

## Annex to May 16<sup>th</sup> 2023 AGM Minutes

(including the minutes from Q and A session with Gayle Gander and Ola Kolade now Kenley Councillors from May 2022)

### 2022 Minutes

**Local Councillors and candidates for local elections on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022 Ola Kolade (standing for re-election) and Gayle Gander.**

A Question and Answer session took place during the meeting at about 20.15 hours

Ola explained that he had replaced Steve O'Connell and was standing for re-election. He had written some 25 objections to various Planning applications which involved over development of the land. The bankruptcy of the Council was making it very difficult to get anything done. Kendra were following up on the Kenley Good Growth Fund and the proposed traffic alterations involved. *Kendra are giving the Council some time to carry out their own analysis of the project and hope that that the Council will find a way to reinstate many of the key road safety items that have been deleted.*

Ola has met many residents though not had much involvement with WURA but will visit the road to see our problems first hand.

Gayle introduced herself as a regular dog walker on Kenley Airfield and is passionate about preserving Kenley from the so far outrageous overdevelopment of the area. There are pockets of excellence in the Council but for the most part they are unresponsive particularly at executive level. Love Clean Streets for example are highly responsive to reports using their app. At a lower level there is no customer service as exemplified by the reports in the media on the state of some Council flats.

There was much general discussion and the main points that emerged were in no particular order;-

- Ola made good presentation at recent Kendra AGM
- No one accountable at the Council for mismanagement including poor financial decisions
- Member living in WR now faced with construction sites on both sides of her property with no control or oversight of construction sites by the Council.
- Too many construction sites in Borough to control properly
- No stop notices ever served on developers or proper protection of trees with TPOs
- As long as Labour in power at the Council there was never any interest in this part of the Borough. Getting a Conservative Mayor is vital (but not assured of course) to our interests
- There was mention of the Council's investment in the Collonades
- Who is actually investigating the huge financial losses at the Council and prosecuting culprits
- Are we at the stage of the Council being put in special measures...apparently not.

Emergency funding from central government is being managed by Grant Thornton, Accountants.

*Councils have a duty to manage taxpayers' money responsibly and it is right that they are held to account where they are found to have failed to do so. The review team, led by Chris Wood, found "significant failings in the leadership and management" at Croydon Council which had led to failures in identifying, escalating and addressing financial risk.*

*The report highlighted the council's poor track record in managing budgets, poorly managed commercial ventures and low levels of reserves which caused significant issues.*

- As a result of the bankruptcy and the intervention of central government there have been cuts in various services with damaging results
- Ola- Hamida Ali is doing her best
- Ola- my top priorities pedestrians and planning
- Ola- housing development for Kenley and Coulsdon way ahead of target
- Conservative Mayor will amend or remove SPD2
- Khan, London Mayor given freehand to Croydon Council.no restraint on Council exercised by Central Government.
- *Both the [Public Accounts](#) (PDF) and [Housing, Communities and Local Government](#) Committees have sought greater clarity on how the target of 300,000 housing units a year will be met and why this number was chosen.*

- Inspectorate allowed appeals on 46 and 50 Welcomes Road on basis overriding policy
- Ola; if Jason Perry elected as Mayor he will reverse local plan and amend it
- Lack of planning enforcement officers at Council
- Split Borough between North (L) and South (C) with some swing voters in middle
- Any new Cabinet of Ward Cllrs will be drawn from all parties to try to bring the Borough together more than has been the case
- Non performing Mayor can be voted out
- Oversupply of expensive flats across the Borough unlikely to solve housing crisis
- Hedges overhanging road can be reported direct to Council copying in WURA

### **Question and Answer sessions at WURA AGM 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023** **Present Cllrs Ola Kolade and Gayle Gander**

For the record congratulations to both Gayle and Ola on their election/re-election and their input since election in looking after the interests of Kenley

Dosan Vucinic from Welcomes Road asked why if there were a substantial number of objections to a development by neighbours (say 50 or more) this did not trump Government housing policy and the National Planning Policy Framework. In the context of such policies appeals against planning refusals will not be dismissed by the Inspectorate.

Ola confirmed that objections carried some influence, but as they are not material considerations, objections alone will not trump an application that is compliant with detailed planning policy.

