

Council

Meeting held on Monday, 16 December 2019 at 6.45 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

- Present:** Councillor Humayun Kabir (Chair);
Councillor Maddie Henson (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Hamida Ali, Muhammad Ali, Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel,
Sue Bennett, Margaret Bird, Simon Brew, Alison Butler, Jan Buttinger,
Janet Campbell, Robert Canning, Richard Chatterjee, Sherwan Chowdhury,
Pat Clouder, Stuart Collins, Mary Croos, Jason Cummings, Patsy Cummings,
Mario Creatura, Nina Degrad, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Sean Fitzsimons,
Alisa Flemming, Felicity Flynn, Clive Fraser, Lynne Hale, Simon Hall,
Patricia Hay-Justice, Simon Hoar, Yvette Hopley, Karen Jewitt, Shafi Khan,
Stuart King, Toni Letts, Oliver Lewis, Stephen Mann, Stuart Millson,
Vidhi Mohan, Michael Neal, Tony Newman, Oni Ovir, Ian Parker,
Andrew Pelling, Jason Perry, 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 Jamie Audsley, Jane Avis, Luke Clancy, Chris Clark,
Maria Gatland, Steve Hollands, Bernadette Khan and Steve O'Connell

PART A

64/19 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

The Mayor, Councillor Humayun Kabir, signed the paper copy of the minutes to acknowledge them as an accurate record of the meeting.

65/19 Disclosure of Interests

There were no disclosures of interests. Members confirmed their disclosure of interest forms were accurate and up-to-date.

66/19 Urgent Business (if any)

There were no items of urgent business.

The Mayor, Councillor Kabir, provided Council with his announcements. Members heard that the Mayor had carried out 116 engagements since the last meeting of Council and thanked the Deputy Mayor and past Mayors for representing him on many occasions. The Mayor highlighted two seminars that he had hosted in the Town Hall on the important subjects of social prescribing and mental health awareness.

The Mayor also thanked everyone who had organised and participated in the Remembrance Sunday commemorations and Armistice Day events that took place in November.

Members also heard details of the recent STAR awards that celebrated the successes of Croydon's looked after children and the Council's staff awards that recognised the work of exceptional council officers. On behalf of the council, the Mayor congratulated all those recognised at the ceremonies.

The Mayor drew Council's attention to two forthcoming fundraising events. These were a celebration of Chinese New Year on 28 January 2020 and a Caribbean Ball on 7 February 2020.

Finally, the Mayor in his capacity as Returning Officer for the General Election held on 12 December 2019, announced the results for all three constituencies in the London Borough of Croydon. Steve Reed OBE was duly elected as the Member of Parliament for Croydon North with 36,495 votes and the turnout was 62.9%. Sarah Jones was duly elected as the Member of Parliament for Croydon Central with 27,124 votes and the turnout was 66.4%. Chris Philp was duly elected as the Member of Parliament for Croydon South with 30,985 votes and the turnout was 70.7%. The Mayor expressed his congratulations to all three Members of Parliament.

The Leader

The Mayor invited the Leader, Councillor Newman, to make his announcements. The Leader informed Council that the local government funding settlement was still yet to be announced by the Government and that it was hoped details would be received before Christmas. The Council was continuing to lobby the Government for a fair funding settlement regarding unaccompanied asylum seekers and Councillor Newman thanked Members for their support in these efforts.

Finally, Councillor Newman highlighted that the BBC was airing a Panorama programme that evening that focused on 'SPAC Nation'. The Leader confirmed to Members that the Council was taking appropriate steps in response to the allegations that had been made.

The Chief Executive

The Mayor invited the Chief Executive to make her announcements in her capacity as the Head of Paid Service and as Returning Officer for the Fairfield by-election. The Chief Executive, Jo Negrini, announced that Councillor Caragh Skipper was duly elected to the Fairfield Ward at the by-election held on Thursday 7 November 2019 with 849 votes and that the turnout had been 22.77%. On behalf of Members, the Mayor welcomed Councillor Skipper to the Council.

68/19 **Croydon Question Time**

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Mayor, Councillor Kabir, explained that Croydon Question Time would commence with thirty minutes of public questions to the Leader and Cabinet Members with preference being given to those who had questions who were in attendance at the meeting.

E Taylor asked Councillor Butler, the Cabinet Member for Homes and Gateway Services, if the Council would halt any Brick by Brick Developments on greenfield sites as these were habitats for natural creatures as well as spaces for residents.

Councillor Butler stressed the Council's commitment to build much needed homes and that the Council had to balance the needs of all residents. Brick by Brick had been established to deliver high quality homes and would review all potentially appropriate sites owned by the Council. This was necessary because the Council did not receive funding from the Government to develop homes, which limited the ability to compete on the open market for available land. As many homes were built in a post war era, when people were moving out of London and populations were smaller, it meant that there were underutilised spaces that could be considered for additional homes.

The Brick by Brick design team was charged with designing schemes to ensure that there was green space or to improve green space, such as by including greater facilities or by making them more accessible. Councillor Butler also stressed that sites which were protected under planning policies were not used for new homes.

In a supplementary question, a concern was raised about a possible conflict of interest between the Council and Brick by Brick and whether the exact fee received from Brick by Brick could be published. Councillor Butler stressed that any planning applications received by Brick by Brick were considered under planning law and local, regional and national planning policies in the same way as any other planning application. All agreements including sales and transfers between the Council and Brick by Brick were already published and publicly available.

Local resident, **Gregory Edwards**, asked the Deputy Cabinet Member for Families, Health and Social Care, Councillor Campbell, a question relating to

his grandmother who was currently receiving privately funded support but was likely to receive publicly funded support in the future. Mr Edwards asked if there was a projected overspend for community led support.

