

Agenda Item 3

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

15 MARCH 2023

(7.15 pm - 8.45 pm)

PRESENT: Councillor Edward Foley (in the Chair), Councillor Michael Brunt, Councillor Billy Hayes, Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, Councillor Edith Macauley, Councillor John Oliver, Councillor Thomas Barlow, Councillor Caroline Charles, Councillor Gill Manly, Councillor Tony Reiss, Mansoor Ahmad, Becky Cruise, Dr Stannard and Roz Cordner

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Ross Garrod, Councillor Eleanor Stringer

Hannah Doody (Chief Executive), Calvin McLean (Interim Assistant Director Public Protection), Louise Round (Interim Executive Director of Innovation and Change) and Katy Saunders (Safer Merton Business Support)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr Stuart Neaverson (with Cllr Edith Macauley as substitute).
- Cllr Paul Kohler (with Cllr John Oliver as substitute).
- Cllr Nick McLean (with Cllr Thomas Barlow as substitute).
- Cllr Agatha Akyigyina (with Cllr Caroline Charles as substitute).

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

4 COUNCIL PLAN (Agenda Item 4)

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ross Garrod, introduced the Council Plan. The plan outlines ambitious plans for the new Administration, focused on the major initiatives and priorities and how we will measure ourselves.

The three key themes are nurturing civic pride, building a sustainable future, and creating a borough of sport.

Delivering the ambition in this plan will require collaborative working not only with our residents and businesses but also with a range of partners at a local and regional level. At the end of the plan, there is a proposed set of key performance indicators by which we can monitor our progress and we can continue to build in targets against those indicators over the course of the next year.

In response to Members of the Commissions questions, the

Several different measurements will be required to monitor progress as some objectives will be milestones while others will remain as ongoing activity.

The document has been designed to be straightforward and easy to read for residents and could become too complex if we were to add all the milestones in under each activity.

The comments around the usefulness of a glossary were also noted.

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

The Chair welcomed the new Borough Commander, Detective Chief Superintendent, Clair Kelland, to the meeting. The Borough Commander introduced Superintendent Luke Mooney, who will have sole responsibility for Merton Borough, and provided Commission Members with an update on the Commissioner's Turnaround Plan.

Our focus will be on strengthening our neighbourhood policing.

In terms of local issues that impact our communities, there will be a renewed focus on precision policing. We now have new data and technology that will allow us to take an intelligence led approach and on a day-to-day basis identify both those high harm prolific offenders but also those offenders that commit community crimes.

Externally we will focus on how we can better listen to our communities, public protection, safeguarding and how we respond to violence against women and girls.

The Borough Commander will be setting up an Ethics board internally to look at misconduct data, including both internal and external complaints from the public, and see whether we can identify any thematic issues so that we can be proactive in responding to that behaviour of officers.

In response to supplementary questions from Commission Members, the Borough Commander expanded as below:

Merton is the fourth safest Borough in the MPS. The last three months have seen a reduction again in knife crime and this is likely due to additional resources being put in place, following robbery issues in the area, and that visible police presence has driven down crime.

There is a strengthening public protection program within the MPS and one of the Commissioner's priorities is reducing violence against women and girls.

Operation Vigilant is now going to be deployed in the southwest – this is a proactive policing operation where plain clothes officers observe perpetrators behaviour in hotspots to develop an intelligence base. The basis of it is that officers intervene before an offense takes place and that led to a 24% reduction of all offenses within those hot spot areas.

Crime figures - there has been a 5% increase in total notifiable offenses emerging in the last 12 months, although we've seen a slight dip again in the last three months, so things are very much moving in the right direction.

The Borough Commander is keen to continue attending the Independent Advisory Group meetings.

Burglary figures have gone down with a reduction of 1.4%. There were 783 burglaries in Merton in the last year which is 1.4% less than the previous year. SD rates for the Southwest are at about 4% so definitely a lot of work to do in that area. A bespoke burglary team has been created, with its own Inspector and Sergeant, so that we can focus on burglaries in the borough and reduce that number as well as increase our detection rate.

As part of the ethics board work, we will be developing a process to review the footage from body worn videos looking at the grounds for the search and also the quality of that interaction.

Crime Stoppers launched a campaign last autumn called Fearless which is a good method for encouraging young people to report crimes anonymously. Safer Merton have made an application for funding to continue this campaign.

We have a dedicated gang's team within our local investigation strand and following an eight-month covert proactive operation, that team ensured some very senior gang members received custodial sentences.

The Chair thanked the Borough Commander for her attendance.

6 PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO) (Agenda Item 6)

The Interim Assistant Director of Public Protection introduced the item.

A Public Space Protection Order allows a local authority to make an order to prohibit certain behaviours.

Consultation showed that 79% of residents are in support of a borough wide PSPO to deal with alcohol-related antisocial behaviour

The original five ward PSPO approved by Cabinet back in September led to roughly 244 interventions but very little enforcement, which demonstrates the approach that

we've taken. The reason for going borough wide is so that we can have a consistent approach across the borough and deal appropriately with any displacement issues.

In response to questions, the Interim Assistant Director of Public Protection added further clarifications.

It's a priority for us as an administration to take this type of antisocial behaviour seriously.

Recognising that some of our most prolific street drinkers are vulnerable/have complex psychological/addiction issues, we have started working with Public Health and other departments looking at assertive outreach and support. There is a post that's being recruited to currently which will be funded between the drug and alcohol misuse service, public health, and the homelessness team who will have responsibility for this large piece of work.

The signs are intended to clearly signal that we want this to be a responsible drinking borough. Comments from a Commission Member on the need to redesign the sign were noted by officers.

7 WORK PROGRAMME / TOPIC SUGGESTIONS (Agenda Item 7)

Commission Members reviewed this year's work programme and agreed the potential carry overs for next year.

The Chair reminded Members to send in any topic suggestions by the end of March.