



**Finance Director
Duncan Whitfield discusses
successes and opportunities;
past, present and future...**

The Council is leading the management of highly significant land, property and other developments in the heart of London. In themselves, these projects amount to investment packages worth billions of pounds. At the same time we manage critical services turning over more than £1.2bn per year.

Over the past year with support from our strategic partners Morgan Law, we have recruited and appointed almost sixty high calibre candidates not only from London and the South East but also other parts of the country. The success of the campaign using a dedicated website with over 1000 online applications, and widespread off-line searches has exceeded our expectations. We believe that our recruitment exercise had been one of the most intense seen in Local Government in London for many years; and amazingly it was successfully completed in around nine months.

We have been able to recruit at all levels within the finance family and across the Council, from Children's Services to the new Environment and Housing directorate to my own corporate team based in the Town Hall. The impact has been dramatic.

I am confident that we have created a new structure with the skills and enthusiasm that will not only help drive forward Southwark's ambitious agenda, but also contribute to the image and success of Local Government finance as a whole.

The campaign has been especially satisfying as it has run alongside a major programme of organisational change. In February, the Council committed to a revised Medium-Term Financial Strategy. This strategy addresses the demands of the major projects already underway, increasing demands on services particularly in Adults and Social Care and the continuing challenges set by the efficiency programme. The strength of this planning process has allowed Southwark to maintain the 6th lowest Council Tax in London and to approve a ten year capital programme valued at over £1bn covering investment in Leisure, Youth Facilities, Education, Housing Improvement, Cleaner Greener Safer and other priorities.

In July, the Executive selected a preferred development partner for the development of the Elephant and Castle, providing extensive and modern commercial, residential and leisure facilities and bringing new life to a special part of London. Development proposals for the Canada Water site in Rotherhithe are nearing completion and news of this project will emerge shortly. In August, Partnership for Schools agreed the Council's Outline Business Case for Building Schools for the Future, committing government funding of around £200m to the schools building programme in Southwark. The first phase of the redevelopment of the Aylesbury Housing Estate is now underway and partners will be selected in the coming months.

Most exciting for me though was the Council's decision to commit to new office accommodation near London Bridge.

This will deliver a new home for around 2000 staff currently distributed around the borough in a number of aging buildings that can no longer cope effectively with the demands of modern working.

Preparation for the move is in progress and a modernisation programme is being developed to help transform the delivery of services to Southwark residents, businesses and visitors.

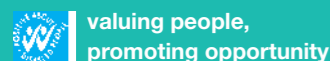
I am delighted to say that many of our new recruits will already be working alongside some of our more experienced team members in supporting these projects. Major changes have been made in the delivery of finance support to strategic projects and procurement, and to both audit and risk to manage the demand for their support. We will continue to strengthen the team as we increasingly look to move into the delivery phase.

Taking breath and reflecting on my two years as Finance Director, I appreciate more than ever how exhilarating it is to be part of a team delivering real change and improvement for our customers. It is crystal clear that the way forward can be so much more certain when you have in-built resilience within your team to manage the day-to-day challenges and to leap the natural hurdles and obstacles that you meet along the way.

After engaging in a successful strategic recruitment partnership, we have proved that in a competitive and demanding marketplace such as the centre of London, Southwark Council can attract and retain real talent who are committed to our vision. With a combination of these new resources, a clear strategic direction and an almost unrivalled level of commitment, I feel sure that we are pushing on towards even more rewarding outcomes in the future.

Southwark Council...

...talent like no other.



Southwark's finance team is undergoing a period of development that mirrors the dramatic change within the Borough itself. After the identification of a large gap in our permanent establishment, we embarked on a recruitment exercise to bolster our skills, experience and knowledge and to prime ourselves to take on some of the most exciting challenges and opportunities in Local Government today.



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