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## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

22 FEBRUARY 2017

(7.15 pm - 9.05 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Abigail Jones (in the Chair), Daniel Holden, Stan Anderson, David Chung, Russell Makin, John Sargeant, Imran Uddin and John Bowcott

Co-opted Members

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Nick Draper (Cabinet member for Community and Culture), Ross Garrod (Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking), Martin Whelton (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing), John Hill (Head of Public Protection and Development, ENVR), Anthony Hopkins (Head of Library and Heritage Services), Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration), Paul McGarry (FutureMerton Manager), James McGinlay (Head of Sustainable Communities), Paul Walshe (Parking Services Manager) and Annette Wiles (Scrutiny Officer)

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bull (with Councillor Bowcott attending as substitute).

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

Councillor Uddin declared that his office building has benefited from the programme of regeneration in Morden town centre. Councillor Jones declared that she works for National Grid which has an interest in energy companies.

### 3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and an accurate record.

#### Matters arising

1. Clarion (formerly Circle Housing): members were reminded to send to the Scrutiny Officer their experiences with Clarion following its appearance at the Panel earlier in the year. This is to help inform the Panel about how Clarion will feature in next year's work programme. Councillor Makin noted that he was still to receive communication from Simon Gagen, head of reactive repairs; and
2. Budget resolutions: Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration, reported that an alternative is being brought forward to replace the proposed budget saving that would have been achieved through the cessation in consultation letters on building applications. This will result from the recently published housing white paper which proposes an increase in planning fees.

#### 4 UPDATE REPORT: ANPR AND PARKING (INCLUDING PAVEMENT PARKING AND RINGO) (Agenda Item 4)

The item was introduced by John Hill, Assistant Director, Public Protection. It was highlighted that the report provides a general update on parking with a focus on major projects and that whilst the purpose of the council's parking strategy is stated in the report additionally there has been significant focus on improving the customer parking offer. It was noted that the Parking and CCTV team comprises 91 staff, is completely resourced in-house, issues 15,000 resident parking permits a year, takes 4,000 calls per month and is responsible for enforcement at the Wimbledon championships and around all the borough's schools. Over the last year, there has been close to a 25% drop in the number of complaints received and an accompanying improvement in the number of appeals against enforcement orders won.

The Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system has allowed the automation of what had been a resource heavy manual process. Merton is the first London council to introduce ANPR at such a scale (across the entirety of the borough). This has resulted in a 100% increase in the number of enforcement notices issued. However, it hasn't yet been possible to sign-off the system. There is a good relationship with the contractor (Siemens) and work is currently on-going to optimise the operation of each of the 41 installed cameras. It is anticipated that this work will be completed after Easter at which point it will be possible to provide a sign-off.

Ringo, the cashless payment system, and pavement parking were highlighted as the other major parking initiatives currently on-going.

In response to member questions, officers clarified:

- No final payment has yet been made to the contractor and will not be made until the system is working as per contract requirement. This means making sure that the operation of each camera is optimised (the region of interest for each camera is correctly positioned and triggers to capture data for enforcement);
- Whilst the number of enforcement Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued is behind target this is a 100% increase on the number issued during the same period last year. This has been achieved whilst releasing staff who have been able to go back on foot patrol which has achieved a 20% improvement in enforcement of offences;
- Whilst the number of complaints received isn't benchmarked, it was noted that 46 is a very low number for such a big service;
- It is believed that the decline in parking complaints has resulted from ANPR implementation; it provides incontrovertible evidence of contraventions making it difficult to challenge or complain about PCNs;
- No breakdown can be provided by complaint type. It was suggested that these will potentially have arisen from PCNs issued by foot patrols which are also correlated to the 14% loss in appeals;

