

Merton Council Overview and Scrutiny Commission



Date: 16 July 2013

Time: 7.15 pm

Venue: Committee rooms D & E - Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX

AGENDA

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3	Minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2013	1 - 8
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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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Overview and Scrutiny Commission Membership

Councillors:

Peter Southgate (Chair)
Iain Dysart
Suzanne Grocott
Jeff Hanna
Russell Makin
Diane Neil Mills
Samantha George
Logie Lohendran
Peter McCabe (Vice-Chair)
Dennis Pearce

Substitute Members:

Judy Saunders
John Dehaney
Mary-Jane Jeanes
Henry Nelless
John Sargeant
Oonagh Moulton

Co-opted Representatives

Peter Connellan, Roman Catholic diocese
Dr Joanne Sullivan-Lyons, Secondary school parent governors
Colin Powell, Church of England diocese
Vacancy, Primary school parent governor representative

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.

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Agenda Item 3

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

30 APRIL 2013

(7.15pm – 10.10pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Peter Southgate (in the Chair), Peter McCabe (Vice Chair), John Dehaney (substitute for Russell Makin), Iain Dysart, Suzanne Evans, Suzanne Grocott, Jeff Hanna, Richard Hilton, Diane Neil Mills, Judy Saunders.

Co-opted members – Dr Jo Sullivan Lyons and Colin Powell.

ALSO PRESENT: Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services; Kris Witherington, Community Engagement Manager; Annalise Elliott, Head of Safer Merton; Ben Sherlock, Graduate Trainee; Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda item 1)

None.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Russell Makin.

3 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 28 FEBRUARY

RESOLVED: Minutes were agreed with the following amendments:

- Add Councillor Diane Neil Mills and Councillor Jeff Hanna to the list of those present
- Business Plan Update – add that the Chair of the Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel continues to have overarching concern about the level of cuts given the continued underspend.
- Duke of Edinburgh Award – amend to show that Councillors Evans, Grocott and Diane Neil Mills also voted in favour of the funding being retained
- Add sentence at end of paragraph relating to Polka Theatre – “Councillors Evans, Grocott, Hilton and Neil-Mills asked that their names be recorded in the minutes as having voted against the funding cut”
- Grammatical changes as notified by Councillor Evans

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services, confirmed that all outstanding information requests had been received, with the exception of staffing information which should be ready in a couple of weeks.

5 CENSUS DATA - PRESENTATION

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The Commission received a presentation from Kris Witherington, Community Engagement Manager. The presentation is published with the minutes of this meeting.

Kris Witherington outlined headline findings from the census data received to date:

- increase in population since 2001 – population density is now above average for London. Large growth in Wimbledon Park and Trinity wards, decrease in Hillside and Wimbledon Village wards
- younger population – mean age fallen from 37 in 2001 to 34 in 2011
- more diverse population - 16% fall in White British population, 6% rise in Other White population (predominantly Polish and South African)
- housing changes - 8% increase in flats and 6% decrease in terraced houses
- owner occupation levels still above London average but there has been a 67% increase in private rented accommodation (particularly around transport hubs)
- decline in car ownership, also particularly around transport hubs
- significant differences in the level of educational qualifications in different parts of the borough
- a decrease in economic activity – caused by increase in economically inactive (retired people and those looking after home or family) rather than an increase in unemployment
- Merton is a comparatively healthy borough but has significant geographical differences.

Members commented that the census information was extremely interesting and that it would be helpful to have numbers as well as percentage figures. They also said that some of the geographical differences are more subtle than a simple east/west divide and that this should be reflected in future presentations and reports.

Members said that they would also like to have some analysis of what is driving the demographic changes and how this will impact on council policies and service delivery. The Chair said that these issues would be discussed at the scrutiny work planning session for councillors and co-opted members on 9 May. The Director of Corporate Services, Caroline Holland, added that the service reviews would take demographic changes into account.

In response to a question about whether inequalities were decreasing or increasing within the borough, Kris Witherington said that the new Community Plan would have some of that information and that once all the census data has been received, there will be analysis of changes in inequalities.

