



Communities, Safety and Justice

Cabinet Member Bulletin

Councillor Hamida Ali

November 2016

Latest News

Communities are to be given more responsibility for the things that matter most to them as part of a new scheme aimed at devolving town hall powers to residents.

Three pilots will be established in South Norwood, Purley and New Addington to assess how residents can best work alongside the council to shape how projects and services are delivered locally.

As part of the six month pilot, communities will also be asked to identify key issues, needs and priorities in their neighbourhoods and to put forward suggestions on how these can be resolved. The initiative follows the success of a similar scheme in Thornton Heath which saw residents, business owners and other stakeholders work together with councillors to identify key issues in the area.

Feedback from the community was used to specifically shape a number of projects, such as the cleaning of the clock tower along with 9000sqm of paving along the high street and identifying places of interest and hidden gems around Thornton Heath for which new signage was produced. Another project, included a search for local artists who worked with the community to develop ideas for public art, which is now being produced to flank the walls along High Street and Brigstock Road. Last year, more power was handed to residents across Croydon when the council introduced the community budget programme. The initiative, which is led by councillors with the involvement of local residents and business owners, gives each area in the borough its own budget to spend on local projects.

Residents were at the heart of decisions on how the money was spent and in Fieldway; it was shared between a Christmas lights competition, the New Addington Carnival, tickets for local scouts, a youth club cooking project, a healthy meal for elderly residents and the New Addington Autism Group.

The budget in Croham funded the printing of a bi-annual newsletter, the South End Christmas lights, photographic equipment and iPads for a local school, the local scout group's centenary celebration and lighting to the scout hut and work in a community garden.

The council's commitment to devolution has seen funding for this year's community ward budgets double to £288,000, giving communities more money to spend on what matters to them. An annual budget of £12,000 will be given to areas with three councillors, who will each be given £4,000, and £6,000 to each councillor in New Addington and Fieldway, where there are fewer members.



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Croydon Council Recognised as a Living Wage Friendly Funder



The Living Wage Foundation has recognised Croydon Council as a Living Wage Friendly Funder. The scheme recognises funders that commit to supporting charities by funding posts at the Living Wage or above. Living Wage Friendly Funders work together to end low pay in the Voluntary and Community sector. Thousands of charities and funders have already embraced the Living Wage across the UK, but low pay remains a real challenge across the sector.

Katherine Chapman, Director, Living Wage Foundation said:

“The leadership shown by the London Community Foundation, the London Borough of Croydon and Cloudesley as Living Wage Friendly Funders demonstrates a commitment to tackling the serious problems that low pay brings to our communities. Many organisations in the voluntary and community sectors are working hard to tackle social injustice and poverty; it’s only right that those committed to these roles are afforded at least a Living Wage. We hope to see many more funders and corporates follow the lead of the Living Wage Friendly Funders.

At a time when half of those in poverty live in a household where someone has a job, the Living Wage is much needed by families across the UK. The Living Wage is a robust calculation that reflects the real cost of living, rewarding a hard day’s work with a fair day’s pay.”

There are now 16 funders signed up to this scheme including People’s Health Trust, Trust for London, Barrow Cadbury, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Comic Relief, the London Borough of Islington, City Bridge Trust and Lloyds Bank Foundation.

The Minimum Wage in the UK is currently £7.20 an hour in the UK, but the UK Living Wage, which is set independently and calculated in accordance to the basic cost of living in the UK, is considerably higher at £8.45, rising to £9.75 in London.

We are very proud to be only the third local authority to receive Living Wage Friendly Funder status. Becoming a Living Wage employer was a hugely important manifesto pledge for the administration and we have continued that commitment through our recent commissioning process with the

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voluntary sector where paying or working towards paying the Living Wage was a key principle. We are now working hard to encourage all employers in Croydon to pay the Living Wage. More than one in four of our residents earns less than the living wage - which is higher than the national average - and we're doing everything we can to see all of our residents take home a fair wage.

Successful prosecutions secured by council's Anti-Fraud Team

Croydon Council's diligent Anti-Fraud Team is to be congratulated for their hard work to secure two successful prosecutions of Croydon resident Angel Jackson and former employee Khush Thapar who between them cheated Croydon taxpayers out of hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Angel Jackson from Norbury fraudulently claimed nearly £192,000 in benefits between November 1998 and January 2013. She was jailed for seven years after being found guilty of 30 charges of dishonestly obtaining benefits, one charge of council tax evasion and one charge of unlawful eviction.

Croydon Council's corporate anti-fraud team launched a complex investigation in 2012 alongside Merton Council and the Department for Work and Pensions following a tip-off. During searches at Ms Jackson's home, officers found £20,000 in cash, mainly £50 notes, in the bottom of a wardrobe, and got video evidence to show she had unlawfully evicted one of her tenants.

Sentencing Ms Jackson at Croydon Crown Court, Judge Adam Hiddleston said: "You, Angel Jackson, are a thoroughly dishonest person. For over a decade you sought to cheat everyone who crosses your path, the local authorities, insurance, even your ex-husband."

CLlr Hamida Ali, Cabinet Member for Community Safety said: "Angel Jackson's fraud cheated taxpayers in Croydon and across the UK out of thousands of pounds, so I'm very glad to see the court has found in our favour. I'm especially proud of our dedicated Croydon Council officers who led this complex case, and I hope this sentence acts as a deterrent to anyone else considering this level of criminality."

Croydon Council will now pursue confiscation proceedings to claim back the proceeds of Ms Jackson's fraud.

Khush Thapar, a former Croydon Council employee from Coulsdon, had fraudulently claimed more than £6,000 in direct care payments. She appeared at Croydon Crown Court, on 28 October, having previously pleaded guilty to a charge of dishonest false accounting, under the Theft Act 1968. It was found that she had misused direct payments awarded to her, which were designed to pay for her care needs.

His Honour Judge Ainley said that Thapar had used her knowledge of the scheme, and seized an opportunity to use the money to pay for things that she knew were not permitted.



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He imposed a custodial sentence of 18 weeks, suspended for two years, and ordered her to pay £1,000 toward the cost of the prosecution.

Councillor Hamida Ali, cabinet member for communities, safety and justice, said: 'It's always sad when somebody uses their inside knowledge of a particular system and abuses that system for personal gain.

'It's particularly sad when that person used to work for the council and manipulated a payment scheme that's designed to help those who genuinely need that assistance.

'The diligence of our corporate anti-fraud team, however, is to be congratulated for bringing this crime to light and gathering sufficient evidence to secure a successful prosecution.'

Working Together

Croydon Economic Summit 2016 – Croydon Congress, 23rd November

Croydon's Congress brings together leaders from the public, business, community, faith and voluntary sectors that have a key role to play in shaping the borough's future success. This Congress events consider cross cutting themes that are relevant and important to improving the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in Croydon. The theme for this Congress was regeneration and economic growth and the keynote speaker was Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London. Subjects discussed included businesses and employment opportunities arising from regeneration and growth in Croydon, the evening and night time economy in Croydon and outer London and skills and employment opportunities for residents. Delegates also had the opportunity to network during this event.

MPs Gather in the Heart of Parliament to Recognise and Celebrate the Stories of Survivors of Female Genital Mutilation Art Exhibition

Members of Parliament from all parties joined together on 24 October at the opening ceremony of a week-long art exhibition in Westminster celebrating tales of survival from women affected by Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

Steve Reed, MP for Croydon North, the sponsoring Member of Parliament for the exhibition and a great supporter for the work that Croydon's FGM project is undertaking in the borough who proposed this exhibition.

In Croydon, there are estimated to be 3,480 females who have been affected by FGM at some point in their lives, equivalent to 1 in 104 females. The council and NHS Public Health England co-fund a dedicated FGM project in Croydon to reduce and prevent FGM in the borough as well as improving psychological and physical health outcomes for those who are affected.

The exhibition comprises four portraits painted by London-based artist Emma Scutt of FGM survivors Leyla Hussein, Hibo Wardere, Alimatu Dimonekene and Lucy Njomo.



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The theme of the exhibition is 'storytelling' – depicting the strength, hope and motivation for change that stories and voices of women leading the FGM awareness campaign in the UK and worldwide today can bring to new audiences through art.

MP for Croydon North, Steve Reed, said, "These stunning portraits bring light to the issue of FGM. This is an absolutely horrific, barbaric practice which has been illegal since 1985 in the UK. I cannot overstate the importance of raising awareness to help support communities to identify, tackle and help protect young women and girls from the threat of FGM. These portraits represent four women's personal testimonies in a powerful way, it is a tribute to the work and I am proud to take up this cause." Cllr Hamida Ali, Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety and Justice said, "I am delighted to see the strength of these women celebrated in the heart of the UK government. However this is also a timely reminder of the work we still have to do in Croydon and nationally. It is because of this that I am a staunch supporter and advocate of the FGM project." One of the subjects of the exhibition, Lucy Njomo is a Croydon resident and works with NHS Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Croydon Council to identify and provide support to girls and women affected by or at risk of FGM. To date, over 1,100 professionals from Health, Local Authority, Police and the Voluntary Sector have been trained in FGM, risk assessment, identification and management of FGM, local referral pathways and procedures. Lucy said: "We need to break the cultural silence and find new ways to talk about FGM. This art exhibition gives us the opportunity to raise awareness of the many survivors of FGM who have to live with the lifelong consequences every day. I am happy to be part of this exciting exhibition so that my story can effect real change and reach out to others who are suffering"