

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES TO OPPORTUNITY AND FAIRNESS IN CROYDON?

Submission No. 1 to the Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission

Discussion of issues relevant to the Commission's inquiries - Articles published in *Croydon Citizen*

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Opportunity knocks? The Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission begins its work

By [Sean Creighton](#) - Tuesday 20th January, 2015

Sean Creighton welcomes the launch of Croydon's long-promised Opportunity and Fairness Commission

'Fairness commissions in other boroughs are essentially about anti-poverty measures'.

At last the [Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission](#) is starting on Wednesday 28th January with a launch at [Stanley Halls](#) in South Norwood, 7:00-8:30pm.

The idea of a Fairness Commission for Croydon was a welcome Labour manifesto headline pledge. The Labour administration agreed to set it up at the cabinet meeting on Monday 30th June. The delay in its start has been due to the problem of finding a chair - eventually the Bishop of Croydon.

The commission will be calling for evidence from residents, community organisations, businesses and other experts. An interim report will be produced in September. This will be followed by a further phase of work culminating in a final report in January 2016.

The commission's initial meeting clashes with the one advertised for some time by [Croydon Communities Consortium](#), which is funded to hold public consultation meetings by the council. I have suggested that the CCC should re-schedule its meeting so that those who normally attend can go to the Commission's launch.

At the core of 'fairness' lies the issue of growing wealth inequalities

Fairness commissions in other London boroughs and cities are essentially about anti-poverty measures. They are a welcome recognition of the need to revive the former anti-poverty strategy approach of councils in the 1980s and 1990s. At the core of the concept of 'fairness' lie the growing wealth inequalities across the country, made worse by such things as people being paid below a living wage, zero hours contracts, and cuts to benefits both for those in work and the unemployed.

Fairness commissions are a means to an end, *not* an the end in themselves. The end is to try and halt the growing wealth diversity, and to improve incomes, living standards and opportunities for the least wealthy.

Last year the Webb Memorial Trust, which was mentioned in the cabinet report, commissioned [some work](#) on poverty, inequality and commissions for the [All Party Parliamentary Group](#) on poverty. Issues have emerged from commissions elsewhere in the country that raise a number of questions for the Croydon one to consider:

- Are there other ways to reduce the wide disparities in income between the wealthiest and poorest households? Whilst the living wage focuses on the lowest paid, should the pay ratios with higher earners be reduced? Should there be a cut in the pay of senior officers starting with the chief executive?
- Living wage: I discuss this [here](#)
- Debt and credit: how can support be given to develop the credit union sector to provide an alternative to payday loans and competitive banking services for people on low incomes? Is it possible to have a bye-law restricting the activity of payday loan companies?

- Increasing job opportunities for local people: how can new local businesses and social enterprises be created with a clear strategy and action plan? How can employers be encouraged to increase the proportion of local people they employ?
- Tackling youth unemployment: can larger businesses be persuaded to effect a step change in their engagement with local people, guaranteeing to provide an agreed percentage of work experience placements every year and committing to increasing apprenticeship and other local employment opportunities?
- Targeted support for mothers: can employers be persuaded to develop a targeted package of employment support to mothers, especially for those groups of women with particularly low rates of employment, combining advice on childcare, training, volunteering and employment options?
- Health: can greater and more integrated provision of preventative and community-based health and social care services be provided, particularly for the elderly, and reduction in the large gap in life expectancy between the least and most deprived areas be achieved? Can increased attention be given improving the physical health care of people with mental health problems?
- Housing: can a London living rent formula be developed? How can newly-developed homes be prevented from standing empty? Can more premises over shops be brought into residential use?
- Internet access: can a partnership be developed in which universities and the creative digital industries play a role in making free access to wireless internet universal across the borough?
- Reducing energy bills: should the council and housing associations assess the feasibility of becoming an affordable energy provider?
- Food banks: what support should be given to food banks and other providers of emergency food relief?
- Enhancing democracy: what needs to be done to encourage voter registration and increase the number of voters?
- Implementation: there will be a problem of moving from identifying achievable recommendations to implementation and action where recommendations are too general or too ambitious. What will happen after the commission has reported and published its recommendations? Who will be responsible for implementing the next stage?

This task needs lateral thinkers, independent in their questioning

Beyond partnership and calls for more collaboration between public, private and third sector bodies, there has been little in any of the reports about alternative political strategies or recommendations about how tackling poverty and inequality might be advanced in the cut and thrust of public and political life. This is perhaps not surprising given the commission's model and the nature of the process. However, the extent to which partnership and consensus alone can deliver the change that is required to significantly reduce poverty and inequality is debatable.

Anyone who has been involved in partnership processes over the last two or three decades knows how difficult they are to work in, especially when small partners, such as the community and voluntary sector, get marginalised and trodden all over.

The members of the commission who will be announced at the launch meeting on 28th January will be taking on a very onerous, time-consuming task. They will need to be lateral thinkers with wide experience across economic, regeneration and social policy, analysis and delivery. It needs people

who are independent in their questioning and thinking, and who are not locked into existing council, other public service or private enterprise structures.

On the original timetable the commission is due to publish its final report in January 2016. Given the delay in its start will the timetable be revised?

Rather than set up a small support team from existing staff seconded from departments that are undergoing cuts, the council tendered out the function. Let's hope that the team has a good track record in public engagement and understanding about effective partnership working. In my experience of teams servicing other partnerships and enquiries, this is a potential Achilles' heel.

The cabinet report can be accessed [here](#). If you are interested in attending the commission's launch, please [email](#) or ring freephone 0800 612 2182.

(Submission editorial note. The above discussion was an up-date on a posting on the author's blog site shortly after the Council announced it was establishing the Commission.

What do Labour's cuts for 2015/16 mean for services?

By [Sean Creighton](#) - Monday 15th December, 2014

The closure of Purley pool draws fire - but what will follow? Sean Creighton on the Labour cuts package

Croydon's Conservative opposition has homed in on the Labour council's plan to close Purley swimming pool as part of its cuts to achieve a balanced budget in 2015/16. Croydon Central MP Gavin Barwell is leading the campaign opposing the closure to strengthen his chances of re-election at the general election.

Because of the way the budget cuts information is being presented, this threatened closure is the only easy campaign target. It is as if Labour has deliberately included this in the early stages of budget-setting to draw attention away from the key question: what will be the effect of these cuts to services on the ground?

