

SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 16 February 2016 at 6:32pm in the Council Chamber, the Town Hall, Croydon

This meeting was filmed for broadcast on the council's internet site at:
<http://www.croydon.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

MINUTES – PART A

Present: Councillor Sean Fitzsimons
Councillors Sara Bashford (Vice Chairman), Emily Benn,
Carole Bonner (Deputy Chair), Mario Creatura and David Wood

Also in attendance for part or all of the meeting:
Councillors Humayan Kabir, Bernadette Khan, Toni Letts, Joy Prince,
Badsha Quadir, Mark Watson

A01/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor Sherwan Chowdhury.
Councillor David Wood was present as his reserve.

A02/16 MINUTES

The Part A minutes of the meetings held on 15 December 2015 were agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

A03/16 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

None.

A04/16 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

A05/16 EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED – that the allocation of business on Part A of the Agenda be confirmed.

QUESTION TIME: COUNCILLOR TONI LETTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMY AND JOBS (Agenda item 6)

Present for this item:

Councillor Toni Letts, Cabinet Member for Economy and Jobs

Jo Negrini, Executive Director Place

Stephen Tate, Director of District Centres and Regeneration

Any Opie, Director of Safety

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Jobs made a presentation covering the achievements, challenges and pressures facing her portfolio. She also outlined her priorities for the next 12 months. A copy of the presentation has been uploaded to the council website and can be found [here](#).

The Chair invited questions from Members:

Boxpark

A Committee Member sought answers to a number of questions about Boxpark which were related to commercially sensitive information. The Cabinet Member and Executive Director Place were therefore unable to provide answers to these questions. The Cabinet Member did provide the following information:

- The council loan is £3 million
- The project is running to time

The Executive Director Place provided the following information to the Committee:

- The interest rate on the loan is above bank base rates
- The site has been cleared and enabling work on access points and through routes was being done for the 5th phase of Ruskin Square
- Boxpark has done modelling work relating to the market and had determined that a food and beverage option was appropriate for Croydon

Matthew McMillan, Boxpark also informed the Committee that:

- Boxpark was using land which would otherwise be empty
- The boxes are only part of the story as the event space will provide opportunities to enliven the space

Investment

The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that the Croydon Enterprise Loan Fund is now £4 million, up from £2.75 million last year, and this provides a loan facility of up to £10,000 for many small and medium sized businesses which are unable to access 'normal' sources of funding.

The Executive Director Place informed the Committee that:

- The Revolving Investment Fund provides a way for the Council to pool resources for investment and it is being used to bring forward

developments and seed-funding the redevelopment function. It is not a loan facility for businesses.

- The council also supports local businesses with a 'free for one year' business rates scheme.

The Executive Director Place suggested that scrutiny might wish to consider an item on the work being done and the support offered to new businesses as part of its work programme next year.

Skills for work

The Cabinet Member stated that:

- A considerable amount of work was being done in this area including through apprenticeships through FE colleges, schools and organisations such as NatWest Bank, Westfield Hammerson, the council and the Princes Trust
- Apprenticeships can be undertaken by people up to the age of 60 and that there are increasing numbers of opportunities for people with disabilities
- She was keen to encourage more women to take on roles in the construction industry and that this was happening slowly

The Executive Director Place added context by stating:

- The council was looking at S106 agreements with a view to including obligations around employment during the construction process and with end users
- Through regeneration projects and the job brokerage scheme the council was aiming to help more people into employment including the Westfield Hammerson development
- Regardless of the outcome regarding the runway at Gatwick, the airport will expand over the next few years and provides opportunities for job
- The Apprenticeships levy of 0.5% on the payroll will also help encourage employers to take on more apprentices
- It was expected that 5000 new jobs would be created as a result of the Croydon Local Plan

District centres

The Cabinet Member stated that there was not much that the council could do to directly encourage more diversity of shops in the district centres.

The Executive Director Place stated that:

- Planning consents for A1-A3 for many units in district centres enables units to change use without recourse to planning permission eg. banks can become betting shops and that the council therefore has limited powers in this respect.
- Going forward Article 4 now provides the council with powers to prevent the conversion of office space to residential accommodation

in the metropolitan centre. The council has limited opportunities to provide affordable business space as it only owns Davis House and also needs to provide affordable housing.

