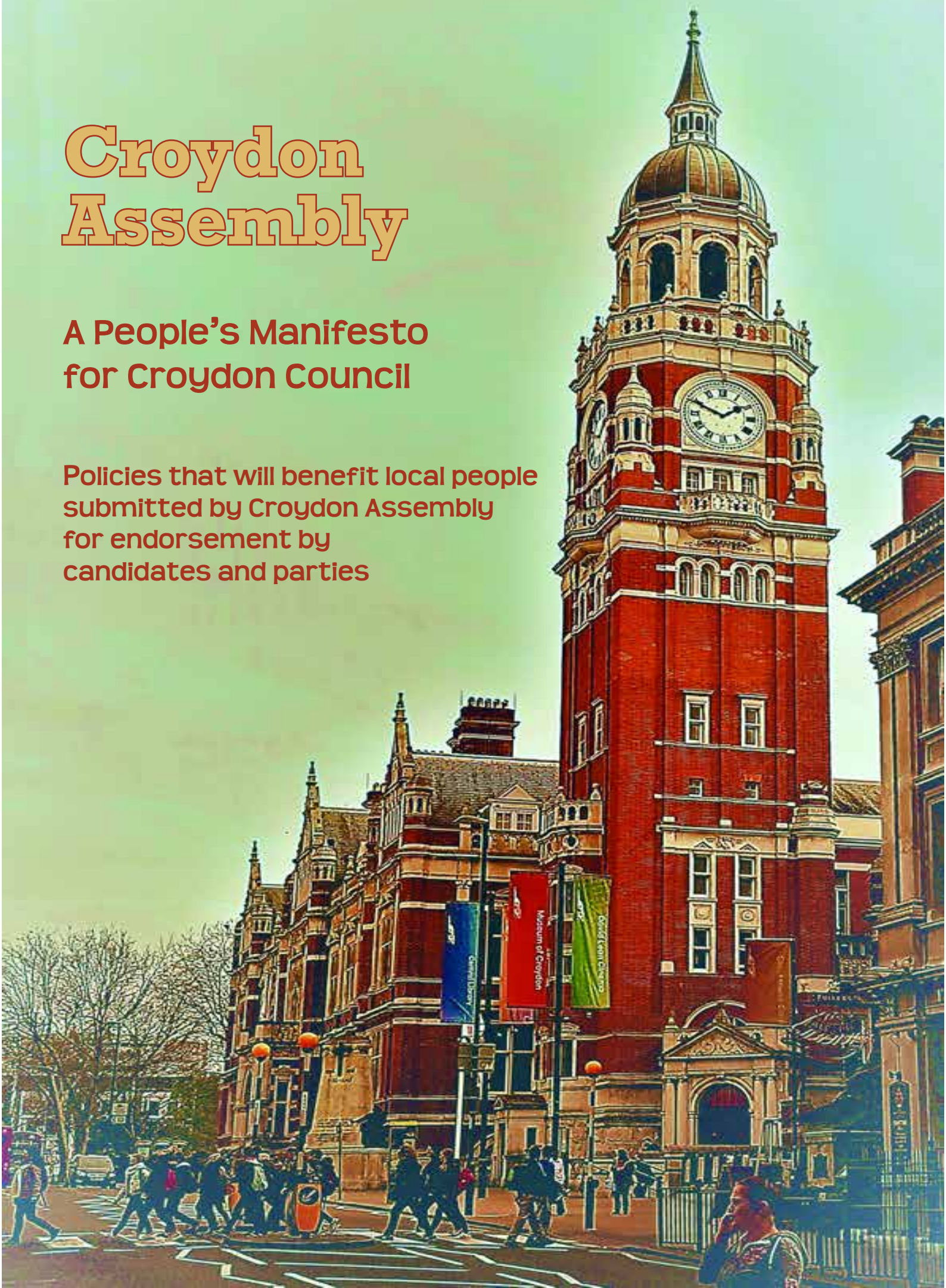


# Croydon Assembly

## A People's Manifesto for Croydon Council

Policies that will benefit local people  
submitted by Croydon Assembly  
for endorsement by  
candidates and parties



# Croydon Assembly

## A People's Manifesto for Croydon Council

### **Policies that will benefit local people submitted by Croydon Assembly for endorsement by candidates and parties**

Dear candidate

Croydon Assembly has established itself in the community in a series of well-attended events that have been held on a regular basis since 2015. During that time we have debated, discussed and drawn up a People's Plan for Croydon that is aimed at empowering local citizens in a meaningful way at a time when many feel powerless and disenfranchised.

