

Merton Council  
**Sustainable Communities  
Overview and Scrutiny  
Panel**



Date: 24 June 2014  
Time: 19:15  
Venue: Merton Civic Centre

**AGENDA**

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| 1. | Declarations of Interest                     |         |
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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.**

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## Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel Membership

### Councillors:

Russell Makin (Chair)  
Stan Anderson  
David Dean (Vice-Chair)  
Ross Garrod  
Janice Howard  
Abigail Jones  
John Sargeant  
Imran Uddin

### Substitute Members:

Tobin Byers  
David Chung  
Edward Foley  
Daniel Holden  
Abdul Latif

### Note on declarations of interest

Members are advised to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest 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 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 4035 or by e-mail on [scrutiny@merton.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@merton.gov.uk). Alternatively, visit [www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny)

# Agenda Item 3

## **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 26 MARCH 2014**

**7.15PM – 9:25PM**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Russell Makin (in the chair), Ray Tindle, Samantha George, John Sargeant, Dennis Pearce, Stan Anderson, Ian Munn, Dennis Pearce, David Dean

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Andrew Judge, Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration, Councillor Nick Draper, Cabinet Member for Culture and Housing, Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration, James McGinlay, Head of Sustainable Communities, Paul McGarry, Future Merton Manager, Rebecca Redman, Scrutiny Officer

### **1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

### **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

### **3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 FEBRUARY 2014**

**RESOLVED:** Panel agreed the Minutes as a true record of the meeting subject to an amendment on page 5 of the minutes – paragraph 5.

### **4 MATTERS ARISING**

The Chair proposed that the order of the agenda be changed to the following:

Item 1- Declarations of Interest

Item 2 – Apologies for absence

Item 3 – Minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014

Item 4 – Matters arising from the Minutes

Item 7 – Adult skills and employability task group review – Action Plan and Progress Report;

Item 5 – Regeneration in Mitcham and Morden Town Centres – Verbal Update

Item 6 – Mini Holland Bid – Progress Report

Item 8 – Draft Final Report – Climate Change and the Green Deal Task Group

Item 9 – Performance Monitoring – Verbal Update

Item 10 – Topic Suggestions for 2014/15

**RESOLVED:** The Panel agreed to re-order the agenda.

### **5 ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP REVIEW –**

## **ACTION PLAN AND PROGRESS REPORT (agenda item 7)**

James McGinlay introduced the report and outlined progress against the agreed recommendations from the Panels task group review of adult skills and employability. A more detailed outline of progress to date is included as Appendix 1 to the report.

James McGinlay noted that the action plan mirrored the work being delivered by the Economic Wellbeing sub group.

**Recommendation 1** – Members heard that 118 apprenticeships had been set up and appointed to and that one apprenticeship resulted in a full time post appointment at the council.

**Recommendation 4** – The Panel were informed that the information portal had not been set up as yet but that information sharing was happening. An Employment and Skills Officer was due to be appointed and would take this work forward.

**Recommendation 5** – £650,000 of funding was secured to deliver this work from an external fund by the Economic Wellbeing Sub Group.

**Recommendation 6** – There is ongoing work with the library to link in with its existing provision to provide job clubs.

**Recommendation 7** – The council's inward investment strategy was being prepared and consultants had been engaged to work on what Merton's offer is, in particular, capitalising on the SW19 Wimbledon brand.

**Recommendation 8** – The council sought ideas at the Future Wimbledon Conference to develop a master plan for the area. The ideas will be exhibited at an exhibition in central London. This will ensure that the design can be opened to a wider sphere of influence.

**Recommendation 9** – Changes to business rates have resulted in the capacity for the council to look at reductions and incentives and in particular, try and attract new businesses to the borough. Eligibility criteria and targeted geographic areas are included in appendix 2 to the report.

A Member asked about support for existing businesses. James McGinlay confirmed that businesses that are below a certain value are eligible for reduction.

**Recommendation 11** – Discussions are underway with the Higher Education Funding Council to look at possible provision.

**Recommendation 13** – There has been no work undertaken as yet on this action. 2015 is the target date for completion.

**Recommendation 15** – James McGinlay informed the Panel that the economic development strategy was in draft and that it could be brought to the Panel for comment in due course.

A Member welcomed the progress and highlighted the need to expand provision of apprenticeships and education courses available to meet all needs and that any building and development must use quality

materials.

A Member asked when the inward investment strategy would be ready for Members to comment on. James McGinlay conformed the draft strategy could be brought to the Panel for comment after June 2014.

**RESOLVED:** Panel noted the report and asked that an update on progress be brought back to the Panel for consideration in 6 months.

That consideration of the draft inward investment strategy, draft economic development strategy, and skills base in the borough be added to the list of topic suggestions for the Panels 2014/15 work programme.

## **6 REGENERATION IN MITCHAM AND MORDEN TOWN CENTRES – VERBAL UPDATE (agenda item 5)**

A presentation was given by Paul McGarry on the development and progress on the council's regeneration projects in Mitcham and Morden town centres. This document is available on the council's website.

James McGinlay informed the Panel that the following considerations needed to be made when nagging in any regeneration project:

- Demographic change;
- Quality of materials, landscape and public facilities;
- Driving footfall through the area;
- Enhancing community spirit and identification with the area

James McGinlay added that the council had received an expression of interest from a cinema and a chain of associated restaurants about locating to Mitcham which would revitalise the area. The council are developing a brief to capture market interest. Master planning will be undertaken at a later stage should this be taken forward.

Panel members asked if joint ventures for funding town centre developments were being considered. In particular, in relation to transport and the possibility of exploring options for greater access to Mitcham, with TfL.

Paul McGarry confirmed, in response to a Member question, that the fountains in the area were being restored and reinstated in the town centre as they are part of Mitcham's heritage

A Member asked about density in relation to housing developments that would be encouraged as part of the regeneration of town centres. Paul McGarry explained that the design brief includes a statement on what height housing should be in the town centre in Morden. Height is just one factor and the size, quality and economic benefits greater density of housing brings also need to be considered. All options will be considered at this stage before being consulted on and worked up into regeneration proposals for agreement.

Councillor Andrew Judge added that proposals were being considered to increase public space in front of the tube station in Morden by

locating the buses elsewhere.

Paul McGarry stated that the use of the whole high street also needed to be considered as a central public space outside of the tube station may not draw people down the high street and businesses could have reduced footfall. A range of factors and possibilities are considered when drawing up proposals.

The Chair asked that Councillors in the affected wards be consulted on any proposals.

**RESOLVED:** Panel noted the presentation.

## **7 MINI HOLLAND BID – PROGRESS REPORT (agenda item 6)**

Councillor Andrew Judge introduced the report and informed the Panel that whilst the council had been unsuccessful at stage 2 of the bidding process for the Mini Holland fund, the bid compiled by the council was visionary and of high quality and commended the Future Merton team for their work. As part of this process the council engaged traffic engineers to consider the remodelling opportunities in the borough and did not wish to simply abandon the ideas and initial plans compiled for the bid document. The proposals also had cross part support at council and the Mayor of London's office has been supportive of Merton's bid throughout his process.

Councillor Andrew Judge made the Panel aware that the council planned to meet with a representative from the GLA to seek views on how to take forward certain projects within this bid. There would be a 3 year programme to realise this vision and funding would need to be identified.

A Member stated that the council needed to ensure that all residents were considered when developing or remodelling certain areas, not just cyclists and that town centres with the greatest potential to benefit from these improvements should be identified, for example, Colliers Wood, South Wimbledon and Morden.

A Member asked when the council will be in a position to know if the GLA will offer any funding for one off projects that formed part of the bid that were to be discussed shortly. The Chair also enquired about the decision making process for spending the funding the council will receive in accordance with the proposals in the bid and what discretion the council has to determine how this funding will be spent.

Councillor Andrew Judge stated that discussions to be held with the GLA would focus on which parts of the bid they would recommend the council take forward and this will then be part of a negotiation process. The timescales have yet to be identified.

**RESOLVED:** Panel noted the report and agreed to receive an update on the developments with a number of the projects within the bid that the council may be taking forward as part of its 2014/15 work programme. The Panel requested that the next update on progress be brought to the June 2014 Panel meeting.

**8 DRAFT FINAL REPORT – CLIMATE CHANGE AND GREEN DEAL TASK GROUP (agenda item 8)**

Members considered the draft Final Report and recommendations of the task group and asked questions about the review in relation to the following:

- Necessity of an ESCO for Merton when energy services are delivered already by private organisations successfully;
- Whether Merton Council should roll out selling solar PV to residents when private companies already do so that could be engaged should residents be interested in installing on their properties;
- The aesthetic appeal of solar PV to residents and schools;
- The possibility of working with Circle Housing and MPH to install solar PV on social housing

Chris Lee explained that the council's focus at present in relation to climate change had been in the area of renewable energy. The council had delivered a number of initiatives which meant that it was generating electricity which there were opportunities to sell and utilise the Feed in Tariff to generate an income as well as benefits for residents. The ESCO would act as the legal vehicle by which Merton council could sell its surplus energy supply. There is a clear business case for an ESCO. Chris Lee added that he agreed with the idea of solar PV on social housing but this would need to be explored with Circle Housing/MPH.

Paul McGarry stated that the council had tried different approaches with regard to installing solar PV at schools and 8 schools have taken up this technology to date. The council now need to consider where they will target to discuss the possibility of installing solar pv, for example, in leisure centres.

**RESOLVED:** Panel noted the information tabled response from Circle Housing/MPH to the task group's recommendations.

Panel agreed to:

- Include a recommendation in the report which asked Cabinet to consult Circle Housing/MPH on the possibility of joint working and initiatives that could be taken forward in partnership that the task group have made recommendations on;
- That the response from Circle Housing/MPH to the task group's recommendations be included as an appendix to the task group report; and
- That the report be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration at its June 2014 meeting

**9 PERFORMANCE REPORTING – VERBAL UPDATE (agenda item 9)**

Chris Lee informed the Panel that the majority of indicators had been identified as Green according to the council's RAG rating system and

were on target to be achieved. Chris Lee also highlighted that there was underperformance in the following areas and gave reasons as to why this was the case:

**Planning performance** – this was linked to a fault with the M3 performance recording and monitoring system which is being investigated. Chris Lee said that the council had received 4000 planning applications this year and that he did not anticipate this volume decreasing in 2014/15. Funding has been found for an additional Planning Officer to deal with this volume.

