

CCC

Croydon Communities Consortium

**Notes of the Public Meeting
held following the AGM
Town Hall, Council Chamber
Monday 24 November 2014
8.15 pm**

This meeting followed the AGM, starting 45 minutes later than intended, due to the high volume of questions dealt with at the AGM.

Present: Elizabeth Ash (Chair), Mahbub Sadiq Bhatti, John Bosco Saldana, Michael Buckley, Pauline Childs, Roger Clark (Treasurer), Sean Creighton, Charlotte Davies, Mike Fuller, Bridget Galloway, Beryl Gowers, David Gowers, Zahair Hanna, Glen Hart, Elizabeth Jatto, Mark Johnson, Ganapathy Kasinathan, AJ Kennedy, Josi Kiss, Dave Lee, Clive Locke, Pett Norville, Matloob Raja, Alan Reynolds, Amares Sakar, Cllr Mike Selva, Peter Staveley, Janet Stollery, Gordon Thomson, Peter Underwood, Julia van der Vord, Mike van der Vord, Sabrina Williams, David White, Adrian Winchester, Osman Yousuf.

Apologies for absence were received from Mohammed Aslam, Cllr Sara Bashford, Kathleen Bensberg, Tim Buick, Philip Chapman, Sheila Childs, Ayyaz Choudry, Jay Ginn, Raj Gopal, Heather Hardie, Cllr Maddie Henson, David Freeman, Cllr Wayne Lawlor, Maureen Levy, Linda Morris, Grace Onions, Paul Pinder, Margot Rohan, Sanjay Shah.

Police Update

The Met Police had planned to attend but CCC had been advised only late that day that this would not be possible due to a policing issue arising that required the acting Borough Commander's attention.

The meeting were advised that Police were invited to all meetings, and an update if no officer was available to attend was requested.

Format and topics of meetings

The meeting opened with a question from committee on what people would like from CCC meetings. Several suggestions were offered, including devoting the first half hour to specific issues. The committee explained the intention to keep meetings free of set subjects to actively encourage engagement on any subject of interest. It was suggested that CCC could encourage people to put notices up beforehand. This is already encouraged on the website posts but could be developed.

Cases where subjects has arisen only on the night were mentioned e.g. Addiscombe discussion on existing and new local residents' associations, bus routes and community engagement in Sanderstead, as well as meetings on specific subjects such as the one held on Rubbish issues. It was also noted that meetings are not just to discuss issues but to raise awareness, cite new initiatives and update on what is going on locally, eg. David Lean updates.

A suggestion that a set topic could be discussed for the first half hour with a view to taking a vote on how the community feel about one particular thing was suggested. Another suggested that themes could be built around presentation of four areas of accountability of Croydon Council - Engagement, good governance, financial transparency, and the issue of whether they are adequately putting into implementation their policies. This would help gauge public opinion.

The Chair asked for an indication of hands to see who was in favour of this approach. A majority were in agreement.

A question was raised as to how CCC could fairly decide topics for discussion and not be accused of pushing any particular agenda? It was suggested and agreed it would be a case of people putting comments on the website to indicate interest. The need to include flexibility for anyone to raise any issue was considered important. The need to keep meetings apolitical was also important.

A representative from a Residents' Association in South Norwood indicated an interest in engaging with CCC to help resolve issues there. Fly-tipping and antisocial behaviour were issues.

The Chair explained that this AGM event was different to general meetings held. The intention had not been to eat into the open forum time but clearly a few people had come along with specific questions to raise and it was valid to give time to addressing these, which had extended the AGM considerably.

It was explained that what CCC planned was a series of open meetings with no set agenda to give the opportunity for residents/businesses to discuss what concerns them or highlight initiatives, unlike Croydon Question Time which often raised many issues but no one knew the outcome. This is why CCC take detailed notes on meetings and follow up points raised in future meetings. Examples given included the excellent follow up on issues and requests for information at the recent Sanderstead meeting against meetings in other areas where councillors who offered to follow up or were approached have failed to respond or update.

It was agreed that a follow up to the meeting on Rubbish with Council officers present would be useful as still this a real issue for Croydon.

Policing in Croydon

CCC aims to link with the police to update the community. Policing is a real issue for Croydon and whilst the community are told that policing numbers are on the increase it raised the question why, when the Assistant Borough Commander was due to be at the meeting, but called away at short notice, there was not one suitably briefed replacement.

Tackling issues

It was pointed out that one of the strengths at the meetings held so far was that misconceptions about issues relating to just one area had been broken down to demonstrate that people across the borough have similar issues. Another strength of CCC's work is that people from opposite ends of the borough who may know nothing about each other, but share the same problems, can work together on specific issues. It was accepted though that some issues related only to a specific area.

Another from South Norwood commented on sadness at how the area had been allowed to deteriorate in the few years she had been living elsewhere.

Streetlife was mentioned as a useful tool to keep up to date with what was happening in communities.

South Norwood & Regrowth plan

A meeting in South Norwood was suggested. Those knowing the area well felt it was very run down and neglected. It was accepted that areas such as Broad Green were in a similar predicament.

Another commented that there are similar problems in the south and central areas of Croydon relating to local shops, commercial buildings turning into residential units, transient populations in short term rental accommodation. The issue of landlords who don't live in the area and keep a check on tenants and their properties was also seen as an issue.

Another pointed out that South Norwood is one of the district centres like Norbury and Thornton Heath which are under the Council's regrowth plan and are supposed to have more money and attention to address some of these issues. The need for good public engagement was paramount or

it was felt it would be the council officers deciding what is best for these people in these areas. The first meeting that took place in Norbury was invitation only, not a public meeting. The member requested a discussion as part of a CCC meeting about Norbury and South Norwood because the areas had this in common and we could end up with the areas being changed in the way that locals do not want them to change.

This meeting was agreed by a show of hands and Sean Creighton agreed to work with CCC to set this up.

Parking issues affecting local businesses

A businessman from the London Road referred to the issue of people wanting to shop locally and support small shops but people are dissuaded to do so as there is nowhere to park. The Council have a lot to answer for as regards the planning, cleansing, and parking as key issues that come up time after time at meetings. We need to push this Council to make some serious changes.

Council consultations

Another raised the issue of Council consultations happening but felt what is delivered is fait accompli. The example was given of the Cultural Zone – who was consulted on this? Even those living right in the middle of Croydon weren't asked to comment. It was agreed that consultations should allow the community to feed views to the Council before decisions are made.

CCC advised of striving to advertise as many consultations as possible on the website and via social media. Caution is used though. One was a consultation on culture with the #ambitiousforcroydon hashtag. CCC advertised the consultation but didn't use this hashtag as it the 'ambitions for' slogan was part of the Labour election campaign and CCC are apolitical. In a similar way CCC have been careful in regard to the issue of the downgrading of the Urgent Care Unit in Purley as it is linked to just one political party so whilst able to advertise the issue are unable to link to Conservative-run petitions or campaigns.

It was agreed that there was often a lack of clarity around consultations, whether they are Council led or instigated by a community group. The way the Culture consultation was presented led people to think it was not a council consultation. The fact that consultations have been extended might indicate poor take up.

Where communities are asked for opinions or input this is not always effective. The example was offered of a community group being invited to contribute to questions for a consultation but told it was too late when they submitted them. It was felt that the community needs to be aware of issues like this, when they occur.

Another asked where decisions are being made, noting that there was a one day conference in the middle of Croydon but the tickets cost £500, which excluding many.

Accessing Council information/community partnership

Issues of accessing Council information was raised, with those present having different experiences of ease of access. It was noted that a group emailed CCC the information about the Stronger Communities Partnership. It was raised at a CCC meeting and those at the meeting knew nothing about it. CCC followed this up with others and they were similarly affected e.g. someone who sits on several groups – only one of the groups had been contacted. One of the things CCC are trying to do is to make sure all this information is going to everyone equally.

Westfield/Hammerson consultation exercises

Another mentioned a meeting the following Saturday at Stanley Halls, South Norwood as part of the first round of consultations on the Hammerson/Westfield site. Few were aware. CCC had asked for information but not been advised. Several present were aware of the poor promotion of the first consultation exercise in Centrale. CCC put it on social media after being alerted, late in the day, by

residents passing the message on to others. It was agreed that this issue was of high interest, that it was worrying that the consultation exercises were poorly advertised. It was agreed that a large venue for a borough wide information exercise would be most useful. Working in silos is ineffective and it was generally accepted that the community need to work together to effect change.

Croydon University Hospital

Another person raised issues regarding declining standards at Croydon University Hospital (CUH), referring to petition to the hospital and the hospital being taken to court. Others present clarified that this related to one patient who relatives are trying to move to another hospital.

This person went on to refer to declining standards and that as Croydon rely on this hospital this needing to be discussed. Information from Steve Reed MP was referred to, noting how poor standards were at CUH. Others refuted this, reporting good experiences and questioned what these reports were. Another spoke in support of Accident and Emergency at CHU with plans to rebuilt starting end of next year. It was understood that, at the present time, four times more people are using this than it was designed for originally.

Croydon CCG

The forum for discussing healthcare issues is the Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) although meetings were poorly attended. The CCG has been invited to CCC meetings to promote public engagement. The CCG have a duty to involve local communities in commissioning services. A show of hands showed that other than two no-one had been to a CCG meeting.

Another disagreed that CCG meeting were poorly attended but felt that they were not user friendly and there was not a lot of follow up. She also strongly disagreed re standards at CUH as they have improved immensely.

Purley Hospital

A good deal of money has been spent on this, including the addition of an Urgent Care Centre, which wasn't advertised effectively, leading to underuse and eventual downgrading to a Minor Injuries Unit. The future of healthcare provision generally in Croydon was a concern with the NHS re-configuring provision and something people should keep an eye on. The conflicting information on two versions of leaflets in circulation about Purley MIU was seen as an issue.

Attendance of Councillors at CCC meetings

Concern that councillors were not present was raised. The committee confirmed that all councillors were invited. Some pointed out that there was another meeting on the old Ashburton Library the same evening. It was noted that some councillors had sent apologies.

Mike Selva, a Broad Green councillor, added that he would like to encourage more councillors to attend CCC meetings and noted that a Conservative group meeting was being held that evening also meaning it would be difficult for them to attend.

Save The David Lean Cinema

Adrian Winchester gave a brief update on the David Lean. 50 screenings will have been shown by the end of this year and flyers were made available. Details of how to book are on the CCC website.

Close of meeting

With no other questions raised the meeting was closed and all were thanked for attending. Informal networking continued for a further fifteen minutes.

Meeting closed 9.10pm