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Council

Meeting held on Monday, 25 July 2022 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Alisa Flemming (Chair);
Councillor Sue Bennett (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Kola Agboola, Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel, Adele Benson, Margaret Bird, Claire Bonham, Mike Bonello, Simon Brew, Janet Campbell, Louis Carserides, Richard Chatterjee, Chris Clark, Sherwan Chowdhury, Stuart Collins, Mario Creatura, Jason Cummings, Nina Degrad, Rowenna Davis, Danielle Denton, Lara Fish, Sean Fitzsimons, Clive Fraser, Amy Foster, Simon Fox, Maria Gatland, Brigitte Graham, Lynne Hale, Patricia Hay-Justice, Christopher Herman, Yvette Hopley, Mohammed Islam, Karen Jewitt, Mark Johnson, Humayun Kabir, Stuart King, Ola Kolade, Lee, Llabuti, Enid Mollyneaux, Stella Nabukeera, Tamar Nwafor, Eunice O'Dame, Ian Parker, Ria Patel, Tony Pearson, Jason Perry, Ellily Ponnuthurai, Badsha Quadir, Holly Ramsey, Helen Redfern, Reshekaron, Scott Roche, Manju Shahul-Hameed, Nikhil Sherine Thampi, Luke Shortland, Srinivasan, Andy Stranack, Stewart, Sutton, Catherine Wilson and Callton Young

Apologies: Councillor Jade Appleton, Samir Dwesar, Gayle Gander and Michael Neal

PART A

12/21 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meetings held on:

- 16 December 2020;
- 16 December 2020 (2);
- 29 March 2021;
- 4 May 2021;
- 11 October 2021;
- 11 October 2021 (2);
- 7 March 2022, and;
- 25 May 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2021 were agreed as an accurate record with the following amendment:

The removal of councillors Lara Fish, Amy Foster, and Rowenna Davis from the attendance list as they were not Members of the Council at that meeting.

13/21 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

14/21 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

15/21 **Announcements**

The Mayor gave her announcements to the Members of Council by noting the passing of Richard Billington, a former Councillor and honorary alderman who had passed away on the 20 May 2022.

The Mayor also noted the passing of Rosemary Bromwich, who was a former mayoress who had passed away on the 20 June 2022.

Members paused for a moment of silence.

The Mayor informed Council that she had met with the Director of Education, who had supported the Mayor with writing to all of the schools and colleges in Croydon to find out which charities they would like the Council to support.

The Mayor stated that she would be meeting to consider the charities that had been proposed to the council and she would provide an update on the name of the chosen charity via email ahead of the next full council meeting.

The Mayor also informed Members of the upcoming civic mayoral events:

- The Croydon Carnival Auction on Sunday 31 July 2022
- Jamaica Independence Day, Charity Fundraising Dinner and Dance on Friday 5 August 2022
- The Mayor's Inaugural Dinner (the date was yet to be confirmed)
- The Charity Golf Day on the 6 October 2022.

The Mayor proposed to reduce the allocated time of a number of the standing items in order to ensure that the Members could conduct all of the necessary business. The Mayor moved to suspend Council procedure rules in the following ways:

- At item 9, to suspend council procedure rules (3.59 of Section 4A of the Constitution) to allow the presentation of the report on the South Norwood Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.
- At item 12, the Annual Scrutiny Report, to suspend council procedure rules (3.51 of Section 4A) to limit discussion of this item to 20 minutes.
- At item 14, Mayor and Cabinet Questions, to suspend council procedure rules (3.29 to 3.32 of Section 4A) to reduce the three pools of Cabinet Members to one pool allocated to the Mayor, who could call upon Cabinet Members individually to support answering questions where necessary.
- At item 15, Maiden Speeches, to suspend council procedure rules (3.7 of Section 4A) to limit the time allocated to each speech to two minutes.

This motion was seconded by Councillor Creatura.

The motion was taken to a vote and carried with all Members voting in favour.

The Mayor invited the Chief Executive, Katherine Kerswell, to make her announcements.

The Chief Executive in her role as the Head of Paid Service asked the Council to note the appointment of Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense as the Monitoring Officer. The Chief Executive thanked Andrew Hunkin for his work as the interim Monitoring Officer.

In her role as Returning Officer the Chief Executive also informed the Council that Danielle Denton had won the South Croydon by-election held on the 30 June 2022, which had brought the total Conservative party membership at the Council to 34 including the Executive Mayor.

16/21 **Political Balance following by-election**

The Civic Mayor introduced the item and informed the Members that it had been proposed to appoint Councillor Denton as an additional Member of the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Executive Mayor moved the recommendation which also sought to appoint Councillor Sherine Thampi as the reserve Member for the Committee.

The motion was seconded by Councillor King.

The motion was taken to a vote and carried with all Members voting in favour.