**Parking Income** – This is behind target by £250,000 and is down to greater compliance by motorists as well as the impact of the shortfall of £60,000 over the xmas period with the provision of free parking.

**Recycling** – This has remained at 38% just shy of the 40% target. This is consistent across London. There is a borough wide recycling scheme being rolled out to tackle this and increase recycling rates to meet the 2014/15 target of 42%.

A Member asked what proportion of recycling was green waste. Chris Lee committed to gathering this data and sharing with the Panel.

A Member suggested that clear bags could be used and a fine enforced for people not recycling. Chris Lee explained that the council do not provide bags and that this would come at a cost to the council or resident to change the bags used.

**RESOLVED:** Panel noted the update and agreed that performance monitoring should be a key item on the Panels 2014/15 work programme.

## 10 TOPIC SUGGESTIONS FOR 2014/15 (agenda item 10)

Members offered the following topic suggestions for the Panels 2014/15 work programme for consideration at the topic workshops planned for June 2014:

- Council policy on cross overs and obstructions on the highway (Councillor Ian Munn)
- 20mph zones and limits (Councillor John Sargeant)
- Performance monitoring of Merton stock transfer to MPH (Councillor Samantha George)
- Recycling (Councillor Ian Munn)
- Planning and enforcement (Councillor Russell Makin)
- Mini Holland Developments
- Performance monitoring – Regeneration in town centres
- Progress Report – Adult Skills and Employability Task Group Action Plan
- Draft Inward Investment Strategy



**RESOLVED:** Panel agreed to add the topic suggestions made to the list to be considered at the topic workshops planned for June 2014.

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## **Committee: Sustainable Communities and Transport Overview & Scrutiny Panel**

**Date: 24th June 2014**

Agenda item:

Wards: All

### **Subject: Priorities for the next 4 years**

Lead officer: Simon Williams, Director of Community & Housing

Chris Lee , Director of Environment & Regeneration

Lead member: Cllr Andrew Judge , Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability,  
Councillor Judy Saunders , Cabinet Member for environmental cleanliness and parking  
Councillor Nick Draper , Cabinet Member for Community & Culture.

Forward Plan reference number:

Contact officer: Chris Lee, Simon Williams

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### **Recommendations:**

- A. That Members note this report and the presentation to be available at the meeting and make comments regarding the Administrations priorities within the remit of this Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To set out the initial priorities of the Administration over the next 4 years

## **2 DETAILS**

- 2.1 Cabinet members will present the Panel with an outline of their priorities over the coming 4 year term. This report provides an outline, but not exhaustive, overview of the challenges and priorities over this period
- 2.2 Financial austerity remains the context within which the priorities are set and the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out the savings required over the coming 4 years a large proportion of which will be found within the areas of work covered by this panel. The Environment & Regeneration Department have a savings target of £13.2 million over the period 2014-2018, £6.3 million of which has already been agreed by Council with a further £6.9 million yet to be identified. Community & Housing have a savings target of £10.9 million, of which £7.4 million has been already been approved with a further £3.5million yet to be identified.
- 2.3 The above savings were approved by Cabinet in February and Council in March. The savings targets for 2018-19 are not included in the above figures.

## **2.4 Outline Priorities**

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## **Economic Growth**

London and Merton's population is growing. The draft Further alterations to the London plan underline the fact that we will need to increase the supply of housing over coming years . Alongside this we will want to ensure that Merton's employment base continues to grow and that we attract investment to create new business and development particularly in our Town centres. We have a sound platform to work from with an adopted core strategy and CIL charging schedule as well as Development Plan documents that support development and regeneration and economic development plans to deliver growth.

Circle MPH have a responsibility and legal obligation to deliver the decent homes standard in the housing stock transferred from the Council. We will work to ensure that the Housing conditions of residents are improved and that any regeneration is both supported and viable. Priorities for the Administration will include:

- Delivering our regeneration plans in Town centres and working closely with Circle MPH to develop regeneration plans that are supported by residents and deliverable
- Exploring innovative ways to increase housing supply and developing a stronger housing supply programme
- Delivering our Economic development strategy to attract inward investment , create jobs and growth and invest in the skills of residents to be able to get into sustained employment.
- Utilising our land and property assets such as redundant car parks to catalyse development and growth.

## **A clean, green, sustainable borough**

Merton is a clean and green place to live, visit and do business but we face huge challenges if we are to save money whilst maintaining standards. The Council spends c £20 million cleaning the streets, collecting and disposing of waste. We will want to look at opportunities to do this more efficiently and in particular how we might be able to utilise the South London Waste Partnership. Across London and the rest of the country recycling levels are stagnating yet this remains a key area in which to generate income, reduce carbon emissions and offset costs . Due to recent renegotiations with our contractors we now receive significant income from recycle and thus creating a greater incentive to reduce waste being landfilled or in future being treated at the Energy from Waste Plant.

Mitigating and adapting to climate change will remain a key challenge and we will need to implement all of the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act as well as making further progress in reducing our carbon emissions and supporting residents and business to do likewise.

We are piloting the use of private enforcement capacity to crack down on those who make Merton untidy. This is expected to be at no additional cost and we shall evaluate the impact / benefit shortly in considering how we take this forwards.

In 2014 we ran the Merton Spring clean for the first time. We shall look to build on this and the Street Champions initiative and to proactively work with residents in maintaining clean neighbourhoods.

In parks we will look to maintaining and enhancing parks and greenspaces whilst seeking efficiencies and growing the volunteer capacity we attract through initiatives such as 'Dig Merton' which creates social capital. Priorities for the administration will include :

- Delivering Phase B of the SLWP – Energy from Waste Plant and looking to ensure that through the partnership we maximise opportunities for further sustainability through District heat network and other renewable energy.
- Working with partners on the SLWP to identify further opportunities for financial efficiency and carbon reduction.
- Delivering on our Climate change strategy and plan as well as the work done by Scrutiny. This includes further rollout of Solar Panels on Council and school buildings
- Developing further the community involvement in greenspaces through 'Dig Merton' and other initiatives for food growing and greening Merton – promoting good public health and well being and a greener borough.
- Increase enforcement action to improve cleanliness and change behaviour.
- Proactively engage with residents to help maintain cleaner neighbourhoods and town centres.
- Driving up waste recycling levels

### **Efficient and reliable services that meet customer's needs**

Whether statutory or discretionary the services we provide need to be provided at the right standard and deliver value for money. The Council transformation programme is overseeing a review of all services and looking at how they can be transformed so that we can meet our financial challenge whilst still meeting the needs of our residents and businesses. Many operate in changing legislative times eg. Planning development control management but all will need to transform. The Council customer contact programme together with our transformation plans will help shape the way these services meet the needs of our growing and changing population. Priorities for the administration will include:

- Ensuring the Customer contact programme delivers improvements in the services in E& R and C & H
- Delivering other transformation plans to sustain and improve services whilst reducing cost.

- Reviewing processes and improving performance management.
- How we can procure better to deliver savings and improved outcomes;
- Developing the role of volunteers to assist in efficiency and adding value;
- Overseeing the delivery of the shared Regulatory service with Richmond and other boroughs who wish to join

### **Sustainable transport and Fair parking policies**

Economic and housing growth will put increasing pressure on transport in London and Merton and we will need to continue our work to improve sustainable transport and reduce reliance on the motor car. Active transport [ cycling and walking ] has huge public health benefits and personal economic benefits as well as reducing carbon . We will look to build on the Mini Holland work and seek external funding for this and other sustainable transport programmes.

Our highways are in relatively good condition when compared to others across London but they rely on significant capital investment each year. We will want to look at how all of the money spent on highways and the public realm generally can deliver better outcomes through more intelligent planning such as through Home zones to reduce vehicle speeds and improving the look and feel of residential roads. Work is underway to research the effectiveness of 20 mph zones and limits which will inform future decision making on how we reduce vehicle speeds and accident numbers.

Whilst car ownership is reducing slightly the demand for on street parking remains high. As traffic and highway Authority we have a responsibility to reduce accidents and congestion and we discharge this through various controls including introducing Controlled parking Zones , parking management and the permitting of highway works. Parking control remains a high profile public service and one which may face change through legislation in the way CCTV enforcement operates. Priorities for the administration will include:

- Optimising the money we spend on the public realm to deliver the best outcomes for neighbourhoods and town centres;
- Investing in sustainable transport and in particular promoting active transport where possible through development of better safer cycling and pedestrian infrastructure ;
- Researching 20 mph zones and limits and learning from Homezones before considering longer term investment;
- Building on fair parking policies and our parking charter to ensure we manage congestion and the demand for parking space whilst supporting vibrant retail and other businesses.
- Ensuring all shopping parades have min 20 minutes free parking available to encourage support for local facilities.

## **Leisure and culture**

Merton is a great place to live and visit with plenty of opportunity to relax, play sport or pursue arts or cultural interests. We want to build on this and to ensure that we meet the needs of future generations. We will need to work smarter if we are to do this with less money as predicted. We know that Morden Park Pools is in need of replacement and we will shortly consider the results of the public consultation we will want to ensure that the replacement facility meets the needs of the population for the next 30 years or so. Equally we will need to look at how we develop sports and leisure facilities in other parks and greenspaces so that the growing population can enjoy and stay healthy physically and mentally. We will want to continue to support the arts and culture attracting external investment alongside our own to maximise the projects and events . Priorities for the administration will include:

- Developing the replacement Morden Leisure Centre ;
- Developing other sports and leisure facilities where appropriate in parks and green spaces;
- Seeking external investment in arts and cultural events in the borough

## **Libraries and heritage**

Libraries play a unique role in our community by providing a free and accessible space for all the community to enjoy and develop their learning. Over 1,200,000 visits were made to our libraries in the last financial year and 33% of our residents regularly use their libraries with almost 65% as library members.

