

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 4 July 2019

Wards: All

Subject: Overview and Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2019/20

Lead officer: Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services

Lead member: Cllr Peter Southgate, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Contact officer: Julia Regan: Julia.regan@merton.gov.uk 020 8545 3864

Recommendations:

That members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

- i) Consider the proposed work programme for the 2019/209 municipal year, and agree issues and items for inclusion (see draft in Appendix 1);
 - ii) Discuss and comment on how they wish to draw on external experts this year and how the quality of evidence provided to scrutiny meetings could be improved.
 - iii) Appoint members to the financial monitoring task group, to meet on 17 July, 29 August, 12 November 2019 and 24 February 2020;
 - iv) Consider whether they wish to establish a task group review this year;
 - v) Consider whether they wish to make visits to local sites; and
 - vi) Identify any training and support needs.
-

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to support and advise Members to determine their work programme for the 2019/20 municipal year.
- 1.2 This report sets out the following information to assist Members in this process:
 - a) The principles of effective scrutiny and the criteria against which work programme items should be considered;
 - b) The roles and responsibilities of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission;
 - c) The findings of the consultation programme undertaken with councillors and co-opted members, senior management, voluntary and community sector organisations, partner organisations and Merton residents;
 - d) A summary of discussion by councillors and co-opted members at a topic selection workshop held on 21 May 2019; and
 - e) Support available to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to determine, develop and deliver its 2019/20 work programme.

2. Determining the Overview and Scrutiny Commission Annual Work Programme

- 2.1 Members are required to determine their work programme for the 2019/20 municipal year to give focus and structure to scrutiny activity to ensure that it effectively and efficiently supports and challenges the decision-making processes of the Council, and partner organisations, for the benefit of the people of Merton.
- 2.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission has specific roles relating to budget and business plan scrutiny and to performance monitoring that should automatically be built into their work programmes.
- 2.3 Since 2012/13, the Commission has agreed each year to establish a financial monitoring task group to lead on the scrutiny of financial monitoring information on behalf of the Commission, with the following terms of reference:
- To carry out scrutiny of the Council's financial monitoring information on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission;
 - To advise on other agenda items as requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission;
 - To report minutes of its meetings back to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission;
 - To send via the Commission any recommendations or references to Cabinet, Council or other decision making bodies.
- 2.4 Members who attended the scrutiny topic workshop agreed that they wished to re-establish this task group for the forthcoming municipal year. The Commission is therefore requested to re-establish and appoint members to the group. It is proposed that the task group will meet four times during 2019/20 to enable the financial monitoring information to be examined on a quarterly basis as well as scrutinising a small number of budget areas in-depth and reporting back any recommendations to the Commission. The meetings will be held in public and the agenda and minutes will be published on the Council's website, alongside those of the Commission.
- 2.5 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission may choose to scrutinise a range of issues through a combination of pre-decision scrutiny items, policy development, performance monitoring, information updates and follow up to previous scrutiny work. Any call-in work will be programmed into the provisional call-in dates identified in the corporate calendar as required.
- 2.6 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission has six scheduled meetings over the course of the municipal year, including the scheduled budget meeting (representing a maximum of 18 hours of scrutiny per year – assuming 3 hours per meeting). Members will therefore need to be selective in their choice of items for the work programme.

Principles guiding the development of the scrutiny work programme

- 2.7 The following key principles of effective scrutiny should be considered when the Commission determines its work programme:
- **Be selective** – There is a need to prioritise so that high priority issues are scrutinised given the limited number of scheduled meetings and time available. Members should consider what can realistically and properly be reviewed at each meeting, taking into account the time needed to scrutinise each item and what the session is intended to achieve.

- **Add value with scrutiny** – Items should have the potential to ‘add value’ to the work of the council and its partners. If it is not clear what the intended outcomes or impact of a review will be then Members should consider if there are issues of a higher priority that could be scrutinised instead.
- **Be ambitious** – The Commission should not shy away from carrying out scrutiny of issues that are of local concern, whether or not they are the primary responsibility of the council. The Local Government Act 2000 gave local authorities the power to do anything to promote economic, social and environmental well being of local communities. Subsequent Acts have conferred specific powers to scrutinise health services, crime and disorder issues and to hold partner organisations to account.
- **Be flexible** – Members are reminded that there needs to be a degree of flexibility in their work programme to respond to unforeseen issues/items for consideration/comment during the year and accommodate any developmental or additional work that falls within the remit of this Commission. For example Members may wish to question officers regarding the declining performance of a service or may choose to respond to a Councillor Call for Action request.
- **Think about the timing** – Members should ensure that the scrutiny activity is timely and that, where appropriate, their findings and recommendations inform wider corporate developments or policy development cycles at a time when they can have most impact. Members should seek to avoid duplication of work carried out elsewhere.

Models for carrying out scrutiny work

2.8 There are a number of means by which the Overview and Scrutiny Commission can deliver its work programme. Members should consider which of the following options is most appropriate to undertake each of the items they have selected for inclusion in the work programme:

Item on a scheduled meeting agenda/ hold an extra meeting of the Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Commission can agree to add an item to the agenda for a meeting and call Cabinet Members/ Officers/Partners to the meeting to respond to questioning on the matter ■ A variation of this model could be a one-day seminar-scrutiny of issues that, although important, do not merit setting up a ‘task-and-finish’ group.
Task Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A small group of Members meet outside of the scheduled meetings to gather information on the subject area, visit other local authorities/sites, speak to service users, expert witnesses and/or Officers/Partners. The Task Group can then report back to the Commission with their findings to endorse the submission of their recommendations to Cabinet/Council ■ This is the method usually used to carry out policy reviews
Commission asks for a report then takes a view on action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Commission may need more information before taking a view on whether to carry out a full review so asks for a report – either from the service department or from the Scrutiny Team – to give them more details.

Meeting with service Officer/Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A Member (or small group of Members) has a meeting with service officers/Partners to discuss concerns or raise queries. ■ If the Member is not satisfied with the outcome or believes that the Commission needs to have a more in-depth review of the matter s/he takes it back to the Commission for discussion
Individual Members doing some initial research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A member with a specific concern carries out some research to gain more information on the matter and then brings his/her findings to the attention of the Commission if s/he still has concerns.

2.9 Note that, in order to keep agendas to a manageable size, and to focus on items to which the Commission can make a direct contribution, the Commission may choose to take some “information only” items outside of Commission meetings, for example by email.

