

# Scrutiny

ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017



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**INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIR OF SCRUTINY, COUNCILLOR SEAN FITZSIMONS**



**Cllr Sean Fitzsimons**

Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee

I am pleased to introduce our Annual Report, which highlights the key activities and developments in scrutiny over the past year. I hope it encourages you to get involved in the scrutiny process and to contribute your views and experience to our committees in future.

Faced with a wide range of possible issues to investigate in these challenging times, we have prioritised strategic issues of importance to Croydon.

We have investigated the local need for housing, through the scrutiny of the Brick by Brick initiative; we have examined opportunities to improve transport in the borough, including work with relevant agencies to improve access to local railway stations; we have made recommendations to make mentoring more widely available and thus improve youth employability, critical to the future economic vitality of the borough.

We have also prioritised the scrutiny of risks facing the borough. Examples have included economic risks such as the impact of Brexit and the long-running Southern railway strike on the borough, the risks arising from the placing of local health trusts into special measures, the safeguarding risks linked to issues such as missing children and gang activity, and measures taken to tackle the risk of road accidents in the borough.

The risks faced by the borough place a responsibility on Scrutiny committees to hold to account the individuals and agencies responsible for tackling such challenges. Members have held in-depth question and answer sessions with Cabinet members responsible for services and budgets, including detailed questioning on the likely effectiveness of new ways of working developed to reduce costs in the face of increasing demand, particularly in adult social services.

Through our work, we have endeavoured to make Scrutiny more effective by developing positive working relationships with stakeholders including the council's executive. We continue to increase our "pre-decision" scrutiny, which

involves discussions with Cabinet members before their decisions have been finalised and leads to more constructive debates and swifter implementation of new initiatives.

As mentioned above, our Scrutiny committees have endeavoured to hear evidence not only from council officers, but also from a wide range of external agencies and residents, in a variety of ways, e.g. through surveys, written submissions and participation at meetings. They benefited greatly from information provided by transport agencies and passenger groups when they scrutinised accessibility at Croydon's railway stations and Vision Zero, which aims to improve road safety and reduce the number of fatal accidents to zero.

I am delighted that we were also able to involve young people, who are not heard often enough in the public arena. At the 6 December meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee which focused on youth employability, twelve young people, accompanied by head teachers from Oasis Shirley Park and the Meridian High School, made valuable contributions regarding the challenges involved in choosing a career and the powerful impact of effective mentoring, which led to a recommendation to Cabinet.

The public continues to be warmly welcome to attend Scrutiny meetings. In addition, all Scrutiny meetings have been webcast this year to give local residents easy access to our discussions from the comfort of their own armchairs. I hope this will help to encourage ever wider interest and participation in Croydon's Scrutiny activity.

I would like to express my personal thanks to all the members of Croydon's Scrutiny committees for their contributions to this year's meetings, and will work with the executive and other members, officers, outside agencies and residents to ensure that Scrutiny leads to real improvements in quality of life for Croydonians.

I hope you find this annual report interesting and look forward to seeing you at future Scrutiny meetings.

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THE SCRUTINY YEAR IN NUMBERS

28

Scrutiny meetings in Croydon

10

meetings of Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny meetings at various locations in the capital

02

Scrutiny reviews completed

109

recommendations made

40

recommendations of these accepted

Over 60

issues scrutinised

188

written contributions to scrutiny reviews

02

call-in meeting



Participation in Scrutiny meetings by 14 residents and representatives of 43 organisations and groups

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**SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**



**Cllr Sean Fitzsimons**

Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee oversees the performance of all overview and scrutiny functions, including the development of procedures governing the operation of the committee and its sub-committees. It also has responsibility for scrutinising crime and disorder matters and flood risk management in the borough. The committee hears all call-ins of Cabinet decisions other than those relating to education matters, which are heard by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

You can view the agendas, reports and minutes of this committee by clicking on the link: [www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings)

**Overview**

This year, the committee has focused on scrutinising major risks facing the borough. These have ranged from soaring housing costs and the risks of joblessness resulting from threats to the economy, to the challenges due to shrinking local government grants.

