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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 1 SEPTEMBER 2022

(7.15 pm - 9.50 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Councillor Stuart Neaverson (in the Chair),
Councillor Daniel Holden, Councillor Caroline Charles, Councillor
Klaar Dresselaers, Councillor Anthony Fairclough,
Councillor Dan Johnston, Councillor Gill Manly,
Councillor Stephen Mercer, Councillor Slawek Szczepanski,
Councillor James Williscroft and Councillor Victoria Wilson

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Cabinet Member for Transport,
Councillor Natasha Irons, Cabinet Member for Local
Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change
Paul McGarry, Head of Future Merton, John Bosley, Assistant
Director of Public Space Contract and Commissioning, , Stella
Akintan, Scrutiny Officer, Dominique Hill, Climate Change Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Braithwaite. Councillor Klaar Dresselaers attended as a substitute.

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillor Martin Whelton and Councillor Slawek Szczepanski attended as a substitute.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The Chair thanked panel members for their support following the untimely loss of his father. He highlighted that the Panel has an important role in addressing climate action in London.

Councillor Stephen Mercer queried the wording on the collection of waste and suggested giving a specific example such as 'community skips' and take out i.e. replacing it with e.g.

RESOLVED

The scrutiny officer to review the video and amend minutes
The rest of the minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record

4 ACTIONS LOG (Agenda Item 4)

A panel member said a few recommendations were not put on the action log. The Chair reported these are waiting for sign off and will appear on the updated log.

5 CABINET MEMBER PRIORITIES - VERBAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

The Cabinet Member for Transport said his priorities include protecting the safety of local residents. Therefore he is working with Transport for London and is hoping to reduce the speed limit on St Helier Avenue following death and serious injury. The Cabinet Member listed his priorities as follows:

Step free access in the following areas:

Tooting Thameslink

Raynes Park

Haydens Road

E-bike hire – A strategy resources is being put in place

More bike hangers

Electrification of buses in Merton

Role out of electric vehicle charging – thanked officers for Merton being awarded funding for the air quality strategy.

A panel member said Lime bikes are in already in Merton. The Head of Future Merton said if bikes are in the borough the authorisation has not been granted and this will be followed up with relevant companies.

A panel member said only injury or death leads to additional speed measures. The Head of Future Merton said speed cameras are police jurisdictions, most accidents are driver error. Resources mean the most dangerous areas are addressed first, schools and junctions are usually first priority.

Resolved

The Chair thanked officers and the Cabinet Member.

6 CLIMATE CHANGE AND NET ZERO PROGRESS (Agenda Item 6)

The Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change gave an overview of the report submitted to Scrutiny which provided an update on climate action in Merton.

A panel member asked for an update on Merton's Climate Delivery Plan for Year 2 and how we are performing against priorities. The Climate Change Officer said the Scrutiny report provides an overview of progress against the key priorities, and noted that with the Cabinet Member, officers are currently reviewing progress to inform the allocation of £2 million climate funding allocated by Cabinet this summer. Officers recognise the need for increased engagement with businesses. The Climate Change Officer also said that recruitment has been challenging this year across the sector

and highlighted that officers are currently recruiting for a number of roles and asked councillors to share job adverts via their networks.

Panel members asked about Merton's Climate Action Group and how the Council is looking to promote and increase participation in the community-led climate projects in Merton. The Cabinet Member noted the importance of engaging with those not already involved in the climate agenda by highlighting the co-benefits of climate action, in part through the Climate Action Group's community-led initiatives such as Merton Garden Streets and the Energy Matters project. Officers are also looking to run a Climate conference in the autumn where the Council hopes to launch an eco-leads network for schools.

The Climate Change Officer highlighted Merton's climate action newsletter, events this summer and autumn to engage with residents, and opportunities to build on community networks developed through the Climate Action Group initiatives to enable greater engagement with and participation from Merton residents. A Climate action engagement strategy is being developed to identify how the Council can reach residents who don't already engage with the Council's communications channels; an online consultation will run this autumn to inform this strategy.

A panel member asked how we are increasing participation and engaging with businesses regarding waste minimisation and disposal from businesses, and what role councillors could play to help with this awareness raising piece. The Cabinet Member agreed that increasing engagement with businesses would need to be a focus moving forward.

Panel members asked about progress with retrofitting. The Climate Change Officer highlighted that a number of projects are already underway. The Climate Change Officer also noted that once Community Retrofit Officers have been recruited, the Council will look to develop a retrofit strategy and energy masterplan for the borough, and increase engagement with residents, landlords, businesses, housing providers and schools. Panel members were encouraged to contact the Climate Change Officer if they wanted to invite representatives from the GLA to attend local events to talk to residents about the Mayor's Warmer Homes programme.

In response to questions on electric vehicle charging, the Head of Future Merton reported there are 250 charging points and bid for further funding, EV charging strategy is being developed and rise in electric vehicles in the borough. Mapping out demand for new chargers.

RESOLVED

The chair thanked officers for their report

7 ACTIVE TRAVEL: CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE (Agenda Item 7)

The Head of Future Merton gave an overview of the report
Luke McCarthy – Merton Transport Group was invited to address the panel. He said this is an opportunity to raise the level of ambition on cycling infrastructure. There is

more to be done to achieve the ambition and remove barriers. Other boroughs have been more successful on obtaining Transport for London funding. There is a lack of ambition and leadership in this area. It is suggested there should be year on year targets to address recent decline in active travel. They would also like timescales to be clearer.

The Head of Future Merton reported the new Administration has set out the ambition and will be working with climate change team. It is recognised that the network is fragmented and more work needs to be done.

The Cabinet Member for Transport said he has met with Luke and recognises his concerns and is working towards the actions which have been set out.

Panel members asked about enforcing the 20 mile per hour speed limit, rental of cycles, Lime bikes being abandoned, the hire of e-scooters, and cycle training. The Head of Future Merton said a pan-London trial on cycling hire has come to an end and it now needs to be decided which companies to invite to Merton.

The Head of Future Merton said the breaking the speed limit of 20 mph is a criminal activity. If residents are concerned about traffic, they should inform the council as traffic calming measures could be considered. It was reported that cycle training was paused during the pandemic and could be reinstated.

A Panel member asked about plans for cycling around Morden as it is currently dangerous. The Head of Future Merton said there is a long-term plan. Morden is not great for cycling and this been a frustration for many years. The Mayor has launched a healthy streets vision with more cycle lanes but this is subject to Transport for London funding.

Councillor Fairclough put forward the following recommendation
'Cabinet looks at resourcing for and prioritise the walking and cycling master plan.'
This was seconded by Councillor Wilson and passed unanimously

Councillor Fairclough put forward a further recommendation
'Recommend to Cabinet that they examine any potential quick wins that are already identified and still relevant.'

This was seconded by Councillor Dresselaers and passed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That the recommendations are forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.

8 SCHOOL STREETS: LESSONS LEARNED REVIEW (Agenda Item 8)

The Head of Future Merton gave an overview of the report,

A panel member asked about fines in relation to school streets. The Head of Future Merton said warnings were issued initially then this moved to fines, The numbers of

financial penalties issued usually reduce over time when people adapt to the new measures. There are parts of the borough the fines have remained consistently high.

A panel member asked if the council could implement some distinguishing features, so residents are aware it is a school street. Also, if restriction times can be earlier and term time dates clearly advertised.

The Head of Future Merton encouraged councillors to put forward suggestions for schools as there may be future opportunities to expand the scheme.

The Cabinet Member for Transport said he will raise this issue at the Head Teachers forum and does not wish to impose measures on schools.

Councillor Neaverson put forward a recommendation

The Council explore the possibility for planters and particular features that make it clear it is a school street.

This was seconded by Daniel Holden and agreed unanimously.

Councillor Manly put forward a recommendation

Cabinet to review the communication of zones including term times in school streets
This was seconded by Councillor Fairclough and agreed unanimously

RESOLVED

That the recommendations are forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.

9 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Agenda Item 9)

The Assistant Director of Public Space Contract and Commissioning gave an overview of the report and progress with performance indicators

A panel member raised concerns about fly tipping which has improved overall but asked what action can be taken about particular hotspots. The Assistant Director said we need to be persistent, as well as focus on community education. Some areas must be looked at on a case-by-case basis as there may be intrinsic issues that need to be addressed.

RESOLVED

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for the report.

10 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 10)

Work programme

The Chair reported that the task group on electric vehicle charging will convene shortly.