options such as redesigning the service, redeveloping the app, reestablishing a new team, and revisiting options the Council could financially support given its limited resources.

3. In response to the answer given and printed in the agenda, the questioner asked if the Executive Mayor would write to the Mayor of London to ascertain if his recent strategy for transport in London would be reviewed in accordance with the national guidance and if Croydon would make any changes to its strategy as a result.

The Executive Mayor in response stated the Council was awaiting the release of the detailed guidance on the strategy and he would consult with the Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment to respond accordingly.

4. In response to the answer given and printed in the agenda, the questioner stated the problem was more about crossing the main road to get to the school. As most children were too small to see round or over the buses before crossing the road. More safety measures were needed.

Councillor Scott Roche, the Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment in response stated, that the relevant officers would investigate the specific situation and respond to the questioner accordingly.

5. In response, to the answer given and printed in the agenda, the questioner disagreed there was inclusivity and primary support for children with learning disabilities in the Borough. She detailed the difficulties face by her children such as lack of SENCO staff and suitable non-overwhelming learning environments in addition to the closure of Dyslexic society due to budget cuts as evidence the Council needed to do more primary aged early intervention for children in Croydon.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young people, Councillor Maria Gatland, advised the questioner to email her directly so she could discuss the situation with the Corporate Director Children, Young People & Education.

6. It was noted that Question 7 had been withdrawn and deferred to the next meeting of Council.

7. In response, to the answer given and printed in the agenda, the questioner asked if the Executive Mayor to write to the Department for Transport and urge them to negotiate with Rail Delivery Group and The Mayor of London as the decision to withdraw the One Day Paper Travel Card would be detrimental to public transport users in Croydon.

The Executive Mayor responded that he was happy to write to the Department of Transport.

8. In response, to the answer given and printed in the agenda, the questioner asked about the start and end date of the analysis and when specific actions would commence to increase the uptake for funded 2-year-old Early Years places in the Borough.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Maria Gatland, advised she was uncertain of the timing but would be happy to confirm the specifics later in response to a direct email from the questioner.

## 75/21 **The Croydon Debate**

Council received a public petition for the reopening of a visitors' centre in South Norwood Country Park that achieved just over 2,500 signatures by the deadline for submission to the meeting.

Mr Will Hoyle, the lead petitioner, attended Council and made a case for how important the visitors' centre was to the community before its closure. He advised that a restored visitors' centre would present renewed education opportunities, be a base for arts activities, allow the Friends group to expand its conservation work and bring the environment garden to its full potential.

He further advised reopening the refreshment kiosk as an income stream for the park would give residents the sense their park was valued and halt the decline in recent years. He asked the Council to commit to a timeline for reopening of the visitors' centre in the park and actively lead the process of exploring funding options to finance the reopening of the centre.

The Executive Mayor thanked Mr Hoyle for bringing the petition, the Friends Group of Southern Country Park for their great work and the local residents who signed the petition. He advised that the visitor centre had been severely damaged by arson in 2020 and should have been dealt with swiftly as an insurance claim and rebuilt by the previous administration. He stated that the present administration was building a record of investing in Croydon's parks by accessing several funding options and wished more resources was available to the Council to help resolve the issues facing many parks in the borough.

Councillor Amy Foster, the Shadow Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, responded by highlighting the work of the grassroots organisations and community champions and commended their efforts with Stanley Hall and South Norwood Library. She advised the issue was about trust and not money, as backing the petition was a committed group with a wealth of expertise that had raised over £10,000 to run a pop-up visitors' centre right next to the building. She advised the Council should use this opportunity to revitalize the space as this would empower local communities and protect the Borough's assets.

Councillor Scott Roche, the Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment, clarified the works being carried out by the Council at the site, such as viewing platforms repair with £30,000 compensation from Thames Water, major ground works to improve the biodiversity of the site, and encourage more diverse bird population and, depending on finances, there were further plans to commence the maintenance programme and recruitment of Park Wardens. He stated the Council was committed to doing everything under very restricted circumstances to improve the park.

Councillor Christopher Herman, Shadow Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment, advised that since the fire, there had been no commitment to reopen the visitors' centre or a time frame for when residents could expect anything to be done. He stated that there were legitimate concerns that without the visitors' centre the park would continue to decline and the Council needed to be transparent and provide a time frame for the reopening of the visitors' centre.