**Holding the Leader to account**

The 28 June meeting featured this year’s first appearance of the Leader and the Chief Executive Officer of the council for a Question and Answer session. Members

questioned them on the challenges faced by local residents, such as the difficulties in finding and keeping an affordable home in the borough and the risks to local jobs that may result from a “hard Brexit”. The Leader stressed that the borough was in a strong position to withstand the economic storms and challenges ahead, with the caveat that one could not underestimate the potential for economic instability in months to come.

Members challenged the Leader regarding the council’s response to the sudden rise in hate crime in the aftermath of the referendum. He stated that he would be holding talks with community leaders in the borough to tackle this trend and gave assurances that a robust line would be taken to combat this type of crime.

Members also expressed concerns regarding spiralling demand for recycling services at the Purley Oaks recycling centre. The Leader announced that representations had been made to Bromley Council and Surrey County Council regarding the impact of closing their own recycling centres on demand at the Purley Oaks recycling centre and levels of vehicular traffic in its vicinity. A new permit scheme has now been introduced for Croydon residents.



## SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

### Cabinet decision on “Brick by Brick” called in

On 7 July, the committee called in the Cabinet decision on the “Brick by Brick” initiative to build 1,000 homes in the borough to examine the consultation undertaken on this scheme. Members expressed concerns that many residents had not been consulted on the proposed initiative, that inadequate notice had been given of forthcoming meetings with local residents, and that the full list of proposed developments had not been published.

Councillor Alison Butler, Cabinet member for Homes, Regeneration and Planning, explained that guidance had been provided by the previous Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, recommending the use of public land to increase housing supply and stem the rise in housing costs. She reminded all present of all the avenues residents could use to convey their views on the proposed developments.

Having listened to a number of residents’ and councillors’ evidence, the committee resolved not to refer the decision back to Cabinet. However, they made recommendations calling for better responses to councillors’ and residents’ concerns, closer liaison with councillors, lengthier notice of forthcoming consultation meetings or drop-ins, and a review of the consultation process at a future Scrutiny meeting. Positive Cabinet responses to these recommendations were reported to Scrutiny members at their 13 December meeting.

### Electoral registration and diversity

The 6 September meeting featured an item on Electoral Registration, during which members were pleased to hear that the availability of a range of methods to register to vote and the interest in the Brexit referendum had led to a significant rise in registrations prior to 23 June. Members questioned officers on canvassing procedures and possible ways of reducing the numbers of canvassers to save costs. They were advised that the guidelines governing canvassing methods were set by the Electoral Commission.

At the 6 September meeting, the committee also scrutinised diversity and inclusion in the council. Members were particularly interested to hear the evidence provided by Yvonne Okiyo, Chair of the Women’s Staff Network Group, who gave a flavour of how staff groups could inform the council’s diversity agenda through informal discussion and support as well as practical action plans.

### Culture in Croydon

Councillor Timothy Godfrey, Cabinet member for Culture, Leisure and Sport, attended the 1 November meeting.

Members were given a presentation on the refurbishment of Fairfield Halls. They were reminded that the objective was to create a cultural quarter around the halls, which would be developed over the next decade in three main phases. Members agreed that a visit to the halls be conducted in 2017 and that the new operator of the halls should be invited to a Scrutiny meeting in the following municipal year to obtain a progress report.

The 1 November meeting ended with members approving the 27 recommendations of the Scrutiny review of Gypsy and traveller welfare in Croydon for presentation to Cabinet. The review had investigated the accommodation needs of this group and relevant planning policy, as well as their physical and mental health, education and welfare needs.

### The proposed budget and future economic prospects

The 13 December meeting of the committee focused on the borough’s economy and the proposed 2017-18 budget.

The Leader highlighted the importance of the borough’s Growth Zone for the economy of Croydon and his hope to attract businesses that would bring well paid jobs to the area. Members questioned him on progress with the Westfield Hammerson project, which has evolved to include plans for more housing provision.

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**SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**

Members asked what measures were being taken to improve housing affordability and employment opportunities. The Leader pointed to the landlord licensing scheme as a tool for preventing extreme rent rises and improving housing conditions, and to the council's Good Employer Charter and commitment to the implementation of the Living Wage. He added that the commitment of the Mayor of London to improving the housing stock in the capital should also help reduce the upward pressure on rents.

