

Merton Council

Council

18 November 2015

Supplementary agenda

6	Councillors' Ordinary Priority Questions to Cabinet Members	1 - 6
7a	Strategic theme: Councillors' Questions to Cabinet Members	7 - 12
24	Amendment to item 7c	13 - 16
25	Amendment to item 13	17 - 18
26	Amendment to item 14	19 - 20

This page is intentionally left blank

PRIORITY QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL 18 NOVEMBER 2015

Ordinary Questions

Councillor Tobin Byers to the Leader of the Council

Could the Leader outline the work undertaken over the last few years to make the council a more efficient and business like organisation and the role of the trade unions in this endeavour?

Reply

Over the past few years there has been significant changes in the organisation both in the response to reductions in funding from central government and the review and modernising of services by exploring different delivery models, increase in partnership working and ultimately reduction in workforce.

To support the changes the Council has introduced Shared Services, (HR, Legal, Regulatory Services, Audit, Pensions, and Investigations) and partnership working such as South London Waste Partnership. To enable the Council to continuously improve it has adopted the Target Operating Model (TOM) and will incorporate channel shifting through the review of Customer Contact. Forecasting medium and long term savings (4 years) allows a strategic approach to budgeting and business planning.

By adopting the above models there have been economies of scales savings which has benefitted both the organisation and service users/customers.

By working with the Trades Union we have been able to consult with our staff through collective bargaining, used one central point of contact thus saving management time and resources, been able to resolve employment issues prior to costly litigation, and been open to challenge on management decisions where sometimes a better solution can be found. There has also been active engagement by our trade unions in Departmental Consultative Committees (DCCs) which monitor, inform and resolve specific departmental emerging themes such as health & safety, equalities, new legislation, and priorities such as sickness, use of temporary workers and workforce development.

Through our relationship with the Trades Unions we have jointly promoted health days, staff surveys and employee development. The TUs are a particularly useful conduit for our manual staff which make up about a third of the workforce.

Councillor Michael Bull to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:

Has the full independent Savills report on the investigation into Keepmoat's record of failure on Circle Housing repairs and maintenance been published yet and is it open to inspection?

Reply

Circle Housing Merton Priory have released a report summarising the results of the Savills' investigation. The report can be found at <http://www.circle.org.uk/~media/7BBCC788C31147D38635EA6BF89064DD.pdf>

CHMP have taken the decision not to release the full Savills' report.

Councillor Linda Kirby to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance
Could the Cabinet Member comment on the work he and officers are doing to bring forward a balanced budget for agreement by full council in March, despite the 40% cut to local government funding since 2010?

Reply

The council has established a medium term approach to financial planning. This means that work on balancing the 2016/17 budget started some years ago. Officers prepare budget reduction options for member consideration 3 to 4 years in the future. This means that a substantial portion of the work required to be completed in setting the next years budgets has already been completed. The budget process aims to protect front line services especially the social care received by vulnerable groups by focussing savings on the back office and services for the less vulnerable

Councillor Hamish Badenoch to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:

A number of residents have contacted me with concerns about the frequent road works in Copse Hill and the damage being done to it and surrounding roads as a result of the development of the Atkinson Morley site. Can the Cabinet member confirm what action the council is taking to minimise disruption to residents and to ensure that the developers compensate and repair any damage done to these roads?

Reply

We have worked very closely with all Utility Companies and the developer to minimise any disruption by co-ordinating their works thereby reducing the requirement and impact of traffic management.

We were aware that some damage to the road had been caused by emergency utility works but these were repaired at no cost to the Council. There are still some connections to be undertaken and these will be monitored and enforced to ensure that any further damage caused will be repaired by those responsible.

There is a legal agreement between the council and the developer to ensure that any damage caused by works associated with this site is made good at their expense. Any defects that arise within a 12-month period following completion will also be repaired at their expense. The council also holds a financial bond to ensure that the road and footway is left in a safe condition following completion.

Councillor Imran Uddin to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking

Could the Cabinet Member outline how she is working to combat the problem of people who choose to litter our streets?

Reply

There are a number of steps we are taking which seek to balance providing the right opportunities to dispose of litter properly alongside actions to tackle those individuals who choose to break the law.

