

Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations

Tuesday 12th September 2023

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Edith Macauley (Chair), Councillor Eleanor Stringer, Councillor Laxmi Attawar, Councillor Agatha Akyigyina, Councillor Slawek Szczepanski, Councillor Hina Bokhari, Councillor Joan Henry, Councillor Jenifer Gould, Veronica Karawa, Rev Hannah Neale, Inspector Ollie French-Greenslade, Chelliah Lohendran, Dr P Arumugaraasah, Andrew Robertson, Amy Mallett, David Gentles, Susan Botros, Octavia Lamb (clerk)

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Apologies

Superintendent Luke Mooney, Inspector Kevin M L Chambers, Fitzroy Dawson

3. Minutes

Agreed.

Chair introduced the new Equalities and Community Cohesion officer, Susan Botros, who then gave a bit of background on her work to date. Chair also introduced new member of the JCC, Veronica Karawa, representing the Kevin Karawa Leukaemia Trust (KKLT)

4. Introduction of Voter ID

The Head of Democratic and Electoral Services, Andrew Robertson, introduced the report on the introduction of Voter ID.

Councillor Bokhari welcomed the report, in particular the outreach work and identifying the need to educate and inform young people. She asked what work is planned to reach out to 18 year olds (eg Freshers fairs, Sixth Forms) and also people over 60. AR responded they are working closely with the Youth Engagement team. On 26th September they are attending the Merton College Freshers Fair. They are contacting Sixth Form colleges, and they are putting information into PHSE lessons. They have also engaged with the Youth Parliament and are looking at social media options. Councillor Bokhari asked if AR was writing to the Electoral Commission about the fact that over 60s can use travelcards as ID but young people can't. AR will look into this. She also raised the issue of differentiations in the spelling of South Asian

names. AR informed that the Association of Electoral Officers is looking pan-London at matters such as these to inform guidance and set in place best practice.

Chelliah Lohendran from the Merton Seniors Forum asked for material to be sent. He also asked if the info is available in other languages. Will liaise with OL.

Councillor Akyigyina asked for reassurance about getting this message out to everyone, without missing anyone out, in particular residents new to the borough. She also commended telling people early but highlighted the need to continue to keep people informed, and to carry a clear message “The voting system is changing.”. AR responded that Housing Associations have agreed to send the info out with new tenancy packs. Leisure centres will carry the info. There will be a direct mail to every household. Councillor Henry agreed there needs to be repeated messaging.

Councillor Attawar expressed concern that there is a plan to introduce Voter ID for postal votes too. AR responded that the review for this is not until 2026.

5. Climate Change Action

Climate Engagement Officer, Amy Mallett, introduced the report on Climate Action in Merton.

Councillor Bokhari asked about transitioning to cargo bikes. AM responded that anything beyond the Wimbledon BID trial that has already taken place would be funding and resource-related. But is happy to pick it up with colleagues.

Councillor Gould asked if we are getting towards meeting the targets, and also who will be feeding into Safe Cycling Policy. AM responded that we are working towards meeting the targets in Year 3 of the Climate Delivery Plan, and that Safe Cycling is being overseen by colleagues in Future Merton.

Councillor Stringer asked about reassurance that Merton businesses are also being encouraged to use sustainable transport. AM responded that £400k is going towards business support.

6. Borough of Sport

The Head of Sports and Leisure, David Gentles, introduced the report.

Councillor Gould asked about the approach to disability in sport. DG responded that he has been working closely with the Cabinet Member, Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, to ensure inclusivity, as well as working with a Disability Sports Coach.

Hannah Neale asked about ensuring opportunities from the West are brought to the East of the borough, and about the approach to reaching the “unreachable”. DG responded that the challenge to date has been enough suitable facilities in the East. Moves are being made eg introducing Park Run to Figges Marsh. Asked for people to be in touch with him with details of communities which otherwise might not be being engaged with.

Councillor Henry reiterated the need to reach people in the east of the borough, and asked what support there is for people and groups running small projects. She also asked about looking at vacant spaces to use. DG

said this was very much in line with their Ambitions around Older People and Younger People in particular. Regarding vacant spaces, he welcomes information from the community about these.

Councillor Akyigyina asked about the “hard to reach”. DG responded they are also promoted intergenerational activity (eg walking netball), and have started delivering on this where the infrastructure exists.

The Chair commended the work being done, in particular for children and young people.

7. Holocaust Memorial Day 2024 Theme Update

Interim Policy and Scrutiny Manager, Octavia Lamb, introduced the report. Councillor Bokhari requested that in future acronyms are not used in reports, particularly on issues of importance like Holocaust Memorial Day. OL responded in the affirmative.

8. Draft Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Interim Policy and Scrutiny manager, Octavia Lamb, and Interim Equalities and Community Cohesion Lead, Susan Botros, introduced the report and explained the consultation timetable.

Hannah Neale requested clarity around “care experienced” in the broadened scope of the strategy. Councillor Stringer confirmed that it alludes to young people who have been in care (as opposed to young people who act/have acted as carers themselves). SB agreed to clarify the wording around this. Councillor Gould asked about the inclusion of the impact of climate change on equality issues. SB agreed and is meeting with a Climate Officer as a priority. Councillor Gould suggested the JCC should have a role in refreshing the Equality Impact Analysis template, and using external advisors to ensure performance is monitored. Noted.

Councillor Akyigyina asked for details of who is now chairing Merton Council’s Race Equality Network. SB will do so.

9. A New Met for London (formerly Police Turnaround Plan)

Inspector Oliver French-Greenslade summarised the report on behalf of the Merton Neighbourhoods Lead, Superintendent Luke Mooney. He also spoke about the New met for London event recently held at Tooting and Mitcham Football Club, and work being done in Mitcham Town Centre. There are also a number of activities planned specifically around Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

The Chair commended to report and the event where she was present. She requested a report on the outcome of the event. OFG responded that the review of feedback has been started and will be circulated once finalised. Councillor Akyigyina praised the work being done in Mitcham Town Centre. Councillor Bokhari praised the event and requested that this level of engagement and the willingness and enthusiasm for change can continue. OFG responded in the affirmative. He made clear that the devotion of the

officers to their wards is outstanding and there is a wide range of engagement even with limited resources.

Councillor Henry requested more events at a smaller and more local level.

OFG responded that they have started to look at this.

Councillor Gould asked about the timescale for resolving complaints received about police officers. OFG responded that the Commissioner has recently changed how the complaints system works, but this is an organisational issue outside his scope of reference.

10. AOB

Councillor Henry asked for clarity around membership of the JCC as she is aware of people who would like to be included. SB is looking at this at the moment as a priority.