As the question related to financial matters, Councillor Campbell asked the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, Councillor Hall, to respond. Councillor Hall stated that any forecasted overspend would be included in section 2.4 of the recent Cabinet report and that the detail was included in the appendix to that report. There was substantial financial pressure on adult social care, including on community support service, but the criteria for considering support packages had not been changed.

Mr Edwards asked a supplementary question, suggesting that there may be future issues with community led approaches being delivered in central Croydon, particularly with road safety and suggested more cross party and cross council discussions on regeneration for community led support. Councillor Hall responded that both regeneration and investment in services for residents were critical, including the provision of much needed homes. The Council was conscious of the need to ensure that there was a balance between competing needs and priorities.

As there were no more residents that had indicated that they would like to ask a question, the Mayor moved on to questions submitted by email by those unable to attend the meeting. The Mayor read out a question from Croydon resident **Mr Mark Samuel**. This related to information given to residents regarding the bulky waste collection service at a time when it was suggested that there were serious problems with that service.

The Leader, Councillor Newman stated that he understood that it was a case of the wrong information being circulated and that an apology had been given to Mr Samuel. Councillor Newman reinforced the apology that had been given.

Questions to the Leader

Councillor Tim Pollard informed Council that many residents had asked him to read reviews on TripAdvisor to gain an understanding of their experience of Fairfield Halls. Council was informed that prior to closure, only 17% of reviews had been negative but since reopening, 67% of reviews were negative. The Leader was asked if he would take responsibility for the issues at the Halls and ensure that they were addressed.

In response, Councillor Newman expressed his disappointment that Councillor Tim Pollard was still talking down the Halls after so many months. That there would be teething issues with the reopening of any venue was accepted, but this did not make it acceptable for Councillor Tim Pollard to continuously and publically put down the venue where so many staff and performers were working hard to make it a success. Councillor Newman was proud of the work to restore the Halls. The Leader further suggested that Councillor Tim Pollard may want to reflect on why, when the Labour party had

recently had its worst results nationally in 100 years, votes continued to increase for Labour in Croydon and whether this was a consequence of persistent negative campaigning about Croydon.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Tim Pollard stated that the Labour party had performed so badly in the recent general election as a result of its Leader not taking responsibility. He stated that Councillor Newman similarly refused to take responsibility for issues with the Fairfield Halls, refuse collections, children's services and asked why Councillor Newman could not take responsibility for anything that happens in Croydon.

Councillor Newman responded by stating that he was very happy to take responsibility for the part that he had played in Croydon returning two Labour MPs and for winning the recent Fairfield Ward by-election. He further added that having checked TripAdvisor, the Fairfield Halls had a rating of four and a half stars out of five and encouraged Councillor Tim Pollard to be more positive about Croydon.

At this juncture, Councillor Helen Pollard raised a point of order regarding the figure quoted by Councillor Newman. The Mayor advised that this did not constitute a point of order and moved to the next question.

Councillor Jerry Fitzpatrick asked the Leader what the people of Croydon needed from the new Government. The Leader stated that the main area of help that was needed from the new Government was a fairer funding settlement. The austerity agenda of the past ten years had done a huge amount of damage to local services. Councillor Newman was pleased that there continued to be cross party support for fairer funding on unaccompanied asylum seeking children and that all hard working people in the borough wanted to see Croydon treated fairly on funding by the new Government.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Fitzpatrick asked what conclusions could be drawn from Labour winning 18,000 more votes than the Conservatives in Croydon on a bad night nationally for the Labour party, when in 1997 Labour had only won 10,000 more votes. Councillor Newman responded that everyone was reflecting on the challenges facing the Labour party at the national level. With regard to Croydon, the Leader stated that the Conservatives had failed to change from its remorseless negative campaigning across the borough and to respond positively. Councillor Newman encouraged Conservative Councillors to send staff working on the pantomime at the Fairfield Halls a good luck message wishing them well.

Councillor Streeter asked the Leader if he shared Steve Reed's analysis that the general election result was a repudiation of 'Corbynism'. Councillor Newman informed Members that he agreed that the Labour party needed to look at what had gone wrong for the party but stated that he would avoid criticism of individuals. Councillor Newman also stated that leadership figures within the Labour group had accepted responsibility for the general election result and drew the parallel between that response and Councillor Tim Pollard's reaction to the results in Croydon. The Leader stated that it is how

you respond to losing that was most important and that Croydon Conservatives needed to get better at it.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Streeter stated that while he had never agreed with Labour party policies, he had accepted that the party stood for a commitment to inclusion and equality. He asked the Leader what had changed and if he would apologise to the Jewish community for the anti-Semitism in the Labour party.

Councillor Newman expressed his disappointment that the Conservative Party was still pursuing the same themes of negativity when they had been so clearly rejected by the people of Croydon. The Leader was proud of how the Council had been leading the way on issues of equality and highlighted the boroughs' White Ribbon status, the work on black history month, its fairtrade status, its work on Windrush and stated that he was happy to be judged on the decisions that the Labour administration had taken in Croydon.

In putting his question to the Leader, **Councillor Stephen Mann** informed Council that Steve Reed MP had proposed establishing an area forum for Crystal Palace that included all four boroughs that the area fell across. Councillor Mann asked what the Council could do to enshrine such a forum in the Council's Constitution. Councillor Newman responded by expressing his hopes that all four Boroughs would participate in the forum and suggested that the Council could investigate if ward budgets could be utilised in innovative ways to support the area.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Mann stated that the proposed forum had the support of community leaders and businesses and asked if the Leader would both attend a meeting of the forum and work with council leaders of other boroughs to enshrine the forum in their constitutions. Councillor Newman informed Members that he would be delighted to attend the forum and that he encouraged other leaders to attend. Councillor Newman further stated that the administration wanted to encourage devolution as this was an agenda that should be further embraced.

