

CROYDON COUNCIL

MINUTES

**of the meeting held on
Monday 23rd February 2015 at 6.30 p.m.
in the Council Chamber**

THE MAYOR, COUNCILLOR MANJU SHAHUL-HAMEED - PRESIDING.

Councillors Audsley, Ali, Avis, Bains, Bashford, Bee, Benn, Bennett, Bird, Bonner, Brew, Butler, Buttinger, Canning, Chatterjee, Chowdhury, Clancy, Clouder, Collins, Creatura, Cummings, Fisher, Fitzsimons, Flemming, Gatland, Godfrey, Hale, Hall, Hay-Justice, Henson, Hollands, Hopley, Jewitt, Kabir, Khan B, Khan S, King Kyeremeh, Lawlor, Letts, Lewis, Mann, Mansell, Mead D, Mead M, Mohan, Neal, Newman, O'Connell, Pelling, Perry, Pollard H, Pollard T, Prince, Quadir, Rendle, Ryan P, Scott, Selva, Speakman, Stranack, Thomas, Thompson, Watson, Winborn, Woodley, Wright

ABSENT: Councillor Wentworth.

The Mayor announced the sad news that Honorary Alderman Yvonne Stewart had recently passed away. Honorary Alderman Stewart served as a Councillor for West Thornton Ward from 1974 until 1986.

The Council stood and observed a minutes silence for Honorary Alderman Stewart.

The Mayor announced that following a request from the Leader of the Council and supported by the Leader of the Opposition she had agreed to vary the order of business. The Council Tax Debate listed as Agenda item 8 would now be taken before Agenda item 7, Business Report of the Leader and Cabinet. In addition the number of speakers for the Council Tax debate would be increased from 6 to 10 per group. Agenda item 6, 2016-17 Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools would be taken as the final item of the meeting

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (agenda item 1)

Apologises were received from Councillor Wentworth.

2 MINUTES (agenda item 2)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 26th January 2015 be signed as a correct record.

3 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST (agenda item 3)

All Members of the Council confirmed that their interests as listed in their Declaration of Interests Forms were accurate and up-to-date.

4 URGENT BUSINESS (agenda item 4)

None

5 ANNOUNCEMENTS (agenda item 5)

The Mayor thanked Members for their support of her various charity events. She reminded Members of forthcoming events, details of which were on noticeboards in the Members area.

6 COUNCIL TAX DEBATE (Agenda item 8)

The Council debated the Recommendations as contained in the Leader and Cabinet Business Report (agenda item 7), including the following reports:

- 1) General Fund and HRA budget 2015/16 and financial strategy 2015/19.
- 2) Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement & Annual Investment Strategy 2015/16.

Councillor Tony Newman moved the recommendations contained in the report as printed in the Council agenda under agenda item 7, Business Report of the Leader and Cabinet and Councillor Alison Butler seconded.

Councillor Tony Newman opened the debate and spoke of the achievements of the Labour Administration since being elected in May 2014. These include

- Becoming a London Living Wage Council,
- Tackling Domestic Violence was a priority,
- ‘Don’t Mess with Croydon’ campaign launched,
- Fairness and Opportunity Commission launched,
- Affordable housing requirements in new developments set at 30%,
- A private landlords scheme consulted on,
- Growth Borough status agreed,
- Procurement strategy changed to support local business,
- A return of Croydon’s Ambition Festival,
- A developing arts and culture strategy,
- A proactive business growth policy to bring new businesses to Croydon,
- 20mph across the Borough being consulted on,

Councillor Newman went on to say that he was proud to be the Leader of the Council and that the budget being proposed would deliver a freeze in Council Tax and the lowest local authority housing rent increase in London. Councillor Newman thanked officers for their hard work in preparing the budget documents and for the support from the Labour Group in embracing the three year budget.

Councillor Newman said that the budget proposals were based on sound economics and sound values to fund those policies to be implemented and would mean that the Administration would retain a tight control on the Council budget.

Councillor Newman said that there was still much to do, young people of the Borough were not being given the opportunity have their potential recognised, ambition for Croydon was at the heart of everything the Administration was doing.

In summing up Councillor Newman said that Council Tax would be frozen, the budget was balanced and public services were being put first.

