

# Merton Council Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel



Date: 6 September 2016

Time: 7.15 pm

Venue: Committee rooms C, D & E - Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden  
SM4 5DX

## AGENDA

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**This is a public meeting – members of the public are very welcome to attend.  
The meeting room will be open to members of the public from 7.00 p.m.**

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## Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel membership

### Councillors:

Peter McCabe (Chair)  
Brian Lewis-Lavender (Vice-Chair)  
Laxmi Attawar  
Mary Curtin  
Suzanne Grocott  
Sally Kenny  
Abdul Latif  
Marsie Skeete

### Substitute Members:

Stephen Crowe  
Najeeb Latif  
Ian Munn BSc, MRTPI(Rtd)  
Gregory Patrick Udeh

### Co-opted Representatives

Saleem Sheikh (Co-opted member, non-voting)  
Hayley James (Co-opted member, non-voting)

### Note on declarations of interest

Members are advised to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting. If a pecuniary interest is declared they should withdraw from the meeting room during the whole of the consideration of that matter and must not participate in any vote on that matter. If members consider they should not participate because of a non-pecuniary interest which may give rise to a perception of bias, they should declare this, withdraw and not participate in consideration of the item. For further advice please speak with the Assistant Director of Corporate Governance.

### What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny describes the way Merton's scrutiny councillors hold the Council's Executive (the Cabinet) to account to make sure that they take the right decisions for the Borough. Scrutiny panels also carry out reviews of Council services or issues to identify ways the Council can improve or develop new policy to meet the needs of local people. From May 2008, the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and Panels have been restructured and the Panels renamed to reflect the Local Area Agreement strategic themes.

Scrutiny's work falls into four broad areas:

- ⇒ **Call-in:** If three (non-executive) councillors feel that a decision made by the Cabinet is inappropriate they can 'call the decision in' after it has been made to prevent the decision taking immediate effect. They can then interview the Cabinet Member or Council Officers and make recommendations to the decision-maker suggesting improvements.
- ⇒ **Policy Reviews:** The panels carry out detailed, evidence-based assessments of Council services or issues that affect the lives of local people. At the end of the review the panels issue a report setting out their findings and recommendations for improvement and present it to Cabinet and other partner agencies. During the reviews, panels will gather information, evidence and opinions from Council officers, external bodies and organisations and members of the public to help them understand the key issues relating to the review topic.
- ⇒ **One-Off Reviews:** Panels often want to have a quick, one-off review of a topic and will ask Council officers to come and speak to them about a particular service or issue before making recommendations to the Cabinet.
- ⇒ **Scrutiny of Council Documents:** Panels also examine key Council documents, such as the budget, the Business Plan and the Best Value Performance Plan.

Scrutiny panels need the help of local people, partners and community groups to make sure that Merton delivers effective services. If you think there is something that scrutiny should look at, or have views on current reviews being carried out by scrutiny, let us know.

For more information, please contact the Scrutiny Team on 020 8545 3390 or by e-mail on [scrutiny@merton.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@merton.gov.uk). Alternatively, visit [www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny)

## **Public Health response to motion from Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel (28.06.2016) about PH savings on Handyman Subsidy Scheme**

Public Health Merton would like to thank the Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel for their input, to inform the process of making difficult decisions in times of financial constraints on public sector budgets. We have carefully considered the motion put forth as well as other discussion points made on the day.

### **Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Motion**

Councillor Stephen Crowe put forward a motion asking the panel to support the public health budget except for the cuts to the Handyman Service which he suggested could be funded from the 40K savings above target for 2016/17.

That the Director of Public Health provides more detail on alternatives to the handyman service.

### **Summary of response to the motion**

- Public Health Merton accepts the motion and the Handyman Subsidy Pilot is running in 2016/17. The pilot was initially designed to run for 12 months but is extended for a second year to enable a smooth transition. However, it is planned to cease in 17/18.
- It is important to distinguish the pilot from the Handyman Service itself. Public Health funds the subsidy pilot which is attached to the existing Handyman Service provided through the Age UK Merton. The cessation of the Handyman Subsidy Pilot will not affect the overall Handyman Service which will continue to be available to the target group of the pilot.
- Public Health Services in Merton and across the country are undergoing a sea-change moving away from individual interventions to population-based approaches.
- Pilots like the Handyman Subsidy have to be considered in the light of the opportunity costs of the loss of other services and risks to the Public Health budget.

### **Detailed response**

#### **Back ground**

Following the completion of a Falls Prevention Health Needs Assessment (FHNA) in 2014/15 which revealed that a marked number of falls among older Merton residents occurred in the home (this picture is common across the country), Public Health funded a subsidy pilot attached to the Handyman Service which is provided through the Age UK Merton. The pilot subsidised handyman jobs for people aged 65 and over at risk of falling to enable them to mitigate against falls hazards in their homes. This pilot was developed in line with NICE guidelines on general approaches to behaviour change, which recommend building upon the existing skills and resources within a community<sup>1</sup>. The pilot was initially designed to run for 12 months but is extended for a second year and is running through 2016/17.

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<sup>1</sup> Behaviour change: general approaches, NICE guidelines [PH6] Published date: October 2007  
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph6/chapter/3-Recommendations>

In view of the savings pressures on the Public Health Budget, a proposal of savings was made to the Council and approved subsequently by the cabinet. As a first step the savings plan considered all projects and contracts that were due to end in this financial year and budgets for pilots such as the handyman Subsidy that had a natural end-point were incorporated into the savings plan.

### **Current situation**

The Handyman Scheme Subsidy Pilot runs till the end of 2016/17, continuing in this year to ensure that the pilot ending smoothly transitions into the Handyman Service it is attached with. The Age UK Merton Handyman Service has been in existence since 2009 and is not commissioned by Public Health- it is funded through receipts from users who pay for the service. The cessation of the Handyman Subsidy Pilot that was funded by Public Health will not affect the overall Handyman Service which will continue to be available to the target group of the pilot.

One purpose of the pilot was to better understand how to provide a handy man service most effectively. Data are being collected on the types of falls hazards that are being mitigated by the Handyman Subsidy Pilot and the demographic profile of the service users, and the learning will be incorporated into the existing Handyman Service to enable better targeting and provision. We will be working closely with Age UK Merton about this. In the first year of the pilot, 187 jobs for older people at risk of falls have been provided through the subsidy. This is only 12% of the total activity of the Handyman Service.

Public Health Services in Merton and across the country are undergoing a sea-change moving away from individual interventions to population-based approaches. With the reshape and redesign of core public health services in Merton in a more restricted budget, such as Lifestyle Services (Stop Smoking, Health Lifestyle and Weight Management), NHS Health Checks and Substance Misuse Services, and potential financial pressures from the Sexual Health budget, pilots like the Handyman Subsidy have to be considered in the light of the opportunity costs of the loss of other services and risks to the Public Health budget.

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