

Council

Meeting held on Wednesday, 17 April 2024 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Tony Pearson (Chair);

Councillors Appu Srinivasan, Kola Agboola, Jeet Bains, Leila Ben-Hassel, Sue Bennett, Adele Benson, Margaret Bird, Claire Bonham, Simon Brew, Janet Campbell, Louis Carserides, Richard Chatterjee, Chris Clark, Sherwan Chowdhury, Stuart Collins, Mario Creatura, Jason Cummings, Patsy Cummings, Nina Degrad, Rowenna Davis, Danielle Denton, Samir Dwesar, Lara Fish, Sean Fitzsimons, Alisa Flemming, Clive Fraser, Amy Foster, Simon Fox, Gayle Gander, Maria Gatland, Brigitte Graham, Matt Griffiths, Lynne Hale, Patricia Hay-Justice, Maddie Henson, Christopher Herman, Yvette Hopley, Mohammed Islam, Karen Jewitt, Mark Johnson, Humayun Kabir, Stuart King, Ola Kolade, Joseph Lee, Endri Llabuti, Enid Mollyneaux, Stella Nabukeera, Michael Neal, Eunice O'Dame, Ian Parker, Ria Patel, Jason Perry, Ellily Ponnuthurai, Holly Ramsey, Helen Redfern, Chrisni Reshekaron, Scott Roche, Manju Shahul-Hameed, Nikhil Sherine Thampi, Luke Shortland, Andy Stranack, Alasdair Stewart, Esther Sutton, Catherine Wilson, Robert Ward, Callton Young and Fatima Zaman

Apologies: Councillor Tamar Barrett

PART A

108/24 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

109/24 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

110/24 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

111/24 **Announcements**

1. The Chair moved the suspension of Council procedure rules related to the following items to allow effective conduct of Council business:
 - a) In order to progress Council business effectively, and allow Council to consider the Labour Group amendment for the Local Plan Review, the Chair proposed that the Council Procedure Rules were waived regarding 'Council Reports – Amendments on Notice or Referring Back Recommendations' Sections 3.82 to 3.90 and the item be conducted as follows:
 - Mayor Jason Perry would move the recommendations
 - The proposals would be seconded by Councillor Jeet Bains (reserving the right to speak)
 - b) The following Councillors would speak for 3 minutes each
 - Mohammed Islam
 - Chris Clark
 - Jeet Bains
 - Mayor Jason Perry would have final right of last reply, up to 3 minutes before the vote.
2. The Chair announced the success of charity events that had taken place since the last meeting and future civic events as follows:
 - a) International Language Day – 27 February 2024
 - b) Flag raising days:
 - St. David's Day
 - Ghanaian Independence Day -
 - St. Patrick's Day'
 - Bangladesh Independence Day
 - Autism Acceptance Week
 - c) Forthcoming events
 - St. George's Day - flag raising - 23 April 2024
 - Civic Mayor's Charity Gala Dinner 26 April 2024.

3. Mayor Jason Perry informed Members that a Croydon resident, Sarah Mayhew, had been identified as murder victim found at Rowdown Fields, Croydon. He confirmed that a man and a woman had been charged with murder and arraigned at Court. Council was providing support to the local community who were understandably concerned about the tragic incident.

He also expressed his condolences to the family of Rijkaard Salu Siafa who was stabbed on Friday, 12 April, in Fellmongers Yard, Croydon. He confirmed that the Council was working with the Police and community partners to assist with investigations and provide reassurance to community following the tragic event.

4. The Chief Executive, Katharine Kerswell, made no announcements.

112/24 **The Croydon Debate**

The Chair of Norwood Neighbourhood Residents Association, Deborah Bestwick made the petition as stated in the agenda.

In response, Mayor Jason Perry explained that as consultation on the proposals for the Council's Libraries was due to conclude on 19 April, he was limited in what he could say. He agreed that Norbury Library was a valuable asset to the local community and was at present not being used to full effect. The changes, if agreed, he said, would potentially see Norwood Library increase its opening hours, including to opening on Saturdays, thereby, making it much more available to local residents.

Councillor Mark Griffiths stated that there was significant relief in the community that since the petition was initiated last summer, Norbury Library had been designated one of two hub libraries in the north of the borough but this meant that it would be unavailable to those who needed it most. He argued that possibilities included utilising the obvious passion in the community to volunteer on a more formal basis so that volunteers could open the library on non, staff days and the opening its café and community space.

Councillor Andrew Stranack stated that so far, there had been over 3000 responses and encouraged everyone to take part in the consultation process as the Council wanted a free, fair, and open process. The current proposals meant that Norwood Library would open five or six days a week and the partnership with Open Plus will extend the hours at this library and the option for community partnerships was being explored.

Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel paid tribute to the late former Councillor Maggie Mansell for her hard work, fighting for the library and championing investment in the ward and said she was looking forward to constructive and fruitful engagement with Councillors alongside residents, and community groups to deliver a comprehensive plan for the library to the benefit of all in the area.

Deborah Bestwick, thanked Members for the cross-party acknowledgment of the importance of all libraries. She drew attention to the beautiful architecture and the over £1m previous investment in the Norwood Library. She agreed to encourage residents to participate in the consultation process and asked for a decision timeline.

In closing, Mayor Perry said though limited in what he could say because of the ongoing consultation, the proposals for the library were developed because of listening to the community. He encouraged residents to participate in the consultation process and confirmed Cabinet would make the decisions at the conclusion of the consultation period.

113/24 **Croydon Question Time**

The Council received seven questions from residents. The following responses were given to supplementary questions based on the answers given and published in the agenda.

1. In response to a supplementary question on why residents had to register by phone for free parking allocation, Councillor Scott Roche explained that the Council was trying to make free parking allocation consistent across the borough. He stated the following:
 - the maximum parking time allowed had been increased to 2 hours in district centres and parking bays, but the second hour being a reduced rate.
 - There was also a review of parking at district centres, to add additional parking spaces where they were not currently. Residents can pay for parking online and at the news agency with the pay point model.
 - An upgrade on this system would cost the Council millions of pounds which was not affordable and therefore could not be justified as Croydon was one of the few Councils providing free parking allocation in accordance with its policy of prioritising local business, shoppers and visitors to Croydon.
2. In response to a supplementary question on whether the drop in the Council's position amongst London boroughs was due to lack of effective engagement with active community groups and if he would be willing to meet with active groups in the community such as the London Green Network as soon as possible to discuss.

Councillor Scott Roche stated that a new Carbon Action Team had been created in addition to the air quality action plan to encourage the model shift and they were currently working with various departments and engaging with various groups, but he was happy to meet with London Green Network and the report on ongoing work was forthcoming.

3. In response to a supplementary question on the integrity of the collision data collected, Councillor Roche Oaks stated that he would ask the relevant officers if there was more that could be done in terms of engagement with the Police and residents to get the needed data for the road as suggested by the questioner.
4. In response to a supplementary question if the Council would use the carbon offsets payment from the S106 agreements for Community energy projects as some Councils such as Southwark, Lewisham and Hackney Councils had done, Councillor Roche said he was happy to ask officers to look into it and report back to Mr Lee Barker.
5. In response to a supplementary question on the Council's criteria for helping the homeless. The Deputy Executive Mayor, Councillor Lynne Hale, in response confirmed that she was aware of the situation at the underpass and a portion of the levelling up fund would be used to address this issue and that underpass would soon be closed. She confirmed that the Criteria do exist, but she stated that she could not comment on personal cases but invited the questioner to email to discuss the specifics of the case and reiterated that the Council was committed to commissioning services to provide and offer the homeless support and encouragement into accommodation.
6. In response to a supplementary question on the specialist help for children with special needs and mental health issues, Councillor Maria Gatland, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. She said that the Council had improved, communication with parents and working very closely with them in various forms and the Council was doing its best to address the issue of long waiting lists waiting lists.
7. In response to a supplementary question if there about educating residents and business owners in the local area who were repeat offenders. Councillor Scott Roche explained that the Council had an educational programme as part of the Blitz Campaign which involved reminding businesses about helpful information such as bin collection days, commercial licences and various ways of waste disposal.

114/24 **Reports to Council**

115/24 **Proposed Changes to the Constitution**

It was moved by Councillor Sean Fitzsimmons, the Chair of the General Purposes Committee, who thanked Members from all the political groups at the Constitution Working Group for their hard work towards the proposals in the reports. This was seconded by Councillor Luke Shortland and for the reasons set out in the reports and appendices, Council **RESOLVED** to:

1. Approve the proposed changes to the Constitution as set out in the respective reports and appendices attached to the report to Council and as recommended by the General Purposes Committee;
2. Authorise the Monitoring Officer to update the Constitution and make any consequential changes;
3. Note that further changes will be made to the TCR's when regulations under the Procurement Act 2023 are finalised and the new procurement regime is fully in force; and
4. Note those changes to the TCR's which are executive functions of the Council.

116/24 **The Local Plan Review**

Mayor Jason Perry in moving the recommendations, stated that the report outlined how housing needs would be achieved whilst preserving Croydon's character and creating vibrant places for people to live, work, and visit. He highlighted the following areas of the Plan:

- new policies on Houses with Multiple Occupation (HMOs) to minimise that often negative impact on neighbours, with new policies focused on the environmental impact, such as in stores, as well as the cumulative impact of an over, concentration of HMOS within a particular area.
- climate change policies, which bring Croydon into line with 2021 London Plan for achieving Next Zero with post, development monitoring being put in place.
- amended policy around cemeteries and burial grounds to meet the burial needs of all communities within the borough.

He further stated the following:

- the views of communities, given in the 2022 consultation, and more recently, through workshops with Resident Associations, and councillors had been taken on board to ensure that the changes to the local plan would serve Croydon residents.

- the Plan would ensure contribution to meeting housing needs and supporting sustainable development whilst protecting the character of Croydon's neighbourhoods.
- the Plan had been reviewed at a scrutiny sub-committee and a six, week consultation would take place this summer to gather the opinions of residents, businesses, and community groups about the proposed changes and to test the soundness of the plan against the Council's evidence base.
- the acceptance of the Labour Group amendments.

Councillor Mohammed Islam, stated that after various meetings with local communities, it became clear that there was a need to ensure a provision of burial facilities that met the needs of all people in our borough.

He stated that the nearest Muslim burial ground, Eternal Gardens in Campbell Park, Sidcup was nearly an hour driven from Croydon, a journey that could be daunting and burdensome, especially during time a time of mourning.

With the Labour Group amendment, residents could look forward to a future where the establishment of new burial grounds in the borough was not encumbered by policy restriction.

Councillor Chris Clark stated that there were thousands of people on the council housing waiting list and according to the 2023 Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 1,817 new affordable homes must be built each year meet this level of need. The labour Group amendment which proposed representations to the government to make changes to national planning policies would enable this level of annual need for affordable homes to be met, and the Council would work with partners, including the Greater London Authority and the Government, to maximize the delivery of affordable housing in our Croydon every year.

He highlighted other proposed amendments from the Labour Group such as:

- to reduce the environmental impact and effects on neighbours of any new Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) by making it a requirement that they must have adequate space for recycling.
- to facilitate the delivery of additional spaces will meet the future needs of all communities in our borough by making clear that meeting places in the borough for voluntary and community sector organisations were desired and therefore to be protected and their availability improved.
- to promote the delivery of air quality, positive developments. To encourage modern, energy efficient building techniques for the construction of times.