Councillor Tim Pollard, speaking against the motion, also thanked officers for their hard work in the preparation of the budget papers. He went on to speak about the claims that £100m was a deficit rather than a pressure on the Council budget for the next 3 years. He reminded Members that this was the same figure that the Conservatives had to find when they were in power following the reduction in funds received from central government. He refuted the claim that Council Tax had been frozen saying that every household would be paying £25 more than last year. He went on to express concerns about a number of other aspects in the budget including:-

- The changes to the Council Pension Fund,
- Where funding would be found for the Culture budget,
- Questioned the cut in the roads budget,
- Failure to build any Council houses.

Councillor Simon Hall, supporting the motion opened by saying that this budget was a new approach and direction, focusing on residents and targeting use of the limited funds available. Government cuts to local government funding meant that a different approach had to be taken to deliver the services that resident's require. The budget had been set for a three year strategy starting from a realistic base with a realistic timeframe for implementation. There would be investment in school places, regeneration, vulnerable adults and children services, technology improvements will produce savings, and bringing services in-house rather than outsourcing will produce further saving.

Councillor Jason Cummings speaking against opened by saying that this was a budget with just one aim, to get through to the end of May and the parliamentary elections. He continued by saying that budgets usually have three sets of fingerprints, the officers who prepare the papers, the Leader and finance cabinet member. These papers followed that pattern but Councillor Cummings questioned whether all the policies were agreed between the Leader and Cabinet Member. He went on to talk about the school playing fields "sell off" and the proposed closure of Purley Pool that were reviewed following public protest.

Councillor Alisa Flemming said she was proud to support the budget that would implement changes desperately needed by the residents of the borough. This Administration will put people first. There will be a family friendly approach towards jobs to allow flexible working, flexible and affordable childcare and affordable housing. Vulnerable people in the borough need places to go and it is important to

protect the front line services that help people in need. Councillor Flemming also called for a ban on zero hour contracts, especially for young people, to allow people to earn a decent wage.

Councillor Yvette Hopley speaking against said she was pleased to speak at this important meeting as budget setting has a direct impact on every resident in the borough. She spoke about the decisions being made and the consequences these have on residents. In particular she raised concerns about the pension fund and the implication of changes that could mean the liability would be underwritten by the Council Tax payers. She went on to speak about the replacement of financial advisors, co-opted members and fund managers and the switching of pension funds. In summing up Councillor Hopley expressed her disappointment that Conservative members had not been permitted to speak to the new Pension Fund managers.

Councillor Louisa Woodley, speaking for the motion, opened by saying that despite a cut in health and social care funding from central government the Administration would increase spending to look after vulnerable people in the borough, children with disabilities and mental health services. The London Living Wage would now be met by all service providers meaning that care workers would now only need to do one job. The 'Meals on Wheels' service would allow for hot meals to be delivered or cooked in homes allowing residents to stay in their own home. In summing up Councillor Woodley said that working with health partners to care for the over 65s and facilitating people to remain in their homes were priorities.

Councillor Maria Gatland, speaking against said that all councillors wanted the best for children and young people in the borough and praised the improvements seen in schools under the previous Administration. She went on to say that she hoped these improvements would continue as it had been highlighted by the local press that many talented and high achieving children are lost to the borough by attending schools in adjacent boroughs. Councillor Gatland welcomed the investment in primary school places but questioned the lack of planning for increased demand for secondary school places.

Councillor Stuart King, speaking in support, opened by saying that even in times of extreme and unprecedented austerity, local government can still make a difference to the people they serve. Councillor King went on to speak about some of the achievements that had been made since May 2014, these included improved street cleaning, over 400 duty of care visits to shops & business to ensure proper trade waste agreements are in place, quicker removal of fly tipping, and additional evening street cleaning on the most used road in the borough. Additional staff have been recruited to the enforcement team and additional vehicles were being used to remove fly tips. In summing up he spoke about recent successful prosecutions for fly tipping and thanked residents for their participation as street champions.

