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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

21 MARCH 2018

(7.15 pm - 9.50 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Peter Southgate (in the Chair), Peter McCabe, Hamish Badenoch, Mike Brunt, Brenda Fraser, Abigail Jones, Sally Kenny, Dennis Pearce, Oonagh Moulton and David Williams

Co-opted Member Helen Forbes

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Edith Macauley MBE (Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities)

Lyla Adwan-Kamara, CEO, Merton Centre for Independent Living

Chief Superintendent Peter Laverick (Borough Commander), John Dimmer (Head of Policy, Strategy and Partnership), Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration), Julia Regan (Head of Democracy Services), Neil Thurlow (Community Safety Manager) and Evereth Willis (Equality and Community Cohesion Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from co-opted member Colin Powell.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 CRIME AND POLICING IN MERTON (Agenda Item 4)

Chief Superintendent Peter Laverick said that he was standing in as Borough Commander on behalf of Chief Superintendent Sally Benatar, probably until mid-May. He provided a response to each of the questions set out in section 2.1 of the report:

1. The start date for the new Basic Command Unit will be 23 May
2. Merton will continue to be policed at full strength with dedicated ward officers and PCSOs

3. The council's wish to keep a police station in Wimbledon is being considered at a senior level within the Metropolitan Police. The front counter in Wimbledon will remain open until Mitcham police station has been refurbished.
4. The Basic Command Unit will comprise five functions – emergency response, neighbourhood policing, CID investigation, safeguarding, and headquarters function. Superintendent Guy Collings will be the lead contact for Merton.
5. There are a number of diversionary projects already in place in Merton and these will continue.
6. The police are committed to enforcing the PSPO to control street drinking and drinking in parks. There has been a focus on hotspots in Mitcham town centre.

In response to additional questions about the operational changes, the Borough Commander said that he would work as effectively as he could with the resources that he was given. He stressed that there would be sharing of good practice across the four boroughs in the BCU.

The Borough Commander undertook to:

- contact the leader of the volunteer police cadets to discuss how they could assist with supporting youth clubs.,
- find out where in Wimbledon the British Transport Police are based
- speak to CI Phil Palmer about the operation of the PSPO in Mitcham town centre and provide the Commission with an update

In response to questions about safeguarding, the Borough Commander said that there would be more officers in the safeguarding function, compared to the other four functions, and that this would be a real increase in numbers. The police places huge emphasis on early intervention and on working in partnership. He suggested that the Chair of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel could meet with CI Rob Applegarth, the lead officer on safeguarding. The Borough Commander has not seen the report that there had been a link to Merton in about 20% of the last 30 stabbings so could not comment at this stage but would be interested to see the analysis.

The Borough Commander introduced the crime figures set out in Appendix 1 of the report. He said that the context for the recent 4.1% increase in total notifiable offences in Merton is one of crime reduction since 2011 and a low base compared to other boroughs. He said that overall Merton remained a low crime area, with reductions in the number of the most serious crimes. He offered to provide crime figures per 1,000 population in future.

The Borough Commander made additional points in response to questions:

- engagement with the local community and publicity for policing successes are key to reducing the fear of crime
- he undertook to investigate the number of rape cases and report back to the Commission

- the police are working with schools, parents and local communities to discourage young people from carrying knives

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission RESOLVED to thank Chief Superintendent Peter Laverick and to invite the new Borough Commander to attend in September.

5 HATE CRIME STRATEGY (Agenda Item 5)

Neil Thurlow, Community Safety Manager, introduced the report and drew the Commission's attention to an updated version of the action plan that was laid round at the meeting and will be published alongside the minutes. He highlighted the long lasting impact that hate crime has on victims and the partnership approach that had been taken to developing the hate crime strategy. He stressed that a hate crime would be categorised as such if the victim or another person perceived it to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a personal characteristic.

Lyla Adwan-Kamara, Chief Executive of Merton Centre for Independent Living, informed the Commission that a survey carried out by Merton CIL and partners during Hate Crime Week had found that 50% of respondents across all protected characteristics had experienced hate crime. Specifically for disabled people, 98% of hate crime against disabled people went unreported and many of the victims knew their perpetrator. The main reasons cited in the survey for not reporting were that victims thought it would not make the abuse stop, fear of reprisals and that they wouldn't be believed.

Lyla Adwan-Kamara added that she hoped that future work would include further training to help service providers and community groups to identify hate crime; also to work with the police to look at reported crimes to identify whether there was a hate crime aspect. Chief Superintendent Laverick, the Borough Commander, said that he would be interested in looking at a sample of reported crime and anti-social behaviour to see if hate crime aspects were being missed; as well as work on encouraging other public authorities to report hate crime.

In response to a question, Lyla Adwan-Kamara said that the reduction in the number of disability hate crime reports was much more likely to be due to under-reporting rather than a reduction in hate crime rates.

In response to a question about conviction rates for hate crime, PC Rhys Cullinane, said that of 19 reports in January 2018 only one had resulted in charges being brought. He said that most were withdrawn due to lack of evidence or were withdrawn by the victim. He undertook to provide a more detailed analysis as part of the Commission's next update on the Hate Crime Strategy.

The Commission RESOLVED to continue to support the partnership work on hate crime.

6 EQUALITY AND COMMUNITY COHESION STRATEGY (Agenda Item 6)

The report was introduced by Evereth Willis, Equality and Community Cohesion Officer. She drew the Commission's attention to the significant progress made against wide ranging objectives (set out in paragraph 2.7) plus the high level of commitment that she had received from council officers, thus indicating that the strategy and action plan were being taken seriously.

In response to questions, Evereth Willis said that the action plan on child obesity includes engagement with parents and schools and she undertook to:

- include a percentage change figure to show performance against targets in the next update of the action plan for the Commission
- find out and report back on whether there is a designated "homework zone" in libraries
- find out and report back on what action was being taken to promote community cohesion through the provision of classes to teach English

ACTION: Equality and Community Cohesion Officer

In response to a question, Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration, said that there was no separate budget for this work and that it had been embedded and delivered within existing resources. Equalities objectives had been mainstreamed into service plans and the TOM review included an equalities dimension.

7 COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LOCAL AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (Agenda Item 7)

The Commission discussed the report and AGREED that it would like to use the Select Committee report and recommendations as an opportunity to review how scrutiny operates in Merton, including whether to recommend its replacement with a committee structure.

ACTION: Head of Democracy Services to add this proposal to the list of work programme suggestions to be considered by the Commission at its meeting on 11 July 2018.

The Commission also AGREED that the remit of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel is too large and should be reviewed. ACTION: Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Head of Democracy Services

8 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda Item 8)

RESOLVED: that the Annual Report should be updated to include content from the final Panel and Commission meetings in March 2018 and should then be presented to Council at its meeting on 4 July 2018.

9 PLANNING THE COMMISSION'S 2018/19 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 9)

RESOLVED: that the Commission:

1. Agreed the agenda items for its meeting on 11 July 2018 as set out in paragraph 2.8 of the report
2. Agreed to add youth diversionary projects and support for “carers and cared for” to the list of topic suggestions
3. Agreed that members will email suggestions for agenda items and task group reviews to the Head of Democracy Services
4. Agreed that all councillors should be invited to attend the induction training workshop on scrutiny

10 NOTE OF MEETING OF FINANCIAL MONITORING TASK GROUP 6 MARCH 2018 (Agenda Item 10)

The Commission RESOLVED to note the minute of the task group’s meeting on 6 March 2018 and to thank Councillor Hamish Badenoch for his effective chairing of the task group over the past two years.