

## QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS

| Question Number   | Question asked by Councillor: | Subject        |
|---|-------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES, SAFETY and JUSTICE</b><br><b>Councillor Hamida Ali</b> |                               |                |
| CQ069-17  | Creatura, M                   | Knife Crime    |
| CQ065-17  | Creatura, M                   | Fly-postering  |
| <b>LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</b><br><b>Councillor Tony Newman</b>                             |                               |                |
| CQ071-17  | Creatura, M                   | "Your Croydon" |

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**CQ069-17**      **from Councillor Mario Creatura**

**Councillor Hamida Ali**

At full Council on Monday 26th June, I asked the Cabinet Member what the Administration was doing to combat the rise in reported knife crime in Croydon. I pointed out that those young people that go to the Croydon Congress, whose parents attend public meetings and who regularly engage with the authorities are not likely to be those that are caught up in gang and knife-related crime. That those disenfranchised from the establishment are the ones that are both hardest to reach and those most in need of engagement.

As part of the Mayor of London's recently published London Knife Crime Strategy, it's been reported in the local press that every secondary school in Croydon could get metal detectors installed at entrances in order to find concealed weapons.

I'd like answers to the following please:

1. How many incidents involved knives have taken place in secondary schools in Croydon since 2014?
2. How does that figure compare to knife-related crime that does not take place in our schools?
3. Does the Administration believe that metal-detectors are required in our secondary schools?
4. If it does, what is the mechanism by which the Council would enforce metal detectors at our secondary schools?
5. Is the Cabinet Member aware and able to provide the view of Croydon's police force on this suggestion?

**Reply**

**1. How many incidents involved knives have taken place in secondary schools in Croydon since 2014?**

The council works closely with schools and we do support them in dealing with knife related issues but information is not held on the number of incidents in school.

**2. How does that figure compare to knife-related crime that does not take place in our schools?**

Given the answer above no comparison can be made. However total knife related crime is as follows Years 14/15 - 443, 15/16- 340, 16/17 -674. More detailed figures are attached (below).

**3. Does the Administration believe that metal-detectors are required in our secondary schools?**

This is just one of a number of tactics that can be deployed to assist schools in tackling knife related issues. While metal detectors in schools can assist in ensuring safety, they are used at the school's invitation, in partnership with the police and in a targeted way based on intelligence and any operations must be approved by the relevant Chief Inspector. There is evidence that those who carry knives can go to some lengths to 'hide' them elsewhere including getting other people less likely to be searched to carry for them so arches can be useful in preventing this. And just because a knife may be carried into school, it does not necessarily follow that it is intended to be used in the school. As such, we would see arches as potentially augmenting the work we are doing in having a zero tolerance policy for illegal knives on our streets more broadly. If you would like more information Ch Insp Mike Spies is happy to help 0208 649 01 14.

**4. If it does, what is the mechanism by which the Council would enforce metal detectors at our secondary schools?**

Schools, working in partnership with their schools' police officers are best placed to determine the best way to keep children and young people in their care safe based on local risk assessments made for each individual school. The Council does not have the power to enforce metal detector use in schools, but will continue to work in partnership with Head Teachers and governing bodies to ensure our young people are safe. The council is working closely with the police and other agencies to tackle serious youth violence in the round - and that includes a range of activity in addition to police enforcement tactics, including engaging with young people and their parents to raise awareness about the dangers of carrying a knife.

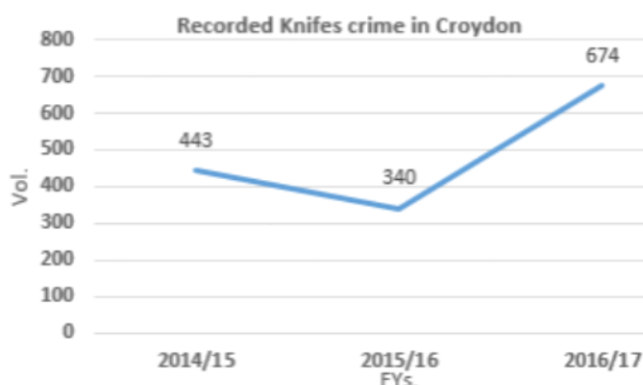
**5. Is the Cabinet Member aware and able to provide the view of Croydon's police force on this suggestion?**

This is clearly a question for the police and would encourage the councillor to raise this with police colleagues directly.

**Croydon borough's Knife crime figures with month/year breakdowns for 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17**

| Month-Year   | Knife Crime Offences |  | Month-Year   | Knife Crime Offences |  | Month-Year   | Knife Crime Offences |
|--------------|----------------------|--|--------------|----------------------|--|--------------|----------------------|
| Apr 2014     | 53                   |  | Apr 2015     | 18                   |  | Apr 2016     | 26                   |
| May 2014     | 30                   |  | May 2015     | 24                   |  | May 2016     | 40                   |
| Jun 2014     | 53                   |  | Jun 2015     | 22                   |  | Jun 2016     | 39                   |
| Jul 2014     | 45                   |  | Jul 2015     | 19                   |  | Jul 2016     | 70                   |
| Aug 2014     | 26                   |  | Aug 2015     | 28                   |  | Aug 2016     | 90                   |
| Sep 2014     | 27                   |  | Sep 2015     | 26                   |  | Sep 2016     | 79                   |
| Oct 2014     | 28                   |  | Oct 2015     | 35                   |  | Oct 2016     | 57                   |
| Nov 2014     | 37                   |  | Nov 2015     | 34                   |  | Nov 2016     | 46                   |
| Dec 2014     | 38                   |  | Dec 2015     | 52                   |  | Dec 2016     | 37                   |
| Jan 2015     | 37                   |  | Jan 2016     | 26                   |  | Jan 2017     | 57                   |
| Feb 2015     | 27                   |  | Feb 2016     | 22                   |  | Feb 2017     | 61                   |
| Mar 2015     | 42                   |  | Mar 2016     | 34                   |  | Mar 2017     | 72                   |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>443</b>           |  | <b>Total</b> | <b>340</b>           |  | <b>Total</b> | <b>674</b>           |

| Fys     | Count |
|---------|-------|
| 2014/15 | 443   |
| 2015/16 | 340   |
| 2016/17 | 674   |



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**CQ065-17            from Councillor Mario Creatura**

**Councillor Hamida Ali**

In response to the answer given to CQ032-17 on the subject of fly-postering, the Cabinet Member reveals that using the Council's records they can find only **one** who could be deemed to be a repeat offender.

On 27th June 2016 I reported to Officers the repeated fly-postering of Croydon Town Centre by Ruskin House on Coombe Road - the HQ of the Croydon Labour Party. These posters were on the sides of buildings, phone boxes, walls and other non-sanctioned locations. The reply on 28th June ensured enforcement officers would look into this and would update me on 'what action is taken'.

On 8th July 2016 I reported to Officers that Ruskin House had yet again fly-postered Croydon Town Centre. That afternoon I was assured the 'NSO team to look at this and update you on what action they have taken'.

On 22nd February 2017 I yet again reported to Officers that Ruskin House had put up posters around Croydon Town Centre. I was assured on 27th February that this would be taken up and I'd be 'updated directly as this is an enforcement issue.' No update was provided.

On 11th March 2017 I reported to Officers that Ruskin House had put up yet more posters around Croydon Town Centre. A more substantive reply came on 13th March. The fly posters in 2016 were dealt with by way of a verbal warning. The individual person that this was issued to is no longer involved with Ruskin House so the Council told me they were unable to follow up with enforcement action.

Ruskin House has now been issued with a written warning which, if breached, could result in a Community Protection Notice being issued. This would then make them liable to a fine or prosecution.

My questions to the Cabinet Member are as follows:

1. Why is the system used to record instances of fly-postering not kept up to date accurately by Officers?
2. What processes will she be putting in place to ensure the accurate recording of information for the purposes of enforcement going forward?
3. Will the Cabinet Member ensure that 'Ruskin House' as opposed to an individual is noted as a 'repeat offender'?
4. Is it the practice of this administration to attribute an organisation's illegal fly-postering as the responsibility of an individual or of anyone representing that organisation?
5. Does the Cabinet Member believe Ruskin House has been given particularly special treatment and if so why does she believe that is the case?
6. Should Ruskin House break the written warning, what does the Cabinet Member believe is proportionate enforcement action?
7. Does the Cabinet Member feel it is acceptable for political parties to fly-poster, sticker or spread other messages through illegal means?

