

Council Supplementary Agenda



**7. Croydon Question Time (Pages 5 - 14)
Public Questions (30 minutes)**

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1. As a local resident in Fairfield near East Croydon station, I'm feeling increasingly anxious when walking around the local area. Especially so after the spike in knife crime we've experienced in the last week or so. I'd like to know what is being done to tackle this at source and also what is being done to keep residents such as myself safe from not only actual crime, but the fear of crime itself.

Response

Croydon remains devastated by the tragic murder of 15-year-old schoolgirl, Elianne Andam. My thoughts are with her family, friends, school and everyone who has been affected.

I share our community's concern at this and other recent events, and the community's determination that things must change. Together with our partners, the police, and our communities we are working hard to tackle knife crime and help young people stay safe.

Since May 2022 there has been a rethink on the Community Safety Plan with a real emphasis on delivery. This will be achieved through the Youth Safety Delivery Plan, Tackling VAWG Delivery Plan and Hot Spot Delivery Plan. There plans are at various stages of completion with the Youth Safety delivery Plan having recently gone through Cabinet for approval. We have already delivered a PSPO in Central Croydon as part of the Hotspot Delivery Plan. All those plans are live documents that rely on community input and co-production. Furthermore, the council has made significant investment in our VCS intervention programmes to guide those at risk away from violence. But it is clear much, much more needs to be done and we will be working closely with our partners to redouble our efforts on knife crime and its causes.

2. When will the council start taking action against fly tippers, especially in alleyways and hotspots like Euston road?

Response

In common with the rest of the country, Croydon has experienced a significant increase in fly tipping and discarded waste.

Over the last 12 months we have cleared in excess of 29,000 reported fly tips.

Veolia, the Council's waste contractor, is clearing 98% of all reported fly tips within 24 hours; the problem is that they are being replaced just as quickly as currently being experienced in Euston Road.

We have recruited a new team of Contract Monitoring officers who are working in partnership with our service provider and identifying hot spots and areas of repeated concern in order to resolve these issues and find a sustainable solution, which may require the support from our Environmental enforcement officers as any incident of fly tipping is a criminal offence. The Council will seek to enforce in any case it is able to, whether through the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice or through a prosecution. We aim to help people do the right thing and tackle those who spoil our public areas. We are also undertaking a programme of 'blitz cleans' in district centres in order to bring areas back to standard. This will involve the removals of fly tips, graffiti and general environmental improvement. These will be followed with support for traders and residents around the proper handling of waste.

3. TFL data for Croydon shows 51% go to work by car, 25% on foot, 17% by bus or tram, 6% by rail and 1% by bike.

Croydon introduced many car-hostile policies and restrictions under the previous administration, often with minimal consultation.

Given the Uxbridge byelection, how will you change the following to a more car-friendly voter-friendly approach – boosting the economy and setting the public free?

20mph on most roads

School streets

Road closures

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

Controlled parking zones

Yellow lines

High parking charges

Emission charges

Cycle lanes

Road humps

Response

When it comes to Transport, the Council (under whatever political persuasion), has little leeway in making policy. Strategy and policy are made at national level.

The Mayor of London has to make the Transport Strategy for the Capital. London local authorities are then required to make plans to implement the Strategy.

The Recent hurriedly implemented Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and cycle lanes were rushed in following statutory guidance issued by central government to local authorities, and it is publishing the Walking and Cycling Plan for England, which provides detail and background to the statutory guidance.

This went in parallel with a change to funding direct from central government, and that via TfL (as part of TfL's financial bailout by central government). The statutory guidance has since been withdrawn on the 2nd of October. At the same time, central government published 'The Plan for Drivers' which promises new guidance on LTNs. Currently the Cycling and Walking Plan remains in place, retaining the target (guiding the actions of local authorities and others) of half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked

by 2030.

Both the Healthy School Streets and Neighbourhoods schemes in Croydon were introduced as experiments under an experimental order with a 6-month statutory consultation period, to enable the council to listen to the views of the community and consider the impacts before any decisions are taken to either keep, amend or remove the schemes following assessments. Following recent consultations nine healthy school streets were confirmed and one healthy school street will be removed in response to consultation and data gathered through the experimentation period.

With regards to the 20mph restrictions on many local roads in the borough, these do not aim to restrict traffic, but to reduce speeds and the risk to vulnerable road users. Department of Transport research shows that pedestrian injury and car impact speed at 20mph has a 2.5% chance of being fatally injured, compared to a 20% chance at 30mph.

Consultations are always undertaken for road closures and neighbourhood schemes as we have a duty to consult on such initiatives. We always welcome the views of our residents, community organisations and the businesses we serve.

There was previously an open consultation on the council parking strategy.

4. The residents of Croydon welcome and applaud mayor Perry's Croydon clean-up campaign August 14th (Norbury clean up). But does this extend to eyesore front gardens where owners / occupiers leave fridges, mattresses, sofas in their front gardens and ignore polite requests to clean up their front garden? Is there or will there be a council department which will respond to residents' complaints about eyesore front gardens, and will such council / department officers attend and deal with and take enforcement action in respect of reported eyesore front gardens?

Response

I thank the resident for recognising the value of the blitz cleans and the impact that these can have on a local community, restoring pride in an area.

I am pleased to advise that for areas such as overgrowing vegetation which encroaches on the public highway, we are able to intervene and our Highways Inspectors are empowered to work with the homeowner to address these matters. In regard to unkept properties this will need to be assessed by our Planning enforcement on a case-by-case bases, with the potential use of S215 powers.