Pool One

With the end of the time allocated to questions to the Leader, the Mayor signalled that he was moving on to questions to the Cabinet Members in the first pool. Councillors Lewis, Flemming and Campbell were invited to make their announcements.

Councillor Lewis and Councillor Flemming had no further updates that were not included in their bulletins. **Councillor Campbell, Deputy Cabinet Member for Families, Health and Social Care**, congratulated all those staff that had been nominated or were finalists at the recent council staff awards. The Health, Wellbeing and Adults Department had done particularly well with three category winners and one special recognition award.

Councillor Helen Pollard informed Councillor Lewis, the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport, that she cared about the Fairfield Halls and wanted it to succeed. However, having read TripAdvisor reviews of the Halls since its reopening that were very dissatisfied, she wanted to know when Councillor Lewis would start listening and when he would apologise for spending £41m on the Halls, for it being delivered late, over budget and for it not being the world class venue that had been promised.

Councillor Lewis informed Members that this was shameful from the Opposition, who claimed to support the Fairfield Halls but opposed the investment in restoring it. The administration was proud of its investment in the Halls while Councillor Helen Pollard was more interested in recycling the comments of keyboard warriors. The people of Croydon had spoken in 2014 and 2018 and had been clear that they expected a Fairfield Halls that lived up to their expectations. The Opposition could keep talking down and trashing Croydon but they would not win doing that.

Councillor Lewis advised the Opposition to support the Fairfield Halls and its operator. While he appreciated that there would be teething problems, everyone at the venue was working hard to be excellent across the board.

Asking a supplementary question, Councillor Helen Pollard stated that the venue operator, BH Live, were listening to the negative TripAdvisor reviews rather than dismissing them. Councillor Lewis was asked when he was going to apologise for delivering a venue that fell short of the West End but charged West End prices.

Councillor Lewis informed Members that Councillor Helen Pollard had not learned by continuing to trash both the venue and the operator. The operator was acting as it was contracted to by engaging with customers and the Council fully supported them. Councillor Lewis urged Councillor Helen Pollard to get behind Croydon, the Fairfield Halls and to start talking Croydon up instead of continuously talking it down.

Councillor Prince asked Councillor Lewis what evaluation had taken place of the Mela and Pride Festivals held in Wandle Park during the year. Councillor Lewis informed Members that those were wonderful events that celebrated the diversity of the Borough and he thanked the Waddon Ward Members for their support including through their Ward budgets. Evaluation of the events had taken place and showed that the audience came from a wide area across London and beyond, which was good news for Croydon.

Asking a supplementary question, Councillor Prince agreed that they were very successful events and asked if any specific lessons had been learned on how the events could be even better in future. Councillor Lewis responded that a key lesson was that recycling facilities at the events could be improved. Councillor Lewis also encouraged any community views that had been expressed to Ward Members would be welcomed for planning future events.

On behalf of Councillor Chatterjee, Councillor Helen Pollard asked Councillor Lewis if the administration was driving the Croydon Arts Society, who had been exhibiting for over 140 years, out of the Borough. The display space available to the society had been reduced by two thirds and new Council rules stated that any exhibition had to be held for at least three months, which was prohibitive for a Society that depended upon volunteers. It was unclear why the Council was putting barriers in place to stop the Society from holding exhibitions in the Borough.

Councillor Lewis informed Members that this was another example of Councillor Helen Pollard running down positive steps that the Council had taken. The Council was making improvements in how the Clocktower operated and in the Museum of Croydon. The Croydon Arts Society had been given the opportunity to tender for exhibition space in the Clocktower but they had chosen not to and those spaces had now been filled by various arts organisations from around the Borough. The Society had expressed a desire to exhibit in the renovated Fairfield Halls and the Council had connected them with the operators and hoped that an agreement would be reached.

Asking a supplementary question, Councillor Helen Pollard requested that Councillor Lewis committed to finding the Society an alternative exhibition space within Croydon. Councillor Lewis stated that it was regrettable that Councillor Helen Pollard had not listened to his previous answer. The Council had tried to find alternate venues for the Society and had been in dialogue with them. The Council was doing what it could to facilitate opportunities, though ultimately it was up to the Society to take up one of those opportunities.

Councillor Mann informed Council that the previous Mayor of London had abandoned plans to restore facilities within Crystal Palace Park three years ago. This issue, alongside the London Borough of Bromley having no clear vision for the Park, had left the Park Trust in an impossible position. Councillor Mann asked Councillor Lewis what solutions were available for the regionally important resource.

Councillor Lewis agreed that the Council recognised the value of the Park and its facilities and agreed that it was of regional importance and strongly encouraged the London Borough of Bromley to invest in the site.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Mann stated that meetings had been held with the partnership trust and there was a £50m funding gap for the centre that placed serious questions over the long term future of the National Football Centre and the athletics track. Councillor Mann asked if Councillor Lewis would intervene and meet with the Trust, the GLA and the London Borough of Bromley to secure the centre's future.

Councillor Lewis highlighted that there were 128 parks across Croydon and many residents also used facilities outside the Borough. Councillor Lewis encouraged the Park Trust to speak with the decision makers and, while he

was happy to meet with Ward Councillors to discuss the issues, recognised that this was a decision for the GLA and the London Borough of Bromley.

In putting a question to Councillor Flemming, **Councillor Bennett** asked if the Cabinet Member would join her in welcoming that 14 academy schools in Croydon had been rated as outstanding by Ofsted and that 16 had been rated as good and that Croydon's schools had a lucky escape as the Labour Party's manifesto had included a commitment to return all schools to local authority control.

Councillor Flemming agreed that it was right to celebrate the success of Croydon's children for their achievements. It was important that all children were able to access good education and there were concerns around exclusion rates at academies. The Council would continue to ensure that all children in the Borough had access to the best education irrespective of where they lived or their needs.