8. Will the Cabinet Member commit to work with colleagues within her party to ensure that illegal political fly-posting will never again take place across our borough?
9. Can the Cabinet Member please estimate a cost for the removal of the Ruskin House posters and the Labour General Election fly-posting/stickers that she will be aware have been distributed across the borough

## Reply

- 1. Why is the system used to record instances of fly-posting not kept up to date accurately by Officers?**

In some cases the posters put up are permitted and are not classed as fly-posting under the Town and Country Planning Act. The council has also changed reporting systems and is currently engaged in the roll out of a new database (CRM) to record some instances. Instances are not / were not recorded centrally due to the designation of different posters.

- 2. What processes will she be putting in place to ensure the accurate recording of information for the purposes of enforcement going forward?**

The CRM system should be operational soon, however, repeat offenders can still be identified and issues addressed, especially where an evidential chain can be highlighted and used. Officers have used existing processes to identify several prolific fly posters and one was recently prosecuted and fined a substantial amount.  
<https://wp.croydon.gov.uk/news/council-prosecutes-company-and-director-for-flyposting/>

- 3. Will the Cabinet Member ensure that 'Ruskin House' as opposed to an individual is noted as a 'repeat offender'?**

The legislation does not allow for that approach. A responsible person needs to be identified. A course of conduct observed and then dealt with accordingly.

- 4. Is it the practice of this administration to attribute an organisation's illegal fly-posting as the responsibility of an individual or of anyone representing that organisation?**

It can be both or either.

- 5. Does the Cabinet Member believe Ruskin House has been given particularly special treatment and if so why does she believe that is the case?**

Officers are not allowed to give special treatment. They have been dealt with as any other person/organisation would be. The instances at Ruskin House have been noted.

- 6. Should Ruskin House break the written warning, what does the Cabinet Member believe is proportionate enforcement action?**

It depends on the scenario. As the letter sent was a warning letter, the sanction for breaking it means that the next step may be the serving of a formal notice or a fine may be issued. However, as a warning letter has been sent in this instance, there is no reason to believe that the warning will be broken in the future.

- 7. Does the Cabinet Member feel it is acceptable for political parties to fly-poster, sticker or spread other messages through illegal means?**

Some temporary event advertising is permitted under the relevant legislation so a blanket statement cannot be made. That notwithstanding, with the best will in the world

we cannot expect that every individual taking an interest in electoral politics will be fully conversant with the relevant legislation regarding stickers, for example.

- 8. Will the Cabinet Member commit to work with colleagues within her party to ensure that illegal political fly-posting will never again take place across our borough?**

We will continue to work to address problems when they are brought to our attention. It is impossible, however, to ensure that it will never again take place.

- 9. Can the Cabinet Member please estimate a cost for the removal of the Ruskin House posters and the Labour General Election fly-posting/stickers that she will be aware have been distributed across the borough?**

The cost was negligible as most of the posters were taken down by Ruskin House after they were instructed to do so.

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**CQ071-17**            **from Councillor Mario Creatura**

**Councillor Tony Newman**

The latest edition of the Council's 'Your Croydon' was dispatched to residents across the borough in the last week.

Could the Leader please answer each of the following:

1. How many households does 'Your Croydon' get delivered to in the borough?
2. How many households are there in the borough? Are there any that do not receive the publication?
3. How much does the a) print and b) distribution of the publication cost each year?
4. How many editions are printed every year?
5. How many FTE Council officers work on this publication?
6. What is the editorial process by which content is determined, written, proofed, designed and ultimately signed off for publication?
7. In the 'CODE OF RECOMMENDED PRACTICE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY PUBLICITY' issued by the DCLG in 2011, the code clearly states that Council publicity 'should avoid anything likely to be perceived by readers as constituting a political statement, or being a commentary on contentious areas of public policy.'
  - a) Does the Leader feel that the story on page 15 of 'Your Croydon' entitled 'HISTORIC WIN FOR SARAH' is in breach of this condition? If not, why not?
  - b) Ms Jones is quoted at length in the article discussing her political priorities and referring to a number of Labour Party manifesto pledges (e.g. investment in the NHS; education; campaigning for more equality in housing etc.). This can clearly be 'perceived by readers as constituting a political statement' and/or a 'commentary on a contentious area of public policy'. What is the Council's position on rectifying this breach of the Code?
  - c) Who commissioned the article?
  - d) Who wrote the article/interviewed Ms Jones?
8. The Code also states that 'Where local authority publicity addresses matters of political controversy it should seek to present the different positions in relation to the issue in question in a fair manner.' Ms Jones' comments were not



challenged and no balance was provided in the article.

