

Council

Meeting held virtually on Monday, 13 July 2020 at 6.30 pm.

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Maddie Henson (Chair);
Councillor Sherwan Chowdhury (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Hamida Ali, Muhammad Ali, Jamie Audsley, Jane Avis, Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel, Sue Bennett, Margaret Bird, Simon Brew, Alison Butler, Jan Buttinger, Janet Campbell, Robert Canning, Richard Chatterjee, Luke Clancy, Chris Clark, Pat Clouder, Stuart Collins, 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, Humayun Kabir, Bernadette Khan, Shafi Khan, Stuart King, Toni Letts, Oliver Lewis, Stephen Mann, Stuart Millson, Vidhi Mohan, Michael Neal, Tony Newman, Steve O'Connell, Oni Oviri, Ian Parker, Andrew Pelling, Jason Perry, Helen Pollard, Tim Pollard, Joy Prince, Helen Redfern, Scott Roche, Pat Ryan, Paul Scott, Manju Shahul-Hameed, Andy Stranack, Gareth Streeter, David Wood, Louisa Woodley and Callton Young

Apologies: Councillor Robert Ward

PART A

102/20 Disclosure of Interests

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

103/20 Urgent Business (if any)

Madam Mayor invited the Leader, Councillor Newman, to address the meeting with his item of urgent business. The Leader informed Members of Council of the latest position on Government funding for the local authority Covid-19 response. A total of £500 million additional funding had been announced to cover the costs of all councils in England. This was compared to estimated incurred costs totalling £6 billion. Whilst the Government had stated it would announce the individual allocations for each council within three days, this had not happened. At the time of the Council meeting, a total of 11 days had passed and Croydon had still not been informed of its allocation. The Leader asked to place on record his disappointment with the uncertainty this was causing.

Madam Mayor

Madam Mayor, Councillor Henson, provided the meeting with her announcements. It was detailed to the meeting how Madam Mayor had undertaken three formal engagements since the Council meeting held on 6 July 2020. This was in addition to holding an event to formally launch her theme for the year; early years – everything from becoming a parent through to the primary school years.

Madam Mayor informed Members of Council how she would be launching an initiative called *Croydon Connected* over the summer, inviting all Primary Schools, Nursery Schools and Children's Centres to take part in making a giant paper chain for display in the Town Hall. This would feature artwork from children remembering those who had worked tirelessly and who had suffered during the pandemic. A summer reading scheme was also to be launched with Councillor Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Learning. Madam Mayor also anticipated being involved with the *Love My Street* campaign with Councillor Collins, Cabinet Member for Clean, Green Croydon.

Madam Mayor noted the recent achievements of *The Cherry Garden Centre* that had contributed plants for packages provided to veterans in the borough. These were to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day. It was also noted that *Parchmore Community Centre* had continued to provide support for Croydon residents digitally throughout the pandemic.

The Leader

Madam Mayor invited the Leader, Councillor Newman, to make his announcements. The Leader updated Members of Council on the response to Covid-19, expressing that his thoughts remained with those who had suffered loss as a result of the pandemic. In response to the economic crisis resulting from lockdown, the Council was working with the Local Strategic Partnership and the NHS in Croydon to address inequalities and support communities throughout the summer. The Leader expressed his concern that a second wave might occur later in the year. The work of the Council's Public Health team was acknowledged and that it was working with *NHS Test and Trace* on outbreak control. It was noted that the *Climate Crisis Commission* would be meeting soon after the Council meeting. The work of the Council on the economy, public health and the climate crisis would be undertaken in parallel to provide a sustainable response to the situation in which Croydon found itself.

Madam Mayor explained that Croydon Question Time would commence with thirty minutes of public questions to the Leader and Cabinet Members. In accordance with advice from the Government and Public Health England, it was not possible to hold public meetings in the Town Hall. As a result, Members of the public were unable to ask questions from the public gallery in the Council Chamber. However, questions had been submitted by email until 12 noon on Friday 10 July 2020. There had been three public questions received which Madam Mayor proceeded to put to the relevant Cabinet Members.

Michael Clark asked a question regarding e-scooter lanes which was read to the meeting by Madam Mayor: "To help address pollution in towns, would the Council make one pavement for use by pedestrians and the opposite pavement for use by bicycles and little electric scooters. Parents won't get their cars out if they know their children can ride to school safely. This would cut pollution and congestion." Mr Clark suggested that pavements could be painted different colours depending on their use and credited Greenpeace with this suggestion.

In response, Councillor King, the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport & Regeneration (Job-Share), thanked Mr Clark for his interesting suggestion and explained how interventions were considered by the Council on a case by case basis. However, the Council had to make provision for the needs of all those who used pavements. This included those who were blind and partially sighted, as well as residents who needed to gain access to their properties. As a result, the Council tended to avoid shared space solutions for the use of pavements where possible. Councillor King acknowledged that Mr Clark had made an interesting suggestion but that there were quite a few practical reasons why it was not possible to take it forward.

Kathryn Bond asked a question regarding *Brick by Brick* which was read to the meeting by Madam Mayor: "*Brick by Brick*, Croydon's arm's length building company, has spent millions of pounds building various developments within the London Borough of Croydon, however, as reported, only a few have been sold. Please state whether there is a plan B, to recover costs, to sell the many "for sale" new builds, that haven't been sold to private individuals, to offer them for sale to Housing Associations?".

