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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

16 JULY 2013

(19.15 - 21.45)

PRESENT Councillors Peter Southgate (in the Chair), Iain Dysart, Suzanne Grocott, Jeff Hanna, Russell Makin, Samantha George, Peter Connellan, Logie Lohendran, Peter McCabe, Dennis Pearce and Ray Tindle

Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration), Sophie Ellis (Assistant Director of Business Improvement), Peter Stone (Interim Head of Procurement) and Julia Regan (Head of Democracy Services)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Jo Sullivan-Lyons, co-opted member.

Councillor Diane Neil Mills has been replaced by Councillor Ray Tindle.

The Chair welcomed Peter Connellan, co-opted member, to his first meeting of the Commission.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 APRIL 2013 (Agenda Item 3)

Agreed.

3 MINUTES OF THE CALL-IN MEETING HELD ON 2 MAY 2013 (Agenda Item 4)

Agreed.

Matters arising – the Director of Environment and Regeneration, Chris Lee, said that Cabinet had discussed the call-in and would receive a report at its meeting in September to address all the issues raised in the call-in report.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE NOTE OVERLEAF (Agenda Item 1)

None.

5 FUTURE OF POLICING IN MERTON - PRESENTATION BY THE BOROUGH COMMANDER (Agenda Item 5)

The Borough Commander, Darren Williams, presented detailed information on crime patterns in Merton. He said that overall, performance is high and Merton has the fifth

lowest level of crime in London. Of the 7 MOPAC (Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime) priority indicators, the only red indicator for Merton is the level of theft from person offences.

Darren Williams reported that he has examined crime patterns forensically and discussed findings with partner organisations in order to identify areas for improvement and to reduce crime still further.

He drew the Commission's attention to some of the key findings:

- Theft, vehicle crime and burglary are the crimes committed most frequently in Merton
- Wimbledon Town Centre is a clear hotspot for all crimes, as are (to a lesser extent) Mitcham and Morden town centres
- Wimbledon Village and West Barnes are hotspots for thefts from cars
- Burglary rates have reduced over the last five years. The peak months for burglary are September to November

In response to a question about the profile of local criminals, Darren Williams said they were mainly male (except for thefts from vehicles) and not young people on the whole.

Darren Williams stressed that reducing crime is a partnership activity and he highlighted the role that the Council and councillors can play in helping to get crime prevention awareness messages across to residents, particularly in relation to burglary and theft from cars.

Commission members described some of the local issues brought to them by residents in relation to drug dealing, gangs, fear of crime and safer neighbourhood policing. Darren Williams said that the police rely on local information to target its activity and he therefore welcomed contact and feedback from residents and councillors.

Commission members asked for information about officer numbers so that they could assess the level of resourcing provided by MOPAC. Darren Williams said that there are currently 328 officers of all ranks in Merton and that this will increase to 351 by the end of 2015. Of these, 216 are constables (233 by 2015) and 45 are PCSOs (40 by 2015). He undertook to provide the number of Safer Neighbourhood Officers as well as a ward breakdown of numbers by officer type. ACTION: Borough Commander.

In response to a question about how many reported crimes are solved, Darren Williams undertook to provide this information. ACTION: Borough Commander.

A Commission member asked whether the buildings no longer used by the Police could be made available for community use. Darren Williams said that those leased buildings were still being used by the Police.

RESOLVED:

- To thank the Borough Commander for the excellent work in keeping crime rates low
- To ask the Borough Commander to provide any future reports or presentations in advance of the meeting so that Commission members can absorb and consider their questions
- To invite the Borough Commander to future meetings (note – under agenda item 8, the Commission agreed to invite him to the meetings on 26 November 2013 and 11 March 2014)

6 CIVIL UNREST CABINET ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TASK GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS (Agenda Item 6)

The Director of Environment and Regeneration, Chris Lee, provided an update to the report:

- Recommendation 7 – the peer review went well and an action plan is now in place
- Recommendation 8 – MOPAC (Mayors Office of Policing and Crime) has allocated £32,000 to commission a bespoke service for offenders in the 19-25 age range to help prevent re-offending
- Recommendation 9 – this post is now being recruited and has been funded by MOPAC

Chris Lee made additional points in response to questions:

- Recommendation 3 – the list of drivers is already available and there are operational procedures and guidance for drivers
- Recommendation 5 – access to the contact lists for businesses and community leaders is through the Emergency Planning Team and the officer on duty. The business contacts are maintained by the Chamber of Commerce. Members sought assurance that these would be directly available to the Council in an emergency rather than through the Chamber of Commerce. ACTION: The Director of Corporate Services undertook to check the access arrangements.
- Recommendation 7 – the peer review report will be published in the next 2-3 weeks. Chris Lee undertook to find out whether this will be reported to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel. ACTION : Director of Environment and Regeneration
- Recommendation 8 – the £32k funding is for a fulltime officer (possibly a police officer) to be based in the offender management team for one year. MOPAC will review future funding on basis of “payment by results” before confirming any future funding
- Recommendation 10 – ACTION: the Director of Environment and Regeneration undertook to find out 1) what progress has been made in relation to producing a flyer on stop and search procedures, 2) whether a small number of stop and search will still be needed under sections 60 and 44 or whether these will stop completely 3) detail on composition of the stop and search monitoring group .

- Recommendation 11 – ACTION: the Director of Environment and Regeneration undertook to find out what progress has been made in talking to young people about stop and search.

RESOLVED: To have a further update report at the Commission’s meeting on 26 November

7 CUSTOMER CONTACT PROGRAMME UPDATE (Agenda Item 7)

The Commission welcomed the level of new detail provided in the report.

The Director of Corporate Services outlined progress made since 2010 and, with the Assistant Director of Business Improvement and the Head of Procurement, provided further information on issues raised by members of the Commission:

- The Target Operating Model (TOM) is part of the Council’s routine approach to service transformation and improvement. Each business has refreshed its TOM recently and these are now being analysed to understand what enabling activity is required in supporting strategies and programmes, including Customer Contact. An iterative process is being adopted to ensure the programme and TOM delivery are designed in tandem to avoid duplication and inconsistency. The process is being led through departmental management teams, the Merton 2015 Board and the corporate management team.
- The three housing workstreams (on page 29) are intended to refine existing processes, particularly in relation to method of contact, and to help people to understand how the housing register works and their likelihood of being allocated housing. The housing allocation policy will not be changed by this work. ACTION: In response to points made by Commission members, the Assistant Director of Business Improvement undertook to review ensure that the Customer Contact programme works with the service lead to ensure that customers can access the service in the most efficient way and as far as possible online and that the process is transparent.
- The Head of Commercial Services confirmed that procurement of the system will be carried out via the EU Competitive Dialogue procedure and described how the process works, through prequalification, dialogue phases and call for final tenders. He agreed that, as in all procurement using Competitive Dialogue, fine judgement will be needed to ensure that the appropriate number of bidders are taken through to each phase. The contract is unlikely to be valued above £2million and so will not need to be approved by Cabinet. ACTION: Assistant Director of Business Improvement will provide timetable to Councillor Samantha George
- Customer data, alongside other sources of information such as the census, will enable the council to understand in more detail customers’ motivation and behaviour and to segment customers in order to organise services so that they respond to demand in a more sophisticated way.

A Commission member suggested that it would be helpful to have a screen in Merton Link to provide detail on the length of the housing waiting list.

RESOLVED: to receive a further progress report in March 2014.

8 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14 (Agenda Item 8)

RESOLVED: to adopt the draft work programme (in Appendix 1) with the following changes:

- To invite the Borough Commander to the meetings on 26 November 2013 and 11 March 2014 and that this should be the first item of business at each of these meetings
- To receive an update on the customer contact programme at the meeting on 11 March 2014
- To review the information on policy and service developments in response to demographic change (meeting on 19 September) with a view to following up in more depth at particular services
- To remove the gang-call in report as this comes under the remit of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- If there is extensive information available for round one of budget scrutiny (meeting on 26 November 2013) then the report on the shared environmental health service will be deferred to April 2014. ACTION: Director of Corporate Services to advise

The Commission agreed to re-establish the financial monitoring task group for 2013/14 with existing terms of reference and, in addition, to ask the task group to:

- 1) consider the local council tax benefit scheme prior to it being discussed by the Commission on 26 November 2013
- 2) receive a report on commercial waste

The Commission appointed councillors Iain Dysart, Suzanne Grocott, Samantha George, Diane Neil Mills, Dennis Pearce and Peter Southgate to the financial monitoring task group, and agreed to invite the Scrutiny Panel budget leads to join the group

RESOLVED: that future communication with the Borough Commander on behalf of the Commission should be copied to the Chair and forwarded to all members of the Commission for information.

Commission members agreed that it would be helpful to have budget scrutiny training in a similar format to that provided last year. ACTION: Director of Corporate Services

9 MINUTES OF THE FINANCIAL MONITORING TASK GROUP MEETING 25 JUNE 2013 (Agenda Item 9)

RESOLVED: that the minutes be agreed.

Matters arising – the Director of Corporate Services said that the WGA tool had still not been received from HM Treasury