Customer satisfaction with library services is at an all-time high with some of the highest satisfaction levels in London whilst continuing to be the cheapest run service. Building upon this solid foundation we will continue make our libraries more accessible and provide cutting edge technology that is responsive to customer needs. We recognise that technology will play an even greater role in the way we deliver services and will make more information available and enable customers to complete more interactions online.

Building on the success of our volunteer project we will continue to redefine the Library & Heritage Service offer by providing a broader range of services in partnership with other providers and redevelop our sites where it has been identified. We will maximise the use of library space for other activities and provide services in a modern and inclusive environment.

Merton has a rich and varied history and the Heritage Strategy for the borough has gone some way towards improving the promotion of Merton's heritage and bringing in external funds to preserve its history for generations to come. There is more work to be done and increasingly through Merton Memories and other projects more can be done to digitise our stories.

Priorities for the administration will include:

- Progressing redevelopment plans for Donald Hope and West Barnes libraries.
- Investing in technology to provide excellent and innovative IT solutions.
- Nurturing the love of reading at an early age by providing a focused range of services to children and families to improve literacy levels.
- Put the community at the heart of all that we do by actively involving residents in service design and delivery.
- Revise the Heritage Strategy.

## **Adult Education**

Adult learning plays a pivotal role in strengthening communities, families and the lives of individuals through promoting continuous education. It contributes to the economic and social fabric of society. The benefits are significant in terms of reducing inequalities, preventing ill health, promoting mental wellbeing and increasing employability. Lifelong learning provides a second chance for many facing multiple barriers, often giving access to that first opportunity for employment, and rekindling confidence in ability to learn. It contributes to the skills base of communities. It enables people to retain an active and open attitude to life, and is one of the five key elements for ageing successfully.

In the current year Merton Adult Education (MAE) has attracted 5054 learners, which produce 7000 enrolments annually. In connecting with communities and enabling employability, MAE has prioritised offering a diverse range of courses meeting a range of need, bridging the economic disadvantage gap between the East and West of the borough. In addition courses are offered to individuals wanting learning for personal development. Student recruitment remains good; establishing key partnership links combined with undertaking a range of outreach and marketing activities has contributed to our overachieving our contract targets for the past three years. Successful implementation of this strategy has also resulted in a diverse intergenerational student profile.

Priorities for the administration will include:

- Developing the commercial based on local offer based on local employers.
- Agreeing the future delivery model for adult education in Merton.
- Moving even more quickly and flexibly to match supply to demand.

## **Housing**

Merton's Housing service aims to improve the quality, availability and accessibility of housing in our Borough during a time of change when new legislation is being introduced for housing tenancies, benefit payment and localism. It is now harder to get onto the ownership ladder, local house prices are still rising across the Borough and



there is less funding for new social rented homes. Effective pragmatic provision of housing, housing advice and homelessness prevention is integral to Merton Housing's ambitions. We will continually look at how we can effectively provide a service that best meets the needs of Borough residents, partners and stakeholders.

Priorities for the administration include:

- Maximise the supply of social and private rented sector homes
- Refresh the Homelessness Strategy
- Continue to prevent homelessness and minimise incidences of rough sleeping
- Minimise the use of temporary accommodation
- Respond to the needs of private sector tenants suffering disrepair through negotiation and enforcement
- Work collaboratively with Circle Housing Merton Priory regarding regeneration

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 This report provides an outline of the Cabinet Members priorities over the ext 4 years There are infinite alternative options.

### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1 None

### **5 TIMETABLE**

- 5.1.1 Further reports on these priorities can be brought back where the work programme of the Panel allows.

### **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no financial issues for this report.

### **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no immediate legal or statutory implications arising from this report.

### **8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no such implications arising from this report.

### **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no crime and disorder implications.

### **10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There is no health and safety implications for the council arising from this report.

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

11.1 None

**12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1 None

**Committee:** Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**Date:** 24<sup>th</sup> June 2014

Agenda item:

Wards: All

**Subject:** Agreeing the Work Programme 2014/15

Lead officer: Rebecca Redman, Scrutiny Officer

Lead member: Cllr Russell Makin, Chair of Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Contact officer: Rebecca Redman: Rebecca.redman@merton.gov.uk 020 8545 4035

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## Recommendations:

That Members of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- i) Consider their work programme for the 2014/15 municipal year, and agree issues and items for inclusion;
  - ii) Consider the methods by which the Panel would like to scrutinise the issues/items agreed;
  - iii) Identify a Member to lead on performance monitoring on behalf of the Panel;
  - iv) Identify a Member to lead on budget scrutiny on behalf of the Panel;
  - v) Agree on an issue for scrutiny by a task group and appoint members to the Task Group; and
  - vi) Consider the appointment of co-opted members for the 2014/15 municipal year, to sit on the Panel and/or on the Task Group
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## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to support and advise Members to determine their work programme for the 2014/15 municipal year.
- 1.2 This report sets out the following information to assist Members in this process:
  - a) The principles of effective scrutiny and the criteria against which work programme items should be considered;
  - b) The roles and responsibilities of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel;
  - c) The findings of the consultation programme undertaken with Members, senior management, voluntary and community sector organisations, partner organisations and Merton residents;
  - d) A summary of the discussion by councillors and co-opted members at a topic selection workshop held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2014; and
  - e) Support available to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to determine, develop and deliver its 2014/15 work programme.

## 2. **Determining the Overview and Scrutiny Panel Annual Work Programme for 2014/15**

- 2.1 Members are required to determine their work programme for the 2014/15 municipal year to give focus and structure to scrutiny activity to ensure that it effectively and efficiently supports and challenges the decision-making processes of the Council, and partner organisations, for the benefit of the people of Merton.
- 2.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Panels have specific roles relating to budget and business plan scrutiny and to performance monitoring that should automatically be built into their work programmes. Members are recommended to appoint a Performance Monitoring Lead Member and a Business Plan/Budget Scrutiny Lead Member on behalf of the Panel.
- 2.3 Overview and Scrutiny Panels may choose to scrutinise a range of issues through a combination of pre-decision scrutiny items, policy development, performance monitoring, information updates and follow up to previous scrutiny work. Any call-in work will be programmed into the provisional call-in dates identified in the corporate calendar as required.
- 2.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel has six scheduled meetings over the course of 2014/14, including the scheduled budget meeting (representing a maximum of 18 hours of scrutiny per year – assuming 3 hours per meeting). Members will therefore need to be selective in their choice of items for the Panel's work programme.

### *Principles guiding the development of the scrutiny work programme*

- 2.5 The following key principles of effective scrutiny should be considered when the Panel determines its work programme:
- **Be selective** – There is a need to prioritise so that high priority issues are scrutinised given the limited number of scheduled meetings and time available. Members should consider what can realistically and properly be reviewed at each meeting, taking into account the time needed to scrutinise each item and what the session is intended to achieve.
  - **Add value with scrutiny** – Items should have the potential to 'add value' to the work of the Authority and its partners. If it is not clear what the intended outcomes or impact of a review will be then Members should consider if there are issues of a higher priority that could be scrutinised instead.
  - **Be ambitious** – Panels should not shy away from carrying out scrutiny of issues that are of local concern, whether or not they are the primary responsibility of the council. the Local Government Act 2000 gave local authorities the power to do anything to promote economic, social and environmental well being of local communities. Subsequent Acts have conferred specific powers to scrutinise health services, crime and disorder issues and to hold partner organisations to account.
  - **Be flexible** – Members are reminded that there needs to be a degree of flexibility in their work programme to respond to unforeseen issues/items for consideration/comment during the year and accommodate any developmental or additional work that falls within the remit of this Panel. For example Members may wish to questions officers regarding the declining performance of a service or may choose to respond to a Councillor Call for Action request.

- **Think about the timing** – Members should ensure that the scrutiny activity is timely and that, where appropriate, their findings and recommendations inform wider corporate developments or policy development cycles at a time when they can have most impact. Members should seek to avoid duplication of work carried out elsewhere.

Models for carrying out scrutiny work

2.6 There are a number of means by which the Overview and Scrutiny Panel can deliver its work programme. Members should consider which of the following options is most appropriate to undertake each of the items they have selected for inclusion in the work programme:

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| Item on a scheduled meeting agenda/ hold an extra meeting of the Panel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Panel can agree to add an item to the agenda for a meeting and call Cabinet Members/ Officers/Partners to the meeting to respond to questioning on the matter</li> <li>■ A variation of this model could be a single meeting to scrutinise an issue that, although important, does not merit setting up a 'task-and-finish' group.</li> </ul>   |
| Task Group   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A small group of Members meet outside of the scheduled meetings to gather information on the subject area, visit other local authorities/sites, and speak to service users, expert witnesses and/or Officers/Partners. The Task Group can then report back to the wider Panel with their findings to endorse the submission of their recommendations to Cabinet/Council</li> <li>■ This is the method usually used to carry out policy reviews</li> </ul> |
| Panel asks for a report then takes a view on action                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The Panel may need more information before taking a view on whether to carry out a full review so asks for a report to give them more details.</li> </ul>   |
| Meeting with service officer/partners                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A Member (or small group of Members) has a meeting with service officers/partners to discuss concerns or raise queries.</li> <li>■ If the Member is not satisfied with the outcome or believes that the Panel needs to have a more in-depth review of the matter s/he takes it back to the Panel for discussion</li> </ul>  |
| Individual Members doing some initial research                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A member with a specific concern carries out some research to gain more information on the matter and then brings his/her findings to the attention of the panel if s/he still has concerns.</li> </ul>   |

2.7 Note that, in order to keep agendas to a manageable size, and to focus on items to which the Panel can make a direct contribution, the Panel may choose to take some "information only" items outside of Panel meetings, for example by email.

Support available for scrutiny activity

2.8 The Overview and Scrutiny function has dedicated scrutiny support from the Scrutiny Team to:

- Work with the Chair and Vice-Chair of each Panel to manage the work programme and coordinate the agenda, including advising officers and partner organisations on information required and guidance for witnesses submitting evidence to a scrutiny review;

- Provide support for scrutiny Members through briefing papers, background material, training and development seminars, etc;
  - Facilitate and manage the work of the task and finish groups, including research, arranging site visits, inviting and briefing witnesses and drafting review reports on behalf on the Chair; and
  - Promote the scrutiny function across the organisation and externally.
- 2.9 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel will need to assess how they can best utilise the available support from the Scrutiny Team to deliver their work programme for 2014/15.
- 2.10 The Panel is also invited to comment upon any briefing, training and support that is needed to enable Members to undertake their work programme. Members may also wish to undertake visits to local services in order to familiarise themselves with these. Such visits should be made with the knowledge of the Chair and will be organised by the Scrutiny Team.
- 2.11 The Scrutiny Team will take the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's views on board in developing the support that is provided.
- 3. Selecting items for the Scrutiny Work Programme**
- 3.1 Each Overview and Scrutiny Panel sets its own agenda within the scope of its terms of reference, with the Overview and Scrutiny Commission taking a coordinating role to ensure that any gaps or overlap in the scrutiny work programme are dealt with in a joined-up way.
- The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel has the following remit: -
- Housing, including housing need, affordable housing and private sector housing;
  - Environmental sustainability, including energy, waste management, parks & open spaces and the built environment;
  - Culture, including tourism, museums, arts, sports & leisure;
  - Enterprise and skills, including regeneration, employment, adult education & libraries; and
  - Transport
- 3.1 The Scrutiny Team has undertaken a campaign to gather suggestions for issues to scrutinise either as Panel agenda items or task group reviews. Suggestions have been received from members of the public, councillors and partner organisations including the police, NHS Sutton and Merton and Merton Voluntary Service Council. Other issues of public concern have been identified through the Annual Residents Survey. Issues that have been raised repeatedly at Community Forums have also been included. The Scrutiny Team has consulted departmental management teams in order to identify forthcoming issues on which the panel could contribute to the policymaking process.
- 3.2 A description of all the suggestions received is set out in Appendix 2.
- 3.3 The councillors who attended a "topic selection" workshop on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2014 discussed these suggestions.

- 3.4 The suggestions were prioritised at the workshop using the criteria listed in Appendix 3. In particular, participants sought to identify issues that related to the Council's strategic priorities or where there was underperformance; issues of public interest or concern and issues where scrutiny could make a difference.
- 3.5 A note of the workshop discussion relating to the remit of this Panel is set out in Appendix 4.
- 3.6 Appendix 1 contains a draft work programme that has been drawn up, taking the workshop discussion into account, for the consideration of the Panel. The Panel is requested to discuss this draft and agree any changes that it wishes to make.
- 3.7 The Panel may also wish to select items for scrutiny from the presentations made by Directors and Cabinet Members (at the Panel's meeting on 24 June 2014) or based on other public priorities of which Members are aware through their ward work.
- 3.8 Items on the Cabinet's forward plan that relate to the remit of this Panel are listed in Appendix 5. The Panel may wish to include one or more of these issues in its work programme.

#### **4. Task group reviews**

- 4.1 The Panel is invited to select an issue for in-depth scrutiny and establish a task group in order to carry out the review.
- 4.2 Two potential areas for in-depth scrutiny were identified at the workshop:
- Housing Supply
  - Implications of the Welfare Reform Act

#### **5. Co-option to the Panel membership**

- 5.1 Scrutiny Panels can consider whether to appoint non-statutory (non-voting) co-optees to the membership, in order to add to the specific knowledge, expertise and understanding of key issues to aid the scrutiny function. Panels may also wish to consider whether it may be helpful to co-opt people from "seldom heard" groups.

#### **6. Public involvement**

- 6.1 Scrutiny provides extensive opportunities for community involvement and democratic accountability. Engagement with service users and with the general public can help to improve the quality, legitimacy and long-term viability of recommendations made by the Panel.
- 6.2 Service users and the public bring different perspectives, experiences and solutions to scrutiny, particularly if "seldom heard" groups such as young people, disabled people, people from black and minority ethnic communities and people from lesbian gay bisexual and transgender communities are included.
- 6.3 This engagement will help the Panel to understand the service user's perspective on individual services and on co-ordination between services. Views can be heard directly through written or oral evidence or heard indirectly through making use of existing sources of information, for example from surveys. From time to time the Panel/Task Group may wish to carry out engagement activities of its own, by holding discussion groups or sending questionnaires on particular issues of interest.

- 6.4 Much can be learnt from best practice already developed in Merton and elsewhere. The Scrutiny Team will be able to help the Panel to identify the range of stakeholders from which it may wish to seek views and the best way to engage with particular groups within the community.

## **7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 7.1 A number of issues highlighted in this report recommend that Panel members take into account certain considerations when setting their work programme for 2014/15. Overview and Scrutiny Panels are free to determine their work programme as they see fit. Members may therefore choose to identify a work programme that does not take into account these considerations. This is not advised as ignoring the issues raised would either conflict with good practice and/or principles endorsed in the Review of Scrutiny, or could mean that adequate support would not be available to carry out the work identified for the work programme.

- 7.2 A range of suggestions from the public, partner organisations, officers and Members for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme are set out in the appendices, together with a suggested approach to determining which to include in the work programme. Members may choose to respond differently. However, in doing so, Members should be clear about expected outcomes, how realistic expectations are and the impact of their decision on their wider work programme and support time. Members are also free to incorporate into their work programme any other issues they think should be subject to scrutiny over the course of the year, with the same considerations in mind.

## **8. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 8.1 To assist Members to identify priorities for inclusion in the Panel's scrutiny work programme, the Scrutiny Team has undertaken a campaign to gather suggestions for possible scrutiny reviews from a number of sources:
- a. Members of the public have been approached using the following tools: articles in the local press, My Merton and Merton Together, request for suggestions from all councillors and co-opted members, letter to partner organisations and to range of local voluntary and community organisations, including those involved in the Inter-Faith Forum and members of the Lesbian Gay and Transgender Forum;
  - b. Councillors have put forward suggestions by raising issues in scrutiny meetings, via the Overview and Scrutiny Member Survey 2014, and by contacting the Scrutiny Team directly; and
  - c. Officers have been consulted via discussion at departmental management team meetings.

## **9. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are none specific to this report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the financial, resource and property issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific financial, resource and property implications.

## **10. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Overview and scrutiny bodies operate within the provisions set out in the Local Government Act 2000, the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.



- 10.2 Scrutiny work involves consideration of the legal and statutory issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific legal and statutory implications.
- 11. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**
- 11.1 It is a fundamental aim of the scrutiny process to ensure that there is full and equal access to the democratic process through public involvement and engagement. The reviews will involve work to consult local residents, community and voluntary sector groups, businesses, hard to reach groups, partner organisations etc and the views gathered will be fed into the review.
- 11.2 Scrutiny work involves consideration of the human rights, equalities and community cohesion issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific human rights, equalities and community cohesion implications.
- 12. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**
- 12.1 In line with the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Police and Justice Act 2006, all Council departments must have regard to the impact of services on crime, including anti-social behaviour and drugs. Scrutiny review reports will therefore highlight any implications arising from the reviews relating to crime and disorder as necessary.
- 13. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**
- 13.1 There are none specific to this report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the risk management and health and safety issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific risk management and health and safety implications.
- 14. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**
- 14.1 Appendix I – Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel draft work programme 2014/15
- 14.2 Appendix 2 – Summary of topics relating to this Overview & Scrutiny Panel's remit suggested for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme
- 14.3 Appendix 3 – Selecting a Scrutiny Topic – criteria used at the workshop on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2014
- 14.4 Appendix 4 – Notes from discussion of topics relating to the remit of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Scrutiny Topic Selection Workshop 11<sup>th</sup> June 2014
- 14.5 Appendix 5 – Extract from Forward Plan
- 15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 15.1 None

One item may be selected for a full task group review. The topics (suggested at the topic selection evening on 11<sup>th</sup> June) identified that may be suitable for a task group review were:

- Housing Supply
- Welfare Reform Act and its implications

### Draft Work Programme for Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel meetings

#### Meeting date – 24<sup>th</sup> June 2014

|   |
|---|
| <b>Item/Issue</b>   |
| Priorities for 2014/15 – Cabinet Member/Director presentation |
| Agreeing the 2014/15 work programme - Report                  |

#### Meeting date – 16<sup>th</sup> September 2014

|   |
|---|
| <b>Item/Issue</b>   |
| Monitoring of stock transfer to Merton Priory Homes (including Street Cleaning Strategy/Estate maintenance) |
| Update on Regeneration Proposals – CHMP   |
| Update on the Welfare Reform Act (including focus on implications for residents and food poverty)           |
| Climate Change and Green Deal Task Group - Executive Response and Action Plan                               |
| Inward Investment Strategy  |
| Economic Development Strategy   |
| Performance Reporting(including focus on waste management and street scene)                                 |
| Work Programme 2014/15  |

#### Meeting date – 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014

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| <b>Item/Issue</b>   |
| Pre decision - Scrutiny of the budget and business plan                     |
| Cycling Provision   |
| Housing Supply  |
| 20 Mph zones/road safety  |
| Adult Skills and Employability Task Group – Performance monitoring          |
| Performance Reporting(including focus on waste management and street scene) |
| Work Programme 2014/15  |

#### Meeting date 8<sup>th</sup> January 2015

|   |
|---|
| <b>Item/Issue</b>                                       |
| Pre decision - Scrutiny of the budget and business plan |
| Libraries/Arts/Green Spaces                             |

|   |
|---|
| Performance Reporting(including focus on waste management and street scene) |
| Work Programme 2014/15  |

**Meeting date 25th February 2015**

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| <b>Item/Issue</b>  |
| Town Centre Parking and Parking at Neighbourhood Shopping Parades – Action Plans |
| Cycling Provision  |
| Town Centre Regeneration   |
| Performance Reporting(including focus on waste management and street scene)      |
| Work Programme 2014/15   |

**Meeting date 18th March 2015**

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| <b>Item/Issue</b>  |
| Street Lighting  |
| Parking and congestion outside schools   |
| Outlets in town centres (e.g., Betting Shops, Hairdressers, Fast Food) (licensing) |
| Flood Risk Management Strategy   |
| Performance Reporting(including focus on waste management and street scene)        |
| Work Programme Planning  |

### Description of topic suggestions received in relation to the remit of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

#### 1. Housing supply

There is significant press coverage of the housing crisis which has highlighted the need to make provision to allow new homes to be built, and existing homes to be refurbished. Recently councils have been undertaking benchmarking to determine how they might support the need for housing and increase/facilitate supply<sup>1</sup>. This is linked to the request made by the Department for Communities and Local Government for evidence to identify innovative models, ideas and case studies to advise local councils on how they might play a greater role in meeting housing demand<sup>2</sup>.

