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## **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**11 JUNE 2015**

**(19.15 – 21:40)**

### **PRESENT**

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

### **ALSO PRESENT:**

Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration),  
Anthony Hopkins (Head of Libraries and Heritage Services),  
Cormac Stokes (Head of Street Scene and Waste), Rebecca  
Redman (Scrutiny Officer), Councillor Nick Draper (Cabinet  
Member for Community and Culture), Councillor Andrew  
Judge (Cabinet Member for Environmental Regeneration and  
Sustainability), Councillor Judy Saunders (Cabinet Member for  
Parking and Environmental Cleanliness)

Deborah Upton, Executive Director for Governance (Circle  
Housing Merton Priory), Jane Bolton, Interim Managing  
Director (Circle Housing Merton Priory), Ray Evans, Deputy  
Programme Director, Repairs and Maintenance (Circle  
Housing Merton Priory), Paul Quinn, Director of Merton  
Regeneration (Circle Housing Merton Priory)

### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Russell Makin advised that he is a member on the Board for Merton Community Transport.

### **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

### **3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 MARCH 2015**

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

### **4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Panel expressed thanks to Councillor Russell Makin for his commitment and work as the outgoing Chair of the Panel.

Panel agreed to reorder the agenda to receive the update on Morden Leisure Centre first.

### **5. MORDEN LEISURE CENTRE – VERBAL UPDATE**

Christine Parsloe provided the Panel with an update on the Morden Leisure Centre development. A newsletter had been shared with Members on progress. Christine Parsloe informed the Panel that a Project Manager appointed, through a process of open procurement, from Sweet UK Ltd. The South London Legal team have also been appointed and will oversee the development.

In addition, a memorandum of understanding with the Morden Park Playing Fields Community Trust is being discussed to reduce duplication. A surveyor has been appointed and a design team will be selected shortly. The team are also putting together a technical specification with Greenwich Leisure, which will feed into the agreed operational standards. Christine Parsloe added that the model design would be consulted upon further by architects to test the public's views. The procurement of the main contractor would also ensure value for money. She added that Cabinet would agree this shortly and the planning process would be agreed and in place by Christmas 2015.

Councillor Janice Howard asked if a physical model or online model would be established to enable the public to see the plans and feed into the consultation process. Christine Parsloe confirmed that there would be a physical model and that there would also be some online consultation, but that unnecessary additional costs would be avoided.

Councillor Stan Anderson asked about the transition from the existing site to the new site and the potential impact on service delivery. Christine Parsloe confirmed that the council intend to keep the existing Morden Park Pools site open and in operation to enable smooth movement of operational staff to the new centre. Once transition is complete, the existing site will be closed.

Councillor Russell Makin asked if there had been any discussion with TfL to ensure residents could easily access the new site. Christine Parsloe explained that traffic surveys were underway by TfL who are working with the councils Highways team. Further surveys will be undertaken when the development is firmed up.

**RESOLVED:** Panel noted the update.

## **6. CIRCLE HOUSING MERTON PRIORY – UPDATE**

Members received the attached presentation.

Deborah Upton informed the Panel that CHMP would shortly recruit to the Head of Housing permanent post.

Omar Ali, Chair of the High Path Estate Residents Association, addressed the Panel to raise issues with repairs and maintenance in some of the properties on the High Path Estate and he submitted a written statement and photographic evidence of the issues being discussed.

Councillor Ross Garrod asked what work CHMP had done to anticipate the impact of the changes to benefits and welfare for some of its residents and what support they would be offering to those affected. Jane Bolton explained that CHMP have worked with the Housing Benefit Team at the council and have identified families likely to be affected by the benefits gap. There are a number of vulnerable residents that will be referred to specialist advice agencies for people with financial difficulties. CHMP try to get people economically active and in some form of work to support them to be financially independent.

Councillor Ross Garrod asked if any funding was being made available by CHMP to expand employment and advice services available to residents. Jane Bolton confirmed that there were no plans to do so at present as CHMP cope with demand which stands at 100 residents at present. This is not a significant enough number of residents to need to expand current provision.

Deborah Upton explained that one of Circle priorities is to help people tackle the impact of welfare reform. Substantial funds were also put into the credit union by Circle but more funding would be made available if necessary.

Councillor John Sargeant asked how customer satisfaction levels were calculated as it was clear from the representation made by Omar Ali that some residents are unhappy with their service. He added that it would be useful to see case studies and examples of problematic situations and how they have been resolved.