Mr Will Hoyle, the lead petitioner, stated the fact that residents understood the Council's financial problems but that this did not mean the park was not falling into disrepair. What would be welcomed was the council exploring funding opportunities and the Executive Mayor committing to meeting with residents until funding was in place.

In closing, the Executive Mayor stated that despite the financial situation, the Council had shown a commitment to the improvement of parks in the borough and empowerment of local communities. He committed to meet with local residents and the Friends Group to discuss and explore sources of external funding and future improvements in the park within the financial context of the Council.

#### Member Petition

Councillor Holly Ramsey introduced a Petition for the introduction of a weight restriction on Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) on Plough Lane, Purley.

Residents believed this measure would address issues such as the volume and speed of vehicles, safety concerns, road damage, and increased noise and pollution. She advised that although Plough Lane was unsuitable for HGVs due to its width and road setting; however, it was regularly being used as a cut-through for those vehicles, and this usage had increased

substantially over the years due to continuous developments and since the opening of the incinerator in Sutton.

She stated that in recent months there had been two major gas leaks requiring continuous repairs and works with obvious financial implications for the council and other bodies. In addition, residents felt endangered when HGVs had to constantly drive onto the very narrow pavements to avoid similar vehicles moving in the opposite direction, and this was a danger to pedestrians, cyclists, those using the GP surgery and the pharmacy, and the large number of John Fisher School pupils who used Plough Lane for after school sports at the playing fields. The fact that residents on the Sutton side were calling for the same restrictions demonstrated an overwhelming consensus for this issue to be resolved, so hopefully the administration and officers, working with Sutton Council, would find the best solution to this issue.

In response, Councillor Scott Roche, Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment clarified that a request was received from Sutton Council at the end of September, seeking the Council's views on the proposals to introduce a 7.5 tonne restriction on Sandy Lane, Forest Drive and Plough Lane corridor between Wallington and Perley. He explained that the length of the corridors was in Sutton, but summer Plough Lane was within Croydon. It was explained the proposals were part of Sutton Council's wider initiative to provide healthy streets and safe conditions for cyclists and pedestrians.

Councillor Scott Roche stated that whilst the objections were welcomed, an assessment on whether the proposals had the potential to displace issues to neighbouring parts of Croydon was needed so officers were asked to assess the proposals and report back.

#### 76/21 **Reports to Council**

#### 77/21 **Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report**

Councillor Yvette Hopley, the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care introduced the report which outlined the work of the Board with the council's key partners in both health and social care and future opportunities.

She advised the Board met five times during the year as part of its statutory duties to review strategic work and pharmaceutical needs. She stated that updates on the new integrated care systems and substructures, had played a key part in promoting integrated care across the system and the Council was currently carrying out a review of the current Health Wellbeing Board strategy. She thanked the Local Government Association for its assistance in working with the Board during initial scoping meetings.

Councillor Yvette Hopley encouraged Members to read the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment report, which was a digitally produced live document that highlighted all future health and social care needs and was published on the Croydon Observatory website. She advised that despite challenges, the achievements through the Board included developing a newly refreshed

health care plan, transforming mental health services for children, work on the government funded Discharge Fund, fulfilling the Executive Mayor's Manifesto pledge by having a mental health summit in partnership with boy and citizens.

She stated that the programme of works reflecting this year would be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board soon. She closed by thanking Councillor Janet Campbell and all Members for the cross-party support.

The Executive Mayor MOVED the recommendations.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Mario Creatura, put to the vote and CARRIED.

**RESOLVED, to:** Note the Annual Report.

## 78/21 **Scrutiny and Overview Committee Annual Report**

The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Councillor Rowenna Davis Council in moving the recommendation stated:

- Scrutiny Committee was an independent minded, cross-party group of councillors whose job was to hold the Council's executive and partners to account with the right to ask for information, robustly challenge and question those in power and make recommendations for change.
- She welcomed the renewed strength of the Scrutiny committee which had allowed it to scrutinise the council's finances to ensure the Council was making the best use of the funds provided by struggling residents. The Children's Sub-Committee had questioned how money was spent on children in the Borough; the Streets Sub-Committee had scrutinised the New Year waste contract; and the Health Sub-Committee had fought to ensure the Council obtained its fair share of funding. The Homes Sub-Committee had ensured that tenants were getting the decent service they paid for.
- Councillor Rowenna Davis advised that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee had concluded the budget was ambitious in its plans to turn around the Council's finances, but acknowledged the difficulty with the outstanding debt and was committed to relentlessly supporting the Council's efforts to broker a deal with national governments to enable Croydon to be financially independent again.

