Recovery Board Minutes

22 May 2026, 14.15 – 15.45

Attendees: **Commissioners:** Ged Curran, Lead Commissioner (chair); Debbie Warren, Commissioner (Finance); Jackie Belton, Commissioner (Transformation) **Members:** Jason Perry, Executive Mayor; Councillor Lynne Hale, Deputy Mayor; Councillor Jason Cummings, Cabinet Member for Finance **Officers:** Elaine Jackson, Acting Chief Executive; Conrad Hall, Corporate Director, Resources (S151); Venetia Reid-Baptiste, Corporate Director, Sustainable Communities, Regeneration and Economic Recovery (SCRER); Annette McPartland, Corporate Director, Adult Social Care & Health (DASS); Stuart Collins, Corporate Director, Children, Young People and Education (DCS); Kevin Kewin, Local Government Association; Ella Hullett, Strategic Support Officer (minute taker) **Chief of Staff Team:** Lindsey Lewis, Chief of Staff to the Commissioners	
Apologies: Susmita Sen, Corporate Director; Councillor Stuart King, Leader of the Opposition	
1.	**Item 1. Minutes, actions and updates** The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate account of the **27 March 2026** meeting.
2.	**Item 2. Mayor's Programme 2026-2030** Mayor Perry Introduced • Noted election outcome and the manifesto that supported that campaign. • Campaign had a lot of focus on the work done but recognising that there is more to do and delivery of that. • Working on 100-day plan which focuses on some of the manifesto items and then working on the new corporate plan. Desire for this plan to be more user and resident friendly with simpler language and to follow model of manifesto. • Set out the intention of the administration to be more action focused. Inherited a dysfunctional council both financially and with regard to governance and the recognise the impact this had on the term and delivery of resident focused outcomes. Recognise that there is still more work to do around organisation but a bigger focus on actions. • Need to ensure that political direction is followed through. To introduce a mayoral direction process, with clear tracking and timescales. This intends to also avoid officers taking political decisions around policy. • Overall, a continuation of what the Council has been doing but with more external outward facing action. Cllr Cummings • Recognise that this is a different start to this term as aware of the issues facing the Council, previously uncovered issues that then needed to be dealt. • Now into period of a financial refresh, looking at difficult policy decisions. There is a political appetite to look at all of these policy options to be able to develop a credible plan.

- The challenge is the same as before the election, this administration to be a continuation of what has come before.
- June Cabinet to take forward the Mayoral priorities.

Elaine Jackson

- Noted the success of the election and the boost this has provided the Council. Demonstrates that the Council has been able to build on what was already there and bodes well for ability to move at pace over next few months.
- Over last few weeks have held member induction which was well attended and regarded as a positive event with good engagement.
- Annual Council to go ahead on 27th May.
- Early engagement about priorities has been undertaken, all of Heads of Services, Directors and Corporate Management team have had initial discussion on what this looks like. CMT and Director Meeting in the afternoon.
- Financial Strategy to July Cabinet.
- Clear direction from the Mayor around the political appetite to take more risk, to have early discussions in the policy space with more open conversation, a more strategic approach with difficult decisions. Officers have been asked to bring forward all choices for consideration. Residents must be able to see the benefit of what the Council does. The narrative about Croydon the place needs to change.
- Discussed with the Mayor ways of working, keen to be smarter in ways officers do things to ensure an emphasis on delivery.
- To change the Mayor's advisory board – finance, policy and cabinet MABs. Looking to set up finance meetings. Finance MAB to track delivery plans which include both BAU and transformation savings.
- Need to ensure equal attention to strategic as well as operational focus e.g. inward investment.
- The Mayor's Plan to be co-designed with Mayor, focusing on outcomes and improvement, needs to focus on local outcomes framework with a link through to performance and appraisal setting to drive forward accountability.
- Feels like a reset moment – noted a positive meeting between officers and political leadership yesterday.

Conrad Hall

- Introduced the financial strategy, reemphasising the point about simplifying controls and increasing managerial accountability. Need to be simpler, quicker and more agile.
- Three particular strands to emphasis
    1. Dialling down transformation programme – important aspects within but it is not the vehicle to deliver everything. For example, discussion around investment in improving housing applications is a sensible thing to do but need to draw out the policy changes that could be taken to shift the nature of the cost.
    2. Growth and general fund underspend – to arrange a process over next month to better agree and understand those figures, with commissioner engagement, to ensure confidence in the figures are not overly generous.
    3. Identifying all of the major policy choices that could be taken, with a view to determining early decisions to be taken. View to implement as many of policy choices as soon as possible.

- Financial strategy to go to July but policy choices may not be ready yet for external consumption, however, still needs to come soon after.

Ged Curran

- Recognise descriptions of first term as heavy on discovery, stabilisation then experimentation through transformation. Shared view that next 4 years need to be focused on ambition, particularly around Croydon the place.
- Delivery as central to residents and within that there is a need for prioritisation.
- Croydon has advantages when you look across London – experienced members, talented officers, shared story and understanding as well as a passion to improve the borough.
- Responsibility to share the challenges ahead to achieve the ambitions and the risks that might be there.