Support available for scrutiny activity

2.10 The Overview and Scrutiny function has dedicated scrutiny support from the Scrutiny Team to:

- Work with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Commission to manage the work programme and coordinate the agenda, including advising officers and partner organisations on information required and guidance for witnesses submitting evidence to a scrutiny review;
- Provide support for scrutiny members through briefing papers, background material, training and development seminars, etc;
- Facilitate and manage the work of the task and finish groups, including research, arranging site visits, inviting and briefing witnesses and drafting review reports on behalf on the Chair; and
- Promote the scrutiny function across the organisation and externally.

2.11 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission will need to assess how they can best utilise the available support from the Scrutiny Team to deliver their work programme for the coming year.

2.12 The Commission is also invited to comment upon any briefing, training and support that is needed to enable Members to undertake their work programme. Members may also wish to undertake visits to local services in order to familiarise themselves with these. Such visits should be made with the knowledge of the Chair and will be organised by the Scrutiny Team.

2.13 This year, in response to the results of the scrutiny annual survey, the Scrutiny Team will also explore with chairs and vice chairs the use of external experts and the quality of evidence provided to Panels to understand what else might be done to meet members’ needs. In order to progress this, it is recommended that the Panel spend some time discussing this as part of the development of the work programme if these issues have not already been addressed at the topic workshop.

3. Selecting items for the Scrutiny Work Programme

3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission sets its own agenda within the scope of its terms of reference. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission undertakes a coordinating role to ensure that any gaps or overlap in the scrutiny work programme are dealt with in a joined-up way.

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission has the following remit: -

- Formal crime & disorder scrutiny
- Safer communities: the role of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, safer neighbourhood teams, anti-social behaviour, drugs & alcohol treatment, domestic violence and road safety
- Stronger communities: community leadership, voluntary & community sector, public involvement & consultation; community cohesion, service delivery diversity & equalities
- Cross-cutting & strategic matters, inc. scrutiny of the budget & business plan and the approach to partnership arrangements
- Corporate capacity issues – communications, legal, human resources, IT, customer service
- The performance monitoring framework
- Financial monitoring
- Responsibility for keeping scrutiny under review

3.1 The Scrutiny Team has undertaken a campaign to gather suggestions for issues to scrutinise either as agenda items or task group reviews. Suggestions have been received from members of the public, councillors and partner organisations. Other issues of public concern have been identified through the Annual Residents Survey. Issues that have been raised repeatedly at Community Forums have also been included. The Scrutiny Team has consulted departmental management teams in order to identify forthcoming issues on which the Commission could contribute to the policymaking process.

3.2 A description of all the suggestions received is set out in Appendix 2.

3.3 The councillors who attended a “topic selection” workshop on 21 May 2019 discussed these suggestions. Suggestions were prioritised at the workshop using the criteria listed in Appendix 3. In particular, participants sought to identify issues that related to the Council’s strategic priorities or where there was underperformance; issues of public interest or concern and issues where scrutiny could make a difference.

3.4 A note of the workshop discussion relating to the remit of the Commission is set out in Appendix 4.

3.5 Appendix 1 contains a draft work programme that has been drawn up, taking the workshop discussion into account, for the consideration of the Commission. The Commission is requested to discuss this draft and agree any changes that it wishes to make.

4. Task group reviews

4.1 The Commission is invited to select an issue for in-depth scrutiny and establish a task group in order to carry out the review. The task group will subsequently meet to scope the review and draft the terms of reference that will be reported back to the next Commission meeting for approval.

4.2 Attendees at the May topic workshop shortlisted two potential issues for a task group review:

Tackling modern slavery

4.3 Members had a wide ranging discussion of this hidden crime and what part the council could play in taking action to tackle it. Members accepted that any work on this would need to focus on something tangible and specific.

4.4 Members agreed that the task group review work should start by receiving data and information on what is already being done and then to focus on the council's supply chains and make recommendations to ensure that these are kept clear of modern slavery.

4.5 The task group could draw on guidance for councils that was published by the Local Government Association in conjunction with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and find out what action the council has taken in response.

4.6 Proposed terms of reference for the task group:

- To investigate what action has been taken by Merton Council to identify and eliminate modern slavery in its supply chains;
- To review the operation of the council's regulatory services (Environmental Health, Planning and Licensing) to establish where they might encounter modern day slavery, what training they have to detect it and what resources and powers they have to deal with it;
- To make recommendations on future action, including education of staff, to ensure that the council's supply chains are kept free of modern slavery and that the council's regulatory functions are equipped to deal with this issue.

Commercialisation, revenue generation and income maximisation

4.7 Attendees at the topic workshop noted the previous work that had been done by the commercialisation task group and the financial monitoring task group. They agreed that any new task group work should start by receiving information on what is already being done within the council and what the options are for the future. The task group could look at best practice elsewhere in terms of innovative and creative ways of raising revenue.

4.8 Proposed terms of reference for the task group:

- To research new and innovative approaches to commercialisation, revenue generation and income maximisation being developed by other councils;
- To discuss these with the corporate management team and take a view on whether there are aspects that Merton Council can learn from and/or seek to undertake.

5. Public involvement

- 5.1 Scrutiny provides extensive opportunities for community involvement and democratic accountability. Engagement with service users and with the general public can help to improve the quality, legitimacy and long-term viability of recommendations made by the Commission.
- 5.2 Service users and the public bring different perspectives, experiences and solutions to scrutiny, particularly if “seldom heard” groups such as young people, disabled people, people from black and minority ethnic communities and people from lesbian gay bisexual and transgender communities are included.
- 5.3 This engagement will help the Commission to understand the service user’s perspective on individual services and on co-ordination between services. Views can be heard directly through written or oral evidence or heard indirectly through making use of existing sources of information, for example from surveys. From time to time the Commission/Task Group may wish to carry out engagement activities of its own, by holding discussion groups or sending questionnaires on particular issues of interest.
- 5.4 Much can be learnt from best practice already developed in Merton and elsewhere. The Scrutiny Team will be able to help the Commission to identify the range of stakeholders from which it may wish to seek views and the best way to engage with particular groups within the community.

6. Training and visits

Training

- 6.1 The annual member survey 2019 asked what scrutiny related training and development opportunities councillors and co-opted members would like to have provided in the coming year.
- 6.2 A majority of respondents agreed that there was a need for training and development opportunities in each of the core areas specified in the questionnaire. These are listed below, together with proposals to address the training need:
- budget scrutiny

The Director of Corporate Services will provide a briefing prior to the November and January rounds of budget scrutiny meetings. Dates are 7 January 2020 and a late October date to be confirmed.
 - how to monitor performance and interpret data

A training session will be designed in consultation with the scrutiny chairs.
 - questioning skills

A training session with an external provider was held in October 2018. The Head of Democracy Services will write to members to find out what their current needs are and will report back to the Commission with proposals to address those needs.
 - chairing and agenda management

A training session with an external provider will be held on 2 July 2019.

Visits

- 6.3 Commission members are asked to identify any visits that they would find helpful to provide a context for scrutinising service delivery or policy changes.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

7.1 A number of issues highlighted in this report recommend that Commission members take into account certain considerations when setting their work programme. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission is free to determine its work programme as it sees fit. Members may therefore choose to identify a work programme that does not take into account these considerations. This is not advised as ignoring the issues raised would either conflict with good practice and/or principles endorsed in the Review of Scrutiny, or could mean that adequate support would not be available to carry out the work identified for the work programme.

7.2 A range of suggestions from the public, partner organisations, officers and Members for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme are set out in the appendices, together with a suggested approach to determining which to include in the work programme. Members may choose to respond differently. However, in doing so, Members should be clear about expected outcomes, how realistic expectations are and the impact of their decision on their wider work programme and support time. Members are also free to incorporate into their work programme any other issues they think should be subject to scrutiny over the course of the year, with the same considerations in mind.

8. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

8.1 To assist Members to identify priorities for inclusion in the Commission's work programme, the Scrutiny Team has undertaken a campaign to gather suggestions for possible scrutiny reviews from a number of sources:

- a. Letter to partner organisations and to a range of local resident groups, voluntary and community organisations, including those involved in the Inter-Faith Forum and members of the Lesbian Gay and Transgender Forum;
- b. Councillors have put forward suggestions by raising issues in scrutiny meetings and via the Overview and Scrutiny Member Survey; and
- c. Officers have been consulted via discussion at departmental management team meetings and through an item in the Staff Bulletin.

9. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none specific to this report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the financial, resource and property issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific financial, resource and property implications.

10. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Overview and scrutiny bodies operate within the provisions set out in the Local Government Act 2000, the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

10.2 Scrutiny work involves consideration of the legal and statutory issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific legal and statutory implications.

- 11. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**
- 11.1 It is a fundamental aim of the scrutiny process to ensure that there is full and equal access to the democratic process through public involvement and engagement. The reviews will involve work to consult local residents, community and voluntary sector groups, businesses, hard to reach groups, partner organisations etc and the views gathered will be fed into the review.
- 11.2 Scrutiny work involves consideration of the human rights, equalities and community cohesion issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific human rights, equalities and community cohesion implications.
- 12. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**
- 12.1 In line with the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Police and Justice Act 2006, all Council departments must have regard to the impact of services on crime, including anti-social behaviour and drugs. Scrutiny review reports will therefore highlight any implications arising from the reviews relating to crime and disorder as necessary.
- 13. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**
- 13.1 There are none specific to this report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the risk management and health and safety issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific risk management and health and safety implications.
- 14. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**
- 14.1 Appendix 1 – Overview and Scrutiny Commission draft work programme 2019/20
- 14.2 Appendix 2 – Summary of topics relating to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission’s remit suggested for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme
- 14.3 Appendix 3 – Selecting a Scrutiny Topic – criteria used at the workshop on 21 May 2019
- 14.4 Appendix 4 – Notes from discussion of topics relating to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, Scrutiny Topic Selection Workshop on 21 May 2019
- 15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 15.1 None

Draft work programme 2019/20**Meeting date – 4 July 2019**

Item/Issue
Leader and Chief Executive – vision, key priorities & challenges for 2019/20
Merton Partnership annual report
Analysis of annual members' scrutiny survey
Road safety around schools – scrutiny task group report
Discussion of questions for the Borough Commander

Meeting date – 11 September 2019

Borough Commander – crime and policing in Merton
Safer Merton – update report – ASB, knife crime, street drinking
Review of the overview and scrutiny function – CfPS to present results
Annual residents survey – results relating to Safer and Stronger strategic themes
Road safety around schools – Cabinet initial response to task group report

Meeting date – 13 November 2019

Demographic profile of councillors and senior council officers
Shared services – updated list of services
Universal Credit – position statement
Budget scrutiny round 1
Review of the overview and scrutiny function – action plan

Meeting date 22 January 2020 – scrutiny of the budget

(and identification of questions for Veolia)

Meeting date 18 March 2019

Veolia contract – street cleaning – case study approach to contract management
Accessibility of services on the council's website
Restorative Justice
Discussion of questions for the Borough Commander

Meeting date 2 April 2020

Borough Commander – crime and policing in Merton
Safer Merton – update report – domestic violence
Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy – action plan
Road safety around schools – updated Cabinet action plan
Overview and scrutiny annual report and member survey results

Description of topic suggestions received in relation to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission 2019/20

The following topics were suggested by residents, local groups, councillors and officers, for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, for their 2019/20 work programme.

POLICING IN MERTON

Who suggested this issue?

In previous years the Commission has received regular updates on crime and policing from the Borough Commander as a standing item. This has included the latest crime figures for Merton and comparative data for neighbouring boroughs.

A resident has raised concerns about blatant drug dealing in their area and suggested that the Commission should look at street drug dealing.

Summary of the issue:

Merton is part of the south west London Basic Command Unit (BCU), alongside Kingston, Richmond and Wandsworth. This is the only four borough BCU in London.

In 2018/19 the BCU Commander attended two meetings of the Commission to provide the latest crime data and answer questions on a wide range of issues. She was asked detailed questions on levels of crime, how BCU police resources are deployed in Merton and the future of Wimbledon and Mitcham police stations.

What could Scrutiny do?

At its meeting on 24 April 2019 the Commission agreed that it should continue to question the BCU Commander on:

- the impact of the four borough merger on policing levels
- an update on police estate matters following an internal review of the option of reducing to one shared parade ground for Merton and Wandsworth
- an update on MOPAC decision making in relation to the location of the Merton front office police station.

It is recommended that the Commission should continue to invite the BCU Borough Commander to attend twice yearly. The issue of street drug dealing that was raised by a local resident should be included in the questions put to her and the resident who made the suggestion should be invited to attend and contribute.

SAFER MERTON

Who suggested this issue?

The Community Safety Manager has suggested that the Commission receive an update on the work of Safer Merton.

Through the annual member survey, a councillor has suggested street drinking as a topic for scrutiny.

Summary of the issue

Safer Merton is responsible for developing and implementing strategies to reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse in Merton. The team works in partnership with the police, probation service, health agencies and other organisations as part of the Safer Merton partnership, aiming to reduce crime, fear of crime and to improve the quality of life in Merton.

In 2018/19 the Safer Merton Manager reported twice on work being undertaken by Safer Merton and the Community Safety Partnership, including detailed information on the CCTV service, anti social behaviour, victim support and hate crime. A report was also received on how the police and the council respond to Traveller encampments.

The Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) that is currently in place to prohibit street drinking will come to an end in October 2020. The council will consult with residents to ascertain if there are still concerns around street drinking, if so where these concerns manifest and also whether the community believe that a PSPO is a useful tool to enforce against problematic street drinking behaviour and whether there are other issues which residents would like to see enforced within a PSPO.

This consultation, together with a partner consultation and analysis of evidence collated about the impact of the PSPO, will be used as a basis for recommendations on the future of PSPOs in Merton.

What could scrutiny do?

It is recommended that the Commission receive two updates on the work of Safer Merton during 2019/20. As this work relies on partners, including the police, it is recommended that these reports should coincide with the next meeting attended by the BCU Commander.

The Community Safety Manager has suggested that the first update (in September) could be used as a means of seeking the Commission's views on the public space protection order, alongside the public and partner consultation on this issue, before making a decision on any future action. This would address the wider matter raised through the topic suggestion process on how street drinking is dealt with.

The September report could also include an update on work on anti-social behaviour and a report back from the knife crime event held on 18 May.

The second report (in March) could provide an update on the work of the domestic violence service that will go live with new providers on 1 July. The providers could also be invited to attend.

Information on restorative justice and trafficking could be included in one of these reports if these are not the subject of separate reports to the Commission (see below).

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Who suggested this issue?

The Liberal Democrat Group have suggested that Commission could scrutinise restorative justice – to identify how the council and its partners can strengthen restorative justice in Merton giving victims of crime the chance to meet perpetrators and cut both fear of crime & reoffending.

Summary of the issue

Restorative Justice is an approach used alongside criminal justice to help victims gain a sense of closure, help offenders recognise the impact of their crime and reduce the chance they will re-offend.

Restorative justice gives victims the chance to meet or communicate with their offenders to explain the real impact of the crime – it empowers victims by giving them a voice. It also holds offenders to account for what they have done and helps them to take responsibility and make amends.

Government research (cited by the Restorative Justice Council) demonstrates that restorative justice provides an 85% victim satisfaction rate, and a 14% reduction in the frequency of reoffending.

In London the Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime leads on restorative justice for adults through the MOPAC Victims Board. In Merton the lead for this is within Safer Merton. The level for uptake of restorative justice has been low across London.

The council's Youth Justice Service is responsible for restorative justice when the perpetrator is a young person. The service attempts to contact all victims of young people subject to out of court disposals, Referral Orders, Youth Rehabilitation Orders and Custodial sentences. Those harmed are given information about the sentence or out of court disposal imposed on the young person and restorative justice options are explained and discussed. Information is also given on other services, which may be of assistance such as Victim Support or the Jigsaw Project, which provides support for young victims.

The Youth Justice Service also provides training to a wide range of professionals, including police officers, on restorative justice techniques. This work has been funded by MOPAC.

What could scrutiny do?

It is recommended that the Commission receive a report setting out work being done by the council and its partners to promote and strengthen the operation of restorative justice in Merton. This report would include information from Safer Merton and from the Youth Justice Service. Victim Support and the Jigsaw Project could be invited to attend to join in the discussion.

MODERN SLAVERY

Who suggested this issue?

The Liberal Democrat Group have suggested that Commission could scrutinise modern slavery – scrutiny could assist with work to eliminate all forms of modern slavery in Merton by reviewing council policies and procedures, and considering best practice and a joined-up approach to the issue given the different services that may come into contact with potential modern slavery.

Summary of the issue

The Home Office estimates that up to 13,000 people in the UK are living in slavery.

The Local Government Association produced a guide for councils in 2018 which has defined modern slavery as follows:

Modern slavery is an umbrella term, encompassing human trafficking, slavery, servitude and forced labour. Someone is in slavery if they are:

- forced to work through mental or physical threat
- owned or controlled by an 'employer', usually through mental or physical abuse or the threat of abuse
- dehumanised, treated as a commodity or bought and sold as 'property'
- physically constrained or have restrictions placed on their freedom.

There are a number of different types of exploitation that victims of modern slavery may be subjected to, and victims may experience more than one type of exploitation at the same time. The most common forms of exploitation are:

- Sexual exploitation; Labour exploitation; Forced criminality; Organ harvesting; Domestic servitude

Councillors and council officers, through their day-to-day activities, may encounter victims of modern slavery and uncover activities linked to modern slavery crime. For example, officers may come across potential victims living in substandard accommodation when inspecting houses in multiple occupancy (HMOs), councillors may hear concerns from residents about particular businesses or houses in their area, and children's safeguarding services may come across children who have been trafficked or exploited.

Human trafficking is a hidden crime in many ways so any figures will be an under-representation of the extent of the issue. Safer Merton has reported that there have been at least three cases of adult trafficking in the last 12 months in Merton.

What could scrutiny do?

This is a sensitive, complex and cross-cutting issue that impacts on all of the council's departments. It is therefore suggested that this would be a suitable issue for examination by a scrutiny task group.

Any work on this issue would need to be supported by the three strategic lead officers who work on human trafficking – the victims champion in Safer Merton, the Head of Safeguarding in Adult Social Care and the designated safeguarding lead with Merton CCG (NHS). Children's safeguarding services would also need to be involved as would the Salvation Army as they work with Safer Merton to support victims of trafficking. Background information would include

evidence given to the Home Affairs Select Committee on Modern Slavery and a research report by Hestia, as well as information from Merton Against Trafficking.

