**Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance**

**Croydon Communities Renewal Plan**

Thursday 11th March 2021, 10:00- 12:00, Online

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| **Welcome and introductions:** Steve Phaure, CVA’s CEO introduced the eventWe’ve had 4 meetings of Croydon’s Voluntary Sector Alliance (CVSA) since the news about the Council’s finances became known. We’ve tried to get our bearings on how that will impact us as a sector and tried to mitigate against that impact. We’ve made our position as Croydon’s Voluntary and Community Sector clear to the council. In dealing with COVID last year we responded with so much innovation and agility and that’s been recognised across Croydon’s Strategic Partnership and we’ve been anticipating and working towards a much bigger role for the sector in the future. With issues that relate to our work escalating in the fall out of the pandemic including; mental health, food poverty, race inequalities, domestic abuse, serious youth violence, we were in talks with the council and other agencies about the bigger role to be played and then with the Council’s financial crisis the conversation changed to how we meet those financial challenges. So whilst these last meetings have been about the immediate challenges we’re also looking longer term at the bigger role for Croydon’s VCS. We’ve now got a Communities Renewal Plan reflecting the issues and concerns that you’ve raised and we’ll confirm those with you today.  |
| **Croydon Renewal Plan:** Councillor David Wood, Deputy Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon and Communities and Gavin Handford, Director of Policy & Partnerships See attached presentationContact: david.wood@croydon.gov.uk |
| **Discussion:****Steve:** We’re fortunate that Croydon has a strong partnership with common purpose to find ways forward in the most difficult of circumstances, we saw that throughout last year. Since October Cllr Wood and Gavin Handford have been coming to these meeting so let’s make these bi-monthly meetings for this council engagement to meet in May, July and Sept. so we can work on these challenges together.In your presentations there are two key themes; commitment to addressing underlying causes of inequality and the need to reduce spend. There’s one word that ties these two themes together and that’s ‘prevention’. We need to get into the detail to be able to support transformational change. **Q:** Lola,Concern comparing the cost of services. Cost is not the best measure. Must look at what is delivered. Need to have confidence in the measure.**A:** Comparisons with other boroughs that can provide services for less money, so need a better understanding of how they do this but also ensuring quality is also in order. Not just cost but need to be honest that the Council needs to reduce costs. **Q**: Maddy, Assurance that there will be no disposal of community assets at all without direct involvement of partners particularly those currently managing assets.**A:** Asset disposal paper outlines parts of council estate that council wants to dispose of. Open to discussion to any organisation that wants to, maximum return will obviously be a priority. Just to be clear locally elected Councillors are still running Croydon **Steve:** Discussions about setting up a Community Trust in progress. If rate subsidies are imposed that will gravely impact on many in the room, that is one of the mitigations you’ve found this year and you have our gratitude for that. **Y Gaye:** To read more about the paper that was presented to cabinet on the 18th February on the Interim Asset Disposal Strategy please click on this link <https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/g2488/Public%20reports%20pack%2018th-Feb-2021%2018.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10> and go to page 53 for the cabinet report and the list for the first 15 proposed assets can be found on page 77**Q:** Claudine, PJS Community Service,Is there any guidance on preparation required by sector to support the council with new strategy? (Public service reform issues) **A:** Any proposals will require strong business cases. Assurances that resilience is there, can deliver and is sustainable. Won’t be developing guidance but will be having conversations with partners. You will know where the opportunities are better than we do. **Comment:** Susanette, Croydon Vision, True - cost benefit analysis would be the approach**Steve:** There is some framework we can provide so let’s get something out to groups on what may be required. **Q:** John, Neighbourhood Watch, How will work on localities be tied into consultations? **A:** Rachel Sony joining conversations about localities and multi-disciplinary teams. I’m sure there are opportunities to link that better.**Q:** Brian, Croydon neighbourhood Care Association, Lots of worries about the uncertainties which makes it difficult to run services, can you give an update/clarification on Community Fund this year?**A:** Council have either confirmed funding or spoken to each provider about discussions on alternations. Speak to Gavin if funding is not clear**Q:** Gordon, Croydon Drop-In, By the council’s own calculationsevery pound invested in VCS you get £8 back in value for money. Last correspondence you gave alluded that some services might lose their contract this year. Can you confirm that everyone who is currently in receipt of Community Funding will not have contracts cancelled until April 2022? It sounds as if you are still identifying savings so can you give us that reassurance at this stage or are some of us still at risk of receiving 3 months-notice for 20/21 contracts? Can you let us know what services will be affected by the withdrawal of the Transformation Fund?**A:** Small number of organisations are in discussions about their contracts. If anyone has any concerns about their funding, please get in touch. The council has further savings to deliver in 21/22. Further conversations on transformation fund - not confirmed cancellation**Q:** Susanette, Croydon Vision, Interested in term culture change. We are professionals and there are services within the council that we can deliver better. What is the estimated budget for 21/22? What contingencies are possible e.g. CIL? Where are the gaps?**A**: Culture change is the new approach. We agree VCS is professional and recognise the value and passion it brings. Budget is balanced depending on £50m capitalisation. Government ‘minded’to approve it. Final decision in the summer, dependent on progress. £100k reduction on Community Fund for 21/22 but still working through that, if you have received a letter that will stand.