

Agenda Item 3

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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 11 NOVEMBER 2014

(19.15 - 22.00)

PRESENT

Councillors Councillor Russell Makin (in the Chair),
Councillor Stan Anderson, Councillor Ross Garrod,
Councillor Janice Howard, Councillor Abigail Jones,
Councillor John Sargeant, Councillor Imran Uddin and
Councillor David Dean

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor Andrew Judge (Cabinet Member for Environmental
Regeneration and Sustainability), Councillor Nick Draper
(Cabinet Member for Community and Culture), Chris Lee
(Director of Environment and Regeneration), Caroline Holland
(Director of Corporate Resources), James McGinlay (Head of
Sustainable Communities), John Hill (Head of Public
Protection), Cormac Stokes (Head of Street Scene and
Waste), Richard Lancaster (Future Merton Programme
Manager), Dave Moffat, David Suranto Consultants, Steer
Gleave Davies, Yvonne Tomlin (Head of Community
Education), Christine Parsloe (Leisure and Culture
Development Manager), Sara Williams (Regeneration,
Investment and Renewal Officer – Future Merton), Rebecca
Redman (Scrutiny Officer), Councillor Peter Southgate,
Councillor Dennis Pearce

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 1)

Councillor Imran Uddin expressed his interest in item 7 as trustee of Morden
Park Community Trust.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)

None.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16TH SEPTEMBER 2014 (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED: Panel agreed the Minutes as a true record of the meeting.

4 MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON 29TH SEPTEMBER 2014 (Agenda Item 4)

RESOLVED: Panel agreed the Minutes as a true record of the meeting.

5 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Agenda Item 5)

Councillor John Sargeant asked about the status of the response from Pauline Ford at CHMP on the ambience reports and if the question could be raised on the possibility of sharing the results of the independent audit of Keep Moat that was discussed at the meeting of the Panel on 29th September 2014. Rebecca Redman explained that Pauline Ford had responded and was looking into whether ambience reports could be shared and that she would follow up with Pauline Ford on the Keep Moat audit and update the Panel at the next meeting.

Panel agreed to re-order the agenda to the following:

- Item 8 – 20mph zones and limits
- Item 6 – Adult Skills and Employability Task Group
- Item 7 – Morden Leisure Centre Update
- Item 9 – Business Plan Update 2015-2019
- Item 10 – Performance Monitoring (Verbal Update)
- Item 11 – Co-option
- Item 12 – Work programme

RESOLVED: Rebecca Redman to follow up on queries raised with CHMP.

6 ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP - PROGRESS UPDATE (Agenda Item 6)

Sara Williams introduced the report and provided an update on key actions within the action plan, resulting from the agreed recommendations of the task group review of adult skills and employability undertaken by the Panel as part of its 2013/14 work programme.

Sara Williams explained that on recommendation 3, there was recognition by the department that further work needed to be undertaken on this. Responsibility for building in opportunities to secure apprenticeships through the tendering process would need to be discussed with the procurement team. In addition, the Flexible Support Fund Bid was proposed as part of the recommendation, however, this was to be submitted as a revised application to respond to the changes in criteria and that the funding sought would be higher than originally planned.

Sara Williams informed the Panel that recommendation 8 was progressing and that the Merton Partnership conference was being held on 20th November 2014 which would focus on growth and would involve a discussion regarding inward investment and branding of SW19. A workshop was also due to be held on the delivery of the inward investment strategy in November 2014.

James McGinlay added that, in relation to recommendation 3, Future Merton are working with colleagues in procurement but that formal discussion with that team would need to be held before the arrangements could be agreed.

Caroline Holland added that, with responsibility for corporate procurement, she would ensure that this was raised with the procurement team at their next meeting and discuss where templates could be amended to include this requirement.