Ray Evans (Savills) explained that he felt that the issue raised at this meeting by Omar Ali was appalling, but that it was not a case he was familiar with. He committed to address this issue as soon as possible and to meet with Omar Ali to address the problems noted in his submission to the Panel.

Ray Evans added that he was confident that improvements were being made and that Keepmoat were also improving. He added that surveyors were also on site to look at problems now. Ray Evans offered his apologies to Omar Ali and committed to personally looking into this case.

Councillor John Sargeant asked if CHMP would come to a future meeting and provide evidence on specific problems and how they have been addressed, as well as on how future issues might be mitigated to enable Members to see what the issue was, the process followed, and the outcome. Deborah Upton confirmed that this could be provided and suggested that the Panel might be interested in the work of the Tenants Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Janice Howard enquired about the target for responses to issues raised for repairs and maintenance. Jane Bolton explained that targets are in place but that a number of factors affect response rates, for example, staff absence. Lessons are being learned about how to handle calls more efficiently and trends in contact and, of particular issues, are being identified and monitored.

Councillor Russell Makin asked how the gardening scheme was publicised. Jane Bolton explained that this information could be found on the website and in CHMP magazines.

Councillor David Dean expressed his concerns about the submission from Omar Ali and asked that councillors be kept up to date on such issues and on what remedial action was taken. He added that repairs appear to be an on going problem for CHMP and calls are not being answered or responded to promptly enough.

Councillor Andrew Judge added that the example given was, from his knowledge, far from an isolated case. Repairs are not being dealt with over a prolonged period of time. He added that the surveyors employed have not been carrying out thorough assessments and that repairs are not being adequately undertaken. Councillor Andrew Judge encouraged councillors to bring forward any cases raised by their constituents and ensure action is being taken.

Councillor Ross Garrod asked if the repairs service provided value for money to residents. Deborah Upton explained that the main reasons for this contractor being employed were the anticipated financial savings and expected improvements to the service. Residents were also consulted on the choice of contractor.

Councillor Ross Garrod noted that there were longstanding issues in Mitcham where roof repairs had not been fully carried out and scaffolding had been in place for some time. Councillor Ross Garrod asked why customer satisfaction rates seemed to be the same as those provided to the Panel last year when there is now a full time director in place, based in Merton, and more surveyors have been employed. He asked why customer satisfaction figures have remained stable. Deborah Upton explained that customer satisfaction tracks at 85% month on month. CHMP are planning to run focus groups with residents to understand their issues and why they are not happy.

Councillor Ross Garrod asked if satisfaction data was collected before or after repairs were carried out and if surveys were undertaken by an independent body. Jane Bolton explained that surveys were undertaken independently of the central call centre service and that data was provided to CHMP separately on customer satisfaction.

Councillor Imran Uddin added that statistics needed to reflect the depth of the problems being experienced.

**RESOLVED:**

- Panel requested that a response be provided to the High Path Estate Resident Association with regard to the case raised at the meeting.

- Panel requested quarterly performance data from CHMP on repairs and response times.
- Panel requested that CHMP attend their January 2015 meeting to comment on their response to the case raised at the meeting and to provide other case study examples of issues and how they have been resolved, to reassure Members that sufficient measures are in place to support residents.

## **7. DEPARTMENTAL PRIORITIES – PRESENTATIONS**

Members received the attached presentations.

Chris Lee highlighted the following areas of work that have been prioritised for the year ahead:

- Investment of £4 million in the Canons site through the Heritage Lottery Fund which would see work commence end of 2015;
- Outcomes of wheeled bin pilot in Lavender Ward and implications for waste collection service going forward;
- End of procurement process for automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) system and CCTV services which will revolutionise how traffic problems in the borough are dealt with and aid traffic flow;
- Small scale procurement programme for street lighting, which will be agreed alongside a £400,000 investment proposal. New system will reduce energy and maintenance costs;
- Development of a Housing Zone in Morden;
- Growth is a significant priority for the department;
- Achieving 40% housing supply target and ambitious plans for land in council ownership;
- Mitcham Fair Green Improvements;
- Cycling and investment from Mayors Fund which will improve the quality of infrastructure and prioritise routes;
- Housing Development Company as the HRA will not be reestablished, focus on mixed tenure and look at how this model could assist the councils general fund and create an income stream;
- Transformation programme and 10 service areas which must identify savings and efficiencies;

- Commercialisation and giving more attention to how to generate new or enhance existing services to generate income

Anthony Hopkins outlined the priorities for the C&H Department. See attached presentation.

