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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

6 SEPTEMBER 2023

(7.15 pm - 9.10 pm)

PRESENT: Councillor Edward Foley (in the Chair), Councillor Michael Brunt, Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina, Councillor Laxmi Attawar, Councillor Billy Hayes, Councillor Paul Kohler, Councillor Nick McLean, Councillor Stuart Neaverson, Councillor John Oliver, Councillor Tony Reiss, Mansoor Ahmad, Becky Cruise and Roz Cordner

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Ross Garrod, Councillor Eleanor Stringer, Hannah Doody (Chief Executive) and Calvin McLean (Interim Assistant Director Public Protection), Young Inspector Brandon Alexander.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Cllr Usaama Kaweesa (with Cllr Caroline Charles as substitute) and Co-opted Member, Dr Oona Stannard.

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 a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

4 QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (Agenda Item 4)

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ross Garrod, gave an overview of his priorities for this year including Cost of Living work, the Council Plan, and the Borough of Sport's summer activities.

Next year's focus will be on our house building programme, creating affordable properties, and delivering on the Borough of Sport ambition (Borough of Sport launch is on 24th September at the Canons Leisure Centre).

The Chief Executive, Hannah Doody, updated the Commission that the new Corporate Management Team is now in situ, and introduced John Scarborough, Managing Director for SLLP and Monitoring Officer, to Members.

In response to Commission Members questions;

Members were reassured that community schools in Merton are all ok with regards to RAAC.

As a Local Authority we did undertake an analysis on our properties last year, however the Executive Director for Housing is revisiting this to ensure all still in order. With regards to Housing Stock, we expect Clarion to perform an analysis that housing is safe.

The New Hospitals Programme will also consider this issue.

Budget overspend is a forecast at present and can move. Inflation has had a big impact on our budget, along with cost of utilities and staff awards. We anticipate challenging savings ahead.

ULEZ – It's clear from the work that the Council has done around air quality, that there is a need to improve the quality of the air that we breathe. We stand with our residents and support them by introducing e-bikes, forest bikes, sustainable transport, and active travel, as well as walking and cycling strategy to support all this, and we have provided £1m towards supporting residents with scrappage scheme.

Several conversations have taken place with GLA, Mayor and Deputy Mayor for policing and the Councils desire for both police stations to remain open.

5 BCU COMMANDER - CRIME AND POLICING IN MERTON (Agenda Item 5)

The Borough commander, Detective Chief Superintendent Clair Kelland, gave an update on the recently launched 'New Met for London' and Turnaround Plan - More trust, less crime.

Focusing on community crime fighting and identifying top offenders.

Increased our resources in our Emergency Response teams to improve response times and we are now in the top quarter of the BCU.

Fixing our foundations – Creating additional training to support Detectives and Officers.

Superintendent Luke Mooney - focusing locally on issues relating to Merton.

In response to questions:

- Future of Mitcham and Wimbledon Police stations are a top priority, and it is essential we retain them and invest in them.
- Professional Standards Directorate has been completely overhauled.
- Responding robustly to behaviour that is below the standard set will increase the confidence of our staff to report and speak out about unhealthy culture.
- Review underway into PCSO powers.

With regards to a question on whether there is full complement of staff in Ravensbury ward as there is a current lack of visibility of officers, Superintendent Luke Mooney agreed to arrange a walkaround with Cllr Caroline Charles.

6 SAFER MERTON - ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (Agenda Item 6)

The Chair invited the Interim Assistant Director of Public Protection and the Head of Community Safety to present their report on antisocial behaviour.

Safer Merton rely on a partnership approach to tackle antisocial behaviour, at a local, borough and Pan London level.

In response to questions:

- In terms of Mitcham Town Centre, there is an intensive action plan looking at the broader concerns affecting this area.
- Regular enhanced days of visibility - If you feel your Ward could benefit, please get in touch with the Safer Merton team.
- Merton is consistently one of the safest boroughs in London.

Public Space Protection Order signage update – The Interim Assistant Director of Public Protection reported that unfortunately we were too optimistic that we would have enough performance data to report on this yet, but we can say that no concerns have been raised about the signage at this stage.

PSPO signage requires a six-week cooling off period. Kingdom supporting with enforcement and engagement of the PSPO. There have been 23 engagements during that six-week period. Monitoring will be monthly through board group, and we are happy to provide updates post Locations Board. We will also be monitoring the data in line with other data collected such as fly tipping etc.

7 SCRUTINY MEMBER SURVEY (Agenda Item 7)

The Chair gave an overview of the results.

Main points:

- We need to greatly improve scrutiny member survey returns.
- Members would like to see more expert witnesses at panel meetings.
- Members would like to undertake more site visits (where appropriate).

Members of the Commission are keen to reorganise the scrutiny panels and could set up a cross party working group to look at ideas for this, considering the organisational restructure / alignment with Directors and Cabinet Members. Scrutiny officer to send out meeting dates.

8 WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 (Agenda Item 8)

The work programme was agreed.