In response, Councillor Butler, the Cabinet Member for Homes & Gateway Services, noted that Ms Bond's question was not quite accurate; *Brick by Brick* had provided 124 private homes for sale, of which 66 had been sold or reserved. It was reported that there had been a healthy interest shown in *Brick by Brick* properties since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic reflecting demand for good homes. The Council was continuing to explore the purchase of *Brick by Brick* units for use as temporary and emergency accommodation. Councillor Butler noted that proposals were coming forward to Cabinet on how to maximise the Council's housing stock.

Andrew Frazer asked a question about trees in Purley which was read to the meeting by Madam Mayor: "I do see a number of new developments in Purley, whilst at the same time noting that a number of very mature trees have been cut down, one or two near me. I suppose this is necessary when building a new development, but I do not see any replacements being planted in Purley? Do developers contribute to the cost of improving the environment and how is this money/planting allocated to Purley? Could you please confirm: 1) How many new trees have been planted in Purley in the last 12 months; and 2) How many will be planted within the next 12 months and where?".

In response, Councillor King thanked Mr Frazer for his question and noted the Council had ambitions for street trees. It was the Council's objective to plant 3,500 street trees by 2023 of which approximately 2,000 trees had already been planted. This meant the Council was well on the way to achieving its target. Trees were being targeted for planting in areas where pollution was greatest but also right across the borough including new trees in Purley such as in Hartley Down, Buttermere Gardens, Higher Drive, Inglebor Drive and Purley Borough Close. It was highlighted that in January 2020 funding had been secured from the Forestry Commission. This was for use in wards where there was less than 20% tree coverage with additional funding options being explored for other areas in the Borough. It was hoped that it would be possible to continue tree planting in Purley.

Questions to the Leader

Having been invited by Madam Mayor to ask his question, the Leader of the Opposition, **Councillor Tim Pollard**, noted that the papers published for the Cabinet meeting on 20 July 2020 showed that the Council's Covid-related costs had increased by a further £3m but that the detail providing an explanation of the costs had not been published.

In response, The Leader reminded Councillor Tim Pollard that he had been offered, and had rightly taken-up a finance briefing and therefore should have been aware of the detail of the Council's Covid-related costs. It was noted that Councillor Tim Pollard would also be aware of how the returns made to the Ministry of Housing, Communication and Local Government (MHCLG) were anonymised when published. Increasing costs reflected responsibilities being handed down from Government such as the Council's role in supporting those who had been Shielding. This was being made worse by the size of the Borough and it therefore having to support a larger percentage of the costs. The Leader reiterated that it was unacceptable that the Government's funding of local authority Covid-related costs had still not been detailed.

Councillor Tim Pollard stated that this was not the answer for which he had been looking. Rather he had wanted specifics given that the Council's financial situation had meant that a 15% reduction in the staff headcount was being implemented. The Leader noted that this was regrettable but was the result of 10 years of austerity combined with the implications of the response to Covid-19. The Leader thought it was wrong that the Opposition was

seeking to make political advancement out of the situation rather than offering an apology for what had happened nationally. It was also noted that Children's Services had been significantly underfunded by the Conservative Administration when it was in power. This had been addressed with the Labour Administration following investment best practice as recognised by Ofsted. The Council was working hard to ensure that the changes made were maintained. The focus on continuing to offer a whole family approach was stressed.

Councillor Ben-Hassel asked the Leader about the delay in the Government providing detailed guidance in relation to Covid-19.

In response, the Leader noted that the Government had not worked with local government but had gone to private companies to deliver its pandemic response. The Government had only turned belatedly to local government and its local knowledge to support *NHS Track and Trace*. The Leader thought it was not feasible to run the country from one department in Whitehall. Local knowledge was needed in the face of a pandemic.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Ben-Hassel asked the Leader what the Council was doing to address the severe economic challenges being faced and how local communities were being engaged in this process. In response, the Leader noted the work being done by the Council to support small businesses which were fundamental to local communities. This included moving more decision-making out to local communities. The success of work in Thornton Heath and *We Love SE25* was noted and how this had been driven by small businesses. Governance structures would be kept under review over the midterm to ensure they were responsive.

Councillor Roche expressed his interest in encouraging public engagement and asked the Leader when the public would again be able to take part in full Council. In response, the Leader acknowledged his commitment to public engagement but noted that he needed to take technical and legal advice on what was possible in terms of public engagement in Council and other public meetings.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Roche noted that public engagement was already happening at some of the Council's public meetings including the Planning Committee. He called on all options to be explored for full Council. In response, the Leader reiterated his commitment to public engagement and that work would be done to ensure future public engagement.

Councillor Mann noted that on 4 July 2020 Crystal Palace had voted in favour of holding a town team meeting. There was also a desire for a parallel forum of elected representatives to address cross-border matters. The Leader was asked to support a first meeting happening digitally before the summer recess.

In the response, the Leader stated that he was not saying this could not be looked at but that clarity was needed to ensure it would be held on a cross party basis. The Leader was concerned to make the initiative work and to ensure the support of other Councils to deliver the work.

Pool 1

With the end of the time allocated for questions to the Leader, Madam Mayor signalled that she was moving to questions to the Cabinet Members in the first pool. Councillors Collins, King and Hall were invited to make their announcements.

Councillor Collins, Cabinet Member for Clean Green Croydon, thanked all the staff involved in waste services for the increase in recycling rates. On the basis of this the Council had been nominated for a national award. Councillor Collins expressed his personal thanks to all the staff and residents; this was great for the Borough and the planet.

Councillor King, Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport & Regeneration (Job-Share), noted that the Traffic Management Advisory Committee had met prior to the Council meeting and had created another 10 *School Streets* localities, the award winning initiative making the environment outside schools safer with a 15 – 25% reduction in the use of cars for school trips and 87% support from residents in those areas. This brought the total number of *School Street* sites in Croydon up to 26, one of the highest levels of any authority.

Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport & Regeneration (Job-Share) confirmed to the meeting the development of the Purley Baptist Church site had been granted permission by the Government. The misleading campaigns seeking to prevent the development had failed. The approval confirmed the plan led approach which it was noted had first been proposed under the Conservative Administration. The delay that had been caused had been a waste of money.

Councillor Hall, Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources, reiterated the point made by the Leader regarding the lack of information from Government regarding the local government funding settlement. Awaiting further detail was noted to be causing great difficulty. It was acknowledged that the staffing review had begun but that this aimed to minimise the level of compulsory redundancies by targeting vacant posts and agency personnel in addition to voluntary redundancies. The objective was to protect front line services.

Councillor Jason Cummings asked Councillor Hall to publish the return made to MHCLG detailing all the Council's Covid-related costs. In response, Councillor Hall noted this information was already available; overall the Council had incurred £85m of additional Covid-related costs comprising £25m of direct costs, £25m of lost income and £35m of lost savings. Against this background, the Government's funding settlement was low even though a promise had been made to fund "whatever it took" for authorities to respond to the pandemic.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Jason Cummings, asked for a direct answer to his question of when the Council's return to MHCLG would be published. Councillor Hall responded that he would need to take advice from officers.

Councillor Patsy Cummings asked Councillor King to clarify the implications for Croydon's young people of the suspension of free travel for under 18s required as part of the Government's funding support for *Transport for London* (TfL).

In response, Councillor King described the impact as likely to be considerable. TfL's free travel for under 18s provided a significant benefit with up to 55,000 young people likely to be affected in Croydon. This would hit those from poorer and more disadvantaged backgrounds harder. The average cost of travel was £1.50 per child per day. This would total between £15 and £22.50 per week for families with two or three children and push some further into poverty. All Members were encouraged to support efforts to get the Government to see sense and overturn its decision.

Councillor Mohan associated himself with the comments made earlier in the meeting by Councillor Collins regarding the good job done by Environmental Services in difficult times. However, he wished to know from the Cabinet Member why redundancy notices had been handed to all the team responsible for graffiti removal.

In his response, Councillor Collins agreed that the Environmental Services team did a good job but that the Council was responding to an unprecedented event. Overall, councils had incurred £6bn of costs responding to the pandemic, of which £1.4bn of costs had been incurred by authorities in London. As a result, all councils were having to make difficult decisions. The Council would make sure there was a way to clear graffiti and Members would be notified if this resulted in any change to the service offered.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Mohan noted that Councillor Collins was blaming everyone else and not accepting that this situation had arisen from his mismanagement and that he would be paying *Veolia* to do officers' jobs. On behalf of residents, Councillor Mohan called on plans to remove the service to be abandoned. In response, Councillor Collins emphasised that it was a matter of public record that there was a gap between the costs being incurred by Councils and the funding offered by the Government. Councillor Mohan was encouraged to look at the papers presented by Councillor Hall that spelt out the financial difficulties. Protecting staff in Children's Services was a top priority which meant having to make difficult decisions elsewhere.

Councillor Clark asked Councillor Collins about what was being done to address the litter being left in Croydon's parks.

Councillor Collins confirmed that litter in Croydon's parks was the result of the behaviour of a minority who were lazy or did not care. There was a need to

educate and for cultural change. This was being supported with communication through social media interventions and signage. It was noted that litter was an issue for all councils. More bins were being purchased and work was being done to involve young people in supporting parks, cleaner streets and the environment. Consideration was being given to where new bins should be situated. Additionally, there was a focus on enforcement using covert surveillance.

Councillor Millson asked Councillor Hall about holding the Council's public meetings online and why a meeting of the General Purpose and Audit Committee (GPAC), which looked at the Council's finances, had not taken place. Councillor Millson requested an update on the opinion of Grant Thornton on the Council's finances.

In response, Councillor Hall explained that the Council was holding extensive discussions with Grant Thornton and it was also represented on the Finance Review Panel that was meeting fortnightly. Grant Thornton was described as supportive of the financial review process being implemented of which it had full visibility. It was stressed that the financial crisis was as a result of the actions of the Conservative Government. Councillor Hall noted that the papers for Cabinet on 20 July 2020 were to include a balanced outturn for 2019/20 despite the Opposition having predicted a deficit. The hard work of officers was acknowledged in providing as solid a position as possible.

Councillor Millson used his supplementary question to note that Councillor Hall was placing the blame on the Conservative Government. It was noted that GPAC had not met and therefore it was questioned if the corporate risk register was being updated with the request made that this be shared. In response, Councillor Hall noted the impact of the pandemic on the Council's immediate ability to hold formal Committee meetings and that the Government had made changes to the financial timeframes which had an impact on when GPAC needed to meet. Credit was given to the Croydon Digital Services team that had ensured meetings could still be held virtually. A copy of the updated risk register was anticipated to be published.

Councillor Fraser asked Councillor King to confirm what had been done to promote cycling and walking during lockdown and to avoid car-based recovery.

In response, Councillor King thanked Councillor Fraser for his work promoting cycling and walking. The temporary measures taken to reallocate road space to promote cycling and walking were described, including how more space was needed for both activities to allow for social distancing. Additionally, road closures were being used to prevent *rat running* and more speed awareness signs were being deployed in response to concerns expressed about speeds when roads were less busy. These schemes had proved popular with residents with a tangible positive impact being described.

Councillor Parker asked Councillor Hall to detail the level of reserves the Council had left on which it might call. In response, Councillor Hall described

how the level of reserves had been increased. In his supplementary question, Councillor Parker asked why the Administration had not moved sooner to increase the level of reserves. In response, Councillor Hall noted that there had not been any increase in the General Fund Reserves during the latter years of the Conservative Administration.