Councillor Rowenna Davis encouraged Members to read the report and highlighted the following achievements:

- The introduction of the Homes Sub-Committee had helped shine a light on those languishing in expensive temporary accommodation and ensured that the horrific conditions experienced by residents at Regina Road would not be repeated.



- The agreement by all the political groups to change the rules that allowed new Green and Liberal Democrat voices into Scrutiny.
- The changes to council tax enforcement resulting from the Scrutiny meeting with residents struggling to pay their bills. The haunting testimony of those who convinced the council to lack empathy and accessibility led to the practical recommendations rooted in their experience. Some of the changes might have seemed small, but they could offer lifelines to the council's most vulnerable.
- In response to a question about the impact of having a member of the Opposition as Chair of Scrutiny had made on the ability to hold the Mayor to account, Councillor Rowenna Davis said she welcomed the decision and the cross-party decision to allow extra spaces for Green and Liberal Democrat Councillors on the committees, and that the introduction of the new Homes Sub-Committee had strengthened scrutiny but the committee's efficiency could be further improved by reviewing timetables to ensure adequate time for consideration of reports before Cabinet meetings.
- When asked how the committee learnt about the cost of living crisis in Croydon, and how it planned to continue its work in this area, Councillor Davis responded that the committee, through meetings with faith groups, food bank leaders, community leaders and charities, was able to identify the issues with digital exclusion, council tax enforcement and debt and, due to the lack of awareness about the council tax hardship support scheme, the committee had made a recommendation to include information on the support scheme on the back of each council tax bill.
- In response to a question on the recommendations after the committee's recent review of the community safety partnership, Councillor Davis said the committee considered violence against women and girls and domestic abuse and had made recommendations such as the inclusion of victims in the process of using community partnerships to deal with domestic violence and the use of domestic violence champions in the local communities. She stated that the committee would follow up the recommendations to evaluate their impact after implementation.
- In response to a question whether the committee was planning to consider the financial impact of the Ultra Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ) on residents, Councillor Davis advised that though the committee was happy to consider issues suggested by Members, it was best it focused on topics such as the impact of the increase in council tax on local residents, where the Council had direct power and control and that which the Scrutiny Committee could influence or improve through recommendations.

- Councillor Rowenna Davis, in response to several questions confirmed that recommendations from Scrutiny were not based on opinions but were data driven.
- In response to a question, Councillor Ria Patel, the Chair of Streets & Environment Scrutiny sub-Committee advised that the Sub-Committee had held several discussions on what improvements could be made in future to address missed collections by looking at lessons learnt from Veolia's waste contract and service.
- In response to a question on the similarities between the Improvement and Assurance Panel and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Rowenna Davis stated that both were focused on the Council's budget. She advised that Croydon's finances remained the centrepiece of Scrutiny work and committee members were upskilling and training to equip themselves to ask the right questions about Croydon's budget and finances.
- In response to a question about the benefits of the sub-committee Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel, Chair of the Homes Scrutiny Sub-Committee, stated that she welcomed the creation of the Homes Sub-Committee as it had enabled proper oversight of the Housing Transformation Programme. Having a dedicated committee focused on this was very helpful. She advised that there were challenges with finance and capacity due to the pressure of the homelessness relief duty on the budget but these issues were sector wide and not unique to Croydon.
- In response to questions, Councillor Rowenna Davis stated that Scrutiny had not scheduled a dedicated session to look into the Council's decision to invest in the property market and the disparity between acquisition and sale values of Croydon's assets. She advised she was happy to discuss the possibility with Scrutiny members.
- In conclusion, Councillor Rowenna Davis thanked officers, political leaders, and members of the community for their hard work towards the report.

Councillor Richard Chatterjee the vice-chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee seconded the motion. It was put to the vote and CARRIED.

**RESOLVED, to: Note the Report.**

79/21

## **Equalities Strategy**

The Executive Mayor, Councillor Jason Perry in moving the recommendations of the Equality Strategy Report stated:

That the Council's current equality strategy was adopted in 2021 during a period of significant transformation and change, including the impact of the

COVID 19 pandemic, shifts in working practices, and the Council's response to the 2020 Report in the Public Interest.

