

Scrutiny Streets & Environment Sub-Committee

Meeting held on Tuesday, 30 January 2024 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall,
Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Councillor Ria Patel (Chair), Councillor Louis Carserides (Vice-Chair), Danielle Denton, Gayle Gander, Stella Nabukeera, Ellily Ponnuthurai and Nikhil Sherine Thampi

Also Present: Councillor Jeet Bains (Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration)
Councillor Scott Roche (Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment)

Apologies: Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Nikhil Sherine Thampi.

PART A

1/24 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

2/24 Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

3/24 Urgent Business (if any)

There were no items of urgent business.

4/24 Period 7 Financial Performance Report

The Sub-Committee considered a report set out on pages 19 to 56 of the agenda that provided the Cabinet Report on Period 7 Financial Performance for Members to ascertain whether they are reassured about the delivery of the 2022-23 Sustainable Communities, Regeneration & Economic Recovery (SCRER) Budget. The Corporate Director of SCRER introduced the item.

The Chair asked if the forecasted breakeven for 23/24 was realistic, and the Corporate Director of SCRER responded that, at Period 7, it was. The Chair queried budget variances and a vacancy in the Culture team. It was explained that this vacancy sat outside the 'Borough of Culture', which was funded by grant funding, and would not affect its delivery. Members were informed that information on vacancies in the Culture team could be provided following the meeting.

Members queried risks in the Parking and Planning departments and the volatility in this income, and asked what the Council could do to generate income for these areas in a way that was less demand led. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that these risks were inherent to income budgets for these departments, but that the Council needed to ensure it could set realistic targets and forecast figures; however, it was acknowledged that these income budgets were vulnerable to changes in the economy and demand.

The Sub-Committee asked about underspends due to reduced utility costs and heard that this had been as a result successful bids for government funding to subsidise General Fund spend on energy costs for swimming pools and leisure facilities.

Members asked whether the bid in progress for the 'Planning Skills Delivery Fund' had been decided and what this money would go towards if successful. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that the Council had submitted a number of bids for Planning grants and that more information on these bids and their purposes could be provided outside of the meeting.

The Sub-Committee asked about the numbers of major planning applications and predicted underachievement of income at Period 7. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that major planning applications generated a significant amount of planning income. The opportunity in this area (listed at 4.91 in the report) acknowledged that there were several major schemes in development that could generate large fees, but it was explained that the Council needed to be careful not to project these too soon, as the decision as to when these were submitted fell to the developer. Members heard that there had been a reduction in major applications in 23/24 due to a number of factors, including the increased cost of development and new regulatory requirements; there were still a good number of major applications in the borough compared with other boroughs. The Chair asked how officers could ensure there was not an overestimation of the number of major applications and associated income in future years. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that predictions were based on the number of applications received in past years in combination with the knowledge of forthcoming developments and other factors.

Members asked about risks associated with a decreased demand for parking and what mitigations had been put in place. The Corporate Director of SCRER acknowledged that there had been a change in behaviours since the

pandemic, but stated that some demand had recovered in some areas as people returned to office based work.

The Chair asked about ANPR cameras and the timeline for all schemes to be operational. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that there had been a change in the ANPR contractor during 23/24. The Head of Highways & Parking Services explained the new contract had specified that 125 cameras would be in place by January 2024; 119 of 125 cameras were operational, with six cameras offline due to vandalism associated with the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ). Members asked if the same cameras were being targeted or if the cameras being vandalised were in a specific area. Members were informed that vandalism was across the network, but that there were also specific pockets in the north of the borough. The Head of Highways & Parking Services explained that anti-vandal collars had been fitted to cameras as well as signage to state that the cameras were not associated with ULEZ. The Sub-Committee asked about further remedies for the vandalism and heard that the solutions were bespoke depending on the act of vandalism as these were varied. The Sub-Committee heard that the provider was currently operating the contract to the satisfaction of the Council.