Councillor David Dean asked why more funding was not being sought from ESF funds. Sara Williams explained that significant funds could be applied for from this fund but, given that the team are quite small, there is a need to be realistic about what can be delivered. James McGinlay added that the prospectus for ESF and RDF funding was recently published by the GLA and an application for larger sums of money could be made on initiatives that might be jointly delivered by neighbouring authorities. This can be explored by Future Merton to determine if there is merit in approaching other authorities to work together on mutually beneficial projects.

Councillor David Dean added that we should seek to make bolder applications for funding where they can be delivered and also asked if up skilling residents was undertaken with the aim of simply ensuring they secure employment, or to enable them to progress or realise higher salaries. James McGinlay confirmed that the economic development strategy aimed to ensure higher value jobs and also increase the skills base of those on lower wages or in long term unemployment.

Yvonne Tomlin added that with regard to the action plan, the service has continued to develop its commercial arm. MAE has promoted use of the Wimbledon site, particularly with Wimbledon Tech being based at that library. Income is generated from room rentals in the library and whilst commercial aspects have not developed as speedily as the council would like, there has been an increase in promotion of and securing room lettings at present. The service is over target by £13,000 on rentals.

Yvonne Tomlin explained that the ABE qualification suite attracts more overseas students and that there was a test run in the latest prospectus on expanding provision and the range and level of qualifications and courses on offer. However, there have been low enrolment numbers this year and the service is looking at revamping its marketing. A meeting was also held with Kingston regarding partnership working and franchising some of the higher level courses that are delivered. Whilst looking at how to work up links with key partners is important, this is on hold whilst the Cabinet consider the options appraisal of MAE and how the service might function going forward. This will also impact on what commercial options are pursued.

Yvonne Tomlin informed the Panel that other work to deliver on the recommendations included a bid to the Department for Work and Pensions and Job Centre Plus to pilot a scheme in Mitcham Job Centre. This is a pop up arrangement that provides support to job seekers on job search and interview skills.

Councillor Abigail Jones asked if apprenticeships were available for people of all ages and if older people were taking up apprenticeships. Sara Williams explained that the Take1 initiative provided apprenticeship opportunities for individuals up to the age of 24. The figure presented in the updated action plan reflects this scheme. There are also other initiatives being overseen by the Economic Wellbeing Group. Long term unemployed and carers often need to be up skilled and there is work underway to address this. In addition, a new action plan has been prepared for the next 2 years which will support the long term unemployed.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the update and requested that further updates be provided to the Panel every 6 months on delivery of the action plan.

7 MORDEN LEISURE CENTRE - UPDATE (Agenda Item 7)

Christine Parsloe introduced the report which outlined the first decisions that Cabinet had been asked to take on 10 November 2014 which were all agreed at that meeting. The roll out of the project for Morden Leisure Centre is at the early stages of development, Christine Parsloe asked what involvement scrutiny would like in this process.

Councillor Ross Garrod stated that he was happy with the development and that Cabinet had accepted a two site solution and asked what the existing site would be used for when the development was complete. He also asked if this site could be utilised for affordable housing.

Christine Parsloe explained that this was not possible on this site for planning reasons. This site is defined as metropolitan open land and it is required to be returned back to open public space upon completion of the project. The Friends of Morden Park Playing Field expressed its interest in being involved in the restoration of the site to its historic features.

Councillor John Sargeant asked if the costs of returning this site to its original state were planned into the capital costs for the project and if the funds for this work had been ring fenced. He added that the council should work closely with the Community Trust in this process and consult residents in the area.

Christine Parsloe explained that the cost of the reinstatement of this land was accounted for within the project budget. This fund will be ring fenced to enable the developer to do so and the costs of demolition are included in the £11 million budget for the project. Christine Parsloe added that the council are in discussion with the Community Trust but that wider agendas would need to be managed so as not to impact negatively on the project scope, timescales and budget.

Councillor Russell Makin asked about the two site solution and when a decision would be taken on the actual site for the leisure centre. Christine Parsloe informed the Panel that site surveys would be undertaken in due course and that some surveys were already underway. The fact that only two

sites have been prioritised means that the cost of these surveys is reduced and the findings can then be discussed with developers.

