

Agenda Item 3

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CABINET

13 JULY 2020

(7.15 pm - 8.07 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Stephen Alambritis (in the Chair), Mark Allison, Laxmi Attawar, Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Edith Macauley MBE, Eleanor Stringer and Martin Whelton

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Daniel Holden and Peter Southgate (Leader of the Merton Park Ward Independent Residents Group)

Hannah Doody (Director of Community and Housing), Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration), Rachael Wardell (Director, Children, Schools & Families Department), Louise Round (Managing Director, South London Legal Partnership and Monitoring Officer), James McGinlay (Assistant Director for Sustainable Communities), Paul McGarry (FutureMerton Manager), Julia Regan (Head of Democracy Services), Octavia Lamb (Policy and Research Officer (Labour Group)) and Louise Fleming (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

There were no apologies for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2020 are agreed as an accurate record.

4 REFERENCE TO CABINET FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION ON THE CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (Agenda Item 4)

The Leader thanked Councillor Tobin Byers, who had stepped down from his Cabinet role and paid tribute to the work he carried out while he was a Cabinet Member. The Leader advised that Councillor Allison would be overseeing the waste contract and climate change element of the portfolio on an interim basis over the summer, and the Leader would be overseeing the adult social care and health elements of the portfolio including chairing the Health and Wellbeing Board, in order to provide direction and support for the Directors during the Covid recovery phase.

The Leader advised that items 4 and 5 would be discussed together. For the purposes of the minutes, the decisions are set out under the relevant agenda item.

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Peter Southgate, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission addressed the meeting and presented the reference report. He welcomed the strategy and action plan, the response to which would define the Council's policies on climate change for the next 30 years. He outlined the four recommendations of the Commission and asked that the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel play a supportive role in scrutinising the actions as they come forward. Councillor Southgate paid tribute to Councillor Byers for his work on the climate strategy.

At the invitation of the Chair, Pippa Maslin addressed the Cabinet on behalf of the Climate Emergency Working Group. She thanked Councillor Byers and the officers involved for all their hard work and thanked Cabinet for their consideration. She also thanked the community and voluntary organisations involved and welcomed the collaborative way of working. She ask the Cabinet to use the strategy and action plan to lobby the government for change to protect the future health and wellbeing of the borough.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance thanked all those involved in the climate change strategy and the cross party effort, including the work undertaken by Councillors Byers. He acknowledged that climate change was the great challenges of our time and thanked those in Sustainable Merton, the voluntary sector and the Climate Emergency Working Group for their commitment. The report recognised that tackling climate change required the efforts of the whole community and that the cost of tackling climate change could not be borne by the Council alone, particular in light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and that significant investment from central government would be required.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration paid tribute to Councillor Byers for his work and for helping to create an evidence based, community based plan. The delivery of the plan was beyond the financial capacity of the council and will act as a strong lobbying platform and a basis for behaviour change in the community to deliver climate change. A delivery plan would follow this and there would be an implementation group formed over the next few weeks and months in order to have a community based group to work alongside scrutiny in the delivery of the plan.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education thanked Councillor Byers and the officers involved and paid tribute to the young people who had contributed to the formation of the plan.

The Cabinet Member for Voluntary Sector, Partnerships and Community Safety, welcomed the plan and the involvement of the voluntary sector, the proposed monitoring of the plan and the lobbying of the government for the funding required for the delivery of the plan. She also thanked Councillor Byers for his work.

The Cabinet Member for Commerce, Leisure and Culture and thanked Councillor Byers and welcomed the plan which was far reaching and would involve everyone to work together to move this forward.

The Leader thanked Councillor Southgate for his contribution and it was

RESOLVED

1. That the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission be considered when taking a decision on the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.
2. That a formal response be provided to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 1 September, setting out for each recommendation whether the recommendation is accepted, partially accepted or rejected.

5 ADOPTION OF THE 2020 CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (Agenda Item 5)

The discussion in relation to this item is set out at item 4 above.

The Leader thanked Pippa Maslin for her contribution and reiterated that the plan would be used as a lobbying tool for pursuing the necessary government funding and it was

RESOLVED

1. That the 2020 Climate Strategy and Action Plan be recommended to Council for adoption.
2. That the significant cost to the Council and to the residents and businesses of Merton to become zero carbon be noted, as well as the need for a national Green recovery programme to shift towards a zero carbon economy and a more sustainable future.
3. That Cabinet recommends to Council that it lobby for further funding and policy changes at national level to support the delivery of the 2020 Climate Strategy and Action Plan.

6 ALLOCATION OF NEIGHBOURHOOD CIL FUNDING TO THE SUSTAINABLE MERTON COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS (Agenda Item 6)

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport presented the report which proposed the allocation of £50,000 Community Infrastructure Levy funding to the Sustainable Merton Community Champions Programme.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration addressed the link between the community champions and the work on climate change, air pollution and recycling. This grass roots activity would be essential to deliver the climate change action plan.