He explained that the strategy sought to build on the foundations laid by the original strategy and reflected the results of recent changes and initiatives introduced by the Council. It also incorporated the adoption of the George Floyd Race Matters Pledge, the Crude and Equality Pledge, New People and Cultural Transformation Strategy, the Council's work as the pilot organisation in the London Tackling Racial Inequality programme and updated the strategy by drawing on 2021 census data.

The Executive Mayor advised that the format of the strategy had been refreshed with the original four outcomes streamlined into three, all objectives redistributed accordingly, and the responsibilities for health and social care were now better reflected. He stated that he was happy to accept the amendment submitted by Councillor Stuart King which proposed that the Equality Annual Report be brought to Council to enable discussions on the progress made on delivering the Strategy.

Councillor Stuart King, Leader of the Opposition, seconded the motion and stated that:

- It was right that the Council should be addressing social inequalities as a community leader and employer and advised that the Opposition supported the adopted approach and endorsed the outcomes underpinning the strategy.
- He expressed concerns about the absence of a delivery plan alongside the strategy as the aspirations of the strategy had to be measured and monitored transparently in a meeting where all parties were represented and able to debate any progress made delivering the strategy. In closing, the Executive Mayor stated that delivery plans ensured the Council followed through on its many good strategies and he was happy to accept the amendment as Croydon was one of the most diverse boroughs in London and the strategy was designed to make Croydon as equal a place as possible and expressed gratitude for the cross-party support for the strategy.

The motion was put to the vote and CARRIED.

**RESOLVED to:**

1. Approve the refreshed Equality Strategy 2023-2027 (Appendix A) and the updated Equality Objectives at paragraph 4.11.
2. Note the adoption on 27 September 2023 by the Executive Mayor in Cabinet of the London Local Government Anti-Racism Statement, developed by the London Councils Chief Executives London Committee (Appendix B).

3. Refer the Equality Annual Report for discussion at Full Council each year to ensure that progress delivering the strategy is visible and accountable to councillors and the community.

## 80/21 **Questions to Mayor and Executive**

Mayor Jason Perry, supported by members of the Cabinet, invited questions from Council on various topics affecting the borough. The Chair called upon councillors in turn and Mayor Perry responded that:

- The prevalence of domestic violence against women and girls was an ongoing issue and the Council was intent on tackling this. It was one of the delivery plans in the community safety strategy.
- The Council's partnerships with the police, health, and community colleagues were regularly reviewed to refresh the community safety strategy. The three delivery plans were live documents co-produced with partners and featured in the Council's budget.
- The Community Safety Strategy was reviewed, the safety delivery plans were considered by Cabinet the previous week, the Youth Justice plan was considered by Scrutiny Committee on 10 October and the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy would be coming forward in due course.
- The Community Safety Engagement Board was initiated in April 2023 at the request of local community groups.
- The Town Centre was top priority, and the council was working with partners on a renewed master plan for the Town Centre. A Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) was initiated in April and 130 notices within the PSPO had been issued. Also, the Safer Streets group had been reformed to support the homeless and improve the cleanliness of the Town Centre.
- Regarding Croydon Limited Partnership, the Council was currently in ongoing negotiations with Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield (URW) and firm timetables were expected towards the end of the year.
- One of the ways the Council was implementing the recommendations of the Violence Reduction Network contained in the Strategic Assessment Report 2022 was by focusing on funding community groups.

The Executive Mayor held monthly and daily meetings with the Borough Commander to discuss issues and challenges facing the borough and hold the Police to account and ensure all was being done to make Croydon's streets safe. Also, the Safer Neighbourhood Board was a public board that was in place to hold the police to account.

