



ISLINGTON

Annual update from the Executive Member for Finance, Performance & Community Safety

Cllr Andy Hull

Policy & Performance Scrutiny Committee 14 February 2019

Overview of portfolio

Areas of responsibility include:

- Finance - including budget setting and monitoring
- Savings and transformation
- Revenues & Benefits
- Resources: Property, Digital, Human Resources, Legal Services
- Procurement, Contract Management
- Democratic Services, Registrars and Electoral Registration
- Customer Services: Contact Islington and Complaints
- Performance management
- Risk management: Information Governance, Internal Audit & Risk
- Community safety and policing (including hate crime)
- Public Protection

Finance

- Financial Resilience and Sustainability have been important themes this year
- Statutory financial reporting is excellent, the Council & Pension Fund accounts 2017/18 had a clean sign off
- We robustly monitor our budget
 - Only Environment and Regeneration are overspending in 2018/19 and this has reduced from its earlier £1.5m to £0.5m
 - Other services are looking at underspending and the overall position is forecast to be an underspend
- In September the Executive agreed to increase reserves by £2m increasing them to £10m. We need a prudent level of reserves in such uncertain times
- The Pension Fund is leading the way in reducing its carbon footprint and how its investments impact on emissions
- The Pension Fund has an equity protection policy in place to protect over half of its investments putting it in a good position heading into the next pension fund valuation

Finance

- There is huge uncertainty over Islington's long term funding
- We have a one year settlement from the government for 2019/20 and beyond that we await the outcome of the Government's:
 - Spending Review – which will tell us how much money the government is giving to local government in total, and
 - So-called “Fair Funding Review” – which will determine how that money is distributed to councils
- Irrespective of the distribution model, local government, London and Islington need a significant increase in funding from government
- The Council has set out in its 2019/20 budget proposals a transformation programme over three years looking to save £33m
- Those proposals are ambitious but put the Council in as good a position as possible heading into such an uncertain future
- The Council will also have a £379m three year capital programme which includes £260m devoted to new homes, of which £187m is to fund at least 550 new council homes in Islington

Revenues and Benefits

In 2018-19 we have:

- Collected over £400 million from Council Tax and Business Rates combined
- Further increased the proportion of Council Tax payers who pay by direct debit – over 64,000 out of approximately 89,000 accounts
- Continued efforts to collect Council Tax and Business Rates older debt. Total arrears recovered in 2017/2018 were £1.37m Council Tax and £3.2m Business Rates. In the current financial year (2018/19) we are on track to recover a further £1.2m Council Tax and £1.9m Business Rates (note, the team is working with less resources in 2018/19 - recruitment is underway)
- Exempted Foster Carers from Council Tax
- Awarded almost £2.5m in relief to those businesses most badly affected by the Government's 2017 Revaluation
- Reviewed the student qualification status of those occupying Islington's largest 'student' blocks and levied council tax charges on the landlords when no student was present

Revenues and Benefits

In 2018-19 we have:

- Maintained the help available through our Council Tax Support Scheme
- Helped 2,173 households on Universal Credit with a discretionary housing payment equivalent to one week's net rent
- Increased the availability of crisis awards through the Resident Support Scheme in response to Universal Credit
- Continued our commitment to provide support to residents through our Resident Support Scheme with help for items such as white goods, beds and furniture
- Updated Housing Benefit/Council Tax support processes and resident information in light of Universal Credit

Benefits - Welfare reform / Universal Credit



Universal Credit Full Service was introduced in Islington from 20 June 2018. To date, there are 5,000 residents on UC, and around 20,000 existing claimants will move over to UC by 2023. To prepare for the introduction of UC, and ensure residents have the support they need, we have:

- Carried out fact-finding visits to Southwark and Croydon (who piloted UC Full Service) to learn from their experience
- Established a Universal Credit Board to steer policy around our approach to UC, and a UC Working Group to implement policy and support at an operational level
- Introduced a new Digital Zone at 222 Upper Street to ensure people have free access to computers, internet and scanners to manage their UC claim, with further free computers available in all our libraries
- Commissioned Citizens' Advice Islington to provide support in the Digital Zone to help people manage their claims, and to provide budgeting support at both Islington jobcentres
- Co-located Housing Income Officers in both jobcentres to help council tenants manage their rent payments
- Provided advice to hundreds of residents through our Income Maximisation Team and our Advice Partners (CAB, Islington Law Centre and Islington People's Rights) who we fund to provide benefits and debt advice
- Engaged with local DWP staff to jointly train up over 60 frontline teams and local organisations, put in place support, and address specific issues, escalating these to DWP at national level as required

Property

Our Property Strategy sets out policies to make best use of the Council's property portfolio – around 270 properties, including operational buildings, libraries, children's centres, community centres and investment properties

- Key income and savings opportunities being realised this year:
 - £250k saving from moving staff out of Northway House, Upper Street and exiting the lease (Pret a Manger now in occupation) was achieved in September 2018
 - £75k saving from exiting a lease at Elthorne Road, £55k new letting at Brewery Road (formerly used by Parking Services), £86k new letting on Upper Street and additional income of circa £100k from rent reviews at Brewery Road
 - Commencement of major refurbishment at 49-59 Old Street to generate additional income of over £700k from new lettings by early 2020
- On track to realise £3m of extra income / rent savings by 2019/20
- Work is progressing on optimising use of community centres, and space in libraries, and further operational accommodation efficiencies

Digital Services

- The Shared Digital 'Light' proposal was superseded by the decision to return to a sovereign digital service
- The majority of staff returned to Islington management by 31 October 2018 with the transition completing by 31 December 2018
- Some 60 projects were triaged back from Shared Digital and with new initiatives there is currently a pipeline of 90 IT projects
- Some shared procurement continues on in a tri-borough arrangement including print and mobile services, Microsoft licensing and Wide Area Network connectivity. These all benefit from the scale the combined purchasing brings
- The new Islington Digital Services (IDS) team has been established in a holding structure and the first calendar quarter will see the approval of a business plan and restructure to rebuild the capability of the organisation
- Whilst still reliant on interims and agency workers through the transition, recruitment of permanent staff has commenced – as has a renewed focus on development plans for the current workforce
- The delivery focus now is on unlocking the backlog of demand whilst rebuilding the infrastructure, some of which is beyond its useful life

Human Resources

Over the past year we have:

- Launched our new Equalities online training programme in April 2018
- Engaged with over 100 managers and front line staff, between October and December 2018, to inform the development of the People Strategy
- Started 74 new apprenticeships last year (including new apprentices and upskill opportunities)
- Reviewed our Occupational Health Service provision and moved to a new provider from October - Medigold. People have access to a more responsive, professional service, provided from modern OH facilities
- Procured a new Employee Assistance Programme contract from the same provider - Workplace Options. There is widespread satisfaction with the service Workplace Options provides. The new contract is effective from January 2018. We are encouraging more people to use this service which is open to all employees and their immediate families
- Provided additional HR Business Partner support to the Environment & Regeneration Department to help them better manage sickness absence at the Depot from October 2018

Procurement and contract management



- The Strategic Procurement Team oversees all procurement, contract management and in-sourcing matters for the Council, ensuring that we comply with legislation and that money is properly spent
- In 2017/18 the Council had 5,966 suppliers - total third party spend amounted to over £571m – around one third of these contracts were tendered in 2017-18
- The Team has continued to deliver bi-monthly supplier registration days to assist potential providers to register on the Council's e-tendering system – the London Tenders Portal.
- We also run training workshops for local suppliers to help them win contracts: 10 courses in 2017-18, and a further 5 in 2018-19, with additional 'meet the buyer' events for the voluntary and community sector
- We published lists of all contracts with aggregate annual value of £5,000 or more on the Council website to ensure transparency, and to support the VCS to build alliances with existing suppliers, to support delivery of services
- Larger procurements and tenders are advertised transparently on the Council's website, London Tenders Portal and Voluntary Action Islington
- The Procurement Team also ensures that London Living Wage is considered as part of the procurement process