- Small businesses and start-ups find it hard to find office space and although proving hugely successful, Tech City businesses need space to move on to as they grow.
- District centres could provide good locations for these and not just retail outlets

The Director of Safety stated that with regard to licensing issues, the Cumulative Impact Zones offer some protection as they link to the prevention of crime and disorder licensing objective but that the council's powers with regard to other types of outlet such as sex shops or betting shops are limited.

CCURVE (Croydon Council Urban Regeneration Vehicle)

The Executive Director Place confirmed that the council was in discussion with John Laing regarding the CCURVE as an entity and with Waitrose as a potential cornerstone outlet at the site in Coulsdon. In the meantime, the car park would reopen shortly.

The Head of Safety confirmed that the work to resurface the car park was finished. The car park needed to be formally reinstated and this process would be complete by 7 March 2016 when charges for parking would be made. However, it was expected that the car park would open before 7 March and would be free.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Economy and Job and officers for the information provided to the Committee.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to:

1. Recommend that consideration be given to the suggestion of the Executive Director Place that an item on the work and support provided to start-up businesses in the town through the 'free for one year' business rates scheme be added to the work programme 2016/17.

A07/16 REVITALISING THE EVENING AND NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY OF CROYDON (Agenda item 7)

Present for this item:

Councillor Mark Watson, Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety and Justice

Jo Negrini, Executive Director Place

Matthew Sims, Croydon BID

Matthew McMillan, Boxpark

Saif Bonar, Matthews Yard
Esther Sutton, Oval Tavern and Pub Watch
Adrian Winchester, Save the David Lean Cinema Campaign
Omar Siddiqui, Delights Desserthouse
Robin Butler, Spread Eagle
Paul Bossick, Bad Apple
Elenor Toner, Rise Gallery
Sarah Afrane, Youth Parliament
Lauren Furey

The Chair of the Committee introduced this item by stating that scrutiny had conducted a quick 'straw' poll through the council's Get involved! engagement platform over the weekend. The poll generated 111 responses and copies of the topline findings were circulated at the meeting would be loaded to the website after this meeting [here](#).

The Chair summarised the quick poll findings as follows:

1. Have you been out in Croydon in the past 12 months – 69% said Yes
2. If yes, what venues did you visit?
 - i. Pub 58%
 - ii. Bar 46%
 - iii. Live performance venue 26%
3. If no, why not?
 - i. Anti social behaviour 68%
 - ii. Lack of ambience/ atmosphere 65%
 - iii. Fear of crime 58%
 - iv. Nothing of interest 55%
4. What venues would you like to more of in Croydon?
 - i. Theatre 61%
 - ii. Live performance venue 57%
 - iii. Large music venue 56%
 - iv. Comedy venue 54%
5. The poll received 93 responses to the question - if you could do one thing to improve Croydon's night life, what would you do? Themes relating to these responses included:
 - i. More variety
 - ii. More independent, quirky (less chains) venues
 - iii. More outside events
 - iv. Easier access 'walkability'
 - v. More for families/ children
 - vi. Improvements to atmosphere (sterile)
 - vii. Better calibre venues
 - viii. Safety issues eg better lighting, get rid of rubbish – more green space

ix. Support for local businesses/ start ups

The Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety and Justice made a short presentation about the evening and night time economy (NTE) in Croydon. A copy of the presentation has been uploaded to the council website and can be found [here](#).

The Executive Director Place made a presentation about lighting schemes including in Lyon in order to demonstrate how lighting can be used to encourage movement from one area to another, how it can be used to celebrate architecture and add interest to an area. A copy of the presentation has been uploaded to the council website and can be found [here](#).

The Chair invited Councillor Mario Creatura provide a short statement about an event he had organised at Matthews Yard on Monday 1 February 2016 to discuss the night time economy.

