

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2008/09

London Borough of Merton



Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2008/9

Contents

	Page
Foreword - Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission	
Scrutiny Outcomes 2008/09:	
• Overview and Scrutiny Commission	1
• Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel	4
• Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel	10
• Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel	12
• Corporate Capacity Overview and Scrutiny Panel	15
Community engagement in Scrutiny 2008/09	20
Looking Ahead – Scrutiny at Merton 2009/10	22
Membership 2008/09	23
Scrutiny Support	25

Foreword

No two years in scrutiny are ever alike. Each year brings its successes and new challenges, and scrutiny evolves to take account and learn from both success and failure.

This report marks the third year of scrutiny in Merton following fundamental changes made after the review of scrutiny undertaken in 2005/06 with the help of Professor Steve Leach. Members are growing more confident in their roles and more willing to work together to achieve constructive outcomes. The relationship between scrutiny and the executive has grown in maturity, reflected in greater readiness to accept scrutiny recommendations for changes to the budget. Recommendations arising from scrutiny reviews are invariably accepted by the Cabinet, subject only to financial constraints.

Satisfaction with the performance of scrutiny is reflected in an overall effectiveness rating of 80% in the annual member survey, the highest level achieved since the survey started and significantly above the 65% target set for 2008/09. Pre decision scrutiny is particularly important in Merton given its fine political balance, so it is gratifying to see its effectiveness rating improving year on year, to 69% in 2008/09.

Although satisfaction with call ins tends to be low, call in of the decision to let a contract for the Merton Efficiency Project without treating it as a key decision did highlight a weakness in the constitution. While compliant with the constitution, the decision would have been more readily accepted if it had been treated as a key decision, given its potential significance for the borough. The constitution will require amendment to recognise this principle.

Scrutiny undertook a number of major reviews involving external partners in the course of the year, but space allows me to mention only two. Healthier Communities and Older People carried out a challenging review of quality of care in nursing homes that identified worrying shortcomings. It had the further, unintended consequence of alerting partners and officers to the need to respond promptly to scrutiny reports at the draft stage. All scrutiny takes place in the public domain; this transparency is fundamental to its ethos.

The Commission reviewed fear of crime in Merton, building on our already strong working relationship with the police. Fear of crime is both pervasive and pernicious, and although there is no magic cure, changes to the way we manage the public realm can improve the quality of life for our residents.

We ended the year with our scrutiny team at full strength, welcoming Julia Regan in March as our new Scrutiny Manager, from Redbridge. For most of the year Barbara Jarvis acted as manager of the team as well as supporting two panels and I would like to thank her for her hard work and commitment.

I would also like to thank my Vice Chair, Rod Scott, who stepped down in December. Rod proved tenacious in pursuit of transparency in the council's decision making processes, and never afraid to engage with the detail in complex reports, both qualities that are invaluable to scrutiny. I am pleased to welcome his successor, Oonagh Moulton, and look forward to a constructive year ahead working with her and all members of the Commission.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Southgate". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'g'.

Councillor Peter Southgate
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny
Commission

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission delivered the following Work Programme that was determined after consultation with Panel Members, Co-opted Members, Merton residents, Senior Officers, local voluntary and community organisations and partner organisations.

The outcomes of the Commission's work during 2008/09 have contributed to the achievement of Merton's key strategic themes, aims and objectives within the Business Plan and to the delivery of Merton's Local Area Agreement and Community Plan.

Scrutiny reviews

Fear of crime

This issue was chosen for review because the fear of crime is consistently highlighted in annual residents' surveys as a key local issue of concern, despite statistics showing low levels of reported crime in the borough.

The review recommendations largely focus on the need to inform local people about the initiatives which are currently in place and being taken forward already to reduce fear of crime and disorder in the borough and increase reassurance about public safety and personal well-being. For example, many of the concerns raised by older residents and young people are already being addressed, such as expanding use of CCTV and improving street lighting.

A key message from the review is that responsibility for reducing fear of crime rests not just with the Police, but requires collaboration through the Council and local partners working together, including improving communication channels.

This report will be presented to the Council's Cabinet, for approval and agreement to implement the recommendations through development of an action plan. The Overview & Scrutiny Commission will then have a continuing role in monitoring progress towards implementing the agreed actions within the timeframe set.

Past reviews

The Commission has continued to monitor the implementation of past reviews:

- Neighbourhood governance – the Commission receives regular updates on how the Community Forums are working and will take into account issues raised at Forum meetings when drawing up the scrutiny work programme for 2009/10. The Commission concluded that the Forums had got off to a good start and made a number of suggestions aimed at improving publicity for Forum meetings.
- Enforcement – there has been three years of ineptitude in implementing the review panel's recommendations. The Commission has agreed to

refer the report back to Cabinet and will continue to receive progress updates until it is satisfied that implementation is on course.

Strategic issues and pre-decision scrutiny

At the start of the year the Commission received a presentation from the Council's Leader and Chief Executive, setting out their priorities for the year ahead, discussing the Council's financial position and its approach to addressing the budget gap. These discussions enabled the Commission to draw up a work programme that would contribute to issues of strategic importance to the Council and its residents.

