

Branch Newsletter Summer 2020

Croydon UNISON

Message from Yvonne Green, Branch Secretary



Firstly, I hope you are all well as can be expected during what has been a very challenging time one way or another for us as we are all dealing with the **Covid 19 pandemic**. I would like to take the opportunity of paying a tribute to our NHS workers and other front line services for their tremendous work and dedication they have shown during this pandemic.

George Floyd's death while being arrested by police in America in May 2020 was very tragic, resulting in world-wide condemnation. UNISON stand with those peacefully campaigning to end all forms of racism in law enforcement, in the administration of justice and in wider society.

Black Lives Matter.

I would also like to update you on the **current restructure by Croydon Council** which is due to the financial cutbacks required before COVID 19 and from its subsequent fallout.

I know that the conversations over the coming weeks will be difficult for some of you and just to let you know that **Unison is here to support you every step of the way**. If you are impacted by the proposals please contact your local steward or the branch as soon as possible. As you can appreciate this will be a challenging time for the branch and we would ask for your patience and be assured that we will get back to you.

Below is a brief background to the proposals presented to us recently and taken from the presentation by Jo Negrini and ELT (Executive Leadership Team) as well as the HR Business Partners for each division.

In the discussions, we have been informed that Covid-19 has had a significant impact on both the Council's financial position, as well as the financial position of residents and businesses across the borough. The increased expenditure is coupled with reductions in income, creating an unprecedented budget gap in our 2020/21 forecast.

Coivid-19 has had a threefold impact on the Council's financial position:

- Additional demand in a number of services - This has resulted in higher than budgeted spend
- Loss of income - The lockdown has led to a dramatic reduction in income in service areas such as leisure and parking.
- Delay in realising savings

We were told that as at the end of June 2020, the cumulative impact of additional spending and reduced income resulted in **an overspend forecast of £65.4m for 2020/21**.

We were told that urgent action is therefore required to respond to this unprecedented financial challenge and so the Council has established a **Finance Review Panel** 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.

Again we were informed that **direct staffing costs account for 56% of the council's revenue budget** and a headcount reduction is therefore inevitable as they seek to improve their financial position. By acting now will help them to minimise the level at which they need to reduce staffing numbers.

The presentation went on to say that the financial struggles of local authorities have been well documented for more than a decade. With no sign of austerity easing, **councils like Croydon are increasingly having to balance rising demand for services with year-on-year real terms cuts to their grant funding from government.** As a result Croydon has had to deal with funding cuts of 75% (£105m) in the last decade.

We were informed that **the initial forecast in May 2020 was a net £62.7m over budget** in the current year including all Covid19 funding received from the government, and **this has risen in June 2020 to £65.4m.**

The council received direct government funding for Covid19 to date has been £19.9m, with additional monies allocated for specific purposes including support to businesses, funding for care homes, Test, Track and Trace and for the reopening of high streets. Some additional funding was also announced by the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the 2nd July 2020, the detail of which is not yet known.

This forecast overspend is due to three key elements which are directly related to Covid19. They are increased expenditure, reduced income and the inability to deliver budgeted savings in year.

Whilst we were told that most councils are in a similar position, Croydon has a comparatively low level of general and earmarked reserves that could be deployed, in the region of £10m. The 2020/21 budget included a contribution to the general fund reserves of £5m, with further contributions planned in future years. Reference was made to further funding that may materialise from central government towards the Covid19 burden, and the council will we understand continue to lobby on historical underfunding issues, however, they added that these possibilities cannot be relied upon to close the gap. We are not in a position to sit back and wait for funding that may never be forthcoming and so took the decision back in early May that they needed to act now and act fast to ensure that they have a plan for managing the budget.

Jo Negrini said that in response to the scale of the immediate financial challenge, the council recognised the need to act swiftly and decisively and established the Finance Review Panel. At its first meeting on 21 May 2020 the **Croydon Finance Review Panel** considered and endorsed the recommendations of a report setting out a range **of immediate and short term measures** that the council will take to address its 2020/21 forecast overspend. **A reduction of staffing was one of these measures along with reviews of expenditure on the capital programme, our use of agency staff, our ability to generate income and reduce expenditure on supplies and services.**

PROPOSALS

The employer had a couple of informal meetings with the trade union and a formal period of consultation with the recognised trade unions and the workforce on a staffing headcount reduction equating up to a 15% reduction in the revenue staffing budget. The full year effects of this will be £17.05m, with an expected immediate savings contribution in this year (2020/21) of £1.7m.