In asking a supplementary question, Councillor Bennett stated that she had been a governor at an academy for ten years and that she did not need any lessons from Councillor Flemming. Councillor Bennett further stated that the Cabinet Member's view on exclusions was wrong because academies were not excluding pupils as excluded pupils' results were still attributed to the school that they were excluded from and stated that excluding a pupil was very rare.

Councillor Flemming informed Council that she received enquiries on a day to day basis regarding exclusions and children at risk of exclusion. The impact on a school's results was often suggested as a cause of exclusion. The Cabinet Member highlighted the serious issue of exclusion of white and black working class boys in Croydon and further highlighted that exclusion had a long term impact on the life chances of those boys. This was of particular concern for children that were in the local authority's care. Councillor Flemming stated that the Council's ambition was to work with schools and parents to reduce exclusions to zero.

Councillor Canning asked Councillor Lewis how many young people had benefitted from the Council's free swimming initiative over the school summer holidays. Councillor Lewis answered that free swimming was a proud achievement of the administration since 2016. There had been over 15,000 free swims to date. This had included 2,800 in Waddon ward.

Asking a supplementary question, Councillor Canning welcomed Councillor Lewis' positive answer and that it was clear how popular the initiative was. Whilst recognising the financial pressure that the Council was under, Councillor Canning asked if the initiative would be continued. Councillor Lewis agreed that it was a popular service for young people and that there was a shortage of facilities for children as youth clubs had been slashed under Conservative austerity measures. It was hoped that the Council would be in a position to continue the initiative in the 2020 summer holidays,

however budget setting was currently taking place for the next financial year and the budget settlement was yet to be received from the Government.

In asking a question to Councillor Campbell, **Councillor Hopley** thanked and congratulated all the staff that were nominated or finalists at the recent awards. Councillor Hopley informed Members that there had been significant investment in healthcare provision in the Borough, particularly with the opening of a new acute ward at Croydon University Hospital. There had been further investment in the Somewhere Safe to Stay hub. Councillor Hopley asked if the Deputy Cabinet Member welcomed the Government's investment in those aspects of healthcare provision in the Borough.

Councillor Campbell deferred to Councillor Butler who agreed that all those who supported the opening of Somewhere Safe to Stay hub were to be congratulated but also expressed her concern that such provision was required in Croydon as a consequence of failures of the welfare state, mental health services and drug and alcohol services and the failure to invest in social housing to support residents. Councillor Butler further shared her concern that services for homelessness were underfunded and that officers were spending significant time applying for short term grants when it would be preferable for services to be funded on a long term basis and to reform the welfare system.

Councillor Hopley asked in her supplementary question that as the government had jointly funded a number of initiatives, what would the Council do to work with other agencies to tackle the issue of alcohol and drug abuse through the homelessness hub.

On behalf of Councillor Campbell, Councillor Hall responded that the Council's work with the One Croydon Alliance, localities initiatives and with the Local Strategic Partnership all showed local services working together like never before. The Council was working with all parts of the NHS to bring services together. Councillor Hall informed Members that more would have been achieved if the Government had not cut its funding of the Council by 76%, causing the Council to have to bid against other local authorities for short term grants. Councillor Hall stated that the £5bn shortfall for funding adult social care services had to be fixed and encourage Councillor Hopley to lobby the government to address those issues.

POOL TWO

With the end to the time allocated to questions to the Cabinet Members in the first pool, the Mayor signalled he was moving on to questions to the Cabinet Members in the second pool. Councillors Butler, Hamida Ali and Shahul-Hameed were invited to make their announcements.

Councillor Butler, Cabinet Member for Homes & Gateway Services, informed Council that it had been a privilege to meet tenants that were moving into the new Council homes that had been built by Brick by Brick. One of the tenants she had met that day was not only pleased to have received a Council

tenancy, but also to have been moving into such a well-designed, spacious home that also had a garden. These were just the first homes to be delivered through the Brick by Brick programme which would total 2000, with over 1000 to be affordable homes. This was in addition to the Council increasing its stock by purchasing around 350 homes and leasing 200 more as part of a programme to ensure that residents had access to the affordable homes that were needed across the Borough.

Councillor Hamida Ali, Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon and Communities, informed Members that the Mayor's forthcoming Civic Awards were a crucial opportunity to recognise Croydon's many community heroes. Councillor Hamida Ali encouraged all Members to put forward nominations to say thank you to those residents who had worked so hard for their communities.

Members were also informed that the Council had recently been rated as 'achieving' following its peer assessment under the Local Government Equalities Framework and thanks were expressed to all the staff that had helped to deliver that.

Councillor Shahul-Hameed, Cabinet Member for Economy and Jobs, informed Members that the Council was exceeding its target of 100 apprentices in 100 days and expressed her excitement to see that Croydon employers were supporting this initiative. Officers that had supported this initiative were thanked for making it such a success.

Members also heard that 107 businesses had now been recognised under the 'good employers' scheme and a reception had recently been held to celebrate their contribution. Councillor Shahul-Hameed further informed Members that the recent two week pop-up business school had attracted nearly 100 local residents and businesses. The scheme supported residents to understand how they could start their own business with no capital, to build a website and to understand how to manage the administrative aspects of establishing a business.

In asking a question of Councillor Butler, **Councillor Hale** stated that the recent transfer of 27 new homes to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) must have been very exciting for all of the new residents and wished those residents well in their new homes. Councillor Hale asked what the cost of this transfer had been and how it had been funded.

Councillor Butler did not have the exact figures and committed to sharing this with Councillor Hale following the meeting. The purchase had been funded partially through a grant from the Mayor of London and the remainder had come from the HRA.

Councillor Hale asked a supplementary question, enquiring if the tenants of those new homes would have the Right to Buy. Councillor Butler responded by stating that the Council should be celebrating the improvement of its social housing stock, which all parties agreed was the housing that was desperately

needed across the Borough, and not immediately be talking about selling its new homes.