Members asked about issues with the printing process for around 3100 Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) between October and December 2023; this had meant that initial PCNs had not been issued to motorists, giving them no chance to pay the discounted rate. The Corporate Director of SCRER apologised for this, and explained that those affected would be written to, the PCNs cancelled, and any fines paid in error refunded. A phone number and email address had also been published so that residents could contact the Council to check whether they were affected; the automatic reply from the parking enquiry email address has also been updated. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that there would be further reassurance around the PCN issuing process, with letter templates being reviewed to ensure that they met statutory guidance and regulatory changes.

The Chair asked about the framing of staffing underspends as an opportunity when these could pose a risk to the delivery of services. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that vacancies were an opportunity to aid in achieving a balanced budget for 23/24, but acknowledged that these could be a barrier to the Council in achieving good outcomes for residents. The Corporate Director of SCRER stated that there was a difficult recruitment environment, with it sometimes taking longer periods to get staff in post, which could lead to a saving in staffing costs.

Requests for Information

1. The Sub-Committee requested information on current vacancies in the Culture and Community Safety Division that were contributing to a £0.4m underspend at Period 7.

2. The Sub-Committee requested information on the factors contributing to a £0.1m underspend for the Coroner's Service at Period 7.
3. The Sub-Committee requested information on bids submitted by the Planning department during 23/24, including for the 'Planning Skills Delivery Fund', detailing the amounts bid for; the purpose of each bid; and the results of where bids had and had not been successful.

5/24 Budget Scrutiny Challenge

The Sub-Committee considered a report set out on pages 59 to 68 of the agenda, which provided information on the following 2023/24 budget proposals:

- 2024-28 SAV SCRER 002 - Fees and charges - Changes to parking policy
- 2024-28 GRO SCRER 003 - SEND Transport – Growth Proposal
- 2024-28 SAV SCRER 006 - Deferral of growth in highways maintenance

The Sub-Committee went looked at these proposals with a view to determining:

- Are the savings/growth deliverable, sustainable and not an unacceptable risk?
- Is the impact on service users and the wider community understood?
- Have all reasonable alternative options been explored and do no better options exist?

The Corporate Director of Sustainable Communities, Regeneration and Economic Recovery (SCRER) introduced the item and the Sub-Committee received presentations (Appendices A, B & C) on each budget proposal introduced by the Cabinet Member for Streets & Environment.

2024-28 SAV SCRER 002 - Fees and charges - Changes to parking policy

Members asked if parking trials had indicated whether the Council would be able to achieve additional parking income and what learning or insights there had been from the South Croydon parking trial. The Head of Highways & Parking Services explained that one of the aims of cashless parking trials had been to analyse kerbside transactions; previously residents had needed to get a paper ticket from a machine entitling them to a period of free parking. The trials had shown a drop in the total number of transactions, and it was thought this showed that there had been an element of meter feeding in district centres, although this could not yet be quantified. The Parking Policy Consultation had specifically asked about free parking in district centres and the potential change of this offer to charging a nominal fee. The results of the

consultation were still being analysed to determine how a nominal fee could contribute to potential savings in future years, including 24/25.

The Sub-Committee asked whether there would be more engagement with local businesses with a view to introducing more PayPoints to ensure these were closer to parking locations. The Head of Highways & Parking Services explained that the Council would first need to reach out to PayPoint to understand how they engaged with local businesses; the contract currently sat with PayPoint and RingGo. It was acknowledged that there had only been one PayPoint available in the Purley trial, but that for the other trials there had three available. The Head of Highways & Parking Services stated that other payment methods were being investigated for those who did not have access to the RingGo app or phone line, potentially through parking vouchers as in some other boroughs.

Members enquired if officers had been aware of SMS charges to residents from RingGo reminder texts. The Head of Highways & Parking Services stated that they were aware of these charges, but that the system opted-out users out of this service by default, other than for users RingGo who had signed up to the service over seven years ago. Details, including screenshots, had been provided in FAQs to businesses and on the Council website as to how to opt-out to the SMS service.

