

Merton Council Council

19 April 2023

Supplementary Agenda 1: Strategic Theme Motions and Amendments to the Strategic Theme Report

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Motion from the Liberal Democrat Group – Schools and Young People – Care Leavers as a protected Characteristic

Proposed by: Cllr Chessie Flack

Seconded by: Cllr Samantha MacArthur

Council understands that:

1. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies, such as councils, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation of people with protected characteristics.

Council notes that:

2. Care experienced people face significant barriers that impact them throughout their lives;
3. Despite the resilience of many care experienced people, society too often does not take their needs into account;
4. Care experienced people often face discrimination and stigma across housing, health, education, relationships, employment and in the criminal justice system;
5. As corporate parents, Councillors have a collective responsibility for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by us as an authority.

Council agrees that:

6. The work done to further strengthen the role of corporate parenting in Merton is helpful and that all corporate parents should consider acting as mentors, hearing the voices of looked after children and young people and to reflect their needs in any aspect of council work.
7. Councillors should be champions of our looked after children and challenge the negative attitudes and prejudice that exists in all aspects of society wherever and whenever possible.

Council therefore requests Cabinet:

8. Considers care experience as a local protected characteristic in Merton;
9. To proactively seek out and listen to the voices of care experienced people when developing new policies based on their views and reflect these in Equality Impact Assessments;

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10. To continue to build on the existing ringfenced apprenticeship opportunities for care experienced people by committing to an agreed appropriate number of apprenticeships places each year delivered through the Council's levy funding.

**Councillor Chessie Flack
Bokhari**

Councillor Samantha McArthur Councillor Hina

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Labour Motion: A Police Service people can trust, and that is responsive and accountable.

Proposed by: Cllr Stringer
Seconded by: Cllr Macauley

Motion text:

Council notes:

- Merton residents and all Londoners expect and deserve a Police Service they can trust, not fear, which responds to the needs of the communities it serves and is accountable to the community for the decisions it makes.
- With deep concern the appalling findings of Baroness Casey's independent review into the standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Metropolitan Police Service, including the findings of institutional racism, sexism, misogyny, and homophobia in the Met, and the failure to implement operational, cultural, and systemic change that is so desperately needed.
- That the deeply troubling failures highlighted in the Casey review are overwhelmingly due to a longstanding failure of culture within the force. However, the review also highlights that government cuts to funding for the Met have exacerbated some problems.
- And welcomes the commitment from the new Met Commissioner to major reform of the Metropolitan Police Service and to rebuilding trust amongst Londoners.
- The strong and positive working relationship that Merton Council and Merton Police maintain, which is focused on keeping our borough one of the safest anywhere in London.
- The administration's response to the Turnaround Plan which expresses our wish to work with the Police to develop and support the aims of the plan, and ensure our local priorities are achieved alongside the changes that need to be seen in the Met.

Council believes:

- That to see any progress towards rebuilding trust and confidence in the police, the Metropolitan Police must fully follow the recommendations of the Casey review and work with our communities in a genuine and meaningful way.
- That the example of effective relationships with police partners here in Merton demonstrates that there is a way forward for the Metropolitan Police Service.
- That a local, neighbourhood policing presence and effective engagement with local communities is essential to people being able to feel safe in their communities and to building trusting relationships with the Police Service.

Council resolves:

- To send a letter from the Leader of the Council to the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police calling for the full implementation of all recommendations set out in Baroness Casey's review.

- For the Cabinet Member for Civic Pride to work with the Police and residents to ensure that voices of local people are included in the way that their community is policed.
- Campaign with other London Boroughs and the Mayor of London for the government to fully reverse their damaging cuts to our Police Service, and to keep our local Police Stations in Mitcham and Wimbledon open.

Cllr Eleanor Stringer

Cllr Edith Macauley MBE

Cllr Ross Garrod

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Labour Motion: St Helier Hospital

Proposed by: Cllr McCabe
Seconded by: Cllr Williscroft

Motion text:

Council notes:

- In 2020, a joint meeting of NHS Surrey Heartlands and NHS South West London Clinical Commissioning groups approved plans to close the emergency, maternity, and children's in-patient services at both Epsom and St Helier Hospitals and to build a new facility for the provision of these services in Belmont.
- That since this decision was taken, the health landscape has changed dramatically because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the increasing demand on health services, and the cumulative effects of underfunding of the NHS by successive governments since 2010.
- That Covid-19 has had a disproportionate impact on ethnic minority groups, those living in areas of deprivation, those with underlying health conditions, older people, and residents with a learning disability. And that hospitalisation and mortality rates during the pandemic have been disproportionately higher among Black, Black British, Asian, and Asian British communities.

