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## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 2 NOVEMBER 2020

(7.15 pm - 9.35 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Natasha Irons (in the Chair),  
Councillor Daniel Holden, Councillor Ben Butler,  
Councillor David Dean, Councillor Geraldine Stanford and  
Councillor Owen Pritchard

John Bosley (Assistant Director Public Space Contracts and Commissioning), Phil Howell (Assistant Director for Strategy and Improvement), Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration), Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services) and James McGinlay (Assistant Director for Sustainable Communities)

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

Apologies were received from;

Cllr Anthony Fairclough (Cllr Eloise Bailey as sub)  
Cllr Aidan Mundy (Cllr Nick Draper as sub)

### 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 of the previous meeting were agreed

### 4 BUDGET UPDATE (VERBAL UPDATE) (Agenda Item 4)

The Director of Corporate Services gave a verbal update on the latest budget position.

In response to Panel Member questions, the Director of Corporate Services provided additional details:

- Dedicated Schools Grant has been an issue since 2018/19 and there is still an ongoing debate as to who holds the deficit.
- Significant increase in EHCP's, expanding special schools, increase in education requirements (raised to 25), and placements are expensive. Other Local Authorities are experiencing the same.

### 5 CLARION HOUSING: REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE (Agenda Item 5)

The Panel welcomed Jane Bolton, Mike Robbins and John Ferman to the meeting as representatives of Clarion Housing.

John Ferman gave a progress update and provided a presentation on Clarion's response to the pandemic. Panel Member questions were also answered by the Clarion representatives;

- Repairs are seen as an essential service
- Our Settled Housing teams are reaching out to people that are usually in contact but have been quiet during this time. Our Estate Services team are also checking on residents
- With regards to tenants wishing to seek other quotes in response to Section 20 consultations. The parameters are tight in terms of the qualifications and experience required of the contractor. We have a strict tender process for major works agreements in line with OJEU processes. We obtain the best value quotes and they are regularly scrutinised.
- We embrace and adopt new technology and would like to see it broadening out for digital consultation use.

## 6 HOUSING STRATEGY (PRESENTATION) (Agenda Item 6)

The Assistant Director for Sustainable Communities gave a presentation to the Panel on the plans for a Housing Strategy for Merton.

The Assistant Director for Sustainable Communities and Panel Members discussed the dilemmas surrounding the desire for lower density versus the need for higher density in Merton and the importance of access to amenities and open spaces.

## 7 SUPPORT FOR PRIVATE RENTERS (Agenda Item 7)

The Assistant Director for Strategy and Improvement provided an update on the work to move rough sleepers into long term sustainable accommodation in partnership with the private sector.

In response to questions, it was clarified;

- Proactive action for rogue landlords is based on intelligence alerting us to action required and helping us to ascertain where those properties in breach are located.
- We undertake proactive work to identify HMO's based on intelligence sources, data sets and there are factors involved in terms of crime and disorder.  
Action: The AD agreed to divulge intelligence sources.
- At the present time, further work needs to be carried out in order to introduce landlord licensing but we hope to do this in the future.

## 8 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Agenda Item 8)

The Panel looked at the key areas in the performance monitoring information.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration highlighted some of the KPI's

- Annual and Visitor permits below expected – This could be attributed to Covid or the nudge towards less car use/more sustainable transport.
- Waste volumes - More people working at home has meant less commercial waste / more residential waste

#### 9 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 9)

The work programme was agreed.

Members were reminded about a special scrutiny meeting on the 8 December 2020 for Emissions Based Charging.

#### 10 BUSINESS PLAN 2020-2022 (Agenda Item 10)

Taken with Item 4.