Councillor Clark asked Councillor Hall for an update on the Council's investment portfolio. In response, Councillor Hall noted that the people of Croydon were receiving a multimillion pound benefit from the investment portfolio, with derived income being used to pay for front line services.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Clark asked about Croydon Park Hotel and any short or long term plans for its use. In response, Councillor Hall explained that all options were being considered for the use of the site. In the meantime, it was being used to provide emergency and temporary accommodation. However, it had been clear from the outset that the site had significant development potential that the Council was seeking to unlock.

Pool 2

With the end of the time allocated to questions to the Cabinet Members in the first pool, Madam Mayor signalled she was moving on to questions to Cabinet Members in the second pool. Councillors Lewis, Flemming and Campbell were invited to make their announcements with Madam Mayor giving her congratulations to Councillor Campbell for her recent appointment to the Cabinet.

Councillor Lewis, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure & Sport, welcomed the Government's funding to protect culture and the arts from the impact of the pandemic. It was noted that the Council was waiting to see what the implications of this would be for Croydon with greater clarity being requested. Councillor Lewis expressed his disappointment that the sector had waited so long for this support and noted that some venues had already shut. Thanks were given to all services under the remit of the Cabinet Member for their hard work. Specific reference was made to the Bereavement Service that had come under considerable strain during the response to the pandemic.

Councillor Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning, congratulated schools, teachers, governors and officers for keeping schools open throughout the pandemic. It was also highlighted that the summer school programme would happen with details to be provided on the Council's website.

Councillor Campbell, Cabinet Member for Families, Health and Social Care, announced that in recognition of the link between ill-health, food health and lifestyle habits, Councillor Avis had been appointed as the Council's *Good Food Champion*. The link between being over-weight and Type 2 Diabetes was noted along with the UK having the highest consumption of ultra-processed food in Europe. Councillor Avis would be working with Councillor

Woodley, in her capacity as the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, and the Director of Public Health with a report back to Council anticipated.

Councillor Hopley congratulated Councillor Campbell on her appointment and speculated on the reason for Councillor Avis having lost her post. Councillor Campbell was asked what was being planned to assist the approximate one thousand residents who needed additional support as a result of having had Covid-19.

In response, Councillor Campbell acknowledged the changing environment and that officers were working to ensure a response. Specific reference was made to mental health support.

Councillor Hopley used her supplementary question to press Councillor Campbell about a specific plan. In response, Councillor Campbell committed to put her thoughts in writing.

Councillor Flynn also expressed her congratulations to Councillor Campbell on her appointment and asked if the Cabinet Member agreed with the request made by Sir Kier Starmer, the Leader of the Labour Party, for the Prime Minister to apologise to Care Homes for the implication made that they had not complied with Covid-19 requirements.

Councillor Campbell concurred and described how the Government had been slow to offer support to Care Homes and their workers despite the fact that they risked their lives to look after our loved ones. Councillor Campbell associated her herself with the comments made by Mark Adams, the Chief Executive of *Integrated Care*, that this amounted to a travesty of leadership and agreed that the Prime Minister should apologise.

Councillor Gatland welcomed the good news of the Ofsted judgement and acknowledged the hard work and long hours of staff. However, Councillor Gatland asked Councillor Flemming to clarify that no staff in Children's Services would lose their jobs as part of the headcount reduction?

Councillor Flemming described how she had met the Director of Children's Social Care; how the Department was responding to the headcount reduction was discussed including the aspiration to safeguard as many positions as possible. Not recruiting to vacant posts was one approach being taken. Councillor Flemming was not able to give a categorical undertaking but it was still the objective to ensure a more stable workforce with agency staff being encouraged to move to permanent roles.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Gatland noted that she assumed the lack of a categorical undertaking meant that some staff in Children's Services would lose their jobs. Councillor Gatland referenced the comments of the Children's Commissioner who had highlighted that vulnerable children were dropping through the cracks because of Covid-19. As a result of the size of Croydon's population, it had a larger number of vulnerable children who needed a dedicated service. Reassurance was sought that this would be

provided. In response, Councillor Flemming gave her assurance of the focus on those who were vulnerable. The authority was within the 90% quartile for visits either in person or online during the pandemic with the objective to shift from online to face-to-face. It was explained how a monthly safeguarding meeting was held to review the authority's performance. The Ofsted Improvement Board was no longer operating in the same way but was still working to ensure progress.

Councillor Clouder noted the unprecedented challenge faced by Croydon's Care Homes and asked Councillor Campbell for an update on what was being done to ensure their safety.

In her response, Councillor Campbell noted the weekly communications happening with Care Homes and that advice and guidance that applied to these settings was being regularly reviewed. The Council was ensuring they were fully equipped with PPE and training was being provided where this was needed. The *Care Quality Commission* was also undertaking checks to monitor risks. The resulting summaries from these checks showed that the inspector was satisfied.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Clouder anticipated a second wave of Covid-19 and asked if Croydon's Care Homes were in a good position to cope should this happen. Councillor Campbell acknowledged that this was the understanding she was seeking to gain through questions being asked of officers with reassurance being elicited.

Councillor Helen Pollard asked Councillor Lewis if he welcomed the Government's investment in the arts and asked how long it would be before Croydon's libraries would be reopened.