- The supplementary design guide (SPD) was removed in July last year. The Local Plan would be focused on design character rather than being density driven and would be agreed by Cabinet and Council.
- There was no total quantum of resources available for preventive projects but an ongoing process of funding local grassroots groups through resources drawn down from government funding in addition to council resources and advice was being sought from professional officers and professionals in the field on the best programmes to keep the Borough's young people safe.
- The Council's "blitz" clean-up campaign had successfully led to the reduction of fly tipping by 84 percent over a three-week period in Norwood and the Thornton Heath Clock Tower had been restored. The next target for the blitz cleaning was Thornton Heath.
- Cabinet approved the extension the PSPO to include Thornton Heath Ponds and the whole of Grangewood Park. The protection orders would be in place by the end of 2023. Training on what powers for use were available under the PSPO would be provided to officers.
- A public meeting with local residents to discuss violence against women and girls would be held in a few weeks to ensure the Council's plan was moving in the right direction. In addition to tackling street harassment activities in schools, there was a recognition that discussions with young people about healthy relationships was needed.

A leading UK charity, Against Violence and Abuse (AVA) was working to have interventions in schools, and the Council was working with schools and AVA to ensure those interventions were rightly targeted.

- There were measures within the delivery plan of the community safety strategy for preventing violence against women and girls to ensure the Council was setting the right targets, and that those targets were monitored and met.
- Lessons learnt in the successful Norbury blitz clean-up would be applied to the Thornton Heath blitz clean-up.
- The Youth Justice Plan was a set of priorities from central government that officers were collaborating and working hard on to address the issues, despite financial challenges to deliver the best for the Borough's young people.
- Wandle Park Café would be reopened pending resolution of the issues with the building.
- Croydon had low school pupil exclusion rates compared to other London boroughs, and it disproportionately affected black boys. However, there was intensive support from organisations such as Saffron Valley

Collegiate, grassroots community groups, and there were support mechanisms in place such as mentoring support for both excluded and managed moved children.

- Cabinet agreed the non-statutory consultation for the closure of maintained nursery schools. Five of the maintained schools already operated at a deficit; doing nothing was not an option. The consultation would enable the views of local residents to be factored into the decision.
- Officers were working hard in collaboration with the Cabinet Member for Children Services and Young people to mitigate the impact of previous budget cuts and prepare for the forthcoming youth offending service inspection.
- The ability of the Council to provide spaces for community groups had reduced significantly due to the council's debt burden and the necessary sale of assets. Officers were asked to explore the possibility of putting empty shop units into community use.
- The Council was committed to educating primary and secondary school pupils about domestic violence as part of a multi-agency approach to tackling violence and the inclusion of this approach was being drafted in the Youth Safety Plan.
- The London Borough of Culture programme's initial funding of approximately £1.5 million from the GLA was used very wisely. Officers were currently trying to use the programme to secure additional funding from the Arts Council and the Lottery Fund.
- The Council was committed to working in partnership with private enterprises in the borough.
- The first papers relating to budget setting would soon be published. The Cabinet Member for Finance was engaging with the opposition parties and preparations were being made in terms of officer support to facilitate the process next year.

At this point, in accordance with Council Procedure Rules (3.3 of Section 4A) the Civic Mayor moved that the meeting be extended for a further 30 minutes up to 10 pm to allow for Item 11, Council Debate Motions to be considered.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Mario Creatura, put to the vote and CARRIED.

**RESOLVED, to:** Extend the guillotine for a further 30 minutes to 10 pm.

It was noted that Councillor Richard Chatterjee was unable to vote on two items due to IT issues.

### **Conservative Group Motion**

Councillor Lynne Hale in moving the Conservative Group Debate Motion, spoke in favour of the motion and argued that:

- The Council's most valuable work, in terms of potential outcomes, must be focused on the borough's diverse local communities, grassroots organisations that understood exactly what their local communities needed and could deliver better value for money and more agile solutions.
- The Council would have to do less until the finances stabilised but could still listen and empower residents to do more for themselves.
- While the events of the past few weeks have been extraordinarily distressing and difficult, it had been incredibly moving to see how so many diverse communities had pulled together.

Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel spoke to the motion on behalf of the Opposition and stated that:

- The Opposition welcomed the motion and was dedicated to ensuring that local voices were heard and all residents were treated fairly with respect and dignity and solutions provided to the issues facing residents despite the council's financial situation.
- Though the Council had not been able to help in some issues such as homelessness, but could work collectively with local residents as they were happy to get more involved but wanted to be better supported. Community groups were well resourced networks and had the ability to respond and transform local assets to meet their own needs. Also, Councillors should be fully informed of the Council's initiatives and engaged to work in partnership with the Council in putting residents first.