This is potentially a very wide area for scrutiny so if members wish to carry out a task group review of modern slavery, it would be helpful to have a steer on what the focus of attention should be so that draft terms of reference could be drawn up for consideration by the Commission at its meeting on 4 July.

JOINT SCRUTINY WITH YOUTH PARLIAMENT

What could scrutiny do?

Following the success of the joint scrutiny exercise on the safety of young people in Merton, held during Local Democracy Week 2018, the Commission agreed at its meeting on 24 April that it would hold a similar event during LDW in 2019.

It is recommended that the Youth Parliament should be invited to select a topic for the exercise.

MONITORING THE EQUALITY AND COMMUNITY COHESION STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2017-21

Who suggested this issue?

For many years this has been a standing item whereby the Commission receives an annual update on the Equality and Community Strategy Action Plan, which sets out the actions the council will take to meet the equality priorities both corporately and departmentally. Each time the strategy has been reviewed, the Commission has received a draft so that its comments and recommendations could be included in the final strategy.

Summary of the issue:

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires the local authority, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a “protected characteristic” and those who do not. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 also requires the council to publish equality objectives every four years to demonstrate how it will meet the PSED. The equality strategy outlines the council’s equality objectives and is delivered through an action plan setting out actions to address the six themes within the strategy.

What could scrutiny do?

It is recommended that the Commission should receive a progress report so that it can scrutinise the implementation of the action plan at its meeting in March 2020.

BREXIT UPDATE

Who suggested this issue?

The Corporate Services Departmental Management Team have suggested that the Commission could receive an update report setting out progress made by the corporate working group that has been looking at the implications of Brexit for the council and local residents and directing action.

Summary of the issue

The Commission received an initial report on this issue in November 2018 detailing how the council was preparing for Brexit, including contingency plans in the event of a 'no deal', and how the council could support EU residents to secure their rights around settled status. The Commission agreed with Cabinet's proposed approach for how the council can support EU residents, particularly those in hard to reach and vulnerable groups, with information and support to secure their rights around settled status. The Commission requested that councillors be provided with information so they could encourage EU residents within their wards to apply for settled status.

What could scrutiny do?

The Commission could receive an update report and invite local voluntary sector groups who have been engaged in helping EU citizens to gain settled status to attend to share information and join in the discussion. This would include Merton and Lambeth Citizens Advice Bureau, Commonsense Trust, South London Law Centre and the Association of Polish Families.

INVOLVING MUSLIM WOMEN IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Who suggested this issue?

The Vice Chair of the Muslim Women of Merton has suggested that the Commission could examine the representation of Muslim women in local politics and senior leadership across the Council and public sector.

Summary of the issue

Information provided by the Vice Chair of the Muslim Women of Merton:

In 2017, Citizens UK published a report called 'Missing Muslims' based on a national commission investigating the under-engagement of Muslims in public life. The commission, chaired by the Rt Hon Dominic Grieve QC MP, took evidence from faith and non faith leaders/groups, councillors and politicians across the United Kingdom. It found that discrimination, and fears of being discriminated against actively discourage participation and contribute to disillusionment with the political process amongst young British Muslims.

The report recommended that the public appointments' unit, Cabinet Office develop a comprehensive online platform that explains the civic engagement opportunities available at a local level as well as nationally. Information should be provided on standing as a school governor, to how to be part of a Safer Neighbourhood team, serving as a magistrate, being elected as a councillor (with a breakdown and explanation of the party system).

However this recommendation has yet to impact Muslim communities, especially women in Merton.

In 2018, Councillor Hina Bokhari was elected as the first Muslim female councillor in Merton. Given that there are 60 councillors in Merton and a total Muslim population of 10.4% (annual population survey data) it is particularly surprising in 2018 that this should be a first.

Muslim Women of Merton (MWM) are concerned by the under-representation of Muslim women in local politics and senior leadership. Not only do Muslim women appear to be under-represented in post as councillors and MPs, but also under-engaged with democratic processes and consultations. Muslim women are often perceived as a 'hard to reach group'. Attempts to

engage with women via mosques, and Muslim voluntary organisations may not have been fully explored and thus opportunities are lost to seek the views of this important part of the electorate.

Open access equality data on gender, race and religion of Merton Council employees, councillors and MPs would provide a helpful baseline, and to monitor the impact of future actions. MWM has made contact with the Faith and Belief forum, Democratic Services and HR and established that equality data is not currently collected in Merton on elected councillors and that there are currently no plans to do so. Data is held on gender and race of council employees but not on religion

If the council is truly committed to equality and honouring its equality objectives, as laid out in Merton's Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy 2017-21, namely:

Equality Objective 4: To Encourage recruitment from all sections of the community , actively promote staff development and career progression opportunities and embed equalities across the organisation

Key Activity 4: Increase the diversity of the leadership team

collecting this data is surely essential. How will Merton council know that it has been successful in 'increasing the diversity of the leadership team' if there are no measures of diversity or SMART objectives in place?

The Equality Framework for local government sets out responsibilities under the equality act for involving communities in public life and a skilled and committed workforce with workforce monitoring. Engaging diverse populations in public life will enhance the quality of services provided, provide intelligence that will shape public policy and practice and create relationships of trust between citizens and public institutions.

What could scrutiny do?

Muslim Women of Merton would like the council to commit to reviewing the representation of Muslim women in local politics and senior leadership across council life following the lines of enquiry that MWM have suggested below:

- 1) How many female, Muslim council employees at team leader/manager grade are there at present and how has this fluctuated over the past 10 years? Is this figure representative of the local population?
- 2) Will the council commit to collecting ethnicity and faith data of their councillors on an ongoing basis in future?
- 3) How does the council currently measure engagement with the Muslim community and is it regarded to be adequate?
- 4) How might the council improve engagement and consultation with the Muslim community on the above issues and how could Muslim organisations assist this process?

The council's Equalities and Community Cohesion Officer has reported that this lack of diversity affects the wider BAME community and has suggested that any scrutiny of representation in local politics and/or senior council management, should gather information on all faith and ethnic groups and then focus follow up scrutiny work on any groups that are particularly under-represented.

The Commission could seek to carry out this initial data gathering through a report to the Commission and the follow up work by setting up a task group review. The task group could undertake a programme of engagement with community groups to encourage greater involvement in local democracy, gather information and look at best practice in the borough and elsewhere. Muslim Women of Merton would be invited to contribute either through attending a meeting of the Commission or participating in the task group review. BAME Voice and other organisations representing ethnic minority and faith communities in the borough would also be invited to contribute.

