

## **Council**

Meeting held virtually using MS Teams on Monday, 6 July 2020 at 6.30 pm.

### **MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Humayun Kabir (Chair - until 19:03pm);  
Councillor Maddie Henson (Chair - from 19:08pm);  
Councillors Hamida Ali, Muhammad Ali, Jamie Audsley, Jane Avis, Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel, Sue Bennett, Margaret Bird, Simon Brew, Alison Butler, Jan Buttinger, Janet Campbell, Robert Canning, Richard Chatterjee, Sherwan Chowdhury, Luke Clancy, Chris Clark, Pat Clouder, Stuart Collins, Mary Croos, Jason Cummings, Patsy Cummings, Mario Creatura, Nina Degrad, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Sean Fitzsimons, Alisa Flemming, Felicity Flynn, Clive Fraser, Maria Gatland, Lynne Hale, Simon Hall, Patricia Hay-Justice, Simon Hoar, Steve Hollands, Yvette Hopley, Karen Jewitt, Bernadette Khan, Shafi Khan, Stuart King, Toni Letts, Oliver Lewis, Stephen Mann, Stuart Millson, Vidhi Mohan, Michael Neal, Tony Newman, Oni Oviri, Ian Parker, Andrew Pelling, 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:** Councillor Steve O'Connell

### **PART A**

At the outset of the meeting, before the formal business commenced, The Mayor, Councillor Kabir, led Members of Council in holding two minutes silence. This was to allow those who had suffered as a result of Covid-19 to be held in the thoughts of those attending the meeting. It also provided an opportunity to be thankful to all those who had worked hard during the pandemic to support the Croydon community including health, social and emergency services as well as members of the voluntary and community sector and Council officers. The two minute silence was also held to demonstrate that Croydon stood in solidarity with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities around the world and to remember the life of George Floyd.

#### **93/20 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The Mayor explained the voting arrangements. As the meeting was being held virtually, the Mayor had consulted with both Groups and both had confirmed their support for all the recommendations being considered at the meeting. On which basis, the minutes of the Budget and Extraordinary Council meetings

held on 2 March 2020 were agreed as an accurate record. The Mayor explained that these would be signed following the meeting whilst observing social distancing requirements.

94/20      **Disclosure of Interests**

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

95/20      **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

96/20      **Vote of Thanks**

The Mayor passed the Chair to the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Henson, who presided over the vote of thanks to the outgoing Mayor of Croydon.

The Deputy Mayor invited the Mayor to give his farewell address.

The Mayor commenced his address by expressing his personal condolences to those families who had lost loved ones during the pandemic and spoke of his solidarity with the *Black Lives Matter* movement. Additionally, the Mayor congratulated Councillor Creatura on the birth of his twins.

It was detailed how 544 formal engagements had been held during the Mayoralty year, of which the Mayor had personally attended 433. It was noted that many of those had promoted education to residents of all ages and had brought together many different communities and faiths from across the Borough.

Particular successes were noted; the hosting of a Borough-wide Domestic Violence Awareness seminar and others on Knife Crime Reduction and Mental Health Awareness. Those involved in delivering these were personally thanked including *Freedom Together CIC*, *the Metropolitan Police*, Councillor Hamida Ali, *Foundation 47*, the *Croydon Neighbourhood Association*, *Croydon Mind* and Yemi Hughes, who was working hard to prevent more deaths after tragically losing her son to knife crime.

The Mayor expressed his pleasure in having welcomed to the Town Hall investors from 22 different countries to talk about why Croydon was a fantastic place to live, work and invest. Abdul Basit Syed and Councillor Toni Letts, the Council's Business Champion, were specifically thanked for their support.

The trip to Arnhem for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the Arnhem Bridge was recalled including speaking to his Royal Highness, the Prince of

Wales, who was informed how much Croydon had changed since the 2011 riots. Arnhem's Burgomaster, Mayor Ahmed Marcouch, had been invited to Croydon during the opening of Fairfield Halls to jointly unveil the Arnhem Gallery plaque.

The impact of Covid-19 on the Mayoral year was acknowledged; it was explained how fundraising events had moved online.

Particular thanks were given to a number of individuals who had supported the Mayor including Penny Smith-Orr and her daughter Caroline, Anthony King, Anusha Subramaniam, Graeme Smith, Shalina Alabaksh, Deva Ponnoosami, Chandra Babu, Surinder Sahota, Lorraine, Drolet and her son Zack, Giash Uddin, Eawor Ali, Dilly Surelia, Jubayer Kabir, Amanat Hussain, Seleman Rez, Neil Athorn, Patrick Unsby, MFA Zaman, Susan Crosswaite, Sebrina Spencer, Elam Tanveer, Mohammed Islam, Christina Bades and Anna Virabyan, Aska Miah. Four Croydon restaurants were also thanked for their support of the Mayor's fundraising efforts. These were *Chat House*, *Bagatti*, *Zafran* and *Urban Guj*.

In his closing remarks, the Mayor paid personal thanks to the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Henson, the members of his staff including Stephanie Cope, Hema Vasanthakumar, Nick Evans and Luca Bercelli as well as the Leader, Councillor Tony Newman, the Group Whips and Democratic Services. His biggest thanks were reserved for his wife, Mrs Rahena Chowdhury, for her support as his consort.

The Deputy Mayor thanked the Mayor for his address and invited the Leader, Councillor Tony Newman, to move the vote of thanks to the Mayor. In so doing, the Leader associated himself with the Mayor's comments regarding the pandemic and the fight to forever eradicate racism in society. It was described how Croydon was standing in solidarity with those fighting to ensure that *Black Lives Matter*. The Mayor's success, both in terms of his fundraising and the events held up until the start of lockdown, was acknowledged along with the work done across the Borough to bring communities together. The focus brought to the issues of Domestic Violence and Knife Crime was described as making the Borough proud. The Mayor's response to Covid-19 was also highlighted including working alongside the voluntary sector, with food banks and making meals for NHS staff. The Mayor was described as having an exemplary vision for his role and having been dedicated to leading the fight back against Covid-19 over the last three months. The Leader concluded by inviting Members of Council to pay tribute to the Mayor, Councillor Kabir.

The Deputy Mayor invited the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Tim Pollard, to second the motion. Councillor Tim Pollard, took the opportunity to also associate himself with the Mayor's remarks regarding Covid-19. Heartfelt condolences were expressed to all those who had suffered loss as a result of the pandemic whilst thanks were given to the NHS, Council officers and members of the voluntary sector who had all done so much to respond to the

emergency. Additionally, it was noted that Council would respond to the death of George Floyd on a cross party basis.

Councillor Tim Pollard expressed his thanks to the Mayor for all he had done throughout the municipal year. It was described as a sadness that the Mayor had less opportunity to fulfil his role due to the impact of Covid-19. Congratulations were given for all the Mayor's fundraising efforts and for his skill in chairing Council meetings with good humour and even handedness.

The Deputy Mayor put the motion to the vote with the vote of thanks, which was passed unanimously in the following terms:

- i. The Members of Council tender their grateful thanks to The Worshipful The Mayor, Councillor Humayun Kabir, for the courteous and efficient manner in which he presided over the Council's deliberations during the past year;
- ii. The Members of Council record their sincere appreciation of the dignified manner in which Councillor Humayun Kabir has carried out the traditional duties of the office of Mayor, of the support and encouragement which he and his Consort, Mrs Rahena Chowdhury Kabir, have given to local organisations and of the prominent part they have taken in the social life of the Borough during the Mayor's period of office; and
- iii. That this resolution be sealed and presented to the Mayor at the Annual Council Meeting in a suitable form.

## 97/20 **Election of the Mayor**

The Mayor, Councillor Kabir, resumed the Chair and called on the Leader, Councillor Newman, to propose Councillor Henson as the new Mayor of Croydon.

The Leader proposed the motion and took the opportunity to emphasise Councillor Henson's suitability for the role as Mayor. Particular mention was made of Councillor Henson's extraordinary start to the Mayoral year, being the first ever virtual Mayor. Given Councillor Henson's business and technology skills, it was noted that Members of Council could not have chosen better. It was hoped that the number of Covid-19 cases would continue to decrease allowing the new Mayor to fulfil her civic duties in and around the Borough. Councillor Henson was noted to have already demonstrated her ability to embrace traditional civic engagements during her time as Deputy Mayor.

The commitment to families and young people made by Councillor Henson was highlighted along with the campaigning zeal she had demonstrated as a ward Councillor. It was welcomed that Croydon would again enjoy a Mayor who would be standing up for residents during tough times. Such was the adverse situation being faced that leadership was needed to bring together private, public, voluntary and other bodies to support those who needed it

most. Councillor Henson becoming Mayor at a young age was acknowledged along with the support that would be provided by Councillor Chowdhury as Deputy Mayor to build on the work done by Councillor Kabir.

The Mayor invited the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Tim Pollard, to second the motion. Councillor Tim Pollard expressed his congratulations to the Mayor elect. Whilst it was a shame that Mayor-making was not happening in the traditional way, it was noted that Councillor Henson had the distinction of being Croydon's first virtual Mayor although it was hoped that it would be possible to cease holding meetings virtually before the end of the year. It was highlighted that Councillor Henson had experience of working on a cross-party basis and that this provided a good foundation for the role as Mayor.

The Mayor put the motion to the vote which was unanimously passed to elect Councillor Maddie Henson as the Mayor of the London Borough of Croydon for 2020/21.

The meeting paused briefly (from 19:03 to 19:08) to allow Madam Mayor to dress in her chains of office and the Deputy Mayor to put on his badge.

Madam Mayor read out the declaration of office:

*I, Councillor Maddie Henson, having been elected to the Office of Mayor of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon, hereby declare that I take the said office upon myself, and will duly and faithfully fulfil the duties of it according to the best of my judgement and ability. I undertake to observe the Code of Conduct which is expected of Members of the London Borough of Croydon.*

Madam Mayor formally announced Councillor Chowdhury as her Deputy who also read out the declaration of office.

It was explained to the meeting that both declarations would be signed, witnessed by the Chief Executive, in a socially distanced way during the week of the meeting.

Mr Mark Henson was formally announced as Madam Mayor's consort.

Madam Mayor explained that the past-Mayor's badge and citation would be presented to Councillor Kabir and the past-consort's badge to Mrs Rahena Chowdhury Kabir as soon as social distancing restrictions were sufficiently relaxed to allow this to happen.

In her acceptance address, Madam Mayor described the honour of being elected as the youngest woman to be made Mayor in her home town; she wished to give back to Croydon something of what it had given her. Madam Mayor explained how she had contracted Covid-19 and had been unwell at the start of lockdown. Having recovered well, this had provided her with the opportunity to reflect on her own mortality and as a result, she had decided to put together a time capsule. This included a letter to the future, a copy of

which Madam Mayor read to the meeting. This described living through the pandemic and how it had brought appreciation of the support offered by family and the value of working together.

Madam Mayor announced that the theme for her Mayoral year would be early life including everything about pregnancy and becoming a parent through to the primary school years. This was her greatest passion and extremely relevant given the impact of Covid-19.

The charities and voluntary organisations that would directly benefit from Madam Mayor's fundraising activity were also announced. These were St Christopher's Hospice, Home Start Croydon and The Motor Neurone Association.

In her closing remarks, Madam Mayor, called for all to reflect on the experience of the pandemic, to work together to put the world back together and ensure that the future be better than the present.

#### 98/20 **Political Balance of the Council and Composition of Committees**

The recommendations in the report were proposed by the Leader, Councillor Newman and seconded by Councillor Tim Pollard. They were put to the vote and passed unanimously.