Councillor Janice Howard asked if flexibility had been built into the project as the funds allocated to the project may not be sufficient as the development progresses or if issues arise that need to be responded to. In addition, if an additional stage would be put in place within the project to negotiate on the features within the leisure centre that were requested by residents, if funding allowed at that stage.

Christine Parsloe informed the Panel that the council would be seeking external funding and is in conversation with Sport England as there is an understanding that a leisure centre needs to be built for the future. Flexibility will be built into the development to ensure that future expansion and customer requirements of the leisure industry can be considered.

Councillor Nick Draper added that the department will monitor the budgets for delivery of the project and ensure it is delivered to agreed timescales. There is a possible role for scrutiny in this process. The development is also an invest to save initiative as well as a response to customer need and scrutiny may wish to maintain an overview of the project to ensure that it is meeting its objectives.

Councillor David Dean asked what the lifespan of the leisure centre building would be. Christine Parsloe confirmed that the lifespan was estimated to be 50 years. Modern solutions are being used when building commences on the centre which will ensure significant improvements in quality and greater efficiency of materials.

Councillor David Dean asked if extended opening hours could be offered at the new centre. Christine Parsloe explained that this was not part of the agreed leisure centre contract that has been in place with GLL since 2010. The service will have sufficient opening times to meet demand.

Councillor Andrew Judge explained that remediating the land on the existing site will be a condition of planning for the development and that the council will be working closely with the Community Trust to fulfil its wishes.

Councillor Imran Uddin proposed that the regeneration of the site may be a particular avenue for scrutiny to focus on when negotiations are at a more advanced stage.

Councillor David Dean noted that there had not been an opportunity for pre decision scrutiny of the project at this stage but that this would be welcomed in the future where there was an opportunity to do so.

Councillor Russell Makin proposed that the Panel might be involved at the stage of drawing up proposals for the restoration of the existing site, on what is

being negotiated with the Community Trust and on what facilities will be offered.

Councillor John Sargeant stated that the development of the leisure centre and the negotiations with the Community Trust could not be expected to run in parallel.

Councillor David Dean added that the quality and aesthetics of the building were key to its use and to being a building that the area can be proud of in the future.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report and asked that an update on progress with delivery of the project be brought to the Panel every 6 months and that the project plan should be shared with the Panel as part of this update, highlighting any opportunities for pre decision scrutiny.

8 20 MPH ZONES AND LIMITS (Agenda Item 8)

Chris Lee introduced the report and explained to the Panel that research had been undertaken in response to a request from the Panel, to enable members to undertake pre decision scrutiny on the proposals for the roll out of 20mph zones and limits across the borough. The report produced by consultancy Steer Davies Gleave looked at examples of 20mph zones and limits and the schemes implemented across London, nationally and internationally, to provide an evidence base to start a dialogue about the appropriate scheme for Merton. The position in Merton is that there are both 20mph zones and limits and there has been, over the past 2-3 years, a reduction in speed and accidents.

Chris Lee added that the DfT had also commissioned external research into 20mph schemes and the experiences of others reinforced the evidence emerging from this review and provided a feel for what is emerging regionally and nationally.

Dave Moffat and David Suranto consultants with Steer Davies Gleave commissioned to undertake this review, presented the findings:

- Legal, regulatory and policy context
- 20mph zones and limits across London
- Road safety rationale for 20mph speed limits
- Impacts of 20mph schemes (pre and post monitoring)
- Conclusions and considerations for Merton

Members were informed that both 20mph zones and speed limits are self enforcing and will incur different costs in terms of implementation. Both limits and zones require clear signage and physical measures. Limits are most common place as they are less financially onerous to implement. Members

also heard that the rationale for reducing speeds also relates to the duty placed on local authorities to contribute to public health (within the Health and Social Care Act 2012), as well as increased road safety and meeting associated targets and local policy commitments.