- ANPR hasn't reached its financial estimates but the objective of the system is enforcement and not income generation. However, the system has already paid for itself;
- It is anticipated the potential for income growth will be limited by the impact ANPR will have on driver behaviour; it is anticipated that the system will result in fewer enforceable offences being committed;
- Cameras are fixed but it is possible in the future for ANPR to link in with police systems. This will be used to identify known vehicle registrations and notify these to the police for action;
- A 'white list' of exempt vehicles has been collated by the council working in partnership with, for example, buses companies and ambulance services. This is to prevent officer time being wasted on reviewing digital capture of exempt vehicles. It was clarified that this largely means not capturing vehicles that are entitled to use bus lanes. However, buses and other vehicles are entitled to use bus lanes are not exempt from box crossing infringements and will be pursued. ANPR cannot capture speeding by exempt vehicles in bus lanes (the cameras capture static images only and not movement). Speeding offences are enforceable by the police;
- Pavement parking is continually under review. The council is currently enforcing this new policy in 300 of a potential 600 roads. Marked parking bays each need a Traffic Management Order and are subject to a survey and consultation with residents. However, some roads are too narrow to enforce the policy without blocking access for emergency vehicles;
- Any building company that parks its vehicles on the pavement causing damage is responsible for reinstating at its cost. This is enforced through building conditions. Any such damage can be reported to the Highways and Maintenance Team.  
**Action:** Paul McGarry, Head of *futureMerton*, will look at the issue reported at Seymour Avenue; and
- Where there is evidence that crossovers are being installed without permission, they should be reported to Traffic and Highways. Councillor Chung's offered officers the chance to join him on a visit of his Longthornton ward to see the impact crossovers installed incorrectly without permission are having (the impact on disabled residents was specifically noted).

## 5 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Agenda Item 5)

The performance monitoring item for Environment and Regeneration was introduced by Chris Lee:

- SP417 % Public Spaces CCTV cameras working: it was noted that the investment made in CCTV is now having a demonstrable public benefit on open spaces in Merton. It is supporting the council to work in partnership with the police to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour;
- SP065 % Household waste recycled and composted: this target is not being met. A downturn in volumes is usual for this time of year as there is a decrease in garden waste recycling. However, this is more significant this year. This was highlighted as an issue with an impact on income;

- Planning indicators: these are good and show a much better picture than at the same point last year despite the volume of planning applications being in excess of the numbers anticipated. It was noted that the housing white paper suggested an increase in planning fees as long as this is used to further fund development control. This also suggests a possible additional 20% increase in planning fees where a local authority is meeting its housing targets.

In response to member questions, it was clarified:

- The housing white paper won't affect the percentage of the building control market retained by the council. It was noted that this is a growing and buoyant market with the amount of Merton's work remaining steady even if the share is decreasing;
- Enforcement of planning permission is largely reactionary and triggered by complaints; and
- It was noted that what appears to be a fall in commercial waste income in December is actually the result of how the billing is phased. Overall, this is well ahead of target and it is anticipated the annual total will exceed the annual target.

## 6 ANNUAL REPORT: LIBRARY AND HERITAGE SERVICE (Agenda Item 6)

Anthony Hopkins, Head of the Library, Heritage and Adult Education Service, introduced the item. The report format has been changed to reflect the seven main objectives set out in the libraries strategy of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It was highlighted that the schools membership scheme is still the only one of its kind in the country. This is contributing to library usage which is the highest in London. The scheme is now being rolled-out to secondary schools.

Performances at the new Wimbledon library arts space are high quality and well attended. A First World War project has just concluded with a digital archive legacy that is making some information available for the first time. There has been an increase in support for health, literacy and digital literacy and improvements have been made to the digital infrastructure in Merton's libraries. A survey of library users has found record levels of satisfaction.

Upcoming work will focus on reducing costs. This will mainly be achieved through a change in the service structure with periods of self service and reduced staffing during times of low usage in library branches.

The new build of a library in Colliers Wood library is on track. Further work is planned with health and learning partners. Income generation is being achieved by opening coffee shops in library facilities and all performance measures are on track.

In response to member questions, it was clarified:

- Performance is very high. It is benchmarked against that of other councils (Merton is out performing others). However, a drop in performance is anticipated given forthcoming changes to the service structure;
- The *Great Expectations* performance at the Wimbledon Library arts space wasn't an income generating activity – it was subsidised by £19K of Arts Council funding.

However, without the additional funding, the council would not have been left exposed because the model will be for the performance organisers to take the risk;

- All the new coffee shop facilities are being let to commercial providers with the council receiving a guaranteed rental income without having to take any of the risk;
- At times of self-service there will always be a security guard on site as a minimum;
- Overall the new art space at Wimbledon library hasn't had an impact on the level of books stocked. When the building was reconfigured, it was possible not to lose space for lending stock. There has been a reduction in reference stock due to changes in the way customers access information and with some information now made available solely online by publishers. Spend on stock is down but this hasn't had a significant impact on loan levels and usage. Stock borrowing is slightly down but use of e-resources is growing;
- Loyalty schemes are part of the summer reading scheme for 4 – 12 year olds which is a competition to encourage reading. Prizes are being built into the secondary school scheme currently being developed. This will encourage young people to read with prizes offered through sponsorship of the scheme; and
- Faith groups and other community groups are part of the on-going outreach of the heritage strategy to widen participation.

## 7 UPDATE REPORT: TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION (Agenda Item 7)

Paul McGarry, head of *futureMerton*, provided a presentation updating members on the town centre regeneration of Wimbledon, Raynes Park, Morden, Mitcham and Colliers Wood.

The presentation highlighted that in:

- Wimbledon there is a focus on planning, alternative options for Crossrail2, consultation with residents through workshops and development of the Wimbledon masterplan;
- Raynes Park work is on-going to understand the impact of Crossrail2, Next@Home is open, approval has been given for the development of the Times Square retail park and support had been provided for the Raynes Park Christmas events;
- Morden the aspiration is to reinvent the suburb, providing a model for regeneration of other outer London towns. Shop front improvements are happening and work is on-going with Transport for London (TfL) to remodel the one way system around the Civic Centre and relocate the bus station. The Baitul Futuh Mosque rebuild has started with this reflecting architectural details from elsewhere in Morden;
- Mitcham the clock tower restoration and market square regeneration are complete. The quality of the build of the new bus lane was also highlighted; and
- Colliers Wood the tower development will complete this summer with Costa and the Co-op arriving shortly after. Images were also shown to demonstrate the quality and impact of the Baltic Close development which reflects the history of the area.

In response to member questions, it was clarified:

- The timings of the Wimbledon masterplan and CrossRail 2 consultations now seem much better aligned;
- There is awareness of difficulties caused by traffic light failures outside South Wimbledon Station. This is dealt with appropriately by the survey work on-going to inform the masterplan activity;
- Reasons for needing to relocate the buses from outside Morden tube station include air quality, health and safety issues caused by buses reversing, loss in economic activity resulting from passengers moving between the tube and the buses without going passed shops and aesthetic considerations; and
- Selection of a development partner for Morden remains on the existing timeline supported by there being existing planning policies and a development pack establishing the development priorities.

#### 8 COMMERCIALISATION TASK GROUP: EXECUTIVE RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN (Agenda Item 8)

Chris Lee thanked the task group for its helpful report. He noted the action plan has responded to all of the recommendations. Councillor Draper, Cabinet Member for Community and Culture, highlighted that he expects scrutiny to ensure the council's large scale events are a commercial success.

In response to a member question, it was clarified that an ESCO will be established when there is energy available to sell. It is thought this will occur as part of the Modern town centre regeneration. Legal advice on setting up an ESCO has already been sought, reflecting that this is regarded as a realistic development opportunity and ensuring the council can move swiftly when it is timely to develop a business case.

#### 9 AIR QUALITY TASK GROUP: UPDATE REPORT (Agenda Item 9)

Councillor Uddin, as chair of the task group, highlighted that it is focused on the implementation of the EU's air quality directive and will review the implementation action plan. Additionally, it will look at what infrastructure needs to be put in place to improve air quality including strategic leadership in South-West London.

#### 10 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 10)

Councillor Martin Whelton noted that he is required to report back to the Panel on the reference it made to him regarding the Belvederes width restriction as are result of the call-in meeting. He gave the Panel his apologies for not having done this sooner and noted that he is still looking at what else might be done including speed restriction signs. He will consult on this and noted that resident groups remain unhappy.