

SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 6 September 2016 at 6:30 pm 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 Jan Buttinger (Vice Chairman), Carole Bonner (Deputy Chair),
Kathy Bee, Joy Prince and James Thompson

Also in attendance for part or all of the meeting:

Councillors: Hamida Ali, Sara Bashford, Margaret Bird, Jason Cummings,
Andrew Rendle, John Wentworth and David Wood.

A51/16 APOLOGIES (Agenda Item 1)

None

A52/16 MINUTES (Agenda Item 2)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2016 were agreed with the following text added:

Councillor Kathy Bee made a request for the minutes to reflect the concerns raised about Croydon's pending Youth Zones, asking if the Leader had

"looked further than Wigan, perhaps Oldham, who had experience of retaining older members or Manchester who had been successful in delivering a broader appeal to keep existing members interested?"

The Leader reported that Wigan had a great partnership with Wigan football club and that Croydon was exploring a relationship with Crystal Palace football club. Wigan, similarly to Croydon had estates within walking distance of their youth zones. Officers were looking at transport links and had made a powerful case to create a zone in New Addington.

Challenges to consider would related to the young people that had outgrown the youth zone and how best to support and equip them with tools for young adult life. Croydon is working with a range of partners, like the Queens Trust Fund are reviewing Croydon's ideas and potential, taking our programme seriously as investors. Ultimately Croydon seeks to ensure that the Zones are sustainable.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the call in meeting held on 7 July 2016 be agreed.

A53/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 3)

None.

A54/16 URGENT BUSINESS (Agenda Item 4)

None.

A55/16 EXEMPT ITEMS (Agenda Item 5)

There were none.

A56/16 QUESTION TIME: The Cabinet Member for Finance and Treasury (Agenda Item 6)

Councillor Simon Hall, Cabinet Member for Finance and Treasury was in attendance supported by Jo Negrini, Chief Executive and Richard Simpson, Executive Director, Resources. A presentation focused on major initiatives, projects and joint working across the Council and with external partners. Key areas highlighted included the following:

The Authority continues to make tough savings, decisions and choices to control the overall overspend. It is recognised that 2020 will see a significant funding gaps related in part to consistent reductions in grants, changes to funding streams eg. unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) funding and benefits and Croydon being underfunded as a Gateway authority. The gateway comes with its own set of challenges, officers are working on early intervention to negate levels of homelessness to avert future crisis.

The committee questioned forecasting overspend and specifically the recurring overspend in the People Department, Members asked for some assurance that this was not due to historical under forecasting. The Cabinet Member reported that this demand lead area was constantly under pressure, however initiatives had resulted in, in year reductions. The Committee further probed and asked what the true drivers were. It was reported that Croydon has an historically challenging demographic, which is demand lead. The Committee enquired if there was a mapping system of how and potentially where spend will be and are these benchmarked with other authorities? Councillor Hall reported that a governance board consisting of Cabinet Members and lead officers identified trends and drivers, it was reported that information with partners

can vary at specific levels and the detail is not always available, however some information could be gathered around admission rates.

Councillor Hall confirmed that he works with other Cabinet Members across all portfolios. A good example would be the health and social care landscape as it constantly evolves, changes, in a bid to adapt to the healthcare economy, the main drivers include the pressures to deliver on outcome based commissioning for over 65s using the better care fund as the mechanism. New ways of working and service redesign had its limits regarding potential savings. Collaborative commissioning across the sector will be key to success going forward.

Contract monitoring should help to raise standards and drive down costs. Officers are having honest and challenging conversations with contractors in a proactive way and do impose sanctions to drive up standards and achieve value for money.

The Assets strategy is achieving income as Bernard Weatherill House has seen floors 11 and 12 successfully been leased, floors 9 and 10 will realise an additional funding stream. Jeanette Wallace House's final disposal and the Taberner House investment scheme should ensure a healthier capital receipt.

The IT roll out was well on the way, initial feedback was positive. Agile working would free up office space and Croydon is ahead of the game.

HR had experienced lots of changes, restructuring continues, staff are working hard and staff motivations had increased. However there is recognition that more work needs to be done to improve morale as the organisation continues to change.

The Committee asked what the potential impact of Brexit would be, specifically around property prices. Officers confirmed that with property being exposed and the fluctuation in prices, building costs had increased, a full item would be reported to Cabinet.

