

## Public Questions – 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024

1. Can you please explain why you have not funded new footpaths around Selhurst shops and the top of Gloucester road. The footpaths here are in total disrepair, awful looking, are uneven, are a health and safety trip risk, water lingers and rubbish collates. For decades blotched jobs of very poor quality have been done. The pavements rightly should have been replaced 20 years ago, but have disintegrated to disrepair and health and safety danger. Why has Selhurst pavements been neglected to total disrepair and when will you fund new footpaths?

### Response

At our onsite meeting on the 8th July you were able to show myself and officers first-hand the issues you have raised, and I hope this will be the start of a productive line of communication to rectify the problems you have highlighted.

More broadly, Croydon has over 726km of carriageway and 1235km of footways as part of its public highway. Highway materials deteriorate for several reasons and as such, the Council receives many demands from all parts of the borough for action to be taken.

In an effort to prioritise these demands objectively the Council has a tested system of regular safety inspection and response to ensure that all the borough's footways and carriageways are maintained to required standards. This process allows our highway officers to prioritise repairs as well as it ensures that the limited funds we have are directed at sites with the greatest need.

2. Community energy is thriving up and down the country facilitating cost savings for thousands of public sector and public serving buildings. So why, unlike most other London councils that are benefitting from having solar and other energy upgrades fitted at no costs to themselves, does the council seek to charge rent for projects discussed with Croydon Community Energy, putting them at risk of not being financially viable to progress with the projects. Can the council outline its stance on supporting such projects, commit to 3-month timeline to resolve differences and discuss potential avenues for increasing support in the future?

### Response

There are a number of companies operating in the UK market offering to install solar panels on public buildings which will, on paper, deliver 'cheaper' electricity. Croydon Community Energy is one such company.

CCE have contacted the Council expressing an interest to explore where they could install such a scheme on a publicly owned building In Croydon.

In the event CCE presented a set of Head of terms to the Council in March 2024 where they proposed a scheme to the Council where CCE install solar panels at Gresham Primary School, reducing the school's energy bills and potentially returning excess energy to the National Grid generating an income stream for the school.

The Council raised a number of concerns with CCE on their proposals. These covered the following issues of concern:

- Exclusivity
- Procurement
- Rent and service charge.
- Sinking fund
- Indemnity of LBC for future operational and contractual costs

The Council has been unable to approve the scheme as yet, because under the initial proposal the Council would not derive any direct benefit and indeed would be opening itself up to potential costs. Whilst the school would be a beneficiary in terms of its utilities budget, there could be the real risk of financial exposure to the Council for dilapidations and liabilities under their proposed supply agreement to the grid.

Under the draft agreement issued by CCE the Council would be liable for dilapidations – namely the removal of the solar panels from the roof and the making good of the roof. CCE were also seeking compensation from the Council should the Council elect to terminate the agreement early.

CCE have not, as yet, submitted any form of business case setting out the viability and benefits from their scheme. We have agreed with them that they need to prepare and submit a detailed business case setting out the costs, benefits and potential liabilities to all parties. This would help to determine what lease arrangements are most appropriate.

CCE agreed in May 2024 to prepare this business case and submit it back to the Council. The scheme would also be subject to planning.

Lastly in order to comply with public procurement regulations we have proposed that this scheme be treated as a 'pilot' scheme. In the event that there are more sites, then it is likely we would have to go to market and seek competitive bids since CCE are not the only company in the market providing such an offer and they are not registered on any framework.

Current actions sit with CCE to prepare and submit a business case to the Council.

3. What is being done to stop drug dealing and antisocial behaviour caused by drugs? On my road there is no CCTV there is frequent graffiti, I have been harassed by people on drugs making inappropriate comments, my neighbours frequently spot drug dealing taking place in broad daylight.

### **Response**

Croydon Council are in the process of appointing a Contractor to design, supply, install and commission equipment to upgrade the existing CCTV control room, public space cameras and transmission equipment, housing estate systems and to provide CCTV maintenance services. In relation to the cameras, we will be installing cameras at our crime hotspot locations which we will use the police data to identify perpetrators.

The Graffiti removal service was introduced by the Executive Mayor, and The Love Clean Street app is the fastest way to report fly-tipping, graffiti, and other issues on Croydon's streets. Alternatively, you can add a report through the [Croydon Love Clean Streets website](#).

Through the Safer Croydon Partnership, we work with the police and other partners to tackle ASB and hotspot locations. Please provide details of road in question in order that we may respond with specific next steps.

