



ISLINGTON

# **Annual Report of the Executive Member for Finance & Performance**

**Cllr Andy Hull**

Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee  
5 October 2015

# Budget

- Delivered a balanced 2014-15 budget at year end
- Prepared and passed the council's 2015-16 budget, delivering a further £37 million of necessary savings as a result of government cuts, meaning that we have now in total had to reduce spending by £150 million since 2010
- Developed the council's budget strategy, process and timeline for 2016-19



# Welfare Reform



- Jointly founded and led the national 'Keep The Safety Net' campaign
- Aim was to save the Local Welfare Provision Fund from being cut by the government
- Resulted in rescuing £74m of the fund across England, including £560,000 in Islington
- Allocated Discretionary Housing Payment to help those affected by welfare reforms remain in their homes whilst seeking more affordable accommodation / looking for work
- We are one of the few councils in the country who has spent their entire DHP allocation, supporting residents in financial hardship (often as a result of welfare reforms) to the maximum allowed



# Financial management

- Annual accounts for 2014-15 signed off with no qualifications or issues
- The Annual Governance Report approved by Audit Committee demonstrates our internal controls remain good in spite of significant cuts
- Embedded the council's new financial management model, saving £1 million
- Collected more council tax, contributing £1.9 million to savings targets



## Financial management (continued)

- Continued effective management of our Treasury function (cash and loans), delivering additional savings when opportunities arise without undue risk
- Delivered £7.8m of savings across the Finance & Resources department in the last financial year
- Overall, the council's financial management function remains strong and resilient, securing sound stewardship of public money



# Procurement


- Agreed new Procurement Strategy 2015–20
  - Implemented new governance arrangements to reduce bureaucracy
  - Appropriate contracts now in place for all external spend
  - Commissioning & Procurement Board supporting and challenging all procurements to reduce costs and improve effectiveness
  - All new national transparency requirements delivered
  - Training delivered to businesses including local small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the voluntary sector
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## Customer service

- Continued to make services available online, with an upward trend in online transactions and particular success on council tax queries which can now be handled online
- On track to hit ambitious target to reduce telephone calls and visits into Contact Islington
- More people than ever are paying council tax by direct debit
- Benefit processing times continue to be in the top quartile for London



## Developing Digital / Online services

- Developed and published Islington Digital Strategy 2014–18
  - Established and chaired the Members' Digital Sounding Board
  - Supported channel shift activity by making services available online, such as Registrars' Services and Schools Admissions
  - Incrementally launching the new Islington Council website (beta version)
  - Prepared proposals to share our ICT service with Camden Council - will deliver savings and provide opportunities for improved services
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# Information management

- Achieved a 'reasonable assurance' following an audit by the Information Commissioner's Office carried out in February 2015
- This is the second best of four possible levels
- Recognition of the good processes we have in place to protect personal data



# Internal audit, investigations and risk management

- Re-let our internal audit contract with six other London boroughs, delivering volume discounts and greater cross-borough working
- Completed the internal audit plan for 2014-15 with high levels of implemented recommendations and customer satisfaction. Prepared and embarked on fully consulted, risk-based plan for 2015-16.
- Revised the corporate anti-fraud strategy and policies to maximise the benefits from corporate anti-fraud resources
- Refreshed and rolled out the revised corporate risk management framework, resulting in a more relevant set of data and officer engagement

# Legal services



- Successfully threatened judicial review of the government's decision to cut the local welfare provision fund - led to a proper consultation and partial restoration of the fund (see welfare reform above)
- Successful challenged the decision on Islington's Article 4 direction, leading to the government accepting additional areas in the borough where permitted development rights (effectively allowing offices to convert to residential use) would not apply
- Supported adoption of the Preventing Wasted Housing Supply Supplementary Planning Document
- Saving £693,000 in 2014-15 in respect of Ordinary Residence matters through work in relation to the responsibilities of other councils

# Human resources

- Integration of repairs service and concierge service staff under TUPE
- Adoption of important new and revised employment policies including:
  - Disciplinary procedure
  - Workplace Resolution Policy (replacing the grievance procedure)
  - Market Supplements Policy
  - Voluntary Redundancy procedure
- Schools HR successfully taking responsibility for a number of new schools outside Islington
- Achieved Timewise accreditation



# Democratic Services



- Smooth delivery of the General Election in Islington in May 2015, with our borough being the second in London to declare
- Implementation of Modern.Gov for committee papers
- Managed introduction of individual voter registration



# Fairness

- Continued leadership on the Living Wage e.g. successfully campaigning with Citizens UK and fans for Arsenal and the rest of the Premiership to commit, as a start, to paying the Living Wage to all their directly employed staff
- Planning next steps for the Living Wage campaign in Islington ahead of Living Wage Week in November 2015
- Supporting the work of the London Fairness Commission



# Performance

- Reviewed and refreshed the council's suite of corporate performance indicators – including equality targets – setting new challenging targets for 2015-16 with the Policy and Performance Committee's approval
- Held Monthly Performance Panels (MPPs) 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