- to make it clear that the most appropriate site for a new university in Croydon was in the town centre.

Councillor Jeet Bains who seconded and reserved the right to speak stated that the local plan review, evidence space had been updated and the Plan would contribute to meeting the borough's housing need which was a confirmation of the Special Strategy to concentrate development in the most sustainable locations, the inclusion of a new policy in respect to HMOS, the identification of local green spaces, and updating policies to address climate change.

In closing, Mayor Jason Perry said that it was important to consider the impact of new schemes on the environment especially in case of HMOS, the new bespoke policy would ensure air quality, meet minimum space standards and the threat of over spilling bins would no longer be the norm in future.

For the reasons set out in the report, Cabinet report 27th March 2024, associated appendices (Appendix 1) and Labour Group amendment, Council **RESOLVED** to agree:

- 1.1 The submission of the draft Croydon Local Plan Review and its associated Sustainability Appraisal (as per Appendix 1 but subject to the amendments set out in 4.6, the Labour Group amendment and any further minor changes arising from any representations received) to the Secretary of State following the conclusion of the statutory 6- week publication and consultation period in accordance with; Section 20(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and;
- 2.1 Delegate to the Corporate Director for Sustainable Communities, Regeneration and Economic Recovery, in consultation with the Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration, the making of minor modifications and factual corrections to the draft Croydon Local Plan Review and its associated Sustainability Appraisal arising from any representations received and prior to submission to the Secretary of State.

117/24 **Questions to the Mayor and Executive**

Mayor Jason Perry, used the first 3 minutes to highlight the following:

- The second blitz clean campaign had started in Thornton Heath from West Thornton this week. This was part of the ongoing commitment to cleaning up Croydon's streets and district centres.
- Lesson learnt from the successful Norbury Blitz campaign had resulted in a three-pronged approach to tackle street licensing, commercial waste licenses, and domestic waste from flats and HMOs. Also following Blitz Clean up in Norbury, there was an 84 percent reduction in flight tipping.

- This campaign would likely take place over two-month period and would target graffiti and residents have requested the Council to crack down illegal parking. Police activities would also target fly tipping and the Council would be working local businesses and residents to provide ongoing advice and support to help keep the area looking its best after the clean-up.

The Executive Mayor then gave the following answers to questions asked by Members:

- Conversations with Maintain Nursery Schools have been ongoing since the decision in December with sessions with the community. There was a slight improvement as some nurseries had improved their position, but a deficit remained. A report on this would be coming to Cabinet, in May or June 2024.
- There were a number of factors to be taken into consideration in deciding the closure of any Maintained Nursery School such as results of the consultation and if any financial improvement made would be sustainable. The decision would be made at Cabinet.
- Councillor Hale as Cabinet Member for Homes was having regular meetings with the Housing Regulator. The Council was reshaping the Housing department to ensure a better delivery of the Housing Transformation plan and Council was engaging with resident through the Housing Improvement Board.
- Council had appointed carbon neutral program managers who were reviewing the Carbon Neutral Action Plan for implementation.
- The Mayor confirmed he would be to meet with residents in upper Norwood in a Brick by Brick built Shared ownership scheme to discuss the 35 percent increase in property management services and would work to improve conditions for tenants and residents in housing across the borough.
- The changes to the Local Plan would provide stricter policies to control the environment around HMOs.
- Air quality was now part of the Local Plan and the policies, once adopted, would be used to incentivize developers to incorporate air quality improvement measures into their projects.
- Environmental health and planning conditions breaches were being taken seriously. The Council's enforcement team now had a new team leader and had managed to reduce caseloads. The team they had dealt with 19 cases so far with two cases which may go to court.