The 13 December meeting featured pre-decision scrutiny of the proposed General Fund Revenue Budget for 2017-2020, due to be presented to Cabinet on

20 February. The budget had been developed against a background of grant reductions which had begun in 2011-2012 and were set to continue until 2019-2020.

The Cabinet member explained that a key approach to dealing with these funding reductions was to "manage demand" by implementing various ways of preventing problems from emerging through education, support, enforcement and publicity. The council's Gateway service was highlighted as a means of supporting families to overcome risks such as unemployment, rent arrears and homelessness. This was particularly important for Adult Social Services, which was experiencing fast growing demand as well as rising costs. The committee agreed that the pressures on these services and their budgets needed to be robustly scrutinised in the following year.

**It's the economy...**

At the 10 January meeting of the committee, members questioned Councillor Mark Watson, Cabinet member for Economy and Jobs, on measures being taken by the council to support the local economy.

Members discussed the vitality of Croydon's district centres. Cllr Watson stated that the national retail trend towards out-of-town shopping malls was being reversed to the benefit of district centres and their high streets. He also observed that all necessary steps should be taken to encourage the public to shop locally, taking Addiscombe as an example of a thriving local shopping centre.

Cllr Watson gave a brief presentation regarding the proposed development on Surrey Street, where a daily market is held. Members were advised that the sum of £500,000 was due to be spent from the capital programme on improvements to the street, as well as the same amount in match funding from Section 106 contributions.

A user of the Surrey Street market was invited to contribute to discussions. He encouraged the council to consult the London Street Trading Benchmarking Group for their ideas on proposed designs. He highlighted the needs of local residents, whose numbers had grown significantly in recent years after the building of new flats in the area. Residents were particularly concerned about the potential increase in noise levels in the area in the evening. Members called for the refurbishment of Surrey Street to be "future-proofed" and for the area to be provided with sustainable lighting to add value to the area without inconveniencing local residents.

**Safety in Croydon**

The committee questioned Councillor Ali, Cabinet member portfolio for Communities, Safety and Justice and the new police borough commander for Croydon, Chief Superintendent Jeff Boothe. In particular, the committee considered the Community Safety Strategy ahead of its presentation to Cabinet. Overall, it considered the Strategy a good policy document. The committee were also concerned to hear of the new powers to be provided to local authorities in the form of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). The committee concluded that the council should only use PSPOs to address a clearly defined problem and that there should be robust review mechanisms in place to monitor their use.

As part of the pre-decision scrutiny recommendations, the committee recommended that more contextual information be provided in the strategy to compare crime rates in Croydon within those of neighbouring boroughs and across London. In addition it was recommended that road safety be more thoroughly addressed within the strategy as a community safety issue.

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**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**



**Cllr Jan Buttinger**

Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee scrutinises key issues affecting children and young people in the borough and services provided to this age group by the council and its partners. It also has power to scrutinise the functions of the council as a local education authority and examines the forthcoming Dedicated Schools Grant on a yearly basis.

You can view the agendas, reports and minutes of this sub-committee by clicking on the link: [www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings)

**Overview**

The work programme of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee has focused on some of the most significant challenges facing this age group and action being taken by the council and its partners to tackle or at least reduce risks:

- Risks faced by the borough’s most vulnerable children and young people
- Issues relating to educational achievement and preparation for future employment

**RISKS FACED BY THE BOROUGH’S MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**Croydon’s Looked After Children**

The sub-committee scrutinised challenges faced by Looked After Children on a number of occasions throughout the year, both to ensure that everything possible was being done to increase their life chances and overcome the disadvantages accrued during their childhood.

At our 13 September meeting, members scrutinised issues relating specifically to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. They questioned officers regarding age assessments carried out to ensure that young arrivals were aged 17 or below and thus eligible for services as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. Officers explained that young people presenting as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children had to be given a placement within two hours whereas age assessments could take up to 28 days.