Councillor David Dean stated that commercial opportunities through MAE should be better managed.

Councillor John Sargeant asked how the size of the offer in year 1 of the commissioning model would be determined. Anthony Hopkins explained that work was underway on this and that soft market testing was also being undertaken by the service.

Councillor John Sargeant asked if the council would seek to deliver 400 new homes per year. Chris Lee confirmed that this was the case. Councillor John Sargeant asked how ANPR would work. Chris Lee explained that there is currently a white van monitoring traffic offences, which capture an image that then needs to be scanned and submitted to the DVLA, alongside a separate system to issue a ticket. ANPR will allow a more seamless service as the software can do all of the above and is therefore more efficient and can enable the department to get through higher volumes of work. The vans can also be removed.

**RESOLVED:** Panel noted the presentations.

## **8. AGREEING THE WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16**

Panel agreed the work programme and asked that they be given opportunity to scrutinize any proposals regarding Merton Adult Education at pre decision stage. Panel agreed that this item should be scheduled into the work programme for June or September 2015, dependent on the departmental timescales for reporting to Cabinet.

The Panel asked for briefings at the September 2015 meeting on the following items to enable them to make a decision as to what the task group review would be for the Panels 2015/16 work programme:

- Commercial Services;
- Tourist Industry in Merton

The Panel heard from Merton Centre for Independent Living (CIL) regarding their request that the Panel scrutinize proposals for the Merton Adult Education service and that they engage service users with moderate to profound learning difficulties that are students of MAE to ensure that their views are represented in any recommendations made to Cabinet.

Merton Centre for Independent Living (CIL) also offered to support the Panel to undertake engagement with service users they support that have learning disabilities, for example, through training, coaching and engagement tools. Attention was also drawn to the submission from young people with disabilities that are students of MAE.

Councillor Russell Makin enquired about the Public Transport Liaison Committee (PTLC) and raising transport issues. Rebecca Redman agreed to update the panel on the meeting date for the next PTLC meeting when agreed.

Councillor David Dean asked that CHMP come back to the Panel with an update on their response to the issues raised by the High Path Estate Residents Association.

Councillor Russell Makin asked that the Panel receive an update on developments regarding Crossrail 2.

**RESOLVED:**

- Panel agreed the work programme, subject to the additions requested.
- Panels agreed to decide upon a task group review at the September 2015 meeting, further to receiving the above briefings, and appoint members to the group at that meeting.
- That the Scrutiny Officer consult with Merton CIL to engage its service users when the Panel considers MAE proposals at a future meeting
- That the Scrutiny Officer inform the Panel via email of the date of the next PTLC meeting (when determined by the department)
- Panel agreed to engage CHMP at the Panels January meeting to look at the response that has been made to issues raised by the High Path Estate Residents Association at this meeting, and on other specific cases and how they are being addressed
- That Crossrail 2 be added to the work programme
- Panel agreed to consider the quarterly performance data on CHMP repairs and response times as part of their 2015/16 work programme

**9. PERFORMANCE MONITORING –VERBAL UPDATE**

Councillor Abigail Jones proposed that the Panel undertake performance monitoring differently during the 2015/16 work programme by giving it more prominence and considering it as the first item of business on the agenda, following the standard items. It was also proposed that the Directors for E&R and C&H provide the Panel with information at each meeting on their top 3

areas of concern and how they are addressing these to enable the Panel to look at these areas in more detail and make any recommendations they feel are appropriate.

Councillor David Dean raised questions regarding the total increase in commercial waste and associated income. Chris Lee explained that commercial waste is quarterly billed and therefore income would be received in June 2015 and reflected in the next quarter on the dashboard.

Councillor Ross Garrod asked for data relating to the performance of CHMP on a quarterly basis on repairs and response times.

**RESOLVED:**

- Panel agreed to consider performance monitoring as the first item of business on the agenda
- Panel agreed to receive a brief report alongside the performance dashboard information on the top 3 areas of concern from the directors of E&R and C&H
- Panel agreed to consider the quarterly performance data on CHMP repairs and response times as part of their 2015/16 work programme