Now we are asking all candidates for the May 2018 Croydon Council elections to endorse this Manifesto as a way forward for the Borough. While we acknowledge that Croydon Council does not have all of the powers to implement many of our proposals, we believe that candidates should commit to campaigning for these policies inside and outside of the Borough.

Indeed, Croydon Assembly, which is an initiative of Croydon Trades Union Council, believes that the savage cuts in spending imposed on the council by the government should have been the target for active campaigning by councillors. It is still not too late to abandon passivity and mobilise the community against continuing austerity at the expense of vital local services.

In the meantime, please let us know if you can support the Croydon Assembly manifesto for the May elections.

Best wishes

Ted Knight  
Chair, Croydon Assembly  
January 2018



## Our democratic deficit

Croydon Assembly considers that democracy at both national and local level has been in full retreat for many years and that substantial changes are needed. The Assembly believes that there is a growing demand for a deeper, more inclusive democracy.

At local level, the cabinet system and US-style directly-elected mayors has concentrated decision-making power in fewer hands leading to cronyism, patronage and corruption. We therefore urge council candidates to support the following demands:

- ▶ Abolition of the cabinet system and US-style directly-elected mayors and restoration of the committee system, which gives all councillors the right to make policy
- ▶ Abolition of council tax, stamp duty land tax and business rates in favour of a system of land value taxation plus a wealth tax and more progressive income tax to fund increased provision of directly-provided public services
- ▶ Mandatory and binding consultation and ballots on all developments affecting local communities
- ▶ Regular consultation with the local labour movement, community and voluntary organisations to discuss economic and housing needs and priorities and how they can be met
- ▶ Campaign with communities against further spending cuts imposed on Croydon by the government.

## Meeting Croydon's housing crisis

Croydon Council claims it is doing its best to tackle the borough's housing crisis. But too many council schemes seem to favour private developers. Through its Brick By Brick company, the council is acting like the developers in imposing new schemes on estates while ignoring residents' views. These are the stark facts:

- ▶ 3,137 families were in temporary accommodation in 2017, many for years
- ▶ Dozens had been waiting for a permanent home for more than a decade
- ▶ 4,766 households are on the waiting list for council homes in 2016
- ▶ Over half of private tenants depend on housing benefit because rents have soared
- ▶ Numbers of empty homes in Croydon have risen to 3,130 at the end of 2016
- ▶ Croydon has the seventh highest number of people sleeping rough in the UK with 68 in February 2017
- ▶ In 2015 Croydon ranked 14th in the Index of Multiple Deprivation in relation to access to housing and services
- ▶ Over one in five of all households in Croydon are unsuitably housed, mostly in the north of the borough.

## Candidates should commit to:

**Making Brick by Brick accountable.** The council's Brick by Brick development company is proposing and the Planning Committee is approving applications for schemes to add more homes on existing council estates against the wishes of the residents. Brick by Brick must be made transparent and democratically accountable to residents.

**Listening to estate residents.** The lesson of the Grenfell fire is that people are not listened to. Candidates should support compulsory ballots of residents on council and housing association estates subject to regeneration proposals and be bound by the results.

**Disposing local authority land** to community-led housing and social projects like Community Land Trust and co-ops to meet housing and regeneration needs.

**Refocusing on funding social rented provision** with genuine affordable rents and security of tenure and ending the use of (un)affordable up to 80% of market rent targets.

**Regularly consult** with local labour movement, community and voluntary organisations to discuss housing needs and priorities.

**Establish district committees** of councillors and local community representatives to oversee the work of council officers and the budget for each district centre.

**Impose a moratorium** on approvals for new tower blocks until the lessons have been learnt from the tragic Grenfell fire disaster.

## Candidates should campaign for:

- ▶ Powers to compel owners of empty homes to bring them back into use or have them compulsorily purchased at a low price
- ▶ National funding for estate renewal
- ▶ Powers to acquire land for development of social housing
- ▶ A new national planning framework that prevents landowners from sitting on land banks and gives local communities the power to appeal against planning decisions they have opposed
- ▶ Mandatory minimum standards for all new development, including lifetime homes standard, solar panels where possible and insulation for energy efficiency
- ▶ Removal of central government limits on local authority borrowing
- ▶ Powers to take equity stake in private developments as a condition of planning consent
- ▶ Protection of the Green Belt from building development
- ▶ A planning-aid service to support communities seeking to amend or oppose planning applications
- ▶ A national private landlord and lettings agents' licensing scheme, an end to subsidies for buy-to-let, the introduction of rent controls, repair standards and an end to short-term tenancies.

## For a sustainable local economy

Croydon Assembly urges candidates to support a fundamental change of direction of policies for developing the local economy. A combination of developers and public expenditure cuts have changed the local economy – for the worse.

Luxury shops proposed for the new Whitgift Centre and the conversion of office blocks to housing, mean that there are fewer opportunities for new businesses to get started. While the Croydon Tech City movement has been creating lots of digital businesses, they are small-scale employers. The rise in office/workspace rents could drive many of them out.

The welcome Living Wage policy of the council is counterbalanced by the reduction in hundreds of jobs from the council's workforce because of government spending cuts.

## Construction and Green industry jobs

Candidates should campaign for Croydon Council to:

- ▶ Only work with private sector companies which pay at least the Living Wage, recognise trade unions, do not use zero hours contracts and support skills development programmes such as apprenticeships
- ▶ Use building contractors which recognise trade unions, fully comply with health and safety requirements and have apprenticeship programmes
- ▶ Establish a Direct Labour Building department to carry out local housing and public service building projects with in-built apprenticeships
- ▶ Adopt a public plan showing the types of construction job skill sets needed in approved building developments
- ▶ Encourage job creation in the green industries, including in manufacturing solar panels, waste recycling, including commercial waste.

## Sustainable employment

Candidates should press Croydon Council to:

- ▶ Undertake an urgent study into the particular problems faced by the groups most prone to unemployment with a view to providing positive assistance
- ▶ Carry out an urgent study on the skills needed by young people to fill a range of vocational and professional jobs
- ▶ Advocate ring-fencing for its residents of jobs being created in Croydon
- ▶ Negotiate additional community benefits from the redevelopment of the Whitgift shopping centre, including:
  - ▶▶ residential homes on top of the development rather than in tower blocks
  - ▶▶ more public green space including on the roof of the Centre
  - ▶▶ all workers regardless of employer to be paid at least the London Living Wage
  - ▶▶ a veto on the possibility of a hotel in favour of student accommodation.

## Social care for all

Every day, many older people in Croydon go without the care and support they deserve and need. The number of people getting state help with the costs of their care has fallen by more than a quarter since 2011.

Croydon Assembly urges candidates to speak out and campaign on behalf of local people to deliver the resources for adult social care. A number of issues need to be addressed:

- ▶ Under funding – in the last 5 years there has been a £160 million cut in total public spending on older people's social care despite a rapidly increasing demand because of our ageing population
- ▶ Unmet need – 1.2 million people aged 65 plus don't receive the care and support they need with essential living activities
- ▶ Declining access – cuts in local authority care services have placed increasing pressure on unpaid carers

- ▶ Many older people who can't access care deteriorate and end up in hospital wards instead. In 2009-10, 250,000 over-90s were seen in A&E – by 2016 this figure had soared to 450,000
- ▶ The quality of care in private sector accommodation and whether local authorities should take over provision.

Croydon Council candidates should campaign for a Future Care Guarantee that is supported by all parties. This would include a new funding formula and national entitlements to health and adult social care services free at the point of use funded by the state.

The strategy should focus on:

- ▶ Tackling health inequalities between geographical areas
- ▶ Support for independent living by designing homes and communities for age and mobility and investment in “pre-care” measures
- ▶ A campaign for investment to tackle loneliness and social isolation
- ▶ Involving older people and younger generations in co-designing future care services
- ▶ New and emergent technologies for health and care service provision
- ▶ Training to build the capacity and skills of the “careforce”, both paid and unpaid
- ▶ Support for carers at home and in community settings.