Councillor Ola Kolade, the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, seconding the motion argued that:

- The Council was listening to its diverse communities and taking action to tackle the key issues in the borough and this meant true partnership, fostering relationships with voluntary and community groups and faith groups, listening to residents, empathizing and addressing the issues that mattered to them.
- The Council was also listening to the business community and actively seeking opportunities to support town and district centres and local businesses in areas that have been let down for too long.

- Diverse committee groups had played a key role in co-creating and co-delivering over 30 projects with over 50 schools engaged in community safety.
- The introduction of the Residence Charter and a community safety engagement board, the Blitz Clean-up campaign was evidence that the Council was listening to its diverse communities and taking action to tackle the key issues facing local residents.

Councillor Rowenna Davis, Chair of Scrutiny argued that:

- Whilst the Opposition would vote for the motion, it had no confidence in the words due to the results of past attempts. She stated that the passion expressed in the community meetings after the recent tragic events showed that residents were desperate to get involved.
- She advised that Council should have given residents opportunities to help design and lead solutions to the violence in the borough or explore examples of best practice from other London boroughs such as Islington Council's Fairness Commission on Newer Citizens Assemblies.

The motion was put to the vote, with Council voting UNANIMOUSLY in favour of the motion.

**RESOLVED, that:**

1. The Council was committed to listening to, respecting and working in partnership with Croydon's diverse communities.
2. The Council was dedicated to ensuring that local voices were heard and were at the heart of every work and that all residents were treated fairly, with respect and dignity.

The Executive Mayor speaking in response to the debate stated:

- He was grateful for the cross-party support and advised that the Residents Charter was an important living document, that demonstrated the Council's commitment to listening to residents and encouraging their involvement in the decisions which impact on their lives such as the appointment of house service repair contractors and the regeneration of Regina Road.
- The new homelessness prevention team was now up and running and the new staffing structure would be aiming to ensure that the maximum wait time for new cases would be two weeks; emergencies could be seen to within 48 hours with a new focus of preventing homelessness at the earliest opportunity and ensuring that residents were treated fairly with respect and dignity.



## **Labour Group Motion**

Councillor Callton Young OBE, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance in moving the Labour Group Motion stated:

- That this year, Croydon proudly joined the nation in celebrating 'Windrush 75', marking 75 years since the Empire Windrush's arrival at Tilbury in 1948, bringing 1,027 passengers from the Caribbean including 500 from Jamaica.
- He explained that this saw the start of the 'Windrush Generation' defined as people who arrived in the UK from the Caribbean between 1948 and 1973, invited by the British government to help rebuild the mother-country after World War II. Croydon Council saluted the 'Windrush Generation,' their contribution to post-war Britain and enrichment of our borough's cultural diversity.
- Councillor Callton Young advised that as Windrush 75 was being celebrated, the country must address ongoing fallout from the 'Hostile Environment,' which had left many Windrushers still seeking fair and just compensation for the adverse impact on their lives.
- He stated that it was recognised that legacies of the past still manifested themselves today in inequitable outcomes for Windrush descendants as evidenced in the educational attainment of Black boys who were disproportionately excluded from mainstream education. These issues required robust policies to address them.
- Councillor Callton Young affirmed Croydon's commitment to becoming an anti-racist Council and apologised for past unjust Council policies, like the 'Ban on Bashment' affecting Reggae, Grime and Hip-Hop performers, that was introduced in 2008 and lasted for a decade. Croydon Council was resolute in supporting cultural expressions and committed to fostering a thriving, inclusive, night-time economy for all. He called for Windrush 75 to remind us of our shared history and our unwavering commitment to social justice and inclusivity in Croydon.

Councillor Andy Stranack, the Cabinet Member for Culture spoke in favour of the motion and stated that:

- He had agreed with the Executive Mayor that this year as the London Borough of Culture, a spotlight must be shone on the rich, diverse communities that make up Croydon. It was the reason the year started with the successful Caribbean Influences exhibition which would be on display at the National Portrait Gallery until middle of February 2024.
- Croydon had played an important role in the celebrations nationally and local events were held which celebrated the vital contribution that the Windrush generation had made to Croydon, but also did not shy away from

personal testimonies of the hostile environments that newcomers faced even before and after they arrived in the UK.