Department	FTE reduction	Savings proposed (£000)
Children, Family & Education	36.3 fte	4,058
Health, Wellbeing & Adults Place	69.3 fte	4,717
Resources	44.0 fte	5,098
	25.5 fte	3,173
Total	175.1 fte	17,046

The first formal meeting was held on Monday 6th July 2020 a further meeting was held on Thursday 9th July to give our initial response to the document and further meetings will take place as we move along as it is important that we obtain the views and any counter proposals of our members impacted.

The proposal document will be launched next week commencing Monday 13th July 2020.

We hope to have consultation meetings with our members and we are deciding on the best way to hold these meetings and will email you all in due course. Most of these meetings will be conducted remotely and we will, where possible, attend physical meetings as well. ***We are working with IT to set either a webinar/appointed slots by zoom or teams, so you are able to contact us for support during the restructure. Please watch this space for more information.***

In unity and Solidarity, Please keep Safe and Well
Yvonne Green, Branch Secretary Croydon Unison

Important Branch Update

Branch staff are continuing to work from home due to COVID 19 so they are unable to attend meetings face to face but will be able to attend on-line meetings if available.

If you are unable to get through on our branch phone, which is being redirected at present, please leave a message but also send an email to branchoffice@croydonunison.co.uk.

If contacting us by email through this busy period with an enquiry please can you provide your membership number, workplace and job title and a contact telephone number.

If you have any specific concerns about the cutbacks please contact your Line Manager first and then if you still need support please feel free to contact us.

Also please refer to the UNISON web site where there are regular updates about COVID19 and its future implications. <https://www.unison.org.uk/coronavirus-rights-work/>. There is sector specific advice for Education, Healthcare, social care, government and workers and police staff.

My UNISON – Make sure your details are up to date

A number of members have contacted recently saying they have **not received any email communication** only by post. It is important that you register an email address online with MY UNISON. If you have changed address or employer these can also be updated.

<https://www.unison.org.uk/my-unison/>

Pay Update

Pay review – The NJC pay claim for 2020/21 is still currently under review with the Local Government Association. The current offer of 2.75% was sent out to branches for consideration, the Croydon branch recommended its acceptance due to the current financial times. The region has been asked to run a ballot, branches will be written to and the results need to be submitted by the 11th August 2020 The survey will be conducted by GIZMO- watch this space.

Disputes

The Tower Hamlets strike dispute is a result of the council issuing new working contracts by dismissing staff and re-engaging them on lower terms and conditions. It was well attended on Friday 3rd July, when over 450 people attended an on-line virtual meeting. It is the first virtual strike meeting of its kind and there were also some socially distanced picket lines held around London. There are 3 more strikes due to be held on the 15th, 16th and 17th July. We send our solidarity messages to our colleagues at Tower Hamlets.

Conference Updates

The **Local Government** and **National Delegates Conference's** both due to take place in June have been postponed. Also the locally held **Croydon Retired Members re-union and AGM** at Ruskin House has also been put on hold.

Branch office Information

Our new web site is now live. However we still hoping to recruit a volunteer to help us keep it up to date due to the pressure in the Branch Office with general enquiries and other administrative matters. Visit <https://croydon.unison.site>

If you need advice in the workplace please contact your local Representative in the first instance. You can find a list of all our representatives and their contact numbers and their email addresses listed on our local Branch website.

At present branch staff are working from home so please contact us by email if possible and we will endeavour to get back to you as soon as possible. Email branchoffice@croydonunison.co.uk

The Branch office does have a voice mail but these messages are being redirected at present and there may be delays in getting back to you.



Don't get angry - get active!

Have you ever thought about being a steward? We are always looking to welcome new Reps into the branch and this could be a role you might be interested in pursuing.

The Branch will organise full training for you, both from UNISON and the TUC as a Rep you are entitled to time off to train. We would not expect you to carry out any representations or to support your colleagues until you have carried out training.

Our most experienced Stewards and officers are also on hand to support you. Whether you work in the public or private Sector we need you! If you would like to find out more about the role, please email the Branch Office.



Are you receiving?

If you are not receiving emails that our sent out from time to time from UNISON and the branch, please go to <https://www.unison.org.uk/my-unison/> where you can check if you have registered an email.

Proud to be in UNISON

Stay Alert. Control the Virus. Save Lives.

The UNISON Year 2020/21

Please note dates below postponed until further notice due to Covid 19 – watch this space

August 2020

Croydon Retired Members Re-Union and AGM – Ruskin House

October 2020

Retired Member's Conference:
Tues 13th – Wed 14th
Bournemouth

November 2020

Disabled Member's Conference: Sat
2nd – Mon 4th November Brighton

LGBT Conference: Fri 13th – Sun
15th November Brighton

January 2021

Black Members Conference:
To be confirmed

February 2021

Women's Conference:
To be confirmed

Branch AGM:
Ruskin House
To be confirmed

June 2021

Local Government Conference:

National Delegate Conference: