



Finance and Resources

Cabinet Member Budget Bulletin

Councillor Simon Hall

October 2020

Financial Position

As detailed in reports to Cabinet and the Extraordinary Council Meeting, the Council finds itself in an unprecedented financial position. Based on the August MHCLG Covid-19 return, there was an in-year financial gap of £50 million, of which £42 million relates to Covid-19.

The budget amendments approved by Full Council have identified some £28 million of in-year savings. These will need to be delivered and further in-year savings initiatives are also being worked on.

As detailed previously, we are also working with the LGA and London Councils to lobby for further funding for local government, given the estimated £1.3 billion shortfall in London and the estimated £7 billion shortfall across England.

We recognise that there is a need for a total resetting of the Council's priorities and the way it operates, whilst remaining faithful to the priorities and manifesto commitments of the administration. This is being worked up as a priority to form a Croydon Renewal Plan. As part of those works, the Council is also undertaking a strategic review of all its group entities.

Full Council has supported the formal application to MHCLG for a capitalisation direction. This is where a Council is allowed to borrow money to fund revenue shortfall and then repay that money over time. Clearly, our Croydon Renewal Plan will be a key element in their consideration of our application.

Staffing Review

The staffing review was a massive exercise, which involved deleting over 400 positions throughout the Council.

We made clear that we wanted to protect frontline services, albeit sometimes needing them to be delivered in a different way. We also made clear that we wanted to minimise the number of compulsory redundancies. We also wanted to delete vacant posts and terminate agency contracts wherever possible. At the start of the proposals, there was still a risk of some 175 compulsory redundancies.

We extended the consultation process and the final proposals were presented to the unions on 9 September. As a result of having taking into account alternative proposals, offering targeted voluntary severance and opening up redeployment opportunities, it now appears that there will be less than 50 compulsory redundancies.

As I have said previously, one is more than we would want, so efforts are continuing to find redeployment opportunities, even though notice letters have now been issued.

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Personal Protective Equipment

The Council's PPE stock is at a healthy level and is reviewed regularly to ensure three months' stock is available at any one time.

Over the spring we bought significant quantities of PPE from the West London Alliance and the Central Buying Team continue to source and purchase best value PPE.

The Council is currently providing PPE to a wide range of internal services, including our 6 council run care homes, and supporting care providers with emergency PPE when needed. Adult Social Care providers have worked hard in recent months to establish their own PPE supply chain, in a recent survey 99% indicated that they had enough to meet their needs, as such demand for Council PPE support has fallen significantly.

Given a potential spike in Covid infections we are working closely with the care sector to direct them to a free supply of PPE, as announced in the Adult Social Care Winter Plan 2020-21, available until March 2021 through the national PPE e-portal. Providers will be required to sign up to the e-portal to access this stock, currently only 38% of care homes and 27% of domiciliary care settings have registered. We are also continuing to work with the London Resilience Forum and DHSC to source free PPE for those services who are not eligible for the national e-portal, these include children and adult social care workers, mental health community care, personal assistants, domestic violence refuges and rough sleeping services.

Contract Review

The Commissioning and Procurement team have been working with various departments around the Council to see where we can make contract savings. This has resulted in savings in excess of £3 million to date.

Croydon Park Hotel

The operator of Croydon Park Hotel was not able to survive the impact of Covid-19. Since its closure, we have been assessing the options. Whilst developing longer term solutions, we have decided a meanwhile use of emergency temporary accommodation. This will enable the Council to save considerable funds on emergency temporary accommodation, whilst providing high quality emergency temporary accommodation.

L&D Offer for Staff

L&D are launching new virtual skills development for managers on virtual training on remote working, managing change, managing stress, coaching for managers and coaching managers style and transformational change. For all staff a new e-learning for supporting mental health is available

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NJC Pay Award

The pay award for the current year has now been agreed nationally. This involves a minimum rise of 2.75% for all staff covered by the NJC salary scales. Work is underway to implement the NJC pay award - this is the first time this will be done on the new My Resources system so testing is underway as an important audit check before implementation.

Croydon Digital Infrastructure Toolkit – 4G Small Cells

Croydon Council has successfully become the first council in the UK to offer a non-exclusive, open access agreement for 4G small cells on street lamps. Working in partnership with Freshwave a pilot has been completed in July 2020 the first 4G small cell antennae across town centre locations including Croydon University Hospital and West Valley Hospital in East Croydon. The open access, non-exclusive approach enables Croydon to work with multiple telecoms operators and all mobile networks to bring faster and better 4G coverage for the customers of Croydon.

Community Fibre: Full fibre to social housing

The roll out of Full Fibre to social housing assets across the borough is now well underway with more than half of the sites completed. This will be of direct benefit to our tenants, helping to reduce the digital divide, especially important at a time when families are even more dependent on the quality of internet connection, with working from home and studying.

Digital Inclusion

The LGA funded Digital Inclusion project has continued to provide remote 1-1 digital inclusion training to residents within sheltered housing blocks in New Addington.

Digital Learner Guides providing basic digital skills to residents have been published and will soon be available via Central Library, CALAT and Age UK Croydon offices.

Croydon in partnership with Leeds Digital have recently secured some MHCLG funding to help residents that need digital skills and devices. Croydon, Leeds City Council, Age UK Croydon and TechResort will work in collaboration to create a comprehensive Digital Inclusion toolkit for the delivery of digital skills to residents.

Digital Advertising

The Council has entered into a contract for small format bus shelters & street furniture. This will generate significant income for the Council and will enable increased advertising, including a lot more effective public messaging from the Council.

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