Locally, the council found in its Annual Resident's Survey that there has been a slight increase in the number of residents expressing concerns regarding housing supply. Also, in Community and Housing, 43 complaints relating to service delivery and policy on housing needs.

The need to look at housing supply can also refer to the availability of social housing as well as affordable housing for first time buyers. The Panel last considered the councils housing strategy as part of its 2012/13 work programme in which it commented on the draft Housing Strategy 2012-2015. With regard to multiple occupation properties, the increase in this type of housing is linked to changing demographics and increasing rental and property prices. Certain expectations are placed upon landlords and the local authority is able to enforce these requirements.

#### 2. Food Poverty

The use of food banks (and food aid more generally) has attracted considerable media interest and has stimulated some controversy. In part, this has been prompted by reports from the Trussell Trust, the coordinating body of the UK's largest network of food banks, showing a rapid increase in the use of food banks in the UK.<sup>3</sup>

More than 900,000 people were given emergency food in the past year in the UK, an increase of 163 per cent, according to figures from the Trussell Trust, the biggest food bank charity. Static incomes, rising living costs, low pay, under-employment and other problems related to welfare reform also contributed to the increased demand, the charity said.<sup>4</sup> A BBC News article

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.localgov.co.uk/Review-asks-how-can-councils-boost-housing-supply/35934>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/review-of-local-authority-role-in-housing-supply-call-for-evidence>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.lgiu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Household-Food-Security-final-report-for-Defra.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/churches-unite-to-act-on-food-poverty-600-leaders-from-all-denominations-demand-government-uturn-on-punitive-benefits-sanctions-9263035.html>

also cited that the rise in demand for food banks was linked to changes in welfare benefits, unemployment, low income and debt. It found that a third of councils were supporting and resourcing food banks in the UK.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, a report by Oxfam and the New Policy Institute found that changes to housing benefit and council tax support that have resulted in some families paying housing costs they were previously deemed too poor to pay. It finds that together those changes mean about 1.75 million of the poorest families have seen a cut in their income in the past three years<sup>6</sup>.

A report on Food Insecurity was commissioned by Defra in response to the growing use of food banks in the UK and published its findings in February 2014. The report indicates that food security is rising and that emergency responses, although valuable, are not adequate or sustainable<sup>7</sup>.

The Review sought to establish the food aid landscape in the UK and the 'at risk' individuals who access food aid provision, how they do so, and why. Food aid provision as defined in this report encompasses a range of both large-scale and small local activities aiming to help people meet food needs, often on a short-term basis during crisis or immediate difficulty. It is noted in the review that in the UK, household food security is not routinely monitored. Similarly, this review found that the triggers for food aid use which are currently being reported by organisations like national charities and NGOs include (in order of ranking by the sources):

- loss of, reductions in, or problems associated with social security benefit
- Payments
- low income
- indebtedness
- homelessness<sup>8</sup>

The findings of this research suggest that a focus should be maintained upon both the short and longer-term determinants of household food insecurity in order to facilitate the most effective responses. Furthermore, it is argued that given the on-going economic pressures, reforms to social policy, and an expectation that food prices will remain high for the foreseeable future, there are likely to be further implications for household food security. The effects of these factors will be difficult to quantify given the lack of systematic monitoring and evidence gathering on food insecurity and food aid uptake<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-26369558>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/apr/22/welfare-cuts-drive-uk-poorest-poverty-oxfam>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.lgiu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Household-Food-Security-final-report-for-Defra.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.lgiu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Household-Food-Security-final-report-for-Defra.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.lgiu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Household-Food-Security-final-report-for-Defra.pdf>

### 3. Update on Welfare Reform Act

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 aimed to bring about the most significant changes to the welfare system in 60 years<sup>10</sup>. The Welfare Reform Act received royal assent on 8 March 2012. It aims to bring about a simplification of the benefit system in order to improve incentives to work. It also works towards the government's aim of cutting the welfare bill by £18bn by 2015<sup>11</sup>.

The Act makes changes to a number of elements of the existing benefits regime. Significant changes include:

- Introduction of a benefit cap for out of work households;
- Introduction of Universal Credit to replace existing benefits such as Income Support/ JSA;
- Measures to tackle under occupation in the social rented sector;
- Changes to the local council tax support scheme;
- Introduction of the localised replacement for the Social Fund, Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants; and
- Introduction of personal independence payments to replace working-age disability benefits.

It was anticipated that from October 2013 the council would experience a reduction in new benefit claims as new claims and change of addresses claims would start to be made directly to the DWP for Universal Credit under phase one. From April 2014 there was a further reduction in the council's involvement in the process as all new claims and change of address claims for non-pensioners are now made directly to the DWP.

**Local Council Tax Support schemes** - replaced the existing national council tax benefit scheme. From April 2013 all councils have become responsible for their own council tax support scheme. A new local scheme was due to be agreed by January 2013 by full council.

**Discretionary payments under the Social Fund** – under the new arrangements Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants cease and a grant was provided to Council's to develop a local support scheme from April 2013. Options for local delivery were explored.

The abolition of two discretionary elements of the social fund, community care grants and crisis loans in April 2013 resulted in the two grants relaxed with a non ring fenced grant paid to upper tier and unitary local authorities<sup>12</sup>.

**Local welfare assistance** - is the social safety net for Britain's poorest and most vulnerable citizens, intended to provide them with vital support when they face a short-term emergency or cash crisis. Introduced in April 2013, it replaced the social fund, the centrally-administered

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.lgiu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Welfare-reform-and-local-authorities.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.lgiu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Welfare-Reform-Act-20121.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.lgiu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/New-local-welfare-schemes-an-update.pdf>

scheme abolished under the 2012 Welfare Reform Act. A portion of the money previously allocated to the social fund (around £178m in 2013-14) was redistributed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to 150 English councils, and to the Welsh and Scottish national governments<sup>13</sup>.

An article published by the Guardian noted that the local welfare assistance fund had not been spent fully and questioned why when many vulnerable people had received a reduction in, or loss of, benefits. They found that spending may have been low due to the following factors:

- Councils not advertising the scheme;
- Eligibility Criteria;
- Those eligible being turned down for a loan and not realising they could still be considered by the council for this fund<sup>14</sup>

Other provisions introduced in the Welfare Reform Act 2012 included:

**Introduction of a Personal Independence Payment** - the reform of disability living allowance (DLA) meant that DLA would be replaced by a personal independence payment (PIP) for those of working age from April 2013. As yet there are no plans to extend PIP to children under 16 or claimants who are over 65. However migration from DLA may apply to these groups at a later date.

The select committee reports on the implementation of welfare reforms by local authorities in 2011 and 2012/2013 identified a number of issues and pressure points for implementation of provisions within the Act which included:

- Potential negative impact of direct payments arrangements for the housing aspect of Universal Credit on social landlords and availability of finance for investment in the social housing sector;
- Introduction of unnecessary complexity in the separation of Council Tax Benefit from Housing Benefit under Universal Credit;
- Timescales for turning around changes to Council Tax Benefit; and
- Social Fund being sufficient to address demand<sup>15</sup>

#### **4. Climate Change and the Green Deal Task Group**

The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel undertook a task group review of Climate Change and the Green Deal as part of its 2013/14 work programme. The Panel is due to receive an Executive Response and Action Plan at their September 2014 meeting.

#### **5. Inward Investment Strategy**

Merton's Economic Development Strategy (EDS) notes that attracting inward investment is a very resource intensive activity. As the budget is small, the approach to attracting inward investment requires careful consideration. Marketing would be central to this strategy and the use of Wimbledon as a brand would support some of the work that the council was aiming to

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/datablog/2014/apr/20/the-crisis-in-local-welfare-assistance-explained>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/datablog/2014/apr/20/the-crisis-in-local-welfare-assistance-explained>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.lgiu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Welfare-reform-and-local-authorities.pdf>

facilitate in other parts of the borough. This strategy would seek to attract new companies to the borough to stimulate the local economy and generate local jobs. The council has been working with London and Partners and the Mayor of London's office to look at how to target foreign and UK based investment and how best to sell the boroughs attributes to potential investors.

## **6. Monitoring of stock transfer to MPH**

The ownership of all 9,000 Merton Council homes was transferred to the housing association Merton Priory Homes (MPH) in March 2010. The stock transfer to Merton Priory Homes, a newly-formed subsidiary of Circle Anglia was based on a vote in favour of the transfer by 53% of tenants. The organisation committed to invest £129 million in improvements to their homes to 2020, with a planned £383 million being invested in the stock over 30 years. It also set up a £1 million community fund to invest in projects across the borough.

Panel members have considered the benefits that have resulted from the transfer as part of its 2013/14 work programme and delivery against the promises contained within the transfer. In addition, the progress and fulfilment of the MPH promises made at the time of the housing stock transfer is regularly monitored by the housing team and presented in a quarterly report to Cabinet. Further information about Merton Priory Homes can be found on their website: <http://www.circle.org.uk/>

In addition, the presentation received by the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel on achievement of the commitments within the stock transfer document can be accessed online: <http://democracy.merton.gov.uk/documents/s3805/Presentation%20-%20Merton%20Priory%20Homes.pdf>

The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel has also heard a call in on the proposals for the regeneration programme of the housing stock by Merton Priory Homes as part of their 2013/14 work programme.

