



Finance and Resources

Cabinet Member Bulletin

Councillor Simon Hall

July 2019

Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2019

The draft accounts were completed on time, by 31 May. This is a very tight timescale and I want to pay tribute to all the Finance officers who enabled this to be completed. The accounts are now being audited and the audited accounts will be going to the General Purposes and Audit Committee on 23 July.

Outturn for the year ended 31 March 2019

This is being considered at Cabinet on 8 July as part of the July Review.

Despite major in-year pressures, on the general fund, there was an overspend of £345k, which is significantly less than 0.1% of the gross departmental expenditure. There were exceptional costs relating to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and related areas of £5.1m. This £5.4m. overall overspend will be funded from the collection fund for 18/19 which, because of local government accounting rules, can only be recognised on 1 April of the subsequent year, even though it relates to moneys collected in 18/19.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

The total shortfall on funding last year was some £10.6m. The Home Office's failure to fund the work we do as a gateway authority properly and failure to put in place a properly functioning national transfer scheme is placing a huge burden on Croydon's Children's Services and the Croydon taxpayers.

The Home Office recently announced an extra £30 million funding for UASC but not a penny of that will be coming to Croydon!

Lobbying is continuing to seek to rectify this.

Croydon Digital Strategy

On 8 July, Cabinet will be considering our new Digital Strategy. This is a massively ambitious strategy to transform how the Council works, how the Council serves and engages with residents, the tech sector in the borough and the type of digital borough we are.

Even before the Strategy is approved, we are already seeing the benefits of our new Croydon Digital Service under our Chief Digital Officer, Neil Williams and having moved away from a big overarching contract with Capita.

The vision for CDS has started to become reality, with the new strategy, new ways of working and new governance all in place, CDS is moving from being a service in transition to one that is implementing a radical new strategy

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Croydon.Digital

After 4 sprints of intense user research and design, the Croydon.Digital beta site launched on Monday 17 Jun. The blog team has been hard at work polishing it and working out the kinks.

We are building up a growing events listing, job listing and developing a Business Register to showcase the wealth of talent amongst Croydon's tech companies.

This is a big step forward from the Alpha version and is establishing this in the tech community in Croydon.

Website

We know that the website needs a radical overhaul.

Having delivered Croydon Digital as an exemplar in addition to piloting our in-house delivery capability and new ways of working, we are now starting the process of transforming the council's website.

The new website project had its official kick-off on 11 June and the first sprint started last week. This includes using the lessons from other authorities and having access to code from Brighton council to allow improvements to be made rapidly.

Transition from Capita

We are moving away from an overarching agreement with Capita to bringing significant IT services in-house and having a series of specialist suppliers for the various areas of IT.

The first, and probably the most visible for staff was the end user services, which is now being supplied by Littlefish. This went live on Wednesday the 15th May. This was the first and critical milestone in our transition to the new partner model (Littlefish, Capita, Vodafone and Xerox). The transition was seamless and all the satisfaction and performance scores for the new supplier are excellent.

MyResources

This is the new platform for finance, HR and procurement. A huge amount of work has been done by the project team and officers across the Council to ensure that this delivers the information, processes and platforms the Council needs.

The transfer to MyResources has been completed successfully and I want to thank all those involved in achieving this.

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This new platform will allow for vastly improved information and processes across the Council, including automation and self-serve, empowered staff, improved spend and commitment analysis, better supplier management, improved human resources information and much more.

Apprentices

Effective 1 April 2019, all Council apprentices are being paid at least the London Living Wage, irrespective of which level apprenticeship they are undertaking. The Living Wage Foundation does not include apprentices as being in scope for living wage. However, we believe this is the right thing for us to do as a London Living Wage employer and as part of our aim for this to be a living wage borough.

Equalities Award Nomination

The council has been shortlisted for an Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (ENEI) award in the Representative Workforce category. Since 2017, Croydon Council has featured regularly at ENEI Awards, demonstrating its consistent commitment to Equality and Inclusion. Last year the Council was declared 'Overall Winner 2018 - Public Sector', on account of the strength of all the nominations at that time, and walked away with 3 awards.

Workforce Strategy

This is being developed as part of our ambitions to have an excellent, valued and representative workforce. This will be presented to Cabinet in the Autumn.

The Council is currently undertaking a five week period of engagement with our workforce through face to face interviews, staff meetings and on line consultation. Our staff's views will help us shape our action plans and priorities

Children Services recruitment

Children's social work recruitment remains a priority. As the Improvement journey continues, we are seeing more and more success in attracting the right staff for the service.

We have had a very positive response to our Assisted Support Year of Employment (ASYE) for newly qualified social worker recruitment which was six times over committed.

We continue with a rolling programme to recruit experienced social workers with on average three social workers joining Croydon each month.

We have appointed five new Service Managers.



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Commissioning and Procurement Policy

The Council has produced a suites of documents that build upon the good work that has already been undertaken and outline our ambitions to use the Council's purchasing power to maximise social value, foster local employment, promote fair pay, encourage local business growth and support community priorities through embedding ethical and sustainable commissioning considerations in all aspects of commissioning practice.

Details about the key documents can be found below:

- The Commissioning Framework has been refreshed which sets out the commissioning ambitions and priorities for the next four years. This framework outlines our commitment to Sustainable and Ethical Commissioning including 'Buy Local' principles, improving our under £100k buying arrangements, insourcing and innovation, Value Croydon, contract management and working with anchor organisations.
- The Social Value Policy - for the first time the Council will be publishing its Social Value Policy. Croydon Council has been recognised as an exemplar in achieving social value through our contracts. This policy will enable us to take this even further by clearly defining the social value that is important to the Borough. We will also be mandating Social Value at a minimum of 10% and reporting on Social Value annually.
- The refreshed Tenders and Contract Regulations – which form part of the Councils' Constitution, will provide a stronger focus on quality in our tendering processes and how the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of our borough can be enhanced through delivery of each contract.

As well as the above, the Council has produced our very first Supplier Code of Conduct. Our suppliers are an extension of us and should be adhering to the same Values and principles that we do. This Code of Conduct gives a clear signal to suppliers that want to work with the Council.