**Steve:** There’s £700m within ‘the system’ so there’s other local funding for the VCS.**Q:** Steve, You have chosen to remove small grants fund but chosen to keep Community Ward budgets. What’s your evidence base?**A:** Devolution agenda, greater community input into localities. If you have effective Counsellors in touch with their communities they would know what the local community priorities are. We’re widening access and devolving to the community level. Groups who used that funding who would be adversely impacted by the loss of this funding and with representations from councillors from all sides we’ve decided to maintain but reduce this fund to £2k (down from £8k). **Q:** Edwina, Healthwatch, What information can be shared with the sector about the types of preventative services that can help with future demand?**A:** Can share budget information, we can see where the budget pressures are. Lots of comparative budget information available. Prevention is important but savings from the Council’s budget is needed now. Need a facilitated conversation through infrastructure groups as Council doesn’t have capacity to meet with everyone individually.**Steve:** On the big question of prevention, we are thinking 5 years ahead as we have massive issues to work on for the years ahead. Maybe you could report back to us on how you spend that 150million and what it’s supporting in the borough.**Q:** Paster Bola Thomas, His Grace E. Outreach and Together Croydon, Who do we contact if we want see the Community Asset List? Who do we contact on public service reform if we have a service we can deliver better than the council? We have submitted an Expression of Interest but it was passed about and we’re still not sure who the contact is. Can you explain what immediate impact the £70m capitalisation loan will have as funding is needed by groups to support basic needs. The figures you’ve given, are they forecasts on savings and growth? What are you basing the forecast on?**A:** Forecasts are based on savings and growth proposals, changes to services. This link takes you to appendix A of the budget report, and lists all the savings and growth items: <https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s28041/Appendix%20A%20Revenue%20savings%20income%20and%20growth%20options.pdf>Money already spent, not new money. Money is to balance the budget this year. We’ll work with the infrastructure groups so we’re picking up the conversations and you know who to contact. **Steve:** Thanks to you both for working in partnership during these difficult discussions for us all. Suggest we keep these bi-monthly meetings to discuss the issues raised. **Q:** Phillipa, Mind in Croydon, What is CIL please?**A:** Community Infrastructure Levy. A levy charged on new developments in the Borough. Used to support development by funding infrastructure focused on what the council, community and neighbourhoods want. The council are exploring whether it can be used to maintain community assets.**Q:** Shirley, Health News Mobile, What is HRA, RIPI, ASC, MHCLG?**A:** Sorry for the acronyms. HRA = Housing Revenue Account, RIPI = Report in Public Interest, ASC = Adult Social Care, MHCLG = Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government, CIL = Community Infrastructure Levy**Q:** Marilyn, BICC, Could we involve residents by putting something in The Open House editorial? I proof-read this for Croydon Council**Q:** Bhupendra, CVA, Do we have a timescale for when we may hear about CIL monies being used to support rent subsidies?  |
| **Communities Renewal Plan- Themes and Priorities:** Steve Phaure, CVAFollowing issues raised at previous meetings and through networks we’ve come up with 16 themes that we need to confirm with you. See attached slides.We’ll then need to draw up an Action Plan with quick wins and also different service models with bigger roles for the VCS. We’ve narrowed the themes into 6 priority themes for immediate attention. In bringing about this change we’ll need to be working in partnership with other agencies, incl: Council, NHS, police and Local Strategic Partnership. So we’ll need to collectively sign up to some tangible changes in these next few months. The council has by October to come up with some real change so that’s the timescale we’re working to.**Q:** Delphine, Bromley & Croydon Women's Aid, Prevention is a great aim and policy but can we be mindful that that is a long-term strategy. Prevention takes time to take effect. We work in domestic abuse for example, and do preventative and awareness work but we still need to provide services to support women in refuge and in the community especially with the well -documented increase in domestic abuse. I can't see where domestic abuse sits within the themes?**A:** Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence is one of the 16 themes of the Communities Renewal Plan, following this feedback we’ve added Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence on the priority list too |
| **Plenary****Comment:** Jenny, CVA, Save our Libraries! Libraries are so important for communities.**Comment:** Elizabeth, CCC, To join the campaign; www.savecroydonlibraries.worpress.com, @SaveCroydonlibs **Comment:** Philippa, Mind in Croydon, I think integration of health and care objectives and initiatives is also crucial and making the social value of the work that we do and the inward investment that we bring in the sector to bear in the conversations.**Comment:** Maddy, Have to record my appreciation for the continued and outstanding leadership of Steve and Sarah of the CVA on this . We are proud and privileged to have the CVA at the forefront of our efforts.**Comment:** Caroline, DWP Homelessness Outreach Worker. Want to stress the importance of the VCS especially through the pandemic, so grateful for all you do.**Q:** John, Neighbourhood Watch, Crime prevention can contribute to many other issues. We can predicting rapid increase in other crime after Covid. Important we work in partnership with other agencies like the police.**Steve:** Agree we have had Operation Cleveland at CVA’s Resource Centre for the last few weeks following the recent spate of knife crime in South London and in West Croydon. CVA, along with grassroots groups, has just been successful with a GLA *My Ends* funding bid for £750,000 working closely with police to prevent youth violence. **Q:** Susanette: Croydon Vision, How do we consider cultural change? How can we be more joined up? Make sub groups to look for external funding not so reliant on the Council.  |
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