Officers were questioned on the processing of applications by young Albanian asylum seekers, the largest ethnic group of unaccompanied asylum seeker children in the borough. Members asked why the Home Office did not challenge Albanian applicants more robustly as they knew that there was no conflict in that country. Officers explained that work was being carried out with Albanian officials to develop systems to ensure that unsuccessful applicants could be sent back to a safe place in their country. Officers were also questioned about Syrian refugees and stated that there were only very few in the borough, and that their number was unlikely to rise.



## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

### Scrutiny of Croydon's Safeguarding Children Board

The Chair of the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB) appeared at the 11 October meeting to present the annual report of the Board and answer members' questions on the performance of the Board. Members raised concerns regarding the 13.8% rise in the number of referrals to children's services in 2015-2016, and were informed that this was due in part to a rise in the borough's youth population, in part to awareness-raising on child abuse, as well as on the different reporting thresholds adopted and also by the large new cohort of health visitors in the borough.

Missing children were discussed at length as their numbers are the highest of any London borough. Members heard that missing children were involved in a number of other problems such as child sexual exploitation, gangs and drugs. Asked what could be done to stem the rise in the number of missing children, it was explained that this rise was partly due to a rising awareness of the problem and therefore to be welcomed at this stage. It was added that many of the children who go missing are placed in Croydon by other boroughs, and that communications are taking place with these London boroughs to encourage them to work with Croydon to deal with missing children more effectively. She also praised the range of approaches being used to tackle the number of missing children, including the use of daily missing children lists, weekly meetings of the Missing Monday Panel, etc.

### The quality of children's social care

At the 14 March meeting, members focused on the quality of children's social care in Croydon as it faces a significant increase in demand. They were given assurances that the council had dedicated increased resources to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub dealing with children who may be at risk to provide swift support to reports of harm. One area which the sub-committee felt still needed improvement was the engagement of children and young people in care. However, officers announced that a newly appointed director had been charged with developing a youth engagement strategy which would include provision to hear the voices and views of the borough's Looked After children.

Members also scrutinised the effectiveness of support provided to young people with special educational needs and disabilities as they grow up and their needs change. Officers concurred that the council should increase and broaden

provision for young people aged over 16 with challenging Autistic Spectrum Disorders and complex needs and provide them locally to keep costs down. They were pleased to hear that the council had submitted a bid to provide services to 120-150 young people with such needs with a focus on developing skills and employability.

### EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND PREPARATION FOR FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

#### Home Schooling

At its 14 June meeting, the sub-committee scrutinised home schooling or Elective Home Education (EHE) in the borough. While the number of home schooled children in Croydon is low (199 as at May 2016), members included this topic in their work programme to scrutinise the monitoring of the standard of education and safeguarding arrangements for home schooled children.

Members sought assurances on the safeguarding of home schooled children. The officer stressed that the quality of her relationships with families was crucial to maximising the effectiveness of her monitoring. If any risks were suspected, communications were initiated with other agencies such as the child's G.P. Asked about safeguarding risks relating to radicalisation, the officer stated that there had been one referral to the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and one relating to the Prevent initiative in the past year.

Members questioned the Monitoring and Support Officer on home educated children with special educational needs (SEN). She stated that 3% of children were known to have such needs and added that a formal assessment could be provided if parents raised concerns about learning difficulties being experienced by their child.

After in-depth questioning, members concluded that they were impressed with the quality of service provided to home educated children in the borough and their parents, although they expressed concerns regarding the limited resources available to do so and the lack of legislation in place to compel councils to keep track of their educational outcomes, special needs and safety. Cabinet has agreed to carry out further research into the special educational needs of Croydon's home educated children and to put the case to central government for compulsory registration of home schooled children and mandatory yearly visits to provide better safeguarding and monitoring of their educational outcomes.



## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

### Scrutiny review of school exclusions

In recent years, there has been a significant reduction in exclusion numbers, due largely to the establishment of a “Fair Access Panel” (FAP). This panel is attended by Croydon head teachers and other relevant staff to discuss the cases of pupils at risk of exclusion and agree ways of avoiding this outcome, often through managed moves to other schools in the borough. Councillor Matthew Kyeremeh was keen to examine how well this new system was working and to understand issues underpinning school exclusions in the borough, and conducted a Scrutiny review of school exclusions, the findings and recommendations of which were presented at the 13 September meeting of this sub-committee.