a) How will the Council seek to rectify this?

b) The Code asserts that 'Publicity material produced by local authorities relating to a particular member must not seek to affect public support for that individual.' Does the Leader believe that giving an article, taking up two thirds of a page, to Ms Jones and no copy to Mr Reed and Mr Philp is in breach of this?

b) Can I have an assurance that both Mr Reed and Mr Philp will be receiving a similar publicity opportunity in future editions?

## Reply

**1. How many households does 'Your Croydon' get delivered to in the borough?**

Approx. 155,500

**2. How many households are there in the borough? Are there any that do not receive the publication?**

There are 155,551 residential address. Sometimes an address may not receive a magazine due to entry phone systems where no answer is received. There will be further delivery attempts.

**3. How much does the a) print and b) distribution of the publication cost each year?**

a) £9,870 per issue

b) £13,950 per issue (Approx.)

**4. How many editions are printed every year?**

In the last financial year there were three print editions

**5. How many FTE Council officers work on this publication?**

The council's communications team writes the articles and designs the publication as part of their role. No individual is employed solely to work on the magazine.

**6. What is the editorial process by which content is determined, written, proofed, designed and ultimately signed off for publication?**

Editorial meetings where the communications team suggests and contributes stories, agreement of articles with the head of communications, articles written, proofed and designed by the communications team. The magazine is signed off by the head of communications and director of strategies and partnership.

**7. In the 'CODE OF RECOMMENDED PRACTICE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY PUBLICITY' issued by the DCLG in 2011, the code clearly states that Council publicity 'should avoid anything likely to be perceived by readers as constituting a political statement, or being a commentary on contentious areas of public policy.'**

a) Does the Leader feel that the story on page 15 of 'Your Croydon' entitled 'HISTORIC WIN FOR SARAH' is in breach of this condition? If not, why not?

The story is primarily about the first ever woman MP to be elected in Croydon. It does not breach the code.

- b) **Ms Jones is quoted at length in the article discussing her political priorities and referring to a number of Labour Party manifesto pledges (e.g. investment in the NHS; education; campaigning for more equality in housing etc.). This can clearly be 'perceived by readers as constituting a political statement' and/or a 'commentary on a contentious area of public policy'. What is the Council's position on rectifying this breach of the Code?**

The story does not mention a political party and is not in breach of the code. It is a personal piece about Croydon's first female MP and I'm sure Cllr Creatura will join me in welcoming this important and significant development for our borough.

- c) **Who commissioned the article?**

The article was not commissioned it was put forward and agreed by the editorial team as a story of historical significance for the borough

- d) **Who wrote the article/interviewed Ms Jones?**

A member of the editorial team

8. **The Code also states that 'Where local authority publicity addresses matters of political controversy it should seek to present the different positions in relation to the issue in question in a fair manner.' Ms Jones' comments were not challenged and no balance was provided in the article.**

The article is not politically controversial. It is a personal piece about Croydon's first female MP

- a) **How will the Council seek to rectify this?**

n/a

- b) **The Code asserts that 'Publicity material produced by local authorities relating to a particular member must not seek to affect public support for that individual.' Does the Leader believe that giving an article, taking up two thirds of a page, to Ms Jones and no copy to Mr Reed and Mr Philp is in breach of this?**

Mr Reed and Mr Philp are featured on the same page in the Full Results section.

- c) **Can I have an assurance that both Mr Reed and Mr Philp will be receiving a similar publicity opportunity in future editions?**

The editorial content of the magazine is entirely a matter for the editorial team but I'm sure that if Mr Reed and Mr Philp are personally involved in a story of historical significance then they would be considered for inclusion.