- Thankfully, so many of this first generation showed courage and perseverance through the discrimination and had created the diverse communities present today, there was a need to learn and continue to learn and shine a spotlight on their experiences to overcome existing barriers and prevent the erection of new ones.
- Over the next six months, the Borough of Culture would certainly continue to support events that highlighted and celebrated the Windrush generation.

Councillor Patsy Cummings speaking in favour of the motion argued that:

- A hostile environment policy introduced in the late 2000s to deter illegal immigration, required the Windrush generation to provide documents going back decades. Unfortunately, due to various reasons, they were unable to provide this, resulting in significant challenges to their rights and legal status.
- The consequences of these policies brought about unimaginable suffering for some people who had lived in the UK for most of their lives, who suddenly faced deportation, were wrongfully detained and denied access to health care and employment, and some lost their homes.
- The scandal that erupted in 2018 shed light on the government's mishandling of their legal status and triggered an official inquiry. The Home Office promised to resolve the situation, acknowledging that the Wind Rush Generation had been treated wrongly.
- On 22 June 2018, Croydon Council became the first local authority in the country to establish and celebrate an annual Windrush Day, in recognition of the rich diversity Commonwealth citizens had brought to the borough and the Windrush Flag was raised.
- In December 2018, Councillor Callton Young and Councillor Patsy Cummings moved a motion which was carried unanimously to call upon the Conservative Central Government not to cap compensation amounts payable to victims of the hostile environment and to continue to review by our business policies and procedures to support those affected, and to press the Prime Minister, at the time, to call an independent public inquiry into the Windrush scandal.
- Councillor Patsy Cummings in conclusion, stated that the Windrush Generation encapsulated a significant chapter in the history of recent migration in the UK, while some steps have been taken to rectify those historical wrongs, and while this local authority was playing its part, it remained essential to remember the Windrush generation, who played a pivotal role in rebuilding culture.

Councillor Joseph Lee speaking in favour of the motion stated that:

- He was a child of the Windrush Generation and was proud of the contributions they had made to enrich the UK, culturally, economically, and socially. He commended their resilience, hard work, and unwavering commitment to a better future for themselves and for the United Kingdom.
- The legacy of Windrushers was woven into the fabric of our society, and it was a legacy that should be honoured, cherished and celebrated. The fact that legacy still affected outcomes for Windrush descendants could not be ignored such as was seen in the education attainment of Black boys who were disproportionately excluded from mainstream education.
- The Council's commitment to becoming an anti-racist organisation needed working together to dismantle the barriers in the way of a more equitable future that was fair, inclusive for all where everyone, regardless of their background, could thrive and contribute to the vibrant tapestry of Croydon.

Councillor Callton Young exercising his right of last reply argued that:

- The government had promised to right the wrongs done to the Windrushers but five years later, too many victims were still fighting. He advised that the finding of a public review in 2017 was that the 'Ban on Bashment' policy had been written into the Council's licensing policy for almost a decade. He stated the Council must become an anti-racist Council and never again should it be allowed to attack a cultural expression best celebrated as part of the Croydon's collective diversity.

The motion was put to the vote, with Council voting UNANIMOUSLY in favour of the motion.

**RESOLVED, to:**

1. Affirm the Council's commitment to becoming an anti-racist Council and extend apologies for past unjust Council policies, like the 'Ban on Bashment' affecting Reggae, Grime and Hip-Hop performers, that was introduced in 2008 and lasted for a decade.
2. Affirm the Council's resolution and commitment to supporting cultural expressions and fostering a thriving, inclusive, night-time economy for all.

The Executive Mayor speaking in response to the debate stated:

- That the contributions by the Windrushers to the country should be commended but many governments had mistreated them over time and those injustices should be put right. He commended Councillor Callton Young for stopping the 'Ban on Bashment' Policy in his party within those

ten years.

- The Executive Mayor stated that the Council had adopted a refreshed Equality Strategy, tonight building on the adoption of the George Floyd Race Matters pledge. Ensuring the Council had an accurate and relevant Equality Strategy that was anti-racist was pivotal to success in the provision of essential services to all London Borough of Croydon residents.
- He concluded the Council must be committed to tackling social justice, injustice and ensuring inclusivity so that all Croydon residents felt valued and respected.

82/21 **Maiden Speeches**

This item was deferred to the next Council meeting.

(Please see minute 73/21)

83/21 **Appointments**

No changes to appointments were proposed.

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:**

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