The Commission's scrutiny of the decision to let a contract in relation to the Merton Efficiency Project without it being treated as a key decision has resulted in a review of that part of the Council's constitution relating to key decisions. The code of conduct relating to the employment of consultants and the process for viring monies has also been reviewed as a consequence of the Commission's deliberations. The Commission examined and approved the outcome of these reviews, subject to comments aimed at ensuring that similar decisions in the future would be treated as key decisions. This will require changes to the constitution.

At its February meeting the Commission received a report from the Police explaining the reclassification of categories of violent crime. Discussion covered police work with schools and colleges to tackle knife crime, work to prevent domestic violence and to support victims, gangs and progress made by the safer Neighbourhood initiative. The Commission expressed its appreciation of the exceptionally good working relationship between the Police and the Council.

Other work by the Commission included:

- Input to drafting of the Business Plan 2009-12, the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Third Sector Strategy
- Discussion of Merton Partnership's Annual Report as part of the Commission's statutory performance monitoring role in relation to Local Area Agreement targets.
- Submitting a response to the government's consultation on an enhanced role for the scrutiny function as proposed in the 2008 White Paper "Communities in Control"

Call In

To date there has been one call in this municipal year within the remit of the Commission, concerning the Cabinet's decision on the Waste Collection Review. Officers gave evidence regarding operational models for waste

collection and the review process to date. The Commission made recommendations regarding future consultation with residents on these issues and suggested that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Commission may wish to look at the review process, including the proposed methods of consultation of residents.

Scrutiny of the Budget

The Commission examined the Cabinet's budget proposals at an early stage in the budget setting process and commented on the 2008/9 budget out-turn. Further budget scrutiny took place at the Commission's January meeting, enabling each of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairs to raise points pertinent to their Panels as well as scrutinising budget proposals in the round. Many of the suggested budget amendments raised by the Commission and the Panels were accepted by the Cabinet .

The Commission also spent some time examining Council's balances and reserves strategy and, due to the current economic uncertainty, is planning to look at this again during 2009/10.

Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel delivered the following work programme that was determined after consultation with Panel Members, Co-opted Members, Merton residents, Senior Officers, local voluntary and community organisations and partner organisations.

The outcomes of the Panel's work during 2008/09 have contributed to the achievement of Merton's key strategic themes, aims and objectives within the Business Plan and to the delivery of Merton's Local Area Agreement and Community Plan.

Since May 2008 the Healthier Communities & Older People Scrutiny Panel has undertaken scrutiny on a number of key issues relating to health services and adult social care as indicated below:-

Agenda Items/one-off reviews

The Panel has considered a number of items at its meetings over the past year, including:

- a presentation on the foundation trust status application by the South West London & St George's Mental Health Trust,
- the outcome of the Safeguarding and Older People Inspection,
- the development of a new Carers Support Strategy,
- work being taken forward on 'Healthcare for London' by the Joint Committee of PCTs,
- the temporary suspension of the diabetic retinopathy screening programme, notified by the PCT
- strengthening of health service commissioning in South West London,
- responding to the consultation on developing a constitution for the NHS
- a progress report on the development of the strategy arising from the Panel's review of transitions in 2004
- introducing a protocol for effective working with the new Health Local Involvement Network (LINK).
- Responding to local NHS trusts' annual health check declarations

Task group reviews

The panel agreed to undertake a scrutiny review of quality of care in nursing homes in Merton during 2008/9 and all members of the Healthier Communities and Older People Panel had an opportunity to be involved in the review process in some way. All 15 nursing homes used by Merton residents in the borough were visited by small groups of councillors who engaged with residents, relatives and staff. A draft report of the findings of the review was approved by

the Panel in February 2009 and this will now be finalised and forwarded onto Cabinet in June 2009 to agree implementation of the recommendations.

A scrutiny review on Prevention of Ill Health and Early Intervention undertaken in 2007 produced a cross-cutting set of recommendations which were incorporated into a Healthier Communities Action Plan. The Panel considered an update on progress on this in July 2008.

A scrutiny review of GP Services in 2008 had flagged up the potential for visiting some GP surgeries in the borough and visits to two local surgeries took place in October 2008. This provided an opportunity for councillors to engage directly with primary care practitioners.

Other Review Groups

The Panel has reconstituted two review groups for 2008/9, one focusing on mental health issues, the other on transformation work relating to the whole of adult social care services.

The Mental Health Review Group has focused on the following key issues:-

- Modernising adult community mental health services
- Psychological therapies in primary care
- Mental health/learning disability in-patient service
- Outcomes of a mental health patients survey
- Recovery and personalisation model of care
- Future location of in-patient services

The Adult Social Care Review Group has focused on various projects contained within the service transformation programme, including:-

- Housing options for vulnerable people
- Reablement service
- Putting People First
- Transport programme update

Scrutiny of council documents

The Panel considered a number of strategic documents during the year. The initial scrutiny of budget proposals took place in October 2008 and then again at the formal budget scrutiny meeting in January 2009. The Panel submitted comments on a number of proposed budget items relating to the following key areas:-