RESOLVED that the allocation of £50,000 Neighbourhood CIL funding to Sustainable Merton Community Champions 2020-21 Programme in advance of Cabinet's consideration of bids submitted under the Neighbourhood Fund 2020 bidding round be approved.

7 HOUSEHOLD REUSE AND RECYCLING SERVICE - CONTRACT REVIEW (Agenda Item 7)

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance presented the report and thanked Councillor Byers and the officers involved. He paid tribute to the staff at Garth Road and thanked them for their efforts during the pandemic. The review of the contract provided an opportunity to pay London Living Wage to more of the Council's contractors. In the event of a change of contract which gave some flexibility, the Council would seek to pay London Living Wage where possible. There had been a cross party call on the government to properly fund local government and their contractors, so that the London Living Wage could be extended to all Council staff.

The Leader echoed the comments made regarding the service at Garth Road and the commitment to paying London Living Wage where possible.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration advised that the proposal in the report was testament to the purchasing power of the South London Waste Partnership in securing a good deal which represented best value for the Council in a turbulent market.

RESOLVED

1. That the proposed variation of the contract with Veolia ES (UK) Limited to continue with the management of Household Reuse and Recycling Centres until the 31st March 2025 on revised terms as set out in this report be approved.
2. That the early extension for the next three years and delegate further contract variations to the Director of Environment and Regeneration be approved.
3. That the desire of the South London Waste Partnership boroughs to implement the payment of London Living Wage (LLW) starting on 1st April 2021 be supported.

8 OUTTURN 2019/20 (Agenda Item 8)

The Leader advised that items 8 and 9 would be discussed together. For the purposes of the minutes, the decisions are set out under the relevant agenda item.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance presented the report, noting the difference between the outturn which largely represented the pre-Covid financial position and the forecast which represented the Council's financial position post-pandemic. He thanked everyone for keeping within budget in the 2019/20 financial year.

Despite an undertaking from the government to fund the pandemic response, so far the money provided had fallen far short of what was required. The estimated cost to the Council of dealing with the pandemic was approximately £40m. As the Council was already close to the legal minimum amount of reserves, then without financial help from the government the Council could be faced with difficult financial choices at a vulnerable time for the community.

The Director of Corporate Services also highlighted the difference between the outturn and the forecast and outlined the areas which would require close monitoring due to the impact of the pandemic, particularly parking and CIL contributions. Further government announcements relating to grant funding were awaited and an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy would be brought to the Cabinet for consideration in September. Slippage into the next financial year was proposed in relation to the housing company due to delays brought about by the pandemic.

The Leader thanked the Director and her team for their work.

The Cabinet Member for Voluntary Sector, Partnerships and Community Safety highlighted the need for continued investment in CCTV and its support for the Borough Command Unit and its role in keeping residents safe. It was also important to continue to fund voluntary and community sector organisations who had played a pivotal role in the pandemic response.

In response to a Member question, the Director of Corporate Services advised that initial indications showed that the gap could reduce to £20m which would be a significant gap to fill in one year and there could be difficult choices ahead.

The Leader thanked all those for their contributions and it was

RESOLVED

1. That the revenue outturn for 2019/20 be noted.
2. That it be noted that there will be an update on the five year plan for the DSG deficit prepared and reported back later in the financial year.
3. That the outturn position on Capital be considered and the Slippage into 2020/21 and other adjustments detailed in Appendix 2C, 2C1 and Section 7 of the report be approved.
4. That it be noted that TfL have issued warnings that their funding to local authorities is likely to reduce, officers have received assurances that funding commitments already incurred will be met by them.

9 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT 2020/21 - MAY 2020 (Agenda Item 9)

The discussion in relation to this item is set out at item 8 above.

RESOLVED

1. That the financial reporting data for month 2, May 2020, relating to revenue budgetary control, showing a forecast net adverse variance at year-end of £25.4m be noted.

2. That the contents of Section 4 be noted and the amendments to the Capital programme Contained in Appendix 5B be approved.

That the contents of Section 4 and Appendix 5B be noted and the following amendments be approved to the approved Programme:

Amendments to the Approved Capital Programme Requiring Cabinet Approval

Scheme	Budget 2020-21	Budget 2021-22
	£	£
Housing Company	(3,674,470)	3,674,470

10 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda Item 10)

The Cabinet noted the contents of the exempt appendix and agreed not to refer to it as part of the consideration of the item, and therefore the meeting remained in public.

11 HOUSEHOLD REUSE AND RECYCLING SERVICE - CONTRACT REVIEW - EXEMPT APPENDIX (Agenda Item 11)

The Cabinet noted the contents of the exempt appendix and agreed not to refer to it as part of the consideration of the item. The decision is set out under item 7 above.