Debbie Warren

- An opportunity for a reset on the money side, if that can be accomplished the other aspects will follow. Requires focus from officers and politicians.
- Queried where savings to come from if transformation is not going to deliver – not capable of delivering in this financial year in full so where are replacement savings to come. Need to understand where this piece of work is. Welcome finance focus in MABs but need to better understand the process for putting these savings on the table to then take a view.
- In order to balance this financial year, some of those savings need to come into play.
- Outcomes framework to be a key resource for the Council – will give a view of how budget is being utilised and how money is delivering. Advice to make use of it, opportunity to give more of a roadmap, alongside what Director group can share around high expenditure or poor outcomes.
- Culture is another key aspect – opportunity to bring management team into the fold through finance MAB. There is still a sense that managers don't want to manage or don't feel empowered to manage as transformation is the thing doing the work or they don't want to tread on the toes of transformation. Culture needs to shift to give every member of staff opportunity to contribute to the financial issue and council.
- Council is opening this year with an underspend budget, some of which can be freed up to reduce budgeted deficit. Process around growth and underspends will reveal where there are overspends that are being offset and that needs to be navigated carefully to avoid overall overspends. Noted that CH has invited DW into discussions around growth.
- The next year as key in attacking the financial issue and therefore take on less debt through EFS as well as the MHCLG intervention aspect. Need a degree of ambition (i.e. close the gap, reduce cost base) with a focus on delivery. It is key to flush out all those opportunities in operational budgets and a process needs to be developed so that these policy choices can be on the table for politicians to consider.
- Note the chance and opportunity to grab this.
- Opportunities around policy options – For example, looking at where core business is expensive and what would need to be done to take money out of that, understand what is palatable and what can be optimised. Not necessarily one action taken to fix, it is a collaborative responsibility to address so may be a number of decisions / actions.

Cllr Cummings

- Welcomed the Commissioner input in building the list of potential policy decision, to also contribute to putting things on the table, to ensure that the Council isn't missing those options.
- EJ Noted that the Council are also including opportunities that have been considered before.

Jackie Belton

- Noted that other Councils are looking to Croydon as a place to learn from – continuity, clarity around purpose. Recognise other Councils don't have clarity, cabinet, shared priority.
- Still things that the Council needs to stop doing and clarify where effort is spread. Still stuck in the mud a little bit and this an opportunity to change that.
- Note stability means that regional and national government will want to work with the Council.
- More work needed on methodology – around business cases and how Council are going to track and then deliver. Too much focus on meetings where work needs to be done outside of meetings. This is the time to reset.
- If things won't deliver, then stop those.
- There are lots of opportunities to make big changes and deliver better outcomes for residents as well as delivering savings.
- Need to prioritise and stop some things that aren't delivering e.g. shared services, need to spend money on things that are going to make a difference.
- Noted work of CH on benefits realisation.
- Programme of continuous improvement needs to be spread across 4 years – for example, areas in Place can deliver savings and income in systematic way.
- Opportunity to move from transformation to continuous improvement.
- Recognise that language needs to be clearer for staff as well as residents.
- Clear priorities – new term, it is clear Mayor wants Croydon the place to change. Need to have resources in place to support that and stop activity that doesn't.
- Performance management needs to be improved, data needs to be acted on and need to hold people to account if they don't deliver. That's still not there in all places.

Abi Brown

- Strong mandate to deliver, officers have heard that and members have laid out clear direction.
- Attended UKREIIF – need to do more of that, people want to work with Croydon and people want to work with Croydon more now with the stability and mandate to deliver.

Mayor Perry

- Recognise the importance of political stability for investors and external investment – need to capitalise on that. Also noted the relationships built across London and the benefits of political stability within that context.
- Need to give message out to the public that the Mayor is in charge and has a mandate, Conservatives still have control of planning despite no overall control.

	Cllr Cummings • At a position where all the political party cross party working decision making has been agreed. Recognise that is not the case for other boroughs. Continued working relationships across the Chamber. Conrad Hall • Recognised that other places don't yet have clarity on decision making. Developers will be interested in Croydon as they can see a working relationship and stability. • EJ – Noted the stability across South West and Croydon's role in that partnership. Ged Curran • Noted the burden to now deliver on the back of all those benefits. • Need to lose word transformation – what are key core corporate projects and programmes. • More transparency on the finances about where the Council really is. • Cultural challenge for the Council – tension between where energy goes and what is actually being done. Jackie Belton • Noted that Commissioners contribute with the intention to help, there may still be some bumps along the road that are uncomfortable but necessary to hear.
6.	**Item 6: AOB and Date of the next Board** Ged Curran • Requested meeting shifted to a Tuesday from a start in July as part of Commissioner's previous agreement to look at their working day. • Agreed the Council would set the forward plan for the Commissioner Recovery Board and the Council to share that forward look. • Noted that the Council did very well in the elections and the recognition the Council deserves for this. • The Commissioners to write to the Council regarding the next Secretary of State letter, Council to share their letter by end of July for Commissioners to provide comments for end of August. Kevin Kewin • LGA is represented on a lot of Recovery Boards and to share how that works in other areas with regard to forward planning. • Note still awaiting the best value guidance refresh to come out in approximately July. The date of the next board was noted as **26 June 2026**. Meeting End