

Merton Council Overview and Scrutiny Commission



Date: 14 July 2021
Time: 7.15 pm
Venue: Council Chamber, Merton Civic Centre

AGENDA

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| 2 | Declarations of pecuniary interest | |
| 3 | Minutes of the previous meeting | 1 - 4 |
| 4 | Questions to the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive
- priorities and challenges for 2021/22 | |
| 5 | Recovery and Modernisation Programme - Presentation | |
| 6 | Identify questions for the Borough Commander | |
| 7 | Draft Overview and Scrutiny Commission work programme
21/22 | 5 - 12 |

**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.**

For more information about the work of this and other overview and scrutiny panels, please telephone 020 8545 3864 or e-mail scrutiny@merton.gov.uk. Alternatively, visit www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny

Press enquiries: communications@merton.gov.uk or telephone 020 8545 3483 or 4093

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www.merton.gov.uk/council/committee.htm?view=emailer

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Further information can be found [here](#)

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Overview and Scrutiny Commission membership

Councillors:

Peter Southgate (Chair)
Peter McCabe (Vice-Chair)
Ben Butler
Billy Christie
Brenda Fraser
Paul Kohler
Nick McLean
Aidan Mundy
Sally Kenny
Thomas Barlow

Substitute Members:

John Dehaney
Edward Foley
Simon McGrath
David Williams MBE JP
Omar Bush

Co-opted Representatives

Mansoor Ahmad, Parent Governor
Representative - Secondary and Special
Sectors
Roz Cordner, Education Co-optee.

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. For further advice please speak with the Managing Director, South London Legal Partnership.

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 3864 or by e-mail on scrutiny@merton.gov.uk. Alternatively, visit www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny

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Agenda Item 3

All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the committee/panel. To find out the date of the next meeting please check the calendar of events at your local library or online at www.merton.gov.uk/committee.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

28 APRIL 2021

(7.15 pm - 8.50 pm)

PRESENT: Councillor Peter Southgate (in the Chair),
Councillor Peter McCabe, Councillor Brenda Fraser,
Councillor Edward Gretton, Councillor Paul Kohler,
Councillor Nick McLean, Mansoor Ahmad,
Councillor Billy Christie and Councillor David Chung

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors

David Keppler (Head of Revenues and Benefits), Chris Lee
(Director of Environment and Regeneration) and Evereth Willis
(Equalities and Community Cohesion Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Cllr Aidan Mundy (Cllr John Dehaney as sub), Cllr Ben Butler (Cllr David Chung as sub) and Roz Corder (Co-opted Member).

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:

During the item on Universal Credit at the last meeting Councillor McCabe queried the number of 25 Kick Start employees that the Council were looking to take on. Further investigation outside of the meeting revealed that currently there are 46 placement opportunities that have been identified.

4 UNIVERSAL CREDIT (Agenda Item 4)

The Head of Revenues and Benefits presented a report on Universal Credit.

A Commission Member asked whether it is feasible for the data to include information on the typical duration of claims. I.e. x percentage of persons might be on universal credit for a period of less than 12 months or some 36 months plus.

Action: Head of R&B to contact the CAB and job centre to request if data is available, with a view to returning to the Commission in around six months' time.

For future updates on Universal Credit, the Manager of Mitcham Job Centre and a CAB representative will be invited to attend.

5 EQUALITY AND COMMUNITY COHESION STRATEGY - TO FOLLOW (Agenda Item 5)

The Chair welcomed Evereth Willis, Equalities & Community Cohesion Officer, to the meeting of the Commission.

Key points included;

- The great work by the Council and Voluntary Sector at the start of the pandemic in setting up the Community Response Hub.
- We have been chosen as a pilot site for the Workforce Race Equality Standards. This is a national standard that's usually for adults and children social care but we're using the principles corporately across the council.
- Work on the refreshed strategy is underway and will be presented to the Commission prior to Cabinet.