ROAD SAFETY

Who suggested this issue?

Edge Hill Area Residents' Association have raised concerns about speeding on residential roads and lack of enforcement of 20mph limits.

A resident has expressed concern about motorcycles driving through cycle only barriers in the South Wimbledon area and thus posing a risk to pedestrians, especially school children.

Another resident has asked the Commission to risk assess the Durnsford Road road crossing, outside Sainsbury's particularly during school drop off and pick up times.

Summary of the issue

The council's Traffic and Highways Team, in partnership with Transport for London, work to improve road safety in the borough.

In 2018/19, in response to concerns raised by two school governors and a local resident, the Commission established a task group to review the aspects of road design, road user behaviour and enforcement activities that are currently affecting road safety in the vicinity of schools. The task group heard from more than 750 parents and residents, head teachers and council officers as well as examining information about initiatives in other boroughs and Londonwide.

What could scrutiny do?

The task group is in the process of reviewing all the evidence received and will submit its findings and recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 4 July and to Cabinet on 15 July 2019. The Commission will be monitoring the implementation of the task group's recommendations during 2019/20.

It is therefore suggested that no additional action is required from the Commission at the moment.

The specific concerns raised by residents in relation to Edge Hill, South Wimbledon and Durnsford Road have been passed to the Traffic and Highways team for consideration.

REVIEW OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FUNCTION

What could scrutiny do?

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission agreed at its meeting on 20 March 2019 to carry out a review of the overview and scrutiny function in Merton and to develop an improvement programme, with assistance from the Centre for Public Scrutiny, funded by the Local Government Association.

The long awaited Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny has just been published by the government and will be taken into account as part of the review.

The review is currently being scoped by the Centre for Public Scrutiny in discussion with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and the Head of Democracy Services. It is expected that the research, including interviews with executive and scrutiny councillors, officers and partners, will take place in June/July. The Director of Research at the Centre for Public Scrutiny would be able to present the report and draft action plan to the Commission's meeting in September. This will enable the Commission to discuss and agree amendments to the action plan before it is finalised.

The findings of the review and consequent action plan will be made available to the LGA Corporate Peer Review that is anticipated to take place towards the end of 2019.

BUDGET SCRUTINY

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission has a constitutional duty to coordinate the scrutiny responses on the business plan and budget formulation.

Budget scrutiny includes consideration of the revenue and capital budgets, the Medium Term Financial Strategy, savings and growth proposals and the Treasury Management Strategy. Contextual information, such as service plans and equality impact assessments, are provided alongside savings proposals.

It is recommended that, as in previous years, the Commission should put aside some time in its meeting in November and prepare to devote the whole of its January meeting to budget scrutiny.

FINANCIAL MONITORING

Summary of the issue

At its meeting on 24 April 2019 the Commission agreed to re-establish the financial monitoring task group in order to scrutinise the quarterly financial monitoring reports and related work delegated to it by the Commission. As with all task groups, recommendations must be endorsed first by the Commission before being forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.

In 2018/19 the financial monitoring task group also scrutinised a number of budget areas and related issues in depth – budget forecasting, financial risk management, use of contingency funds and reserves, debt management, financial aspects of the Veolia and Ideverde contracts, learning from Lean reviews and a progress update on Merantun Development Ltd.

What could scrutiny do?

The Commission has already agreed to delegate two items of business to the task group:

- a deep dive review of the future capital programme (agreed by Commission at its meeting on 23 January)
- a report on lessons learned from the customer contact contract (agreed by the Commission at its meeting on 20 March)

The financial monitoring task group has identified allocation of grants through the voluntary sector strategic partners programme as a priority area for a deep dive approach during 2019/20 and the Environment and Regeneration Departmental Management Team has suggested that the task group could scrutinise the review of the council's passenger transport service.

Following the task group's discussion on debt management, Merton Centre for Independent Living have requested further work and engagement on social care charging, in particular the development of stronger protocols and protections for disabled people being pursued by debt recovery for social care debts.

The Conservative Group have made a number of suggestions for items that could be considered for a deep dive approach:

- Review of Merantun performance to date and its current and mid-term Plan.
- Housing - review of Clarion performance against contract service levels with financial review also.
- Financial Monitoring Task Group: full review of Veolia and Idverde every six months.
- Review of Borough's school PFI contracts and performance vs contract service levels plus financial review.

It is recommended that all these suggestions are passed to the financial monitoring task group to take into account when determining its work programme for 2019/20.

COMMERCIALISATION, REVENUE GENERATION AND INCOME MAXIMISATION

Who suggested this issue?

The Liberal Democrat Group have suggested that the Commission could scrutinise the council's potential for maximising its income from a range of different sources.

The Conservative Group have made the following suggestions:

- Look at assets / land use to maximise income for the council with focus on long term revenue generation.
- Review partnership working with other bodies with a view to maximise revenue generation.
- Review of further revenue opportunities to sell services against best practices of other Councils.
- Progress report and update on Commercialisation

Summary of the issue

A scrutiny task group review of commercialisation reported to the Sustainable Communities Panel in November 2016. The task group considered commercial opportunities across the areas within the Panel's remit, focussing on parks and green spaces; property, the regeneration of Morden Town Centre and exploiting the "Merton Brand".

The Panel has continued to review implementation of the recommendations, the most recent report was in January 2019.

The financial monitoring task group has also scrutinised the council's approach to commercialisation through a report and through some of its deep dive reviews, in particular on the commercial property portfolio, events in parks and debt management.

What could scrutiny do?

The Liberal Democrat group has suggested that scrutiny of income maximisation could include best practice/learning from other local authorities in innovative ways to grow council revenue. This would include information from councils that are experimenting with establishing charitable funds to manage revenue coming from an additional voluntary council tax.

At its meeting in April, Council resolved to "call on Cabinet to look at ways in which a charitable fund could be established to manage revenue coming from an additional voluntary council tax from Band H properties, based on the models used by some other Councils. These monies could be used to establish a charitable fund, to help support the council and partnership's ambition of bridging the gap in the borough, to help mitigate some of the cuts in national education funding since 2010, subject to consultation."

In the expectation that Cabinet will take this issue forward, it is suggested that no further action on additional voluntary council tax is required from scrutiny at this point in time.