## End pensioner poverty and support disability rights

While Croydon Assembly recognises that the local council has few if any powers when it comes to welfare, disability and benefits, candidates are urged to campaign for the policies outlined below.

**State pension.** Britain's pension is amongst the least adequate in the developed world with 1.9 million pensioners people living below the official poverty line. A basic state pension should be set at 70% of the Living Wage.

**Benefits for those living on low incomes.** Access to benefits is complex and is operated in a way that is punitive and stigmatising for claimants. The Universal Credit system will intensify these issues. A Citizen's Income should provide a universal secure, predictable and unconditional basic income.

**Universal Benefits.** The government should uphold the principle of universal benefits as a right – maintaining and safeguarding the Winter Fuel Payment, national free bus pass, free prescriptions and free TV licence.

**Local voluntary organisations.** Restore funding to groups that bring together volunteers and paid staff to provide support, advice and advocacy services tailored to the needs of individuals.

## Rights for people with disabilities

Disabled people continue to experience historic and systematic disadvantage caused by physical, attitudinal and communication barriers operating in society:

Between 40% and 60% of households with a disabled member are living in poverty.

Disabled people have disproportionately borne the brunt of austerity measures, losing nine times more support than other citizens. This includes over £28 billion of welfare support and social care cuts. This has created a crisis situation where many disabled people:

- ▶ are unable to eat, wash, dress or get out of the house due to under funded services in their area

- ▶ are unable to work or take part in volunteering or training activities after losing support services
- ▶ feel anxious, isolated, or experience declining mental health because they have lost care and support from independent living services.

Croydon Assembly urges candidates to support a right to independent living and advocates:

- ▶ A social care system that can deliver independent living outcomes for disabled people while maintaining choice, control and dignity
- ▶ A fully inclusive education system by building the capacity of mainstream education providers to become more inclusive of all disabled learners
- ▶ Replacing the failing Work Capability Assessment with a new assessment designed with disabled people and based on a social model approach to disability
- ▶ Ending the bedroom tax. Increase the enhanced Personal Independence Payment mobility component eligibility criteria from 20 metres to 50 metres
- ▶ Providing effective support for disabled people to get into, stay in and get on in employment
- ▶ Removing the barriers that exclude and disadvantage deaf and disabled people. Develop a national strategy for tackling disability hate crime.

## Education for all

Schools are under tremendous pressure in terms of resourcing. Unless funding is increased, teacher redundancies and increased class sizes will be inevitable.

State education in Britain has been fragmented with the introduction of Academies and free schools. The franchising of schools, the outsourcing of education services and the restrictions on local authorities have made schools less inclusive and accessible. Candidates should support:

- ▶ Integration of existing Academies and free schools along with public schools into an all-encompassing state education system
- ▶ A policy of community schools so that the segregation of pupils on the basis of religion will no longer occur
- ▶ An end to the privatisation and fragmentation of the education service.

## A National Education Service

A National Education Service should be established to define the roles and responsibilities of all educational establishments from pre-school to adult institutions.

Responsibility for implementing the National Education Service at a local level will rest with a body representative of relevant stakeholders and will include elected council members, teachers, parents and students.

Candidates should campaign for substantially higher levels of investment that will:

- ▶ Rectify the damage caused by spending cuts that have hit all sectors of education from early years provision through to the post-16 sectors
- ▶ Allow for new buildings, improvement of existing buildings and better provision for sport and the arts
- ▶ Enable a reduction in class size so that pupils and students can benefit from a greater amount of individual attention

- ▶ Restore adult education as lifelong learning opportunities.

In addition:

- ▶ Local authorities' power to finance the building of new schools to cater for rising demand must be restored
- ▶ The key function of local authorities to ensure that sufficient numbers of school places are available in every community must be reintroduced.

