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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

23 FEBRUARY 2021

(7.15 pm - 9.35 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Aidan Mundy (in the Chair),
Councillor Daniel Holden, Councillor Ben Butler,
Councillor David Dean, Councillor Nick Draper,
Councillor Anthony Fairclough, Councillor Geraldine Stanford
and Councillor Dave Ward

John Bosley (Assistant Director Public Space Contracts and
Commissioning), Chris Lee (Director of Environment and
Regeneration), Paul McGarry (FutureMerton Manager) and
James McGinlay (Assistant Director for Sustainable
Communities)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

No apologies were received.

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 as a true and accurate record.

Matters arising:

The Chair invited Steve Peach, Head of Neighbourhood Services at Moat Housing, to update the Panel on the work that Moat are doing to manage the waste in the Pollards Hill Estate.

Moat completed a three-year program of regeneration works at Pollards Hill which included improvements to the buildings and garden areas but whilst the regeneration created substantial improvements, it didn't fully address some of the ongoing issues with the refuse and bulk waste. After analysing the types of waste, Moat merged the grounds maintenance and waste collection contracts for a more coordinated approach, which to a certain degree, has helped to keep Pollards Hill tidier. Use of a neighbourhood response team has also enhanced this work.

Following a question on lessons learned, Steven replied that consulting with the community and utilising Veolia to complete a full assessment to understand the capacity required before we installing the bins were extremely useful.

4 CLARION HOUSING REGENERATION (Agenda Item 4)

Paul Quinn, Director of Regeneration for Clarion Housing, gave a progress update on the regeneration.

Panel Members were encouraged to visit ravensburylive.com. This digital tool allows residents to see their own homes being built out effectively in real time.

We have just appointed a social value regeneration officer to work on developing metrics around the world of circular economy

In terms of feedback to residents, we've learned different ways to engage residents such as;

- Zoom meetings with resident steering groups
- Ran a final planning consultation outside with social distancing and a big mobile cinema screen
- Usage of Ravensburylive.com has been enormous and much higher than we see from traditional consultation events.

5 DESIGN REVIEW PANEL (Agenda Item 5)

The Chair invited Tony Burton, Secretary of Mitcham Cricket Green Community and Heritage to speak on their submission to the Panel.

Our review of how Merton's design review panel operates reveals a series of problems;

- There is a deep-seated culture that views the panel as a closed group of behind-the-scenes advisors that stand separate from normal standards of public scrutiny and engagement
- No agreed terms of reference
- Lack of public information about its members or how they are recruited
- Lack of transparency around how the panel handles its members inevitable conflicts of interest
- Often fails to publish its documents and reports in a timely manner

We recommend an overhaul of the panel to include the appointment of an independent chair and independent secretariat to meet the standards required by the London quality review charter and to provide effective terms of reference and transparency in the recruitment of panel members and the management of their conflicts of interest.

The Head of Future Merton gave a presentation addressing several of the points outlined above.

Following questions from the Panel Members, further clarification was supplied;

- The review will provide a brand new code of conduct for all DRP members and there'll be key changes to the structure and operations of the panel.
- The introduction of virtual meetings has worked well for panel members and applicants. We can schedule meetings much more quickly, we can go through much more detail digitally and we've actually had more meetings during lockdown than we ever had because they're quick to set up.
- The review does include an improved a method of recruitment and a recruitment pack which is along the lines of those produced by the private providers like design south east. Information will be added to the public domain on how people are recruited, what skills you need etc.

Future Merton committed to bringing the review back to scrutiny post consultation.

6 MORDEN TOWN CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT (Agenda Item 6)

The Head of Future Merton presented a short update on the Morden regeneration project. This follows on from updates provided to the financial monitoring task group in December and the cross party member steering group last week.

Parts of the project are commercially sensitive because we are about to embark on the procurement process however members have been briefed on the commercial aspects of it.

7 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Agenda Item 7)

In response to a question on waste patterns and recycling rates;

- The recycling rate in terms of recycling tonnage increased by 1400 tons over this last year from April to December.
- From a Covid perspective in the change in how people use their homes and how they stay within borough over this period, the net impact overall to us is we've seen a 5% increase in residual waste. Comparatively speaking, with other three boroughs that are part of the South London Waste Partnership, we are the lowest in terms of percentage increase of residual waste so we do have more residents who are choosing recycling.
- Recycling levels - just over 40% which is a very good performance and is top quartile across London. It's a big increase from 18 months/2 years ago when we were at 33/34. But we also know that around 60% to 70% of the average waste produced by a household is recyclable so there is still room for improvement
- We will be reviewing our targets for the new financial year.

In response to a question on the high number of planning enforcement cases, the Assistant Director for Sustainable Communities explained that the service is not reaching the targets we would like it to but work is being undertaken to address this. We have developed an action plan that is underpinned by additional resource going into the team. We've got a full-time equivalent of three and we're currently over that in terms of the use of some additional agency staff and that's partly to address the

backlog but it's also to get to a more even baseline position so that we can work within our target. It's an area that needs improvement and there's additional resources that's going into that and a greater scrutiny and oversight of the planning enforcement service.

8 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)

The work programme was agreed.