Councillor Croos asked Councillor Butler what action was being taken to tackle concerns being raised regarding private landlords.

Councillor Butler informed Council that all Members had received enquiries from residents that raised concerns around accommodation managed by private landlords. Croydon had a Landlord Licensing Scheme in place that had helped to tackle many of those issues. While there were many excellent landlords in the Borough, there were still many instances of tenants having to suffer poor housing situations. Councillor Butler encouraged all Members to participate in the consultation that was taking place on selective licensing to ensure that the landlord licensing scheme was continued.

Councillor Perry asked Councillor Shahul-Hameed if she was alarmed that the Westfield development would take a further ten years to come to fruition. Councillor Shahul-Hameed informed Members that she did not recognise the ten years that Councillor Perry had suggested. Administration Members, the local MP and officers had held a number of meetings with the owners of Westfield and a revised planning application was anticipated that had a more diverse offer in response to the downward trend in retail. The revised application was expected to have less retail provision, fewer parking spaces, more green areas and more office space. Education and leisure options were also being considered.

In asking a supplementary question, Councillor Perry stated that the figure was given at the recent Develop Croydon Conference. Councillor Perry stated that he heard the Cabinet Member often say that there were lots of meetings but that nothing was changing and asked what she was doing to proactively bring that investment to Croydon.

Councillor Shahul-Hameed reiterated that after the November meeting, a joint announcement was made regarding the plans for the development. The Council had taken every step to support the developers and was committed to bringing it to the Borough to deliver a mix of retail, office, health and education provision. The Cabinet Member further encouraged Councillor Perry to speak directly to Westfield.

Councillor Fraser asked Councillor Butler if she could provide an update on work to prevent homelessness following the agreement of Cabinet in October 2019 to a new strategy for housing and homelessness.

Councillor Butler informed Members that the Council had a significant task ahead. Support was needed not only for those homeless residents in temporary or emergency accommodation, but also for those that were currently on the housing waiting list and those that had not qualified to be on the list. Councillor Butler highlighted the Council's work through both its gateway and housing services to prevent homelessness in the first instance. The Council used discretionary housing payments to help prevent spiralling

debt; topping up rents where residents cannot afford rents and would otherwise be homeless; targeted interventions with residents that the Council were aware were close to crisis; interventions to support people in emergency accommodation to be able to meet their own housing needs; and through the council's social lettings agency. The Council was also building, leasing and buying homes to prevent homelessness in the Borough.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Fraser asked if the wide range of actions was reducing homelessness. Councillor Butler informed Council that the range of actions was preventing homelessness and demand had reduced slightly. The Homelessness Reduction Act required the Council to house people before they became homeless but that there was only limited funding which was also time limited that did not cover the costs of temporary housing under this act. The Council was aware that homelessness remained a significant cost to the borough and the administration was working to manage those costs. However, until both significant funding was made available for social housing and a local housing allowance was set that met the actual costs of rent in the borough, homelessness would remain a problem.

Councillor Millson asked Councillor Butler if she would do everything in her power to protect a site of significant historic interest if one was found in the Borough. Councillor Butler responded that she would give consideration dependent upon the specific nature of the site.

In asking a supplementary question, Councillor Millson informed Council that an air raid shelter had been rediscovered at Hawthorne Crescent in Selsdon and asked the Cabinet Member if she would protect the site and halt the planned Brick by Brick development upon it. Councillor Butler responded that she would need to review the site and would respond fully to Councillor Millson following the meeting.

Councillor Canning asked Councillor Hamida Ali if she could update Council on what success there had been following the public space protection order that had been introduced in Croydon Town Centre in 2017.

Councillor Hamida Ali informed Members that a review of all public protection orders was due to commence in the coming weeks. The approach to the Town Centre order had been to engage and offer support to residents before moving to enforcement action, which was dependent upon the level of resource, including police resources, to enforce. New police resources had been allocated to the town centre and that would assist in the enforcement of the order. The Council was looking at different anti-social behaviours across the Borough as part of a multi-agency approach. As the Council was preparing to review all of the protection orders, it would be undertaking engagement with all affected ward councillors and Members' feedback would be welcomed during that process.

In asking a supplementary question, Councillor Canning stated that there were some suggestions from residents that the order had displaced street

drinking into some parts of Waddon ward and asked the Cabinet Member if she could review if that was case as part of the review of the orders.

Councillor Hamida Ali responded that the Council encouraged residents to report all anti-social behaviour concerns and that she could share a leaflet that had been prepared detailing the ways that reports could be made. The Cabinet Member was not aware of any displacement issues but stated that she would be happy for any issues to be reported to her.

Councillor Roche informed Members that the Council was again proposing to build on green spaces in Selsdon and New Addington through Brick by Brick and asked Councillor Butler if Croydon's green spaces were safe under the current administration. Councillor Butler responding by stating that they were.

In asking a supplementary question, Councillor Roche stated that green spaces clearly were not safe. Councillor Roche stated that there were several applications to build on green play spaces and council estates and that the council was looking to remove protection on green belt across the Borough and asked when this would stop. Councillor Butler responded by stating that she had already provided a full answer to a similar question earlier in the meeting. Croydon was a varied borough and housing development would have to take place somewhere. The Cabinet Member encouraged those that did not believe that the Council should build homes for those in housing need to visit those residents that were in desperate need for housing.

Councillor Butler further informed Council that there were some areas of the Borough where housing would need to be built. The Council was utilising areas that were not overdeveloped and was encouraging infill development and garage and car park sites that were not currently used to limit impact. The Council did not have the funding resources to compete with private developers for land and had to make best use of the land it had available to it.