## Teacher shortages

The current workload on teachers (60 hours a week for many) is placing strain on teachers and adds to the discontent arising from inadequate pay and pension arrangements. These are deterrents to those considering entry to the profession. Croydon Assembly asks candidates to support the following objectives:

- ▶ A fair system for rewarding teachers for their professional commitments, in terms of salaries and pension rights
- ▶ The right of every child and young person to be taught by a qualified teacher
- ▶ A central pool for acquiring supply teachers, cutting out fee-charging agencies
- ▶ Significant improvements in the provisions for teacher training.

## Access to further education

Within the post-16 sector, colleges and universities have suffered financially as part of government policy. This has led to courses no longer being available and employers imposing zero hour contracts, casualisation and fixed-term contracts on staff. Candidates should support:

- ▶ Access to education at post-16 level without restriction
- ▶ Financial support for post-16 students at sixth-form colleges and at universities
- ▶ An end to high fees and debt creating loans in favour of grants.

## Accountability

Current practice imposes on schools a narrow system whereby schools are made accountable via limited criteria arising from testing and results, leading them to become exam factories. We advocate a new approach to accountability and urge candidates to support:

- ▶ Replacing Ofsted by local authorities charged with supporting schools in their development, encouraging accurate school and college self-evaluation and the sharing of good practice
- ▶ Involvement of parents, teachers and community representatives at a local level with a remit of ensuring that high quality provision is made in every setting.

## Student welfare

The welfare and well being of pupils and students is vital and candidates should support:

- ▶ Restoration of a functioning school health service
- ▶ Regular health checks including dental examinations and other services such as counselling as a right
- ▶ Free school meals and milk as part of the commitment to welfare and safeguarding.



## Supporting diversity in our community

Migrants and refugees have had a massive impact, culturally and economically and contributed positively to our society. But government cuts in funding to councils – for example, the 25% reduction in funding for unaccompanied minors – have had a major negative impact.

Croydon Council candidates should campaign for:

- ▶ The right of citizenship for all and an end to deportations
- ▶ Government to work with the council to find solutions in order to provide for people fleeing war, religious and social oppression
- ▶ A major increase in social housing investment
- ▶ School places for all the children that require them
- ▶ a broad, balanced, relevant and enriching curriculum that values students from diverse backgrounds
- ▶ a lay overview of the Prevent strategy and an end to the criminalisation of students
- ▶ A policy that ensures that black and minority ethnic teaching staff are not over-represented on short-term contracts and among agency staff
- ▶ Monitoring of advertisement, appointment and promotion in order to achieve a diverse staff group across all sectors.

## Tackling race hate crime

The rise in Islamophobic attacks have contributed to fear and concern amongst all minority ethnic communities. All forms of racism are unacceptable. Candidates should demand that government develops policies with local authorities to:

- ▶ Tackle Islamophobia by challenging negative stereotyping of Muslims
- ▶ Ensure that there is funding and investment available to race crime services and they are both protected and developed
- ▶ Ensure that, hate crime training provision is improved and victims of hate crimes have access to comprehensive and effective, support services
- ▶ Create a race equality policy aimed at ending discrimination against any community, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

## Knife crime

The Croydon campaign group, Lives Not Knives, states that 1 in 20 knife crimes in London occur in Croydon. Candidates should demand that the government urgently develops policy and effective strategies that help tackle knife crime and gang-related violence.

## Defending the National Health Service

Croydon Assembly supports the National Health Service (NHS) being publicly-provided, publicly-funded through general taxation, publicly accountable with universal comprehensive health care, free at the point of need.

Croydon Council is an important partner in the SW London Sustainability and Transformation Partnership and has powers to endorse or reject the £1 billion local cuts planned to services.

It is also partnered with NHS organisations in the borough: the South London & Maudsley Mental Health Trust (SLAM), Croydon University Hospital and the Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group (general practitioners).

It has specific responsibilities including the promotion of health and well-being, preventive health activity, and ensuring that patients receive care and support to enable them to be discharged from hospital.

Funding of Croydon's health services have been cut by government despite the borough's rising population and increased health problems, which are partly linked to the growing social inequalities in the Borough, especially the North.