The Sub-Committee enquired about new ANPR camera schemes in the 24/25 budget. The Head of Highways & Parking Services responded that there were no new proposals for ANPR cameras in the 24/25 budget, other than the 125 cameras already on the network. Income targets for ANPR were quantified on an average yield of £56 per PCN and were predicted based on the 23/24 contravention data; forecasts were also dependent on the type of scheme. Members asked about possible behavioural change to better compliance as residents became more familiar to schemes and asked if this presented a risk to achieving predicted income targets. The Head of Highways & Parking Services explained that, as part of the Transport for London (TfL) Local Implementation Grant, funds were being allocated to engage with schools where Healthy School Streets schemes had been established. Income budget targets had factored in ongoing compliance with schemes.

Members asked how the parking trial sites had been selected and asked whether these had been chosen to be representative of the borough. The Head of Highways & Parking Services responded that there were 16 district centres in the borough with the majority currently offering one hour free parking; trial sites had been chosen in four distinct areas to provide as full a data set as possible. The Chair asked how it would be determined which sites would continue to offer a period of free parking and which would require a nominal fee. The Sub-Committee heard that only district centres would be considered.

The Sub-Committee asked if officers had looked at other boroughs to see how reduced demand for parking could be mitigated. The Head of Highways & Parking Services explained that this was a difficult exercise as different

boroughs had their own nuances, demands and pressures. There had been engagement through London Councils, who all London parking authorities fed in to, to benchmark the recovery in the number of kerbside transactions since the pandemic.

Members queried whether the Council had a sufficient number of Civil Enforcement Officers. The Head of Highways & Parking Services explained that recruitment was ongoing, but that the context was challenging; currently there were 36 Civil Enforcement Officers with a view to achieving a total of 40.

The Sub-Committee asked about the potential impact to income from adopting more intelligence led enforcement. The Head of Highways & Parking Services responded that the Council was currently working with its software provider to understand what opportunities and data was available. This software was called 'Sidem', and formed part of the current contract with Conduent, and was used for the whole parking back-office. Members asked if efficiencies from improving the Council's use of this software had been identified as savings and the Head of Highways & Parking Services explained that this was still being developed and would likely contribute towards savings in the 25/26 budget.

Members asked about the use of the 'Love Clean Streets' app to report parking violations and issues with parking during school drop offs. The Head of Highways & Parking Services responded that reports on the app allowed officers to conduct enforcement out of hours, but it was acknowledged that not all reports led to an enforcement action. Reports through the app and from phone calls went straight to parking enforcement. The Head of Highways & Parking Services explained that there was a rota system to conduct spot checks on school parking issues, but that there were not resources to check all schools. The Cabinet Member for Streets & Environment added that officers were looking at how the 'no idling' campaign, which formed a part of the Air Quality Action Plan, could tackle these issues in combination. Members asked about resident uptake for the 'Love Clean Streets' app and what the Council was doing to publicise its use. The Head of Highways & Parking Services explained that the uptake had been good and that use of the app was encouraged in Council correspondence with residents; use of the app for reports was monitored monthly. The Cabinet Member for Streets & Environment explained that the app would be used as part of the 'Clean Up Croydon' campaign, which they hoped would encourage residents to increase use of the app as a reporting tool.

Members asked how much the PCN printing issue would affect the 23/24 budget. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that it was recognised that this would be a significant number of refunds, calculated at £56 per PCN, but that this would be a small percentage of the overall budget. These figures would be reflected in the Period 9 Financial Performance report.

The Sub-Committee asked if the Council had engaged other authorities on how they set parking charges and how these would be updated and simplified in Croydon. The Head of Highways & Parking Services explained that the

Council had looked to see what other parking authorities in London were doing, as well as Croydon's kerbside transactions, district centres and controlled parking zones. Currently Croydon had an emissions based charging scheme; under the current system, those paying at the kerbside were charged at the highest band, irrespective of the vehicle, and those paying via the phone line or app received a charge corresponding to engine size/type. The Council was looking at whether to continue with an emission based model, whether parking tariffs were in line with neighbouring boroughs, and whether the parking model best supported the local economy. The Chair asked about whether the parking income budget for 23/24 was achievable; the Corporate Director of SCRER responded that it was realistic based on the current and past data. The data and trends from 23/24 would be used to predict the income budget targets for 24/25.

