

**Finance Review Panel
Terms of Reference
May 2020**

1. Context

In light of the Council's response to the Covid 19 pandemic, the resulting issues in relation to the Council's budget, priorities moving forward and integration with health partners, it has been agreed to undertake a full root and branch review of the council's financial governance, strategy and planning, leadership, decision making, management and group company structures.

Further, this is within a wider context of historical underfunding of Croydon over the last 15-20 years, notably, cumulative cuts, substantial population increase, significant growth in demand across all welfare services, delivering improvements in children services and funding the significant gap in costs for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

The objectives of the Panel's work will be underpinned by political and expert financial challenge testing the deliverable of the objectives below against specified timescales. Grant Thornton, as the Council's external Auditor, will engage with the Panel as part of their value for money work.

2. Objectives

These include but are not limited to the following:-

- To endorse the finance review project initiation document, programme and schedule of work.
- To consider and endorse the S151 Officer's full and detailed response to Grant Thornton's audit concerns, as set out in their letter dated 22nd April.
- To agree the identified short term options to minimise spend and where possible generate income.
- To review options for a refreshed savings proposals for 2020/21.
- To endorse the proposal of a full review of all financial systems, structures, processes and decision-making.
- Review all group and company structures to ensure that the financial implications are fully understood.
- To receive and endorse a report from the S151 Officer of the refreshed MTFS in light of new normal, covid19 implications, health integration work and state of property and commercial markets, for recommendation to the Cabinet and Council.
- To receive regular updates on programme deliverables and schedule of work.
- To endorse a final report with recommendations outlining areas for strengthening and improvement on the areas identified in the above objectives.

3. Membership

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|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Duncan Whitfield | Independent Chair |
| • Jo Negrini | CEO |
| • Lisa Taylor | S151 Officer |
| • Jacqueline Harris Baker | Monitoring Officer |
| • Cllr Simon Hall | Lead member for Finance |
| • Cllr Alison Butler | Deputy Leader |
| • Matthew Kershaw | CEO (Health) |
| • Debbie Warren | LB Greenwich CEO |
| • Executive Leadership Team | |
| • Sabrina Cummings | Executive Officer Support |

4. Panel support

The Panel's administrative support will be provided by the CEO's office and when necessary technical advice or other expertise will be drawn from across the Council.

5. Accountability

The work of the Panel will be accountable to the Leader of the Council and any final recommendations will be presented to the Leader and Lead Member for Finance and Resources and the Cabinet, for approval.

6. Timescale

The Panel will be provided with regular review reports at each meeting set against the schedule of work and timescales contained within the project initiation document.

7. Confidentiality and Access to Information

All papers and reports to the panel will be marked "strictly confidential". All information provided to panel members is confidential to Croydon Council and should not be released, communicated, nor disclosed by any member either during their appointment or following termination (by whatever means), to third parties without prior clearance from the monitoring officer. Panel members are required to hold and retain information (in whatever format received) under appropriately secure conditions.

Information may be the subject of requests under the FOiA. All requests for information should be referred to the monitoring officer. A blanket approach cannot be applied, but where applicable a section **36(2)** FOiA exemption may be relevant, in so far that it exempts information *"if in the reasonable opinion of [the Monitoring Officer] disclosure of the information.*

APPENDIX A

(b) would or would be likely to inhibit (i) the free and frank provision of advice, or (ii) the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation, or (c) would otherwise prejudice or would be likely otherwise to prejudice, the effective conduct of public affairs”.

This and any other exemptions applied are reviewable, on application, to the ICO.

8. Frequency of meetings

Bi - weekly from week commencing 18 May 2020.