To support the NHS on the basis of the principles set out above, candidates should:

- ▶ Oppose any Sustainability and Transformation Partnership proposals to reduce services, treatments, prescriptions for certain drugs and special foods, GP Surgeries and whole departments
- ▶ Oppose the closure of any major acute hospitals in the South West London area, including St Helier and Epsom as such closures will put unacceptable strains on the other hospitals, especially Croydon University
- ▶ Campaign to ensure that Croydon NHS receives the level of funding that reflects its growing population and their health needs
- ▶ Oppose any new proposals to transfer health services to private companies
- ▶ Support bringing back existing privatised services into the NHS
- ▶ Support the creation of a publicly-owned pharmaceutical manufacturing corporation to supply a range of generic medicines and work with universities to research new drug treatments
- ▶ Back demands for an increase in bed provision to meet the needs of the growing population in Croydon and the South West NHS area as opposed to the cuts outlined in the STP
- ▶ Support the full renationalisation of all NHS services, property and land, and the cancellation of any Private Finance Initiative (PFI) or Public Private Partnership (PPP) or PF2-related debt affecting Croydon NHS
- ▶ Campaign for an expansion in primary care services such as general practitioners, dentists, district nurses and occupational physiotherapists
- ▶ Support the scrapping of all fees and prescription charges
- ▶ Endorse the bringing back into NHS employment, with NHS pay and terms and conditions, all medical, clinical, admin and clerical and ancillary staff, currently employed by private contractors.

## Protecting the environment

Croydon Assembly recognises that climate change is a global problem that has the potential for catastrophic effects on the people and life on the planet.

Given the amount of development taking place in Croydon now and in the coming 10 years and beyond, it is an ideal opportunity to campaign to establish and embed truly sustainable objectives into the development of projects in the town.

Candidates should support:

- ▶ Legally enforceable protection of all green spaces, natural habitats, open spaces and parks from spending cuts or development proposals of any kind

- ▶ Genuine community involvement in the development of Croydon and its infrastructure, with a minimum of 20 places allocated to community organisations within the Develop Croydon conference
- ▶ An increase of all forms of renewable energy in the borough on all types of building, and an increase in the use of sustainable technology incorporated into building plans
- ▶ A policy that all new and refurbished buildings should use building-integrated renewable energy sources
- ▶ An increase in Croydon of recycling and re-use. Croydon should become an exemplar, achieving a 75% recycling rate for both business and domestic waste by 2020
- ▶ Withdrawal from the South London Waste Partnership which approved the Beddington incinerator. More use should be made of anaerobic digestion and similar technologies to produce environmentally-friendly products
- ▶ Rejection of all licence applications for fracking both now and in the future, including those for exploration
- ▶ Opposition to further airport expansion, as this will adversely affect the environment
- ▶ A drastic increase in investment in public transport and a return of public transport to public ownership
- ▶ Cycling training being made available to all schools and adults and an expansion of road infrastructure for cycling
- ▶ A substantial increase in air quality monitoring which should include measuring toxicity and other potential health hazards from the incinerator output and increased traffic levels.

## Ensuring access to culture

Access to cultural provision has suffered from years of austerity measures. Libraries and other facilities have too often become easy targets for spending cuts. We urge candidates to support the following policy objectives:

- ▶ Bring libraries back into direct control of the local authority and ensure there are library standards that the council will follow to help preserve the libraries for future generations
- ▶ Increase funding of libraries with no threats of closures and providing new library stock and upgrading and maintaining electronic resources such as WiFi and computers
- ▶ Increase the use of libraries as a community hub for activities for children, young people, adults and elderly people
- ▶ Maintain, promote and invest in local museums, theatres and art galleries such as the Museum of Croydon and the Clocktower and other locally-run projects
- ▶ Encourage local art, media and music organisations through schools, colleges and training organisations to get more children and young people involved in local projects and initiatives
- ▶ Protect small music venues, live entertainment, culture hubs and local independently-run pubs and bars from extortionate business rates
- ▶ Ensure the redevelopment of Fairfield Halls is completed to a timely and high standard
- ▶ Protect and maintain Croydon's only independent cinema, the David Lean Cinema and keep the Braithwaite Hall as an entertainment venue.

# **Croydon Assembly**

Croydon Assembly's steering group meets regularly at

**Ruskin House**

**23 Coombe Road**

**Croydon CRO 1BD**

and is open to new members.

For more information about taking part, email Ted Knight at  
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