Councillor Lewis described the Government's support for the arts as incredibly important. The growth in the use of the online library offer during the pandemic was noted as well as the fact that libraries would start to open from 20 July 2020 for the new *Select & Collect* service. Libraries would open for browsing of the collection from the beginning of September 2020. It had to be ensured that services were opening safely taking into consideration the needs of staff and users. Adaptations had been made in libraries to make them Covid safe.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Helen Pollard noted that there were at least 10 other authorities with libraries already open and asked if they were wrong to have opened? Councillor Lewis stressed that he was not criticising any other authority and that decisions when to open services needed to be taken at a local level. In Croydon, it was important to take decisions based on the best interests of staff and residents.

Councillor Audsley asked Councillor Flemming about the support being given to schools to respond to the *Black Lives Matter* movement.

In response, Councillor Flemming thanked Councillor Audsley for his important question and noted the offence caused by Councillor Hopley's remark to Councillor Campbell regarding her appointment to the Cabinet that implied this had not been achieved on merit. This was compared to what BAME children faced with the curriculum. It was highlighted that those from the Black Caribbean community were more likely to be excluded from school and accounted for a disproportionate percentage of the prison population. Councillor Flemming expressed her pride that schools in Croydon were taking the lead in addressing the lack of diversity in the curriculum; a group had been formed to look at how this should be addressed to achieve the promotion of cultural difference and greater teaching of black history.

In response to a direct request, Madam Mayor permitted Councillor Hopley to make a point of personal explanation. Councillor Hopley stated that she had not meant to cause any offence with her remarks about Councillor Avis. Those were not made with reference to the Councillor Campbell's appointment. Councillor Hopley expressed her shock at Councillor Avis having lost her Cabinet Member position so soon after the Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Audsley used his supplementary question to support Councillor Flemming for challenging micro-aggressions and noted that whilst schools were being praised for doing the right thing asked if those schools that were failing to do more to promote cultural difference would be challenged. Councillor Flemming noted her willingness to take action to provide a fairer education for BAME, white and other minority ethnic children; education needed to be a true reflection of its communities.

Councillor Bird asked Councillor Campbell about a £50 charge for Careline equipment which equated to a 16% increase which had been described as a cost of living raise.

In response, Councillor Campbell explained that this charge had been removed and that this was being confused with a 2% increase that had been made based on Government guidance.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Bird noted that the increase for the quarter had taken the charge from £89 to £104. The size of the increase was condemned and a refund demanded. In response, Councillor Campbell stressed this was not the situation as she understood it and that the £50 installation charge had been removed. A response was to be given to residents and why the charge had been applied was being investigated.

Councillor Mann asked Councillor Lewis how the Council was supporting the community response to the pandemic in Upper Norwood. Councillor Lewis described how support was being offered to the library through the cultural support fund with the aim of keeping residents entertained and busy.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Mann asked what lessons had been learned from lockdown. Councillor Lewis noted that lockdown had been positive for Croydon's libraries, they had gained lots of new members. It was

hoped that libraries and residents would be able to work together to produce online content and support each other. It was noted that just before lockdown, library staff had shared their plans to develop a *library of things*. Councillor Lewis highlighted that he would be proud to be involved in this service development.

Pool 3

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

Councillor Butler, Cabinet Member for Homes & Gateway Services, gave her thanks to those who delivered Homes & Gateway services throughout the pandemic including officers, partners and those individuals who had stepped forward to assist. The issue of street homelessness was highlighted and the objective of keeping individuals from returning to the streets stressed. As a result, Councillor Butler was campaigning on the issue of *no recourse to public funds* which was preventing support being given universally. Letters were being written to Ministers. It was also described how planning was happening for the anticipated rise in homelessness resulting from the end of the eviction ban.

Councillor Hamida Ali, Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon & Communities, described how a public consultation was being conducted on the equalities strategy including talking to community organisations, residents and community groups about their priorities. The Council's commitment to tackling long standing inequalities exemplified by the death of George Floyd and the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on BAME communities was noted. The approach being taken to the development of the equalities strategy was to work collectively building on the local strategic partnership. Plans had been shared informally with the Members of scrutiny. Members of Council were encouraged to share the details of the consultation with their residents and networks. Additionally, they were asked to supply information on those organisations that should be contacted about the consultation.

Councillor Shahul-Hameed, Cabinet Member for Economy & Jobs described the priority being given to the distribution of business grants and support for businesses to reopen. Additionally, announcements of assistance for businesses through support for skills and employment were anticipated. Events were to be hosted and £200K had been allocated for training for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Councillor Perry asked Councillor Shahul-Hameed about the distribution of Government funding for local businesses and why this was not being given to all those that needed it. Councillor Shahul-Hameed was asked when she would ensure that this funding would be distributed.

In her response, Councillor Shahul-Hameed rejected the accusation made and stressed that the funding was being distributed of which Councillor Perry was aware given the briefing he had received. The limitations of the funding provided by the Government were emphasised with hundreds of local businesses not qualifying for any support. Councillor Shahul-Hameed described how the Council had sought to address this through the distribution of discretionary funding. Croydon was continuing to lobby the Government to gain additional funding in order to extend the support being given to local businesses.

Councillor Perry used his supplementary question to note that whilst Croydon had been allocated £60m of business grant funding by the Government, up until the point of the Council meeting, only £47m had been allocated with £13m being kept by the Council and not distributed to businesses. This placed Croydon in the bottom 10% of authorities for its performance in distributing the funds. In response, Councillor Shahul-Hameed, highlighted that the criteria for distribution of grants were determined by the Government with every opportunity being taken to pay out to businesses that had applied. The Council was lobbying the Government to be able to distribute any remaining funds in addition to asking for more funding to assist those businesses that were continuing to struggle.

