

Merton Council

Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel



Date: 12 February 2013
Time: 7.15 p.m.
Venue: Committee Rooms B, C & D
Merton Civic Centre, London Road,
Morden SM4 5DX

AGENDA

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**This is a public meeting – members of the public are very welcome to attend.
The meeting room will be open to members of the public from 7.00 p.m.**

For more information about the work of this and other overview and scrutiny panels, please contact, Stella Akintan, Scrutiny Officer, on 020 8545 3390 or e-mail stella.akintan@merton.gov.uk. Alternatively, visit www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny

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Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Membership

Full Members:

Councillor Suzanne Evans (Chairman)
Councillor Peter McCabe (Vice Chair)
Councillor Margaret Brierly
Councillor Brenda Fraser
Councillor Maurice Groves
Councillor Logie Lohendran
Councillor Dennis Pearce
Councillor Greg Udeh

Substitute Members:

Councillor Laxmi Attawar
Councillor Janice Howard
Councillor Linda Taylor
Councillor John dehaney
Co-opted Representatives
Myrtle Agutter
Laura Johnson
Sheila Knight
Barbara Price
Saleem Sheikh

Note 1

Members are reminded of the need to have regard to the items published with this agenda and, where necessary to declare at this meeting any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (as defined in the The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012) in any matter to be considered at the meeting. If a pecuniary interest is declared they should withdraw from the meeting room during the whole of the consideration of that matter and must not participate in any vote on that matter. If members consider they should not participate because of a non pecuniary interest which may give rise to a perception of bias, they should declare this, withdraw and not participate in consideration of the item. For further advice please speak with the Council's Assistant Director of Corporate Governance.

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny describes the way Merton's scrutiny councillors hold the Council's Executive (the Cabinet) to account to make sure that they take the right decisions for the Borough. Scrutiny panels also carry out reviews of Council services or issues to identify ways the Council can improve or develop new policy to meet the needs of local people. From May 2008, the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and Panels have been restructured and the Panels renamed to reflect the Local Area Agreement strategic themes.

Scrutiny's work falls into four broad areas:

- ⇒ **Call-in:** If three (non-executive) councillors feel that a decision made by the Cabinet is inappropriate they can 'call the decision in' after it has been made to prevent the decision taking immediate effect. They can then interview the Cabinet Member or Council Officers and make recommendations to the decision-maker suggesting improvements.
- ⇒ **Policy Reviews:** The panels carry out detailed, evidence-based assessments of Council services or issues that affect the lives of local people. At the end of the review the panels issue a report setting out their findings and recommendations for improvement and present it to Cabinet and other partner agencies. During the reviews, panels will gather information, evidence and opinions from Council officers, external bodies and organisations and members of the public to help them understand the key issues relating to the review topic.
- ⇒ **One-Off Reviews:** Panels often want to have a quick, one-off review of a topic and will ask Council officers to come and speak to them about a particular service or issue before making recommendations to the Cabinet.
- ⇒ **Scrutiny of Council Documents:** Panels also examine key Council documents, such as the budget, the Business Plan and the Best Value Performance Plan.

Scrutiny panels need the help of local people, partners and community groups to make sure that Merton delivers effective services. If you think there is something that scrutiny should look at, or have views on current reviews being carried out by scrutiny, let us know.

For more information, please contact the Scrutiny Team on 020 8545 3390 or by e-mail on scrutiny@merton.gov.uk. Alternatively, visit www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny .

HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES AND OLDER PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE

16 JANUARY 2013

7.15pm-10.15pm

PRESENT: Councillors; Suzanne Evans (Chair), Peter McCabe (Vice-Chair), Margaret Brierly, Brenda Fraser, Maurice Groves, Janice Howard (substitute), Dennis Pearce, Greg Udeh

Co-opted members: Myrtle Agutter, Laura Johnson, Sheila Knight, Barbara Price, Saleem Sheikh,

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Linda Kirby, Councillor Mark Allison, Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services, Simon Williams, Director of Community and Housing.

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillor Logie Lohendran

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were received from Councillor Dennis Pearce whose organisation is in receipt of voluntary sector grants and Councillor Maurice Groves who is on the Board of Merton Priory Homes.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Logie Lohendran

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 15th & 20th NOVEMBER 2012

The minutes of these meetings were agreed

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes

5 BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE 2013-2017

The Chair asked the Director for Corporate Services to give an overview of the budget process and the latest budget position.

