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Council

Meeting held on Monday, 11 October 2021 at 6.00 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Sherwan Chowdhury (Chair);

Councillors Kola Agboola, Hamida Ali, Muhammad Ali, Jade Appleton, Jamie Audsley, Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel, Sue Bennett, Margaret Bird, Mike Bonello, Simon Brew, Alison Butler, Jan Buttinger, Robert Canning, Louis Carserides, Richard Chatterjee, Pat Clouder, Stuart Collins, Mary Croos, Jason Cummings, Patsy Cummings, Mario Creatura, Nina Degrads, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Clive Fraser, Maria Gatland, Lynne Hale, Maddie Henson, Simon Hoar, Steve Hollands, Yvette Hopley, Karen Jewitt, Humayun Kabir, Bernadette Khan, Stuart King, Ola Kolade, Oliver Lewis, Stephen Mann, Stuart Millson, Michael Neal, Oni Oviri, Andrew Pelling, Jason Perry, Helen Pollard, Tim Pollard, Joy Prince, Helen Redfern, Scott Roche, Manju Shahul-Hameed, Andy Stranack, Gareth Streeter, Robert Ward, Louisa Woodley and Callton Young

Apologies: Councillor Felicity Flynn and Chris Clark

PART A

15/21 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

16/21 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

17/21 **Outcome of Governance Referendum and Next Steps**

The Mayor asked the Leader, Councillor Hamida Ali, to propose the item and firstly set out the background to holding a Referendum. At the Referendum the residents decided that they wished the council to be run by a Mayor of their choosing.

The Leader acknowledged that there were different views on the best governance but felt that collective decision making had been important to the Administration and that they had cautioned against having all power in one set

of hands. The Administration welcomed the result even though it had not been their suggestion. Croydon will become the fifth London borough to have a directly elected Mayor. However, it was disappointing that the turnout had been so low and there is much work to be done by this council to ensure that voters have enough information to be able to fully engage our neighbourhoods in such an important election next May.

The Leader went on to say that there seemed to have been surprise within the Opposition regarding the financial remuneration that a 71st elected member would require together with suitable support. This had been highlighted in the report and will need to be reflected in the budget.

The Leader congratulated Councillor Perry on his selection to be his party's candidate for Mayor but questioned the lack of diversity in the shortlist and continued by stating that the Administration had worked hard to reduce spending and achieve a balanced budget even though no reductions had been suggested by the Opposition.

Councillor King seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Perry stated that last week was a truly historic event where 80% of those who voted chose to have a directly elected Mayor. This issue brought all residents of Croydon together through the DEMOC Campaign. He accused the Administration of delaying this vote as his opinion the referendum should have been held in May 2021 or not needed at all had there been a motion to Council some months ago.

Councillor Perry then went on to question the Leader's support for an elected mayor. However, he stated that councillors must now ensure that the elected mayor will be a positive influence on the borough. The mayor must give a vision of hope to the diverse communities in Croydon. Croydon had been devastated since 2014 by the decision made which led to bankruptcy. Every ward in the borough voted to have an elected mayor and he stated that this proved that the Administration were out of touch with the people of Croydon.

In concluding, Councillor Perry stated that he supported the recommendation.

Councillor Hale stated that the push from the residents of Croydon had been quite extraordinary but that this came from the struggles they had had in getting their views heard. She went on to thank the DEMOC team for their hard work, including the Chairman Gerry Meredith-Smith. It was down to their persistence that the Administration gave in to their demands for a referendum which was held last Thursday (7 October 2021).

In concluding, Councillor Hale stated that she supported the recommendation.

Councillor Fitzpatrick stated that in the review of governance that had taken place in 2018 and 2019 the Opposition had been far from supportive of the idea of a directly elected mayor but were in fact in support of the status quo.

Councillor Fitzpatrick went on the state that the Opposition had remained silent on this subject until very recently and that Government policies had done great damage to the people of Croydon.

In concluding, Councillor Fitzpatrick stated that he supported the recommendation but opposed the rhetoric of the Opposition party.

Councillor Jason Cummings stated he believed that the failure of the Administration to manage the finances was the key factor in the vote and that some Labour councillors campaigned against having a directly elected mayor. Councillor Cummings went on to accuse the Administration of bullying those councillors who were against the change.

In concluding Councillor Cummings stated that he supported the recommendation.

Councillor King stated that congratulations should go to the residents associations who were at the heart of the DEMOC campaign. He went on to say that although the momentum for the referendum came from the south of the borough, every single ward within Croydon voted for an elected mayor. Even with the low turnout the decision will be accepted and respected.

Councillor King went on to say that although the Opposition would like to think that this was a vote for a Conservative mayor, many Labour voters that he had spoken to had understood the benefits that a high profile directly elected mayor would bring to Croydon. It was a decision about how the town will be run but next May's election will decide who that directly elected mayor will be.

The recommendations in the report were put to the vote and were unanimously carried in the following terms:

That Council:

- 1.1 Note the outcome of the referendum held on 7th October 2021 that the people of Croydon voted for a change to the Mayor and Cabinet model from the Leader and Cabinet model
- 1.2 Approve the Council's proposals as set out in its Notice of 15th July 2021 under sections 9MA and 9MB of the Local Government Act 2000, as amended, to have a directly elected Mayor/ Cabinet model of governance as the majority of the votes cast in the referendum were in favour of a change to the Council's operating arrangements.
- 1.3 Note that a report will be brought to a future meeting of Full Council with the proposed constitutional and governance amendments to enable operation of the new governance model from 9th May 2022, following the first election for the Directly Elected Mayor taking place on 5th May 2022.

18/21 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This item was not required.

The meeting ended at 6.34 pm

Signed:

Date: