

OUR FIRST 100 DAYS

by Councillor Mike Fisher, leader of Croydon Council

When we came into office in May this year, we made a number of promises to the people of Croydon. We promised that we would create an atmosphere within the Town Hall of openness and transparency and that we would keep our residents informed about the decisions and actions we were taking on their behalf.

In June we published our first Performance Improvement Plan which set out in some detail how we wanted Croydon to develop in the future and the actions we would be taking to deliver this vision. We promised that we would:

- Make Croydon safer**
- Provide a better environment for people to live and work**
- Ensure that future development retained the borough's character and meet local needs**
- Give everybody in Croydon a sense of belonging and restore pride in our town**
- Deliver good 'value for money' services at an affordable council tax.**

As with any new administration, the first 100 days are crucial. My cabinet members and I have spent a great deal of time reviewing decisions taken by the previous administration. We have considered carefully how these might impact on the people of Croydon and, importantly, our vision for its future.

We have taken a number of immediate steps to ensure that the council's financial position is strengthened in the short, medium and long terms. We knew that there would be some tough decisions to be taken but we are proud that these decisions are already improving the lives of local people:

ACHIEVEMENTS

Priority 1 – SAFER STREETS

Safer neighbourhoods

- Launched multi-agency Crime Reduction Joint Action Group.**
- Council evicted a New Addington man from his council home after he had been convicted of drug dealing.**
- Croydon's Cotelands Centre, one of six pupil referral units in the borough, opened at its new location on the site of John Ruskin College.**
- 24 arrests made as a direct result of the Council's CCTV network, including two males arrested for criminal damage and another for armed robbery.**

Safer roads

- Opened four new zebra crossings in Sanderstead to make it safer for school children and local people to cross busy roads, as part of Gresham Primary School's School Travel Plan. The scheme was funded by TfL.
- Introduced a temporary speed restriction backed by speed cameras as an additional safety measure on a busy stretch of road while repairs are carried out on a pedestrian footbridge following a serious road accident.

Stronger deterrents against antisocial behaviour

- Council secured the first five-year Asbo to be imposed on a prolific offender in England and Wales who terrorised the people of New Addington.
- Introduced a street drinking ban in South Norwood to combat alcohol-related yobbish behaviour and aggressive begging. Plans to implement a similar ban in Thornton Heath in progress.
- Best Bar None Awards – of the 17 applicants, 13 were accredited.
- Young people encouraged to take part in a special youth conference to discuss how to spend an extra £775,000 on youth services and projects.
- 200 police, social services and youth offending team members have received training in the use and application of Acceptable Behaviour Agreements.
- 14 Acceptable Behaviour Agreements established with youths caught committing graffiti and/or criminal damage.
- Equipment seized from persistent offenders during Noise Action Week.
- Trading Standards successfully prosecuted under-age sales and firework-storage infringements.

Priority 2 – BETTER ENVIRONMENT

More opportunities for recycling and protecting the environment

- Introduced a pilot scheme to collect household green waste, cardboard and plastics.
- Submitted application for Air Quality Beacon Status.
- Extended the AirText service to voicemail and answerphone as well as email and the original text service.

Cleaner streets

- Introduced a series of measures to stamp out illegal dumping of commercial and industrial waste at New Addington civic amenity site including employing a specialist security contractor to oversee use of the site.
- Successfully prosecuted a DIY retailer for selling spray paint to a 14-year-old boy.

- Responded to 4,025 incidents of graffiti since June 2006.
- Fly-tipping incidents down from 2,527 in April to June 2005 to 1,067 for the same period this year.
- 30 Street Champions attended open day in July.

Enhanced green and open spaces

- Investigated new ways of adapting to hotter, drier summers and water shortages including using plants which are more resilient to dry conditions, evening watering, extensive mulching with the council's own *Croypost*, made from recycled horticultural waste, and exploring the possibility of using a disused well and underground storage area as a reservoir for rainwater.
- Happy Valley in Old Coulsdon received the prestigious Green Flag Award.
- Croydon libraries signed up to the BBC Breathing Places campaign to get one million people involved in nature and improving their local environment.
- Over 1,000 volunteer hours in parks and open spaces have helped refurbish pavilions and improve facilities.

Priority 3 – RETAINING CROYDON'S CHARACTER

Revitalised town and district centres

- Plans to spend some £250,000 on smartening the area around West Croydon station, improving public safety and making it easier for pedestrians, have been announced.
- The new Croydon Plan was adopted by full council on 12 June. It sets out the planning policy framework for the borough.
- Appointed consultants to take the Vision 2020 strategy for the town centre to the next stage.
- Held public consultation sessions for the residents of New Addington to enable them to express their views on proposals for the future redevelopment of Central Parade.
- Secured funding for JobCentre development in New Addington.

Better cultural and leisure provision

- Reviewed proposals for South Norwood leisure centre and announced new £4 million refurbishment proposals.
- More than 33,000 people attended the World Party and 28,000 attended the Mela as part of Croydon's Summer Festival.
- 22 people attended a community language stock selection event in the Clocktower.
- 3,500 people attended Muslim fitness sessions at Thornton Heath Leisure Centre.
- Croydon's summer book trail and Bookstart Book Crawl got under way in July.
- More than 60,000 people took part in sport and physical activities at Croydon's leisure centres and pools.

- The cost of DVD and video rental from Croydon libraries has been reduced to enable more people to have access to learning, knowledge and enjoyment.

Priority 4 – SENSE OF COMMUNITY

More opportunities for children and young people

- Introduce the 'Hear by Right' standard for the involvement of children and young people in the planning and evaluation of services, agree the plan and commence implementation.
- Archbishop Lanfranc Schools joins four other Croydon schools to have achieved a National Association for Able Children in Education Challenge Award (NACE) – only the ninth secondary school in the UK to achieve this status. The other schools are Ashburton Junior, Kingsley Primary, Whitehorse Manor Junior and Haling Manor High. NACE is an education charity that provides advice and training for educating pupils with high abilities while still enabling the whole school to flourish and improve.
- Officially opened Ashburton Learning Village including its new library.
- Fun sporting events organised by neighbourhood wardens' service were held to encourage more young people on housing estates to take part in sporting activities and to promote the neighbourhood warden service.
- Free summer cycling lessons organised by the council will encourage more children to cycle to school safely.
- Family reading groups took part in a celebration of reading at Croydon libraries.
- Croydon Dyslexia Association held its annual summer meeting in the Central Children's library.
- Croydon was placed second in the 29th London Youth games at Crystal Palace National Sports Centre in which more than 20,000 competitors from all 33 London boroughs took part in six weeks of preliminary events.

Better care for older people

- Following a review of the previous administration's proposals to bring forward the closure of Stroud Green and Colby Court, reversed this decision to avoid unnecessary disruption to the lives of elderly residents.
- Awarded the contract for the £38million New4Old PFI scheme to modernise residential and day-care facilities in the borough to Caring4Croydon (subject to satisfactory finalisation of commercial and legal issues).

More support for adults needing care

- Work started on 7 August on the Whitehorse Road Community Resource Base which will provide community opportunities such as education, leisure and employment as well as a community café.

- Former Crosfield staff have been found new employment. More than 20 people have undertaken work experience or voluntary work placements. Three more work placements are due to start and work is continuing with Interserve, the council's facilities management team, to fill available posts. This is part of a three-year £3.5million initiative which offers assistance to disabled people wanting to find work with mainstream employers.
- Croydon's draft Disability Equality Strategy goes out for consultation.
- 100 carers attended free *Carers Pampering Day* at Waterside Centre, South Norwood. Events included therapies such as reflexology, shiatsu, massage, aromatherapy and guided walks.
- Over 160 delegates including service users, carers, voluntary, health and public sector professionals attended the *Promoting Independence* conference on the Adult White Paper 'Our Health, Our Care, Our Say 2006'.

Priority 5 – VALUE FOR MONEY

Sound financial management

- Closed 2005/06 final accounts on time.
- Anti-fraud training programme and survey.
- Audit Advisory Committee.
- Launched Fair Deal for Croydon.
- Signed off strategic partnership with Interserve.
- Signed off new systems for Revenues and Benefits with Northgate.
- £25m of major contracts due to be let by 12 August
- Advertising and sponsorship contract approved.

Stronger performance management

- Awards in Procurement.
- Launched new corporately embedded risk-management framework.
- Sickness performance.
- Reviewed the overall Performance Management Framework and launched Croydon Counts Index.

A streamlined organisation

- Completed second-tier ECSS and Housing restructurings.
- Established process to review recruitment. procedures to ensure only essential posts are advertised and filled.

Focussing on the customer

- Centralised IT function under Service Transformation Division of PCS.
- Launched new Good Food Awards for over 40 businesses attaining excellent standards of food hygiene.
- Increased Touch Tone payments – additional security features and refunds on debit/credit card payments, greater flexibility for Touch Tone payments.
- New services introduced into the call centre include Social Services Careline enquiries, Mayday Care Package checks, hospital referrals

(Social Services), Children's Social Services, Planning Services and Electoral registrations.

- In partnership with the Home Office and other agencies, drafted a Pandemic Flu Plan – now out for consultation.
- Extended cremation services to include Saturday mornings to meet local needs and meet efficiency savings.
- Held three successful bereavement services events – heritage walks, Know your Funeral Rights seminar and a Crematorium Open Day.