**Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance**

Thursday 10th February 10:00- 12:00

Online

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| **Welcome and introductions:** Steve Phaure, CVA’s CEO introduced the eventWe started the year with the good news that the Council will be deferring cuts to the Community Fund. The next six months will be very eventful. There is a key change in governance coming in May with a new Mayor of Croydon being elected; the Local Community Partnerships are taking shape and the Kings Fund proposals are being put into place. We want CVSA discussions to focus on making Croydon a stronger community and bringing more investment into preventative work; young people and mental health will be major themes, with a Mental Health Alliance having recently launched. During the first 100 days of the Mayor of Croydon being in post, with your help, we are keen to present them with the vehicle to greater community control. |
| **Change to Elected Mayor at Croydon Council**: Gavin Handford, Director of Policy & PartnershipsOn the 28th March 2022 the Notice of Election will be published and statutory rules will come into force to make sure that resources are not used to influence the election outcome.Candidates have until 4pm on Tuesday 5th April to submit their nomination forms. A Statement of Persons nominated (a list of candidates) will be published on Wednesday 6th April.On the 5th May 2022 there will be two elections: a borough wide one for the Mayor of Croydon, who will be in place for 4 years, and local ones for the election of 70 councillors to represent 28 wards.On the 9th May 2022 the Mayor will take office. The Mayor will represent Croydon Council locally, in London and nationally; there are only 4 London authorities with an elected mayor.It is the first elected Mayor for Croydon and the Council will be building new partnerships around the Mayor’s priorities.Q – Croydon Mencap – What was the driving force of this change to an elected Mayor and how will the voluntary sector benefit from a new governance structure?GH – The decision was taken by Croydon’s residents through a referendum. The decision was overwhelmingly in favour of an elected Mayor. Q – Marylin Smithies – The Fieldway Community Centre will be used on the 5th May for the election but there is no lighting in the car park, which stands on Council’s land. GH – Thanks for the support. I will pick this up with the Properties Team.Q – Communities First – Why has this not been communicated appropriately to residents?GH – Communication will be a key work stream of the elections; information on how to vote will be disseminated and of course the candidates themselves will engage with residents.Q – John Gilhooly – Is there a risk that decision making will be compromised if there is a clash between the elected Mayor and a councillor? What are the rules around community organisations supporting one candidate over another one?GH – Separation of powers will be down to the elected Mayor. There are no rules for charities but there are general Charity Commission guidelines covering charities - they cannot run party political campaigns.Q – Paul Voden – Is there still going to be a civic ceremonial Mayor?GH – Yes, some Councils change the title name to avoid confusion.Q – Croydon Covid-19 Mutual Aid – Can we get an example of how to communicate these messages to volunteers and residents without including a political message?GH – The Council always uses factual communication and does not signpost to any candidate’s information. You can also provide a link to <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/council-and-elections/voting-and-elections/mayor-croydon-and-croydon-council-elections/mayor-croydon-and-croydon-council-elections>Steve Phaure (CVA) – CVA and Croydon BID will be staging a hustings, a formal way of bringing candidates before the public, at Fairfield Halls. Q – CCC – How much power does the Mayor have? Will they be able to take decisions without reference to the elected members; for example, to shut libraries, have a fully funded voluntary sector etc?GH – Under legislation key decisions have to be taken in public unless there is what is called “exempt” information, commercially sensible information. They have to be in a meeting forum, where members of the public can come along; the meetings have to be published in advance with an agenda and there needs to be comprehensive information provided to the decision maker in order to make an informed decision (a report). There also needs to be a forward plan of those key decisions so that you know at least 28 days in advance that there is the intention to take a decision on a certain topic. They Mayor will have to use this approach. It is however for the Mayor to decide whether they take all the decisions themselves under that executive function or they delegate it to the whole Cabinet, individual Cabinet members or officers.CCC – My biggest concern is that, depending on who the Mayor is, the decision making process could be very inclusive or not. Would they be able to take a particular decision even if sentiments of councillors/residents were opposing it?GH – Legally yes, politically they would have to be accountable to the electorate.Croydon Mencap – I assume the Mayor’s manifesto will include how and what decisions are going to be made?GH – The Manifesto pledges might indicate how the candidate intends to take decisions but the transparency element of the decision-making process are still a key factor that the Mayor can’t change.Woodside Bereavement Service – If the elected mayor will state their priorities before being elected, should we not be talking to them before their manifesto is finalised. The hustings would help to answer this question.Peter Underwood – If you want to have an input on what candidates have on their manifesto, you need to do it now as the hustings will take place too late. Candidates are preparing their manifesto as we speak.David Page – I am confused. GH initially seemed to state that the Mayor had to get consent from all the councillors but we are now hearing that they can act on their own decisions. Is it right to say that, if they decide to do something, whatever the councillors would like to do does not matter?GH – the Council has a budget and policy framework, within which the Mayor can take decisions, providing they do it within the decision making process. What the council retains is the power to approve policies and approve the budget and that is set out in our Constitution. In terms of the core policies like the Local Plan, Community Safety Strategy etc, the 70 Councillors are required by the Constitution to approve them. But, provided the Mayor is working within that budget and that policy framework, they are free to take the decisions they think are right.Q – John Gilhooly – Is there somewhere we can find a complete list of candidates?GH – Not until the 6th April. What you can do is keep an eye on Social Media and press releases/websites to know who the candidates are. The Council will send out a candidate booklet to all Croydon households with a short statement from each candidates for the elected Mayor.Q – Steve Phaure (CVA). We would welcome collaboration between the new Mayor and MPs around casework. Casework is often disconnected in the way MPs work with the Council, irrespectively from political allegiances. GH – What we know from other Local Authority areas, is that an elective Mayor does have a higher profile. They will have views and engage on things outside the Council’s statutory duties. As a result, MPs will want to have a strong relationship with the Mayor and vice-versa. Q – Carers’ Information Service – There are 8,000 people with Learning Disabilities in Croydon who are eligible to vote. It is important to have an easy to read version of it.GH – The legislation is not very clear on alternative format and we can only do what the legislation allows us to do. However, I took that up with the planning team.  |
| **One Croydon Local Community Partnerships:** Sarah Burns, Director of Communities, CVAOne Croydon are the commissioners and providers for Health and Social Care: the Council, GPs, the Clinical Commissioning Group, the Hospital, South London and Maudsley and Age UK has represented us for the Voluntary and Community Sector but will be stepping back.One Croydon’s ambition is to bring Health and Social Care into local areas so that wrap around support for people can be provided in their local area. They are calling that ambition Integrated Community Networks (ICN+); in essence what they are doing is dividing Croydon up into 6 localities so that health and social care are able to work better together and with the local Voluntary and Community Sector.In preparation for this body of work, CVA and the Council have been hosting Local Community Partnership meetings in each of the 6 localities since November 2020 to:* Strengthen connections between residents, providers, stakeholders in the area
* Make sure we understand challenges and opportunities in each area
* Work towards Local Community Plans
* Influence commissioning- greater local transparency and accountability
* Obtain good outcomes for local people