In response to Commission Member questions, the Equalities Lead provided further information;

The additional functionality for name blind recruitment was considered when replacing the HR system and it hasn't been ruled out. However the HR data shows that in terms of shortlisting and longlisting, the Council is reflecting the community it serves. The data on recruitment shows the problem in terms of recruiting BAME staff is at the interview phase (where name blind recruitment would have no impact). Effort is being put to ensure that, as far as possible, particularly for senior positions where the disparity, black members of staff are on the interview panel. CMT are seeking to put this practice into place.

Domestic Violence – The Safer Merton team are looking at how we can further improve our domestic violence arrangements in light of the bill passed.

With regards to step free access at stations;

- Raynes Park - Too difficult for Network Rail to deal with, unless or until Crossrail 2 comes along.
- Motspur Park – Has been added to the Network Rail list
- Haydons Road – Director of E&R will reply outside the meeting
- Wimbledon Park – Has been given planning consent but is contingent on TFL's financial deal.

Asylum Seekers – The Council is in favour of the lift the ban campaign. A report to Cabinet on this matter is expected shortly.

Action: Clarification on NEET figures to be provided. Detail would need to come from Liz Hammond.

Recovery and Modernisation Programme – Director of E&R agreed to share details of the Recovery and Modernisation programme at a future meeting.

The Chair commented on the need for more actions to be measured, which was further endorsed by the Commission.

The Commission RESOLVED to request that a progress report be received in six months' time.

6 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF COUNCILLORS AND SENIOR MANAGERS (Agenda Item 6)

The Commission discussed the report provided.

A Commission Member asked why there is such an imbalance in terms of the gender split between council staff and council managers. The significant majority of our staff are women and yet just slightly more than half the managers are men. Are we simply failing to recruit women managers at the proportion that we are recruiting women staff members?

Do the HR department or the council as a whole have any actual concrete targets around the recruitment of gender and ethnicity?

Action: Scrutiny Officer to follow up with HR.

7 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT - UNAVAILABLE (Agenda Item 7)

This report was unavailable and will be carried over to the first meeting of the next municipal year

8 MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS (Agenda Item 8)

The Chair invited comments on the results of the Member Survey.

Although the number of completed forms returned was low, satisfaction with the scrutiny function appears to remain consistent as in previous years.

Members expressed ideas on how to improve the process, such as seeking responses from a wider range of stakeholders for responses and adding more open ended questions.

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Overview and Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22



This table sets out the draft Overview and Scrutiny Commission's Work Programme for 2021/22 following discussions at the topic workshop on 9 June 2021.

The work programme will be considered at every meeting of the Commission to enable it to respond to issues of concern or to request new pre-decision items ahead of their consideration by Cabinet/Council.

The work programme table shows items on a meeting by meeting basis, identifying the issue under review, the nature of the scrutiny (pre decision, policy development, issue specific, performance monitoring, partnership related) and the intended outcomes.

Scrutiny Support

For further information on the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission please contact: -
Rosie McKeever, Scrutiny Officer
Tel: 020 8545 4035; Email: rosie.mckeever@merton.gov.uk

For more information about overview and scrutiny at LB Merton, please visit www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny

Meeting date: 14 July 2021 (**Deadline for papers: 12pm, 6 July 2021**)

Scrutiny category	Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Holding the executive to account	Questions to the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive - priorities and challenges for 2021/22	Discussion	Cllr Mark Allison, Leader; Hannah Doody, Chief Executive	
Holding the executive to account	Recovery and Modernisation Programme	Presentation	Chris Lee, Director of E&R Frank Dick, Head of Recovery	
Scrutiny of crime and disorder	Identify questions for the Borough Commander	Discussion	Cllr Peter Southgate, Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Commission	Plan line of questioning for 8 September meeting
Performance management	Overview and Scrutiny Commission work programme 21/22	Report	Cllr Peter Southgate, Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Commission	Discuss and approve work programme and re-establishment of the FMTG

Meeting date: 8 September 2021 (*Deadline for papers: 5pm, 30 August 2021*)