In April 2014 the council started work with specialists in enviro-crime enforcement to undertake a 6 week education and awareness programme advising residents of the impact of littering, including cigarette butts. This was focused around our town centres and station. Following the education initiative these specialist enforcement officers started issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) for littering offences.

We have invested in anti-litter campaigns over a number of years including investing in litter bins with ash trays and in the roll out of new gum and butt bins across our town centres. We are hopeful that through on-going provision of suitable bins, continued education and enforcement, the numbers of FPNs issued will reduce. Our intention is to prevent litter in the first place and satisfy the demands of our residents.

Flytipping often causes litter and we are taking strong and decisive action including three successful prosecutions in the Magistrates Court in the past week, serving to send a clear message that the council will not tolerate those who seek to despoil our borough.

In addition we have recently piloted a wheeled bin service which has shown a significant improvement in litter reduction and street cleanliness.

Councillor Peter Southgate to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure:

Who approved the business plan for the inaugural Classics in the Park event, and what profit was it forecast to make?

Reply

THIS QUESTION WILL BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND REGENERATION

The Business Plan was developed by the Commercial Manager working with staff in Parks and Communications / marketing and was signed off by the Director of Environment and Regeneration with the Parks and Greenspaces manager, in consultation with the Cabinet Member. It is an approach that is in line with other councils as many local authorities seek ways to develop new income streams in the light of government cuts. No profit was built into the 2015/16 budget at the start of the year as this event was in addition to those planned and budgeted for. A surplus was anticipated of c£80k and built into budget forecasts after the event was planned.

To date our commercial event management has been confined to the annual fireworks display. The Classics in the Park event was a pilot project as part of our efforts to protect services from cuts by increasing income in other areas. Lessons have been learned from this first event, not least that developing new income streams will be difficult and may require initial outlays and losses over time before the skills and experience are developed to build up a successful commercial event management service. With the significant financial challenges this government has landed local councils with, we cannot afford to be overly risk averse in terms of developing alternatives to cuts, but at the same time neither can we afford to put money into ideas that are impractical and unlikely to work. We are therefore looking in detail at the lessons learned from this pilot and incorporating them in any future proposals.

Councillor David Williams to the Cabinet Member for Finance:

The council's field study centre, Stouthall, on the Gower peninsular was closed by the Labour administration as from September 1998. Only within the last 12 months has the property now been subleased to Carreg Adventure. In the interim the Council has paid over £1 million in revenue and capital costs to keep it empty. Do these sub leases of the property and woodland cover the cost of the original lease and, if not, by what margin is the council subsidising a private enterprise? Also, how long is the remaining lease on Stouthall and its grounds and what is the length of these sub leases?

Reply

Cllr Williams will be well versed with Stouthall, having been Leader of the Council from 2006-2010 when he failed to make any income at all from Stouthall (the lease for which was which was transferred to the council back in the 1990s as a result of the closure of the old Inner London Education Authority under the previous Conservative government). Thankfully this current administration has managed to sub-let the property which goes some way to re-couping our costs and we are making a saving of £156,000 compared to previous years.

As Cllr Williams is aware, having recently asked the same question of officers and been given the following response on 10 September 2015, the main lease which is for the buildings and some land expires on 1st January 2024.

The lease of the adjoining woodland expires on 1st April 2025.

Under the subleases the sub tenant is responsible for:

- Internal decoration and repairs.
- Maintaining the grounds (excluding removal of knotweed).
- Reimbursing the insurance premium.
- Reimbursing the rent (currently £16,500 p.a. for the main lease and £1,900 p.a. for the land adjoining) subject to a rent free period of three years.

The shortfall is therefore £18,400 pa for the first three years subject to any external repairs and decoration costs required during the remainder of the term plus costs of removing knotweed at £12,000 pa

The Council will remain responsible for external decoration and repairs to the main building (including the boundary walls and fences) but as major refurbishment has recently been completed the liability should not be great. In addition the Council no longer has the liability for security, grounds maintenance and mains services and gas. The budget saving is £25,000 for this year but will increase when the knotweed is resolved and the rent free period ends. The total spend last year was £187,000. Compared to this figure the saving is £156,000.

Councillor Katy Neep for the Leader of the Council

Does he welcome the recent letter from the all party Children and Young People's scrutiny panel to the Chancellor asking him to think again in relation to his proposed tax credit cuts?

