

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 30 April 2013

Agenda item: 6

Wards: All

Subject: Review of Community Engagement and Community Forums 2012/13

Lead officer: Sophie Poole, Head of Communications

Lead member: Councillor Edith Macauley, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities

Forward Plan reference number:

Contact officer: Kris Witherington, Community Engagement Manager x3896

Recommendations:

- A. To discuss and comment on the report
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Commission of the activities of Merton's five Community Forums in 2012/13 and provide an update on Community Engagement activities.

Executive summary:

- 1.2. This was the second year of holding officer supported annual community forum meetings with the option of additional meetings throughout the year led by councillors. Attendance at the annual meetings has been similar to the annual meetings in 2011/12 but with significant variations. Four forum areas have now opted to hold additional meetings.
- 1.3. The e-petition system was launched in December 2010. Since April 2012 seven completed petitions have been submitted to the council, and one was rejected by the council.
- 1.4. The Council appointed People Matters Network to provide a new online consultation hub. This was launched in July 2012.
- 1.5. The Council continues to undertake an annual survey of residents using the same methodology as in previous years with a comparable pan-London survey to help benchmark the results.

2 DETAILS

Community Forums

- 2.1. The five annual meetings of the Community forums took place in September and October 2012. Average attendance across these meetings was 35 residents but there were considerable variations between meetings, with over 50 attending at Raynes Park and 20 at Colliers Wood. All of the annual meetings discussed the refresh of the Community Plan and contributed issues that have been included in the new draft.

- 2.2. Raynes Park Community Forum has continued to meet quarterly at Raynes Park library. The meetings are chaired by a local councillor but are supported by the Raynes Park Association and the town centre champion Neil Milligan. The attendance at additional meetings remains at similar level to 2011/12. The agendas have included controlled parking zones, local transport issues, local planning issues, local health services and the Raynes Park Enhancement Plan.
- 2.3. Wimbledon Community Forum has continued to meet quarterly but has had to switch venues to accommodate a larger audience. The meetings were chaired by Councillor Henry Nelles and supported by the town centre champion John Hill. Attendance at the additional meetings has improved considerably on the 2011/12 meetings. This is no doubt because of the proactive promotion of the meetings by local councillors. The agendas have included Destination Wimbledon, the Olympics, licensing and local planning issues. The police also provide an update at each meeting.
- 2.4. In addition to its annual meeting, Morden Community Forum held one councillor led meeting in April 2013. Both meetings were chaired by Councillor Maurice Groves with support from Paul McGarry, as town centre champion, and held at the Civic Centre. Some councillors have also organised meetings for single wards or ward clusters. At the Morden forum issues discussed have included More Morden, Morden Hall Park, Merton Clinical Commissioning Group, local parking issues and updates from the police.
- 2.5. Mitcham Community Forum chose to hold an additional meeting in April 2013 to coincide with the Rediscover Mitcham plans. The meetings were chaired by Councillor Ian Munn, supported by Cormac Stokes as town centre champion, and took place at Vestry Hall or Age UK. The annual meeting was attended by 28 residents and included a presentation on Rediscover Mitcham, and a question time with the Leader of the Council.
- 2.6. Colliers Wood Community Forum continues to be the most challenging to deliver but saw a significant improvement in 2012. 20 residents attended the annual meeting compared to only four in 2011. Local councillors had met ahead of the meeting to suggest additional methods of marketing the forum and this appears to have had some impact. The meeting was chaired by Councillor Greg Udeh, supported by James McGinlay, and took place at St Joseph's Church hall. Issues discussed included Better Services Better Value, fly tipping, Mayor's Regeneration Fund and Colliers Wood Tower.
- 2.7. Of the five forums Raynes Park and Wimbledon are now at a level that could be considered successful in that they consistently have a comparatively high level of attendance, but this does rely on the commitment of local councillors and the Raynes Park Association. Morden is still exploring the balance between area wide forums and smaller area forums and whether they can replicate the success of Wimbledon. Mitcham is using the profile of the Rediscover Mitcham programme to encourage higher attendance as well as introducing an additional meeting for the first time. For Colliers Wood more work will be needed to build on the improvement this year.
- 2.8. The meeting dates for 2013/14 are set out below:

Forum	Colliers Wood	Mitcham	Morden	Raynes Park	Wimbledon
Annual Meeting date	22 October, St Joseph's Hall	15 October Vestry Hall	8 October, Civic Centre	12 September Raynes Park Library	25 September Wimbledon Methodist Church
Additional Meeting dates	NA	25 March 2014	20 March 2014	13 June 4 December 13 March 2014	12 June, Wimbledon Guild 11 December 18 March 2014

E-petition system

- 2.9. The system uses open source code developed by Public-I and is hosted by the council. This has placed an additional pressure on IT resources but does not involve the cash spend associated with an externally hosted product. It is possible that alternative systems maybe available for no cost as a result of procurement of other IT systems.
- 2.10. The petitions received in 2012/13 and the number of signatures are set out in the table below:

Petition name	Signatures
Retain Merton Council free support for Little League Football	277
Proposed Dog Control Orders	424
Southey Road Pedestrian Crossing	189
Roundabout Kingston/Lower Downs/Burstow Road	128
To include Dupont Road in the Apostles CPZ	87
Speed Restriction Measures on Garfield Road	Still live
To include Chestnut Road in the Apostles CPZ	Still live

Online Consultation Hub

- 2.11. Following a procurement process in 2012 the council appointed People Matters Network to provide an online hub for use by the council and its partners.
- 2.12. Since July 2012, 47 consultations have been registered on the database. In addition 146 listings from our previous internal database were also transferred.
- 2.13. Not all of the registered consultations are available for public view, as the system has also been used to consult with staff and to target specific small groups of service users.

- 2.14. 27 consultations have included an online survey element supported by the system. The Dog Control Orders consultation received 467 online responses, Safer Merton Strategic Assessment received 431 responses and the Town Centre Parking survey received 388. Internally a survey on the 2012 staff conference received 555 responses.
- 2.15. NHS, Transport for London, Greater London Authority, Department of Transport, Boundary Commission for England, Love Wimbledon and MVSC consultations have also been listed on the system.
- 2.16. We have recently added a new feature that enables residents and others to register for alerts. Those who register will receive a short email each time a new consultation that matches their interests is added to the system.
- 2.17. The consultation database can be found at www.merton.gov.uk/consultations

Residents' Survey

- 2.18. The results of the 2012 residents' survey have been reported to Cabinet, Merton Partnership, and Merton Youth Parliament as well being communicated to staff and residents. The detail of the findings is available on the council's website but some of the questions are particularly relevant to this report.
- 2.19. The proportion of respondents agreeing with the statement 'Merton Council listens to the concerns of local residents' remained the same as in 2011 at 60%. The proportion agreeing that 'Merton Council involves residents in making decisions' was down from 55% to 54%. Compared to the pan-London survey the Merton scores were 4% higher for both these statements.
- 2.20. A wider statement that asks respondents if they feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area saw a slight decrease compared to 2011 from 54% to 51% agreeing.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. This report does not require decisions

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. No consultation has been undertaken for this report as it summarises consultation and community engagement activity.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. Not applicable

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. None

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. Minority ethnic, and young people continue to be under-represented at the Community Forums. Improving online provision will offer opportunities to engage with a wider audience.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. None

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- None

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. Community Forum Chair's Reports

12.2. Annual Residents' Survey Results

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