

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH ETHNIC MINORITY  
ORGANISATIONS  
30 MARCH 2017

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Edith Macauley (in the Chair),  
Councillor Abdul Latif, Councillor Fidelis Gadzama and  
Councillor Marsie Skeete

Mr Islam, Mr Sheikh, Dr Arumugaraasah, Mr Din, Councillor  
Joan Henry, Jerry Hall, Tansy Honey, Lisa Lancefield, Mr  
Rahman

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 1)

There were no declaration of interests.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mr and Mrs Shah, Revd Mrs Hannah Neale,  
Dr Haque and Coucillor Chirico.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes were agreed.

4 MATTERS ARISING (Agenda Item 4)

There were no matters arising.

5 GREAT WEIGHT DEBATE - LISA LANCEFIELD, ECOLOCAL (Agenda Item  
5)

Ms Lancefield informed the meeting that The Great Weight Debate is taking place  
across London and as part of that, Merton has commissioned Ecolocal to have  
discussions with local residents on the matter of child obesity.

Lisa informed the meeting that Ecolocal will be working in the borough from February  
to August to do awareness raising and get views on child obesity. There is a focus  
on the following groups:

- Black and Minority Ethnic communities

- Residents in the East of the borough
- Parents
- Young people

To date an East Merton focus group has been held with parents in two schools. Ecolocal also attended the Youth Parliament and spoke to years 7 to 9 children at St Marks school to find out more about the food they eat.

The meeting was informed about the 'Hackathon' taking place on 3 June to get ideas from local residents. Ecolocal will also be attending Mitcham Carnival and Morden Family fun day. Lisa encouraged everyone to complete the survey and informed the meeting that Ecolocal will report findings to Public Health in August.

### **Comments /Questions**

**What is a Hackathon?** – It is a community meeting that is being held at St Marks Academy on 3 June.

A Shooter Park has recently opened at Poplar School, perhaps this could be done at other primary schools.

### **Is there a link between poverty and obesity?**

Yes – obesity is more of an issue for poor communities.

### **How can we address the problem of cheap junk food and how do you keep and kids active?**

Lisa replied that junk food is a problem across the UK and consideration should be given to subsidising healthy foods and serving chips with peas. The cost of activities sometimes acts as a barrier to keeping children active. Public Health is looking at free/cheap activities and aiming to improve play equipment in parks.

**Not all the food in Food Banks are healthy, what can we change?** We need fruit and vegetables also.

**Why are we licencing so many fast food outlets?** – Lisa replied that Public Health is having conversations with planning.

What is balance – Lisa replied that having a balanced and nutritious diet is important.

All agreed that that it is important to educate the parents first.

Who is funding Ecolocal to do the research and why is the West being ignored? Public Health is funding the project and available statistic show that there is a need to focus on the East of the borough. However, people in the West are also being spoken to.

6 POLICE UPDATE - CHIEF INSPECTOR PHILLIP PALMER, MERTON POLICE (Agenda Item 6)

Chief Inspector (CI) Palmer updated the meeting on the crime statistics and gave an overview of issues. The Borough Commander Teresa Breem has left after 3 months to take up a National Counter Terrorism role. Steve Wallace is the Acting Borough Commander. Guy Collings will be joining in two months to lead on counter terrorism.

The data shows that total crime has increased over the last 12 months by 2.7%.

CI Palmer informed the meeting that there has been significant change in holding the Police to account. The Mayor's Police and Crime Plan targets are about vulnerability and supporting victims. There are three priorities:

1. Children and Young People's Safety
2. Violence against Women and Young Girls
3. Hate crime and intolerance

Local priorities are:

1. Burglary
2. Theft from scooters and associated crime.

**Performance on MOPAC 7 crime types**

The borough is performing well, most of the increases have been due to increases in theft of scooters and motor vehicles. This is actually a pan-London issue also. CI Palmer reported that the Police are working closely with partners. A target hardening approach is being taken by identifying the areas where the offences were and doing crime prevention. The performance has improved since last year.

Burglary has increased slightly since last year. The Morden area has higher levels. St Helier and Lower Morden have lower burglary rates. Victims are being supported including receiving crime prevention advice.

Hate Crime – Merton has less than 2% of the whole of London. The figures in the borough are low and this may partly be due to under reporting. Post Brexit the Police is working with communities to give them the confidence to report incidents.

Terror offences can affect communities but there is no significant increase since the Westminster incident. There is a visible presence of the Police to give reassurance.

CI Palmer reported that the next 6 months will see big changes. The Police is moving to a Basic Command Unit which will be made up of: Merton, Wandsworth, Kingston and Richmond. From May, there will be 2 ward members serving all the wards – their location is still to be confirmed.

The challenge will be to ensure that a strong local presence continues. The Mayor of London may have to reduce officer numbers due to the need to meet funding targets.

### **Comments/Questions?**

What are your thoughts on the provisions for custody in the merger? (1) The nearest custody suite is in Sutton- how will we cope? How long will it take to get to the suite? (2) Has anything been done to catch the Wimbledon prowler?

CI Palmer replied that Kingston and Wandsworth have custody suites. The changes will not be much different in the future, the nearest suite will be used. For an emergency the Police will still be measured on response time – the targets are not changing.