The Director reported that the budget report went to cabinet before the latest local government settlement. There are still gaps in the mid term financial plan. This Panel need to consider the risks attached to the savings as there are very few low risk savings; therefore comments on the risk matrix are welcome.

A panel member asked if the council has the correct level of balances or if they are excessive?

The Director for Corporate Services reported that there is a prudent level of reserves required for the current circumstances and possible risks for example we do not currently understand the implications of localising the business rates. Therefore the

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current level of reserves is not excessive at this time.

A panel member queried the assumptions on pay inflation with concern that it may be over-forecast. The Director agreed to share the detailed workings with the panel.

The Chair asked Simon Williams Director of Community and Housing to introduce each of the savings proposals.

The Director of Community and Housing said that we must recognise that the council faces big challenges over the next five years and adult social care must play a full role. Adult social care is the largest controllable budget therefore we need to determine which cuts are reasonable and the best way to achieve them. In making savings there are priorities that need to be taken into consideration:

Investment in prevention and recovery

Give people as much as they need for as long as they need it and no more

Excellent procurement and commissioning

Protect frontline staff and services

Strong partnership working

ASC10 - optimising the use of telecare

The Director reported that there have not been as many savings realised in this area as originally hoped. This was because assumptions were based on what other councils were doing but Merton was already more targeted in its use of home care than other areas so there was less opportunity for savings.

ASC14 – Supported Living

The Director reported that this saving has also not yielded the saving expected as some care homes are not suitable in de-registration. A panel member asked what the criterion is for de-registration? The Director reported that de-registration is driven by the type of service;- it is open to those which would benefit from having more choice and control.

ASC15 - Ordinary residence

The Director reported that hundreds of thousands had already been saved on this target and will pass actual figures to the panel. The changes had needed to be brought forward from future years in case there was a change to the rules governing this area. A panel member pointed out that the way that the information is presented in the table is mis-leading as the money has been saved and the target has been exceeded. It was suggested it would be more helpful if information was presented in

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a way which made clear the actual and revised savings.

ASC16 – Transitions

The Director reported this is taking longer than expected and substitute savings will be found through one-off re-ablement funding from the former PCT. A panel member asked about the impact on the move to the clinical commissioning group on partnerships with the health sector. The Director reported that this will be difficult to predict but the fact that we have a Merton only group to focus on the issues in the borough is positive. A panel member asked about the impact of public health moving to the council, The Director reported that we have received more money than expected. We are yet to find out if we will have additional tasks and responsibilities; overall this is an excellent opportunity to influence the health and well being of Merton residents.

ASC17 – Shared Lives

The Director reported that the department has successfully revamped the service although they had not received as many referrals as they would have hoped.

ASC19 – High value placements

The Director reported that savings could be realised through less reliance on fleet and specialist vehicles. A dual role will be created combining the work of the day centre staff that support people during the day and those driving and or escorting. A number of proposals for getting people to day centres are being looked at including public transport, walking, or use of ordinary cars. Advanced technologies with telecare will mean people can travel alone more safely. Panel members raised a number of issues including; public transport can be complicated if a number of changes are involved; what happens if people do not turn up to meet service users, especially if they are waiting in a public place; who decides what is an unreasonable expectation on service users; staff roles are two separate jobs and could be challenging when mixing customer groups. (This was done before and had to be shelved because it was a disaster).

The Director reported that people's support needs would be looked at and the process managed very carefully. There will be negotiations between service users, carers and professionals. There is already technology in place (e.g mobile phones) to alert people if there needs to be a change in arrangements. There will be a separation of the driver and escort if necessary. Different service user groups can be mixed and it is important that we do to build tolerance in society.

ASC19 Direct Provision – reduce day care costs

The Director reported that we would not be closing day centres. A safe and reliable service as requested by carers will still be offered. However there would be a reduction in tailor made activities through paid staff and the use of volunteers will be increased as with the library service. Several panel members pointed out that prevention has been identified, as a priority and if we take away activities there could be further problems down the line. The Director reported that volunteers would be used to provide activities.

Further concerns were expressed that we could get into a vicious cycle in day care where services are taken away leading to deterioration in patients health, making this proposed saving counter productive.