Councillor Mann informed council that ward budgets had played a crucial to support projects in the Crystal Palace area and asked Councillor Hamida Ali if she would meet with neighbouring boroughs to encourage them to provide similar funding on a fairer basis for the local community. Councillor Hamida Ali responded by stating that £560,000 of funding had been provided through ward budgets in the last financial year. She was conscious of the work that Councillor Mann was doing to bring councillors together across the four boroughs that covered Crystal Palace. The Cabinet Member confirmed that she would be available to support Councillor Mann in his work with colleagues in the three neighbouring Boroughs.

POOL THREE

With the end to the time allocated to questions to the Cabinet Members in the second pool, the Mayor signalled he was moving on to questions to the Cabinet Members in the third pool. Councillors Collins, Scott and Hall were invited to make their announcements.

Councillor Collins, Cabinet Member for Clean Green Croydon, informed Council that he had written to the Government calling for a national campaign against flytipping however this had been rejected. Members were informed that the Cabinet Member would work with Keep Britain Tidy on a flytipping campaign. Additionally, the Cabinet Member announced that the Council would continue to take a hard-line on flytipping and would offer rewards of £100 for information which led to those accountable. The hard-line approach, it was noted, had led to the council seizing 42 vehicles in one month for being used for flytipping.

Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport & Regeneration (Job Share), made an appeal to all councillors to act responsibly in debates relating to planning matters as there had been cases where officers had been personally attacked for carrying out their jobs. It was the intention of the Council to identify those responsible for the attacks so their behaviour could be assessed by their peers. The Cabinet Member further informed Council that the Planning Department had been audited and members of the Planning Committee would receive information on the audit results.

Finally, the Cabinet Member stated that the Good Growth Funding application for Kenley had reached the second round and a final, detailed, proposal would be submitted by officers for consideration.

Councillor Hall, Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources, congratulated all staff shortlisted and the winners of Croydon Council Awards. The My Resources Programme Team was especially noted for their work and had been awarded the Special Recognition Award. It was noted by the Cabinet Member that the awards ceremony had been held at zero cost to council taxpayers due to the event being sponsored by major suppliers.

The Cabinet Member informed Council that as part of the council's Investment Strategy, the council had acquired two assets at a value of £14 million. The investment would provide over £330,000 per annum, after interest, which would be invested into frontline services.

Councillor Jason Cummings queried the delay in publishing the Quarter 2 Financial Performance 2019/20 Cabinet paper, as it was noted that the normal process would be for all papers to be available five clear working days before a meeting.

In response, Councillor Hall stated that advice had been sought on the appropriateness of publishing reports during the Pre-Election Period, and the advice had been that the Quarter 2 Financial Performance 2019/20 report should be published after the General Election had taken place.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Jason Cummings stated that he would have expected to have been informed of a delay to publishing the report and requested further information on the reasons for delaying

publication. Councillor Hall apologised that the Councillor had not been informed and agreed to write to Councillor Jason Cummings with the reasoning for not publishing the report during the Pre-Election Period.

Councillor Fraser requested an update on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) and the funding implications. Councillor Hall informed Members that USAC was a large financial burden which amounted to £8.5 million in 2019/20, around 6% of council tax collection. The financial impact over three years had been c. £20 million for which the Council had not received Home Office support for. It was stated by the Cabinet Member that positive meetings had been held with the Home Office who recognised the financial burden and that once Government Ministers had been confirmed the Council would write to them setting out its concerns.

Councillor Hopley queried why there were plans to close Neighbourhood Recycling Centres when they were regularly used by residents. In response, Councillor Collins stated that there were a number of reasons why the Neighbourhood Recycling Centres were being reviewed; including some being flytipped, others experiencing contamination of waste and some traders using the centres rather than paying the correct fee. It was further noted by Councillor Collins that roadside waste collection had improved and that alternative provisions to Neighbourhood Recycling Centres would be considered. Council were informed that ward councillors would be written to if their area was affected, however it was the intention of the Council to change the sites into public spaces when closed.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Hopley stated that she had received information regarding the plans from a senior officer. Furthermore, Councillor Hopley raised concerns that many residents in Sanderstead used the Neighbourhood Recycling Centre and without it they had no means of recycling unless they placed the waste in black bags on the grass verges. It was further stated that flytipping was not experienced at the Neighbourhood Recycling Centre.

In response, the Cabinet Member confirmed that the issues experienced by residents living above shops could be looked at and alternative recycling options could be considered. The Cabinet Member welcomed Councillor Hopley to review the options for Sanderstead residents with him.

Councillor Canning queried whether the recycling provision for Christmas trees would be available in January 2020. In response, Councillor Collins informed Council that hard negotiations had been undertaken with the South London Waste Partnership which had resulted in an agreement that all four boroughs would have Christmas tree collections between 13 January and 27 January 2020. The Cabinet Member stated residents would need to place their trees outside their homes for collection, or they could put their trees in the green garden waste to be collected earlier than the above dates. For those residents living in flats, Councillor Collins advised that the trees could be placed beside the communal waste bins for collection.

Councillor Hoar questioned whether the council would support and lobby the Mayor of London to undertake an independent investigation into driver fatigue in light of the Sandilands Tram Crash in November 2016. Councillor King responded stating that the Council was developing their view on the matter of an independent investigation and it was noted that it was important that the Council's response was sensible and measured. It was further recognised by Councillor King that the Public Transport Liaison Panel had an annual item on the agenda to review the recommendations of the independent report, as the Council wanted to ensure the recommendations were implemented and lessons were learnt.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Hoar asked whether it would be appropriate for the Council to encourage the Rail Accident Branch to reopen their investigation into the crash, particularly in light of suggestions there was a 2014 Transport for London report into driver fatigue. Councillor King, in response, assured Members that the Council's response would be thorough and that he had taken on board Councillor Hoar's comments.