Councillor Mario Creatura stated that:

- The idea for the event came from the closure of a number of venues locally including Yates's, Black Sheep and Tiger Tiger
- In the past Croydon had seen an evening footfall of some 30,000 people and that this had declined dramatically
- The event comprised a broad discussion of a number of issues including the development of the restaurant quarter, the mix of venues and the need to address these issues in the short term, ie over the next 2-3 years while Fairfield Hall is closed and Boxpark is running
- The impact of licensing issues including as a deterrent to those wishing to set up business had also been discussed
- A highly visible police presence, particularly in the town centre, was perceived by many people to be another deterrent

The Chair then invited contributors to make a short statement to the Committee by answering the following questions:

- *What would a successful evening/ night time economy in Croydon look like?*
- *What do we need to do to create it?*

Elenor Toner, Rise Gallery stated:

- To be successful Croydon needed to offer a diverse cultural scene, not necessarily related to drinking
- The lighting ideas proposed by the Executive Director Place were positive and could work
- Pop up events could also work as young people like constant variety and new venues and events
- Please make it easier for people to rent empty spaces as there are many people who want and are willing to put on events

Sarah Afrane, Youth Parliament stated:

- Kingston has an under 18s club and there is nothing like that for 16-18 year olds in Croydon
- We should learn from the Brixton Academy and put on music events which would attract young people
- Multi-cultural events, evening festivals, events with open mics and places which offered dance or art projects would also attract more people

Matthew Sims, Croydon BID stated:

- Croydon needed to create a bright, warm atmosphere and offer a number of eclectic events to attract lots of different audiences
- The proposed Lyon lighting idea was good as it would add light and decoration and Croydon centre was dark at the moment
- A clean public realm was also important as people respond to a nice place to be in
- Collaboration and partnership working among those with a vested interest in making it successful is key

Matthew McMillan, Boypark stated:

- Atmosphere and ambience is important alongside a concentration of venues and events
- Croydon is a large area with a huge catchment and this is a challenge
- Great new openings are needed for venues and events and the town needs to celebrate successes
- The lighting idea is good and would help create the right environment
- Businesses need to be attracted to come and need to buy in to Croydon
- There is only so much the council can do but it could make it easier for venues to open by providing a supporting hand

Esther Sutton, Oval Tavern and Pub Watch stated:

- This topic had been discussed at a recent Pub Watch meeting and the following factors had been suggested as being important: the provision of something for everyone, choice, diversity, variety and mix of independents and chains, support for grassroots venues and events
- How? Look at the customer journey, way-finding routes and decoration. The lighting idea is therefore a good idea.
- Look at the perception of the town – which many perceive to be dangerous or dying
- Collaboration between partners needs to be boosted
- If workers could be kept here, the 6pm to 11pm slot offers a great opportunity and suggest the high street is closed to traffic in the evenings to encourage this
- The Skyline project was wonderful – could this be resurrected?

Saif Bonar, Matthews Yard stated:

- There is more to Croydon than the town centre, the district centres are important too
- Croydon needs to be attractive to people from outside the borough as well
- It needs critical mass
- Start-ups need to be supported on an even and fair playing field as subsidies are offered only to some at the moment
- Some established businesses are struggling and these create jobs, goodwill and pride in Croydon so should be given support too
- A more liberal approach to licensing is needed

Omar Siddiqui, Delights Desserthouse stated:

- Venues need footfall
- Car parking for customers is an issue especially if we want them to come any distance as it is pricy in the evenings currently
- The Croydon Mela was an annual event which attracted top Indian artists but failed due to lack of funding

Adrian Winchester, Save the David Lean Cinema Campaign stated:

- A positive indication would be people of all ages feeling comfortable with regard to entering the town centre on every night of the week. There are surprising examples of certain productions at the Ashcroft Theatre attracting substantial midweek audiences but much smaller ones on Fridays, which seems to reflect an 'image problem' linked to the peak nights for alcohol consumption.
- Lighting could create a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere in relation to parts of the town associated with cultural activity.
- The David Lean Cinema has contributed to Croydon cultural life, but is limited to three or four screenings a week. With some council investment to support the efforts of ourselves and also others such as Aspara Arts the programme could be expanded
- If a two year closure of the Fairfield Halls begins later this year, a revitalised Clocktower could play a part in limiting the blow to the night time economy that will result from Croydon's depleted arts offering throughout the closure.