In relation to wider issues around income generation, the Commission could receive a report on what the council is currently doing to maximise income from a wide range of sources as well as providing best practice information from other local authorities. Alternatively the Commission could establish a task group to carry out research and visit other authorities.

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

Who suggested this issue?

The Liberal Democrat Group have suggested that, in the light of local authorities delivering fewer direct services and commissioning more through third parties, the Commission could consider what measures the council could take to become London's best contract management council.

Summary of the issue

The council's approach to commissioning is led by the Procurement Board, guided by the Procurement Strategy (2018) and underpinned by Contract Standing Orders, which forms part of the constitution.

Contract management is devolved in Merton and is the responsibility of departmental contract managers.

The Commercial Services Team provides advice and guidance to all departments on their commercial and procurement activity, including tender processes, contract management, supplier relationship matters, savings and benefits capture and compliance with procurement legislation, regulations and the Council's own procurement governance.

A Procurement Toolkit, updated in 2018, provides officers with clear guidance on the correct procurement route depending on contract value thresholds. There has been a recent Internal Audit review of procurement which found that improvements were required on the use of the e-tendering portal Pro Contract system, updating the contract register and ensuring that forward plans are up to date and reasons for extensions are clear.

What could scrutiny do?

The Commission could receive a report setting out the council's current approach to contract management, providing examples of recent contracts and information about the approach taken by other councils.

Alternatively, the Commission could delegate consideration of this issue to the Scrutiny Panels as part of their performance management role on individual contracts; or to the financial monitoring task group to examine how major contracts are monitored, alongside the review of lessons learned from the customer contact contract.

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES ON COUNCIL'S WEBSITE

Who suggested this issue?

The Liberal Democrat Group has suggested that the Commission could investigate how the council's website can be made easier to use by residents.

A member of staff (who is also a local resident) has made a similar suggestion, asking the Commission to review the increase in web based services and reporting systems and to consider whether more vulnerable people are properly equipped to deal with public services that are increasingly being digitised. Also concerned that people who don't use digital media are missing out on important communications and consultations.

Summary of the issue

At its meeting on 20 March 2019, the Commission received a report on the customer contact contract that included information about the availability and take-up of online services. The Assistant Director of Customers, Policy and Improvement assured the Commission that face-to-face services would continue to be available for those who needed them.

What could scrutiny do?

A report could be provided later in the year to update the Commission on what methodology has been used to identify the changes that are required, how feedback from customers is collected and used, and what action has been taken to make improvements to the website and what else is planned.

COUNCIL'S COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE

Who suggested this issue?

Through the annual member survey a councillor has suggested that the council's communications service, both internally and externally, is a weak area and should be reviewed by scrutiny.

Summary of the issue

The Assistant Director of Customers, Policy and Improvement is in the process of recruiting a new head of the communications service and this process will include some amendments to the structure and function. The new arrangements are expected to be in place by the end of the financial year. Scrutiny would therefore be more appropriate once these are in place. The new head of service could present the service plan and respond to feedback from the Commission on the ongoing improvement plan.

What could scrutiny do?

It is suggested that the Commission could receive a report early in the 2020/21 municipal year on the objectives, structure and work programme of the communications service.

SHARED SERVICES

Who suggested this issue?

The Conservative Group has suggested that the Commission could carry out a review of further shared service opportunities against best practice of other councils to save costs.

Summary of the issue

Two task group reviews in 2016-17, one on shared services and the second on outsourced services, examined how different models of service delivery work and made recommendations to stimulate a more consistent and rigorous approach to selecting delivery models and challenging officers on the most appropriate model for each service.

The task group received information on existing shared services and had in depth discussion with a number of service managers to understand the issues involved in deciding whether a shared service approach would be the optimum for the service.

In response to a specific recommendation on shared services, the council developed a toolkit for officers to use when considering whether to move to shared service arrangements, signposting to existing resources and expertise within the council and externally. This was shared with the Commission at its meeting in February 2018.

What could scrutiny do?

The Commission could request an updated list of shared services to be circulated to members by email or reported to a meeting of the Commission. The Commission could then decide whether it wished to pursue the matter through a formal report or delegation to the financial monitoring task group.

FOLLOW UP ON PREVIOUS SCRUTINY TASK GROUP REVIEWS:

Road safety around schools in Merton

The report of this task group review will be considered by the Commission at its meeting on 4 July and by Cabinet at its meeting on 15 July 2019. Cabinet will be asked to provide a formal response to the Commission within two months.

A further report will be sought by the Commission six months after the Cabinet response has been received, giving an update on progress with implementation of the recommendations.

ANNUAL REPORTS RECEIVED BY THE COMMISSION IN PAST YEARS:

- Analysis of Members' survey – an annual survey of all councillors and co-opted members to collect views about how scrutiny is working and how it can be improved. The survey also evaluates satisfaction with the scrutiny function as a whole and with the different work streams that make up overview and scrutiny. This will be reported to the Commission at its meeting on 4 July 2019.
- Overview and Scrutiny annual report – the council's constitution requires the Commission to submit to Council an annual report outlining the work of the overview and scrutiny function over the course of the municipal year. This report is drafted by the scrutiny team in conjunction with the scrutiny chairs and is brought to the Commission in March/April each year for approval prior to submission to Council in July.

Selecting a Scrutiny Topic – criteria used at the workshop on 5 June 2018

The purpose of the workshop is to identify priority issues for consideration as agenda items or in-depth reviews by the Scrutiny Commission. The final decision on this will then be made by the Commission at their first meeting.

All the issues that have been suggested to date by councillors, officers, partner organisations and residents are outlined in the supporting papers.

Further suggestions may emerge from discussion at the workshop.

Points to consider when selecting a topic:

- Is the issue strategic, significant and specific?
- Is it an area of underperformance?
- Will the scrutiny activity add value to the Council's and/or its partners' overall performance?
- Is it likely to lead to effective, tangible outcomes?
- Is it an issue of community concern and will it engage the public?
- Does this issue have a potential impact for one or more section(s) of the population?
- Will this work duplicate other work already underway, planned or done recently?
- Is it an issue of concern to partners and stakeholders?
- Are there adequate resources available to do the activity well?

Note of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission topic selection meeting on 21 May 2019

Attendees:

Councillors Peter Southgate (Chair), John Dehaney, Natasha Irons, Sally Kenny, Paul Kohler, Najeeb Latif, Nick McLean and Owen Pritchard
Roger Kershaw, Assistant Director Resources
Neil Thurlow, Community Safety Manager
Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services (note taker)

Policing in Merton

AGREED:

- to continue to invite the Borough Commander to attend twice yearly to provide a regular update on crime and policing, including the provision of the latest crime figures for Merton and comparative data for other BCU boroughs.
- Commission members will continue to outline questions at the meeting prior to that attended by the Borough Commander so that these could be sent and responses included in the agenda for the meeting.
- Commission members to develop a thematic basis to the questions so that an issue could be pursued in depth and these questions will be asked first. The Borough Commander will be asked to provide brief responses and to bring a relevant expert with her
- A question on street drug dealing will be included at the September meeting.

Safer Merton

AGREED:

- to receive two updates on the work of Safer Merton, preferably at the same meeting that the Borough Commander attends
- that the first update should include information on anti-social behaviour, knife crime, street drinking and seek members' views on the public space protection order
- that the second update should include information on the domestic violence service (service providers to be invited to attend)
- one of the updates should include information on trafficking if this is not taken forward as a task group review

Restorative justice

AGREED to receive a report setting out the work being done by the council and its partners to promote and strengthen the operation of restorative justice in Merton. Members expressed an interest in looking at how funding is accessed and why the approach is underused. The report would include information from Safer Merton and from the Youth Justice Service. MOPAC would be invited to provide a presentation/report. Victim Support and the Jigsaw project would be invited to attend to join in the discussion.

Modern slavery

Members had a wide ranging discussion of this hidden crime and what part the council could play in taking action to tackle it. Members accepted that any work on this would need to focus on something tangible and specific.

AGREED that modern slavery would be a suitable issue for a task group review – work to start by receiving data and information on what is already being done and then to focus on the council's supply chains and make recommendations to ensure that these are kept clear of modern slavery. ACTION: Head of Democracy Services to draft terms of reference for consideration by the Commission at its meeting on 4 July.

Joint scrutiny with Youth Parliament

AGREED to hold a joint scrutiny exercise with members of the Youth Parliament during Local Democracy Week on a subject to be chosen by the Youth Parliament.

Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy

AGREED to receive an annual progress report on implementation of the action plan for the Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy (at meeting in March 2020).

Brexit update

Noted that the Commission had received a report on this in November 2018 and that the work currently being done by the officer working group is considered to be best practice. AGREED that this was not a priority for inclusion in the 2019/20 work programme at the moment. Also AGREED to keep an eye on the national situation with a view to requesting an update report if and when appropriate.

Involving Muslim women in local democracy

Welcomed this suggestion received from the Muslim Women of Merton and noted the advice from the council's Equalities and Community Cohesion Officer that the lack of diversity in local politics and senior leadership at the council affects the wider BAME community.

AGREED to receive a report setting out the demographic profile of councillors, council employees and senior management. The Commission would compare this data with data on the local population and consider what steps it wished to take – recommendations to Cabinet, further report, task group review... Local BAME organisations, including Muslim Women of Merton, would be invited to join in the discussion.

Also AGREED that the Commission should review how scrutiny reaches out to get views from BAME communities and how this could be improved. This will be included in the review to be undertaken by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

Road safety

AGREED that this was not a priority for inclusion in the 2019/20 work programme as the Commission had carried out a task group review of road safety around schools in 2018/19 that would report its findings and recommendations to the Commission on 4 July and to Cabinet on 15 July.

Review of the overview and scrutiny function

NOTED that a review would be carried out by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and that findings and a draft action plan would be reported to the Commission at its meeting on 11 September. REQUESTED that the analysis of the 2019 member survey should present views of Cabinet members separately. ACTION: Head of Democracy Services

Budget scrutiny

AGREED that the Commission should continue to put time aside at its November meeting and devote the whole of its January meeting to budget scrutiny. The Assistant Director of Resources advised that much of the detail in relation to government funding would not be available until

later on in the year, including whether there will be a new funding formula, what the settlement will be and for how many years, pension fund revaluation and whether there will be a Green Paper on funding adult social care.

Financial Monitoring

AGREED that the Commission should re-establish the financial monitoring task group and ask it to continue to carry out in-depth work (“deep dives”) on a small number of service areas as well as continuing to receive quarterly financial monitoring reports.

ACTION: Head of Democracy Services to forward the relevant topic suggestions to the task group so that it can consider them when agreeing the 2019/20 work programme at its meeting on 17 July.

Commercialisation, revenue generation and income maximisation

AGREED to consider as a potential task group review for 2019/20 – work to start by receiving information on what is already being done and what the options are for the future. The task group would look at best practice elsewhere in terms of innovative and creative ways of raising revenue. **ACTION:** Head of Democracy Services to draft terms of reference for consideration by the Commission at its meeting on 4 July.

Contract management

Discussed the council’s approach to contract management and agreed to conduct scrutiny of this through a case study approach so that learning could be identified and shared.

AGREED to receive a report on the street cleaning aspect of the council’s contract with Veolia subsequent to Veolia’s next report to the Sustainable Communities Panel. Also AGREED that the Commission would agree lines of questioning and prepare and share questions in advance of the meeting with Veolia.

Accessibility of services on the council’s website

AGREED to receive a report later in the year to update the Commission on what methodology has been used to identify the changes that are required, how feedback from customers is collected and used, and what action has been taken to make improvements to the website and what else is planned.

Council’s communications service

AGREED to receive a report on this early in the 2020/21 municipal year once the new head of service is in post. The report would set out the objectives, structure and work programme of the communications service.

Shared services

AGREED to receive an updated list of shared services so that the Commission could decide whether it wished to take further action.

Universal Credit

This matter had been referred to the Commission at the workshops on 20 May for the Children and Young People Panel and the Sustainable Communities Panel. The Assistant Director of Resources advised that Universal Credit is a highly rules based national scheme, though the council does have a small discretionary hardship fund.

AGREED to receive a position statement report from the Head of Revenues and Benefits to set out what is happening in Merton and the impact this has had on claimants and their families.

Road safety around schools in Merton

AGREED to receive Cabinet's response to this scrutiny task group review and to monitor implementation of the recommendations.

Annual reports

AGREED that the Commission should continue to receive the analysis of the Members' survey and the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report.