The working group leading on this review obtained a wide range of evidence from council officers, head teachers, teachers, school governors, Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs), parents and pupils. The group were pleased with the wide range of measures taken by various schools to support young people at risk of exclusion, but called for a more robust scrutiny of referrals to the Fair Access Panel.

Following this review, officers reported for the first time on FAP referrals made in the past year in the “school standards” report presented to Cabinet in January and to Scrutiny shortly after. They also agreed to work with the Croydon Head Teachers’ Association to introduce measures to provide better support to pupils at risk of exclusion.

### Education Quality and Standards

At the 7 February sub-committee meeting, members discussed the Education Quality and Standards report which is presented annually to Cabinet and to this sub-committee. David Butler, Head of School Standards, Commissioning and Learning Access, reported significant improvements in early years outcomes as well as in Key Stages 1, 2 and 4, and stated that results had remained in line with the national average at Key Stage 5. He added that 50% of pupils now attended an outstanding school and that results were set to improve even further. Despite the funding challenges discussed at this very meeting, he stressed the borough’s commitment to raise its performance further up the London league tables. Members expressed their warm congratulations to officers for their contributions to the above results.

### Youth employability

Members decided to scrutinise young Croydonians’ employability in view of the major challenges facing this age

group as they leave school and face competition from more experienced job seekers and a dwindling range of jobs due to rampant automation in many work streams.

Information provided by council officers was supplemented with evidence provided at the 6 December sub-committee meeting by the head teachers of Meridian High School and Oasis Shirley Park Academy and a number of pupils from each of these schools. Their contributions gave members a valuable understanding of the barriers faced by young people and of the approaches used by both schools to increase young people’s resilience, ambition, willingness to fight for their future, problem solving skills and understanding of the breadth of careers open to them.

Members were impressed with the evidence provided by staff and pupils of both schools on the effectiveness of mentoring, which in some cases had raised their aspirations and in others strengthened their resolve to pursue a demanding career path despite barriers such as other people’s low expectations of them. The head teacher of Meridian High School stressed that effective mentoring required a lot of personal commitment and time from the mentors themselves in order to have the desired impact.

Members discussed the 6th form offer in the Croydon area and the breadth of A-level subjects available to pupils. They were encouraged to hear that the council was working together with the Croydon Head Teachers’ Association to pool the teaching of some less widely chosen subjects in common Croydon-wide timetabling blocks, to enable pupils from across the borough to access a wider range of courses.

The sub-committee and the Cabinet member agreed that the council should work with schools, businesses and the third sector to identify innovative ways of increasing the pool of effective local mentors and so widen access to mentoring and improve educational outcomes in Croydon.

### The Dedicated Schools Grant

At the 7 February meeting, the sub-committee questioned officers regarding the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation for the forthcoming year. They expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the low funding allocation to the London Borough of Croydon, which, although an outer London borough, has many of the characteristics of an inner London borough. They urged the council needed to make cross-party representations to persuade central government to allocate more resources to Croydon, which has a number of wards with high levels of deprivation.

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HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SUB-COMMITTEE



**Cllr Carole Bonner**

Chair of the Health And Social Care Sub-Committee

The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee scrutinises the work of health trusts providing services to Croydon residents and social care services provided to adult residents in the borough. It also investigates emerging health and social care issues affecting adults living in the borough.

You can view the agendas, reports and minutes of this sub-committee by clicking on the link: [www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings)

The 2016-17 municipal year saw a very busy work programme for the Sub-Committee. In the summer of 2016 both the Croydon NHS Trust and the Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were placed under special financial measures and the Sub-Committee monitored the improvements plans throughout the year. Outcomes Based Commissioning was another significant issue looked at, and Croydon Members were involved in a number of joint health scrutiny committees with neighbouring boroughs.

“Business as usual” is not a phrase that can be used when reflecting on the work of the sub-committee this year. The work programme shifted emphasis to a focus on health and social care following the reallocation of housing and homes issues to the Streets and Environment Scrutiny Sub-Committee. The membership of the sub-committee changed with the Chair welcoming two former Cabinet members, cross party work which has given a depth and richness of experience of budgeting and detailed information.

