

## Cabinet

Meeting of Cabinet held on Wednesday, 28 June 2023 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

### MINUTES

**Present:** Executive Mayor Jason Perry (Chair);

Lynne Hale (Deputy (Statutory) Executive Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes (Vice-Chair)), Councillors Jeet Bains (Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration), Jason Cummings (Cabinet Member for Finance), Maria Gatland (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Yvette Hopley (Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care), Ola Kolade (Cabinet Member for Community Safety), Scott Roche (Cabinet Member for Streets and Environment) and Andy Stranack (Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture)

**Also Present:** Councillors Rowenna Davis (Chair of Scrutiny and Overview Committee), Stuart King (Leader of the Opposition), Callton Young (Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance), Janet Campbell (Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care), Amy Foster (Shadow Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Chrishni Reshekaron (Shadow Cabinet Member for Homes), Richard Chatterjee

**Apologies:** Councillor Mario Creatura

### PART A

17/23 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the Part A minutes of the previous meeting of the Cabinet, held on 24 May 2023, were approved as correct records with the following amendments:

In Paragraph 15/23 – to remove the word ‘to’ from the sentence to read as “good quality long term best value”.

18/23 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were none.

19/23

### **Urgent Business (If any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

The Executive Mayor updated Cabinet with a series of unrelated community safety issues which had occurred over the past couple weeks. The council had been working closely with police and local community groups to ensure the issues were being tackled.

Borough Commander and Council Officers had been supporting police in their investigations. There were additional police patrols in the borough to provide additional reassurance to residents, further, the council's youth engagement teams and wider council services had also been mobilised to ensure safer streets.

20/23

### **Croydon SEND Local Area and Alternative Provision Strategy 2023 – 2026**

The Executive Mayor considered the Croydon SEND Local Area and Alternative Provision Strategy 2023-2026 report and informed Cabinet of the extensive work with key community partners.

The Executive Mayor further informed that the strategy affirmed the council's commitment as set out in the Mayor's Business Plan was to ensure that all children and young people in Croydon had a chance to thrive, learn and fulfil their potential.

The report outlined the aim, principles, and priorities for the next three years, with the ultimate goal of enhancing outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities, and their families.

It was noted that the strategy was co-produced with many partners across the borough.

Cabinet was joined by pupils from Bensham Manor, Coulsdon Pathways, the BRIT school, and Croydon Active Voices, who had shared with Cabinet their collaboration nature of the strategy and working in partnership with the community.

The Executive Mayor thanked the young people, parents, Croydon Active Voices and council workers for their contribution and the amount of work and partnership put into the strategy additionally hearing their voices who shared a lot of pride and aspirations in the strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Maria Gatland, welcomed the inspirational presentation from the young people present and thanked the officers for all the work they had put into the strategy.

The Shadow Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Amy Foster, welcomed the passionate voices from young people, and raised a question relating to early intervention, why maintained nurseries was not mentioned within the strategy, and the impact the closure may have.

The Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, Debbie Jones responded to the question highlighting that Croydon was fortunate in having a sound and solid early years space, additionally, the strategy presented had captured all the work that had been and continued to be done in all early year's settings.

The Executive Mayor in Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

To approve the Croydon, SEND Local Area Strategy 2023-26 for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those accessing alternative provisions (AP) and to agree to receive an annual update report on progress against the strategy.

21/23

## **STAGE 1: RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM SCRUTINY**

The Executive Mayor considered the Scrutiny Stage 1 reports which detailed recommendations relating to the council's improvement journey.

The Chair of Scrutiny and Overview Committee, Councillor Rowenna Davis, addressed the Cabinet and highlighted two areas for the council's improvement journey:

- 1 To speed up the publication of the monthly monitoring reports by ensuring a maximum turnaround time of eight-weeks before publication to address any challenges that may arise; and
- 2 To track the progress of the key performance indicators of the Mayoral Business Plans by recommending that the indicators focused specifically on outcomes for residents.