Reply

I very much welcome the letter the cross party Children and Young People's panel have sent to the Chancellor in relation to his decision to cut tax credits. This is a great example of the importance of Scrutiny in Merton and I commend the panel for standing up for our Merton residents who will be affected by this nasty cut to the livelihoods of working families.

Councillor David Dean to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:

Where is Merton's food waste processed?

Reply

As part of the South London Waste Partnership Merton is contracted with Viridor Waste Ltd for the disposal of food waste.

This waste stream is processed/composted by Agrivert Ltd at their facility in Surrey. The address is as follows: West London AD Facility, Trumps Farm, Kitsmead Lane, Surrey, KT16 0EF.

Councillor Ross Garrod to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Would the Cabinet Member agree that his decision to continue with the council tax support scheme which ensures low paid residents in Merton continue to pay the same rate of council tax that they did before this government's 10% cut to the funding for this benefit helps make work pay for Merton residents?

Reply

Despite the government's decision in 2012 to cut the funding for the council tax support scheme for people on low incomes by 10%, in Merton we decided not to implement this government cut and we have kept council tax low for all our residents,

including those on low incomes. We have managed to protect Merton's low paid and poorest residents by continuing to implement the council tax support scheme as if the old council tax benefit scheme had continued. This decision means the poorest residents have not faced higher council tax bills since the introduction of localised council tax support schemes in April 2013 unlike those in many London boroughs and particularly some of our neighbouring boroughs. It also means that some residents still do not have to pay any council tax at all.

More than 3,000 working households will benefit from this decisions which supports low paid working Merton residents and continues to do so.

7a) Strategic Theme: Councillors questions

Councillor Marsie Skeete to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities

Given recent press coverage of increases in violent crime in London, could the Cabinet Member clarify whether crime overall has gone up in Merton over the last 12 months?

Reply

Crime as recorded by Total Notifiable Offences reported to the Police has increased in Merton over the last 12 months. However, there has been a larger increase in reported crime across London so that compared to the level of the London wide rise Merton remains one of the safest boroughs in the capital.

Councillor John Bowcott to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:

I and many Village residents are certain that people live permanently in vehicles parked on the Causeway. What rights do they have to do this and what is the Council's attitude towards it?

Reply

No one has the right to live within a vehicle parked on the public highway. We are working with the Metropolitan Police to agree the best course of action to remove any vehicles that are being used in this way. We shall be taking appropriate legal action once satisfied that we have the evidence and we have completed the appropriate checks as per the protocol.

An intervention that the Council is currently investigating is the introduction of the appropriate parking management which will address this problem on a more permanent basis at this location as well as addressing the needs of visitors and ensuring access at all times.

Councillor Brenda Fraser to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Could she outline the work Merton does with the police and other partners to ensure that residents are kept safe in the event of a terrorist attack or public order and other emergencies?

Reply

Local planning and co-ordination is developed and tested through the Borough Resilience Forum (BRF) which is a statutory body under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. All local emergency services partners along with health, transport and Merton emergency planning representatives meet regularly to review and assess both London and local risks and ensure we understand and have the ability to co-ordinate our response to any local incidents. Local hazards and risk are also exercised and tested with BRF members and council staff.

The BRF has recently completed an assurance assessment for all partners against all the London plans and frameworks.

In addition as part of the sub-regional planning programme the BRF and council staff participate in testing London plans three times a year to ensure a broader understanding of and co-ordination requirements for the London wide plans. The last workshop on 5th November in fact tested the London Marauding Firearms Attack (MFA) scenario with council and emergency services colleagues from the five south west boroughs.

Merton also participates in the two annual Pan London exercises: Exercise Preparer and Exercise Safer City, the latter of which includes activation of the Borough Emergency Control Centre and co-ordination of council responses to requests for assistance from emergency services.

Also, the council's statutory Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (Safer Merton) works with public, voluntary and community and business organisations to develop crime and disorder audits and implement strategies to reduce crime and disorder.

Annually Safer Merton undertakes a Strategic Assessment to identify and interpret the summary findings of intelligence analysis and assist the partnership in identifying the major issues within the local area, to allow resources to be allocated and activities prioritised in a safety plan for the borough.