The important issues and concerns in relation to the outcome of the boundary commission were discussed. Officers reported that they await the outcome of the Council submission which was due at the end of September 2016.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and his officers for their presentation and discussed the December 2016 meeting of the Committee when the Cabinet Member would be back to present the draft

budget and stated that the Committee would be interested to hear about rates of council tax collection within that presentation, officers confirmed that currently Croydon's collection rates are better than average.

A57/16 ELECTORAL REGISTRATION (Agenda item 7)

Councillor Simon Hall, Cabinet Member for Finance and Treasury supported by Sarah Ireland, Director of Strategy and Communities and Commissioning and Lea Goddard, Head of Elections and Civic Services were in attendance at the meeting to present members with the report. During the discussions the following issues were raised and responded to.

Officers reported that lots of work had been done internally to improve registration and registration rates. In addition to the departmental focus to increase individual registration, nationally there had been a significant increase in registration rates due to the referendum in June 2016; currently individuals registered to vote in Croydon stands at 262,000. The challenge going forward would be to sustain these figures during the annual canvas. The use of multi registration ways has been positive, as individuals have taken advantage of registering using multimedia and continue to respond in traditional ways. As new properties come online the department will use other data set to support the final register.

Members discussed the canvas and how labour intensive it continues to be, Members asked if there were more efficient ways to canvas in a bid to reduce the number of canvassers. It was suggested that perhaps a public campaign, roadshows, giving talks in schools etc. to encourage individuals to register. Officers reported that the guidelines are set by the Electoral Commission on how each authority has to canvas.

The Committee thanked officers for the report and requested that the an update come back to Committee in 6 months to a year which should include information on access to enhanced data matching and the established service plans.

A58/16 DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (Agenda item 8)

Councillor Simon Hall, Cabinet Member for Finance and Treasury supported by Jo Negrini, Chief Executive, Colin Chadwick, Head of HR Specialist Services and Yvonne Okiyo, Chair of the Women's Staff Network Group; were in attendance to present this item to the Committee.

The team are aware that tackling diversity and inclusion remains high on the agenda for the Administration's and were in a position to report that a lot of progress had taken place. Corporately the thinking has been around what do we want for Croydon and how do we achieve it. Officers recognised the journey of travel, balancing the workplace profile against the demographic of the borough. Yvonne Okiyo, Chair of the one of the Council's successful 6 networks reported that each network has a defined action plan. The networks outcomes have been used to influence cultural plans across the piece.

The current flat structure has made it difficult to move around or realise progression. To address this positive action planning would enable talent to flourish be that within or external to the organisation.

Human Resources had reviewed the Living Our Values (LOV) and reported that 59% of staff felt that they are living and demonstrating the authority's values. A programme to reintroduce departmental service planning should enhance the focus on LOVs and in turn will contribute to the council's success.

Officers reported that completed 1:2:1 were currently up to 91%, with service planning become part of the fabric of the organisation this should kick start full compliance of 1:2:1.

The internal action plan should realise

- increased numbers of 1:2:1 appraisals,
- top down approach to service plan
- continued monitoring to identify departments that are struggling and increased engagement.

The Committee thanked officers for the report and were pleased to see that areas of challenged had been identified and would like to see the action plan again in 6 months to a year.

The committee **AGREED** to suspend the standing order at 9:21pm.

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 9)

A59/16

Councillor Sean Fitzsimons informed that Committee that following meeting with the Chief Executive, that more pre decision scrutiny would be considered at the committee, therefore the work programme would be amended to reflect any changes.

Mini Review - Gypsy and Traveller Welfare in Croydon

Councillor Andrew Rendle was in attendance to introduce the summary of the Gypsy and Traveller Welfare in Croydon mini review. Councillor Rendle reported that from the outset of the review he wanted to be assured that Croydon was joined up in its approach to the welfare of all its residents permanent or traveller.

The longer review would point to recommendations around a pan London approach and the significant of legal encampments.

Councillor Rendle thanked officers and contributors for the input and wanted to record a huge thank you to Karen Martin.

The Committee thanked Councillor Rendle for all the work that he had done so far and looked forward to receiving the final document.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to:

- To agree the scrutiny work programme overview (as set out in Appendix 1 of the report)
- To agree the work programme for the Scrutiny and Overview Committee 2016-17, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report

The meeting ended at 9:40pm.