The preliminary budget detail is being submitted to the council's [Scrutiny and Oversight Committee](#) on Thursday 18th December for a pre-budget setting review.

Many of these cuts are shrouded in gobbledegook

The majority of the staff cuts are in the back rooms sections of the Chief Executive's Department (45.5 full time equivalents) and in Development/Environment and the Department of Adult Services, Health and Housing (13 FTEs.). In other areas there are either zero cuts or very small numbers.

Alongside cuts are proposed measures to increase the council's income, including:

- charging for removal of building and DIY waste - which risks encouraging further illegal dumping
- charging residents for new replacement bins, which risks residents being charged when their bins are stolen or are damaged in the collection process, and encouraging flytipping of waste if people cannot afford bins

A lot of cuts are shrouded in 'gobbledegook', such as those to family-based early intervention services: a 'review of all commissioned services to reduce contract rates and create service efficiencies' is proposed. Does this mean pay cuts for contractors' staff and reductions in service quality?

Then there are cuts which look reasonable but which may actually cover up real problems, such as cuts to the youth offending service: there is to be a 'reduction in staffing costs due to a reduction in the re-offending provision.' While there may be such a reduction, does it mean that those still involved in offending are hard-core repeat offenders with whom working is more costly?

Could these cuts jeopardise services for children in care?

It is proposed to reduce spending on looked-after children (those in council care) by £1.485m. This spend is currently over budget, due to the increase in numbers of children taken into care. Could 'savings' put at jeopardy the quality of placements, with staff salary reductions and service standards reductions as part of what the Labour administration describes as 'continu[ing] to drive down costs and rates of placements with independent fostering agencies'?

It is proposed to reduce support to:

- the music service, 'compensat[ing] for [this] by increased trading opportunities'. Really - from what sources? The academies? Individual tuition?

- Croydon faith education resources: ‘in the context of the increasing availability of electronic resources, [we will] cease funding for this organisation.’

The following additional areas have also been identified for reduction:

- Labour hopes to save £900,000 with the creation of the new trading entity for school improvement services which will involve the [TUPE](#) (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) transfer of 90 staff
- Purley pool will close to avoid spending £0.781m on urgent maintenance. The dry side fitness and gym facilities will be extended whilst regeneration plans are taken forward
- Grounds maintenance of green spaces: £140k to be cut across the borough to achieve ‘operational contract efficiencies’. Perhaps the review should explore the creation of a social enterprise to undertake the work, including work placements for school pupils and apprenticeships and training for those with learning difficulties
- The cost of death: fees and charges at the crematorium are set to be increased

Life is getting more difficult for those not on the web

In order to become more open and transparent, the Labour administration is planning to:

- reduce ‘customer contact and resourcing costs as a result of further online service delivery and systems integration’. This presumably includes reducing paper versions, making it more difficult for those not on the web to participate. Does this shutting out of some groups have equalities and inclusion implications?
- reduce its ‘current face to face service offer’ with reduced opening hours for the [Access Croydon](#) counter service and the same reduction in New Addington (a one hour fifteen minute reduction every weekday)
- reduce current phone service offer times, risking ‘service demand rising during shorter opening hours’.

I want to see analysis of the effects of cuts

An important set of information is missing from the papers to the Scrutiny Committee: the planned expenditure of Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy monies on different projects. These are monies paid by developers for economic, employment, education, transport etc. spending as a condition of planning permission.

Let’s take, for example, Section 106 money allocated to be spent in parks. Cllr Godfrey told the council meeting on 1st December that there are three projects for Park Hill Park being financed by Section 106. How many other parks are to benefit from Section 106? How many staff are there in the Parks Technical Team? Is this sufficient to implement all the Section 106 schemes (and other projects) across the parks?

I hope that the town hall trade unions will publish a public analysis of what they think the effect of the proposed cuts will be, and the real ‘savings’ that could be made without adversely affecting service delivery.

Croydon's residents' associations: power to the people, or routinely ignored?

By [Sean Creighton](#) - Friday 28th November, 2014

Is anyone listening? Real consultation is more than a tick in a box, says Sean Creighton

Norbury, where I live, is entering a new phase in its development. Over £1m has been allocated for what are called public realm improvements. Croydon Council has adopted new plans for improving the local economy (the [Growth Plan](#) and the [Croydon Promise](#)) which include improving district centres such as Norbury and South Norwood. Can the role of residents and other local organisations be improved to strengthen their voice as the council forges ahead to implement the plans?

The big questions facing residents' associations are:

- Will the council listen to what they and businesses want or will officers dictate how the money is spent?
- Will the associations have any meaningful involvement in drawing up the plans for improvements or will they simply be consulted - but then have their views ignored? So what has been the experience with council officers over the last couple of years?

Many required actions have not been implemented

There have been regular walkabouts by Norbury residents' associations' members and specialist officers involved in trade licensing and area enforcement. A long list of actions has been drawn up. Whilst those relating to fly-tipping, traders' displays and trade waste licences have been dealt with quickly, many of the required actions have had to be referred to other officers. It is matters such as the re-siting and additional provision of refuse bins which have not been implemented.

As a result, the visual improvements the associations are seeking have not been actioned with the speed that is required. This undermines both their efforts and the point of their joint '[Love Norbury](#)' campaign.

The planners recently approved the application from Paddy Power to extend its shop at 1421 London Road into the unit next door at 1423. I will be covering this in a future article for the *Citizen*. Individuals and residents' associations submitted objections but the planners approved the application without referring it to the planning committee. They justified this on the grounds that there were fewer than twelve objections (the number that automatically triggers referral to the committee) and because no residents' association or councillor requested a referral as part of their objections. The decision reasons posted on the council planning register do not address all the objections that were raised. This makes a mockery of planning consultation.

Those at the meeting were highly critical and suspicious of the council

The implementation of the new approach to economic development in the Growth Plan and Croydon Promise comes under the remit of the Development and Environment Directorate. The Growth Plan went to the cabinet on 14th July. Additional ideas were announced by Jo Negrini, Executive Director of Development and Environment at a meeting of property developers held on 16th September, before the details had been considered and approved by the cabinet on 29th September. She dismissed criticisms of the Westfield/Hammerson scheme as unfounded, showing a complete contempt for a range of legitimate concerns. This does not inspire confidence that public opinion will be given due consideration.

Despite the promise of *public* consultation in the district centres, the council ran an invitation-only event on the Growth Plan for businesses and representatives of the Norbury residents' associations. Not surprisingly those at the meeting were highly critical and suspicious of the council, and little was achieved in terms of constructive debate.

The new administration states that it wants to create a more open and transparent process in its decision-making and improve public engagement. There is growing evidence that this is not being implemented, including in respect of the Growth Plan:

- My request to address that meeting based on my assessment of the Growth Plan, which I had sent to councillors, was rejected
- Constructive assessments of the Growth Plan, such as that of [Croydon TUC](#), have been ignored
- While openness and transparency need to be improved at council leadership level, it must also operate at ward level. Councillors should be in continual consultation with local organisations, especially residents' associations
- Councillors in each district centre should set up a local scrutiny review to examine why many of the actions agreed by the officers have not yet happened and what action can be taken to get speedy action
- The local scrutiny review also needs to consider the proposed regeneration money, ensuring there is a partnership with residents and businesses to oversee budget planning and implementation
- A joint committee of the residents' associations, the local councillors and businesses should be set up to oversee the regeneration of each district centre
- Residents' associations should develop their own ideas for regeneration to strengthen their negotiating position in relation to the agendas the officers may wish to impose
- A set of terms should be drafted on which to develop the relationship between the residents' associations and councillors.

How can Croydon foster equality and combat hate?

By [Sean Creighton](#) - Tuesday 11th November, 2014

Sean Creighton looks at how Croydon deals with hate crime and wonders how the council will respond to allegations laid against it

The number of [hate crimes](#) recorded by the police in Croydon is falling. 338 were recorded in the year to August, a fall of 4% on the previous twelve months. This contrasts with London's figure: up 13% to 12,450. Racial and religion-related hate crimes account for 88.5% of the recorded total in Croydon.

This fall is perplexing given the growing intolerance between different social groups and the current toxic mixing-up of racism, Islamophobia and anti-immigration sentiment. The areas with the highest incidents of such crimes include Norbury, Waddon, Bensham Manor and New Addington.

The number of hate crimes reaching court is a small proportion of those recorded

Hate crimes are the tip of the iceberg in respect of race and ethnicity, gender issues, crimes against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered) people and crimes arising from religious discrimination. Underlying it is discrimination against people because they are non-white, from Eastern Europe, Muslims, Jews, disabled, mentally ill... the list goes on. Low level discrimination is legitimised by the way politicians talk, for example, about immigrants and disabled benefit claimants. Because the majority of examples of discrimination are at too low a level or regarded as one-off events, they will not be reported. Many people put up with seven to eight incidents against them before they report the problem. The number of hate crimes actually reaching the courts and convictions [is a small percentage of those recorded](#).

A council-run seminar on hate crime was held on Tuesday 28th October bringing together a wide range of people, particularly council officers and members of community and voluntary groups such as the Mediation Service and [Victim Support](#).

After hearing several speakers, those attending went into working groups. They reported back on two key points from their discussion; the rest of what they did will be written up.

It was clear participants observe a spectrum, from bullying through low level actions such as verbal abuse, up to actual assaults. A strong preventive and educational approach is needed, alongside prosecuting perpetrators.

Such an approach must involve:

- Developing ways to present diversity positively
- More preventative work e.g. in schools and colleges on how children and young people treat each other and against bullying
- The offer of mediation between perpetrator and victim
- Improvements in the way the agencies and organisations communicate, understand each other and work together
- The development of a record of low level incidents so that people can be advised on how to get help
- Easier third party reporting

- Raising of awareness of support and information services

Croydon's Labour council stands accused of racism

Interestingly, no mention was made of the current council consultation on ['Equality and Inclusion Policy for 2014-16'](#). So I drew attention to it at the close of the meeting, asking how the day's seminar fitted in with this work. Mark Watson, the cabinet member responsible for these issues simply responded by saying that it was being consulted on.

It seems to me that several of the points made are relevant to the Equalities and Inclusion consultation document and could form the basis of amendments, along with the addition of a section on hate crime.

The 'Equality and Inclusion Policy for 2014-16' states:

'The council does not tolerate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation and will take decisive and appropriate action against... employees... in breach of this policy... including dismissal... It will [make] sure that the council does not display conduct that is unreasonable and cannot be objectively justified [including] failure to make reasonable adjustments, indirect discrimination, discrimination arising from disability...'

The document itself is one the most easily understandable so far produced by the new administration under Chief Executive Nathan Elvery's commitment to plain English. The paper outlines the council's strategic priorities as:

- Getting to know the diverse local community and understand its needs
- Providing responsive and accessible services and excellent customer care
- Improving engagement with residents and strengthening partnership-working with voluntary and community groups
- Providing strong leadership, partnership and organisational commitment for the quality and inclusion agenda
- Working towards becoming an employer of choice by recruiting, developing and retaining an efficient, talented and motivated workforce that broadly reflects the communities we serve at all levels

How will the council handle allegations that it has breached its own policy?

The new Labour administration has been accused of being racist by [the church that had hoped to take over the old Ashburton Library building](#). Questions have been raised about the apparent failure to follow employment equalities procedures in the appointment of Nathan Elvery as Chief Executive Officer, with the mayor ruling out of order a question submitted by a member of the public for the council meeting on 6th October.

Important questions therefore need to be asked in the council's equalities and inclusion policy consultation including:

- how will it handle claims that it has breached its own equalities and inclusion procedures?
- how will it handle accusations that councillors are in breach? (ie elected representatives, not just employees)

If it does not spell this out, perhaps the final version when adopted will just be another document that ticks the boxes and will be ignored in practice.

The consultation document can be downloaded [here](#). The consultation on equality and inclusion ends on 12th November. To be seen to be serious in what it says, the council leadership should consider setting up an independent inquiry panel to deal with any accusations. This could have a minimum of three members, chaired by a non-councillor who is not involved in Croydon's policies or the community with relevant legal knowledge, with full access to all relevant documentation and the right to question relevant council officers and councillors.

How sustainable can Croydon become?

By [Sean Creighton](#) - Monday 25th August, 2014

Sean Creighton takes a look at how Croydon is seeking to become a more sustainable borough and the challenges this presents

In 1987 [a committee of the United Nations](#) defined 'sustainability' as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. In 2014, Croydon Council is grappling with how its [Local Development Plan](#) can reflect the principles of sustainability.

It involves decision-making that minimises negative impacts and maintains balance between ecological resilience, economic prosperity, political justice and cultural vibrancy. The banking crisis and the resulting government choice of austerity cuts, especially to local authority spending, have badly damaged progress towards sustainability. Linked with the drive for profit from the property development world, the reality appears to be increasing inequality, a widening gulf between the wealthy and the rest of the community, intensification of the jobs and housing crisis and the driving of many borough residents to cheaper areas of housing.

The council completed a short consultation exercise on sustainability on 30th July 2014. Few people and organisations knew about it. I alerted several on my Croydon email list and have submitted some personal comments. As it was subject to statutory timing limits, Croydon Chief Executive Officer Nathan Elvery has explained to me that the council cannot make the period longer.

The major challenges facing the council and the different types of communities (of place, ethnicity, interests and faith) are:

- the estimated increase in population
- increasing levels of deprivation
- the loss of jobs in the borough available to local residents
- the increasing stresses being experienced in many neighbourhoods experiencing a fast rate of change, and higher densities of population.

What will happen if the Croydon Westfield development does not take place?

The review contains recognition of some of the details of this, but does not really address the anticipated further cuts in council expenditure required by national government. We must also consider:

- further loss of owner-occupied housing (other than in new blocks) and its takeover into the private rented sector
- decisions taken by employers as to whether to move into or out of the borough
- decisions of property developers seeking to maximise profit regardless of whether developments meet the borough's needs
- the increasing trend of the borough becoming a dormitory - a place where most people in work travel outside it for employment

- the lack of an alternative plan if the [Westfield/Hammerson development](#) does not take place or is late in completion
- the absence of any reference to the role and potential contribution of the community and voluntary sector

While there is a need for overall borough-wide strategy policies, the challenge of applying them differs not only from ward to ward but often between different neighbourhoods in each ward.

I have suggested that the final document that emerges from this review should include:

- recognition that borough-wide strategic policies need to be applied to different areas of the borough (whether at ward, district or local centre level) in accord with the needs of and challenges faced within them
- acknowledgement that the development of plans at these lower levels must involve local residents and businesses, in order to meet local needs and aspirations

The report discusses issues such as waste, water use, social inclusion and exclusion, noise, conservation of the built environment, culture, sport & recreation.

As housing becomes denser, noise affects quality of life

The review document highlights Croydon's poor record with regard to waste and admits there is a lack of information on commercial and construction waste, and on construction sites with site waste management plans. It suggests that consideration should be given to "increase recycling and composting and reduce waste going to landfill." This is too narrow so I have recommended that it should read 'increase recycling and composting and reduce domestic, commercial, and dumped and fly-tipped waste going to landfill.'

As families live closely together in small accommodation, noise becomes an increasing problem.

The section on noise does not take into account the increasing problems of noise in residential neighbourhoods, especially in those leading off main roads as housing densities increase in some parts of the borough, competition on the streets for car parking, fast driving through side streets, the late evening and early morning hours economy, and anti-social behaviour. Noise can also be a further problem in blocks of flats and converted houses where sound insulation is not of a high quality.

This is a serious challenge affecting the quality of life of more and more residents, leading to negative attitudes towards each other and towards living in Croydon. I have therefore suggested consideration of the need for all new residential buildings to have high levels of internal and external sound insulation.

77% of Croydon's residents report getting on well together

The review document states that the [National Place Survey 2008](#) indicated 77% of residents from different backgrounds say they get on well together. 51% feel they belong in their neighbourhood, 34% of residents thought they could influence decisions in the local area and 23% had participated in volunteering in the previous twelve months, but only 16% had engaged in local activity designed to increase participation.

It admits to data limitations resulting from the government having cancelled the biennial survey, and that collecting similar data via the ['Citizens' Panel'](#) "may not provide comparable data."

Increasingly transient neighbourhoods become less stable

Many people's standard of living has deteriorated since 2008 because of the banking crisis and cuts in incomes and benefits and reductions in services. Anecdotal information also suggests that many

people, especially long-term residents, have found socio-economic changes in their neighbourhoods difficult to understand and accept. The growth in private renting has increased the turnover of residents leading to less connected and less stable neighbourhoods.

While it will be difficult to carry out a survey of the opinions of a large percentage of residents, it is vital to get some idea of current opinions. I suggest small scale place surveys in, say, three neighbourhoods, representing the most affluent, the average and the most deprived.

CEO Nathan Elvery tells me that individuals and organisations “will of course be able to engage in the next stage of the plan through consultation on the [Croydon Local Plan: Strategic Policies Partial Review](#) early next year.’ Those who wish to can request to be added to the Local Plan consultation database.

Buy now - Croydon will not be this pocket friendly for long

By [Sean Creighton](#) - Monday 11th August, 2014

Sean Creighton asks what Croydon's soaring house prices mean for local people, and finds a predictable answer

"Impressive new housing developments are under construction and we have penthouses selling well in excess of £1m."

"We have a real issue in the mainstream market, in that 80 per cent of houses in London are only affordable by 20 per cent of the population."

"The Saffron development's appeal will continue to push rents again during 2014. Buy now - Croydon will not be this pocket friendly for long."

The first quote is from Richard Plant, Chairman of the [Develop Croydon Forum](#) and partner in [Stiles Harold Williams](#); the second from [London's Deputy Mayor Richard Blakeway](#), and the third from [1st Avenue](#) estate agents' Paul Endacott.

At least 9,500 new homes are planned in Croydon over the next few years. If London Mayor Boris has his way it will become a [housing zone](#) to benefit from financial incentives to encourage even more house-building.

The quotes are from the May issue of *Croydon News*, published by the Develop Croydon Forum. The Forum brings together the leading developers, estate agents and office, hotel and house builders involved along with [Croydon Council](#), [CCURV](#), (Croydon Council Urban Regeneration Vehicle), [Croydon Business Improvement District](#), the [Croydon Partnership](#) (the partnership of the Westfield Group & Hammerson plc developing the new Croydon Westfield Shopping Centre), and the [Whitgift Foundation](#). It is a key driving force behind the strategy to physically transform Croydon, especially the town centre.