The council works with partners (particularly the Police) to assess potential risks to the borough's residents and through the Safer and Stronger Thematic partnerships has implemented plans for numerous matters including; Counter Terrorism, Domestic Violence and Abuse, Sexual Violence, Hate Crime, Reducing Re-Offending and Anti-Social Behaviour.

The partnership has worked with the Faith and Belief Forum to identify potential rest places and given the representatives counter-terrorism awareness training. Proposals are also being developed to provide counter- terrorism awareness to front-line staff.

Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities:

In just one year the new London only approach for recruitment into the Met Police has seen the number of recruits from minority ethnic backgrounds more than double across London and female recruits increase from a quarter to a third. Can the Cabinet Member tell me the number of new recruits that have come to Merton as a result of the Mayor of London's successful, new recruitment policy?

Reply

New recruits are defined by the Met as probationary officers in their first two years of service. Merton has 108 probationary officers who started in the last two years. Of

these probationary officers, 13 are from ethnic minority backgrounds. This brings the level of BAME officers in Merton to just under 12% of the total number of officers, compared to the Merton population which is 37% BAME.

Unfortunately, the Mayor's plans to cut neighbourhood policing across London, including in Merton, demonstrate that recruitment campaigns will have little impact in making residents feel safer if there are actually less frontline neighbourhood based police officers in place.

Councillor Abigail Jones to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities

Could she outline the number of Safer Neighbourhood ward specific officers in place in Merton in January 2010 compared to the number in place in January 2015.

Reply

It is my understanding that in 2010 each of the borough's 20 wards had 1 Police Sergeant, 2 Police Constables and 3 PCSOs ie 120 officers in total. Currently, the allocation in 2015 is 20 Police Constables and 20 PCSOs acting as Dedicated Ward Officers, ie 40 officers in total. Further additional officers can be deployed to wards when required although they are not dedicated ward officers as was the case in 2010.

Councillor Oonagh Moulton to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:

What is the administration's current policy on introducing and expanding 20's Plenty schemes in Merton in order to improve road safety, particularly in residential areas?

Reply

During 2014 the Council together with most other London boroughs as part of the London Environment Directors Network commissioned a review of policy and practice with regard to 20 mph speed limits and zones. In addition we looked at all existing 20 mph speed limit locations within the borough. The report also considered evidence and information drawn from across London and beyond. This was reported to the Scrutiny Commission and is included in the minutes of 11th November 2014: <http://democracy.merton.gov.uk/documents/s5967/20%20Mph%20Zones%20and%20limits.pdf>

The report concluded that 20 mph limits (ie 20 mph signs) have very limited impact on speed reduction. In fact it is only where physical interventions (humps, chicanes, etc) are implemented that driver behaviour changes significantly.

Excess speed is enforced by the police and we work closely with them to identify those locations where evidence supports the need for intervention. Road safety and the reduction of serious and fatal accidents is a priority and our scarce resources are applied to those locations where we identify the opportunity to reduce accidents with particular attention to those immediately outside schools.

Further detailed research into this whole subject is being undertaken by the Department for Transport however this is not expected to report for at least another 2 years.

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Is the Cabinet Member concerned about increasing levels of knife crime amongst young people in London?

Reply

Whilst Merton continues to be one of the safest London borough's we are, of course, concerned about levels of knife crime in the capital. 14 young men have died this year as a result of knife crime in the capital and each one is someone's son, brother and friend. We are fortunate that the few knife related incidents we have had in the borough this year have not involved very serious injury. In a significant number of them the perpetrators and/or victims were not Merton residents. This is why we have been working closely with our Police and council colleagues in our neighbouring boroughs to tackle the issue together. In Merton our safer Schools officers, youth workers, gangs worker and wider CSF colleagues are working hard together to divert and deter young people from carrying knives. We believe that by working together we are making a difference and this is evidenced by our very low rate of young people entering the criminal justice system, and relatively low rates of serious youth crime. We will continue to work hard together to keep the borough safe for our young people.

Councillor Michael Bull to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:

Can the Cabinet Member detail what investigations have been made into road safety in Dundonald ward following the serious road accident involving an 11-year old boy on Dundonald Road on Wednesday 30 September?

Reply

Council officers have kept in contact with the police regarding their on-going investigations, although the investigating team are unable to release any information at this time regarding the accident.