Legal Services

Over the past year, the Legal Services team has:

- Introduced a new Civica Legal Case Management System to transform the culture of Legal Services
- Archived and catalogued legal files onsite and offsite, including freeing up 2 Town Hall basement rooms
- Dealt with threatened judicial reviews
- Converted 10 agency posts to in-house roles
- Successfully administered the historic abuse investigation
- Issued a Winding Up order against Bemerton Villages Management Organisation Ltd
- Completed documentation for redevelopment of the former Richard Cloudesley school site
- Successfully prosecuted fraudulent lettings agency directors and company director for planning breach

Democratic Services

- In 2017-18, Committee Services published the papers for and clerked 173 Council, Executive, committee and other formal meetings, and clerked 141 school admissions and exclusion appeals
- During the year, the team also coordinated and published 49 officer key decisions
- The guidance documents, to assist colleagues across the council with decision making and writing reports for committees, including report templates incorporating the new corporate style, were updated, circulated and published on Izzi
- A comprehensive Member induction programme was delivered immediately after the local election in May 2018, and the immediate issue of ID badges and network access for new councillors arranged. A suite of documents for members were also created, together with a new area for members on Office 365, where forms, codes, protocols, procedures and useful information are held in one easily accessible location
- An ongoing Member development programme was introduced, which included 17 internally delivered training events during the first year
- The team has recently made a significant contribution to the Council's submission to the first phase Borough Boundary Review

Registrars

Over the past year, the Registrars Service has:

- Conducted nearly 2,000 ceremonies in the last 12 months (one of the highest in London) with a programme to extend the offering with more venues and timeslots in the Town Hall (evenings and Sundays)
- Extended the City of London partnership agreement, with additional services such as licensing of wedding venues and marketing being added to the portfolio of work
- Volunteered to assist residents with the European Settlement Scheme –the team will undergo training shortly to offer this service. This will assist those residents who are unable to complete the online application

We are currently undergoing a digitalisation project of historical entries and over 70,000 records are now in a database. This will assist with the preservation and quick access of entries



Electoral Services

Key activities include:

- Successful delivery of the local council elections in May 2018
- Phase 1 of the local boundary review - a review is being undertaken to address imbalances in the number of electors across a number of existing wards. Initial findings will be presented to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in Feb/Mar 2019. This is a major review. Phase 2 (agreeing draft recommendations with LGBCE) and Phase 3 (consulting on and finalising recommendations) will continue during 2019. This will be followed by parliamentary scrutiny. Any changes to boundaries will be implemented in 2022
- Work on the annual voter registration canvass with publication of the revised Register of Electors on 1 Dec 18
- Plans for an outreach programme of work to increase voter registration in under-represented groups including young attainers (16-18 year olds), people of no-fixed abode, electors from BAME groups, residents in residential care homes and hospitals
- Planning and preparation for the GLA and London Mayoral elections in May 2020
- Planning and preparation for the government's 2020 canvass reforms which will be undertaken in parallel with the existing 2019 canvass process
- Polling District Review required in Summer of 2019

Customer Services

Over the past year we have

- Continued to see an increase in customer transactions through online / digital channels, and a corresponding decrease in phone calls and visits. Data for April – December 2018:
 - 151,359 digital transactions (Apr-Dec 18) – increased from 136,942 (Apr-Dec 2017)
 - 333,831 calls answered by Contact Islington (Apr-Dec 18) - down from 379,200 (Apr-Dec 17)
 - 108,103 visits to the Customer Centre (Apr-Dec 18) - down from 112,77 (Apr-Dec 17)
- Delivered a new Digital Zone in the Customer Centre at 222 Upper Street, with a service scanning facility for residents who need to provide evidence to support claims
- As part of the Digital Zone, provided a suite of private booths, equipped with computers and printers, to enable Citizens Advice Islington to support residents who need help with their claim for Universal Credit
- Assembly Hall- increased income/ revenue year on year on a like for like basis.
- Facilities - supported a drive to reduce use of plastics in relation to catering arrangements.