RESOLVED, to:

- 1.1 Note that there were now 34 Labour Group Members; 34 Conservative Group Members (including the Executive Mayor); 2 Green Group Members and 1 Liberal Democrat Member.
- 1.2 Agree the amended size of committees and the allocation of seats on committees in accordance with the principles set out in the report and, in particular, at paragraph 3.16. The amendment increased the size of the Audit and Governance Committee by one seat.
- 1.3 Appoint Councillor Danielle Denton to the Audit and Governance Committee, and one other Conservative Member as a substitute member, in accordance with the wishes of the Conservative Group.
- 1.4 Subject to 1.2, authorise the Monitoring Officer to amend the Constitution to reflect the increase in the size of the Audit and Governance Committee.

17/21 **Appointment of an Independent Panel**

The Mayor introduced the item and asked Councillor Jason Cummings to introduce the report to the Members.

Councillor Jason Cummings informed the Council that the report sought the council's approval to establish an independent panel which consisted of all of the council's independent persons and to authorise the Monitoring Officer to invite three independent persons to form a panel when required.

Councillor Jason Cummings then went on to state that the Monitoring Officer would need authorisation to include the establishment of the independent panel in the Constitution.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Creatura.

The motion was taken to a vote and carried with all Members voting in favour.

RESOLVED, to:

1. Establish an Independent Panel, comprising three Independent Persons, and approve the terms of reference set out at paragraph 1.10.

2. Appoint all the Council's Independent Persons to the Independent Panel and authorise the Monitoring Officer to invite, in accordance with the statutory rules, three such Independent Persons to form a Panel from time to time.
3. Authorise the Monitoring Officer to include the establishment of the Independent Panel in the Constitution and to make any necessary consequential changes.

18/21 **Public Questions**

The Mayor informed Members that they had received one question from a member of the public. The Mayor read the question on behalf of the member of the public as they were unable to attend the meeting.

The question was from Catherine Bradler.

I would like to request a site meeting with Cllr Roche/relevant officers to agree ways for traffic management on Southern Avenue. It has become a notorious rat run to avoid traffic lights at the bottom of South Norwood Hill.

- *Cars break the speed limit, drive recklessly along street causing risk to residents. It's only a matter of time someone is killed.*
- *Vibration from heavy vehicles causes structural damage.*

Councillors have visited Southern Avenue, they agree the situation is unacceptable and something needs to be done, but no action has happened! Please commit to a site meeting, to discuss ways to this serious safety issue.

In his response, the Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment, Councillor Roche stated the following:

"Thank you for your question, Catherine. I'm sorry to hear about the frustration you and your neighbours have experienced from poor driver behaviour and excessive speeding in your local area. The council, under the previous administration, introduced a temporary healthy neighbourhood scheme enforced by planters in May 2020, which subsequently had to be removed in February 2021, following informal public consultation exercise and decision made by the then Cabinet Member. We, the new administration, are still considering the next steps for the LTN programme. Officers are currently working with neighbouring boroughs, the Greater London Authority, Transport for London and relevant partners but as yet we are not in a position to bring this scheme forward nor are we able to confirm a likely timeframe. I would be

happy to arrange a site visit to meet with you and other residents with the relevant officers to discuss potential solutions to the serious safety issues you have described. In the meantime, I have asked officers to contact the Police's Road Safety Engineering Unit and ask for enforcement to be carried out in your local area."

The Mayor confirmed that the response was submitted to the questioner and a resolution had been reached in advance of the meeting.

19/21 **Recommendations from the Executive Mayor in Cabinet to Council for Decision**

The Mayor introduced the item and invited the Executive Mayor to move the first recommendation to council.

The Executive Mayor informed Members that removing the Croydon Suburban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD2) would represent the start of a reset of the planning policy in Croydon. The Executive Mayor felt as though SPD2 had been used to force inappropriate and unwanted development in the borough and whilst housing demands were a real issue, it was important that this challenge was met with solutions that worked for residents.

The Executive Mayor went on to state that he would like to put design and respect of the local character of areas within the borough at the heart of any future planning policy. The Executive Mayor notified Members that in the coming months, he would be looking at what further changes could be made to the local plan.

The Executive Mayor **MOVED** the recommendations in the report.

The Motion was **SECONDED** by Councillor Bains.

The recommendation was **DEFERRED** until item 10 on the agenda.

The Mayor invited the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration, Councillor Bains to introduce the second set of recommendations to Council.

Councillor Bains stated that the report proposed to provide protection for historical characteristics of the local area and would also enable the Planning Department at the council to be more efficient by providing them with clearer regulations to refer to. Councillor Bains also welcomed further engagement

from the community if they felt as though there were any other important historical characteristics which required protection.

Councillor Bains moved the recommendations in the report.

This was seconded by the Executive Mayor.

The recommendations were taken to a vote and carried with all Members voting in favour.