It was suggested to Members that the future policy direction of the council may be to implement zones and/or schemes on an area by area basis or that they may wish to look at a borough wide scheme if appropriate. Borough wide schemes are becoming more widespread across London, for example, central London boroughs such as Islington and Camden have 100% coverage of 20 mph limits/zones. However, the council should undertake monitoring and evaluation to look at collisions and traffic volumes when considering which model to adopt.

Furthermore, compliance can present many challenges. There is no expectation for additional resources for enforcement from the police and thresholds for action to be taken are in place.

Members should also consider the political appetite for schemes such as borough wide zones as this can often have a bearing on the policy direction the council takes. Other factors that can impact on the decision on the type of scheme to be adopted are environmental, traffic volumes, infrastructure and the effects of the scheme in the long term can be difficult to accurately predict.

Part of the challenge is to ensure a change in driving culture and social marketing is encouraged when schemes are implemented to stimulate this behavioural change. Education and engagement are key to this and whilst enforcement can be undertaken it should not be used in isolation without the appropriate mechanisms in place to facilitate behavioural change.

Conclusions drawn to members attention were:

- To note that borough wide schemes ensure consistency for drivers
- A case by case, area by area judgement is recommended as the most appropriate approach for Merton
- This approach should be reviewed at a later stage dependent upon its success and outcomes
- There should be a dedicated budget in place to encourage driver behavioural change
- Evaluation of benefits should focus on the impact on road safety
- The findings of the DfT review are expected in 2017 may be an opportune time to revisit the discussion about a borough wide scheme
- Post implementation monitoring is required for at least 3 years
- Opportunities for greater partnership working with the police should be explored

Councillor Janice Howard asked about the AA survey and noted that a 69% response rate would indicate that residents felt quite strongly about this. Proper consultation should be undertaken before a borough wide scheme is

agreed. Dave Suranto agreed that research had shown that consultation with residents, the police, TfL and other key stakeholders way important.

Councillor Imran Uddin stated that enforcement was a critical factor in the success of the scheme adopted and asked if there was any data from other local authorities on how different types of enforcement impacted on behavioural change over a period of time. Dave Suranto explained that under the current legislative framework, only police can enforce limits. In Hackney, however, lobbying is underway for the council to acquire powers to enforce limits. This has yet to be decided. Some authorities also have existing partnerships and agreements with police on enforcement. Dave Moffat added that community speed watch, a residents group that they came across as part of their research, have a rota in place by which letters are sent to the police from residents when there is an enforcement issue. After 3 letters the resident can expect a visit from the police to address this. This is more of a community approach but it works very well. Councillor Imran Uddin added that there may be a role for Safer Neighbourhood Teams in this and that this should be considered as a priority at the local level.

Dave Moffat also highlighted another scheme to encourage behavioural change which involved stickers in car windows to demonstrate that people were driving too fast and not adhering to speed limits.

Councillor John Sargeant stated that there must be sophisticated signage in place to encourage behavioural change and that more advanced technology in this area should be explored. The most cost effective portable schemes that can be utilised on area by area basis were perhaps the best way forward for Merton.

Councillor Stan Anderson asked what impact 20mph zones/limits would have on congestion. Dave Suranto explained that there had been no increase in congestion resulting from these schemes found in the research. However, London buses have expressed concerns in the past about slowing down routes and therefore impacting on running times however once implemented, they found that their concerns did not materialise.

Councillor David Dean added that we should be mindful of the pressures on police resources already and the severity of the crimes they should be allocating resource towards in order to address them. There can also be confusion amongst residents regarding limits and there is a need for consistency and communication.

Councillor Andrew Judge informed the Panel that speed limits depend on adequate enforcement however the police have been unable to do so due to a lack of resources. It may be helpful for a discussion to take place on the powers of the council to enforce and perhaps an opportunity to lobby for such powers could be taken alongside Hackney.

Councillor John Sargeant noted that all recommendations within the report regarding the potential approaches the council could take regarding 20 mph zones and limits were acceptable but that the council needed to be more proactive. He added that there is a case for more experimental, portable signage in key locations to determine if improvements can be demonstrated and evidence gathered on the extent of behavioural change.