Councillor Fraser noted that Place Regeneration had been discussed at the Cabinet meeting earlier that evening and queried how local councillors could get involved in the development of Place Plans.

Councillor Scott noted that there were many ways that ward councillors could get involved in the development of Place Plans. It was hoped that Plans would be developed across the borough as it was desire of the Council that communities helped develop Plans on how their areas could evolve in the future. The South Norwood, Kenley and Selsdon projects were highlighted by the Cabinet Member as being successful in engaging with the local communities and applying for grants. It was further noted by Councillor Scott that Place Plans additionally provided the opportunity for councillors to be leaders in their areas and work with the local community to identify what the community wanted from its Place Plan.

Councillor Fraser, in his supplementary question, noted that Place Plans gave councillors and communities the opportunity to get involved with planning their local areas, including where bins, recycling centres and housing should be located. It was stated that it was an opportunity all should engage with. In response, Councillor Scott agreed that Place Plans gave communities a say on the future of their local area. Whilst it was recognised the borough had challenging housing targets, which meant new housing was required across the borough, it was the intention of the council to support the creation of stronger communities. Through the development of Place Plans, it was stated that it would be possible to lever in further investment into areas and help identify new facilities which were required by the local community, such as community centres. Additionally, the Cabinet Member noted that the development of Place Plans could support a more informed community which assisted people in engaging and respecting their local area more. The development of Place Plans, it was noted, brought with it a huge range of opportunities and councillors were encouraged to engage with their development.

Councillor Mohan stated that having walked through Croydon the leaves had not been collected and queried when the street cleaning would take place. In response, Councillor Collins stated that trees shed their leaves each year and that since 2012 the Council had had the same amount of resources for leaf collection. It was noted that the levels of heavy rain had caused additional problems that year as it took longer to clear the streets when the leaves were wet. Council were informed that leaf clearing normally finished by the third week of December; however if Members experienced issues they were asked to report them to the Council or through the app so the contractor could address the concerns. Councillor Collins concluded by requesting that opposition Members lobbied the new Government for more money to be spent on public services.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Mohan suggested that the administration should be more prudent with public money and reiterated that the state of street cleanliness was not adequate. Councillor Collins disagreed with the assertion and informed Council that he had spent a lot of time walking around the streets and that residents had thanked him for listening to their concerns and resolving their problems. The Cabinet Member disagreed with the suggestion that the administration was not prudent and noted that the purchase of assets was through the capital budget and the returns were being used to support frontline services; whilst funding for street cleaning came from the revenue budget. Councillor Mohan was invited to join Councillor Collins in the New Year to go on a round with Veolia staff to see their work first-hand.

With the end to the time allocated to questions to the Cabinet Members in the third pool, the Mayor brought Croydon Question Time to a close.

69/19 **Council Debate Motions**

The Mayor requested the Chief Executive read the first Council Debate Motion made on behalf of the Administration:

“Over the past nine years too many Croydon residents have been deeply affected by austerity and welfare reform. Since 2014 the council has implemented a number of measures to mitigate the damage done to thousands of Croydon families. But given the draconian cuts to local government services, this cannot continue. Freezing of benefits and in particular, Local Housing Allowance, has done much to increase the level of homelessness in this borough.

On behalf of the people of Croydon, we therefore call on the newly elected government to take immediate steps to restore Local Housing Allowance, so that it covers people’s rents. To end the benefit cap which has meant that instead of the welfare state acting as a safety net, it completely ignores a family’s needs which for some Croydon families has resulted that it has been impossible to find a home they can afford.

To stop homelessness increasing further, the government also needs to put an end to no fault evictions, cap rent rises and bring an end to Right to Buy which has decimated the social housing stock.”

The Mayor invited Councillor Butler to propose the motion.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Butler informed Council that all Members were aware of the damage that austerity measures had caused to Croydon residents. They had been let down by a welfare system that was no longer fit for purpose and there were hundreds of families that had lost their homes because they could no longer afford the rent. Like the dismantling of the NHS, many of the government cuts had been introduced silently and had affected the most vulnerable. The list had included universal credit, the benefit cap, freezing of local housing allowance, bedroom tax, housing benefit for the under 35s, the two child policy, cutting community care grants and crisis loans, child trust funds, education and maintenance allowances and the Councillor could have continued. Councillor Butler was not calling on the new government to put all of these issues right because for too many the damage had already been done. However, the government could start by lifting all children out of poverty, by immediately amending housing benefit so that it covered the cost of rent and by also bringing an immediate end to the housing cap. This was the opportunity to invest in council services and not to cut them further. Having a home was a basic right and the Council called on the government to put people's needs at the heart of the welfare system.

Councillor Skipper seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Speaking against the motion, Councillor Hale informed members of a resident that she had recently met at the floating shelter who had found themselves homeless after a series of family bereavements and deteriorating health. The shelter had helped restore her self-respect through the warm welcome that she had received there. It was essential that there was a safety net in place for those whose lives were turned upside down, but help had to include education, skills and advice to be sustainable to equip people to make the right decisions for themselves and their families. The Labour Government had created an environment of dependency and the Conservatives had spent years removing that and putting confidence back into the economy. The jubilation in the financial markets following the general election showed that the majority the Conservatives had won was just what the UK needed. There was now certainty in politics and around Brexit. The threat of a ruinous Corbyn led government had been removed and a strong economy would support the welfare system. Councillor Hale could not support the motion.

Also speaking against the motion, Councillor Jason Cummings informed Council that the administration had spent the past five years blaming the Government for everything when it was the previous Labour Government that had caused the problem. The administration had dodged responsibility at every stage. The people of the United Kingdom had given their judgement at the recent general election and the administration should give time to look at what the public had said. The people had voted for another five years of

conservative government and had rejected Jeremy Corbyn and his band of left wing proto-communists. Croydon Labour had to wake up to what residents wanted. The administration had made distasteful comments about senior government ministers over the past five years and if they wanted government help on the major issues that it faces, Councillor Jason Cummings suggested that they change their tone. If the administration wanted to ensure the people of Croydon got a better deal, the Administration should think about how they talked about Government Ministers. Councillor Jason Cummings opposed the motion.