RESOLVED, to:

- 1.3 Consider the report at Appendix B and note the Consultation Statement for the South Norwood Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) (set out in Appendix 2 of the report at Appendix B), including the list of comments, responses and (where applicable) amendments at Appendix 1 of the report at Appendix B.
- 1.4 Agree the adoption of the South Norwood Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) 2022 (set out in Appendix 2 of the report at Appendix B) as a Supplementary Planning Document in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, particularly regulation 14; and,
- 1.5 Agree the changes to the South Norwood Conservation Area boundary as described in the report at Appendix B and in the South Norwood Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) (set out in Appendix 2 of the report at Appendix B); and,
- 1.6 Agree the revocation of the South Norwood Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) 2007 (set out in Appendix 3 of the report at Appendix B) in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, particularly regulation 15(3).
- 1.7 Agree the delegation to the Director of Planning and Sustainable Regeneration, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning & Regeneration, in relation to the making of minor factual, editorial and image changes to the South Norwood Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) (set out in Appendix 2 of the report at Appendix B) prior to adoption.

The Mayor introduced the item and invited Councillor Clark to address the Council in regards to the Croydon Suburban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD2).

Councillor Clark informed the Council that at the annual Council meeting, Councillor King had made it clear that the opposition would work with the administration to ensure that SPD2 was replaced with new local design guidance that attracted the support of residents across the borough.

Councillor Clark stated that there were concerns from the Scrutiny Streets, Environments and Homes Sub Committee about the withdrawal of SPD2 without replacement design guidance being put in place.

Councillor Clark also asked Members to consider the equality analysis report, which flagged the risk of the slowing down of the time that the council had to consider Planning applications and with less guidance for applications it may be difficult to determine whether an application was acceptable and for applicants to know what would be deemed as acceptable. Councillor Clark went on to explain that this may result in more applications being taken to appeal which would further delay outcomes.

Councillor Clark noted that appeals could prove costly for the Council and that it was important to avoid using taxpayer money to cover legal expenses and that the risk of delays in processing applications effectively may affect housing delivery which would impact the availability of affordable and specialist housing.

The Mayor invited Councillor Sutton to address the Council.

Councillor Sutton stated that there would need to be a process in place to mitigate and ensure that groups of people with protected characteristics were not negatively impacted by delays to access to affordable or specialist housing because of the revocation of SPD2.

Councillor Sutton explained that she would welcome an appropriate design led approach working with communities to have sustainable planning to meet housing targets across the borough. Councillor Sutton was also concerned that the revocation of SPD2 would lead to overcrowding and over intensification in areas that were already congested with development. However, Councillor Sutton did accept that the revocation of SPD2 would mitigate the number of planned developments that would impact green spaces.

The Executive Mayor welcomed the commitment of colleagues who supported the proposal to revoke SPD2. The Executive Mayor stated that the council was delivering more than their current housing target and that there would be a full consultation regarding the replacement supplementary planning document and any issues raised would be taken into account.

The Executive Mayor proposed the motion to revoke SPD2.

The motion was taken to a vote and carried with all Members voting in favour.

RESOLVED, to:

- 1.1 Consider the report at Appendix A and agree the revocation of the Croydon Suburban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD2) (set out in Appendix 1 of the report at Appendix A) in accordance with Regulation 15 (2) and (3) of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 1.2 Note the decision of the Executive Mayor to produce the residential extensions and alterations chapter of the Croydon suburban design guide supplementary planning document (SPD2) as a supplementary planning document and report this to Council for adoption after consultation.

21/21 **In-year Appointments**

The Mayor introduced the item and informed Members that the Church Tenements Charity, to which Council had appointed three members at the Annual meeting in May, had since reduced its membership requirements from three members to two and Councillor Bonello, who was appointed, had agreed to step down from the outside body.

This recommendation was taken to a vote and carried with all Members voting in favour.

RESOLVED, to:

- 1.1 Note that Councillor Mike Bonello volunteered to step down from his appointment as a Council Trustee to the Church Tenements Charity following notification from the Charity that its membership requirements had changed resulting in no need for this appointment which had been made at the Annual Meeting in May 2022.

22/21 **Annual Scrutiny Report**

The Mayor introduced the item and invited Councillor Rowenna Davis to present the report.

Councillor Davis thanked the Chairs and Members for their work over the past year, particularly the work on the community safety strategy, the call-ins, the budget, the work on exclusions and the housing improvement plan.

Councillor Davis explained that the function of Scrutiny was to hold Members and officers to account and that this was central to the Council's recovery. Councillor Davis highlighted that the Chief Executive had acknowledged that, in the past, Scrutiny had been abused and this had contributed to the Council's position in the recent years.

Councillor Davis continued by stating that she would like two principles to guide Scrutiny's work in the year ahead, which were community engagement and impact.

The first principle was community engagement. During the scrutiny on the Housing Repairs contract one pensioner told her his story about a leak in his property which took a while to fix. This was an example of the feedback which Scrutiny would need to create better recommendations.

Councillor Davis then explained that the second principle was impact, she stated that she wanted recommendations to be tracked and evaluated.

Councillor Davis continued stating that there were two themes for the work programme over the coming year; these were the Council's finances and the people's finances. The work programmes for the three sub committees could be found online.

Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee would focus on the town centre and the Veolia contract, which would be overseen by Councillor Ben-Hassel.

Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee would focus on safeguarding and sound finances, which would be overseen by Councillor Richard Chatterjee.

Scrutiny Health & Social Care Sub-Committee would focus on the new integrated care partnership and mental health, which would be overseen by Councillor Sean Fitzsimons.

Councillor Nwafor was invited to ask a question and stated that she was pleased to see the increased engagement from Scrutiny to ensure that the voice of the community was kept at the centre of decision making at the Council. Councillor Nwafor then asked what key concerns had been identified regarding the current cost of living crisis and what the main solutions that Councillor Davis would recommend to the Council were.

In response to Councillor Nwafor's question, Councillor Davis stated that Scrutiny had held a community meeting with voluntary groups, food bank leaders, soup kitchen leaders and advice groups to hear what they considered to be the key issues facing the community. Councillor Davis informed the Council that Scrutiny had also had a meeting with officers to hear about the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the Council. The key findings from these meetings were that the issues would concern rent, fuel and energy costs, cost of food, difficulty for residents seeking help from the Council and how hard voluntary groups found it to work with the Council.

Councillor Nabukeera was invited to ask a question and asked, in light of the Mayor's decision not to delegate decision-making powers, what Councillor Davis's recommendations and conclusions were.

Councillor Davis stated that scrutiny had welcomed the Mayor's top priority being to listen to Croydon to hold Cabinet roadshows. Councillor Davis went on to explain that she had asked the Mayor for more detail about putting residents at the heart of decision-making. Councillor Davis expressed concerns around finances and recommended that the Mayor sought guidance on how to remunerate his Cabinet Members as they had more of an advisory role. Another concern was the scale of the challenge facing the Council's Members and the risks facing its residents.

Councillor Ponnuthurai asked whether Councillor Davis thought that the new housing repairs contract would result in the Council providing respectful, appropriate, and good quality services to its tenants and leaseholders.

In response, Councillor Davis stated that the chance to change the housing repairs contract was a massive opportunity as she felt that Axis provided a shocking and disgraceful service citing Regina Road as an example. Councillor Davis then went on to commend Stephen Tate and the Housing department for their work engaging with Scrutiny Members and residents. Councillor Davis informed the Council that Stephen Tate had suggested changes such as bringing the call centre in-house and splitting the repairs contract into three parts to help to diversify risk. Councillor Davis expressed concerns that residents would not get the full transformational service that they deserved and that the change in contract would not necessarily mean a change in council culture, contract management or staff.

Councillor Davis noted that scrutiny recommended the introduction of compensation schemes for residents if there were missed appointments or insufficient work carried out on a property.

Councillor Jason Cummings asked whether Councillor Davis had read the independent remuneration panel report that went to full Council that listed all the independent recommendations for SRAs.

In response to Councillor Jason Cummings's question, Councillor Davis stated that Scrutiny members had decided to look at the best practice elsewhere considering the different levels of responsibility that had been assigned to Cabinet Members who had not been fully completing their areas of responsibility.

Councillor Bonham asked Councillor Davis whether there was a further commitment to address the imbalance in resources within the council.

In response to Councillor Bonham's question, Councillor Davis stated that there had been a discussion with the Mayor about the provision of extra resources for Scrutiny, particularly if Scrutiny was going to continue with the increased levels of community engagement.

Councillor Stewart was invited to ask a question and asked Councillor Davis what she had learnt from her review of the past work of Scrutiny which would enable her to scrutinise the Mayor's priority of improving the Council's customer service.

In response, Councillor Davis stated that the most important thing that Scrutiny could do to help the Council to move forward would be to bring the community voice into discussions by increasing community engagement and resident involvement.

Councillor Davis moved the recommendations as laid out in the report.

This motion was seconded.

This was taken to a vote and carried with a unanimous vote in favour.

RESOLVED, to:

1.1 Receive and consider the Annual Report presented at the meeting as listed in paragraph four of the report.

23/21

Use of Special Urgency Procedures for Key Decisions 2021-22

The Civic Mayor introduced the item and informed the Council that the report noted that Special Urgency Procedures were used in four instances, and that these were related to ensuring the continuity of provision of statutory services to residents, and to reduce costs or the loss of savings to the council.

The Chair moved to agree the recommendations in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Creatura.

This was taken to a vote and carried with a unanimous vote in favour.

RESOLVED, to:

- 1.1. To note the use of Special Urgency for the key decisions listed at section 3.4 of the report during the 2021/22 municipal year.

24/21

Mayor and Cabinet Questions

In the Executive Mayor's announcements, the Mayor welcomed and congratulated Councillor Denton on her appointment as the Ward Councillor for South Croydon following the recent by-election. The Executive Mayor then informed Council that Croydon had two fires in the recent heatwave resulting in the loss of wildlife; however, there was no loss of life or property and he thanked the emergency services for their efforts.

Councillor King asked the Executive Mayor whether he would accept the recommendation in the Opposition motion to develop and publish a comprehensive strategy to support Croydon's residents and businesses impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the cost-of-living crisis had affected many countries across Europe and the Western world. The Executive Mayor informed Council that the council was currently in a poor financial position; however, it would do everything to support its residents during this difficult time. The Executive Mayor stated that he had written to the Secretary of State about the cost-of-living crisis. The Executive Mayor felt it was important for the council to use the £3 million hardship fund to help those in need, the £1 million of hardship fund for those that fell outside of statutory demands as well as other measures of government funding.

Councillor King asked a supplementary question, which queried whether the Mayor's failure to provide a straight answer was evidence that he was unable to listen to the residents of the borough. Councillor King also stated that the Mayor was not listening to Croydon on matters such as the livelihood of residents throughout the borough.

In response the Executive Mayor stated that the previous Administration had failed to listen to financial advice which led to the poor financial situation that the Council was currently faced with.

Councillor Benson asked the Executive Mayor what the new administration had done to help the council to tackle the grass-cutting situation across the borough.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that he knew that grass cutting was a problem across the borough but particularly in the New Addington ward. The Executive Mayor went on to explain that this was a result of poor financial management by the previous administration. The Executive Mayor informed Council that he was pleased that seasonal staff had been put in place and he stated that every area of grass would be cut and the Council would go back to a regular cutting cycle.

Councillor Benson asked a supplementary question and queried how the Council could manage the frustration throughout the borough regarding the frequency of the grass cutting considering the backlog without putting pressure on already limited services.

The Executive Mayor stated that the Council would put extra measures in place to manage the grass cutting. The Executive Mayor went on to explain that weather would have an impact on any proposed schedule for grass cutting and so he preferred a rough guide to a strict timetable. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Roche to address Councillor Benson, who stated that it was one of his priorities to ensure that the schedule was more transparent.

Councillor Sutton asked the Executive Mayor when he would identify the priority neighbourhoods for climate adaptation and when he would unveil his plan of action to the Council.

In his response, the Executive Mayor stated that the council would need assess adaptations when they considered the local plan and dealt with contract renewals. The Executive Mayor informed the Council that he had signed up to the climate pledge.

Councillor Bonham asked the Executive Mayor whether he intended to provide a proper commitment to clean parks throughout the borough.

In response, the Executive Mayor acknowledged that grass cutting was an issue in the parks across the borough and informed the Council that there had been conversations with local Friends groups about how parks would be run and managed moving forward. The Executive Mayor also stated that he would like to continue to have green flag parks in the borough. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Roche to speak, who stated that he had met an external group (London Bloom) which had offered assistance with funding for local groups to manage the parks in the borough.

Councillor Campbell asked the Executive Mayor how he would ensure that vulnerable residents would have their health needs met.

In response, the Executive Mayor acknowledged that the cost-of-living crisis would affect the most vulnerable residents in the borough more than any other group. The Executive Mayor stated that the council would look to the government to see what support they could provide to address the energy crisis. The Executive Mayor went on to explain that the Council would need to get control of its finances as this would enable them to help those who needed assistance through the cost-of-living crisis. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Cummings to speak, who stated that on the Council's website there was a 'help with the cost-of-living page' which provided information on a range of subjects.

Councillor Campbell asked a supplementary question and queried how the Executive Mayor would utilise the information about the most vulnerable residents in the borough.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that they would use this information to acquire more funding for the borough and that he would be working with Croydon University Trust to secure funding.

Councillor Lee asked the Executive Mayor how residents could claim their energy rebate.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the government had set a strict criterion for the £150 rebate to be issued to residents. The Executive Mayor acknowledged that this process was frustrating as those in need found it difficult to receive the rebate. The Executive Mayor informed the Council that many residents had failed security checks which had made the process longer; however, 80% of residents had received their rebates.

Councillor Young asked the Executive Mayor why he was withholding funds allocated for the day and activity program from vulnerable residents during the cost-of-living crisis.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated the Council had received the holiday funding from the government and that this had been used to support groups over the summer and the only funds that had been withdrawn had been to pay officers to run the scheme. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Stranack to speak, who stated that the money that had been allocated was for the easter, summer and Christmas holidays. Councillor Stranack then informed the Council that the reason that some of the funds had been held back was because money had been allocated for the Christmas break. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Cummings to speak, who stated that the financial situation at the council meant that they did not have the resources to address every issue immediately.

Councillor Young asked a supplementary question and queried whether spin was in contradiction to the 7 Nolan principles.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the council had withheld the holiday funds and that they had allocated funds for the Christmas holidays. He stated that there was also additional money available.

