



# Finance and Resources

## Cabinet Member Bulletin

Councillor Simon Hall

December 2019

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### **International recognition for our work on social value**

Because of our outstanding work on social value where we are really setting the trend, I was invited to attend the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development) annual Public Procurement week in Paris.

On 22 October, I was one of the speakers and panellists for a session on "Leaving no one behind: when cities are taking the lead for more inclusive public procurement". There was interest and praise for innovation on procurement and social value from a wide-ranging international audience, including European countries, Australia and Canada.

### **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children funding**

We continue to face a huge financial burden regarding Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, given our role as a gateway authority, the continued failure of national dispersal and wholly inadequate funding arrangements from the Home Office.

The shortfall in funding is of the order of £10 million. To put this in context, that is about 6% of what we collect in Council tax. There is continuing work to lobby and present Croydon's arguments to the Home Office.

### **Asset investment strategy**

We are continuing our policy of acquiring investment properties. We are just acquiring two properties, one in New Addington, one just off Purley Way. These will generate some £400,000 after interest costs. There are many other opportunities that are being pursued.

### **My Resources team**

Our My Resources project has provided a new platform for finance, HR, procurement and payroll. It was successfully rolled out last year, thanks to incredible work from a dedicated team led by Vicky Richardson. This new platform, together with the new ways of working, is delivering very real benefits for the Council.

It was my pleasure to give the team a well-deserved Special Recognition Award at the recent Croydon Council Staff awards.

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#### Workforce Strategy

The workforce strategy was approved by Cabinet on 18 November, after unprecedented levels of engagement with staff and input from an external expert, Joe Montgomery.

Our staff are amazing, delivering services that make a huge difference to residents' lives. And showing huge dedication, not least given the extra pressures brought on by funding cuts, growing need for service and a multi-year pay freeze. I want to pay tribute to our staff.

Over the last five years, we have made real progress. Whether it is the London Living Wage. Whether it is the active and supported staff groups – such as BAME and LGBTQ+ but also Carers and Mental Health. And whether it is our diverse senior management team, the most diverse in London and, I suspect the country!

As an administration, we are never satisfied. We know that there are still areas we can improve on, including reducing or eliminating the gender pay gap, reducing the ethnicity and disability pay gaps and bringing down the level of agency staff (14%), notably in Social Care

Some of the themes in the report:

- Building teams and combatting bullying, harassment and discrimination of any sort
- Encouraging innovation and all staff to speak up and speak out
- Making sure the workforce is truly representative of our diverse communities
- Allowing staff to grow and develop a career, including running BAME, women and disabled leadership programmes
- Rewarding and promoting good performance
- Ensuring that we are an employer of choice
- Improving our recruitment programme, including blind shortlisting and diverse recruitment panels
- Strengthening cross-council working and collaboration

We will be making sure that we monitor the implementation of the strategy on a regular basis, as this strategy will be a live document

Our workforce needs to be resident-focused, innovative and really in touch and in part with our communities. In brief, we want to be an employer of choice, with an inclusive diverse workforce that is delivering to residents and promoting and living our ethos.

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#### **New website soft launched with Adult health and Social Care content**

On Thursday 21 November, CDS unveiled the “beta” version of the new website they are developing to replace the main [croydon.gov.uk](http://croydon.gov.uk) site. Described by our Chief Digital Officer, Neil Williams, as “quietly radical”, the new site is designed to be mobile-first, fully accessible to people with disabilities, with much clearer content that is being rewritten from scratch. The site introduces new design patterns that will structure content as clear tasks to make it easier for residents to find and use council services – and from now on no resident-facing digital service is permitted to go live unless it adopts the new design system. You can read about the background and keep track of progress on the Croydon Digital blog. The site will exist in parallel with the old site, and gradually take over from it throughout 2020. The new homepage will switch over in April.

#### **Croydon Digital Service finalists in LGC Awards 2020**

The council's new digital team has been selected as a finalist for the 2020 Local Government Chronicle awards, in the Digital Impact category. The award bid is for the impact of creating this new team, culture and approach and for the successes it has been able to demonstrate in its first year of existence.

It was a record year for nominations so the team has done well to be shortlisted! Congratulations CDS!

#### **Improvements to internal systems on track**

Dozens of the council's key internal technology systems are at varying stages of renewal, including those used in adults & children's social care, education, housing, revenues & benefits, planning and building and regulatory services.

These are long-running pieces of work, some of which will bear fruit in 2020. The replacement of the system used in adult social care will be a major step forward for the service and is on track to complete in October 2020.

#### **Croydon Schools Tech Roadshow**

A series of assemblies and workshops will take place across a number of schools from January – March 2020. Partners such as Amazon, Sopra Steria, Institution of Civil Engineering, and Institution of Engineering & Technology, Community Fibre as well as the Mayor of London's Digital Talent Programme and others will come together at secondary schools across Croydon to raise awareness of Tech and Digital Skills and Careers. More details can be found at [Croydon.Digital](http://Croydon.Digital)

#### **Freeformers Facebook Digital Skills Programme**

600 students from Croydon College and Coulsdon College took part in the train in October and November. A session for 18+ Croydon jobseekers who are seeking to upskill will be held on 6th Dec at BWH. Contact Croydon Works to sign up!

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### **Commissioning and Contract Management Week**

I attended the opening of the Council's annual Commissioning and Contract Management Week at the end of October. The theme of the week was 'Intelligent and Joined Up Commissioning' and the important role this has in delivering front line services to residents.

With over 100 officers present from all areas of the Council it focused on how using business intelligence is as important as ever to inform decisions that affect how we commission services. The feedback from the session focused on:-

- How we should use data to support decisions.
- Not working in silo
- How we should work closer with our partners and the VCS sector
- Avoiding duplication
- Improved integration and collaboration of services

This week supports our revised Commissioning Framework which encompasses an overarching commitment to 'Ethical and Sustainable Commissioning' that maximises on social value, fosters local employment, promotes fair pay, encourages local business growth and supports community priorities.

During the week there were focused sessions on key issues that affect how we commission such as diversity, modern day slavery, social value and buy local. This continues our focus on ethical and sustainable commissioning in support of residents and Croydon's businesses.