Robin Butler, The Spread Eagle commented:

- There are a lot of diverse venues including independents but not much support is given to them
- Croydon should aim to be a nicer, safer, more appealing place for businesses to open
- Suggest the road between Dice and Bad Apple is closed to traffic in the evenings so that food stalls and an evening economy can be developed there

Paul Bossik, Bad Apple stated:

- Croydon about to blossom as it is redeveloped and part of this will see a huge number of new residents in the town centre

- These new residents may well however be incompatible with a thriving night time economy
- How will the town centre residential district be managed?
- Is there a mechanism to manage current licenses alongside the new resident population?
- Croydon in 5 years will need an offering for the 18-24 age group but this may not be compatible with what the residents want
- Young people of this age want decent, live music, dancing and drinking (not £11 cocktails)

Lauren Furey, resident stated:

- Croydon needs to find and celebrate its identity for example by making the most of what it has
- We should celebrate the talent we have here such as the Brit School
- There are empty properties across Croydon and these could be used short term or longer term for venues and events
- There is a need for venues and events for 18-15 year olds and those younger than this
- There is a lot going on but it is beneath the surface and the information about what is happening needs to get out

Rob Ellender, member of the public stated:

- He likes to go out in Croydon but the many of his friends find the police presence intimidating
- The presence of police and their vans outside venues makes people feel unsafe, as if they need protecting
- The police need to keep people safe but could they park vans out of sight so that they are still there if needed but have a less visible presence outside clubs
- Lighting is a great idea and the Skyline project was great – but it needs to be done and maintained properly eg. the Saffron Square crown is malfunctioning
- Croydon needs places for families too eg. ice rinks, roller skating outside
- The council could help by identifying and making buildings suitable eg. Exchange Square has a number of empty units and the shells are not fit for businesses to move into
- Events need to be set up and become part of an annual calendar

The Cabinet Member for Communities, Safety and Justice provided more information and in answer to Members questions stated that:

- Much of what the contributors have said indicates that we are all on the same page
- There are limits to what the council can and cannot do, for example we can improve the public realm
- Surrey Street should be used in the evenings and its development as a destination is something we could support. There is a meeting with traders in March to talk about public realm improvements and

action will be taken in the next few months

- losing the road between Bad Apple and Dice is a good idea which could be looked and we do need to make better use of Exchange Square
- The better use of the Clocktower, David Lean Cinema and Braithwaite Hall would also be positive and are being worked on
- A temporary ice rink was considered this year and will be looked at again for the 2016/17 season
- With regard to the police presence in the evenings, we are in on-going talks with them. They are however responsible for the prevention of crime and disorder and they say they need to be on hand to respond when necessary
- Perceptions about the town need to be worked on and this is not just about the evening and night time economy
- It is important to have a vibrant evening and night time economy, not just for current residents but to help attract new businesses to the borough as they look for evidence of this when considering locations for their businesses
- There was work which needed doing and most people seem to have the same vision but it is true that we could all work together better
- In a wider context a strong cultural offer is needed for the economic ecosystem to thrive

In response to Members questions:

The Executive Director Place stated:

- The role of the cultural offer and use of space in the short term while Fairfield Halls is closed is important
- There are a number of car parks in the town centre which are not used and offer space which could be used for example
- The nature of the town is and will change and more residents will have an impact and will seek us to ask if we want light night areas in the town centre
- The nature of evening and night time economies across London is changing as neighbourhoods and a diverse food offering is becoming more important
- We want to build a strong evening and night time economy here by taking a joined up approach as it will also attract jobs and grow the market
- Croydon isn't Peckham and in terms of concentration is a large 'city' which needs to be broken down into manageable chunks so that its redevelopment can be prioritised and managed
- It would not be possible to develop a register of empty premises due to the resources maintaining it would involve, however we could use the council's existing information systems to promote events
- There have been a number of good discussion points raised during the course of the meeting and these will be followed up after scrutiny