Growth Items:	
Joint Public Health Consultant Post: A joint commissioned post with the PCT to procure Public Health Services – 50% funding of commissioning post.	The high level of growth for this joint post was questioned and it was explained that public health expertise is expensive, but all councils are moving towards a jointly commissioned Public Health Post. The Panel agreed it would be useful to scrutinise and evaluate the cost effectiveness and delivery of beneficial outcomes for all Community and Housing posts jointly commissioned with Health at some point in the future.
Savings Items:	
Delete the LD College Leavers Group	The effect of this deletion on people moving through transition was raised as a concern. It was explained that college leavers would still receive individual support, but a dedicated group of a relatively small number was not cost effective.
Reduce the Community Care staff team by 2.6 f.t.e.s: Reduces capacity of the service to meet client need and demand.	The Panel queried which staff this related to and were informed they are staff in the LD Service, but that the reduction should read '1.6' <u>not</u> '2.6' f.t.e.s. Concern was expressed that these reductions are of front-line staff and the detrimental effect this would have on service users.
Reduction to ICES budget/PCT to contribute towards the administration of the ICES budget: Saving in cost of procuring new equipment/contribution to budget dependent on PCT agreement.	The high risks indicated with regard to reduction of the Integrating Community Equipment Services (ICES) budget were highlighted (CH11). Concern was expressed that savings in this area might lead to a poor service. But, Members were advised that it will be possible to make efficiencies and agreement from the PCT to contribute towards the administration budget for ICES (CH23) will contribute to this. Therefore, the risks are seen as reasonable by the Department and service performance will be monitored.
High Path/All Saints service developments: Continued developments of outreach and community resource services will bring together the staffing resource of High Path and All Saints, enabling staffing to be reconfigured with associated savings.	Some concerns were expressed about the merits and benefits of integrating the services of two centres for services users with varying and different types and levels of need. The issue of staff redundancies already made, although not indicated here, was also raised. It was confirmed that service users have been consulted on the proposals, which would allow the successful services at High Path to be shared with clients at All Saints. There is no intention to force people to change – but a wider range of activities could be offered to more people. The issue of redundancies already made would be looked into.

<p>Reduction in Voluntary Sector grants: Decisions made as a result of application and ranking exercise in which particular projects did not score highly enough to meet threshold for an acceptable grant bid. Two projects, Friends in St Helier and Asian Elderly (Merton Hall Lunch Club) will not be funded after September 2009.</p>	<p>Concerns were expressed about these savings and what action and resources might be needed if things went wrong as a result of closure of these projects, since they contribute to the emotional well-being of service users. Organisations such as these grow out of a need in a local area and in the current economic climate it will be difficult for groups to secure alternative funding. Small groups also do not have the resources to enable them to submit strong applications for grant funding. The new process for considering VS grant applications was explained and members were advised that the process had been designed in association with MVSC to be transparent and equitable in relation to best use of public funds.</p>
---	---

Overall, with regard to the budget, the Panel resolved to welcome the general approach of protecting front line services in identifying savings. The Panel especially noted that the savings are predominantly targeted on process efficiencies and the rationalisation/restructuring of management personnel within Adult Social Care.

Other strategic scrutiny took place with regard to the Business Plan 2009/12. On the Business Plan, the Panel made the following comment:-

<i>Business Plan Reference</i>	<i>Specific proposal/performance measure</i>	<i>Scrutiny observations and comments</i>
<p>Healthier Communities: Improve access to a range of social care services for adults in need.</p>	<p>Carers receiving needs assessment or review and a specific carers service, or advice and information.</p>	<p>There was concern as to whether this is a reasonable target to set. It was confirmed that performance against this measure is currently not on target and is therefore shown as 'red'. But progress is being made to improve performance.. The Panel agreed it would monitor this measure through regular performance monitoring reports.</p>

Consideration of the Sustainable Communities Strategy Refresh (Merton's Community Plan), the two themes of Healthier Communities and of Older People were focused on and comments were suggested to some of the key areas, particularly in relation to raising the profile of promoting well-being and prevention of ill health.

Joint Health Scrutiny Work

As in previous years, there are a number of joint health scrutiny committees on which Merton health scrutiny members are represented.

- The development of proposals relating to the Better Healthcare Closer to Home Programme continue to be scrutinised through the Merton, Sutton, Surrey Joint Health Scrutiny Committee (chaired by LB Sutton).
- Scrutiny of Tier 4 Services for people with personality disorders arose following the closure of the Henderson Hospital, a specialist mental health inpatient facility in Sutton in 2008. Merton has a councillor representing the borough's views on a joint committee looking at Tier 4 personality disorder services and the work is still ongoing.
- Pan London joint health scrutiny of Healthcare for London proposals has resulted in a report following phase 1 of the scrutiny of strategic proposals for health services across London, arising from the outcomes from the strategic review led by Lord Ara Darzi in 2007. The pan London JOSC reported its findings in May 2008. The next phase on development of stroke and trauma services is the subject of a current pan London joint health scrutiny process.

Call-in

For 2008/9 there have been no called-in decisions referred to the Healthier Communities and Older People Scrutiny Panel.

Performance Management

The Panel appointed two performance monitoring lead members in June 2008, Councillors Jeremy Bruce and Greg Udeh. The panel has regularly received updates on selected performance measures as an item on its agendas. Officers have responded to questions raised by the councillors around performance against agreed targets. The following specific indicators have been focused on:-

- Adults aged 18-64 admitted on a permanent basis in the year to residential or nursing care per 10,000
- Adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home per 1,000 population aged 18-64

- Adults with mental health problems helped to live at home per 1,000 population aged 18-64
- Number of people receiving Direct Payments
- Number of people receiving direct payments per 100,000 population aged 18 or over
- Older people aged 65 or over admitted on a permanent basis in the year to residential or nursing care per 10,000 population
- Older people helped to live at home per 1,000 population aged 65 or over
- Social care clients receiving Self Directed Support (Direct Payments and Individual Budgets)
- Take up of telecare equipment
- Timeliness of social care assessment (all adults)
- Carers receiving needs assessment or review and a specific carer's service, or advice & info
- For new older clients, the % for whom the time from completion of assessment to provision of all services in the care package is less than or equal to 4 weeks.

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel delivered the following work programme that was determined after consultation with Panel Members, Co-opted Members, Merton residents, Senior Officers, primarily within the Children, Schools and Families Directorate, local voluntary and community organisations and partner organisations.

The outcomes of the Panels work during 2008/09 have contributed to the achievement of Merton's key strategic themes, aims and objectives within the Business Plan and to the delivery of Merton's Local Area Agreement and Community Plan.

Since May 2008 the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel has considered a number of items relating to their remit under the four main areas of work undertaken by scrutiny.

Agenda Items and one-off reviews

The Panel has considered a number of items at its meetings over the past year. These include presentations on the introduction of Contact Point, Building Schools for the Future and Hear by Right/Youth Engagement. These served to inform the councillors as well as allow them to ask questions about any issues they thought might arise and discuss the issues between themselves and with officers and cabinet members. The panel were also presented with a report and presentation on the future of 6th Form Provision in Merton following the consultation in February 2009 and the Primary school places strategy giving members the opportunity to make any comments on the proposals before it was sent to Cabinet. The panel also received a report on the School Standards Data.

Panel members have been active in holding discussions with Cabinet Members and Officers requiring them to justify what actions they are taking and why they have made certain decisions. Scrutiny members value these presentations and the opportunity to provide constructive but challenging feedback.

Task group reviews

The panel received and submitted task group reports to Cabinet. The first was the draft Report on Gang Culture in Merton and the second reviewed the Promotion of Formal Childcare in Merton.

Scrutiny of council documents

The panel considered the budget initially in November 2008 and then again at the formal budget scrutiny meeting in January 2009. The Panel referred five savings back to Cabinet:

CSF6	Special Educational Needs: Deletion of .5 EP (Educational Psychology Post).
CSF10	Cross Cutting: foregoing of growth in MTFS for social workers salaries. (CSF10)
CSF12	Safeguarding and Partnerships Service: Reduction in training of social work staff. (CSF12)
CSF14	Safeguarding and partnerships service: Deletion of CAF Co-ordinator
CSF17	Youth and inclusion service: Foregoing growth in Youth Service for 2009/10

Call-in

To date there has been one call in this municipal year within the remit of the Children and Young People Panel, concerning the 'Primary capital programme: strategy for change' in July 2008. The Panel resolved that in the light of the assurance from the Cabinet Member that there will be no school closures in the foreseeable future, and in accordance with paragraph 16(f)(iii) of Part 4E of the Constitution, the decision was not referred back to Cabinet.

Performance Management

Performance Monitoring is a key part of scrutiny and the panel receives updates on selected performance measures as a standard item on its agendas. The high quality reports submitted by officers have enabled members to undertake this role effectively by asking questions of the executive and giving them the opportunity to hold them to account.

Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel have delivered the following work programme that was determined after consultation with Panel Members, Co-optees, Merton residents, Senior Officers, primarily within the Environment and Regeneration Directorate, local voluntary and community organisations and partner organisations.

The outcomes of the Panels work during 2008/09 have contributed to the achievement of Merton's key strategic themes, aims and objectives within the Business Plan and to the delivery of Merton's Local Area Agreement and Community Plan.

Since May 2008 the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel has considered a number of items relating to their remit under the four main areas of work undertaken by scrutiny.

Agenda Items and one-off reviews

Throughout the year the Panel have devoted a significant amount of their work programme to environmental issues such as waste, recycling and climate change. Members considered the review of the Waste Collection Service undertaken by the Council and commented at various stages on the proposals for the service going forward. Linked to this review, the Panel considered the procurement of waste disposal services during two phases and supported the South West London Waste Partnership in deciding who to award the contract for the service to and in submitting a bid to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for Private Finance Initiative credits.

Members focused their attention on the regeneration of the area and commented on the vision and proposals for the regeneration of Morden and Mitcham Town Centres, and the Borough as a whole, by contributing to the development of the Economic Development Strategy. Members have commented on the linkages and interdependencies between the three strategies, feasibility of proposals and the consultation process with residents and partners. In addition, the Panel were invited to comment on the draft Public Realm Strategy for the area.

The Panel commented on the development and focus of the Authority's first Climate Change Strategy. Members will continue to monitor the delivery of the Strategy in the future.

Housing was also central to the work programme of the Panel this year having commented on the increase in rents and service charges, the Housing Revenue

Account, the Councils Housing Strategy and the housing stock transfer offer document.

Members received a referral from the Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel to consider how to improve access to the community for people with disabilities, older people and parents with prams as these issues fall within the remit of the Panel. The Panel met with representatives from local voluntary and community sector organisations to consider the issues that certain groups encounter in accessing transport and the built environment.

The Panel commented on the provision of public toilets in the Borough and the areas/issues that need to be addressed and received an update on the Community Toilet Scheme being piloted by the Council.

Members have been active in holding discussions with Cabinet Members and Officers requiring them to justify what actions they are taking and why they have made certain decisions. Scrutiny members value these presentations and the opportunity to provide constructive but challenging feedback.

Task group reviews

The panel decided to undertake a review of highways maintenance as part of their 2008/09 work programme and met with partners, utilities and voluntary and community sector representatives to inform the recommendations resulting from the review. The Panel are due to consider the Task Groups Final Report and recommendations at their first meeting of the new municipal year in June 2009 to endorse its submission to Cabinet and partners to consider.

The Panel appointed Task Review Champions to ensure that the recommendations resulting from previous scrutiny reviews, agreed by Cabinet/Council, were implemented. The Panel received progress reports from the Task Review Champions at appropriate intervals throughout the year, on a quarterly, six-monthly or exception basis when there were issues of concern/interest that Task Review Champions wished to raise with the Panel.

Scrutiny of council documents

The panel considered the budget initially in November 2008 and then again at the formal budget scrutiny meeting in January 2009. The Panel made a number of comments on the proposals and requested further information and or rewording alongside a number of the proposals to ensure the Overview and Scrutiny Commission were fully informed to present a response to Cabinet. The Panel referred the following saving back to Cabinet:

H2	Housing Needs Savings in Housing Needs Staffing by 1.5 fte through efficiencies
----	---

Alongside their consideration of the Budget, the Panel reviewed the Business Plan at two stages of its development, in terms of planned outcomes and later, targets and performance measures to achieve those outcomes. The Panel made a number of comments that it forwarded to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to produce a response to Cabinet.

Alongside the consideration of the Budget and Business Plan, the Panel also commented on the Community Plan Refresh, a partnership document outlining the vision for the area over a 15 year period, all three strategic documents informing one another and the priorities and planned outcomes for the Borough to make Merton a great place to live, work, and visit.

Call In

To date there has been one call in this municipal year that fell within the remit of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, concerning 20 mph speed limits in the Merton Park Area. The Panel also contributed to consideration of the call in of the waste collection review, which was heard by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, having been considered at pre decision scrutiny stage by the Panel at an earlier date. None of the decisions were referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration; however, Members made comments on the both call ins to the Cabinet Member.

Performance Management

Performance Monitoring is a key part of scrutiny and the panel receives updates on selected performance measures as a standard item on its agendas. The high quality reports submitted by officers have enabled members to undertake this role effectively by asking questions of the executive and giving them the opportunity to hold them to account.

Corporate Capacity Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The Corporate Capacity Overview and Scrutiny Panel have delivered the following work programme that was determined after consultation with Panel Members, Co-opted Members, Merton residents, Senior Officers, local voluntary and community organisations and partner organisations.

The outcomes of the Panels work during 2007/08 have contributed to the achievement of Merton's key strategic themes, aims and objectives within the Business Plan and to the delivery of Merton's Local Area Agreement and Community Plan.

Since May 2008 the Corporate Capacity Panel has considered a number of items relating to their remit under the four main areas of work undertaken by scrutiny.

Agenda Items and one-off reviews

The panel have received a number of presentations about the various functions under their remit. So far the panel have received and asked questions of Human Resources, Risk and insurance, and IT. This has proved popular amongst members giving them a greater understanding of the work of the council and allows them to ask questions of officers and members.

The panel has considered a number of updates on the use of consultancy services and has been very much involved in the decisions relating to the efficiency project.

Task group reviews

The panel received and submitted two task group reviews to Cabinet. The first looking at the Recruitment of Young People was presented in June 2008 and made a number of wide-ranging recommendations looking at both the recruitment and retention of young people. The second report reviewed Democratic Engagement and Electoral Services and was presented in April 2009.

The panel has also continued to monitor of the action plan arising from the review of income generation and specifically progress on the ASH/Care First billing system.

Scrutiny of Council documents

The panel received, discussed and presented recommendations on the proposed 2009/10 Budget and Business Plan. The recommendations submitted to Cabinet are below.

Budget

Budget Reference	Specific proposal	Scrutiny response
Growth items:		
CSG7	I.T. Additional fund to support the introduction and support of disaster recovery (DR) systems.	The Panel considered the need to develop disaster recovery systems and commends this growth item in view of the serious risks.
CEG1	Policy, Partnerships and Performance: Additional post to support Customer Service Accreditation – <u>NOW DELETED BY CABINET</u>	The Panel supported the withdrawal of this growth item by Cabinet on 12 January 2009.
CEG2	Policy, Partnerships and Performance: Fund to pay for support for publicity and promotion related to Community Forums	The Panel supported growth to establish funding for publicity for the new Community Forums in order to ensure they are successful.
Savings items:		
CSS11	Registrars : Nationality Checking Service	The panel raised concerns about this in Round 1 of scrutiny in October 2008 and requested further information on the budget for this service, the risk level and on the proposed level of charges. Cabinet provided further information on the income budget and an explanation of the risk relating to the proposed saving which the Panel accepted. The Panel requested that details on the proposed level of charging be provided for the Overview & Scrutiny Commission on 29th January 2009
CSS15 & CSS16	Local Taxation & Benefits Admin: Invest to save – recruit additional member of staff to target HB overpayment; recruit additional member of staff to target old Council Tax debts	The Panel agreed to support the bringing forward to 2008/9 these 'Invest to Save' items.

CSS45	Audit & Support: Reduce the Training Budget.	The hope was expressed that this saving would not result in a decline in standards.
CSS47	Local Taxation & Benefits Admin: Delete 1 FTE Visiting Officer	The Panel agreed to express its concern to Overview & Scrutiny Commission on the level of risk and potential detrimental impact of this proposed saving on vulnerable and housebound people.
Capital Programme:		
Section 106	£328k available for 2009-10	The Panel queried what impact a decline in planning applications during the economic downturn might have on S106 monies. Members were advised that the figure in the Capital Summary only included S106 resources already confirmed.
Funded by Capital Receipts	£3,700k in 2010-11	Members highlighted this potential capital receipt proposed from the sale of a council office building in another part of the borough and transfer of staff, as a result of continuation of the refurbishment programme for the Civic Centre. The Panel agreed that this proposed receipt will need careful monitoring, given the current financial situation and the sum quoted is not therefore guaranteed.
General Fund Borrowing	Increases indicated year on year to 2012	The Panel flagged up the increase in General Fund Borrowing as a potential concern.

Business plan

Business Plan Reference	Specific proposal/performance measure	Scrutiny observations and comments
Our Customers	Priority – We will engage with our customers to continuously improve and deliver services driven by their need	The Panel welcomed the decision to retain the emphasis on engaging residents to identify their needs in this priority, as recommended in Round 1 of scrutiny and members supported the revised wording as indicated here (which reflects the original wording almost exactly).

Annual complaints report

Reporting the Annual Complaints Report in public ensures openness and transparency about the complaints received by the Council, and to identify areas for improvement. It also allows members to consider these areas and make recommendation and drive the future scrutiny work programme. However, as the report had previously been submitted to Cabinet the panel's chair asked if this could be submitted earlier in future.

Call In

The panel heard one call-in during the year on 25 November 2008. Members called in the Financial Report 2008/09 and specifically the decision that 'approval is given to a virement of £305,850 from the Transformation/Outstanding Council Programme Board Reserve into this year's budget, in accordance with Part 4-F of the Constitution'.

The panel resolved to note that the virement had not breached Part 4F of the constitution, but expressed concern about the process undertaken that has not helped clear scrutiny and would want this to be properly considered for the future.

Performance Management

The Corporate Capacity Scrutiny Panel focused on scrutinising those indicators shown as 'red' in the monthly dashboard of data. These included monthly targets relating to:-

Human Resources:-

- Percentage of staff recruited with a declared disability
- Percentage of staff leaving Merton with less than 2 years' service
- Percentage of spend on agency staff
- Percentage of disabled employees
- Percentage of bme employees

Finance:-

- Percentage of social Services debt collected which is less than one year old
- Percentage of Social Services debt collected which is 1-2 years old

Annual targets:-

- Benefit taken up by over 60s
- Percentage of councillors with an agreed personal development plan

Financial monitoring

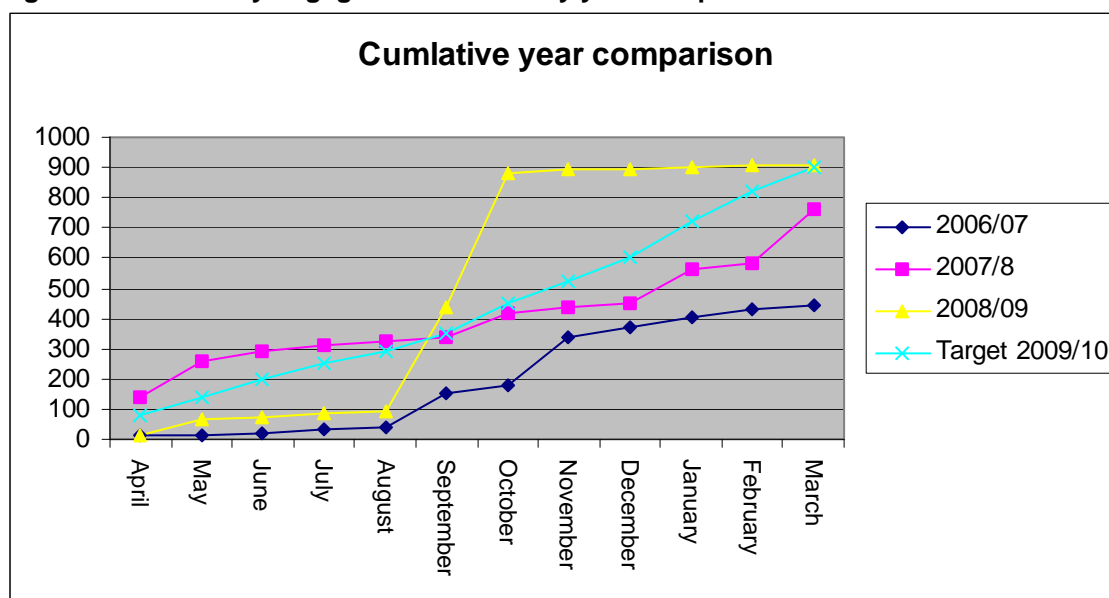
The panel leads on financial matters from a scrutiny perspective and receives regular financial monitoring reports that present members with the opportunity to highlight significant variations to the proposed budget and ask questions of officers and cabinet members about there plans to address this.

Get Involved - Community Engagement in Overview and Scrutiny at Merton 2008/09

Overview and Scrutiny at Merton seeks to engage residents and local community groups in the development and delivery of our annual Scrutiny work programme to ensure that our Overview and Scrutiny Panels/Commission address issues of local concern and to enable Merton residents to influence the way the council and partners deliver services in their area.

Engaging the local community in Overview and Scrutiny is one of our key priorities and the Scrutiny Team sets targets to ensure an increase in community engagement in Overview and Scrutiny at Merton year upon year. The table below shows that we have been successful in doing this over the past three years:

Figure 1: Community engagement in scrutiny year comparison



During 2008/09 we aimed to facilitate the engagement of 700 members of the public in Overview and Scrutiny at Merton. This includes people who have suggested a topic for review, sent in written information, spoken at a meeting or attended as an observer. We have exceeded the target this year, having reached over 880 people to date.

We have set ourselves the following targets for community engagement in Overview and Scrutiny at Merton for the next three years, increasing our target year upon year as we seek to improve the means by which we can involve local residents in the decision making process.

Year	209/10	2010/11	2011/12
Target	800	900	1000

We are also changing the way in which we monitor information so that we can identify which groups within the community have been less involved in scrutiny activities. We will then be able to take steps to find out the reasons for this and to encourage them to become more involved in future.

Get Involved

Community engagement is central to the work of Overview and Scrutiny at London Borough of Merton and ensures that the recommendations made by our Overview and Scrutiny Panels/Commission are reflective of what the people of Merton feel and want and that services are developed and delivered in response to these views.

We welcome and encourage community engagement in Overview and Scrutiny at Merton. If you would like to get involved you can do so in the following ways:

Attend an Overview and Scrutiny Panel Meeting - Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Panel meetings are open to the public and provide an opportunity to listen to proceedings. There are very rare occasions when a meeting, or part of a meeting, needs to be held in private. This is determined by application of a strict set of criteria contained in the Local Government Act 1972 (Access to Information) that includes, amongst other conditions, matters of a commercially sensitive nature.

There may be an opportunity to contribute directly to a scrutiny review depending upon the nature of the work being undertaken.

Meeting dates will be advertised on our website at the following address:
<http://www.merton.gov.uk/committee.htm>

Suggest a Topic for a Scrutiny Review by notifying the Scrutiny Team of issues of concern or by completing the Scrutiny Topic Suggestion Form. This leaflet is available online, in the public gallery at Panel meetings and circulated to all of the Merton Voluntary Service Council at the beginning of the municipal year when the Overview and Scrutiny Commission/Panels are setting their annual work programmes. All suggestions will be considered in accordance with the focus of the Scrutiny on the Council's and partner's strategic priorities and service improvement (please be mindful that Scrutiny Members have a limited amount of time and all issues will be considered according to scrutiny review selection criteria).

Submit your views or evidence to a scrutiny review. You can access the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Work Programme 2009/10 at the following address www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny and contact the Scrutiny Team for further details.

Health and Social Care Scrutiny

Individual Scrutiny Reviews may indicate the need to undertake consultation with patients; service users and carers that provide an opportunity to comment upon health and social care provision. You can also get involved in Local Involvement Networks (LINKS) which monitor and review health and social care services from the patients' perspectives to seek the public's views and to make recommendations to the NHS and social care providers based on those views. Local Involvement Networks (LINKS) also have the power to refer issues to the Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel for consideration.

Alternatively you can get involved in Overview and Scrutiny through our web pages- (www.merton.gov.uk/council/scrutiny/scrutiny-getinvolved.htm).

Looking Ahead - Developing Overview and Scrutiny at Merton 2009/10

Overview and Scrutiny at London Borough of Merton has continued to develop in light of the findings of the Review of Scrutiny undertaken by Professor Steve Leach in 2006 and in delivering the Scrutiny Improvement Plan that outlines improvement activity for the function to ensure it remains effective. The Scrutiny Improvement Plan was developed in response to the outcomes of our annual Members Survey, Member Appraisals, the recommendations of the Councillors Commission report 'Representing the Future', and recent policy and legislative requirements and provisions.

We have addressed the recommendations of the review, achieved delivery of the targets and actions within our Improvement Plan, and have responded to Members suggestions and comments resulting from our Annual Members Survey.

In doing so, Overview and Scrutiny at London Borough of Merton has become an exemplar of good practice, regionally and nationally, and our scrutiny reviews have produced tangible outcomes for the residents of Merton.

To build upon our successes and to ensure the continued development of the Overview and Scrutiny function we will undertake the following improvement activities during the 2009/10 municipal year: -

- Continue to nominate a member from each panel to lead the scrutiny of performance management for that Panel
- The Commission and Panels will choose and scope review topics carefully in order to ensure they are issues on which scrutiny can have a beneficial impact on efficiency or service delivery for the residents of Merton
- The Scrutiny Team will monitor and report back regularly to the Commission/Panels on the implementation of scrutiny recommendations and references made to the Cabinet so that the impact of scrutiny is clear.

We will evaluate the outcomes of our improvement activity within our 2009/10 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report and determine Member satisfaction with the Overview and Scrutiny function through the Annual Members Survey.

Panel and Commission Membership 2008/09

The following Members developed and delivered the Scrutiny Annual work programme for 2008/09 and contributed to the achievement of the Authority's corporate priorities and the aims and priorities of Merton's Local Area Agreement: -

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Members of the commission

Councillor Peter Southgate (Chair)	Councillor Simon Withey
Councillor Oonagh Moulton (Vice-Chair) (replaced Councillor Rod Scott 04.02.09)	Councillor David Dean
Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender	Councillor John Dehaney
Councillor Sheila Knight	Councillor Richard Williams
Councillor Nick Draper	Councillor Corinna Edge (replaced Cllr Oonagh Moulton 04.02.09)

Substitute members of the commission

Councillor Stephen Kerin	Councillor Krysia Williams
Councillor Judy Saunders	Vacancy
Councillor Gregory Udeh	

Co-opted members of the commission

Mr Ravi Kurup	Mrs Anna Juster
Revd David Monteith	Vacancy

Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Members of the panel

Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender (Chair)	Councillor Denise March
Councillor Sheila Knight (Vice-Chair)	Councillor Peter McCabe
Councillor Margaret Brierly	Councillor Dennis Pearce
Councillor Jeremy Bruce	Councillor Gregory Udeh

Substitute members of the panel

Councillor Nick Draper	Councillor Barbara Mansfield
Councillor Zenia S Jamison	Councillor Ron Wilson

Co-opted member of the panel

Mr Saleem U Sheikh – Sutton & Merton PCT Patient and Public Involvement Forum

Laura Johnson

Myrtle Agutter

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Members of the panel

Councillor Nick Draper (Chair)	Councillor Karin Forbes
Councillor Simon Withey (Vice-Chair)	Councillor Patricia Lewis
Councillor Agatha Akyigyina	Councillor Barbara Mansfield
Councillor Jeremy Bruce	Councillor Maxi Martin
Councillor Richard Chellew	Councillor Oonagh Moulton

Substitute members of the panel

Councillor David Chung	Councillor George Reynolds
Councillor Denise March	Councillor Rod Scott

Statutory Co-opted Representatives (with voting rights on education matters):

Co-opted members of the panel

Mr Ravi Kurup (Parent Governor Representative)
Vacancy (Parent Governor Representative)
Revd David Monteith (Church of England Diocesan Representative)
Mrs Anna Juster (Roman Catholic Diocesan Representative)

Non Statutory Co-opted Representatives (with no voting rights):

Melanie Abrams (Primary Head Teacher Representative)
Vacancy (Secondary Head Teacher Representative)
(Members of the Youth Parliament)
Vacancy (Youth Forum)

Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Members of the panel

Councillor David Dean (Chair)	Councillor Judy Saunders
Councillor Russell Makin (Vice-Chair)	Councillor Rod Scott
Councillor Marc Hanson	Councillor Gregory Udeh
Councillor Stephen Kerin	Councillor Krysia Williams

Substitute members of the panel

Councillor Jeremy Bruce	Councillor George Reynolds
Councillor Ian Munn	Councillor Corinna Edge

Corporate Capacity Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Members of the panel

Councillor Richard Williams (Chair)	Councillor Brain Lewis-Lavender
Councillor Corinna Edge (Vice-Chair)	Councillor Edith Macauley
Councillor Mark Betteridge	Councillor Oonagh Moulton
Councillor John Dehaney	Councillor Rod Scott

Substitute members of the panel

Councillor Nick Draper	Councillor Sheila Knight
Councillor Stephen Kerin	Councillor Ron Wilson

Scrutiny Support – Contact the Scrutiny Team

The Scrutiny Team provides independent and professional support and advice to the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and the four standing Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

You can contact the Scrutiny Team using one of the following methods: -

In writing:

Scrutiny Team
Chief Executive's Department
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
Morden
Surrey SM4 5DX

By email/telephone:

Julia Regan – Scrutiny Manager

Julia.regan@merton.gov.uk

020 8545 3864

Barbara Jarvis –Scrutiny Officer

Barbara.Jarvis@merton.gov.uk

020 8545 3390

Daniel Moore – Scrutiny Officer

Daniel.moore@merton.gov.uk

020 8545 4685

Rebecca Redman – Scrutiny Officer

Rebecca.redman@merton.gov.uk

020 8545 4035

scrutiny@merton.gov.uk

The Scrutiny Team receives administrative and professional support and advice on constitutional issues from the Councils Democratic Services Team.

For further information about Overview and Scrutiny at Merton please access our web pages using the following address: -www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny