



Finance and Resources

Cabinet Member Bulletin

Councillor Simon Hall

October 2018

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018-22

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was presented to Cabinet on 24 September. It reflects our strategy, consistent with our manifesto and taking account of the financial environment in which we operate. We have had to make a number of assumptions, notably given the Government's total failure to say how local government will be funded beyond the next financial year.

The MTFS shows our commitment to the residents and, in particular, how we are going to continue to support those in greatest need, of all ages, in our communities.

The MTFS shows that there is currently a forecast £26m. shortfall by the end of the MTFS period and also details some of the measures that we are already taking to address this.

Chief Digital Officer

I am delighted that, in October, our new Chief Digital Officer, Neil Williams will start working for us. He has huge experience, as the person who has overseen the whole gov.uk programme in Central Government.

He already has many ideas of how the Council and the Borough can make the most of the digital potential, be it regarding how the Council engages with residents, how Council staff work or how the digital economy can develop, such as Smart City and other programmes.

The Smallest Thing's 'Employer with a Heart' Charter

The Smallest Thing is a Croydon-founded charity campaigning for the parents of premature children.

I am proud that we have signed up to their 'Employer with a Heart' Charter, meaning that:

- Women of premature children will get an extra week's paid leave for each week that the child is premature
- Partners will get two weeks' extra paid leave
- We will actively support employees who have a premature baby, recognising that the practical and psychological impact of having a premature baby can be very long-lasting.

We had already ensured, last year, that we were fully compliant with ACAS best practice, but this now takes us to a different level.

Croydon Council is one of the first local authorities to have signed up to this and I hope that other local authorities and Croydon businesses will follow our lead.



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Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

As members will know, we are the 'gateway' authority for UASC.

This continues to put a huge burden on the Council's finances. There is a shortfall of over £7m. per annum in looking at UASC and there are also impacts on other services, such as the number of young adults who have 'No Recourse to Public Funds'.

The Leader of the Council and I met with the Immigration Minister last year but, despite warm words, nothing came of that. The Leader of the Council wrote to the Home Secretary over two months ago and has not had a response. Croydon Council taxpayers are having to fund part of a national obligation. We are continuing to use every avenue to correct this.

Children's Improvement Finance Group

This group, chaired by myself and with Cllr Flemming and senior officers as members, meets monthly to ensure that the relevant resources are made available to support the improvement programme, to ensure that the resources are making a difference to the improvement journey and to ensure that we have a sustainable model going forward.

This work includes extra social work teams, higher levels of business support, increased levels of legal resource and contracts for additional services such as return home interviews. We have spent or committed over £7m. and we can see the tangible benefits coming from this. We have, also, increased the base budget by nearly £11m. this year and have assumed a further £7m. increase in the base next year.

New audio-visual equipment

We have installed modern fit-for-purpose audio-visual equipment in the Council Chamber. This will allow meetings and events to be much more effective, allow increased use of digital technology, improve what residents see and hear on webcasts and allow electronic voting. This is another example of how we are taking the Council forward.

Croydon Park Hotel

Earlier this month, we acquired the freehold of this hotel for £29.8m. plus costs. There is an operator with a lease with 13 years to run. This asset will generate in excess of £1.7m, so the Council will see a contribution (after interest and other costs) of c. £1m. to the revenue budget. This will therefore generate funds for vital frontline services.

This is a precursor to our overall asset investment strategy, which was part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and which Council will be asked to approve tonight. This creates a £100m. fund for asset acquisitions where we can get a net contribution to our revenue budget.

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