The Chair asked about the effects to income from 'free limited stay' parking and how the any impacts of changing this would be measured for local businesses. The Head of Highways & Parking Services explained that transaction data was still being modelled and looking at the viability of nominal charges in district centres was still in its early stages. The Council would work with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and local businesses, and use transaction data and kerbside analysis to evaluate the impact of any changes to charges. The Chair queried whether this data would be able to predict the impact on local businesses, or just parking behaviours. The Corporate Director of SCRER acknowledged that modelling business impact was challenging, but stated that any changes would look to facilitate residents being able to park and access shops while discouraging all day parking in district centres and encouraging turnover.

The Chair noted the results of the Council's recent Residents' Survey 2023 report and asked how residents were being involved in influencing changes to parking policy. The Head of Highways & Parking explained that Parking Policy Consultation had received good and diverse responses from across the borough, and had been promoted through multiple channels. Parking trials had been well spread geographically, and had included the two BIDs. Members heard that there had been learning from the cashless parking trials on where communication needed to be better with those already using the RingGo app and PayPoint.

Conclusions

1. The Sub-Committee encouraged the Council to continue to engage with residents and local businesses on forthcoming changes to parking policy and charges.
2. The Sub-Committee were supportive of the promotion of the 'Love Clean Streets' app as a reporting tool for parking contraventions as an alternative for residents contacting the Council by phone or email.
3. The Sub-Committee were encouraged to hear that the 'Love Clean Streets' app would be utilised during the 'Clean Up Croydon' campaign

and were reassured that it was being considered how to also encourage more residents to use the app to report parking contraventions.

4. The Sub-Committee understood that the introduction of nominal charges for parking in district centres was being explored to tackle meter feeding and increase parking turnover, but were of the view that the right balance needed to be found to ensure that the footfall of local businesses was not negatively affected.
5. The Sub-Committee were encouraged that a more intelligence led approach by Parking department could lead to savings through maximising the opportunities available in the 'Sitem' software. Members understood that any potential savings arising from this would not be included in the 24/25 budget.
6. The Sub-Committee were reassured that parking income targets for 24/25 would be set at a realistic level based upon 23/24 contravention data, and taking account of increased likelihood of compliance as residents became more familiar with schemes such as Healthy Neighbourhoods and Healthy School Streets.

2024-28 GRO SCRER 003 - SEND Transport – Growth Proposal

Members asked about the use of the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) and the Head of Independent Travel explained that this had been in use since 2019 with over 30 contractors currently on the DPS. Contractors could apply to be added to the DPS and needed to prove that they met a threshold; new contractors were being added all the time. Contractors on the DPS were given the opportunity to bid for work, which was then awarded to the bidders who could perform to standard at the lowest cost. Members asked if contractor supply had increased to meet rising demand. The Head of Independent Travel explained that contractors were facing a number of challenges; these included the number of Public Carriage Office registered taxi drivers and the availability of ULEZ compliant large Multi-Purpose Vehicles (MPVs). Members heard that, whilst there had not been a reduction in availability from contractors, capacity in the market was constrained.

The Sub-Committee asked why the proposal was for 5% growth when demand was increasing at a greater rate. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that budgets would need to be managed tightly and further efficiencies found in the Transformation Programme to ensure the overall SCRER budget was deliverable.

Members asked about transformation and engagement with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). The Head of Independent Travel explained that there was an established VCS transport provider in Croydon, who had previously worked with the Council. Meetings with this organisation had begun to see how they might deliver some services, due to their smaller cost base

than other contractors. The Sub-Committee asked about the potential impact, should the VCS organisation work with the Council, and heard that this would likely be relatively small.

The Sub-Committee asked how a reduction in single person transport had been achieved. The Head of Independent Travel explained that this correlated with a drop in single high-cost out of borough placements achieved by the Special educational needs and disability (SEND) department; decisions on what transport was provided was based upon the needs of the individual students. The current average cost per student was around £13,000 per year, but Members were advised that this could be misleading due to the range of costs. The Sub-Committee queried how Croydon's costs compared to other boroughs and heard that Croydon transported more students than any other London borough, however, this was to be expected due to the size of its population. The Head of Independent Travel explained that the percentage of students using the transport for out of borough placements would be a more representative figure, but that many costs were determined by the market especially in the case of single person transport. Members asked if out of borough placements were common across authorities, and the Corporate Director for SCRER explained they were with the need to strike the appropriate balance between students' needs and available provision.