Other remarks mentioned related to the proposed consultation for the future options of Maintained Nursery Schools in Croydon, and it was highlighted that any options that brought extra income for nursery's were welcomed, as should any nursery's close the deficits would be absorbed into the general fund of the council adding further pressure on the finances.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings, responded to the monitoring reports that through scrutiny, the understandability of the reports was to be addressed through the members and development route; additionally the arbitrary eight-week request was difficult to maintain as the monitoring reports itself were

produced based on the timeline where resources and information were available, then published in the public domain imminently upon completion for transparency.

The Executive Mayor thanked Councillor Davis for her comments.

The Executive Mayor in Cabinet **RESOLVED**: To

- 1.1. Receive the recommendation arising from the meeting of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee held on 22 May 2023 (Appendix 1), 6 June 2023 (Appendix 2) and the Streets & Environment Sub-Committee on 14 March 2023 (Appendix 3)
- 1.2. Provide a substantive response to the recommendation (a Scrutiny Stage 2 Report) at the Cabinet meeting on 27 September 2023.

22/23

### **Future options for Maintained Nursery Schools**

The Executive Mayor considered the Future Options for Maintained Nursery Schools report, and shared with Cabinet that nationally, Maintained Nursery Schools had faced financial challenges for several years, despite transitional and supplementary funding.

The report outlined a high-level option for the transformation of the delivery of Maintained Nursery Schools in the London Borough of Croydon, to deliver a financially sustainable model, and detailed the potential future options for Maintained Nursery Schools in the borough.

The Executive Mayor added that the council aimed to speak with local residents to receive their view on the future model through extensive consultation with partners, parents and residents. The results of the consultation were to be presented in a report to Cabinet later this year.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education, Councillor Maria Gatland informed that the suggestions and options were welcomed from the Scrutiny Children and Young People Sub-Committee meetings. The report set out the background of the recommendation and highlighted different types of early years provision demonstrating sufficient and diverse supply of early education to meet demand which was a statutory duty. Five of the schools had accrued a deficit of £560k despite a recovery plan, thus, to do nothing was not a viable option. The consultation was to be open and transparent in search of a viable solution and address the deficit.

The Shadow Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Amy Foster raised a question on the lack of communication with Maintained Nursery Schools for the difficulty of how the process had started, and whether the possible closure of two nursery schools was

linked to the boroughs search for two locations to site the new family hubs.

The Director of Education, Shelley Davies responded highlighting that there had been communication with the Maintained Nursery Schools ahead of the publication of any reports that was seen in the public domain, further, addressed that Family Hubs and Centres were different. The service was reviewing where family hubs would be placed. As for the Maintained Nursery Schools the proposal was to conduct a consultation period to address the future for the schools.

The Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, Debbie Jones added that the outcome of the consultation should be able to address the ongoing deficit pressures, and though currently there were not many solutions, it was not an option to do nothing, and thus a consultation was required to review the future of the Maintained Nursery Schools.

The Opposition Leader Councillor Stuart King raised a question on what specific options had been considered and discussed in closing good and outstanding nursery schools.

The Executive Mayor responded that a consultation was to be conducted to understand the future for the schools, further by working collaboratively with partners to find a sustainable model to ensure that Maintained Nursery Schools were financially viable and avoided any increased deficits whilst ensuring that they retain enough provision for the early years.

The Executive Mayor in Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- 1.1. To agree to a formal consultation and publication of statutory notice on the proposed option: to agree to reduce the number of MNS within the borough via closure or amalgamation. This will give partners, residents, including the wider school communities and public the opportunity to comment on the proposed options.
- 1.2. To note the potential risks and benefits associated with this option.
- 1.3. To note that the responses to the consultation will be presented in a report to the Mayor in cabinet later this year, so that a determination on this option can be made by the council.

The Executive Mayor considered the 2023-2024 Period Financial Performance Report and informed Cabinet that the council intended to continue to demonstrate financial discipline and continue to project a balanced position for this financial year.