It was noted that the suburban design guide has been cancelled by the newly elected Mayor (Perry) and a new local plan will be consulted on.

Gayle: The new emphasis will character led rather than density led and the policy to be reinforced in a revised London Plan.

The Mayor has instigated a complete review and overhaul of the structure of the Planning Committee and related processes focused on encouraging best practice and eliminating bad practice. This started in February 2023 and still has work to be done, possibly with more consultation with residents.

Ola; Decisions are democratically driven and where public meetings are called to review planning applications with many 'good' objections from neighbours he has delivered 3 minute speeches on behalf of objectors.

Mike Lott made the point that in the context of Welcomes Road the cumulative impact on a narrow road and designated pathway to Kenley Common and Airfield of compliant planning proposals needed to be taken into account and given due weight. Even so the Inspectorate might still allow an appeal if an application was refused.

The election of our new executive mayor is key to representing members interests.

Janice Greenwood (54 WR) mentioned that the lift in 57 Welcomes Road (new flats) has never worked properly. It was installed to give disability access as a planning condition but this condition is not being enforced by the Council. The tenants are talking to the Councillors about the poor conditions in the flats generally..

Gayle explained that with only 4 planning enforcement officers proper control of all the construction sites in the Borough is never going to be adequate.

Mr Mulvey 2 Uplands Road drew attention to brownfield sites which by definition are sites which have previously been built on. They are not, as most people tend to think, abandoned structures in already built up urban areas and other sites once used for industry.

In fact green sites are just as likely to be built on as derelict urban sites. (There is a derelict site on Hayes Lane near Golf Road for which there seem to be no known plans to develop). Mr Taylor felt such quasi brownfield sites should be termed Orange fields/sites.

Mr Philip mention Rahat and the plan to develop the area at the top of Pine Close. Ola was pretty certain this planning application would not go ahead if only because of lack of access but also the because of the impact on the houses below the site in terms of overlooking and compromising natural drainage.

Mr Vucinic wanted to know how the Council could be allowed to run up debt of £1.2 billion without any oversight or constraint by any part of Central Government. Grant Thornton expected their warnings about the direction of the accounts to be heeded. The questioner also wanted to know how what now appears to have been criminal activity was never stopped and who was supposed to stop it.

Gayle; The Improvement and Assurance Panel is monitoring the Council progress in dealing with its problems. See <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/council-and-elections/budgets-and-spending/reports-and-reviews/croydons-improvement-and-assurance-panel>

The Auditors have refused to sign off the last three years of accounts, although it is understood that the first of these is due to be signed off in the next few months. The accounts and budget for this year are set out at [Agenda for Council on Wednesday, 1st March, 2023, 6.30 pm | Croydon Council](#). Also check out [Reports and reviews | Croydon Council](#) which sets out the various Reports in the Public Interest, Penn's Report etc - these are good places to start understanding more about the financial situation.

The Panel reports to Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities of the United Kingdom

One member recommended spending £2.40 on the Croydon Advertiser to keep track of what is going on at the Council. Equally the on line newspaper Inside Croydon is worth subscribing to if you want to know what is going on at Bernard Weatherill House.

The Chairman asked if the recent Council Tax rise was a one off but presumably it is now built into inflation (Mr Mulvey)

Gayle mentioned that the Mayor is trying to get Government to write off £500,000,000 of the debt.

Mr Heyward 58 WR asked if we can find out where the ULEZ cameras are sited. The Council is challenging the tax along with 3 others and is not allowing it street furniture to be used for cameras. TFL controlled routes may have cameras but this will not include the A22 apparently at least up to Purley Cross.

Mr Mulvey mentioned that the subject of potholes had come up at the recent Kendra AGM and in particular a dangerous one at Hayes Lane/Abbots Lane since reported by Mr Lott as having been expertly repaired.

Ola and Gayle have already raised the potholes issue with Highways who are working to a rota by area.

Water mains burst; SES have a 'clinic' on Thursday for members affected about the loss of water supplies to their houses and the slow delivery of drinking water to victims, especially 'priority' customers for example with mobility issues. (Emergency No 01737 772000)

The Councillors left after about 30 minutes with a vote of thanks for taking the time to attend our AGM