

Public Questions – 9th October 2024

1. Local libraries are the lifeblood and even, for some of the most vulnerable, the lifeline of local communities. What evidence was used for the decision to close the 4 local libraries in Croydon?

Response

The libraries service review included an extensive review of the library service, the findings from the consultation and the need in the borough. This research formed the evidence to inform the proposed model and the Cabinet decision. The research can be found in full as part of the report pack for Cabinet on 25th September and is published on our website.

2. Why has the council disbanded phoned lines and gone on to Wi-Fi? And when you ask for parking enforcement you get a voice asking for mailbox number because the council Wi-Fi keeps going down.

Response

Parking Services have not taken calls since 2019. PCN disputes are part of a statutory process which can sometimes end up at adjudication. Residents are therefore asked to communicate via the online portal, by email or in writing; the Croydon website provides the relevant contact/reporting information. Officers are investigating server related issues that appear to occur with a view to a solution as soon as is practicably possible.

3. How does the council think climate change will impact Croydon and its citizens over the next 5 years?

What has been/ is being put in place to minimise this impact?

And specifically, what has been/ is being put in place to ensure climate change doesn't exacerbate inequality in the borough?

Response

Croydon are committed to tackling climate change in partnership with London Councils in a way which that works for all Londoners. We are working on the climate programme that London needs to achieve net-zero. Croydon council have in place the Carbon Neutral Action Plan to address this ambitious and complex programme. This requires a multifaceted response from the council, businesses, the travelling public and other partners.

The Carbon Neutral Action Plan was approved by Croydon council's Cabinet in February 2022 and over the last year the council has been reviewing and revising the existing plan, with a view to updating and sharing the progress made to date. It is proposed that a revised Carbon Neutral Action Plan (Climate Action Plan) will involve a climate risk assessment which will also aim to look at vulnerability assessments to provide pathways for action on climate adaptation and mitigation.

In addition, the council's Croydon Flood risk management strategy and action plan is in place and a number of associated projects are ongoing. For example, there has been installation of SUDS in places across the borough to mitigate impacts of flooding and the proposed Local Plan integrates flood management to minimise flood risk through strategic development accompanied by flood risk assessments in vulnerable zones, encouraging sustainable drainage and rainwater management. The revised plan is intended to be presented to Cabinet in December 2024 and is scheduled to be discussed at Streets and Environment scrutiny committee on the 8 October 2024.

4. AFC Croydon Athletic have famous sponsors who are withholding donations as it appears that the Council has reduced the amount they said they would contribute.

Does the Council understand how important the football club is in keeping young people off the streets and fit and healthy, and will it contribute as per the original agreement?

Response

The Council recognises the value that AFC Croydon Athletic brings to the community. We are unaware of any requests for funding from Croydon AFC, and can confirm that the Council has not made any commitment to provide any funding contribution, or to reduce any funding contribution, and have no record of any commitment to contribute, let alone a reduction.

Officers did liaise with representatives from AFC Croydon some time ago to explore the possibility of including them in a project with the Football Foundation that was seeking external funding to introduce a Multi-Use Games Area. Unfortunately, the project did not progress beyond initial conversations for several reasons. Whilst the Council does not have funding available to directly support sports clubs, we would be happy to have further discussions with Croydon AFC to explore potential opportunities to bid for external funding.

5. Please could the Mayor, as Leader of Council, explain the extent his powers reference democratic accountability?

For example:

Governments DON'T make you HAPPY

They CAN'T make you HEALTHY

They DON'T make you WEALTHY

They CAN'T make you WISE

The best they can do is create a light-touch legal framework - and let the people THRIVE.

Mayor imposing phone-only parking, despite public opposition.

Mayor closing 4 of 13 libraries, despite mass opposition – ignoring options such as Sutton have at Roundshaw – open seven days weekly mostly unstaffed, usually 7am to 9pm.

We don't care what you say – we are going ahead anyway.

Response

We'll take the substantive points of your question in order.

On parking, our 'pay and display' machines are reaching the end of their useful life with the imminent removal of 3G connectivity and increasing maintenance costs. Significant capital investment would be required for new machines and given the current financial position of the Council, this is not possible.

We understand that change can be difficult and I can assure that every effort is being made to ensure that the transition to mobile payment parking is as smooth as possible. We have listened to the issues raised through pilot schemes and are working to mitigate the impact of change wherever possible. As a result, a PayPoint option for those who prefer to make cash or card payments, may be available at any shop that offers PayPoint.

On libraries, during the library services review a range of different options were considered for the library service, as detailed in the Cabinet report packs of 31st January and 25th September.

Sutton's Phoenix Centre Library at Roundshaw is located in a larger building with multiple partners including a youth zone and a gym. This model of co-location enables the sharing of resources and the library to be accessible via self service for longer hours. It also brings footfall and visitors into the library. The four libraries proposed to close are located in small sites without any partners identified as interested in co-location alongside a library. We have sought to develop this approach where there is an opportunity, for example in New Addington, Purley and South Norwood.

6. Has the Council heard from DCMS (Dept. for Culture, Media & Sport) regarding their response to the Library Campaign letter objecting to the Council's "Consultation" procedures?

Response

The Council is aware that DCMS has received correspondence from The Library Campaign dated 30 September. We understand that DCMS will respond to that letter in line with its departmental deadlines. The Council has engaged with DCMS throughout the review process and is continuing to engage with them on the implementation of the new library model.