Voluntary sector grants reduction in infrastructure costs

A panel member asked for detail about the cuts being proposed. The Director reported that the details have not been agreed yet. The sector will be asked to come forward with ideas about where efficiencies can be made. Panel members expressed concern that we need to ensure that voluntary organisations are not asked to take a level of cuts that makes them unviable. It was thought that we need to ensure that we do not harm a sector that offers a valuable service to society as the cost of replacing it would be greater, A panel member was concerned that this could be unachievable and become a revised saving next year.

Meals on wheels contract savings

The Director reported that this service was outsourced a few years ago. If people can manage frozen meals there is a question as to whether we still need a meals on wheels service, as people may only need help to heat up a hot meal. Some councils have stopped providing this service. Reviews are currently taking place all of those using the service to help to determine the best way forward.

Panel members were concerned as sometimes this is the only service that people will accept and that meals on wheels staff can identify other issues of concern and alert relevant authorities. It was also commented that some people will need help to heat up a frozen meal.

The Director reported that there would need to be some careful risk assessment to find the best solutions.

Mental health placements

The Director reported that the Mental Health Trust is managing this saving proposal. People sometimes stay in high cost placements when they no longer need to.

Mental Health and Fanon & Imagine Contract reduction

A panel member reported that Fanon is now closed. The Imagine service for BME groups has moved to Wimbledon, however service users are largely based in Mitcham. The Director reported that specialist services are often not well used and questions are being asked about if we can afford to have separate services, instead of generic services that are open to all ethnic groups. The Director agreed to find out the time the services are provided.

Review of care packages with a view to an overall reduction in line with promoting independence

The Director reported that there is a high deliverability risk with this saving, as savings cannot continually reduce. A panel member said that this panel should look at this in detail in future as some people are not confident in reporting quality issues, also that when savings are made quality goes down, we need to look at consistency of care. A panel expressed concern that the revised saving was too high.

Monitoring high value placements

The Director reported that savings may mean prioritising the elements of support for clients with less essential activities of daily living and accommodation being protected and less essential activities being possibly challenged. Within the national picture spending on services for people with learning disabilities has increased above the rate of inflation. We need to look at what is fair for all client groups in times of cuts.

Brokerage efficiency savings, by finding the best value option and setting personal budgets on this basis

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It was reported that the brokerage team costs £250,000 however this is not new money and has been formed from existing staffing resources.

Panel members asked if this service could generate income and if the service will charge self funders. The Director said that the service was set up to achieve value to the council and is not resourced to offer a free service to self funders. Merton i will provide brokerage advice to self funders. We will investigate the potential of selling the service once it is up and running.

CH05: Realise benefits of prevention programme

A panel member reported that this represents a reduction in prevention services. The Director reported that by 2016/17 either the programme will be working and we can fund it from spending less on long term support or, if it is not reducing spend on long term support, then we cannot afford to keep it going. There will be a balanced portfolio of indicators to measure the success of the programme.

CH06 – Voluntary Organisations - SLA reduction

The Director reported that we would be working with the voluntary sector to find efficiencies. A panel member said that not all voluntary organisations are run by councils.

The Panel agreed to make the following reference to cabinet regarding the budget proposals:

1. Some members of the panel have reservations about the proposal to increase the number of volunteers working in day centres and would like this to be closely monitored. Currently service users benefit from the range of activities provided by paid staff. If these activities are taken away and only provided when suitable volunteers can be found, it could lead to deterioration in their health and increased use of high cost services. It was felt that the analogy with the increased use of volunteers in the library service was not a useful one as this service is far more demanding.
2. The panel are concerned about combining the role of day care workers and drivers as this could prove challenging when dealing with some client groups. The council should be guided by the outcome from the JMC pilots to see if this proposal will be viable.
3. The panel feels that the proposed level of cuts to the voluntary sector is

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unrealistic and should be revised. The voluntary sector provides an invaluable service to the community and Cabinet is reminded that Adult Social Care is currently running a £1.1 million projected year- end overspend. The panel questions the necessity and depth of these proposed cuts. If essential services are not able to continue, the council may have to bear the cost.

4. The panel had some reservations about the new brokerage service and want to see that there is a clear cost- benefit analysis. It is also important that a service of this nature offers a comprehensive service to those who pay for their own residential care.

RESOLVED

Panel to be provided with detailed calculations on the current assumptions on pay inflation

Panel to be provided with details of savings from ordinary residence savings

Panel to be provided with time of Imagine mental health service in Wimbledon

Circulate article in Health Services Journal on prevention services to be circulated to Panel members.

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