Councillor Fox asked the Executive Mayor what he would do about the graffiti in Waddon ward.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that he knew that a huge amount of effort had gone into cleaning graffiti in the ward. The Executive Mayor informed the Council that it was still trying to clean the streets and graffiti to restore hope and pride to residents across the borough. The Executive Mayor explained that the graffiti removal service had been removed by the previous Administration and that he was working with contractors to secure a deal to reintroduce it. The Executive Mayor stated that the Council's 'Love Streets' app would allow residents to report graffiti.

Councillor Fox asked a supplementary question about what proactive measures had been put in place to address anti-social behaviour.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that he was working to clean the streets and to introduce public space protection orders to deal with antisocial behaviour on all levels across the borough.

Councillor Reshekaron asked the Executive Mayor how he planned to provide financial support for the borough's most vulnerable residents.

In his response, the Executive Mayor stated that temporary accommodation and housing was a huge problem within the borough. The Executive Mayor informed the Council that he was working on using government grants to improve the homelessness situation. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Hale to speak, who stated that plans had been shared with the Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee and that she wanted to place the residents at risk in temporary accommodation at the right time which would require the Council to help vulnerable residents at the first opportunity.

Councillor Reshekaron asked a supplementary question and queried how the Executive Mayor planned to help residents in social housing who had accrued rent arrears due to the cost-of-living crisis.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated whilst the Council had funds and initiatives in place, they would be seeking more help from the government to help residents across the borough.

Councillor Ramsey asked the Executive Mayor about his views on the Planning department and what immediate action the current administration had taken.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the current Planning regime was in place to suit developers rather than residents. The Executive Mayor informed the Council that he would seek to implement better design guides and change the local plan.

Councillor Ramsey asked a supplementary question and queried how the revocation of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD2) would impact the Planning department's role and their approach in determining the viability of planning applications.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD2) would not be part of the guidance used moving forward and that the inappropriate design guide led to issues across the borough and the local plan would help to prevent out-of-character developments.

Councillor Graham asked the Executive Mayor whether he believed that reopening Purely Pool during the cost-of-living crisis was a good use of public funds.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that he had written to the Secretary of State about energy costs, and he was chasing the government for assistance in dealing with the costs that the Council would be taking on. The Executive Mayor concluded by proclaiming that the reopening of Purley Pool

was a key election pledge and that it would be re-opened by the Administration.

Councillor Shortland asked the Executive Mayor how he would regenerate the town centre.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that he had had conversations with Westfield, Hammersen and the Whitgift foundation and that they were committed to delivering a rejuvenated town centre. The Executive Mayor informed the Council that Westfield had brought forward their plan for the former Alders building which would bring much more pedestrian traffic.

Councillor Shortland asked a supplementary question and queried whether the backtracking on the previous plans for Westfield by the former Administration had made an impact on the number of jobs and new homes available for the younger residents within the borough.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that there would be small pockets of regeneration in Croydon which would lead to more investment in future and help to rebuild the town centre.

Councillor Degrad asked the Executive Mayor whether he had a plan to support struggling families immediately and over the next six weeks as schools were closed for the summer holiday.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the Council was supporting families through government funding and holiday clubs would be running throughout the summer period. The hardship fund would be used to support families that were on the Free School Meals scheme.

Councillor Degrad asked a supplementary question about what advice the Executive Mayor could provide to struggling families and how they could be encouraged to develop skills to improve their futures.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that there were several funds including the holiday fund which were being advertised. The Executive Mayor also informed the Council that there were additional funds for those who fell just outside of the system who may be suffering and he suggested that Members direct those struggling to the various grants and funds detailed on the Council's website.

Councillor Denton asked the Executive Mayor about the progress in completing and selling the houses and flats constructed by Brick by Brick.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that there were two major sites that were nearly completed. The Executive Mayor informed the Council that there were around 21-23 other sites which had some issues around planning obligations and that many of these obligations had now been dealt with so several sites would be up for sale soon.

Councillor Denton asked a supplementary question and queried whether the Executive Mayor thought that the removal of SPD2 would help to preserve the character of South Croydon ward, and whether he would restore areas of special character which were removed by the previous Administration.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the removal of SPD2 would help to prevent overdevelopment and that the review of the local plan would strengthen character across the borough.

Councillor Srinivasan asked the Executive Mayor about the action he would take to support vulnerable households which were at risk of falling into poverty.

In response, the Executive Mayor acknowledged that the cost-of-living crisis would affect a number of people within the borough and that there were measures in place including a number of government funds immediately available. He also mentioned that there was a section on the council's webpage which provided information for residents about the funds that were available.

Councillor Srinivasan asked a supplementary question which queried the conversations the Executive Mayor had had with government officials to raise concerns about the disproportionate impact of food poverty on vulnerable households.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that he had written to the government about this issue, and that he would look to manage the Council's finances properly to ensure that they were in a better position to deal with these crises when they occurred.

