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## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 19 SEPTEMBER 2023

(7.15 pm - 9.35 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Stuart Neaverson (in the Chair), Councillor Daniel Holden, Councillor John Braithwaite, Councillor Michael Brunt, Councillor Anthony Fairclough, Councillor Dan Johnston, Councillor Stephen Mercer, Councillor Slawek Szczepanski, Councillor Martin Whelton, Councillor James Williscroft, Councillor Victoria Wilson and Councillor Thomas Barlow

Dan Jones (Executive Director, Environment, Civic Pride & Climate), Paul McGarry (FutureMerton Manager) and Lucy Owen (Executive Director of Housing & Sustainable Development)

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

Apologies were received from Cllr Nick McLean (with Cllr Thomas Barlow as substitute) and Cllr Marcie Skeete (with Cllr Caroline Charles 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)

Panel members confirmed that these were a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

### 4 CABINET MEMBER PRIORITIES (Agenda Item 4)

The Chair invited the Cabinet Members to speak on their current priorities.

#### **Cllr Natasha Irons (Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Greenspaces & Climate)**

- Garth Road on the road - pop up skips are going well.
- Installed more cameras for deterring fly tippers, also publishing stills on next door and uploading wall of shame updates.
- Cannizaro Park awarded green flag status.
- Glyphosate free weed killer trial about to begin in Wandle.
- Next half of paddling pools due to be refurbished.
- Climate action year 4 to be published early 2024.
- Merton garden streets has been very successful.

- Mayors' warmer homes promoted widely.
- Home energy efficiency loan

In response to questions:

- Weeding and mowing reviews will be undertaken flexibly.
- *Action: Ward based heat maps for fly tipping. Cabinet Member to chase.*
- Recognise that green spaces and street trees teams are lean, and we are looking at increasing capacity.
- *Action: Ensure Fix My Street have the correct information for public highways/public right of way so they are no longer treated as private.*
- Feel confident we can start to publicise pop up skips more widely now we have a better understanding of numbers attending, space and tonnage needed.

#### **Cllr Stephen Alambritis (Cabinet Member for Transport)**

- Road safety continues to remain a prime aspect of all the work we do.
- Installing step free access at Motspur Park station is ongoing.
- Supporting strategies are being developed, including an Electric Vehicle Charging strategy to support the increase in EV's across the borough, and a Walking & Cycling Strategy to support active travel.
- More borough wide bike hire schemes.

In response to questions:

- E scooters will only be introduced on a pan-London basis.
- Council ULEZ scrappage scheme –30 to 40 applications approved so far, majority of these are diesel cars.
- Bike sheds – We are looking for safer cycle hangars that are easier to maintain and secure following the vandalism of those in Colliers Wood.  
*Action: Paul McGarry to feedback on how many cycle hangars TfL funding can provide.*
- School Street signage – signs have been updated with school times and term time information is available on the website.

#### **Cllr Andrew Judge (Cabinet Member for Housing & Sustainable Development)**

- Ambition to build 400 new council homes - The Council is entering into contracts to build the first 93 homes now, split over 4 sites.
- Introduction of selective licensing to improve conditions for tenants and their neighbours, plus reductions in ASB and health & safety incidents. HMOS will require planning permission in those 7 wards.

In response to questions:

- Empty Homes scheme update – There are plans for a joint scheme with Wandsworth, but we have not been able to recruit an empty homes officer yet.
- Tenants' Champion role works closely with housing officers, website must be effective with the right forms.

- EPC ratings – dropping of regulations in the private rented sector. We can only encourage landlords to renovate. We could look at our supplementary housing guidance with regards to HMO's but our powers are limited.

The Panel agreed to invite Caroline Cooper-Marbiah to a future meeting.

## 5 MITCHAM TOWN CENTRE MANAGER (Agenda Item 5)

Paul McGarry, Head of Future Merton, introduced the item and the Mitcham Town Centre Manager, Mark Warren.

The Panel were informed about the Mitcham Town Centre Partnership Action Plan which is being coordinated by Safer Merton. Following ongoing concerns and issues raised by residents, the purpose of the plan is to improve police presence and visibility and provide community reassurance.

'Mitcham Matters' public consultation received 691 respondents. The consultation was promoted at the Mitcham Carnival and a consultation launch event was held on the market square to increase engagement. The consultation feedback is currently being analysed but a few key headlines show that respondents would like more nature, more art, food and beverage establishments, cultural spaces and there is a major desire for events. Feedback will be used to design short, medium, and longer-term goals for a 'vision statement'.

The dedicated resource of Market Square Manager is out to procurement and will hopefully be in post by December.

In response to questions:

- Free Health & Wellbeing exercises – in early talks with the Council's sports and leisure team about what this offer would be.
- Under 25's were poorly represented in the consultation responses - We have flagged this issue and want to improve so we are considering a young people's field trip, utilising 'Your Merton' feedback, and speaking to youth engagement teams.
- Toilets – Comments were received in public consultation about need for toilets. However, business owners are reluctant to allow public use of toilets because of behaviour.
- We want to make the process of applying for an event licence easier. Trialling the Council as a licence holder for Mitcham Fair Green to monitor if it allows greater flexibility.
- Car park boot sales – Council needs authority of freeholder. Legal and property team have checked lease.

## 6 ACTION LOG (Agenda Item 6)

Executive Director of Environment, Civic Pride and Climate agreed to capture the Idverde recommendations in the relevant meeting.

Scrutiny Officer to resend action log to all, requesting updates.

## 7 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Agenda Item 7)

The Executive Director of Environment, Civic Pride and Climate highlighted a few key indicators and responded to questions.

- Household waste recycling – current target is realistic, but we can review the level of ambition in the future.
- Directorates and objectives have changed, performance monitoring may need to be realigned.

## 8 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)

The work programme was agreed.

The Chair requested an item on 'Community Energy - Fostering community engagement' be added to the work programme.

*Action: Executive Director of Environment, Civic Pride and Climate to include the subject in the climate action plan meeting.*