Chris Lee responded by suggesting that advice be sought from Steer Davies Gleave on signage.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report and agreed its support for 20mph zones and limits to be considered on a case by case basis in the borough. The Panel agreed to forward a reference to Cabinet outlining its support and also requesting that further investigation be undertaken on radar based technology and signage, and associated costs and benefits.

9 BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE 2015-2019 (APPENDIX TO FOLLOW) (Agenda Item 9)

Caroline Holland introduced the report that included the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy and accounted for changes to major items, price inflation, issues regarding the pension fund and the grant settlement received. There has been a reduction in the grant expected as well as a review of council tax and an increase in the council tax base and collection rates. The revised capital programme was also presented alongside early service plan drafts. Further revisions to the service plans will be brought to the next round of scrutiny meetings for consideration.

Alternate proposals have been brought forward where there have been difficulties in generating savings agreed. New targets have been produced based on the council wide budget gap of £32 million. These savings will be brought to scrutiny in January for consideration.

Councillor David Dean asked why the savings target was so significant and the impact on the total budget. Caroline Holland explained that there had been an increase in the population which had impacted on the amount of dedicated schools grant received. There have also been additional responsibilities to be accounted for in public health and also in nursery provision. Legal shared services, regulatory shared services and the costs of transfer of staff have also resulted in additional costs and pressures. There is a downward trajectory with savings, however, there are increasing pressures resulting from demographic change. Caroline Holland added that one of the recommendations on Morden Leisure Centre was to rephase the capital programme. In this the costs would be spread over a greater number of years. This update will appear in the budget report in January 2015.

Councillor John Sargeant asked about structural changes to services that Cabinet were considering, for example, the MAE options appraisal. The budget and service implications did not appear to be outlined in this report. He

added that the potential impact should be considered by the Panel at their January 2015 meeting. Chris Lee explained that the impact would only need to be considered from April 2017 onwards and that the service and budgetary implications would be reflected in the 2017 budget.

Caroline Holland added that the MAE options appraisal and outcomes of the consultation could be brought to scrutiny in due course. Similarly, decisions to be taken on the waste contract would need to be factored into the budget in 2017 at the earliest when the contract is envisaged to start.

Councillor John Sargeant added that performance monitoring alone doesn't give an opportunity to get into the detail of the structural changes proposed and that the panel should have an opportunity to comment to enable them to deliver on their duties to their residents.

Councillor Imran Uddin asked what discretion the council had over the restricted spending outlined. Caroline Holland explained that the council had no discretion over the dedicated schools grant as it was a demand based grant.

Councillor Peter Southgate joined the meeting and proposed that the Panel hold a special meeting to consider the MAE options appraisal in more detail.

Caroline Holland added that monitoring reports are received by Cabinet on the budget and that the financial monitoring task group also undertake analysis by department and by service of the service and budgetary implications of proposals.

Chris Lee explained that there was an expectation there would be an increase in charges for development control. However, this is not going ahead as planned due to legislative changes which have resulted in £200,000 worth of identified savings no longer being achievable. Shared services will offer an opportunity to generate income, as well as fast tracking applications for planning. In building and development control deleting 1FTE in 2016/17 will enable a £40,000 saving.

Councillor David Dean asked about the government response to local authorities setting their own planning charges. John Hill explained that government are still investigating this. A decision is not expected on this anytime soon. Councillor David Dean asked if it was worth discussing this with MP's to fast track a decision. John Hill confirmed that the London Borough Planning Officers Group would have made representations to Government on this.

Chris Lee added structural changes that may be of concern to the Panel in the future are:

- Traffic and highways;
- Phase C procurement;

- Automatic number plate recognition

RESOLVED:

Panel agreed that they did not wish to forward any comments to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission in this instance.

Panel requested that a special meeting be set up to consider the detail of the MAE Options appraisal proposals before the next round of budget scrutiny in January 2015.