There have been 60 burglaries in Morden, 30 in Wimbledon and 30 in Mitcham. A small number of people are responsible for a large number of burglaries. This may be due to easy access from the A3 and access roads behind the homes. Plain clothes officers are being used in West Barnes, Merton Park, Lower Morden and St Helier. The Wimbledon Prowler will hopefully be caught soon, lines of enquiry are being pursued.

**Are the Police working with Pizza companies regarding motor bike thefts?** CI Palmer replied that the companies have put trackers on their bikes. However, often young people take them from front gardens late at night.

**What is the policy on pursuing young people on bikes?** Central control have a process to follow and a sensible decision will be taken. Spikes can also be used to puncture the tyres and a helicopter may also be used to monitor what is happening on the ground.

**If a phone is tracked to an estate, how will the Police know which door to knock?** CI Palmer replied that where there is a high density of properties such as Mitcham Eastfields, it may be difficult to find the precise property and in such a case if the Police suspect a particular address, a search warrant will be obtained. The Police will also use intelligence and description to get leads. Find my I-Phone is a good feature but once the battery dies it does not work.

**How will hot spots be assessed in the new merged service?** Concern was expressed that low crime statistics may mean that less resources are needed. Cl Palmer informed the meeting the Policing Plan is to be done based on an assessment of risk. Also sharing issues with Wandsworth will be a good thing. The merger is a way of aligning resources to meet savings targets. Residents should not see a difference in crime , i.e. an increase.

Concern was expressed about crime affecting old people and faith crimes. A request was made for the crime data to also show anti-social behaviour. Cl Palmer agreed to include it in future.

Resolved: That crime data include anti-social behaviour details.

## 7 DRAFT EQUALITY STRATEGY 2017-21 EVERETH WILLIS, MERTON COUNCIL (Agenda Item 7)

Evereth Willis presented details of the revised Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy 2017-21. She informed the meeting that the Council's Community Cohesion Strategy 2012-15 has expired and the Equality Strategy 2013-17 will expire at the end of March 2017. The Equality Act 2010 requires the council to publish equality objectives every four years to demonstrate how it will meet the Public Sector Equality Duty. The new strategy combines equality and community cohesion objectives, reflecting the synergies between the two.

Equality Strategy 2017-2021 sets out what the council will do to tackle discrimination and inequality and promote equal opportunities and community cohesion in Merton.

The Equality Objectives have been developed through discussion with Community Representatives, the Corporate Equality Steering Group, Collective Departmental Management Teams and the Senior Leadership Team. Five of the objectives relate to service provision and are outwardly focused and one of the objectives is internally focused relating to staffing matters.

Outlined below are the six draft equality objectives:

- A. To ensure key plans and strategies narrow the gap between different communities in the borough;
- B. Improve equality of access to services for disadvantaged groups;
- C. Ensure regeneration plans increase the opportunity for all Merton's residents to fulfil their educational, health and economic potential, participate in the renewal of the borough and create a health promoting environment;
- D. Promoting a safe, healthy and cohesive borough where communities get on well together ;

- E. Encourage recruitment from all sections of the community , actively promote staff development and career progression opportunities and embed equalities across the organisation;
- F. Fulfil our statutory duties and ensure protected groups are effectively engaged when we change our services.

The objectives aim to narrow the gap in outcomes between residents in the East and West of the borough. A cross-departmental approach will be needed to deliver some of the commitments such as Hate Crime and Domestic Violence.

The activity in the action plan are closely linked to the council's performance framework as commitments are aligned with departmental service plans. This will ensure the strategy is embedded in service plans across the council. The actions will be reviewed annually and reported on to Overview and Scrutiny Commission, Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) with Ethnic Minorities and Corporate Management Team.

Evereth outlined some of the measures being considered in response to the issues raised at the JCC meeting on 7 December about the low levels of senior BAME staff. These include:

- Analyse the 2016 staff survey and exit surveys to identify if there are any issues based on equalities that the organisation needs to address.
- Re-launch the BAME staff forum.
- Review the marketing strategy for recruitment and retention.
- Analysis has shown that there was a low take up for leadership and management development from BAME staff– consideration will be given to building confidence to enable more people to self-select for these courses.

The strategy was well received but there was some discussion about the issue of the need for more BAME staff in the Senior Leadership Team.

## Questions

### **What grade of staff are we talking about – PO grades?**

Evereth replied that senior grades are above PO6.

**Is a member of staff wanted to go on a course that cost £2000 what is the procedure to follow?** Evereth replied that learning and development is discussed as part of staff appraisals. If there is a business case for the course and it is linked to the

member of staff's development plan that it may be approved providing that sufficient funds are available.

**What can really be done to change things – it is not good enough that there are few ethnic minorities in management roles?**

Evereth replied that the JCC could monitor the HR commitments in the action plan address the current issue of concern.

Concern was expressed that nothing much as changed in terms of employing senior BAME staff and the members want to see the plan put in place to change things.

**8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda Item 8)**

Mr Sheikh expressed concern about membership numbers because the number of people attending meetings is very low. He asked that something be done to improve the numbers.

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