Exercising her right to speak, Councillor Skipper spoke in support of the motion. Councillors heard that Croydon's talent, resilience, pride and that its community spirit was the envy of many. Croydon was being held back by the cuts that had been imposed and the system now put up more barriers than it took down. Councillor Skipper informed Members how she had once been one of the invisible homeless, and that she was only where she was now because of the support that she had received from her community. Councillor Skipper supported the motion because of her experiences meeting homeless residents in need, including one resident who had started to beg for food. No human should have to beg to have a roof over their heads. Councillor Skipper also spoke in support of the motion as it supported women and children trapped in abusive homes that had been abandoned by the state because they could not afford a safe home of their own. The motion supported tackling the issues caused by universal credit. Councillor Skipper would give the new government a chance to put an end to no fault evictions, to cap rent rises, to end right to buy and to restore the social security safety net to keep people safe and give them security.

The Mayor put the motion to the vote and it was carried.

The Mayor called on the Chief Executive to read out the second Council Debate Motion that had been submitted on behalf of the opposition:

"General election campaigns are always divisive, but the rancour, division and class warfare in the campaign that we have just experienced is unparalleled. The British people reject the politics of envy and hatred, and we should learn that lesson in Croydon by ending the divisive way the council has treated parts of the borough".

Proposing the Motion, Councillor Tim Pollard informed Council that it had been a very rancorous general election. The administration could be pleased locally but the opposition were pleased nationally having won a significant majority Conservative government. The Labour party was unable to understand or accept the reasons why they had lost, specifically that working class electors in the north of the country and the midlands felt patronised and ignored. It was the same in Croydon, with tens of thousands of residents feeling ignored on issues such as bins, on street sweeping, Brick by Brick and planning matters. That was why groups of residents associations had begun a petition for a directly elected mayor and were working hard with cross party support to achieve that. With the Governance Review Panel, there was a real

opportunity to make a change and ensure that the Council was on the side of all residents in Croydon wherever they lived and whatever their views were.

Councillor Perry seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Speaking against the motion, Councillor Hamida Ali informed Council that she had found the motion bizarre. The judgement of many commentators was that the Conservative group had been the cause of many of the issues that the motion raised. Their general election campaign had included a doctored video of Kier Starmer, a twitter account being renamed as a fact checking service and a prime minister with a history of divisive language that included examples of homophobic, racist and sexist language. Allegations had been made against all parties, but independent research had found that most Conservative adverts were misleading. The Council's administration sought to deliver for all residents and to challenge inequality. The motion did nothing to increase cross party working and encouraged the opposition to indulge less in the politics of fear. Councillor Hamida Ali opposed the motion.

Also speaking against the motion, Councillor Newman informed Members that he had more faith in Conservative ministers than he did in Councillor Jason Cummings. When the Labour administration was first elected in 2014, the then Conservative City Hall was thankful. Councillor Jason Cummings had threatened to withhold funding to Croydon residents that did not agree with government ministers and that was shameful and disgraceful. The Labour Group would reflect on its national performance but this was why the Conservatives had lost elections in 2014, 2017, 2018 and 2019 in the Borough. It had previously been an aspiration for Labour to win the popular vote across Croydon, but now there was an 18,000 majority and whatever system was in place, Labour would be confident. In terms of division, a Panorama programme was broadcast that evening referring to the SPAC Nation and the investigation of concerns about the exploitation of young people within that organisation and that Councillor Creatura had those young people canvassing on the streets of Croydon when they were not experienced to handle the situation

Councillor Streeter interrupted the meeting to raise a point of order questioning if Councillor Newman was making an illegal accusation about another Councillor and asked if officers could advise on the legality of the comments. The Mayor reminded all Members to be respectful of each other and to not name specific people. The Mayor asked Councillor Newman to withdraw his specific naming of Councillor Creatura.

In response, Councillor Newman invited Members to review the photographs of Councillor Creatura campaigning across the borough over the previous six weeks as that would speak for itself. People could make their own judgements of the association between the Conservative party and the SPAC nation when they looked at social media though Councillor Newman felt that it was clear.

In concluding his speech, Councillor Newman highlighted that the opposition attempting to shout down the motion, that Councillor Jason Cummings had threatened to withhold funding from residents and it was clear what the people of Croydon was facing. The Labour group had a majority of 18,000 and the Conservative group needed to take a long hard look at itself.

Speaking in support of the motion, Councillor Perry stated that there had been an earthquake in the politics of the nation, the people had smashed the red wall and rejected the politics of envy and hatred. The irony had been that Councillor Hamida Ali had accused the Conservatives of being the party that was spreading envy and hatred when Councillor Newman had personally attacked Councillor Jason Cummings and slandered Councillor Creatura. This had been disgraceful and Councillor Newman had reached a new low. This was a council that imposed and was not a council that delivered for all, that was why 14,000 fewer people had voted for Labour in the borough. Over recent years, the administration had changed the character of the borough against the objections of residents, particularly through Brick by Brick developments building on open play space. The Council was also proposing to build on three large tracts of green belt that in their own admission would cause more than substantial harm to the green belt. The London Plan inspectors had recommended a reduction of housing development targets, but the Council was continuing anyway and had ignored residents. No residents should have been treated with such disdain and when residents spoke the council should listen. Councillor Perry supported the motion.

The Mayor put the motion to the vote and it was lost.

70/19 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The item was not required.

The meeting ended at 9.29 pm

Signed:

Date:

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