10 PERFORMANCE MONITORING - VERBAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 10)

Chris Lee provided an introduction to the item and highlighted that the majority of reds on the performance data were linked to an increase in volumes of waste over the last year. The council have subsequently had to send more waste to landfill. The proportion of waste however remains stagnant. There has also been an increase in fly tipping. This is a national trend and a report from DEFRA shows this to be the case. In addition there is a customer satisfaction issue as there is a perception amongst residents about cleanliness.

Councillor Stan Anderson asked if an increase in bulky waste collection might tackle the increase in fly tipping. Chris Lee explained that it would be difficult to state what the impact would be. Councillor Russell Makin asked what was being done to try to reduce residents fly tipping. Chris Lee informed the Panel that advice and guidance had been issued to households to try and change behaviour and where this persists the council will take action.

Councillor Abigail Jones asked what the turnaround time was between a resident requesting a bulky waste collection and the actual collection. Cormac Stokes explained that there had been problems in the early summer and extra vehicles were put on to respond to demand. The council is now back to its regular collection schedule. Bulky waste is collected on the same day as other waste and the turnaround time is normally within a week.

Councillor David Dean added that we need to be clear with residents about all types of waste collection, including recycling, to encourage them not to fly tip and to increase the rates of recycling. He also asked if putting all waste in a black bag to be sorted was the answer. Cormac Stokes explained that whilst the council would like to encourage people to recycle, they would have difficulty enforcing what people put into black sacks and there would be an additional cost for officer time sorting this waste.

Councillor Ross Garrod asked about the target relating to outdoor events income and why performance in this area didn't appear to be on track due to the income standing at £2023.00 only. Chris Lee explained that the income for the service can come in at different times each month and therefore this is not reflective of the actual income to date. The department do achieve this income target annually.

Councillor Ross Garrod asked about the income target for Merton Adult Education. Yvonne Tomlin explained that there had been changes to the funding method for the service and that the income profile did not reflect the income achieved this year. However, a slight underachievement of income was expected due to issues regarding match funding.

Councillor Ross Garrod asked if the reduction in the grant for the service had been scaled back nationally. Yvonne Tomlin confirmed that this was the case.

Councillor John Sargeant stated that he was aware that the underperformance against the indicators for planning was reflective of a service that, in the past, had insufficient resources allocated to it and a high staff turnover which has negatively impacted on what can be achieved. He asked if this was still the case.

James McGinlay explained that additional resources had been put into the development control team due to an increase in the volume of applications. Performance has started to pick up in this area; however, the department will continue to monitor this. Councillor John Sargeant asked if these resources were available for the longer term. James McGinlay confirmed that resources had been allocated for a two year period at this stage. It is difficult to recruit and there is a high turnover of staff. However, the financial commitment for staffing has been made within the budget.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the performance data tabled.

11 CO-OPTION (Agenda Item 11)

Rebecca Redman introduced the report and sought the Panels views on co-option to the Panel, for the municipal year, on one off items on Panel agendas or on task group reviews.

RESOLVED: Panel agreed to consider co-option at appropriate intervals on task group reviews or for one off items, in line with advice from the Scrutiny Officer.

12 WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15 (Agenda Item 12)

Rebecca Redman informed the Panel that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel had held a Performance Monitoring Training session for its members which had been a useful introduction to performance management relating to their remit. A session was to be arranged for the Panel in due course covering their areas of responsibility.

Rebecca Redman reminded the Panel that they had been invited to the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 25 November 2014 to consider and comment on the Financial Resilience item.

Rebecca Redman reminded the Panel that a member development session was being held on questioning and analysis skills for scrutiny members on 26th November and asked members to confirm their attendance.

Rebecca Redman informed the Panel that the Housing Supply Task Group was due to meet on 1st December to scope the review and that a scoping report would be presented to the Panel at its 8th January 2015 meeting to formally endorse.

RESOLVED: Rebecca Redman agreed to report back with a date for the performance monitoring training session.

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