Councillor Canning noted that the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* was forecasting close to a 12% decrease in GDP by the end of 2020 without a second wave. Councillor Shahul-Hameed was asked what steps were being taken to get residents back into work.

In response, Councillor Shahul-Hameed described the focus on skills and employment being put in place as part of the Council's support for economic recovery being led by the *Sustainable Economic Renewal Board*. It was explained that this was focused on protecting existing jobs as well as brokering new opportunities. The role of the *South Bank University* in supporting the delivery of an accelerated employment programme was described with reference to it providing nursing and accountancy courses. *Croydon Works* was also providing a number of workshops from employers in the borough. Commitments were being made on workshops and apprenticeships with training for SMEs. The *Health Academy* would provide the skills needed in health and social care.

Councillor Canning used his supplementary question to request more information about the support that would be provided for young people given that they typically suffered more when unemployment was high. Councillor Shahul-Hameed concurred noting that data showed those from disadvantaged backgrounds aged under 25 were the hardest hit by the economic circumstances. Additional funding was called for through the *Skills and Job Fund*.

Councillor Hale echoed the thanks expressed to all those who had been supporting those who were homeless during the pandemic. Concern was expressed about the Council giving further funding to *Brick by Brick* whilst its

employees were entitled to a share of the profits. Councillor Butler was asked to explain which report to Council detailed *Brick by Brick's* profits after employees took their share.

In response, Councillor Butler explained that the actions taken were to ensure an increase in Council house stock. This was required so that the Council could provide accommodation at a rent that could be afforded given the housing allowance failed to meet the level of rent in the private sector. Councillor Butler gave a warning that once the eviction ban was lifted there was no system in place to meet the needs of those who had lost their jobs. Profits made by *Brick by Brick* would be paid back to the Council. However, it was also an independent organisation that treated staff fairly.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Hale stressed that the Council could have funded its property development directly and called for responsibility to be taken for *Brick by Brick's* failure to meet its targets. The Council was accused of concreting over green spaces and failing to take into account the Borough's ecology, making it a green to grey Council.

In response, Councillor Butler stated that she did not distance herself from *Brick by Brick*; she was very aware of the circumstances in which it had been set up including the removal of the entire social housing grant and the cap on the Housing Revenue grant. This was contrasted with people struggling to find places to live. The action taken was to ensure social housing was built. Councillor Butler was pleased to announce that the next batch of *Brick by Brick* developments was nearing completion. The issues highlighted were caused by trying to provide new homes in areas of existing density. The Housing Revenue grant was too low meaning the Council could not compete with private developers when trying to secure land for development. The needs of those that had a home had to be balanced with those who did not.

Councillor Skipper asked Councillor Shahul-Hameed about the distribution of business and discretionary grants and how she was ensuring different sectors were supported. Councillor Shahul-Hameed highlighted that the biggest issue being faced by businesses was cash flow and that the Council had responded to this by distributing 91% of the grant funds available. Work was happening to look at targeting the next round of funding for those businesses in the retail, hospitality and other sectors that had been most impacted by the pandemic.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Skipper asked how the end of the furlough scheme would impact Croydon residents. In response, Councillor Shahul-Hameed noted that there was frustration that more was not being done to support the hardest hit by the pandemic in the hospitality and retail sectors. The Government was called on to provide more sector specific funding whilst the Council would do what it could with the limited funds available.

Councillor Streeter asked Councillor Shahul-Hameed when the Council had first become aware that *John Lewis* was pulling out of Croydon.

Councillor Shahul-Hameed noted retailers were struggling because of online shopping even before Covid and that this had been exacerbated by the pandemic. The Council was in communication with *John Lewis* and it was apparent that its Croydon store was not the only one that it was having to close. Reassurance was provided to the meeting that the Council was developing a meanwhile strategy prior to redevelopment which would see other business opportunities piloted in the space that was becoming available. The success of this strategy was demonstrated by *Next* taking-up the space that had been vacated by *Debenhams*.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Streeter asked Councillor Shahul-Hameed to explain what had been done to protect the jobs that would be lost with the closure of the *John Lewis* store. It was stressed that the Cabinet Member's economic strategy was not working and that she was having the wrong conversations. Councillor Streeter called for a new approach and asked Councillor Shahul-Hameed what her new economic strategy might be. In response, Councillor Shahul-Hameed highlighted that the Council's economic strategy had been published in December 2019 but that this was being refreshed to have a revised focus on a recovery strategy. At the time of the meeting, 91% of grants had been distributed to businesses and work was happening with boroughs in a similar situation. Jobs were being created. Councillor Shahul-Hameed pointed to the recent opening of a new *Lidl* in Thornton Heath and several restaurants. Conversations were happening to promote inward investment to create jobs for local people. This was being achieved by working with big and small businesses.

Councillor Prince asked Councillor Hamida Ali about the assistance that had been given by the Voluntary and Community Sector as part of the pandemic response.

Councillor Hamida Ali placed on record her thanks and deep gratitude to all the community groups and volunteers who put the needs of other people first. *Croydon Voluntary Action* had co-ordinated the involvement of 450 volunteers, including members of the Council's own community team. Support had been provided for 700 households reaching 2,000 residents which increased to 4,000 residents through mutual aid.

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

106/20 **Annual Report**

The meeting received the annual report of the General Purposes and Audit Committee. Madam Mayor invited the Committee Chair, Councillor Jewitt, to provide an introduction to the report. Councillor Jewitt recommended the report as printed in the agenda and volunteered to answer any questions from Councillors.

Madam Mayor explained that no questions had been submitted regarding the report and that therefore, this concluded Council's consideration of the report's contents.