The statutory obligations of the sub-committee continue to dominate the work programme. Members continue to work hard to absorb sometimes complex information and statistics. However the health and social care economy continues to grow and evolve, which has caused significant timetabling issues. In addition, the work programme has been affected by the news that the acute and community health provider and commissioner have both been placed in special financial measures. As a result, the sub-committee has had to reconfigure its work programme and where necessary convening additional meetings.

As a direct result of continued engagement with partners, there has been a strengthening of relationships and the recognition of the role and purpose of scrutiny. This has been demonstrated locally as well as in joint work with the South West and South East sectors and pan London.

The Chair of Scrutiny and the Chair of the Health and Social Care Sub-Committee regularly attend sessions at the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the London Scrutiny Network. Their meetings and events have offered members a forum for exchanging ideas on health and social care matters and to debate national issues such as Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) and how best to scrutinise them.



## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SUB-COMMITTEE

One of the significant areas of concern for the sub-committee has been Outcome Based Commissioning. This initiative aims to bring about significant improvements to health and social care across Croydon by delivering care close to home and empowering patients to self-manage their care with a view to avoiding the need for hospital stays and delivering savings on the cost of acute services. At the January sub-committee meeting, members were advised that Croydon's ten year OBC contract was due to be signed in April 2017 and that a basket of services would be delivered by an alliance of commissioners and service providers.

The year ended with a busy meeting on 21 March. The sub-committee scrutinised the work of the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, which provides mental health services to the borough. Members were pleased to hear that the safety of vulnerable in-patients had improved following work to speed up responses to incident reports through discussions at end-of-day debriefs. Members also scrutinised the partnership work of the Croydon Safeguarding Adult Board and heard that the numbers of safeguarding referrals was on the increase as people now recognise the need to react to safeguarding risks. They were pleased to hear that new staff was being recruited to process the rising number of assessments needed.

Members finally considered the decision made by the Clinical Commissioning Group to decommission In-Vitro-Fertilisation (IVF) and Infertility and Assisted Conception services in the borough and are considering the possibility of referring this significant variation in service provision to the Secretary of State.

### Joint Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee

Unlike the neighbouring authorities within South-West London, all of Croydon's healthcare is provided through the South-West London Sector. However, mental health provision is delivered by South-East London, resulting in the Chair of the Health and Social Care Sub-Committee attending both South-West and South-East London Joint Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee (JHOSC) meetings.

Member learning has led to a strengthening of scrutiny and to a valuable exchange of ideas and experiences locally and across both the South-West and South-East London sectors. The Chair of Croydon's Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee has taken a lead in discussions due to the knowledge and experience gained by attending a sub-JHOSC on the provision of in-patient mental health beds.

The Chair of Croydon's Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee continues to raise the profile of health scrutiny in Croydon across the South-West and South-East London sectors. She currently chairs the South-West London JHOSC which is scrutinising the Sustainability and Transformation programme, and has contributed to discussions as a committee member in South East London. Currently the Chair is involved in the PAN London JHOSC forum which is reviewing how best to scrutinise the national programme of Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs). NHS England and the wider health community have cited Croydon as being "ahead of the game" as a direct result of the Chair's investigative ground work in relation to these programmes nationally and at a local level.

Recognising the need for a pan-London JHOSC to review the work and the performance of the London Ambulance service, Croydon continues to lobby for the establishment of such a committee.

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**STREETS ENVIRONMENT AND HOMES SUB-COMMITTEE**



**Cllr Sean Fitzsimons**

Chair of the Streets Environment and Homes Sub-Committee

The Streets, Environment and Homes Scrutiny Sub-Committee has a broad remit. It investigates services and issues relating to housing, public and private transport, Croydon’s highways, waste management and environmental issues such as air quality. In all its work, the sub-committee seeks to promote sustainability and to promote the health and wellbeing of Croydon’s residents.

You can view the agendas, reports and minutes of this sub-committee by clicking on the link: [www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings)

From the beginning of the year the sub-committee identified its areas of focus as being transport hubs and the issues of accessibility experienced by residents, housing, the South London Waste Partnership, and Stockholm Vision Zero, which aims to eradicate or significantly reduce road traffic accidents. The sub-committee’s work programme also evolved in response to emerging concerns such as the process followed for felling street trees, and to developing strategies, such as the council’s fourth Air Quality Action Plan which was to cover the period from 2017 to 2022.