Matthew McMillan, Boxpark stated:

- Boxpark in Shoreditch is next to the station and it has not had a negative impact on other parts of the surrounding area
- It is not about attracting people away from other venues but of creating an environment people want to visit and keep coming back to by offering something for everyone
- Boxpark can help start the process of development as businesses grow out of the boxes and move to more permanent accommodation

In response to a question about press coverage about black venue owners, licensing and the Police, the Director of Safety stated that it is not harder for any group to get a licence in Croydon. With regard to licenses for events, it is a good idea for venues to open lines of communication early in the process and ensure events are managed properly.

Paul Bossick, Bad Apple stated that he believed that the Police did pick on some types of premises and that the council should be a strong licensing authority.

Saif Bonar, Matthews Yard stated that a level of critical mass was needed and that at the moment people don't come to go out in Croydon; they come to go to a specific venue and these are pepper potted about. The town needs pop-ups and it needs to build a strong evening economy which will then move into the night time economy.

At 9:29pm, the Chair, Councillor Sean Fitzsimons proposed the suspension of standing orders to extend the meeting beyond 9:30pm in order to complete the business on the agenda. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Sara Bashford.

In response to a suggestion that a working party be established, Esther Sutton, The Oval Tavern stated that Pub Watch already meets every six weeks. She added that although the main focus related to safety and crime, this could be expanded. Matthew Sims of Croydon BID added that the Croydon Business Crime Reduction Partnership (CBCP) and Pub Watch are having discussions too. The BID has not focused on this in the past but could do so in the future.

The Chair invited contributors to this topic to make one recommendation each for the revitalisation of the evening economy and the following suggestions were made:

- Establish a formalised steering group
- Decorate the evening economy area, notably the high street area
- Close the road between Dice and Bad Apple to facilitate Friday and Saturday evening events
- Take responsibility for licensing away from the Police
- Ensure that the council is a strong Licensing Authority and that the Police keep to their safety role

- Work on the perception and image of Croydon
- Ask the council to develop and drive forward an online platform for promoting events and venues
- Make Croydon the best place in London to hold a premises licence
- Look at the Croydon Card as more and better offers on this could help drive people to venues and events

The Chair thanked all those who had attended the meeting and contributed valuable information to this review.

The Committee formed the following conclusions:

- It welcomed the commitment from the Executive Director Place that the discussion points raised during the course of the meeting would be followed up by officers
- Croydon needs to have more on offer to have a vibrant evening and night time economy and that a 'dwell factor' is important to develop
- A 'where to go in Croydon' online platform is needed
- A review of the Croydon Card scheme and its expansion to include more cultural and food offers could be useful
- A lighting scheme could be helpful especially in relation to route marking and decoration although the remarks about maintenance were noted

The Committee **RESOLVED** – to ask Cabinet to:

1. Consider creating a steering group comprising stakeholders and partners to meet regularly and work together to help with strategy development and the provision of ideas and practical support in order to encourage the development of the evening and night-time economy in Croydon
2. Conduct a review of licensing applications including approvals, refusals and objections (including which responsible authorities or other persons make objections)
3. Create a supportive regulatory environment for licensees whereby the council is known to be a strong licensing authority and the borough is known to be the best place in London for venues to hold a premises licence
4. Investigate the potential to pedestrianise the route between Bad Apple and Dice at certain times of the week and approach traders about offering night-time evening food and street entertainment (like the South Bank food festival)
5. Investigate the potential for a Croydon lighting scheme as described by the Executive Director Place to help improve ambience in the town centre, provide interest and clear routes (such as along George Street) for pedestrians
6. Consider launching or developing an online platform for venues to promote events

A08/16 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2015-16 (Agenda item 8)

Present for this item:

Solomon Agutu, Head of Democratic Services and Scrutiny

Members **RESOLVED** - to:

- 1) Agree the scrutiny work programme overview for 2015-16 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- 2) Agree the scrutiny work programme for the Scrutiny and Overview Committee 2015-16 – Appendix 2 of the report.

PART B

None

The meeting closed at 9:52pm.