Berkeley's Saffron Square

This includes Saffron Tower, a 43 storey block (142 metres) and up to 791 apartments with several blocks already sold. According to Endacott, "[Saffron Square](#) stands as the yardstick by which other developers will follow... a lifestyle destination for the cash-rich, time-poor young professionals looking for a private gymnasium, concierge and café on their complex."

Berkeley Homes' Justin Tibaldi says: "Since Saffron Square was launched we have seen a significant increase in demand for high-end homes in the area both from owner occupiers and investors. The development is already achieving some of the best rental yields in Greater London with a waiting list from prospective tenants proving the demand for rental properties in the area."

Menta's Morello Quarter

This development by Menta and Redrow Homes "has already generated great interest at home and abroad in Cherry Orchard Road, with its 55 storey residential tower and 800 new homes" says Craig Marks, Menta's Chief Executive Officer. "The [Morello scheme](#) was extremely well-received during the UK launch in March and also had a successful airing in Singapore and Hong Kong. Menta has already generated £2.5m in sales."

Ruskin Square

[Stanhope and Schroder's Ruskin Square](#) development begins this year with a 22 storey residential tower. There will be 600 homes in total.

The new Croydon Westfield shopping centre

This includes 600 apartments. Westfield has sold off three regional centres outside London to Intu Properties to concentrate on its [developments in Croydon](#) and Milan.

Taberner House (the former Croydon Council building) and College Green

Under the Council/John Laing CCURV partnership this is being demolished and replaced with new blocks (including a 32 storey one) to create 600 residential units. Of these, 230 will be for private rent by Essential Life. Since *Croydon News* was published, the new Labour administration has pulled back the support for the scheme so as to prevent encroachment on College Gardens.

Barratt's New South Quarter

[This scheme](#) comprises 923 studio, one, two and three bedroom apartments. Gary Patrick, Barratt's London regional sales director says: "Croydon is exceptionally popular with buyers not only because of the excellent transport links to London but also for its green aspects, including the restored Wandle Park. Croydon is becoming increasingly popular with a range of buyer profiles... Rental yields can only... rise with the Whitgift redevelopment."

One Lansdowne Road

Guildhouse Rosepride has permission to build [a 55 storey tower](#) (200m high) including 397 apartments.

Cane Hill, Coulsdon

[Barratt Homes](#) has permission for 675 new homes (1-5 bed), including 163 designated 'affordable'.

Offices to residential

Legal & General plans to replace the former [Nestlé building \(St George's House\)](#) with two new buildings containing 265 private apartments, of which 23 will be designated 'affordable'. 16 office blocks were bought last year to convert to residential: a total of 1.2m sq ft.

This is physical regeneration but not sustainable economic and social regeneration

So - who will benefit from these developments?

Sold to the public and the councillors as 'regeneration,' the effect of these developments appears to be a future influx of people from outside the borough who can afford the sale prices and rentals of the new apartments. While there will be a small supply of so-called affordable homes, most of these these will not be enough to meet the needs of the thousands of existing residents who cannot afford to become home-owners and who are finding life in private rented housing [more and more costly and intolerable](#).

This may be physical regeneration, but it is not sustainable economic and social regeneration designed to lessen social exclusion and inequality. This is an issue which I will address in a future article.

The need for such sustainable regeneration is central to the work of the [Fairness Commission](#) set up by Croydon's new Labour administration, to the next stage of the development of its [Growth Plan](#) and consultation on the [Croydon Local Development Plan](#). The debate needs to start now and I welcome comments in my capacity as convenor of the Croydon Trades Union Congress (TUC) working party on the Growth Plan.

Should more community hubs be developed in Croydon?

By [Sean Creighton](#) - Wednesday 16th July, 2014

Continuing his theme of supporting communities, Sean Creighton considers what community hubs can offer Croydon

[Matthew's Yard](#), the café, bar, work space, events centre and entertainment venue just off Surrey Street market in Croydon town centre, has been developing as a hub - a centre for activities, networks and flexible workspace. [Octopus Community Hubs](#) provides the following helpful definition of what a community hub is intended to be: "a focal point [where] facilities... foster greater local community activity and bring residents together to improve the quality of life in their area". In Brixton a [hub initiative](#) is being developed in Lambeth Town Hall. The organisers are linked to hubs operating in North London. Essentially these are private enterprise entrepreneurial equivalents of multi-purpose community and social centres which go back to the beginnings of the Settlement Houses like [Toynbee Hall](#) and [Oxford House](#) in the 1880s, and the mushrooming of community centres after the Second World War. There is nothing wrong with this new style of hub being private enterprise-run. Perhaps historically, Crystal Palace was a precursor of such entrepreneurialism.

How many commercial and non-commercial hubs can exist in the same local authority area? Would it be possible to develop them in Norbury, Thornton Heath, Broad Green, New Addington, Ashburton etc? Could this be the future for [SEGAS House](#)? How can the Croydon [Fun Palace Project](#) fit in with the hub idea?

It's important not to dilute the powerful network effect of hubs

It has been suggested to me that there is room for many different hubs in an area if the competition between them is not too direct. There is a risk that the powerful network effect of a hub is diluted if people are spread between many - that could defeat the point of the hub. That being said, where they serve a community with different needs and interests they can certainly co-exist. The borough is probably large enough for several hubs, but how far apart should they be? Are Norbury and Thornton Heath too close for a hub each?

Back in 2011 there were discussions about re-opening the Croydon Clocktower as this kind of facility. Unfortunately, it became clear that the then-council's approach would not allow for a dynamic and speedy launch: the process to acquire the space looked as if it would take a very long time indeed. It would in any case have fitted poorly with the initiators' vision. They wanted the whole space at peppercorn rent so they could rent out rooms and make the entire project entirely self-funding. The last the project initiators heard was that the council wanted to retain control and rent out space to a multiplicity of groups on an ad hoc basis.

The initiators, by contrast, wanted to create more of a curated cultural programme of events, alongside the renting of space as a service to community groups. They were keen to work on a social project and ultimately ended up initiating other projects.

As a hub, Croydon Clocktower is likely to remain a specialist one

Meanwhile, under pressure, the last administration took steps to improve the offer at the Clocktower, although more could be done. Should local studies be returned upstairs and its space be used to display the whole of the council's art collection? The advantage of a move back upstairs would be that all the material on open shelves would become publicly accessible again. But as a hub the Clocktower

is likely to remain a specialist one linked to the library, especially as the new community rooms are in Bernard Weatherill House not the Clocktower itself.

It is clear that the alternative concept for the Clocktower would have been close to being directly competitive with Matthew's Yard and would perhaps have created exactly the potential problem mentioned above about vicinity - that hubs are unlikely to thrive too close together. Many of the same activities have taken place at the Yard, while the Spredaeagle pub's first floor room has added another venue for cinema, plays and talks. On the other hand, as discussed at the culture seminar on 8th July, these different venues could be better linked together as a cluster.

Matthew's Yard has both strengths and weaknesses as a potential community hub

Matthew's Yard has lots of strengths as a community hub but also weaknesses, depending on individual responses to its atmosphere, price and décor. It still has to think through how to improve how it publicises the events that take place there. The information board and shelf for fliers is very haphazard. Unless you live or work in or near Croydon town centre, you have to make a conscious decision to go there.

The failure to find tenants for the restaurant and retail spaces in Exchange Square, where Matthew's Yard is located, means that the latter does not benefit from high footfall. Whether these spaces will ever be rented out if the Westfield/Hammerson development is built remains to be seen. The developers around the square may need to re-think their strategy and offer premises to businesses which want stability during the shopping centre redevelopment, or work with the [Croydon Arts Network](#) and Fun Palace to have the units as pop-up venues.

I have been involved in advising social action centres so I'm aware of the problems of running them

There is of course already a network of community centres around the borough, such as [Shirley](#), [West Thornton](#) and [Parchmore Methodist Church Youth and Community Centres](#). Having been on the committee of a community centre in Merton some years ago, including serving as its chair, I am aware of the problems involved in running them.

The workshop programmes I organised for the annual national conferences were designed to encourage more outward and inclusive thinking about the way community associations ran their centres. The Environmental Action Pack I compiled out of discussions at one of the conferences was aimed at helping them move along the path of becoming greener. As Policy Development Officer I have been involved in advising larger scale settlements and social action centres as multi-purpose hubs.

To what extent are those running Croydon's community centres and other multi-purpose buildings stretched and how might they usefully ally with the new developments such as the Arts Network to offer premises for use? Should the Fun Palace reach into different neighbourhoods by travelling around such centres and putting on joint activities with the centre activists? Which buildings can be identified as potential new hubs around the borough? How are they to be funded?

Libraries have been mentioned to me but there are problems given the privatisation of their management and of course they have limitations of space. The former Ashburton Library could be one possibility with an asset transfer to a community trust, and re-configuring the access to separate it improve its security within the park setting.

The issue of hubs is one that cuts across different policy agendas: social inclusion, fairness, building community identification and links, fostering small businesses, developing cultural and other activities from the bottom up. It is to be hoped that in the coming months the development of hubs will appear within a range of new policy approaches.

How can we build a stronger community in Croydon?

By [Sean Creighton](#) - Wednesday 2nd July, 2014

Sean Creighton examines the meaning of community and asks how Croydon can meet the needs and aspirations of all its residents

The [new emphasis](#) that the *Croydon Citizen* is giving to 'community' is welcome. We need a wide debate on where we go given the alienation of some communities within the borough from the previously Tory-controlled Council. The council is now controlled by Labour with a more constructive approach and Tony Newman, its new leader, has agreed to meet with community and voluntary organisations on 30th July at an event organised by Croydon Council for Voluntary Action. This is a welcome first step.

When people from different agencies and organisations are in joint discussions, they often talk about 'community', 'sustainable development', 'community cohesion' and 'respect' (the relationship between different social groups), yet attach different meanings to these words. Croydon needs a common understanding of such concepts.

The word 'community' is often treated as a single entity. It is not - it is comprised of many different overlapping communities. These include communities of geographic interest, such as those people living in a neighbourhood or on an estate, communities of interest, such as service users or the disabled, ethnic and faith communities, and others.

So what are the communities of Croydon? Which are privileged? Which are excluded?

People move in and out of different communities and can belong to more than one community at any one time. However, some communities are more privileged than others. Communities can be excluded and tensions can exist between different communities within the same geographic area, especially on ethnic and religious grounds.

So - what are the many varied communities in Croydon? Which are more privileged than others? Which are excluded or perceive themselves to be excluded? And which areas contain tensions between different communities?

The answers to these questions should form part of an analysis of how to meet the needs and aspirations of residents, both individually and collectively in their different communities.

Safe, fair, welcoming: to what extent is Croydon such a community?

The following ten styles of community functioning have been identified as healthy and effective:

- a learning community, where people and groups gain knowledge, skills and confidence through community action
- a fair and just community, which upholds civic rights and equality of opportunity and which recognizes and celebrates the distinctive features of its cultures
- an active and empowered community, in which people are fully involved and which has strong and varied local organisations and a clear identity and self-confidence
- an influential community, which is consulted and has a strong voice in decisions which affect its interests

- an economically strong community, which creates opportunities for work and which retains a high proportion of its wealth
- a caring community, aware of the needs of its members and in which services are of good quality and meet these needs
- a green community, with a healthy and pleasant environment, awareness of environmental responsibility
- a safe community, where people do not fear crime, violence or other hazards
- a welcoming community, which people like, feel happy about and do not wish to leave
- a lasting community, which is well established and likely to survive

How can Croydon become a better-functioning community?

We should now consider whether current strategies in Croydon reflect these characteristics. To what extent is Croydon such a community? And do current priorities and objectives help Croydon to become a better-functioning community?

Community development involves helping people to acquire self-confidence and skills so that they can take action and exercise influence either to improve their neighbourhood or to strengthen their community of interest. If future plans are to be produced with the local communities, the council and other official bodies require a community development approach. It is therefore important to ascertain how strong current policies and provision are as regards the community development aspects of building a stronger civil society. This will in turn ensure that local people influence the decisions that affect their lives.

This is about changing power structures

The community development approach starts from the assumption that most social problems are rooted in political, social and economic structures. Community development is the process of building active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect.

It is about changing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives. Community workers, whether paid or unpaid, support the participation of people in this process. They enable connections to be made between communities and the development of wider policies and programmes.

Community development also expresses values of fairness, equality, accountability, opportunity, choice, participation, mutuality, reciprocity and continuous learning. Educating, enabling and empowering are at its core. It is therefore important to assess what is known about the extent of community development in Croydon: where is it strong and where is it weak? How well do the council and other agencies implement a community development approach and what improvements could be made? How do community development workers (both paid and unpaid) network? How does funding promote equity within and between communities and how are communities themselves involved in setting funding priorities?