107/20 **The use of Special Urgency for Key Decisions 2019 - 20**

The meeting received a report on the use of Special Urgency for Key Decisions during the 2019 – 20 municipal year. Madam Mayor invited Councillor Hall to propose the motion to note the report. Councillor Hall moved the motion and detailed how the use of Special Urgency for Key Decisions during the 2019 – 20 municipal year was entirely related to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to make time critical decisions. Councillor Patsy Cummings seconded the motion to note the report.

Prior to the vote, Madam Mayor noted that there were 41 Labour Members and 27 Conservative Members in attendance at the meeting. Madam Mayor put the motion to the vote which was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED: Council noted the use of Special Urgency for the key decisions listed at Section 3.4 of the report during the 2019/20 municipal year.

108/20 **Council Debate Motions**

Madam Mayor explained to the meeting that she had been informed by the Labour and Conservative Groups that rather than presenting separate motions for debate, they had worked together to jointly present a single Council Debate Motion. The Chief Executive was requested to read this joint Council Debate Motion on behalf of both Groups:

“This Council opposes racism in all its forms, condemns the mistreatment of Black people across the globe and affirms it has no place in our town. We condemn the murder of George Floyd in the USA and the death of others including Rashan Charles in London and Seni Lewis in Croydon and recognise that such mistreatment of Black people stems from systemic racism. We agree that all public bodies, including Croydon Council, should continue to play their part in tackling inequality. Our residents have a tremendous track record in working together for the common good and we salute the people from across Croydon who have stood in solidarity to declare that Black Lives Matter. As a Council we stand together in opposing racism, promoting fairness and justice and supporting our diverse communities in these challenging times”.

Madam Mayor invited the Leader, Councillor Newman, to propose the motion Racism was described as the ultimate tragedy made possible by the silence of good people. The Leader described how it was right to bring forward the motion that saw all 70 Councillors speaking with one voice to breakdown the wall of silence. Whilst there had been many battles fought and progress made, the murder of George Floyd demonstrated that too much of the wall of

silence remained intact. It had taken the campaign by *Black Lives Matter* to show that change had to happen and that incremental progress was no longer acceptable. The Leader highlighted the role of Croydon's 93,000 young people in making change happen. The Council was proud of its leadership on diversity and support for equality but more radical and faster action was needed. There was a call for more black representation locally, nationally and across London. The over-representation of black students in those excluded from school could no longer be explained and needed to be addressed. The current *Stop and Search* policy was no longer acceptable and needed to be reviewed. The Leader described his shock at how this was used and emphasised the need to support policing by consent. The motion was being put down as a marker to show that the Council would act and that it was about more than just words. The Leader called for racism to be torn down forever and moved the motion.

Councillor Tim Pollard was invited by Madam Mayor to second the motion and described how he, in the immediate aftermath of George Floyd's death and the resulting understandable demonstrations, had contacted Councillor Newman. Councillor Tim Pollard described how he was glad that the parties were working together. It was noted that support was not being given to any particular group or agenda. Rather the motion was stating that discrimination based on any protected characteristic was wrong including all forms of racism. Whilst racism may be less overt, Councillor Tim Pollard stressed that this had not gone away but was more covert. It was noted that this was not about rewriting history. Slavery was an abomination and its modern-day equivalent should be combatted. Councillor Tim Pollard thought it more likely that racism would be addressed if this was done collective and seconded the motion.

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Wood to speak to the motion which the Councillor described as a privilege. A film was described which Councillor Wood had watched with his son. This featured a race by school students. Those who were white had been given a head start to represent their privilege as on this basis they had been able to win easily. The black students questioned even trying to participate in a race constructed in this way. It was described how a 12 year old had been arrested for sending hate messages. Councillor Wood questioned what had happened in the child's life for them to think that black lives did not matter. It was time for meaningful change. This included trying to address past wrongs, increase black representation and review landmarks that no longer represented society's values. It was hoped that all this would happen because actions mattered. It was stressed that BAME individual's mattered; just mattered and not more than anyone else. It was noted how someone's name alone could be the difference between getting shortlisted for a job and not. It was emphasised that black history needed to become part of the school curriculum, the BBC was unable to correctly differentiate between black women in Parliament and that Windrush victims had needed to prove what they had lost as a result of the Government's policy. It was thought that the fierce urgency of this moment in history might give the chance for many to take their shot at having a life lived more equally.

Invited by Madam Mayor to speak to the motion, Councillor Creatura expressed his conscious and full-throated declaration that everyone should play their part to improve the lives of all residents. There was a need to understand and tackle the injustices that held people back and to bring an improvement for everyone. Councillor Creatura quoted the 2017 Race Disparity Audit that had found Asian and black people were more likely to be in persistent poverty reflecting lower education attainment, higher unemployment rates and lower home ownership, in addition to over-representation in policing and the criminal justice system. Without breaking the cycle these injustices would go on and on. Councillor Creatura stressed the need to find the right practical solutions to improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged and called for opportunities to reflect talent and hard work. Systems needed to change and both parties needed to work to a common goal.

Invited by Madam Mayor to speak to the motion, Councillor Young stated that whilst it had been claimed all men were created equal, this only applied to white men and women. Black people had been chattels with those freed from slavery receiving nothing from the reparations. However, racism was not like slavery. Rather it was compared to colonisation and embedded in arrangements through debt and the terms of trade. It was described how France was continuing to profit from poor African nations as a consequence of systemic racism embedded in post-colonial arrangements. *Black Lives Matter* was calling for the end of institutional racism. In addition to condemning the murder of George Floyd, it had to be acknowledged that change needed to happen in the UK as well. The findings of the Lammy Review, including the over-representation of black people in prison, were noted along with the link between school exclusions, arrests and imprisonment. Councillor Young called for the police to be supported when following correct procedures but he also supported the right to challenge the police where this was not the case. It was suggested that an App be developed to support this and provide appropriate guidance on how to challenge inappropriate police action. Croydon's 80,000 BAME community was noted and how this meant that black lives were significant in the Borough.