The report set out the narrative of the Council's financial position.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings informed Cabinet that this report was different from the normal period monitoring report due to the short period into the year, additionally with the service closing accounts of the previous financial year, the early assessment of prediction for the year ahead with the small amount of data would be inaccurate. Period Two monitoring reports would see a return to the standard report with all information it would entail. All settings of the council financial position was included within the report including potential pressures that would arise from council specific circumstances.

The Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Callton Young welcomed the report confirmation that the 2022-23 budget remained in balanced and noted the narrative of this financial year and the risks on savings accordingly merged from the council carrying staff vacancies rather than having staff who worked to achieve savings through transformation, asked how the £10m pounds set aside in the budget for transformation be wisely used to deliver fundamental change leading to long-term sustainable savings.

The Executive Mayor announced that a new transformation director was recently appointed, and the service was very committed to deliver change. There was a transformation plan in place to tackle the money used into its best effect. Cabinet Member of Finance Councillor Jason Cummings added that transformation was a key area within the council which included significant changes for a long-term transformation. The projects applied for the funding were assessed for viability, potential savings and service improvements it may produce. Additionally, there were two pots of funds which related to transformation: a revenue of £10m pounds; and a £4m pounds capital budget which related to activities that generated physical assets as part of the transformation. This was a key part to deliver savings necessary to delivering the MTFs.

The Executive Mayor in Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

- 1.1. To note the General Fund revenue budget risks as detailed in the directorate sections of the report
- 1.2. To note the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revenue budget risks as detailed in the report
- 1.3. To note the Council's historic legacy borrowing and debt burden continues to be critical to the sustainability of the Council's revenue budget. Dialogue with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) continues, and the Council is seeking further financial support from Government in regards to its level of indebtedness and balancing the budget to ensure it can deliver sustainable local government services.

- 1.4. To note that the Council continues to operate Spend Control Panels to ensure that tight financial control and assurance oversight are maintained.
- 1.5. To note the work that has commenced on the Council's Transformation Programme as set out from paragraph 4.43.

24/23

### **Joint Children's Social Care and Housing Protocol for Care Experienced Young People**

The Executive Mayor considered the Joint Children's Social Care and Housing Protocol for Care Experienced Young People.

The report highlighted the collaborative efforts between Housing and Children's Services to establish an improved pathway that addressed these needs.

The Executive Mayor highlighted that the new approach would not only enable to effectively respond to the increasing demand but also improve the service offered by better addressing both the current and future housing and support needs of young individuals, by ensuring they reached their full potential to become independent confident adults.

The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes, Councillor Lynne Hale shared with Cabinet that the latest statistics had shown that the average aged for young people leaving home had increased to 23 years old, though the transition for care experienced young people was experienced at a much younger age with the accommodation provided below standard. This protocol offered an opportunity to do better to young people who were valued and cared for. As corporate parents, the council's responsibility was to ensure care and thus the joint protocol was an opportunity to work together and build shared responsibility for supporting care leavers through a successful transition to adulthood. Further, to proactively identify care leavers at risk of homelessness and act to prevent it, in which the protocol provided a swift, safe, and integrated response for.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Maria Gatland shared with Cabinet that this protocol was the first big step for a whole council approach into bringing forward an improved pathway for care experienced young people transitioning from care into independence, highlighting that the housing provision was one of the challenges to provide a good standard for young people. Further, Cabinet heard that as the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel, the Panel Members had worked very hard to deliver the first Corporate Parenting Strategy for Croydon. Feedback from care experienced young people had highlighted the work the council was to remedy. Cabinet further heard of the local offer, and the joint housing and children social care panel which

was to be established and meet regularly to ensure a clear pathway to secure accommodation for the young people.

The Shadow Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Amy Foster, welcomed the emphasis that as corporate parents the council should want the best for Croydon's looked after children, and raised a question relating to homelessness and why Croydon was unable to make an offer to care leavers similarly to neighbouring boroughs, to which the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People responded that the local offer being made to care leavers were reviewed to be addressed.