- The Police were making effective use of the recently reintroduced public protection order to ensure the safety of the town centre. Along with the reviewed Community Safety Strategy, and the delivery plans, the Council was working with Partners and volunteers to undertake the number of initiatives and to engage on, different issues around safety in the town centre.
- The Council was trying to tackle the issue of the viability of the High Street in different ways such as using the Mayor's good growth fund to make improvements to Portland Road.
- When the contact centre contract was brought in house, it became apparent that the number of calls was greater than it was under the previous contractor. Permanent Staff were recruited in April and resources were now being built up to deal with the issues presenting at the centre and improvements would be monitored through engagement of residents.
- The case of an elderly resident with boiler issues for over a year would be considered by the Mayor.
- The recommendation from Home Scrutiny to set up a direct contact with the voluntary sector and support workers would be considered and a response provided accordingly.
- The results of the recently concluded consultation on the Brighton Road Cycle Scheme would be presented at Cabinet soon.
- It would be communicated when the improvements on the Portland Road Bridge would begin.
- The South Norwood Regeneration Programme was on track with the funding being used for many projects such as mentoring support for Six businesses.
- The medical centre would be an excellent facility for the health care for residents. Planning applications would be submitted soon and hopefully the Centre would be opened next year.
- There was a lot of work happening about getting community space that was meaningful and affordable into new developments and Developers were partnering with local community groups to take the place once built.
- The backlog of planning enforcement cases had been reduced by 25 percent as the Council recruited a new team leader with the aim of reducing case loads and making sure the residents get the desired service.

- The successful Harris Primary School trial Streets Programme would be taken forward by Council.
- Over 300,000 people attended actual physical events during Croydon's year as the London Borough of Culture. The numbers are being finalised.
- Planning officers work very closely with developers to bring forward schemes such as NHS schemes for the benefit of local residents.
- Public space protection orders are part of that dealing with trouble hot spots. The Council was using this to do lots of work around tackling the violence against women.

118/24 **Maiden Speeches**

Council heard the Maiden Speeches of the following Councillors:

- Councillor Bridgette Graham, Woodside Ward
- Councillor Eunice O'Dame, Bensham Manor Ward.

119/24 **Appointments**

There were no appointments made at this meeting.

120/24 **Council Debate Motions**

Conservative Group Debate Motion

Mayor Jason Perry in opening the debate, stated that Council agreed to the removal of SPD on 20 July 2022 and the reviewed local plan would address the concerns of residents over development by eliminating intensification zones, realignment of housing targets in accordance with the London plan, place emphasis on design character over density. He said that various housing needs would be met but not at the expense of Croydon's unique character.

Councillor Ellily Ponnuthurai in speaking to the motion, argued that an unacceptable number of people, nationally and locally, had neither a house nor a home and the number of rough sleepers had doubled across the country.

She explained that people were priced out of any aspirations to own their home and young adults were forced to live at home as priced out. While she welcomed the ambitions of the local plan to build affordable homes, and agreed that design and place were important considerations, but also so was the quality of life as more social and affordable houses were desperately

needed and none was approved by the planning committee in this municipal year.

Councillor Ian Parker who seconded the motion, in speaking to the motion stated that the motion encapsulated the wishes of Croydon's residents and it recognised a clear commitment to amend planning policy, and guidance, emphasised the importance of design and density and highlighted the desire to protect green spaces, improve access and community facilities for all.

Councillor Stuart King argued that the SPD was removed with cross party support and though the motion acknowledged the importance of meeting housing targets, it must be done in a sustainable way. He said that residents were staying in temporary accommodation for years due to a lack of affordable housing and this was not helped by the fact that the planning committee had not approved any affordable housing in the last year.

In closing the debate, Mayor Jason Perry stated that listening to residents was top priority and the removal of the SPD had addressed concerns raised by residents. He said that the upcoming consultation would present a further opportunity to listen to residents so that the right roadmap could be provided for growth as future developments would respect the borough's local neighbourhoods and much needed new homes would be provided in a way that worked for residents and enhanced the local community. The motion was another step towards delivering for Croydon's residents in the future.