Performance

Over the past year we have:

- Developed a new four-year Corporate Plan – *Building a Fairer Islington* – setting out our vision to make Islington a fairer place. The plan sets out seven priority areas for us to focus on to achieve this vision:
Homes; Jobs & Money; Safety; Children & Young People; Place & Environment; Health & Independence; A Well Run Council
- Agreed a suite of corporate performance indicators that will enable us to measure progress towards delivering these goals. These will be reported regularly to the Council's scrutiny committees to ensure accountability
- Mapped all council activity and spend against these objectives so that we understand what are the key programmes and services that are essential to delivery and how much they cost
- Introduced improved processes for developing, signing off and monitoring the new programmes and projects that are essential to delivering transformation and savings across the council – ensuring there are comprehensive business cases, delivery plans and risk registers in place

We are currently reviewing and developing new performance reporting arrangements to monitor delivery of the Corporate Plan, including progress against actions and commitments set out in the Plan, delivery of key change and savings programmes, and progress in meeting performance targets

Information Governance

- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 came into force on 25 May 2018. In preparation for GDPR the council
 - Identified gaps in information asset register
 - Mapped the retention of information assets
 - Reviewed the lawful basis of processing
 - Updated policies and procedures
 - Updated existing contracts to include GDPR addendum
 - Created a contract due diligence checklist, including a supply chain assessment
 - Put in place an Information Governance and Information Security Action Plan (reviewed monthly)
- An Information Governance Strategy has been created and was agreed by the Council's Corporate Management Board in January 2019 - this is supported by a detailed action plan
- An audit of our preparedness was carried out and outcomes were considered in the creation of action plans
- A review into processes for managing Access to Information is being carried out which will set out recommendations for improvements to help drive up compliance

Internal Audit / Risk Management

- The 2017-18 Internal Audit Annual Report, detailing outcomes of delivery of the 2017-18 audit plan, was presented to Audit Committee in September 2018. An overall moderate assurance opinion was given (i.e. the Council's systems for control, risk and governance were generally adequate with some improvement required)
- The 2018-19 Internal Audit Plan is in progress and an interim report detailing delivery was presented to Audit Committee in January 2019
- Internal Audit is working more closely with Audit Committee and in 2018-19 are delivering a deep dive review commissioned by Audit Committee (a review of the Council's governance arrangements surrounding Programmes and Transformation)
- Bi- annual whistleblowing reports continue to be presented to Audit Committee, with the last update presented in October 2018
- A revised whistleblowing policy, updated to include the reporting of Modern Slavery, was agreed by Audit Committee in January 2019
- The Council's Principal Risk Report (PRR) is in the process of being updated and will be presented to Audit Committee in March 2019. Risk workshops were also undertaken with Departmental Management Teams during Quarter 3 and early Quarter 4 to feed into the PRR

Community Safety



- The Safer Islington Partnership is currently focused on five key areas: Youth Crime; Violence Against Women and Girls; Prevent; Hate Crime; and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Significant reduction of over 70% in moped-enabled snatch-theft offences, through our coordinated partnership response
- Camden & Islington Drugs Strategy 2018-21 launched to coordinate response to drug-related crime and ASB
- Launch of the new ASB Warning Notice process to identify and support those on the cusp of committing crime and ASB
- The Community MARAC supported over 40 high risk victims of crime and ASB to access appropriate services and significantly reduce their vulnerability
- Community Safety Officers now accredited in Crime Prevention & Design by the College of Policing to undertake Environmental Visual Audits in locations of high crime / concern – with 15 being conducted across the borough, each with an improvement plan
- Islington's Integrated Offender Management Scheme supported 127 service users, with 40 prolific offenders successfully exiting the scheme due to reducing risk of offending and taking up education, training and employment opportunities. MOPAC have recognised Islington's IOM approach as one of the best in London

Community Safety

- The percentage of repeat young offenders (under 18s) in 2018/19 was 34%, which is a significant decrease from 54% the previous year
- The number of young people in custody has reduced from 17 last year to 12 in Q1 this year
- The Integrated Gangs Team supported 25 young people to exit gangs, with 67% of those they worked with then causing less harm in the community as a result. The IGT also won the award for outstanding partnership working at Children's & YP Now Awards Ceremony.
- Knife crime with injury offences among under-25s reduced by 7%.
- Number of first time entrants into the Youth Justice System is 16 (Q1), which is a substantial decrease, with the target being under 60 (across the year's four quarters).
- Over 80 places now signed up to being Safe Havens in Islington.
- Islington was one of four councils to successfully launch the first MOPAC-funded Pan London County Lines project
- Modern Day Slavery training rolled out across the council and key partner agencies. A Modern Day Slavery Charter for Council Procurement has been signed.