Council further notes:

- That St George's Hospital in Tooting is struggling to cope with local demand, with the Integrated Care Board consistently describing the pressures on the hospital over the most recent winter period as unprecedented.
- With concern, that pressures are also being experienced at Epsom and St Helier's hospitals, where bed occupancy levels have continued to increase over the last year, and that reducing provision at St Helier will also impact St George's and neighbouring hospitals in South West London.
- The serious issues which exist at St Helier Hospital with disrepair and decline, and the backlog of much needed maintenance throughout parts of the site, which were highlighted in a recent report by ITV News.

Council believes:

- That decisions taken in 2020 on the proposed downgrading of St Helier Hospital need to be urgently reviewed so that they can be taken with a fuller understanding of the impact of the post-Covid-19 pandemic healthcare landscape.
- That the proposed downgrading of St Helier hospital will have a detrimental impact on the residents of Merton, taking services that the most vulnerable rely on further away from where they are needed.
- That our dedicated and hard-working healthcare staff deserve better, to be paid a decent wage, and to be able to work in appropriate environments which keep themselves, patients, and visitors safe.

Council resolves:

- To support the formal request of the Leader of the Council for a new Impact Assessment pursuant to the Public Sector Equality Duty is completed before any decision is taken to proceed with the planned downgrading of St Helier Hospital.
- To write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to demand that the government provides the necessary capital funding to the address disrepair at the St Helier Hospital site.
- To write to the CEO of St George's and St Helier Trust and the CEO of the South West London Integrated Care Board to demand that they maintain all existing services on the St Helier site and outline their planned investment in the site over the next few years in light of the delay to the future hospital programme to ensure that the hospital provides an appropriate environment for local people.

Cllr Peter McCabe

Cllr James Williscroft

Cllr Sally Kenny

Conservative Amendment to Strategic Theme Report

To add the following Recommendations:

“B. Council calls upon the Cabinet to begin a programme of public engagement with social housing tenants in Merton to publicise the government’s “Make Things Right” campaign. Specifically, the powers given to social housing tenants by the new Complaint Handling Code which will make it easier for tenants to take any unresolved issues to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

C. Council calls upon the Cabinet to increase partnership working with organisations in the borough to gain maximum benefit from the £2.8 million in government funding from the Homelessness Prevention Grant that will be received between 2023-25.”

Now to read:

Recommendations:

A. That the Council consider the content of this report.

B. Council calls upon the Cabinet to begin a programme of public engagement with social housing tenants in Merton to publicise the government’s “Make Things Right” campaign. Specifically, the powers given to social housing tenants by the new Complaint Handling Code which will make it easier for tenants to take any unresolved issues to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

C. Council calls upon the Cabinet to increase partnership working with organisations in the borough to gain maximum benefit from the £2.8 million in government funding from the Homelessness Prevention Grant that will be received between 2023-25.

Cllr Nick McLean Cllr Daniel Holden Cllr Thomas Barlow Cllr Max Austin

Cllr Eleanor Cox Cllr Andrew Howard Cllr Michael Paterson

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Council meeting - 19 April 2023

From the Liberal Democrat group - Proposed Amendment to the Strategic Theme report: Ensuring safety for all our communities by implementing the Casey recommendations

Proposed by Cllr Paul Kohler

Seconded by Cllr Anthony Fairclough

To add the following Recommendations:

2. That further to paragraphs 4.54 and 4.57 of the Strategic Theme Report, Council requests Cabinet:

- a. Consistently and constructively challenge the Met to fully implement Baroness Casey's recommendations, working with the BCU Borough Commander, the South West London BCU and other BCU partners to develop ways to monitor and measure the effectiveness of reforms;
- b. Consider how to create opportunities for local representative groups to review and challenge policing practices constructively;
- c. Notes that the Review highlights the closure of 124 police stations across London between 2012 and 2022, and continues to campaign to maintain local police stations across the BCU, including the two existing stations in Merton – in addition to its stated commitment of being “supportive” of keeping both Merton's police stations open; and
- d. Ensures that the relevant Cabinet Member reports on the above to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on an appropriate basis.

3. That Council further requests that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission considers how it can proactively work with our communities to hold the Met and the BCU to account for their progress against Baroness Casey's recommendations.”

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