4. Parking Controls changes - please explain Croydon Council's actions. PayPoint is worse - less convenient, slower, more difficult than systems elsewhere. Croydon Council consulted on parking - then did something wholly different. How Croydon consulted public over making all free time-limited parking two-hour Pay-by-phone only. Formal consultation starting next day not mentioned at last Public Questions despite question. Croydon defying Equality Act - Pay-by-phone only parking schemes - discriminatory against older + disabled people. Croydon unable to operate free time-limited parking with no proof of arrival, although standard across London, including TFL. Parking times not related to location – as normal elsewhere.

### **Response**

The proposed changes to parking controls are part of the Council's new Parking Policy 2024, which outlines the Council's direction for parking over the next few years. The adoption of this policy and related changes are required so that to parking controls and tariffs are aligned to our corporate priorities and support the Executive Mayor's Business Plan.

1. Parking Controls changes - please explain Croydon Council's actions.

Croydon Council's new Parking Policy 2024 aims to align parking controls and tariffs with corporate priorities and the Executive Mayor's Business Plan.

2. PayPoint worse - less convenient, slower, more difficult than systems elsewhere

Data collected showed that fewer customers were using PayPoint for parking. To address this, on-street signage will provide information on the nearest PayPoint locations, and parking can also be booked via phone the Ringo app. In addition, for drivers who do not have a smartphone and require another payment option, free parking sessions can be booked by mobile or landline by phoning RingGo on 020 3046 0010

3. Croydon council consulted on parking - then did something wholly different.

Public consultations in 2023 led to a statutory consultation on proposed parking charges, completed in May 2024, with new charges implemented in July 2024. The proposed changes are aligned to the parking policy, corporate priorities, and the Executive Mayor's Business Plan.

4. How Croydon consulted public over making all free time-limited parking two-hour Pay-by-phone only.

Public consultations and notices advertising the new parking charges were issued in April 2024, with feedback considered in a report published in July 2024. 73 Residents' associations and the three Croydon Business Improvement District Associations were also e-mailed with a copy of the public notice and details of the proposals. The council received 127 submissions in response to the consultation and these were considered in a delegated decision report that was signed on Friday 5 July 2024, and is published on the council's website.

5. Formal consultation starting next day not mentioned at last Public Questions despite question.

The public question on 17 April 2024 didn't specifically ask about parking charges consultations, and detailed responses were given to the questions asked.

6. Croydon defying Equality Act - Pay-by-phone only parking schemes - discriminatory against older + disabled people.

An Equality Impact Assessment showed potential negative impacts because of the removal of the option to pay cash on older people. To mitigate this, PayPoint and phone options for parking sessions were introduced which have been included in all communications to customers that sessions can be obtained by phoning RingGo.

7. Croydon unable to operate free time-limited parking with no proof of arrival, although standard across London, including TFL.

Regulating free, time-limited parking without proof of arrival is labour-intensive. Pay-by-phone technology improves efficiency by allowing immediate verification of parking status.

8. Parking times not related to location – as normal elsewhere.

The new policy standardises parking times across local and district centres, offering a consistent two hour maximum stay with the first hour free to support local businesses and the economy.

5. In Ireland, all public libraries are funded by the State in the interests of literacy and levelling up. Is the Council prepared to seek a similar support from the incoming Government?

### **Response**

The legislation that governs public libraries in England is slightly different and is covered by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (PLMA) which states that it shall be the duty of every library authority, in this case the Council, to “provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof....”.

Guidance from the Government’s Department for Culture Media and Sport - ‘Libraries as a Statutory Service’ - is explicit that it is the role of council’s and library authorities to “provide a ‘comprehensive and efficient’ library service under the Act. They must do so in a way which meets the needs of local library users taking into account the resources available.

The public library service is not a national service, but a local service. What a comprehensive and efficient service means will differ between councils and will depend on the needs of each area. It is, therefore, the role of councillors and officials at a local level to determine how much they spend on libraries and how they manage and deliver their service.”

The full guidance including the role of local councils and central government can be found online.

[\[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-libraries-as-a-statutory-service/libraries-as-a-statutory-service\]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-libraries-as-a-statutory-service/libraries-as-a-statutory-service)

The Council will continue to engage with officers at DCMS to develop the best value library service for people who live, work and study in Croydon.

6. Given that our Shirley library is the only local amenity within walking distance, easily accessible for older residents and young mothers, and serves as a vital meeting place for various community groups, what specific factors and data are driving the decision to close it given that Shirley actually has increasing visitor numbers compared to other libraries? Considering the growing demand for local groups to use the library and the impracticality of expecting people to walk long distances or wait for buses to visit another library at their expense, what alternatives are being proposed to meet these diverse community needs?