## **7. Shared Services**

The Environment and Regeneration Department have expressed a commitment to developing a shared regulatory service with Merton, Richmond and Croydon which would cover Licensing, Trading Standards, Environmental Health (Commercial, Environmental Protection), together with providing administrative support. There have been a number of areas of risk that have been identified which include the potential inability to achieve savings targets. These risks also concern the resilience and robustness of the shared service being properly assessed.

Successful shared services are in operation at Merton which involves working with other councils to share resources and make associated efficiency savings. For example, the South London Partnership. The South London Partnership encompasses five South London boroughs: Croydon, Kingston, Merton, Richmond and Sutton. Its aim is to promote the south London sub-region, particularly in matters relating to economic development and transport planning.

## **8. Swimming Lessons provision in leisure centres**

The council has publicised details of the classes it has available on its website. There are a range of classes for children and adults at Canons Leisure Centre in Mitcham, Morden Park Pools, and Wimbledon Leisure Centre (all part of the Better Leisure charitable social enterprise group). In addition, private firms offer classes.

## **9. Adult Skills and Employability Task Group**

The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel established a task group as part of its 2012/13 work programme to undertake a review of adult skills and employability. The review focused on 3 key areas: reducing unemployment, attracting inward investment and improving the quality of



adult education. The task group made a number of recommendations which were agreed by Cabinet and subsequently received an Executive Response and Action Plan outlining how the Cabinet planned to take forward the agreed recommendations.

## **10. Economic Development Strategy**

Merton's Economic Development Strategy (EDS) was refreshed in 2012 alongside development of an economic narrative in response to the recession and its impact on the availability of jobs and on the local economy.

The EDS refresh identifies six components of growth:

- Retaining existing companies
- Inward investment
- Support for new business and established small businesses
- Town centre initiatives and Business Improvement Districts (BIDS)
- Additional sector support
- Reducing unemployment

The work undertaken to deliver the economic development strategy is overseen by the Economic Wellbeing Sub Group of the Sustainable Communities and Transport thematic partnership. The strategy is also supported by an Employability and Skills Action Plan that the sub group is co-ordinating delivery of.

Furthermore, the Panels Adult Skills and Employability Task Group commented on, and made recommendations regarding, the EDS as part of its 2013/14 work programme.

A number of studies have been conducted in the area of cities economic growth and its relation to poverty, particularly in cities<sup>16</sup>. Devolution has been cited as key in progressing economic growth and there have been a number of proposals including the London 'growth deal', Centre for Cities 'Breaking Boundaries' and guidance to local authorities, local enterprise partnerships and universities<sup>17</sup>.

In comparison with the rest of London, the borough has a smaller number of jobs available which have remained stable between 2003 and 2010. Furthermore, these jobs are also not based in sectors which are projected to produce growth over the next two decades. Merton is too reliant on the retail, manufacturing and construction sectors and, if it is to keep pace with the rest of London, it must develop more jobs in professional services and business. Sectoral clusters are key to developing job growth and a number of areas have been identified by the council to target investment in to result in more jobs for the borough, these include green, information and creative industries.

## **11. Public Toilets**

The council has a community toilet scheme which was launched in 2009. The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel considered the scheme as part of their 2009/10 work programme.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/cities-growth-and-poverty-evidence-review>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.lgiu.org.uk/briefing/cities-economic-growth-enhanced-devolution-and-relationships-with-london/>

The scheme enables the public to use toilets in facilities in the borough such as shops, pubs, restaurants etc. where that business has signed up to the scheme. Public toilet buildings that the council previously ran were closed due to funding issues some time ago and there are no proposals to reinstate them.

## **12. Parking**

In the 2013 annual residents' survey, 28% of people surveyed thought parking in the borough was poor. Performance in this area has remained stable since the last residents' survey. Furthermore, the council has undertaken a number of reviews of parking provision in the borough in the past few years relating to town centre parking and parking at shopping parades. These reviews resulted in proposals and recommendations being made to Cabinet outlining how services could be improved and how efficiencies could be made, or on more specific consultation with businesses and residents that would need to be undertaken.

The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel has considered parking at both pre and post decision stages as part of its 2012/13 and 2013/14 work programmes in response to both topic suggestions received, and opportunities for pre decision scrutiny. A detailed briefing report providing an overview of the service was also considered by the Panel.

The Panel made recommendations to Cabinet on proposals for town centre parking, further to consideration of the council's proposals for improvement and efficiencies, and has subsequently received an Executive Response and update on the implementation of this programme. The Panel also considered the outcomes of the council's survey of shopping parades, which included a review of parking at each parade throughout the borough to better understand the extent to which parking provision supports the retail and other businesses in the 34 shopping parades in the borough. The survey considered cost, availability of space and maximum stay across these parades and responses have shown that each parade has its own specific needs. Work is underway to consult with local businesses further on proposals for each individual shopping parade.

## **13. Road Safety**

The Merton Road Safety Plan outlines the council's strategic approach to this issue. The council has stated that it is committed to improving road safety and reducing casualties and collisions. It has an on-going programme of education, training, publicity, engineering and enforcement, all of which aims to reduce collisions on the borough's roads. Merton also produces a Local Implementation Plan (LIP) and a Borough Spending Plan (BSP), which provides a framework of transport policies, objectives, strategy and a costed programme of transport initiatives for forthcoming years. Several transport themes are addressed in these Plans, but those more closely linked toward road safety are reducing casualties, delivering social inclusion and partnership working.

The Mayor of London's Transport Strategy also sets out his priorities on the issue of road safety. The Mayor's Office have also consulted on a road safety action plan which aims to reduce the number being killed and seriously injured on roads in London by 40% by 2020. It includes a number of actions to be delivered working in partnership with London boroughs.

Merton's Transport Policy is guided by the National Policy contained in the Government document 'Tomorrows Road Safer for Everyone' and the Mayor's Transport Strategy. It also takes into account National and Mayoral Targets as well as local safety issues.

## **14. Flooding and pot holes**

The winter of 2013 to 2014 was the wettest on record with over 7,800 homes and nearly 3,000 commercial properties flooded. To date about £14 million has already been paid out by Government to help communities recover and to meet the costs of protecting lives and properties in the future, with a further £183.5 million due to be paid to local authorities by the end of March 2014. A new Committee has recently been set up by the Prime Minister to coordinate strategic long-term plans on flood recovery and flood resilience, following the severe weather.

In April 2010, the Flood & Water Management Act became law. The Act, which applies to England & Wales, aims to create a simpler and more effective means of managing the risk of flood and coastal erosion. The Act also aims to help improve the sustainability of our water resources and protect against potential droughts. The Flood & Water Management Act aims to provide better, more sustainable management of flood risk for people, homes and businesses, help safeguard community groups from unaffordable rises in surface water drainage charges and protect water supplies to the consumer.

As the designated Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for the London Borough of Merton, under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 we are responsible for leading the coordination of local flood risk management in Merton, ensuring that flood risk from surface runoff, groundwater and small watercourses and ditches, known as ordinary watercourses, is identified and managed as part of locally agreed work programmes.

Merton council is responsible for:

- Developing a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy
- Investigating significant flooding events
- Managing ordinary watercourse activities
- Maintaining a register of flood risk assets
- Designating features considered to be important for flood risk management
- Approval of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
- Working with other flood risk management authorities
- Flood risk management plans and maps

The Panel has considered the Flood Water Management Act as part of their 2012/13 work programme.

With regard to potholes, the traffic and highways service are responsible for road maintenance. The council aim to maintain all footpaths and roads in a safe condition, and ensure they make a positive and attractive contribution to the appearance of the borough. All problems can be reported to the council on their website. In the 2013 residents' survey, 28% of residents were dissatisfied with repair of roads and pavements in the borough, while 39% of those surveyed said that they were satisfied.

## **15. 20 mph Zones/Limits**

A 20mph limit or 20mph zone is a dedicated area where improving safety and maintaining the quality of life for local residents takes precedence over the general objective to ease traffic movement. Traffic speed within this area is not to exceed 20mph. For a 20mph zone, traffic

calming features in the form of road humps; speed cushions; road closures; one way systems; pedestrian refuge islands and road narrowing's would have to be introduced at the appropriate distance to achieve a legal and self-enforceable zone. A 20mph limit does not require any traffic calming features as part of the legal requirements except for the introduction of the appropriate signs and road markings which will be located at all the entry points into the area.

Like a number of other London Boroughs, there is a combination of roads with 20 mph limits and 20 mph zones in Merton, the majority of which have been implemented during the last 4 years. The Council commissioned an analysis of the effectiveness of the current schemes that have been implemented. This analysis has focused on a comparison of before and after accident data at each of the individual limits and zones, along with before and after traffic flow and vehicle speed data at each of the individual limits and zones.

The Sustainable Communities Panel considered 20 mph zones as part of its 2013/14 work programme and were particularly concerned with evaluating the research undertaken to establish where 20mph zones and limits should be rolled out in the borough and if a blanket approach borough wide 20mph zone was more appropriate.

Some of the data that was required to draw up proposals for these approaches for the Panels consideration had yet to be collected when the Panel considered this item at their meeting in March 2014. It was agreed that a reference be sent to cabinet to request that the necessary data collection and analysis was undertaken to present the Panel with some firm proposals for the roll out of 20mph zones/limits in the borough. The Panel asked for this item to be brought back for pre decision scrutiny at a future meeting and as part of their 2014/15 work programme.

## **16. Creation and maintenance of green spaces**

Merton is rich in green spaces, with over 60 public parks. The council has a number of duties to maintain parks and green spaces and a dedicated service for this purpose with a range of specialists in arboriculture etc.

The Panel undertook a review of Parks and Open Spaces as part of its 2009/10 work programme. In addition, the Panel undertook a Task Group review of Trees as part of the 2011/12 work programme. The Panel continues to monitor progress with implementation of the agreed recommendations resulting from both task group reviews.

The council's performance targets on resident satisfaction with parks and green spaces are being met and the Annual Residents Survey 2013 found that 70% were satisfied with parks, playgrounds and open spaces.

## **17. Street Lighting**

Resident satisfaction with street lighting has increased in the past year according to the Annual Residents Survey.