5. My name is Lisa Grady, I work at Applegarth school, where my children attended. There has been an increasing risk for the children of Applegarth and Good Shepherd school when crossing the road to school as cars and buses do not stop for them. I have seen children walking into the road having to look around parked cars and buses to try to cross. My son was also almost hit when crossing the road as we couldn't see clearly. Therefore, could I put forward a request for a zebra crossing to be added in Fieldway by Brierley and Applegarth?

Response

A Healthy School Street was introduced on an experimental basis for Good Shepherd Catholic School in January 2023. Now that the Experimental Traffic Management Order statutory consultation period has ended, we intend to reach out to the school so we can understand the impact of the experiment and discuss if other complementary measures or programmes would support active travel choices for the school children. With respect to Applegarth Academy, this school has been identified as a potential Healthy School Street that we are currently assessing for suitability as part of this year's Healthy School Street programme.

6. What does Croydon Council intend to do about the total lack of provision for dyslexic primary school-aged children? 1 in 5 children are dyslexic with either ASD/ADHD or Visual Stress conditions, and yet we as one of London's largest boroughs do not have our own Crested LA maintained school with Level 7 Dyslexic and Dyscalculia input.

Response

Our belief is that pupils with literacy difficulties, including those with identified dyslexia, should usually have their needs met in their local schools. Our primary literacy centre became unpopular as increasingly parents and school staff wanted inclusive practice to be developed in our schools. As a result, we believe that our teaching staff are now more confident in meeting these needs due to the use of screening, evidenced- based interventions and the increased access to technology. It is our aim to promote dyslexia friendly schools through training and advice to Special Educational Needs Coordinators and school staff, via our support services such as the Educational Psychology team.

For the small number of pupils whose needs are at the level where further intervention is needed, they progress through the statutory process, potentially to an Education, Health and Care plan. In meeting their needs, we again look to supporting them in our mainstream schools. Developing further Enhanced Learning Provisions (ELPs) in our local schools is our preferred model. For a small number of pupils, we use both maintained and independent specialist schools which generally meet our demands for specialist placements in this area.

We are in the process of developing a secondary phase specialist education learning provision which will offer places from Year 7 for pupils identified with Dyslexia which should be in place by next Easter 2024.

7. As part of the modernisation of Croydon managed bus shelters those in Norbury (and other areas) were removed before the new were available for installation. Residents' are now facing a third winter without shelter. Please could you say when are the new bus shelters likely to be installed?

Response

This is an incredibly frustrating and unacceptable situation that has arisen through the procurement of the contract for the supply of new bus shelters with digital advertising screens, by the previous administration.

The contract was procured in 2020 and a concession contract was awarded in November 2021. The previous Administration allowed the removal of all existing bus shelters well in advance new shelters being delivered. As the resident rightly says this has left residents facing a third winter without shelter because of their poor decision.

Following the May 2022 elections, I, as Executive Mayor arranged a meeting with the CEO of Smart City (Valo). The CEO gave a commitment that they would install the first 37 bus shelters by November 2022. However, the planned installation did not materialise.

Since then, officers have been taking action to get Valo to deliver the contract including issuing two default notices on Valo earlier this year. To date, Valo has not paid outstanding sums to the Council. Throughout this process, the Council has not paid Valo any money. However, the Council has incurred significant legal costs, which we will be seeking to recover.

Clearly this is a very unsatisfactory position, and we have to reflect on how the previous Administration put themselves into a position where a contractor who had no track record of delivering a contract like this in the UK was able to win the contract and where the existing bus shelters were removed by the previous contractor before the new contractor was in a position to replace them.

Officers have worked incredibly hard to make this contract work but to no avail. Officers are now taking steps to terminate the contract and will be considering all options available to the Council, including pursuing Valo for damages for their failure to deliver the contract. I have also asked officers to prioritise moving forward to secure alternative arrangements for getting bus shelters back in the borough as soon as possible.

8. Government funding settlement for TfL requires TfL to increase fares. As a result, TfL will withdraw One Day Paper Travelcards, contrary to Croydon's sustainable transport policy. Residents will pay higher fares and make fewer journeys. Those without Oyster cards or bankcards will require single peak tickets for all journeys. Children who do not have an Oyster zipcard will pay peak/adult fares; buses are cashless. The London Mayor is willing to discuss ways of retaining the One Day Paper Travelcard with the Rail Delivery Group and DfT. Would the Mayor support discussions with DfT and retention of One Day Paper Travelcards?

Response

The resident will be well aware that accessibility to public transport is much more difficult in outer London than it is in inner and Central London. Whilst radical links are often good, orbital routes are far more challenging.

However, rather than investing in substantial transport for outer London, the London Mayor continues to expand the ULEZ, hurting those who could afford it least the most.

The Mayor of London further proposed removal of the one-day paper travel card will only make things more difficult for many.

Therefore, I would support discussions with the DfT for the retentions of the One Day Paper Travelcards.

9. The Croydon Observatory Borough Profile published in June 2023, shows uptake for funded 2-year-old early years places is 9% lower than the London average. Uptake for 3–4-year-old funded places had dropped 5% from the previous year and was 3% lower than the average for London. Given how important early years provision is for lifelong outcomes, especially for children living in areas with high income deprivation how will the council work to improve uptake of funded early years placements to enable Croydon's future generation to flourish?

Response

The Local Authority is committed to increasing the take up of funded provision and to ensure that parents/carers are aware of what is available and how it can be accessed. At present the council is analysing data to find out which areas in the borough have the lowest take up of these types funding. This will enable us to focus our support in these areas to assist an understanding of why the funding has not been taken up and support knowledge on how to access the funding. Current support available includes contacting parents of eligible 2-year-old funded children to inform them of the offer and how to access it, social media campaigns, advice and guidance from the Child Care team and Family Space website and Children's Centre staff. Other local partner organisations are providing information on the funding offer and how it can be accessed to share with service users.