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

- i. There were 41 Labour Group Members and 29 Conservative Group Members; and
- ii. Approved the appointment and composition of Committees as set out in paragraph 4.7 of the report.

#### 99/20 **Appointments and Remote Attendance at Council Meetings**

Madam Mayor brought to the attention of Council the updated version of the Appointments to Main Council Bodies report, otherwise known as the Blue Schedule that was circulated in the week prior to the meeting. Additionally, that a further late change had been received to the schedule. This was to add Councillor Prince to the vacancy listed on the Brandon Hill Cemetery Joint Committee.

It was also noted that, in addition to including all the annual appointments to committees, panels, working groups and outside bodies, the report asked Council to suspend paragraph 2.3 of part 4F of the Constitution to enable it to agree Chairs and Vice-Chairs as part of the report. The report also asked Members to note the new remote meeting procedure that had been added at part 4O of the Constitution following consultation with both Groups.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by the Leader, Councillor Newman and seconded by Councillor Tim Pollard. They were put to the vote and passed unanimously.

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

- i. Agreed (or received for information as applicable) the following appointments where the number of nominations was equal to the number of available positions:
  - a. The appointments to Committees of the Council (Blue Schedule); and
  - b. The appointments to all other Panels, Working Groups and Outside Bodies (Pink Schedule).
- ii. Agreed the suspension of paragraph 2.3 of the Non-Executive Procedure Rules (Part 4F of the Constitution) for the municipal year 2020/2021.
- iii. Agreed, with the exception of the Licensing Sub-Committee, the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair of all Council committees and sub-committees as set out in the (Blue Schedule) for the municipal year 2020/2021. This is without prejudice to the provisions set out in paragraph 2.4 of Part 4F of the Constitution which would continue to apply enabling in year vacancies to either the Chair or vice Chair to be filled by election at the first meeting of the relevant committee or sub-committee following notification to the Council Solicitor.
- iv. Received for information executive appointments made under the Leader and Cabinet decision making framework:
  - a. The appointments of Cabinet Members, Cabinet Committees and Deputy Cabinet Members (Blue Schedule);
  - b. The appointments to Joint Committees (Blue Schedule);
  - c. The appointments to London Councils Committees and Panels and Local Government Association bodies (Blue Schedule); and
  - d. The appointment of Councillors to the Health & Wellbeing Board (Blue Schedule).
- v. Noted that the Leader has confirmed his intention to continue to devolve decision making powers to Cabinet or relevant Cabinet Members
- vi. Received for information:
  - a. The appointments of Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Cabinet (Blue Schedule); and
  - b. The appointments of political party group officers (Blue Schedule).
- vii. Noted that the Council Solicitor has exercised her powers under Article 15 of the Constitution paragraph 15.2 (d) to make changes to the Council's Constitution arising as a result of legislative changes brought about by the Coronavirus Act 2020 and in particular the The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 with regard to remote attendance at council meetings. The revised Protocol and Procedure Rules have been approved and incorporated into the Council's Constitution at Part 4.O.

100/20     **Resolution to Extend 6 Month Rule**

.....

Madam Mayor explained that the Coronavirus Act and regulations did not include a provision to reflect that Councillors may be absent from Council meetings if they, or members of the family, were to become seriously ill as a result of Covid-19. Like most Councils across the country, the report made provision for such an eventuality. It was stressed that Councillors were still required to attend Council and Committee meetings and that significant absences would continue to be reported to the Monitoring Officer.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by the Leader, Councillor Newman and seconded by Councillor Tim Pollard. They were put to the vote and passed unanimously.

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

- i. Approve all Members' absence from meetings pursuant to section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds of the Covid-19 pandemic; and
- ii. Agree an extension of time for all Members for a period expiring on 31 December 2020.

101/20     **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This motion was not required.

The meeting ended at 19.19 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:** .....