Scrutiny category	Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Scrutiny of crime and disorder	BCU Commander – crime and policing in Merton	Report and in-depth discussion	BCU Commander	To hold BCU Commander to account on crime and disorder
Scrutiny of crime and disorder	Safer Merton Update	Report	Kiran Vagarwal, Community Safety Manager	Report to focus on domestic violence and gender based violence
Holding the executive to account	Council's Communications Service	Report or verbal update	Matt Burrows, Interim Head of Customer Experience & Communications	To review communications service; including complaint handling and digital access and inclusion for all
Holding the executive to account	Merton Council as an Employer	Report	Liz Hammond?	Review of Mental Health support for employees
Setting the work programme	Work programme 2021/22	Written report	Rosie McKeever, Scrutiny Officer	To agree the work programme.

Meeting date: 10 November 2021 (***Deadline for papers:*** 5pm, 1 November 2021)

Scrutiny category	Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Holding the executive to account	Business Plan - budget scrutiny (round one)	Report	Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services	To send comments to Cabinet budget meeting 6 December
Holding the executive to account	Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy	Report	Evereth Willis, Equality and Community Cohesion Officer	Progress report
Scrutiny Review	Universal Credit	Report and discussion Invite Mitcham Job Centre and CAB	David Keppler, Head of Revenues & Benefits	
Setting the work programme	Work programme 2021/22	Written report	Rosie McKeever, Scrutiny Officer	To agree the work programme.

Meeting date: 19 January 2022 (**Deadline for papers:** 5pm, 10 January 2022)

Scrutiny category	Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Budget scrutiny	Business Plan Update – budget scrutiny (round two)	Report – common pack for Panels and Commission	Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services	To report to Cabinet (7 Feb) on budget scrutiny round 2
Budget scrutiny	Scrutiny of the Business Plan; comments and recommendations from the overview and scrutiny panels	Report	Cllr Peter Southgate Scrutiny Officer	To send comments and recommendations from the overview and scrutiny panels to Cabinet on 7 Feb
Holding the executive to account	Climate Change?			
Scrutiny of crime and disorder	Identify questions for the Borough Commander	Discussion	Cllr Peter Southgate	Plan line of questioning for meeting on 16 March
Setting the work programme	Work programme 2021/22	Written report	Rosie McKeever, Scrutiny Officer	To agree the work programme.

***Additional* Meeting date: 26 January 2022 (*Deadline for papers: 5pm, 17 January 2022*) HOLD FOR EXTRA BUDGET INFO?**

Scrutiny category	Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Budget scrutiny	Business Plan Update	Report	Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services	To report to Cabinet on any additional savings
Holding the executive to account	Voluntary sector- How can the community and volunteerism that developed in the pandemic be preserved and enhanced?	Report and discussion Invite CE of Merton Connected to speak at meeting	John Dimmer, Head of Policy, Strategy and Partnerships	Consider also how businesses and charities can be encouraged to continue supporting their communities
Setting the work programme	Work programme 2021/22	Written report	Rosie McKeever, Scrutiny Officer	To agree the work programme.

Meeting date: 16 March 2022 (*Deadline for papers: 5pm, 7 March 2022*)

Scrutiny category	Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Scrutiny of crime and disorder	BCU Commander – crime and policing in Merton	Report and in-depth discussion	BCU Commander	To hold BCU Commander to account on crime and disorder
Scrutiny of crime and disorder	Safer Merton Update		Kiran Vagarwal, Community Safety Manager	Report to focus on ASB and designing out crime
Holding the executive to account	Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy 2022-26	Report	Evereth Willis, Equality and Community Cohesion Officer	Comment on the refresh of the next plan, using learning from scrutinising Covid 19 and other items
Performance management	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report	Report	Cllr Peter Southgate	To approve and forward to Council
Performance management	Planning the Commission's 2022/23 work programme	Report	Cllr Peter Southgate	To review 2021/22 and agree priorities for 2022/23

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