Councillor Pearson asked the Executive Mayor about the scope to introduce Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) in other areas of the borough, particularly in New Addington.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that Public Space Protection Orders were an important tool to use in dealing with antisocial behaviour. The Executive Mayor informed the Council that he had taken steps to introduce the town centre Public Space Protection Order, and that this would go out to

consultation shortly. The Executive Mayor concluded, saying that he would look to restore Public Space Protection Orders in New Addington, Thornton Heath and Norbury to help police officers to deal with antisocial behaviour.

Councillor Pearson asked a supplementary question about the other initiatives that would be introduced to make the borough safer and more pleasant to live and work within.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that cleaning the streets, removing graffiti, and dealing with low level antisocial behaviour were the first steps in improving the borough and that Public Space Protection Orders were the next step to empower the police.

Councillor Foster asked the Executive Mayor to confirm that the Council planned to be digitally inclusive moving forward.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the Council would want to ensure that they were digitally inclusive particularly for those with limited access to the internet. The Executive Mayor suggested that having better access to libraries and providing more open services to residents would help the Council to be more digitally inclusive.

Councillor Foster asked a supplementary question about how the Council could ensure that it stood alongside third sector groups so that it could continue its work across the borough.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the Council was in the process of rebuilding its relationship with the third sector and creating a new environment to work out how to deliver for residents moving forwards. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Stranack to speak, who stated that he had recently visited Selsdon Baptist church and through the King's Fund they provided community hubs. They were also providing health advice and information about housing and other issues.

Councillor Redfern asked the Executive Mayor what Croydon Council was doing to address child sexual exploitation in the borough.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that the Council had mechanisms in place to recognise this issue and respond effectively to prevent child exploitation from taking place. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Gatland to speak, who stated that the governance of their safeguarding was down to the Safeguarding Children's partnership.

Councillor Redfern asked a supplementary question and queried whether the Executive Mayor could categorically state that the opinions expressed about

the victims being the 'wrong sort of girls' were not tolerated in Croydon's Children's Services.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that those opinions were not tolerated by him, and that the Council would not support that position. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Gatland to speak, who highlighted that there were children who were missing from care and how vulnerable they may have been. Councillor Gatland stated that it was important that everybody looked out for indicators around returning home interviews.

Councillor Bonello asked the Executive Mayor why he thought that the Children's Services department was underspent.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that there was an underspend as there had not been a need to grow the budget further; however, he would be keen to investigate whether the Council was covering all its bases. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Gatland to speak, who stated that the underspend was down to the reduction of children in care and the number of vacancies in the department.

Councillor Bonello asked a supplementary question and queried whether the Executive Mayor would commit to not reducing the department's budget further.

In his response, the Executive Mayor stated that the Council would like to maintain its good Ofsted rating in Children's Services. The Executive Mayor explained that he would not commit to not changing the budgets due to the serious financial situation at the Council; however, he was willing to re-evaluate the way in which the department worked. The Executive Mayor invited Councillor Cummings to speak, who stated that the underspend within the department happened under the previous Administration and that there would be reasons detailed for any future budget changes.

Councillor Brew asked the Executive Mayor whether he would provide him with a progress report on the re-opening of Purely Pool.

In response, the Executive Mayor explained that Purley Pool should have re-opened after the pandemic and that there had been grants available that had not been used and the pool remained closed. The Executive Mayor stated that the Administration would look at the most sustainable way to re-open Purley Pool.

Councillor O'Dame asked the Executive Mayor what measures would be implemented to ensure appropriate conditions for residents who were not eligible for Croydon Council's discretionary support.

In response, the Executive Mayor explained that the discretionary fund was available for families who were not due to receive benefits. The Executive Mayor stated that the Administration would need to focus on initiatives which helped to upskill residents for them to move out of low paid jobs.

Councillor O'Dame asked a supplementary question which queried what immediate support the Executive Mayor would provide to residents who fell outside of the target range to receive support from the hardship fund and benefits.

In response, the Executive Mayor stated that there were government grants that the Council would be using to support residents most in need.

The chair asked for the remainder of the Councillor to submit their questions in written form to receive responses electronically due to time constraints.

25/21 **Maiden Speeches**

Delivering her Maiden Speech, Councillor Denton thanked her predecessor, the Executive Mayor, and commended him for his work in the South Croydon ward. Councillor Denton went on to say that, through her work she had connected with the local businesses, residents, faith organisations and charities and as a founding member of the South Croydon Business Association she had a platform to carry her work forward in collaboration with the Council.

Councillor Foster spoke about her experience as a teacher and explained that this experience had taught her about inequality. Councillor Foster stated that during the pandemic inequalities were amplified and the burden placed upon the borough left residents with another crisis. Councillor Foster expressed her desire to build on the legacy of her predecessors and that she wanted to ensure that the opportunities on offer were captured by children and young people within the borough.

Councillor Sherine Thampi thanked his predecessor Councillor Steven Hollands. Councillor Sherine Thampi stated that Old Coulsdon was blessed with great heritage sites such as a monument dedicated to the First World

War. Councillor Sherine Thampi concluded that he would ensure that residents' voices were heard within the council.