Through the work of the Streets, Environment and Homes Scrutiny Sub-Committee, recommendations were made on a range of topics important to the residents of Croydon, such as the performance of the waste contractor, Veolia, and the accessibility of transport hubs. The health of residents was also of paramount importance to the sub-committee when considering the air quality of the borough and means of decreasing pollution remained at the centre of the sub-committee’s considerations.

**Air quality in Croydon**

The meeting in January brought together stakeholders to provide expert opinions on how air quality might be improved within the borough to improve health outcomes. The sub-committee also welcomed the opportunity to undertake pre-scrutiny of the council’s Air Quality Action Plan.

Attending the meeting were representatives from ClientEarth, an organisation of lawyers which has successfully taken the Government to the High Court regarding its action to achieve legal pollution, and the Greater London Authority (GLA). Submissions were also received from Public Health and the sub-committee considered recent reports of the GLA Conservatives, New London Architecture and the New Scientist.

The sub-committee focussed on the pollution caused by vehicles in the borough, in particular the particulates produced by diesel cars. Members were disappointed to hear that the Mayor of London’s new Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) would not include this borough and asked for this to be reconsidered. Members further noted that there was a growing threat to air quality in the area from the rise in wood burning stoves and the number of bonfires taking place.

Whilst the sub-committee acknowledged that the responsibility for improving air quality also fell to organisations outside the council, it recognised the important role the authority had in improving the environment in the borough, the influence the council had, and opportunities to be a leading authority in air quality.

Since this meeting, Scrutiny has worked with the Cabinet and the GLA to bring about improvements to air quality in the borough and beyond, with consequent improvements in the health of people living, working and visiting Croydon. In addition to asking the Mayor of London to expand the boundaries of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) it has called for all buses be retrofitted to ensure they produce fewer pollutants.



## STREETS ENVIRONMENT AND HOMES SUB-COMMITTEE

It is also working with Cabinet to consider a variety of local improvements, such as expanding regulations on wood burning stoves to cover the whole borough, ensuring more trees are planted with a focus on those areas with greater pollution levels, and joining campaigns for a diesel scrappage scheme.

### Scrutiny challenge to bring the number of fatal car accidents down to zero

The sub-committee investigated measures used to reduce the number of car accidents at its meeting in March with a panel of experts, including representatives from Vision Zero UK and Transport for London.

The sub-committee examined the effectiveness of “Vision Zero”, which is as an all systems approach aiming to reduce road collisions and reach the final goal of “zero loss of life”. Whilst the sub-committee acknowledged that no city across the world had been successful in achieving the zero collision target, members heard that this approach had led to significant improvements in safety and reductions in collisions in a number of cities such as Stockholm.

Members were informed that measures had been introduced in recent years which had led to a reduction in casualties and serious injuries in Croydon, including measures to reduce the need to travel. This was put in practice at the meeting itself, as one stakeholder living some distance away participated in discussions through a Skype link.

At the end of the meeting, members recommended that the dataset on road safety incidents must include hospital statistics alongside police data, in order to ensure that monitoring of accidents yields accurate results.

### Accessibility at Croydon’s railway stations

The 22 June meeting brought together stakeholders from across Croydon and London for a specific item on the accessibility of the borough’s rail stations. Norwood Junction was a particular focus due to its considerable footfall and importance of the station coupled with the majority of its platforms not being step-free. Other stations analysed included South Croydon, which has raised platforms posing mobility issues for embarking and disembarking from the station, and West Croydon, which has a staffed gate system which does not operate during all opening hours of the station.

Contributions to discussions were made by representatives of various agencies including Transport for London, Network Rail, the Mobility Forum, the campaign group London Travel Watch and the sector news blog ReConnections. Written submissions were received from the Department of Transport, with a commitment to consider outcomes from the sub-committee’s meeting.

During the meeting, the opportunity to bid for Access for All funding for Coulsdon South and Selhurst stations. Quick wins at West Croydon station were identified and a commitment by Transport for London officers was made to meet with representatives from the Mobility Forum to follow these through. The sub-committee recommended that Transport for London’s “turn up and go” pilot scheme at East Croydon be utilised as a permanent service for disabled users.