Community Hubs: we want to make best use of the community spaces where people already go (some have already expressed interest within Local Community Partnership meetings) and have Health and Social Care staff based in there once a week and connect with all is going on in Localities as well as strengthen community based conversations. With The King’s Fund Phase 2 delivery we will have two more Community Builders working in localities, hearing from people at the margins who have a critical insight at a grassroots level.The Commissioning work stream is working on devolving commissioning into localities. Grant panels will be developed to make sure commissioning follows the Community Plans.We have started electing Chairs and Co-Chairs for each Local Community Partnership, starting with Croydon North-East. Magdalene Adenaike and Nicole Godetz introduced themselves and their ambition for their new roles. We are about empowering the community, communication and inclusion. How can we as a community, as local organisations come together to better support residents and bring a resolution to the topics that the area has highlighted.Magdalene Adenaike is the founder/CEO of Music Relief Foundation (MRF), a grassroots charity serving Croydon’s young people and their families for eleven years. The charity is now based within the Thornton Heath Leisure Centre, a central hub for the Thornton Heath area. Nicole Godetz started her teaching career in Croydon North and has now worked in and around Croydon for over 30 years. Nicole was a headteacher for 17 years and whilst in post her school was awarded the Inclusion Charter Mark and Investors in People (twice). Her school was known for being a Family First organisation. The school was one of the first in Croydon to have full Extended School status and to host a children’s Centre. She has seen the strength that can come from relations with the community. She is presently involved with the *MyEnds* partnership on London Road.We are looking for Expressions of Interest for the position of Chair/Co-Chairs in the other localities. Q – CCC – One of the meetings was advertised with an eye-catching flyer. I know CVA has created a general one for all localities but it would be great to have a flyer for each locality.SB – they are being produced; will try to get them out earlier.Q – CNCA – When will Chairs be put in place in the other Localities?SB – We started with Croydon North East as One Croydon’s work started earlier there and the Local Community Partnership was thriving and ready to take local leadership. We want the growth and progress in other areas to be equally organic and we will move to the next step as soon as the area is ready for it. The process will be followed in each area guided by the LCP. Q – CNCA – our member organisations are busy during the day and cannot attend meetings. How can they still be active?SB – There are a range of ways including by electing the Chairs/Co-Chairs, speaking to Community Builders, reaching out to James Moore (CVA) if they want to be a Community Hub or need to liaise with Health and Social Care staff. Community Builders could also attend your Member forums. Q – Ment4 – This has been built around the 6 GP areas when there are in fact 16 places in Croydon when you look at Planning offices. How is it going to evolve? At the moment, for example, New Addington and Selsdon are grouped together but are really different areas. Is there going to be a Community Hub and Spoke model? Also, there are community groups working across the borough like us. We cannot attend meetings in all 6 areas. It will be difficult to engage.SB – We are looking to create connectivity across the localities. We are very much aware that there are going to be number of hubs and each locality will look different in that respect and much of our work will be about being hyper local and having a Community Hub and Spoke model. In terms of working across the borough, this is an issue we have across the sector and we need to make sure we join up groups effectively to the emerging local community plans. Making sure your activities are on Simply Connect Croydon <https://croydon.simplyconnect.uk/> will help with that connectivity, particularly once the Locality webpages are developed.Q – John Gilhooly – How much of this has been discussed with One Croydon?SB – All of it, it has been developed through 3 work streams and everything gets signed off at One Croydon’s LVP Board. Q – Peter Underwood – Wanted to re-affirm that I have not been able to engage with the LCPs as much as I would have wanted to as I am busy delivering during the day. Can we consider having the meetings at different times/dates? Also, can we have information on who to contact at One Croydon or the different Local Strategic Partnerships (Chairs/Co-Chairs)?SB – We will take the feedback but ultimately this is why we have Community Builders in place, to reach those people who cannot make the meetings. We will think of as many ways as possible to reach out to residents and groups to be as inclusive as possible. AS – We are creating the space for people to come in and see what arises. As Chairs will take over, the groups will take their own paths and times might change, as considered suitable for most members. There will be subgroups and work outside meetings. The Co-Chairs of different areas might also come together to share themes and work being done/good practice. |
| **Survey: CVA support for Croydon’s Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). How good a job are we doing?**Survey will be sent to all attendees after the meeting <https://forms.office.com/r/jHQxKmXi6p> |
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