A council officer and the Traffic Management Police Officer carried out a site investigation on 9th October 2015 and it was observed that vehicles did travel at slow speed on approach / exit at the roundabout; pedestrians were confident in crossing the road (at the roundabout at various arms); the road markings and signs are fully visible; our observations were between 3.00 and 4.30pm and there was no obstructive parking. The site assessment of the roundabout and the arms feeding into the roundabout concluded that there were no obvious physical improvements (in engineering terms) that could be applied. However, notwithstanding this, officers will be looking at any recommendations that the Investigating Police Officer may make following the completion of their investigation.

A *Theatre in Education* session was carried out at the school on 6th November 2015 regarding road safety and distraction on the road. It was well received by the pupils and the teachers. A council officer is liaising with the school, PCSOs and Year 6 tutors to undertake further targeted work on road safety which will include cycling.

Councillor Mary Curtin to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities

Could she outline some of the work our Interfaith Forum undertakes to ensure people of all faiths and none in the borough work together to build a safer stronger Merton?

Reply

The forum's membership is diverse and includes representatives from the Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist and Hindu faiths. It also includes a representative of the British Association of Humanists. To reflect this, the forum is now known as the Faith and Belief Forum.

The forum and individual faith and belief organisations participate in numerous charitable acts including supporting the winter night shelter project for homeless people. Different venues host the shelter with faith groups taking turns to help out – Wimbledon Mosque organises food and volunteers when the Salvation Army Hall is used. Faith and Belief groups have also supported Food Banks, with the Morden Islamic Community Centre recently opening a new food bank open to all residents in the borough who are in need.

An important part of the Forum's calendar is the annual civic event to mark Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January, which has included speakers from all faiths, as well as Holocaust survivors. It is an attempt to remember this terrible period in history, and other acts of genocide across the world, and make a stand against prejudice and discrimination today.

This year to mark Inter Faith Week 15-21 November the forum has arranged a Faith in the Media seminar (17 November), activities in the libraries and a community cohesion event called Diversi-tea (21 November). The latter event is being hosted by the Morden Islamic Centre and participants will be treated to different teas from across the globe and given an opportunity to meet people from different backgrounds. The Muslim Women of Morden are to be particularly commended for their efforts in working with council staff to organise these events.

This page is intentionally left blank

FULL COUNCIL 18 NOVEMBER 2015

ITEM 7C

LABOUR AMENDMENT TO STRATEGIC THEME MOTION

This Council ~~is concerned to notes~~ that Merton's current Community Cohesion Strategy 2012-2015 will shortly come to an end, although it remains fit for purpose under the new statutory PREVENT regime and there is no impediment to it continuing in place whilst a new strategy is developed. ~~the~~ The timetable for renewing the Merton Community Cohesion Strategy has slipped due to reduced staff capacity and the need to focus existing capacity on the frontline of actually delivering the community cohesion strategy on the ground, as illustrated by the agenda/minutes of the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minorities in July and September 2015 ~~so that it has been re-badged between meetings and now referred to as a (new) 2016-18 strategy.~~ Council acknowledges that it is important to ensure full consultation on the strategy so that we get the aspirations and priorities right and that a rushed strategy with inadequate consultation will not well serve the people of Merton.

The legal and statutory implications in the last report to the JCC remind the Council that under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 it has a duty in the exercise of its functions to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism' and that the strategy will promote inclusion and support local people to get involved in their local community and to continue to build good relations in the borough', which is what the existing strategy was designed to achieve and what the new strategy will build on.

The Council resolves to recommend to the Merton Partnership, which is made up of organisations including the police, the council, the NHS and voluntary sector organisations – as owners of the strategy – to inject a greater degree of urgency into the process of renewal where possible, bearing in mind the need to ensure full consultation and the significant reduction in the capacity of organisations such as the police to undertake partnership work in the light of cuts in their funding from central government, and:

1. Ensure that full consultation with all relevant partners and groups in the borough is undertaken prior to the ~~Bring forward the current timetable for~~ implementation from February 2016
2. Continue to encourage meaningful dialogue between the key stakeholders (i.e. Thematic Partnerships; Safer Stronger Group/Executive Board; JCC and Faith and Belief Forum and the Executive Board itself) that includes and goes beyond the ~~repetition of platitudes and~~ aspirations consulted on and agreed by the partnership outlined in the identified seven key priorities (~~e.g. ie~~ developing improving engagement with minority and new communities, monitoring community tensions, continuing inter-faith dialogue, supporting and engaging with the voluntary sector, supporting employment and economic development opportunities, raising, encouraging and supporting children, young people and families, and improving health outcomes etc.)
3. Acknowledging that "community cohesion" is a broad concept and that rigid measurements of levels of cohesion are not always possible, continue to include a detailed action plan and to impose where appropriate and helpful a

rigour with targets and expectation of outcomes that are SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely)

4. ~~Expect that the~~Continue to support the promotion of the use of the English language ~~in by~~ all established groups receiving public funding, bearing in mind the requirements of the Equality Act. ~~is an essential pre-requisite for future funding~~

Motion now to read:

This Council notes that Merton's current Community Cohesion Strategy 2012-2015 will shortly come to an end, although it remains fit for purpose under the new statutory PREVENT regime and there is no impediment to it continuing in place whilst a new strategy is developed. The timetable for renewing the Merton Community Cohesion Strategy has slipped due to reduced staff capacity and the need to focus existing capacity on the frontline of actually delivering the community cohesion strategy on the ground, as illustrated by the agenda/minutes of the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minorities in July and September 2015. Council acknowledges that it is important to ensure full consultation on the strategy so that we get the aspirations and priorities right and that a rushed strategy with inadequate consultation will not well serve the people of Merton.

The legal and statutory implications in the last report to the JCC remind the Council that under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 it has a duty in the exercise of its functions to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism' and that the strategy will promote inclusion and support local people to get involved in their local community and to continue to build good relations in the borough', which is what the existing strategy was designed to achieve and what the new strategy will build on.

The Council resolves to recommend to the Merton Partnership, which is made up of organisations including the police, the council, the NHS and voluntary sector organisations – as owners of the strategy – to inject a greater degree of urgency into the process of renewal where possible, bearing in mind the need to ensure full consultation and the significant reduction in the capacity of organisations such as the police to undertake partnership work in the light of cuts in their funding from central government, and:

1. Ensure that full consultation with all relevant partners and groups in the borough is undertaken prior to the implementation from February 2016
2. Continue to encourage meaningful dialogue between the key stakeholders (i.e. Thematic Partnerships; Safer Stronger Group/Executive Board; JCC and Faith and Belief Forum and the Executive Board itself) that includes and goes beyond the aspirations consulted on and agreed by the partnership outlined in the identified seven key priorities (ie improving engagement with minority and new communities, monitoring community tensions, continuing inter-faith dialogue, supporting and engaging with the voluntary sector, supporting employment and economic development opportunities, encouraging and supporting children, young people and families, and improving health outcomes)

3. Acknowledging that “community cohesion” is a broad concept and that rigid measurements of levels of cohesion are not always possible, continue to include a detailed action plan and to impose where appropriate and helpful a rigour with targets and expectation of outcomes that are SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely)
4. Continue to support the promotion of the use of the English language by all established groups receiving public funding, bearing in mind the requirements of the Equality Act.

This page is intentionally left blank

Council Meeting 18 November 2015

Item 13

Labour Amendment

Merton Council ~~must listens~~ to residents ~~more~~ and resolves to engage with their concerns ~~throughin better ways than just~~ Twitter ~~to achieve this~~. #Mertonlistens

Council notes the significant investment Merton is making into listening and responding to our residents as part of the new Customer Contact Programme which is focused on offering our customers quick and easy access to information and services online, providing a more efficient and responsive service for residents.

Merton's website is being redesigned so it is much easier for residents to "report", "say", "pay" and "apply" for Merton's services. In addition, residents will be able to set up their own website "personal account" which will be personalised to their (or their households) interests, bringing together, into one place, all of their interactions with the council. As a result of this project, the council will:

- be able to keep residents informed of the progress being made with their enquiry
- have more time to spend with customers who need specialist, expert advice
- waste less time responding to complaints or repeat requests for services

Council notes that Merton also listens to residents via regular consultations including the Annual Residents Survey, strategic and budget consultations, traffic and parking consultations and consultations via area forums. The council also offers a dedicated contact centre for telephone enquiries and the LoveCleanStreets smart phone app to allow easier reporting of street scene issues.