There is no statutory requirement on highway authorities to provide public lighting but the Council has a statutory duty to improve road safety and combat crime. Therefore street lighting is provided to ensure the safety of all road users, reduce the fear of crime, increase the feeling of security when it is dark, support the 24 hour economy by promoting economic development, and support social inclusion by facilitating the use of the road network at night. The majority of Merton's street light meets current lighting standards.

Merton Council aims to provide street lighting that has a positive effect on the appearance, environment and general security of roads in the borough. The council notes that it aims to keep all street lighting equipment functioning properly and safely. Merton aims to use lighting that is

environmentally friendly, and states that it regularly inspects lighting equipment in streets and car parks. This is managed by the Traffic and Highways team within the Environment and Regeneration Department.

In 2010 the Panel received a report about the street lighting service, including the development of a Street Lighting Policy that was adopted in 2012. The Panel also undertook pre decision scrutiny as part of its work over a number of years, in particular on the establishment and renewal of the council's street lighting contract in January 2014.

### **18. Obstructions on the highway**

Under the Highways Act 1980 it is clearly stated that the Highway Authority (Merton Council) must as far as possible prevent any obstruction on the highway. The Highway Authority also has the right to take legal proceedings against a person or persons who are known to be depositing such things that would cause an obstruction and possibly result in the injury of a third party.

The council encourages residents to report any obstructions on public footpaths, roads or other public areas. Common examples of obstructions include:

- Builders' skips
- Scaffolding/hoardings
- Builders materials
- Temporary works including traffic lights
- Overhanging tree branches, hedges
- Mud/debris on the road
- Mixing concrete/mortar on the highway
- Unauthorised vendors/traders
- Encroachment of highway boundaries
- Discharge of water onto the highway
- Blocking "Rights of Way"
- Plants and bushes
- Illegal signs

### **19. Parking and congestion outside schools**

The council makes provision for parking outside schools to avoid congestion by issuing penalty charge notices to people who illegally stop on zigzag lines outside schools to ensure the safety of school children at the beginning and end of the school day, given the large number of cars stopped on the zigzags outside the borough's schools. To discourage drivers from stopping on the zigzags the council use mobile CCTV vans to enforce the parking restrictions. It also issues penalty charge notices of £110, reducing to £55 if paid within 21 days, to those who illegally stop on the zigzags. The zig-zags are there as a warning to motorists not to stop in this part of the road. This is because the cars block the children's view of oncoming traffic, making crossing the road unnecessarily hazardous.

### **20. Pavement maintenance and de-cluttering throughout the borough**

The council aims to maintain all footpaths and roads in a safe condition, and ensure they make a positive and attractive contribution to the appearance of the borough. Residents can report issues to the council directly.

## 21. Fox control

The council's policy is not to take any action on urban foxes. The council does not carry out a treatment or service for foxes. This policy has been in place for many years and is in line with neighbouring local authorities in that it follows the guidance laid out by central government.

## 22. Street Scene

A resident expressed concern about the area at the junction of Hillcross Avenue and Grand drive which they feel is unsightly.

## 23. Town Centre Regeneration

Merton's Regeneration Programme is rooted in the LDF Core Strategy vision for the Borough (2011). The programme sits alongside Merton's Economic Development Strategy, Transport for London LIP, and funded projects like Outer London Fund and the Mayor's Regeneration Fund.

Regeneration is planned and managed by the Future Merton team. At present the council continue to work on/have plans for the following town centre regeneration programmes in the borough:

**Rediscover Mitcham** - Rediscover Mitcham - The project comprises of a number of public realm and transport proposals aimed at revitalising the Fair Green and surrounding streets. A number of recommendations on taking the proposals for this area forward were considered and agreed by the Street Management Advisory Committee in 2013.

**Destination Wimbledon** – Number of town centre developments and improvements including artwork, traffic management and station forecourt works.

**Raynes Park Plan** - Raynes Park Local Centre Enhancement Plan' which is intended to guide short-medium term investment in the physical environment in Raynes Park centre. The plan indicates how resources from us and external partners will be allocated to projects in Raynes Park over the next three years. The plan seeks to improve the attractiveness and functionality of the area to ensure that it remains a competitive destination for local shopping and services.

**Rainbow Estate** – The council has produced and agreed the Rainbow planning brief which was adopted in August 2013 as a supplementary planning document to Merton's Core Planning Strategy 2011. It will inform any planning applications that are received for the site.

**Colliers Wood Tower Estate** - The council has been working with Criterion Capital to secure and deliver the redevelopment of the former Brown & Root Tower. Planning permission has been granted for the conversion of the Tower and an extension to the north (towards Colliers wood underground station) to provide 150 apartments, with shops on the ground floor.

**Connecting Colliers Wood** - Merton Council is working in partnership with TfL and the Mayor of London to take forward our Connecting Colliers Wood project. The council will be working on making it easier for residents and visitors to the area to walk from the tube station to the beautiful Wandle Regional Park and historical sites such as Merton Priory Connecting Colliers Wood will also improve links between the town centre and its industrial heritage at Merton Abbey Mills.

**MoreMorden** - During 2013 Merton Council worked with Transport for London to assess viable re-development scenarios for the Morden Station site in order to kick-start the regeneration of Morden town centre. The result of this work is a planning brief to attract developer interest and guide any development proposals that may come forward in the future. We believe the Morden Station site is the catalyst for wider change in Morden town centre, helping to improve look and feel of the high street. The planning brief is also intended to encourage neighbouring landowners to work together to bring forward a comprehensive scheme that would benefit Morden town centre.

## **24. Planning**

Planning is underpinned by the Local Plan (formerly known as the Local Development Framework) which encompasses a number of policies that support it including:

- The Core Planning Strategy;
- Sites and Policies Plan;
- Sustainable Transport and Local Implementation Plan

Planning is a controversial issue, and the borough's planning committee evaluates requests for significant changes to properties/in the borough. Major alterations, new buildings, and changes in the use of buildings and land are defined as development; as is the enlargement of existing buildings and therefore require planning permission.

In the 2013 annual resident's survey, 10% of residents felt that planning services were poor, in comparison with 28% who viewed them as good, which reflected a 2% improvement on results in the previous year.

## **25. Public Transport**

The council is not responsible for providing public transport but does work with TfL and other providers to ensure that any proposals to expand or improve public transport provision are commented on and opportunities for partnership working established, as well as identifying income streams to fund related projects.

The council is also responsible for ensuring the correct infrastructure is in place for public transport.

The council also administers a Public Transport Liaison Committee which provides a mechanism by which residents can raise issues about public transport with TfL and other providers.

## **26. Waste Management**

### *Street Cleaning:*

Despite 60% of residents saying they are satisfied with the way that the Council deals with litter in the Annual Residents Survey, concern over the amount of litter in the street has risen significantly from 2012 onwards.

In recognition of this, the E&R Department have undertaken a Public Value Review of Street Cleaning. The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel have also been engaged in the PVR from the outset and have commented on the scope of the review and received regular updates on progress and outcomes from the review as part of its 2012/13 and 2013/14 work programmes.

Furthermore, as part of the Panels 2011 work programme an in-depth task group review of cleaner town centres was undertaken by the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel and updates on progress with implementation of the action plan have been received at regular intervals.

The council has a system for reporting any issues or concerns regarding street cleaning and have introduced an app called, 'Love Clean Streets'.

#### *Recycling:*

The borough has recently launched a major new recycling scheme, Merton's Mega Recycle' to add to the service already in place and increase the number of residents recycling and the type of products being recycled by offering cash prizes. This scheme is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

This scheme will have both environmental and financial benefits in that increasing above the current 39% of households that recycle in Merton could help achieve a saving of £1.5 million due to the reduction in the amount of waste going to landfill.

Merton's Mega Recycle scheme is working with schools, residents associations and other community groups to increase recycling rates.

#### *Wheelie Bins:*

The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel set up a task group in 2011 at the request of Cabinet in order to investigate the proposed use of wheeled bins for the collection of household waste. Members agreed a broader remit to cover all aspects of domestic waste collection in this review and made a number of recommendations to Cabinet in this area. The task group however, after considering the evidence, was not convinced that adopting the widespread use of wheeled bins would encourage residents to reduce the amount of refuse or indeed to recycle more. Wheeled bins would also be more expensive than current collection methods (sacks for landfill refuse and boxes for recycling).

The council has no plans at present to revisit this decision due to the financial implications of rolling out wheeled bins across the borough.

The Panel also undertook an in-depth task group review of household waste management and the environment as part of their 2011 work programme and have subsequently received updates and performance managed implementation of the action plan resulting from the review.

#### *Waste Management Partnership:*

The South London Waste Partnership is made up of four local councils (Croydon, Kingston, Merton and Sutton) who are working together to provide improved and more cost-effective waste management services to their residents. It delivers benefits both environmentally and financially, by providing more cost-effective solutions by working together to deliver waste management services. The Partnership was formed in 2003.

The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel considered the South London Waste Partnership and contractual changes to the partnership at pre decision stage as part of its 2012/13 work programme.

#### *Dog Fouling:*

This can be reported on the council's website and the Street Scene team will respond.

## **27. Cycle Routes**



## ***Cycling Provision***

Merton aims to significantly improve the conditions for cycling, which it has acknowledged requires significant investment and improved co-ordination across the sub region, to increase the cycle modal share in the borough to 6% by 2031.

A variety of funding sources have been identified to improve cycling facilities in the borough for example, through the councils town centre regeneration programme. Furthermore the additional funding received from the Mayors office for elements of the Mini Holland bid that will be taken forward with funding made available by the Mayor of London's office, despite not progressing to subsequent stages of shortlisting for the Mini Holland Fund.

The Mayors office have identified a number of elements and plans within Merton's bid that they view as worthwhile and are in discussion with Merton to negotiate plans for which £10-15 million of funding from a separate pot from the mayors budget has been made available to Merton to expand and improve its cycling provision.

The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel has reviewed cycling provision as part of its 2012/13 and 2013/14 work programmes.

## ***Education and Road safety***

The Future Merton Road Safety Education Team offers free cycle training at beginner, improver and commuter levels. Experienced instructors provide training within the Bikeability training programme. There is also free cycle training courses for children enrolled at Merton schools.

A recent LGiU policy briefing has highlighted the need to integrate sustainable transport, road safety and public health. The report comments on was produced by the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) and highlights the need for greater alignment of policy and practice across these three sectors. Safety concerns relating to walking and cycling were discussed as an example where there is a potential conflict between safety, sustainable transport and public health.

Evidence from PACTS suggests that road safety is being given less priority by local authorities. The report argues that road safety therefore needs to be kept on the agenda and a priority area for local authorities. They also argue that there needs to be a move away from the traditional approach to casualty reduction through the three E'S of education, enforcement and engineering towards a 'safe system' approach which places an obligation on those in authority to design out risks and an obligation on users to obey the rules<sup>18</sup>.

## **28. CHMP Regeneration**

The Panel have received a review of progress against the commitments within the transfer document to MPH by senior management from Circle/MPH as part of their 2013/14 work programme. The Panel have agreed to undertake a performance monitoring role and receive six monthly updates on progress from Circle/MPH.

## **29. Licensing and planning implications for health/ using the licensing and planning to reduce alcohol consumption.**

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.lgiu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Integrating-sustainable-transport-road-safety-and-public-health.pdf>

Licensing and planning legislation can be used to support public health measures such as reducing alcohol consumption and the proliferation of unhealthy take away food shops on the high street.

**Selecting a Scrutiny Topic – criteria used at the workshop on 11 June 2014**

The purpose of the workshop is to identify priority issues for consideration as agenda items or in-depth reviews by the Scrutiny Panels and the Commission. The final decision on this will then be made by the Panels/Commission at their first meetings.

All the issues that have been suggested to date by councillors, officers, partner organisations and residents are outlined in the supporting papers.

Further suggestions may emerge from discussion at the workshop.

Points to consider when selecting a topic:

- Is the issue strategic, significant and specific?
- Is it an area of underperformance?
- Will the scrutiny activity add value to the Council's and/or its partners' overall performance?
- Is it likely to lead to effective, tangible outcomes?
- Is it an issue of community concern and will it engage the public?
- Does this issue have a potential impact for one or more section(s) of the population?
- Will this work duplicate other work already underway, planned or done recently?
- Is it an issue of concern to partners and stakeholders?
- Are there adequate resources available to do the activity well?

**Notes from discussion of topics relating to the remit of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Scrutiny Topic Selection Workshop 11 June 2014**

Attendees:

Councillors Russell Makin, Daniel Holden, Stephen Crowe, Abigail Jones, Ross Garrod, Imran Uddin

Cabinet Members – Judy Saunders

Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration, Simon Williams, Director of Community and Housing, Anthony Hopkins, Head of Libraries and Heritage

Rebecca Redman, Scrutiny Officer (facilitator)

Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2014-2015 topic summary:

| <b>Pre decision items</b>         | <b>Scrutiny Review/Progress Update</b>   | <b>Task Group Review topics</b>               |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Budget and Business Plan Scrutiny | Housing Supply   | Welfare Reform Act and implications in Merton |
| Inward Investment Strategy        | Update on Welfare Reform Act(including focus on food poverty)                    | Housing Supply                                |
| 20mph zones/road safety           | Update on Regeneration Proposals – CHMP  |   |
| Cycling provision                 | Economic Development Strategy  |   |
|                                   | Climate Change and Green Deal Task Group – Executive Response and Action Plan    |   |
|                                   | Adult Skills and Employability Task Group  |   |
|                                   | Monitoring of stock transfer to Merton Priory Homes                              |   |
|                                   | Town Centre Parking and Parking at Neighbourhood Shopping Parades – Action Plans |   |
|                                   | Town Centre Regeneration   |   |
|                                   | Street Lighting  |   |
|                                   | Parking and congestion outside schools   |   |
|                                   | Libraries  |   |

|  |                                |  |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
|  | Betting Shops (licensing)      |  |
|  | Street Cleaning Strategy       |  |
|  | Flood Risk Management Strategy |  |

**Note of meeting:**

The Members in attendance discussed the merits of the topics received, considering where previous work had recently been undertaken by the Panel in that area. Members considered advice offered by the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking and the officers in attendance when considering each topic.

**Topic 1 – Housing Supply**

Members considered how they might contribute to the refresh of the councils housing strategy, what targets were set for increasing housing supply in the borough, land availability and planning in relation to providing affordable housing.

It was agreed that a briefing report on housing supply would be brought to the Panel at its September 2014 meeting to provide an overview of the above and to enable the Panel to determine if it wished to undertake any further scrutiny.

**Topic 2 Food Poverty**

Members felt that this was an area that should be looked at and that third sector organisations could be invited to provide information on what is being provided. Members also felt that this item could be considered as part of the update on the Welfare Reform Act (Topic 3)

**Topic 3 - Update on the Welfare Reform Act**

It was agreed that an update would be timely on the impact of the welfare reform act and how Merton is responding. A briefing Report was requested in the first instance, with a view to determining if further scrutiny should be undertaken in this area or a task group established.

**Topic 4 – Climate Change and the Green Deal Task Group**

The Chair informed Members that this review concluded in March 2014 and the group’s final report would be presented to Cabinet on 30 June. The Chair also outlined the process of receiving an Executive Response and Action Plan from Cabinet within 2 months of consideration of the report.

It was agreed that the Panel would receive the Executive Response and Action Plan relating to their task group review of climate change and the green deal at their September 2014 meeting.

**Topic 5 – Inward Investment Strategy**

It was agreed that the Panel would undertake pre decision scrutiny of the councils draft Inward Investment Strategy as a pre decision item at their September or November 2014 meeting. In

addition, the Panel requested that a report on the delivery of the councils Economic Development Strategy (Topic 10) be considered alongside this item as a sub strategy of it.

### **Topic 6 –Monitoring of Stock Transfer to MPH**

Members discussed what previous involvement the Panel had in monitoring delivery of the commitments within the stock transfer. The issue of influence was raised and what scrutiny could reasonably ask of MPH or recommendations it could make.

It was agreed that a six monthly performance report be brought to the Panel and MPH's attendance requested to look at progress with delivery of the commitments by MPH.

### **Topic 7 – Shared Services**

It was agreed that the Panel would receive a briefing note on the development of shared services in the E&R Department as an information item outside of the meeting, via email.

### **Topic 8 –Swimming Lessons in Leisure Centres**

Members agreed to refer this item to the department to respond to.

### **Topic 9 – Adult Skills and Employability Review**

It was agreed that a progress report on delivery of the task group's recommendations be received (November 2014)

### **Topic 10- Economic Development Strategy**

Agreed to consider this item alongside the inward investment strategy (Topic 5) (November 2014).

### **Topic 11 – Public Toilets**

It was agreed that a briefing note be shared with members via email to provide some background and performance data on the scheme before a decision could be taken as to whether or not the Panel wish to look at this in more detail and make any recommendations at a later date.

### **Topic 12 – Parking**

It was agreed that the Panel would receive the Action Plans relating to the Town Centre Parking Review and Neighbourhood shopping parades parking review which the Panel had previously commented on at pre decision stage as part of their 2013/14 work programme.

### **Topic 13 – Road Safety**

It was agreed that the Panel would receive a report on the outcomes of the councils work with LEDNET and on 20mph zones in the borough (Topic 15) which could be a pre decision item in terms of how the council might take 20mph forward.

### **Topic 14 – Flooding and Pot holes**

Members agreed to review the councils Flood Risk Management Strategy and also requested a copy of planned maintenance works via email.

#### **Topic 15 – 20mph zones**

It was agreed that this would be considered alongside the road safety item (topic 13).

#### **Topic 16 – Creation and maintenance of green spaces**

It was agreed that this topic suggestion should be referred to the department to respond to.

#### **Topic 17 – Street Lighting**

It was agreed that a report would be received on street lighting and that the Youth Parliament be invited to attend the Panel meeting when this is considered to comment. This report should cover the current technological approaches to street lighting, the councils approach and the council's street lighting contract.

#### **Topic 18 – Obstructions on the highway**

It was agreed that this item would not be taken forward.

#### **Topic 19 – Parking and congestion outside schools**

It was agreed that a report be brought to the Panel on parking and congestion outside schools which should cover measures and enforcement. Members also asked if schools could be engaged to look at how they are trying to tackle this issue.

#### **Topic 20- Pavement maintenance and decluttering**

It was agreed that this item should be referred to the department to respond to.

#### **Topic 21 – Fox Control**

It was agreed that a response should be drafted for the youth parliament and that a number of members of the Panel attend to inform the Panel of the council's policy on foxes.

#### **Topic 22 – Street Scene**

It was agreed that this item should be referred to the department to respond to.

#### **Topic 23 – Town Centre Regeneration**

Members agreed to continue to receive six monthly updates on the councils work/progress in delivering its town centre regeneration programme.

#### **Topic 24 – Planning**

It was agreed to refer the suggestions raised to the relevant chairs of associated panels/committees with responsibility for the issues submitted.

#### **Topic 25 – Public Transport**

Members agreed to forward the topics suggested to the Public Transport Liaison Committee to respond to.

### **Topic 26 – Waste Management**

Members agreed to undertake performance monitoring of the topic suggestions received in this area at each meeting on the standard performance report, and at other appropriate times.

### **Topic 27 – Cycle Routes**

It was agreed that the Panel would consider the elements of the Mini Holland bid that are to be developed and taken forward by the council with separate funding from the mayors office at the appropriate interval.

### **Topic 28 – CHMP Regeneration**

Members noted that a report would be taken to full council in July on this programme for MPH to seek permission from the council for its planning framework to be delivered alongside the regeneration programme drawn up by MPH.

It was agreed that an overview of performance and delivery of the commitments over time for newer members would be helpful. Members also requested that the monthly performance bulletin from MPH to the Cabinet Member be circulated via email to the Panel.

### **Topic 29 – Licensing and planning implications for health**

It was agreed not to take this item forward.

### **Additional suggestions –**

- Libraries – developments/proposals on how to meet increased demand for services
- Betting shops (licensing)
- Street Cleaning Strategy (particularly on housing estates)



Forward Plan items relating to the remit of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

None.

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