Invited by Madam Mayor to speak to the motion, Councillor Hopley described how both parties opposed racism in all its forms. The motion showed how the parties were working together to achieve better outcomes. Councillor Hopley referenced her own mother's struggle and how she had travelled with her sister and grandmother on the *Empire Windrush*. The importance of the slogan featured on a card sent from the ship was highlighted, "*A link to bind where circumstances part*". It was noted that all Councillors were coming together to promote fairness and justice and support diverse communities at a particularly challenging time. Improved representation at a recent Health and Wellbeing Board meeting was highlighted and welcomed as a way to achieve better outcomes. Councillor Hopley expressed concern that those most at risk of dying of Covid-19 were men from BAME groups with particular risk for those from the Bangladeshi community. There was a call to understand this better to prevent any future impact. Councillor Hopley noted that there was more work to be done and that she would endeavour through her role as

Shadow Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health to do all possible to ensure that black lives matter. Councillor Hopley looked forward to working with Councillors Campbell and Woodley as part of the Health and Wellbeing Board to address the issues identified.

Councillor Patsy Cumming, invited by Madam Mayor to speak to the motion, highlighted how British Citizens were being deprived of their rights. Dexter Bristol had emigrated to the UK at the age of eight. He had been dismissed from his job in 2016 because he did not have a British passport. Not being entitled to aid, he had died in 2018. Croydon's own research highlighted that black boys excluded from Primary and Secondary Schools went onto prison and early death. Councillor Patsy Cummings called for diversity to be valued. *Stop and Search* was systemic and insidious and had to be stopped. Croydon needed to take forward a better future with Councillors standing together because they cared. Councillor Patsy Cummings stressed that silence was not an option with it recommended that the motion be followed by a road map as there was an imperative to start working immediately. It was stressed that there was no talk of hatred or revenge and that there was no expectation of elevation above everyone else; equality was all that was wanted.

Invited by Madam Mayor to speak to the motion, Councillor Bains described the overt racism he had experienced and how this had taught him to outperform and work harder. However, over time he had come to understand that this was not necessarily sufficient or fair. Younger members of the non-white community were questioning why they were having to work harder for the same outcome if the lives of black people mattered. George Floyd's brutal killing showed that nuanced words were not needed. Councillor Bains called for all to stand with black people and emphatically declare their support. It was described how it was physically hard to kneel outside the Town Hall for eight minutes and 43 seconds. This had brought home the fear and terror. Whilst some saw taking the knee as an act of submission, about which Councillor Bains had initially had misgivings, he had done this because he had learnt this was an act of unity that provided an understanding pain. Bringing an end to racism needed to be achieved through dialogue, working together and then taking lawful action. Councillor Bains called for the curriculum and statues to be addressed in order to achieve legitimate change in the public realm and give the power to change decisions taken centuries ago.

The motion was put to the vote and carried unanimously.

109/20 **Recommendations of Cabinet or Committees to Council for decision**

1) Independent Non-voting Member Recruitment

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Hall, Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources, to move the recommendation referred by the General Purposes & Audit Committee (GPAC) on 17 March 2020 related to independent non-voting member recruitment. Councillor Hall moved the motion noting the

candidate to fill the GPAC vacancy was excellent and that GPAC played an important role. Councillor Patsy Cummings seconded the motion.

Madam Mayor moved the vote and Council unanimously agreed the recommendation in the report that the appointment should be confirmed for the remainder of the municipal year and that the said appointment should be subject to the Code of Conduct for Non-Voting Co-optees.

2) Children, Young People and Families Plan

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning, to move the recommendation referred by Cabinet on 8 June 2020 related to the Children, Young People and Families Plan.

Councillor Flemming moved the motion noting that the Children, Young People and Families Plan had also been presented to Cabinet and that its theme was the creation of a place where everyone mattered. This was to be delivered in partnership with tangible actions to be taken to establish places for children and young people to be heard. The motion was seconded by Councillor Shafi Khan.

Madam Mayor moved the vote and Council unanimously agreed the recommendation in the report to approve the adoption of the Children, Young People and Families Plan.

3) South London Waste Plan – Publication of Proposed Submission Draft and Submission to the Secretary of State

Madam Mayor invited Councillor Scott, the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport & Regeneration (Job Share), to move the recommendation referred by Cabinet on 8 June 2020 related to the South London Waste Plan.

Councillor Scott moved the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Muhammad Ali.

Madam Mayor moved the vote and Council unanimously agreed the recommendations in the report:

- i. Approved the submission of the draft South London Waste Plan (Appendix 1) and its associated Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix 2) to the Secretary of State following the conclusion of the statutory 6-week publication period in accordance with Section 20(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004;
- ii. Delegated to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Regeneration (Job Share), in consultation with the Director of Planning and Strategic Transport, the agreement of any Main Modifications required by the appointed Planning Inspector to make the South London Waste Plan sound;

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- iii. Delegated to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Regeneration (Job Share), in consultation with the Director of Planning and Strategic Transport the publication of any Main Modifications required by the appointed Planning Inspector for formal consultation; and
 - iv. Delegated to the Director of Planning and Strategic Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Regeneration (Job Share) the making of minor modifications and factual corrections (that are not required to make the South London Waste Plan sound).

110/20 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This item was not required.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm

Signed:

Date:

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