The Chair asked about the in-house service and whether bringing all SEND transport in house would reduce costs. The Head of Independent Travel explained that most bus services were already in-house provision, but that for taxis it was more cost effective to buy into the existing market.

Members asked what safeguarding measures and precautions to deal with medical emergencies were in place. The Head of Independent Travel explained that risk assessments were undertaken and appropriate measures put in place; in cases of very high need, this could include a parent or school staff travelling with the student. All drivers were Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked and had undertaken the Council's Level 1 Safeguarding qualification.

The Sub-Committee asked about increased costs per person for Personal Travel Budgets (PTBs). The Head of Independent Travel explained that PTBs were paid at fixed rate of 60p/mile flat rate, covering two return journeys a day. There had not been a policy change over the last year and so increased costs were likely due to different journeys or families in receipt of PTBs.

Members noted the Phase 2 of the Transformation Programme and asked if it was expected that introducing Muster Points could reduce costs. The Head of Independent Travel explained that no decisions on this had been taken, but that the Transformation Programme would be looking at the possibility of introducing Muster Points. Analysis had taken place, using shadow routing via telematics, to see what savings could be made; initial findings indicated that some time savings could be possible. Muster Points had already been rolled out by some other London authorities, although cost comparison data was not available. It was acknowledged that Muster Points would not meet the needs

of some students. The Council already had the ability to roll out Muster Points under its current policy, but it was recognised that this could be a significant change for children and families. The Corporate Director of SCRER explained that currently there had been no decision on rolling out Muster Points and the views of children and families would be central to any changes.

Members asked how closely the Independent Travel department worked with the SEND department to ensure that there was sufficient in-borough provision, which could lead to a reduction in costs for SEND transport. The Head of Independent Travel responded that the department worked closely with the SEND department on what placements were being made, and participated in the Education Resource Panel around high needs placements and the cost to the Council. Members asked if legislation changes had led to an increase in young people aged 16-25 using services. The Head of Independent Travel explained that the legislation had not changed since 2014 and there had not been a significant increase in demand from this age group in recent years. The Chair asked about provision of transport for under-fives and heard that this had been provided previously but had ceased, as it was not a statutory requirement.

The Sub-Committee asked about increases in students undertaking independent travel. Members heard that the Council employed a total of six full time Travel Trainers plus a manager. Travel Trainers worked with children and families, often from Year 7, to encourage students towards independent travel and to impart useful skills. The Head of Independent Travel acknowledged that this service was not appropriate for all students and explained that the Council tried to target the service towards students who would find it useful and where it could achieve the greatest cost savings. Twenty students had successfully used the service in the last year. Parents were engaged initially, followed by students and schools through Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCo).

Members asked what support the government was providing and heard that there had been discussions around what the 'Safety Valve' process could be used for, and £250,000 had allocated to fund PTBs. There were no specific funding streams available from the government towards SEND transport but there was a growing recognition that this was an area of cost pressure for local authorities. The Corporate Director of SCRER noted that the 'Safety Valve' process related to the overall increasing costs in SEND, but that this had not been targeted towards SEND transport costs specifically; this was well known by the Local Government Association (LGA) and included in their representations to government.

The Chair asked what processes were in place to ensure the high quality of providers. The Head of Independent Travel explained that there was contract compliance programme and a full time contract compliance officer, who conducted a three-yearly contract audits at the provider's premises where the provider has earned more than £1,000,000 a year from the Council; other contractors were still audited but on a less frequent basis. Audits included

sample checking, contacting the Public Carriage Office, speaking with schools and more.