Following on from these discussions, Scrutiny has worked with the Cabinet and Transport stakeholders such as TfL, LOROL, Network Rail and the Department for Transport to bring about better accessibility to all passengers, in small ways, such as improved signage, as well as more ambitious changes such as accessibility capital projects across the borough.

### Issues on the highway

On 28 February, the Cabinet member for Transport and Environment attended for a Question Time session on his portfolio. Members were pleased to hear that around 5,000 people had responded to consultation on the introduction of 20 mph speed limits in the south and east of the borough. In addition, the Cabinet member gave assurances that the council would continue to press the case for large infrastructure projects, including the expansion of the Tram network, work to the London to Brighton mainline, and a possible extension of the Bakerloo Line.

The felling of trees on streets across the borough was raised as a concern by the sub-committee and the meeting reviewed the policy and process which was being followed by the council. The sub-committee asked for ward members to be notified before tree works were to take place to enable them to respond to resident enquiries but were advised that the team which looked after trees in the borough was very small and that this would be very resource intensive. The Cabinet member for Transport and Environment was recommended to provide costings to members for tree replacement works to assist ward councillors in the spending of their Community Ward Budgets, and to establish a specific tree replacement budget instead of using a portion of the maintenance budget.



## STREETS ENVIRONMENT AND HOMES SUB-COMMITTEE

The meeting also considered the council's amended vehicle crossover policy. The sub-committee sought to gain an understanding of the reasons behind the change in policy, which had had a detrimental effect on the street scene of areas of Victorian and Edwardian properties. Recommendations were made to the Cabinet member for Transport and Environment to consider further amendments to the vehicle crossover policy which would preserve the visual amenity of roads composed of Victorian and Edwardian houses rather than allow small front gardens to be paved over for cars that do not easily fit into these spaces.

### Housing in Croydon

The meeting in September was the sub-committee's first opportunity to look at housing, and featured a Question Time session with the Cabinet member for Homes, Regeneration and Planning, a review of the Housing Allocation Strategy and scrutiny of the Brick by Brick development company.

Within the Cabinet member Question Time session, the sub-committee questioned Cllr Alison Butler across her portfolio and received assurances that housing standards were improving across the borough, including in the private sector, following the introduction of the Landlord Licensing Scheme. Members of the sub-committee also questioned the Cabinet member on the proposed Local Plan and future development opportunities within Croydon, and, while members were pleased to hear that Croydon could deliver the required volume of housing, they recognised that surrounding boroughs also had a responsibility to deliver housing.

Scrutiny of the Housing Allocation Strategy also took place at the meeting and the sub-committee endorsed the amendments to the Strategy, noting that the proposed residency requirement of three years was a reasonable compromise due to the high level of demand for housing in the borough. Furthermore, the sub-committee endorsed the introduction of a choice-based lettings system offering a more open and transparent method of allocating properties to residents and the opportunity for residents to make expressions of interest in properties.

The sub-committee considered the council's development company, Brick by Brick, by reviewing its work to-date, key issues for the company and the monitoring that was to be undertaken by the council. Members stressed the need for active and meaningful engagement with residents on this initiative and for councillors to be kept informed throughout the process. Furthermore, the sub-committee stressed the importance of ensuring that developments were not only well designed, but also practical and easy to maintain in the future. Members requested that the sub-committee should continue to review Brick by Brick at key milestones and be given the opportunity to visit development sites once work was underway, to ensure that the best results for the local communities are delivered.

### The council's waste services

The sub-committee in November welcomed the Cabinet member for a Clean Green Croydon to discuss initiatives and challenges within his portfolio. Members welcomed the improvements being introduced to the existing waste contract as well as the opportunities within the new contract, which is due to be introduced in 2018. The sub-committee made a number of recommendations, including the suggestion that the council should lobby government to require businesses to display their waste contract, and to run a national campaign on good practice in waste disposal. The sub-committee further suggested that additional publicity on the disposal of paint waste be undertaken, and that support be provided for a local educational campaign on recycling.

# Scrutiny

ANNUAL REPORT

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