Community Safety



- Prevent training has been delivered to around 250 people across the community safety partnership this year, which has included Arsenal FC security staff, Gallop and Amnesty International
- Responding to a recent rise in Far Right activity locally, including offensive posters, graffiti and flyers, a range of Far Right awareness training has been successfully delivered to highlight how people are radicalised and drawn into extremism
- In October 2018, Islington ran its most successful Hate Crime Awareness week, building on previous years' successes in line with the national campaign. During this week:
 - There were 11 events that took place across seven days which were well publicised across Islington, including an open day at the Emirates Stadium, which attracted attendance from 106 schoolchildren.
 - The event was attended by a range of partners to promote tolerance and celebrate diversity in information sessions and practical workshops, promoting the Islington Hate Crime Pledge and the Hate Crime Awareness online training
- 376 organisations have signed the Islington Hate Crime pledge – with 207 signing up in 2018.

Community Safety



- Solace Independent Domestic Violence Advisors and Support Services worked with 423 victims: 64% receiving a casework service saw an increase in safety and 49% were supported to achieve a justice outcome.
- The Samira Black and Minority Ethnic and Refugee Domestic Violence and Abuse project supported 124 survivors and provided 82 awareness-raising sessions, plus weekly surgeries at Holborn Police station, City and Islington College, IMECE Women's Centre and Caxton House.
- Islington DVA MARAC heard 452 high-risk cases during this period which exceeded the Safe Lives target
- There has been an 11% increase in the number of Domestic Violence offences recorded by police (273 more crimes), so more victims are being identified for support
- Islington Council funded a Street Population Coordinator and a successful bid to the Ministry of Housing supported this appointment with a Complex Needs and No Recourse to Public Funds officers, alongside an uplift in St Mungo's Outreach workers
- This new Street Population team have secured 34 accommodation outcomes for individuals and are working with a consortium of agencies to open a temporary shelter which will provide 15 additional bed spaces

Public Protection – Trading Standards

- Fines totalling £45,000 were issued to letting agents for not displaying fees
- A letting agent was prosecuted for falsely claiming to work with Islington Council to provide social housing
- Another letting agent was prosecuted for fraudulent trading, leading to custodial sentences of 28 months for each of the three directors (who were also disqualified from being directors for 8 years)
 - A first-of-its-kind prosecution was carried out of a trader (a memorial mason) for taking on work whilst knowing that he could not carry it out
 - A simple caution was issued to a food business for displaying the wrong food hygiene rating.
 - A business was prosecuted for the sale of a knife to a minor.
 - The sale of alcohol to minors led to two off-licences having their premises licence revoked
 - Saved a resident over £10,000 by intervening in a cold calling roof-repair fraud (currently under investigation)

Public Protection – Environmental Health



- The total number of food businesses has continued to increase to 2,437, with 80% of all types currently broadly compliant
- The team's enforcement activities to increase rate of compliance included:
 - Programmed inspections resulting in 56 Hygiene Improvement Notices served on 29 businesses and 3 voluntary closures of businesses
 - Two current prosecutions and two simple cautions have been issued
 - Five alleged food poisoning outbreaks have been investigated
 - First compliance and stop notices have been served under the new novel food regulations and continue to serve notices under the Food Information regulations relating to allergen requirements
- Outside of the food regime, work continues in relation to health and safety and statutory nuisance:
 - All the cooling towers in the borough have been inspected in 2018
 - There are currently three live prosecutions for odour nuisance originating from businesses