Let us hope that the 30th July meeting organised at the Croydon Community Voluntary Action Resource Centre ([CVA](#)) can begin to address some of these questions. To see more about the event and to book a place, click [here](#).

Economic development doesn't just mean property (part 1)

By [Sean Creighton](#) - Friday 31st January, 2014

In the first of a three part series, Sean Creighton assesses the success Croydon could achieve by taking new approaches to develop its economy

After leading a history walk in early January at the heart of the property-development-feeding-frenzy in Vauxhall and Nine Elms, I read an article in the Evening Standard on the [property business](#) by Anthony Hilton, which reminds us of the fragility of the property development industry and its economic dangers. Then it was on to the Croydon Consortium meeting at which I drew attention to the article after someone had raised concern about the potential impact of the Westfield and Hammerson development. The commitment of both major political parties to the £1billion investment in the redevelopment of the Whitgift and Centrale shopping centres shows how they are both locked into seeing the private sector development industry as the way forward, blind to the warnings of Hilton.

There are grave doubts about whether the scheme will produce well paid jobs for local people, safeguard existing businesses operating in the centres, stimulate economic development elsewhere in the borough and help recycle money around the rest of the local economy as opposed to leeching it off elsewhere.

South Croydon Community Association (SCCA) understands from Westfield that there are no plans to train staff to develop online retail skills. SCCA wants really profitable shops in its area to have a strong online presence. Neither Hammerson or Westfield seem to be offering to make a contribution to a more cohesive borough. So it looks as if the proposed redevelopment is just another example of narrow thinking that will not help build a resilient local economy that can weather future economic challenges, such as the collapse and withdrawal of firms such as Alders and Nestlé. The redevelopment of Centrale shows how unsustainable developers schemes can be given that it was only completed in 2004.

The proposed redevelopment is just another example of narrow thinking that will not help build a resilient local economy

Whitgift's previous partnership also proved unsustainable. In 2005 using £225million from the Anglo Irish Bank, investors bought 75% of the leasehold of the Whitgift Centre from the Foundation, which retained 25%. The investment was controlled by Howard Holdings plc (HH) which went into administration in 2010. The administrator of HH may well benefit because it is likely from Westfield's purchase of 50% of Centrale from Hammerson is helping to fund the 25% purchase by Hammerson of the lease of the Whitgift Centre. The administrator is no doubt hoping to make a profit on HH's other Croydon developments: Altitude 25, the Exchange and the Bridge.

So basing economic development on property development speculation is a risky business. It appears that we require new ways of thinking about Croydon's economic development by the private sector, the council, the rest of the public sector and the NHS, and the community and voluntary sector. Some of this rethinking could well be based on the work of the [Centre for Local Economic Strategies](#) (CLES) done over the last three years.

CLES points out that "Local economies aren't simply an isolated silo of private sector activity that can be encouraged and shaped. They are made up of a network of social, public and commercial economic activity. These aspects are interconnected and dependent on one another."

CLES believes "elements within a system are in constant flux, unpredictable and highly complex. Many changes and events occur at very different timeframes and speeds. Traffic jams occur over minutes, stock markets crash over days and weeks, housing markets change over months and years, whilst urban regeneration can take decades. All of this means that the application of resilience is a challenge

to a mechanical and linear approach to place making and shaping. Places need to be understood as an interconnected system; the policy application of resilience is a search for qualities and attributes of place which make it adaptable and able to thrive on change.”

We require new ways of thinking about Croydon’s economic development by the private sector

CLES’s work enables us to ask a few questions about Croydon, like how well has it been able to respond effectively to change and opportunities, whether they be economic, social, political or environmental? How well has it been able to withstand economic blows? And how good is it at learning from more successful action elsewhere?

The council’s Scrutiny and Overview Committee is supposed to be holding a meeting to examine the details of the Westfield and Hammerson scheme. As well as undertaking resilience analysis, it should take into account issues identified by New Economics Foundation (NEF) about the requirements of the government’s National Planning Framework announced in early 2012. It instructs planning authorities to “recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality”. Town centres will have to demonstrate their ‘individuality’ and a ‘diverse’ retail offer. Markets have to be enhanced and, where they can be, re-introduced.

Bigger developments will require ‘impact assessments’ to see how they would affect “town centre vitality and viability” - not just now but five years ahead. NEF suggests that “in the right hands, an imaginative and far-sighted local council, this is a huge tilt of the balance of power away from the big retailers.” The Scrutiny and Oversight Committee will need to ensure that there are proper impact assessments as required under the Framework.

I’d also like it to usefully explore other questions such as what will happen to existing businesses when the property they rent is demolished - will they be offered temporary re-location at reduced rent? Will they be able to move back into new properties if rents are substantially higher? Will rental costs increase? Does Croydon really need more office space? How many jobs could be lost through redevelopment? How many new jobs will be in retail rather than construction? And what is the average wage of retail workers and how many retail workers have to claim benefits to have a living income?

In the second part of this article exploring alternative economic development I will look at the CLES’s ideas on Croydon’s local economy.

Economic development doesn't just mean property (part 2)

By [Sean Creighton](#) - Wednesday 5th February, 2014

In part two of Sean Creighton's look into the local economy, he explores the ideas of the Centre for Local Economic Studies

I decided to write about the fragility of the property industry after reading an article in the *Evening Standard* by [Anthony Hilton](#). In this article I will be taking a closer look at the alternative economic ideas from the Centre for Local Economic Studies and how they could benefit Croydon.

The local economy consists of the commercial, public and social sectors. A key question to be asked here in Croydon is how do each of these sectors relate to each other? The [Centre for Local Economic Studies](#) notes:

- “The strength of the commercial economy is defined as economic wealth creation generated by businesses that are privately owned and profit motivated”
- “The public economy consists of services delivered on behalf of government organisations whether national, regional or local, and funded by the public purse”
- “The social economy embraces a wide range of community, voluntary and not-for-profit activities that try to bring about positive local change”

There are also other issues that inter-relate: health and wellbeing, environmental limits, local identity, history and context, governance. Local health and wellbeing issues include ill health, quality of life, travel to work and leisure patterns, and the economic geography of the area. To what extent has the climate change agenda been integrated through mitigation and adaptation strategies into the local economy? To what extent has Croydon been shaped by and managed its identity, history and culture? How does national and local governance affect the local economic territory?