The motion was put to the vote and Council **RESOLVED** to note that:

"Croydon Council recognises the great progress that has been made over the last two years to restore residents' trust in planning matters.

Council notes the decision made in 2022 to scrap the Supplementary Planning Document "Suburban Design Guide" adopted by Croydon Council in April 2019.

Council further notes and supports the wish of Mayor Jason Perry to reform the Local Plan in order to return to a design-led approach to planning, with the removal of the designated "intensification zones."

Council agrees that meeting our housing targets is important, and also agrees that this must be done in a sustainable way. Council agrees that it is important to prioritise design over density, recognising the character of Croydon's diverse and unique places as well as recognising the needs and aspirations of our residents.

Council further agrees the importance of protecting our precious green spaces from inappropriate development."

Mayor Jason Perry thanked members for their support and said the Council had many challenges with finances, the housing and planning departments but the motion would bring it a step closer to delivering for residents and continue the journey of improvement.

Labour Group Debate Motion

Councillor Chrishni Reshekaron opened the debate stating that the national housing crisis was one of the biggest challenges facing the country and good quality housing was a fundamental right. She said that more affordable housing in Croydon would mean less people becoming homeless due to rent arrears, deaths and the number of residents seeking social housing would reduce.

She explained that Councillors received many housing cases related to heating, boiler, leaks, overcrowding damp and mould issues and in Croydon, 2589 children were living in temporary accommodation and the number of rough sleepers and the homeless was increasing and ethnic minorities households were more likely to be homeless.

She argued that the Strategic Housing Market Assessment had calculated that 1817 affordable, rented homes a year would be needed in Croydon and the London Plan target required 2079 houses to be built per year, however, in 2020 to 2023, only 115 affordable homes were approved in Croydon.

In closing, she said the only solution was to build more homes and the Council had to be more ambitious and build more affordable housing, which would reduce inequality, deal with financial pressures, homelessness, and rough sleeping, and help build a fairer society.

Councillor Lynne Hale speaking in support of the motion, argued that to effectively address the demand for housing in Croydon, there was a need to ensure that the Council was providing a range of accommodation to suit the needs of residents by providing the right homes in the right places. She explained that although new developments such as Regina Road indicated good progress that homes were being built to meet housing targets, the Council also wanted to ensure that only viable plans were progressed. She stated that the housing crisis was a national problem that required a national solution such as changes to national planning policies and government funding arrangements that would enable the level of annual need to be met in Croydon and across our country.

Councillor Chris Clark speaking in support of the motion stressed the need to build more homes to make sure that the homes offered would meet every need.

He stated that the housing crisis was a national problem that required a national solution such as changes to national planning policies and government funding arrangements that would enable the level of annual need to be met in Croydon and across our country.

In closing, he said that changes like giving local authorities and housing associations long term stability so they would have the confidence and

security to invest in affordable social and council housing stock, they could unlock government grants to deliver new homes and stop developers from wriggling out of their responsibilities.

Councillor Simon Fox speaking in support of the motion stated that both for rent or sale, many aspiring homeowners were finding it increasingly difficult to enter the market. This had created a gap leading to social inequality and lack of upward mobility.

He explained that the shortage of homes had also impacted the rental market and as the number of available homes decreased, rental prices increased, making it more challenging for Individuals and families.

In closing he said that the inability to find suitable and affordable housing was affecting both low and middle income households in the Borough. By addressing the shortage of housing, the Council could stimulate economic growth and promote a more sustainable future.

The motion was put to the vote and Council **RESOLVED** to note that:

"This Council agrees that building more homes - including genuinely affordable homes for rent - is the principal way to address the national housing crisis as it affects Croydon."

Mayor Jason Perry stated that forthcoming developments such as Regina Road and Red Clover Gardens would provide a significant number of new affordable homes for Croydon's residents along with the review of the Local Plan review reflected the Council's commitment to deliver affordable homes to residents.

The meeting ended at 9.26 pm

Signed:

Date:

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