The Shadow Cabinet Member for Homes, Councillor Chrishni Reshekaron welcomed the report and the proposed housing protocol and raised a question relating to the guarantee of specialist skilled support to ensure the best outcomes for some of the most vulnerable young people with complex needs.

The Executive Mayor responded that the protocols in place were to ensure better support for Croydon's young people. The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes, Councillor Lynne Hale, added that part of the staffing restructure was to ensure that skilled workforce was in place to deliver services.

The Executive Mayor in Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- 1.1. To approve Croydon's Joint Children's Social Care and Housing Protocol for Care Experienced Young People which underpins a new way of working to improve outcomes for young people.
- 1.2. To note that the effectiveness of the new arrangements and measures of success will be reported through the Corporate Parenting Board and existing directorate performance management frameworks to ensure decisive actions are taken to address any issues

## **Gender, Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gap Report 2022**

The Executive Mayor considered the Gender, Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gap Report 2022, which outlined the mean and median pay gap calculations for gender, ethnicity and disability characteristics applicable to the workforce for Croydon Council.

The Executive Mayor addressed Cabinet that there were areas of positive news particularly in the average hourly pay rates for men and women, and there was a negative pay gap for disability. There was more to be done to ensure other pay gaps in the Council continued to reduce, to ensure all employees had equal access to opportunities and fair remuneration.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture, Councillor Andy Stranack shared with Cabinet that the pay gap report presented positive statistics for gender and disability pay and challenges on the ethnicity pay gap. Though there was no room for complacency, the report presented an important measure of how we are trying to build a society that treats people fairly. A full equality strategy was to be presented at the Cabinet in the future meeting.

The Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Callton Young supported publishing the figures as proposed and addressed the need to close the 8.5% gap for ethnicity minority employees in Croydon.

The Executive Mayor in Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- 1.1. To note the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gap reports (Appendix A, B and C)
- 1.2. To approve the action plans as detailed in the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gap reports (Appendix A, B and C) to reduce pay gaps within the council.
- 1.3. To approve the publication of the disability and ethnicity pay gap reports on the Council's website - as good practice to support openness and accountability - alongside the already published gender pay gap figures (which are legally required).

26/23

### **Quarterly Procurement Plan Update**

The Executive Mayor considered the Quarterly Procurement Plan Update report which set out the quarterly update to the Annual Procurement Plan 2023/24, and informed Cabinet that the report provided oversight to how well the Council was complying with meeting procurement timescales and proposed additions and amendments to the plan for the current year.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Jason Cummings informed Cabinet that as part of the new approach to the annual procurement plan there would be quarterly updates. In this quarter there were fourteen additions to the plan detailed within the appendix.

The Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance requested for the updates to include track changes to reveal the changes and encourage challenge.

The Executive Mayor in Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

- 1.1. To approve the revised Annual Procurement Plan for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix A.
- 1.2. To approve the delegated decisions in the revised APP to those Lead Members or Officers as stated in Appendix A that includes

the procurement strategy and award decisions, the duration of the contracts and contract values.

- 1.3. The delegated decisions shall only be exercised following recommendations from the Contracts & Commissioning Board, which include approval from both the Lead Cabinet Member and the Cabinet Member for Finance.
- 1.4. To allow for minor changes to proceed whilst retaining the agreed delegated so long as none of the following thresholds for changes are exceeded:
  - i. Contract value exceeds that proposed in the APP/Quarterly Update Report, by the lesser of £500K or 25%, or the new aggregate value exceeds £1m and it becomes a key decision
  - ii. Substantial / material changes to procurement from that defined in the APP/Quarterly Update Report e.g. material risks are identified

(Should either of those thresholds be exceeded, the delegation cannot be exercised, and the decision shall be recommended to the Executive Mayor, unless a further delegation is approved. Where a delegated decision is a Key Decision to Officers, it must be made in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member).

27/23

### **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Not required.

The meeting ended at 7:50pm