

## **Annual Report to the Policy & Performance Scrutiny Committee by the Executive Member for Finance & Performance**

### **Budget**

- Effective financial oversight of the council's £1bn gross annual budget.
- Prepared and passed the council's 2014/15 Budget, protecting frontline services, helping residents deal with the cost of living and reducing fuel poverty by cutting energy bills, despite the government slashing the council's funding by £20m.
- Drafted a proposed 2015/16 Budget, delivering a further £35m of savings necessitated by continuing government cuts, for publication on 7 January 2015.

### **Finance**

- Regular Financial Monitoring reporting to Executive and Policy & Performance Scrutiny Committee.
- Secured a clean audit and sign-off for the council's Annual Accounts.
- Achieved multi-million pound savings for the council through effective Treasury Management.
- Implementing the Financial Management Review. The new structure will go live in May 2015 and will almost halve the size of the existing team.
- Our collection rates for Council Tax (and Business Rates) remain strong, despite the Government's retrograde welfare reforms.

### **Social security**

- Effectively administered the £3.1m Islington Resident Support Scheme in partnership with The Cripplegate Foundation, recognised nationally as best practice in its provision of community care, housing assistance and crisis support to Islington residents in hard times.
- Fought a year-long campaign in the high court and the court of public opinion to save the Local Welfare Provision Fund.
- Trialing Universal Support Delivered Locally to test the impact of employment support, personal budgeting support and digital support. We are focusing our attention for this work on the Bemerton and New River Green estates, the 200 longest unemployed in the borough and the impact on people accessing the Customer Centre with Universal Credit equivalent benefits. This will be subject to formal evaluation by the Department of Work and Pensions.
- Our Benefits processing times for 'new' claims continue to be in the top quartile for London and for 'change of circumstances' we had the best performance in London last year.
- Regular updates on the impact of the government's welfare reforms to the Employment & Poverty Reduction Board, chaired by the Leader. Update on welfare reform presented at Policy & Performance Scrutiny Committee in July.

## Procurement

- Overseen implementation of the council's procurement policy via the Procurement Board
- Implemented the council's groundbreaking anti-blacklisting policy and developed a plan to reduce our use of agency staff, following constructive scrutiny on both matters by the Policy & Performance Committee.
- Initiated a procurement review of the end-to-end process for supply chain management.

## Customer service

- Led the successful development of the new Islington Customer Centre at 222 Upper Street, saving £1m a year by moving out of Highbury House and bringing together under one roof most of our citizen-facing services.
- The new Customer Centre has now had over 100,000 visitors since 1 April, with an average waiting time of less than ten minutes.
- Overseen the efficient and effective delivery of Democratic Services, including running Local & European Elections and hosting the UK's first gay wedding

## Digital

- Developed and published the Islington Digital Strategy 2014-18
- Overseen a successful recruitment programme in Digital Services to reduce the need to employ expensive agency staff
- Islington Online: our Customer Transformation Programme aims to make our online presence more accessible and intuitive to our customers. This includes:
  - the ongoing development of a completely refreshed website, designed for mobile first, and built with the end users' experience in mind (not the council's departments')
  - a hosted web service: a set of tools, guides and standards to help departments create and publish campaign and promotion sites
  - self-service devices in the Customer Centre for customers to self-serve and for the hosts to show/teach customers what can be done online.
- Established the Members' Digital Sounding Board to test out ideas for new digital developments with elected councilors.

## Information management

- Thoroughgoing review of Data Security in preparation for the Information Commissioner's visit to Islington Council on 9-11 February 2015

## Pay and debt

- Led the Living Wage campaign in Islington, helping us to: become the first accredited Living Wage local authority in the UK; secure the Living Wage for 100% of LBI staff and 98% of our contractors, including in home care; become the place in the country with the highest concentration of accredited Living

Wage employers; and use our £1bn Pension Fund to lobby FTSE 100 companies to pay the Living Wage to their staff and contractors as well.

- Led the Islington Debt Coalition's 'Sharkstoppers' work to take on payday lenders and support London Capital Credit Union to help tackle problem debt.

### **Performance**

- Held Monthly Performance Panels (MPP) with the Leader, Chief Executive and relevant Executive Members and Corporate Directors to hold departments to account for their performance. MPP sessions also include monthly monitoring of council-wide performance against corporate indicators and quarterly monitoring of complaints reports and benchmarking data from across London.
- Refreshed the council's suite of corporate performance indicators
- Quarterly performance reporting to Policy & Performance Scrutiny Committee
- Presented an annual progress update on implementation of the recommendations of the Islington Fairness Commission at Full Council in February.

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**02/12/14**

**Cllr Andy Hull**

**Executive Member for Finance and Performance**