Councillor Margaret Mead, speaking against, said that Councillor Woodley had inherited a good budget with significant growth for this year for those suffering from mental disorders and for young people. Councillor Mead spoke about the funds being put into intervention services, like the Talking Services, but asked if more could be found as early intervention was so important. She went on to express concern about the changes to the 'Meals on Wheels' service where over 2000 hot meals are

served each week and hoped this would continue, saying that the daily contact with housebound residents was very important. Councillor Mead also raised concerns about the overspend on the care package budget and hoped that cuts would not have to be made to front line services to the elderly and vulnerable to balance the books.

Councillor Hamida Ali, speaking for the budget, thanked officers saying that there were many difficult challenges. She went on to say that the budget was a reasonable and fair one, seeking to protect front line services. She went on the question the funding formula used by central government that had led to many of the pressures now being seen. Councillor Ali continued to say that the Administration had tackled many inequalities since coming to power; paying the London living wage, doubling the affordable housing requirement to 30% for new developments, stopping the conversion of office space to substandard housing and setting the lowest rents in London. There were also plans for regeneration in previously neglected parts of the borough. There was still much to do, there are too few highly skilled and highly paid jobs in the borough for local residents, retail growth needs to benefit local residents, housing needs to be affordable.

Councillor Dudley Mead, speaking against, said that he agreed with Councillor Butler that rents, including garages, should be increased by 2.2% but did not agree with the withdrawal of the 2 week rent free period offered by the previous Administration. Rent collection is at 99% has continued at a record high and the funds in the HRA mean that a 2 week rent free period is affordable. He went on to say that the current Administration had said they would spend money on new houses but that has not happened with only 2 houses completed in the last 9 months. Councillor Mead then spoke about the Tenants & Leaseholders Panel where a verbal summary was given on the reorganisation of the Housing department and they requested a written summary for consideration. Part of the reorganisation means that Neighbourhood wardens will be taken away and combined with the area enforcements team. In summing up Councillor Mead said he suspected that the HRA will be used to subsidise the general fund which he did not think was allowed. Councillor Mead also expressed his disappointment that Conservative members of the Pension Committee had been denied the opportunity to speak to the new fund managers.

Councillor Toni Letts, speaking for the motion, said that the opposition must walk around with their eyes closed not to see the improvements that have occurred over the last 9 months. The signs are there, numerous cranes showing where new developments are in place, residents can see the growth in the borough and the ambition that the Administration have for the borough. Councillor Letts went on to say that the transport link sets Croydon apart from neighbouring borough and the benefits this brings cannot over stated. New start-up businesses will be support by the Council, this in turn will grow jobs for local residents. She went on to say that the Council was a pro-business Council, not just for the Town Centre but also the district centres. The new procurement procedures meant that small local business were now included. The Growth plan will deliver investment and jobs to the borough.

Councillor Lynne Hale, speaking against the motion, said she was disappointed with the Culture, Leisure and Sport budget. She said that the investment in Fairfield Halls

was welcomed but did not think it would be to give the major overhaul and refurbishment that the building required. She also raised concern over the cuts to the budgets that supply our parks with plants and bulbs, repairs the fences, marks out the tennis courts, and also plants and prunes the trees lining so many of our streets. Councillor Hale said that Croydon had a fantastic reputation for its green spaces and had won many Green Flag awards in the past. She expressed the importance of these areas to local communities. In summing up Councillor Hale welcomed the decision not to close Purley Pool but said the papers were light on the detail of this.

Councillor Andrew Rendle, speaking for the motion, congratulated Councillor Hall and officers for the budget despite the cuts in funding from central government. He went on to say that the Administration had not only frozen council tax, kept rents low it was also looking to the future, not just one but the next three years. Councillor Rendle spoke about the Ashburton Library building and park that would receive investment and be used by the local community as a multi-function facility. The budget will invest in the community and in the environment, cleaner streets, affordable homes for local people, jobs for local people and better education.

Councillor Michael Neal, speaking against the motion, spoke about the HRA reserves and asked why the two week rent free weeks had been withdrawn. He went on to say that the £100 million was not a 'blackhole', as described by the Administration, but the amount the Council has to save over the next 3 years. He went on to question the attempt to close Purley Pool whilst building a new facility in New Addington, and whilst welcoming the investment in Fairfield Halls the amount was considerably less than the previous Administration had proposed. In summing up Councillor Neal said that Council Tax was increasing by £25 per household and only the GLA precept was reducing. He also questioned the reduction in the road repairs budget and the green waste collection being reviewed with a proposal to charge for the service.

Councillor Mark Watson, speaking for the motion, opened by saying the Government had presided over the biggest drop in the standard of living since the Second World War. Many residents are on zero hours contracts, many of the most vulnerable have had their benefits cut. Despite the government cuts the Administration has delivered a balanced budget, frozen Council Tax and listened to residents' concerns. Many residents are concerned about anti-social behaviour, envirocrime, noisy neighbours and the budget will protect front line enforcement teams with the monies collected from fines being put back into the service. There will be more police officers on the streets in New Addington and Fieldway, more funds have been put into domestic violence services.

Councillor Watson went on to say that one of the manifesto promises was to engage with residents more, this has resulted in webcasting of Council meetings, a weekly Your Croydon newsletter, the introduction of Croydon apps to allow residents to report fly-tipping. The Croydon website has been redesigned and the My Account service had been improved. In summing up Councillor Watson said that the voluntary sector budget would be protected, and with the gold standard equalities policies in place would look after the vulnerable and work with the credit union to help those using pay day loans.

Councillor Mario Creatura, speaking against the motion, said that local politicians were under scrutiny by local residents to see what we spend money on. He went on to say that the budget papers showed a surplus of funds and asked what that money would be spent on. Funds had already been used to remove boulders in Central Parade, the setting up of Fairness and Opportunity Commission and an ambition festival. He went on to say that the poorest in the borough continue to struggle, the two week rent break had been removed, rents and parking had been increased and bulk waste collections fees have increased. There is little detail in the budget papers regarding the retaining of Purley Pool or Ashburton library and in summing up Councillor Creature asked how would this be paid for.

Councillor Stuart Collins, speaking for the motion, said that this was a positive budget from a positive Administration. The freeze in Council Tax kept a manifesto promise, a Council that leads the fight against domestic violence, a council that can have a summer festival, more affordable housing, play streets, 20 mph zones to make the streets safer and run a campaign to have cleaner streets. Councillor Collins spoke about replacing recycling boxes with wheelie bins that would help to reduce land fill charges. In summing up Councillor Collins challenged councillors to be more positive about developments and initiatives that would save money whilst giving first class service.

Councillor Sara Bashford, speaking against the motion, said the options put forward are the Administrations' choices. She went on to say that any Administration would have to make cuts but what and how much is the choice of the Administration. Councillor Bashford went to say that this was the first budget in 8 years from a Labour Administration and it showed what areas were important to spend money on and what areas were not so important. Councillor Bashford then went on to speak about some of the manifesto promises that had not been fulfilled, not having an incinerator built in Sutton, leaving the waste partnership, moving staff out of Bernard Weatherill House and bringing library services back in house.

Councillor Alison Butler, speaking as a right to reply, said that the Administration did deliver. £10million for new council homes, affordable housing percentages in new developments had been increased, regeneration of estates across the borough not just the town centre, the lowest rent rises in London, continued investment in decent homes, commitment to improve standards in the private rented sector, a new approach to homelessness and working with housing associations to ensure Croydon is their borough of choice. Councillor Butler went on to speak about the district centre regeneration plans for Addington, Purley, South Norwood and Thornton Heath. She continued to say that too many residents were experiencing the lowest standard on living for a long time and that the Administration's plans would give more affordable homes for local people. The Government had reduced funding for housing, introduced the bedroom tax, permitted development rights and the benefits cap, whilst not taking into account the level of rents in London. Councillor Butler said that this Administration would invest in the most vulnerable, deliver affordable housing targets, invest in the cultural offer and not cut front line services.