Members asked about complaints regarding provision and whether there were any recurring themes. The Head of Independent Travel responded that sometimes there were complaints and that these were most commonly around where crews changed and perhaps did not meet customers' expectations. It was acknowledged that sometimes relationships did breakdown between providers and families; where this happened, the Council did intervene to try to resolve the situation.

The Chair asked what the Council was doing to ensure applications were accepted where families were entitled to transport and reduce the number of appeals. The Head of Independent Travel explained that the Council reviewed travel applications when they were received; where it was felt the application did not align with the policy it would be challenged. Appeals would often include additional information that was not included in the original application (for example, medical evidence) and this could change the outcome. The policy and application set out what was required for a SEND travel application. Applications were decided within seven working days, with 10 days following a decision to arrange for transport. The Appeals Panel met every two weeks to ensure that, where decisions were challenged, this happened quickly.

Members asked about the Council's SEND transport fleet and heard that this was made up of 32 16-seat minibuses and 13 30-seat buses that were used at school pick up and drop off times. The Sub-Committee asked how the fleet was used outside of this and heard that it had been used for some day trips. Transformation Phase 1 would look at how the fleet could be used by a food bank. There had been some initial discussion with the VCS about possible weekend uses for the fleet. Currently the Council made a negligible income from its fleet.

The Chair asked about market risks and the Corporate Director of SCRER responded that there was always a risk of further cost inflation and demand.

The Chair asked how children were engaged to ensure the service met their needs. The Head of Independent Travel explained that the last change in policy had been the post-16 policy; there had been a full-scale engagement with students that had been commended for its adherence to the Nolan principles. Members heard that any proposed changes would be subject to a similar consultation with students.

Conclusions

1. Members supported that officers were exploring possible commercial uses of the SEND Transport fleet during weekends, school holidays and during the school day. The Sub-Committee were optimistic that this may provide some additional income to the Council but

acknowledged that this could be offset by the cost of any such commercial operation.

2. The Sub-Committee were concerned about whether a 5% growth for SEND Transport would be sufficient to cover rising demands for the service as a result of an increasing number of Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) in the borough, as well as cost inflation that may occur during 24/25.
3. The Sub-Committee acknowledged that SEND Transport was being looked at as part of the Transformation Programme, and that some savings had been made as part of Phase 1 of the project. However, as Phase 2 was still in very early stages of development there was limited understanding of any potential savings.
4. The Sub-Committee appreciated that Muster Points had been identified as a possible point of savings for the SEND Transport service but were of the view that the potential budget impact was limited and that the change would likely not be appropriate for some students.

2024-28 SAV SCRER 006 - Deferral of growth in highways maintenance

Members asked why Croydon was spending significantly more than the London average on reactive maintenance. The Highway Asset Manager explained that Croydon was spending significant amounts on reactive repairs and was working to move to a proactive approach that would reduce costs. The loss of funding from TfL had affected the Council's ability to deal with principal road networks, but the Council was looking at ways to address this by better preserving road surfaces to extend their lives and delay major works. The Corporate Director of SCRER acknowledged that there was a backlog of investment in the highways network and explained that this was the case nationally. It was clarified that this would not be a cut to the budget, but a deferment of planned growth; government had recently provided some additional investment for 23/24 and 24/25 that would help to mitigate this deferment alongside effective use of the Capital Programme. The Sub-Committee heard that the £1,000,000 growth would be included in the 25/26 budget. Members asked if £1,000,000 growth would constitute a real-terms cut and the Corporate Director of SCRER agreed that arguably it could be, but all Council budgets were under similar pressure.

The Sub-Committee asked how this deferment would benefit the Council and what reactive work would be postponed as a result. The Corporate Director of SCRER responded that work would be prioritised to ensure that highways remained safe with less important works undertaken later. The Highway Asset Manager explained that prioritisation for works and auditing was done under a risk-based approach to ensure highways met expected standards. The Sub-Committee asked if this deferment would affect flood alleviation and heard that this was not the case.

Members asked what the real saving of this would be if it led to more reactive and more expensive repairs later on. The Corporate Director of SCRER stated that planning and effective use of the Capital Programme, plus the additional government funding, would mitigate the impact to help to keep highways as safe and well maintained as possible. The Corporate Director of SCRER confirmed that this growth had also been deferred in the 23/24 budget. The Corporate Director of SCRER acknowledged that highways did need investment, but that the Council needed to make challenging decisions across the 24/25 budget. If the Council did not make this deferment, a £1,000,000 saving would need to be found elsewhere.

Conclusions

1. The Sub-Committee were of the view that this saving would contribute to an increased backlog in highways investment that could lead to increased costs for highways maintenance and repairs in the future.
2. The Sub-Committee were supportive of the £1,000,000 growth proposed for the highways maintenance budget in 25/26 but were concerned that this would still constitute a real-terms cut to the budget from 22/23.
3. The Sub-Committee were reassured that the Council would take a risk-based approach to conducting highways maintenance to ensure that highways remained as safe and well maintained as possible within the available budget.
4. The Sub-Committee welcomed confirmation of the additional government funding from the Prime Minister's Network North announcement but accepted that this additional investment would not fully mitigate the deferment of growth in the highways maintenance budget.

6/24 Local Development Scheme Projects and Infrastructure Funding Statement Update (not including the Local Plan Review)

The Sub-Committee considered a report set out on pages 69 to 86 of the agenda, which provided an update on the progress of projects set out in the Council approved Local Development Scheme (LDS) together with a summary of the 2022/23 Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS). The Cabinet Member for Planning & Regeneration and Plan Making Team Leader introduced the item and went through a presentation (Appendix D).

Members asked if there had been an increase in the number of complaints about residential extensions since the revocation of the Croydon Suburban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2 (SPD2) in July 2022. The Head of Spatial Planning, Growth Zone and Regeneration explained that the Cabinet report concerning the revocation of SPD2 had made clear that a new

Supplementary Planning Document would be produced to replace the Household Extensions and Alterations component; since the revocation of SPD2, the Local Plan had been used to make determinations on the basis of character and appearance. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration stated that there had been an increase in enforcement activity as a response to the Mayor's priorities and this did not necessarily relate to the revocation of SPD2.

The Sub-Committee asked how Croydon's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule compared to similar neighbouring boroughs. Head of Spatial Planning, Growth Zone and Regeneration explained that comparison with other boroughs could be unhelpful, as the rates were set by the development viability, development costs and market values in each individual borough. Croydon's CIL charging schedule had been set at £120/m² in 2013 and indexed annually.

Members asked what proportion of CIL was successfully collected and heard that CIL only became payable on the commencement of development. For this reason, it was extremely uncommon for CIL not be collected, as there was enforcement available through planning 'Stop Notices' or liability orders from Civil Courts. As CIL was not an unknown cost, it was factored into the viability of development by developers. The Sub-Committee asked if there had been a reduction in CIL collected over recent years and the Head of Spatial Planning, Growth Zone and Regeneration explained that this was the case, as CIL was linked to the market and developer activity.

The Chair asked about the timeline for the consultant's review of the CIL charging schedule. The Plan Making Team Leader explained that the timeline had slipped due to a priority focus on the review of the Local Plan. Members heard that the consultant's report had been completed and work on the CIL charging schedule would resume in the near future.

Members asked for more detail on the process of reviewing Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plans (CAAMP). The Plan Making Team Leader explained that there would be initial consultations with residents, followed by walkabouts, and drafting of the documents. Once the document was completed, there would be a further consultation and a statutory requirement for a public meeting. Responses from this consultation and public meeting would be analysed and then the CAAMPs were adopted as supplementary planning documents following approval from Full Council.

The Chair asked if there were more transparent ways for residents to see how much CIL was being collected and spent. Head of Spatial Planning, Growth Zone and Regeneration explained that the CIL charging schedule was published on the Council website, as was the Infrastructure Funding Statement. It was acknowledged that there was not a great deal of press around this but the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration stated that CIL was discussed during regular meetings with residents associations.

The Sub-Committee asked about the ramifications of delays to the production of the Local Development Scheme (LDS). The Plan Making Team Leader explained that the Local Plan remained on track to be adopted by the end of 2025; it was acknowledged that some of the other documents were delayed as a result of the Local Plan taking priority, as well as staffing issues and legislative changes requiring the production of additional evidence. A detailed timeline to plan the production of the additional documents was being produced to identify 'pinch points' and ensure that both these and the Local Plan were not delayed.

The Chair asked about unallocated CIL and what was being done to ensure this was spent. The Head of Spatial Planning, Growth Zone and Regeneration explained that some funds were always kept available for future funding years to account for the fact that CIL collection was determined by development activity. The Sub-Committee were advised that the full budget papers would make clear that there was a requirement that £6.4 million a year be available to support the Capital Programme. As a result of this, there was a cautiousness in allocating CIL to ensure that enough was available to support the Capital Programme and corporate budget position. The Chair asked about the possibility of increasing councillor access to CIL, possibly through Ward Budgets. The Head of Spatial Planning, Growth Zone and Regeneration responded that borough CIL was about supporting the Capital Programme on projects that mitigated growth set out in the Local Plan; the 'Local Meaningful Proportion' was used to support communities, where appropriate, accounting for Councillor's suggestions (and previously by Ward Budgets). It was explained that it was strongly encouraged that officers bringing forward projects, resulting from Council endorsed strategies or engagement with communities, first access Section 106 funds as this may have a time constraint or be limited to a specific location. The Head of Spatial Planning, Growth Zone and Regeneration explained that this approach was taken to try to balance the funding to communities and projects through the three different funding streams.

The Chair asked about unspent funds on projects set out in Table 2 on page 82 of the agenda. Head of Spatial Planning, Growth Zone and Regeneration explained that it was the responsibility of the individual project officers to spend the funds once they had been allocated. The Chair asked for a written response explaining why funds had not been spent on CIL Local Meaningful Proportion funded projects. Members asked if CIL had ever been lost due to not being spent on time, and heard that there were no time allocations or restrictions on the spending of CIL funds.

Members asked where the Council's priorities for spend on infrastructure and affordable housing were set out. The Plan Making Team Leader explained that the Infrastructure Delivery Plan was produced on a yearly basis and was produced following information from infrastructure providers informing the Council what infrastructure they needed to align with the Local Plan to deliver development over its lifetime. When bids were received for CIL or Section 106, officers looked to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan to ensure that these aligned

with other programmes. Members heard that affordable housing sat outside of the CIL programme.

The Chair asked how sites for 'On Street Secure Cycle Hangers' had been determined. The Director of Planning & Sustainable Regeneration explained that resident requests had been collated, and once there were sufficient requests for an area site visits would be undertaken to determine viability. The Chair asked how the availability of the scheme had been communicated to residents, and heard that this had been done through the Council website.

Requests for Information

1. The Sub-Committee requested information on the four projects with unspent funding relating to Table 2 (CIL Local Meaningful Proportion projects & amounts allocated or spent for 2022/23, page 82), as well as the money not spend on Vehicle Charging Points (Table 3, Summary details of infrastructure that has been allocated but not spent during 2022/23, page 84).
2. The Sub-Committee requested information detailing the schemes or planning references for the 115 new affordable homes secured through Section106 agreements in 2022/23; as well as information on the amount of unspent Section106 monies at the end of 22/23 related to affordable housing and information on how this related to the wider Housing Strategy.
3. The Sub-Committee requested a summary of the details of each project from Table 4 (Items of infrastructure on which that money was spent, and the amount spent on each item, page 85).

Conclusions

1. The Sub-Committee acknowledged that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule and Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) were both published on the Council website, but encouraged officers to think about additional ways to communicate with Members and residents about where and how CIL was being spent.

Recommendations

1. The Sub-Committee recommended that the Council consider ways to engage residents to determine their views on where they would like to see Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) spent in the borough, and for stronger communication with residents around CIL schemes such as the 'On Street Secure Cycle Hangers'.

7/24 Cabinet Response to Scrutiny Recommendations

The Sub-Committee noted report.

8/24 Scrutiny Work Programme 2023-24

The Sub-Committee noted report.

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm

Signed:

Date:

.....

.....