Councillor Herman thanked his predecessors, Councillors Clive Fraser and Patsy Cummings. Councillor Herman stated that residents had asked him to make the Council work for them and he stated that it was his duty to deliver for his residents.

Councillor Patel stated that she was honoured to be one of Croydon's first Green Councillors. Councillor Patel promised to raise the voices of residents within the Council and felt that it was clear that residents wanted change due to the old duopoly being broken up. Councillor Patel concluded by asserting that Members must ensure that the climate emergency was factored into every decision taken by the council.

26/21 **Council Debate Motions**

The Executive Mayor read out the first Council Debate Motion:

*"This Council would like to praise its staff for the way they have worked and supported our residents through the Covid pandemic and Croydon Council's financial difficulties. It has been an unprecedented time of disruption and change. Whilst accepting that the process is ongoing and that there are more changes and difficult decisions to come it is right to pause and thank those who in many cases have borne the brunt of the effects of the decisions and failures of others.
To all Croydon Council's staff. Thank you."*

Councillor Hale seconded the motion and reserved her right to speak.

Councillor Campbell stated that many officers within the Council were residents of the borough, some of whom faced many issues such as increase in National Insurance contributions, the energy crisis or the reduction in Police services and resulting rise in crime. Councillor Campbell asked whether Members were aware of how many officers were accessing food banks and topping up salaries using universal credit. Councillor Campbell informed Members that a 'thank you' did not address the issues that officers faced and advocated for anonymous surveys on how the administration was doing in terms of leadership to improve outcomes.

Councillor Ben-Hassel stated that under the previous Head of Paid Service restructures within the Council could have been handled better and she hoped that the new executive team would handle restructures more efficiently. Councillor Ben-Hassel informed Members that as the Chair of the Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee she looked forward to the work force strategy update in September, where she would be able to assess

the impact of the pressures placed upon officers. Councillor Ben-Hassel concluded by stating that there was an issue with recruitment and the number of vacant posts which had caused many officers to work under unnecessary pressure.

Councillor Hale exercised her right to speak and acknowledged that the Council's workforce had the terrible financial and leadership issues to contend whilst supporting residents through the Covid pandemic. Councillor Hale accepted that there were numerous issues within the Council which left staff working through backlogs, having to make critical decisions with untrustworthy data and many departments had had several interim appointments at senior and Corporate Director level. Councillor Hale stated that the administration would seek to fix the Council's finances and that the Cabinet paper, 'Opening the Books', which set out plans to deep-dive into the Council finances, would be key to finding a solution to the Council's financial situation.

Councillor Hale seconded the motion.

This was put to a vote and carried unanimously.

The second debate motion was introduced by Cllr King.

"This council is alarmed at the deepening Cost of Living crisis facing residents and businesses in our Borough.

This council notes that Croydon's voluntary sector, which works directly with Croydon families in or at the edges of poverty, are reporting desperate increases in demand from residents struggling to meet their rents, pay for fuel and feed their families. They predict a terrifying winter if action isn't taken now before further increases - particularly on energy bills - begin to bite. Many of our residents are suffering real hardship and are looking to the council and Mayor to take action to support them. The Mayor has the power and authority to provide tangible and real help.

This council also acknowledges the pressure the national Cost of Living crisis will place on the council's budget, both directly and indirectly, as demand for services grows and budgets are eroded by rampant inflation. This pressure will also be felt by the borough's voluntary and community sector.

This council calls upon the Mayor to develop and publish a comprehensive strategy and package of measures to support Croydon residents and businesses impacted by the national Cost of Living crisis, and to publish it no later than 31st October 2022."

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

Councillor Jason Cummings stated that the current cost of living crises affected people at all levels, and that they had to re-evaluate their personal budgets. Councillor Cummings explained that the recent financial situation at the Council made it difficult to manage the rising cost of utilities and that the

Council website had a section dedicated to help with the cost of living. Councillor Jason Cummings concluded by stating that he supported most of the motion that had been proposed and seconded it as the Mayor had the power and authority to make a difference; however, he said that no report would be forthcoming.

Councillor Stranack stated that he agreed with most of the motion. Councillor Stranack explained that the war in Ukraine had put a massive strain on the Council's resources and highlighted Voluntary and Business Sector partners were delivering help to residents. Councillor Stranack stated that his work with voluntary sector groups had allowed the opening of many holiday camps for those receiving free school meals and that the business sector had provided cheap school meals over the summer holidays.

Councillor Young exercised his right to speak and stated that inflation in the UK had hit a 40 year high at 9% and this was forecast to rise as high as 12% later in the year. Councillor Young expressed concern that the most vulnerable residents in the borough would be badly affected if appropriate action was not taken in a timely manner. Councillor Young concluded by stating that the Executive Mayor had failed to process the energy rebate for residents who needed it most and that a strategic approach was required ahead of October.

Councillor Young seconded the motion.

This was put to a vote and carried unanimously.

The meeting ended at 9.23 pm

Signed:

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Date:

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