Council further notes that local authorities have spent millions on social media since the start of the government's austerity programme. However social media networks, such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter, may not always be the most efficient or effective method of interacting with residents and not all councils would want to spend precious resources employing officers specifically to monitor and respond to social media. In a time of government cuts, councils such as Merton have endeavoured to focus spending on front line services, including refuse collection and social services, rather than on staff employed to monitor social media, and to invest in comprehensive online customer relationship management (CRM) solutions that can be used more effectively and efficiently to give a consistent service to residents without impacting on the frontline.

Council therefore agrees to continue to use Twitter where it is appropriate, but to direct residents to more effective and efficient methods which will ensure their issues are comprehensively addressed.

Motion now to read:

Merton Council listens to residents and resolves to engage with their concerns in better ways than just Twitter #Mertonlistens

Council notes the significant investment Merton is making into listening and responding to our residents as part of the new Customer Contact Programme which is focused on offering our customers quick and easy access to information and services online, providing a more efficient and responsive service for residents.

Merton's website is being redesigned so it is much easier for residents to "report", "say", "pay" and "apply" for Merton's services. In addition, residents will be able to set up their own website "personal account" which will be personalised to their (or their households) interests, bringing together, into one place, all of their interactions with the council. As a result of this project, the council will:

- be able to keep residents informed of the progress being made with their enquiry
- have more time to spend with customers who need specialist, expert advice
- waste less time responding to complaints or repeat requests for services

Council notes that Merton also listens to residents via regular consultations including the Annual Residents Survey, strategic and budget consultations, traffic and parking consultations and consultations via area forums. The council also offers a dedicated contact centre for telephone enquiries and the LoveCleanStreets smart phone app to allow easier reporting of street scene issues.

Council further notes that local authorities have spent millions on social media since the start of the government's austerity programme. However social media networks, such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter, may not always be the most efficient or effective method of interacting with residents and not all councils would want to spend precious resources employing officers specifically to monitor and respond to social media. In a time of government cuts, councils such as Merton have endeavoured to focus spending on front line services, including refuse collection and social services, rather than on staff employed to monitor social media, and to invest in comprehensive online customer relationship management (CRM) solutions that can be used more effectively and efficiently to give a consistent service to residents without impacting on the frontline.

Council therefore agrees to continue to use Twitter where it is appropriate, but to direct residents to more effective and efficient methods which will ensure their issues are comprehensively addressed.

Council Meeting 18 November 2015

Item 14

Labour Amendment

Noting the current budget process is already well under way with savings targets for the Medium Term Financial Strategy from 2016/17 to 2019/20 already scrutinised by each of the scrutiny panels in October and November this year with no changes agreed, this Council resolves to ask the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to review, in line with its usual practice of scrutinising all aspects of the budget proposals including deliverability and risk, the weightings used to determine departmental savings targets and their appropriateness in relation to the previously approved “July principles” which were voted for by all parties on the council with the exception of the Conservative Group - bearing in mind that the weightings have been agreed by Council in each of the past five years and that, unless the council tax is increased, reductions to savings in one area will mean more cuts are needed in other areas, particularly environmental services - in detail at a date after its next meeting on 24 November 2015, and thereafter as is usual on an annual basis as part of the usual scrutiny process regardless of which administration is in office.

Motion now to read:

Noting the current budget process is already well under way with savings targets for the Medium Term Financial Strategy from 2016/17 to 2019/20 already scrutinised by each of the scrutiny panels in October and November this year with no changes agreed, this Council resolves to ask the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to review, in line with its usual practice of scrutinising all aspects of the budget proposals including deliverability and risk, the weightings used to determine departmental savings targets and their appropriateness in relation to the previously approved “July principles” which were voted for by all parties on the council with the exception of the Conservative Group - bearing in mind that the weightings have been agreed by Council in each of the past five years and that, unless the council tax is increased, reductions to savings in one area will mean more cuts are needed in other areas, particularly environmental services - in detail at a date after its next meeting on 24 November 2015, and thereafter as is usual on an annual basis as part of the usual scrutiny process regardless of which administration is in office.

This page is intentionally left blank