### **Response**

A review of all the libraries was undertaken in autumn 2023 and each site was assessed based on the following criteria: library usage, location, the condition and suitability of the building and the impacts of change including local population density and deprivation levels. The full analysis can be found in Appendix C of the January 31st Cabinet report – Analysis of Closure Options.

Shirley Library is one of the lowest used in the borough and there are two other libraries within 1.5 miles. Where any library buildings are closed, the library service will deliver an outreach offer of local book collections and events from other local community venues. We are also exploring using the council's transport service to support those who need it to access their nearest Croydon library. A detailed timetable for this service will be included in the Cabinet report seeking a decision on the new model.

7. [WITHDRAWN] In regard to the closure of Shirley Library can you explain why it is deemed essential to keep the library open at New Addington and not provide an easy to reach library that is well advertised with weekend opening for the residents of Shrublands estate.
8. Closure of a local library reduces opportunities for local residents to experience social contact in a learning environment, especially the young and the elderly population. Has the council considered the negative effect of this, despite being charged the same council tax as residents in other parts of the borough?

### **Response**

The libraries review has taken into consideration the impact of changes to the service model and the importance of access to libraries for people of all ages in Croydon. The historic low usage of the borough's libraries has been compounded by the reduction in opening hours since April 2022, further limiting access. The council can't afford to

restore full time opening at all thirteen libraries and the research and review undertaken indicated that maintaining fewer buildings on a full-time basis alongside an outreach offer to engage non-users could better meet need in the borough. The project team are reviewing the consultation responses and updating the proposals and a report will be presented back to Cabinet in September.

9. Shirley Library is in danger of closure. There are restrictive covenants on Shirley Library and the beneficiaries of these are residents whose original property registration number is higher than SY7794 (the library's registration number) and form part of Wickham Road Estate. There are at least a hundred of these beneficiaries. My question is Has the Council held a meeting with the beneficiaries (as they must by law) to see what they want - either to keep the library or negotiate financial compensation.

### **Response**

The Council is aware that responses to the Libraries Service's consultation have been received which reference the restrictive covenants of the Transfer dated 7 January 1935 referred to in the Charges Register of the Shirley Library property title, including plans indicating possible beneficiaries of those covenants. However, the Council's view is that this is not relevant to the Libraries Service's consultation process. This is because the Council has complied with the restrictions by erecting a Library and restrictions 2, 5 and 12 no longer apply. The Council has not sought to explicitly engage with any beneficiaries as part of this consultation process because the focus has been consultation on the model for the Library Service, rather than specific plans for the building at Shirley; the proposals are at a formative stage. We have sought to engage with as many local residents as possible which includes those who may be beneficiaries.

10. Will you support keeping Shirley Library open?

### **Response**

The Council is committed to developing a sustainable model for Croydon's libraries which can have the greatest impact for Croydon's residents now and in the future. Work is still ongoing to consider the responses to the consultation and review proposals and the report presenting these findings is scheduled to be discussed at Cabinet in September.

11. How much council tax revenue does Croydon Council receive from properties in Shirley?

### **Response**

The net collectable debit for Council Tax for Shirley North and South is:

Shirley North £ 13, 543, 976.32

Shirley South £ 9, 897, 080.07

The overall collection rate for Council Tax as at 31 March 2024 was 94.6%

12. I have lived in Mill Lane for over 25 years, and 4 years ago the residents of our road applied for permit parking due to the further concerns about the creation and expansion of Purley Cross Shopping centre and the added problems this would bring to existing parking issues. Whilst we understand that finances are tight, this would have brought an increase in rates and rents payable, more jobs, which is good for the borough. We in return have received nothing, a large increase in traffic, noise, rubbish and pollution. We would be grateful of if you please look at our request for permit parking from June 2020 for the 12 houses on our road, and grant this.

### **Response**

In the summer of 2020, the council received a petition from residents requesting the introduction of restrictions to limit parking to resident permit holders only in Mill Lane, which predates this Administration.

We understand that the parking pressure in this area has increased with the opening of the new M&S store at the Purley Cross shopping centre. Following the adoption of the new parking policy in March 2024 we are reviewing our approach to Controlled Parking Zones or CPZs. We have all requests for restrictions on file and we are developing a new CPZ strategy over the new few months, and we will be in touch with residents who requested restrictions as part of the development of the strategy.

Following the increase in footfall in Mill Lane, due to the additional stores at the shopping centre, we will work with our contractor to review the current schedule of footway cleansing.