Following the debate the a poll vote was taken as required by legislation,

The recommendations were **put** and **carried** 38 -29

Councillor			Yes	no
Hamida	Ali	L	✓	
Jamie	Audsley	L	✓	
Jane	Avis	L	✓	
Jeet	Bains	C		✓
Sara	Bashford	C		✓
Kathy	Bee	L	✓	
Emily	Benn	L	✓	
Sue	Bennett	C		✓
Margaret	Bird	c		✓
Carole	Bonner	L	✓	
Simon	Brew	C		✓
Alison	Butler	L	✓	
Jan	Buttinger	C		✓
Robert	Canning	L	✓	
Richard	Chatterjee	C		✓
Sherwan	Chowdhury	L	✓	
Luke	Clancy	C		✓
Pat	Clouder	L	✓	
Stuart	Collins	L	✓	
Mario	Creatura	C		✓
Jason	Cummings	C		✓
Mike	Fisher	C		✓
Sean	Fitzsimons	L	✓	
Alisa	Flemming	L	✓	
Maria	Gatland	C		✓
Timothy	Godfrey	L	✓	
Lynne	Hale	C		✓
Simon	Hall	L	✓	
Patricia	Hay-Justice	L	✓	
Maddie	Henson	L	✓	
Steve	Hollands	C		✓
Yvette	Hopley	C		✓
Karen	Jewitt	L	✓	
Humayun	Kabir	L	✓	
Bernadette	Khan	L	✓	
Shafi	Khan	L	✓	
Stuart	King	L	✓	
Matthew	Kyeremeh	L	✓	
Wayne	Lawlor	L	✓	

Toni	Letts	L	✓	
Oliver	Lewis	L	✓	
Stephen	Mann	L	✓	
Maggie	Mansell	L	✓	
Margaret	Mead	C		✓
Dudley	Mead	C		✓
Vidhi	Mohan	C		✓
Michael	Neal	C		✓
Tony	Newman	L	✓	
Steve	O'Connell	C	Absent	
Andrew	Pelling	L	✓	
Jason	Perry	C		✓
Helen	Pollard	C		✓
Tim	Pollard	C		✓
Joy	Prince	L	✓	
Badsha	Quadir	C		✓
Andrew	Rendle	L	✓	
Pat	Ryan	L	✓	
Paul	Scott	L	✓	
Mike	Selva	L	✓	
Donald	Speakman	C		✓
Andy	Stranack	C		✓
Phil	Thomas	C		✓
James	Thompson	C		✓
Mark	Watson	L	✓	
John	Wentworth	L	Absent	
Susan	Winborn	C		✓
Louisa	Woodley	L	✓	
Chris	Wright	C		✓
The Mayor	Councillor			
Manju	Shahul-Hameed	L	✓	

7. BUSINESS REPORT OF THE LEADER AND CABINET AND COUNCILLORS' WRITTEN QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS (agenda item 7)

The Leader presented the Business Report summarising the proceedings of the Cabinet meeting held on 17 February 2015 relating to the Council Tax and Budget process.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules, written questions had been submitted in advance by Council Members and written replies had been given by the relevant Cabinet Members. The questions and answers had been placed in the Chamber. Supplementary questions were asked by Members of the Council and replies were given by the relevant Cabinet Members.

Each Cabinet Member was asked in turn if they had anything to add to their report. Questions were then invited from the Chamber for each Cabinet Member who replied orally to the questions on specific paragraphs or submitted questions.

Before taking questions Councillor Newman advised Members that following the defacing of public art the Council would use all its powers to bring the culprits to justice. This statement was supported by Councillor Tim Pollard.

The following Members asked questions on the Business Report
Cabinet Member:

Leader: Councillors T Pollard, Stranack, Bashford, Lewis and Thomas

Councillor Hall: Councillors Fitzsimons, Canning, Mansell, Creatura and Hale

Council **RESOLVED** to receive the report.

8. 2016/17 ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS. (Agenda item 6)

Council **RESOLVED:**

- a. That following the statutory consultation to agree the proposed Admission Arrangements for Community, and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2016/17 academic year as contained in Appendix 1 of the Cabinet report.
- b. To note that no responses have been received from the consultation on 2016/17 Admission Arrangements for Community, and Voluntary Controlled schools.
- c. To agree to the continued use of the Pan London co-ordination arrangements for the 2016/17 academic year as set out in – Appendix 2a (Primary) and Appendix 2b (Secondary) of the Cabinet report.

9. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 20:40

Full copies of the Council agenda, reports and appendices are available in the Members Library and on the Council website at www.croydon.gov.uk/democracy/dande/minutes/committees

The webcast of this meeting can be found at www.croydon.gov.uk/democracy/dande/broadcasts