How does Croydon match up to CLES's suggestions of components that make for a resilient economy? In a report published in 2010, [Productive local economies: creating resilient places](#) listed the following factors: a thriving community and voluntary sector, strong civic engagement, strong public sector, a diverse finance sector, high levels of diversity in the economy, effective public services, closer integration of land use planning with economic development and stronger provision for young people. We need to have an independent analysis of the Croydon economy from these perspectives.

Another important element of the local economy is the social sector, which I will discuss in Part 3.

Economic development doesn't just mean property (part 3)

By [Sean Creighton](#) - Tuesday 11th February, 2014

In part three of Sean Creighton's look into the local economy, he explores the benefits of Croydon's not-for-profit scene

There are many people in Croydon working together 'co-operatively' in a multitude of ways, not for financial profits but for wider cultural, social and economic benefit. These include Save the David Lean Cinema Campaign, the Croydon Citizen collective, Croydon Radio and Croydon Tech City, the BME Forum, the Council for Voluntary Action (CVA), the Citizen Advice Bureaux and Women's Aid.

Croydon's social economy sector comprises at least 1,763 charities, mutuals, co-operatives, social enterprises, community and voluntary groups (CVA estimate [State of the Voluntary Sector](#) report). Some are registered as charities, some as charities and companies limited by guarantee, some as friendly and industrial and provident societies and community interest companies. The majority are unregistered because their income and expenditure is too low. Collectively these can be called the 'not-for-profits'.

Last year saw the registration of several new not-for-profit limited guarantee companies: Croydon Almshouse Charities Trustee Company, Croydon Care Homes, Croydon Old Town Portas Team CIC, Croydon Somali Community Development, and Purley & Kenley Churches Together Food Hub. Not all the over 970 charities which are registered by the Charity Commission as operating in the borough will actually be operating here, but have the aspiration to do so and the CVA estimates that 433 are.

Compared with many areas the economic value of Croydon's social economy sector is huge because of the land and property wealth of the historically charitable Whitgift Foundation. As a group, the growing number of academy and free schools are becoming an important economic block. There are concerns about how the larger players operate, especially the Whitgift.

Since 2010 there have been charities exempt from registering with the Charity Commission, and are private companies with no share capital and are limited by guarantee. Another large not-for profit group are the housing associations operating in the borough and elsewhere, as well as locally based ones.

Compared with many areas the economic value of Croydon's social economy sector is huge

The Co-op Group has a number of retail stores and funeral parlours and apparently owns other property. Being poorly managed and stocked and with no connection with their local communities the Co-op's retail stores face an uphill struggle to increase customer share and have to deal with the contradiction of not just selling their own and other co-operative producers brands, but those of their capitalist rivals. The Group owns some empty shop units on Norbury High Street, and is believed to own other property in the north Croydon area. It does not have a good record of working with the community and the Council on this property portfolio.

There are many national not-for profit organisations which provide services in the borough and many have branches, including Nationwide and the employee partnerships of John Lewis Partnership with its retail store on Purley Way and Waitrose in George Street. The National Trust owns Selsdon Woods which is managed for it by the Council. Age UK has its own separate Croydon charity which had an income of £1m. The charities which run shops contribute to the local economy, enabling people to recycle unwanted possessions, others to purchase them and both thereby contributing to financially supporting the charities.

The Future for the Social Sector

As elsewhere Croydon's social sector is fragmented, often in separate silos, with inadequate methods of cross-communication and in some parts rife with historic personality disputes. Questions that need asking include whether the role of not-for profits in Croydon can be improved, strengthened and their share of the local economy be grown? If the answers are affirmative how can this be achieved?

Croydon Citizen readers interested in ideas about boosting the social economy might like to read the book [People Over Capital: The co-operative alternative to capitalism](#). Of particular interest to supporters of Croydon Tech City would be [Open Source Capitalism](#) written by Nic Wistreich and discussing the importance of the 'co-operative' principle in the web. Readers might also like to look at the work of the Baxi Partnership's in assisting the creation of employee-owned businesses. The David Lean Cinema Campaign might consider showing the US documentary *We the Owners* which Baxi has been promoting here and asking a Baxi representative and staff from the Purley Way John Lewis to lead discussion.

If Labour wins in May and it starts to explore the potentiality of the Co-operative Council model, it will need to think very creatively and openly. It will be a challenge to politicians and officers. It looks to Lambeth as a model. However, the Lambeth approach has been messy and very much a top down initiative announced with no wide-spread community debate. A similar approach in Croydon will not unite all those across the borough who want more empowerment. If the Centre for Local Economic Studies's approach (see parts [1](#) and [2](#)) is adopted then the Council will need to adopt a leadership and enabling role rather than a command and control one, especially given the ever decreasing revenue funding it will have available.

The freeing of Council assets through asset transfer to the social economy, like the Fairfield Halls building to the charity, and the creation of significant worker co-operatives linked to the establishment of a Croydon Bank, could create an institution with a secure base able to attract investors. This could be a significant jolt to the local economy in the short, and a locally controlled basis for growth in the long, term.

Some questions that could be usefully addressed are:

- Should the not-for profit Carillion subsidiary running the libraries be freed from Carillion control and turned into a freestanding social enterprise?
- Should the National Trust take back the management of Selsdon Woods from the Council?
- Should a Croydon Bank be established with the Council, Whitgift, the local housing associations, and other not-for profits committing themselves to open accounts?
- Which sections of Council workers might be interested in becoming staff mutual?
- Could a worker co-operative be established to take over the street cleaning and refuse collection contracts?
- Can there be more support for co-operative and co-ownership housing schemes through e.g. leasing or asset transferring empty Council buildings to them for conversion?
- Will the Council establish resident led Ward Committees to enable Ward Councillors to effectively engage in dialogue with residents and their organisations about the particular issues affecting the neighbourhoods in that Ward and the way the Council services operate there, and with a budget to be able to undertake action for agreed improvements?
- How can the not-for-profit organisations co-operate together on strengthening their combined economic role?

And finally how are conflicts about the role of some of them to be handled, especially in education like the Whitgift Foundation and the organisations controlling the growing number of academy and free Schools?