Kris Witherington explained that although the 2011 census figures show a decline in the number of households since 2001, this is probably due to the 2001 figure

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being inaccurate. He assured the Commission that the 2011 figures could be relied on due to the 93% response rate in Merton (compared to 87% in 2001). In response to a question, he added that census information is compared with data from other sources in order to validate the data and draw out policy implications.

Kris Witherington said that the mid-year population provided by the Greater London Authority (GLA) should be used in preference to those provided by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) because the GLA models predict population movements and changes in housing in a more nuanced and realistic way. These concerns had been discussed with ONS.

In response to a question about the impact that the use of the ONS figures in the government's grant formula, Caroline Holland said that officers are keeping an eye on this but that it has become less of an issue due to other changes made to the formula.

6 REVIEW OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY FORUMS
2012/13

The Community Engagement Manager, Kris Witherington, introduced the report, drawing the Commission's attention to the impact that publicity for forum meetings has had on attendance in Wimbledon. Attendance at Colliers Wood has increased but is still relatively low due to attendance by representatives of residents associations who then report back to a wider membership.

Kris Witherington made a number of points in response to questions about petitions:

- Information about petitions, including e-petitions, is available on the Council's website: <http://www.merton.gov.uk/petitions>
- If an e-petition applies to a particular ward, the ward councillors will be notified of the petition
- Anyone can start a petition. The petition must call on the council or other body to take action (or not). Maximum time limit for completion is 12 weeks.
- The route that petitions take will depend on their subject and whether they relate to a wider consultation taking place

In response to a question about the annual residents' survey, Kris Witherington explained that 6 boroughs currently participate. However, the London comparative data is provided by a pan-London survey of 1000 London residents rather than the results from those 6 boroughs. Kris Witherington is in discussion with other boroughs and with the Local Government Association in order to keep up-to-date with approaches taken elsewhere and to assess best approach for Merton in future.

During discussion about the merits of having a residents' panel, Kris Witherington said that these are quite expensive and there is a need to balance cost against output. The previous panel was not maintained and this reduced the response rate considerably.

7. OPEN DATA AND TRANSPARENCY AGENDA

The Director of Corporate Services, Caroline Holland, introduced the report and said that in future the number of page views would be broken down to distinguish between internal and external hits.

A member of the Commission expressed surprise that the list of property assets was not available as he had been provided with this information in the past. Caroline Holland undertook to investigate and ensure that it is published by the end of May 2013. She added that it would be two or three months before the council's organisational chart would be published. ACTION: Head of Information Governance

This member also expressed concern that more of the data requested through FOI requests has not been published on the council's website. Caroline Holland said that the issue was ensuring the right format is used and that the information is kept up-to-date in order to be meaningful. The member suggested that officers should publish what was to hand immediately and then work on amending the format to meet the government's requirements.

Several members reported problems with opening the data files on the website. Caroline Holland undertook to investigate and rectify. ACTION: Head of Information Governance

In response to a question about how the "open data" is publicised, Caroline Holland undertook to review use of My Merton and other means of publicity. She added that data is already shared with partner organisations. ACTION: Head of Information Governance

8. HOME OFFICE PEER REVIEW AND GANG CALL-IN

The Head of Safer Merton, Annalise Elliott, introduced the report and said that Merton had been identified for a peer review because of a high-profile case involving a Merton resident and not because there is a gang problem within the borough. Informal feedback from the review is that there is strong leadership and effective partnership working.

Annalise Elliott offered to make the peer review report available to the Commission once the final document has been received from the Home Office. Councillor Jeff Hanna, Chair of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel, said that the Panel would be discussing the report at its meeting on 4 July 2013 so it could be emailed to Commission members at that point.

In response to questions, Annalise Elliott provided further detail about the gang call-in:

- participants were selected by youth offending

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panels

- the event was aimed at young people who were not already heavily involved in gangs and could therefore be influenced to make positive changes to their lives
- attendance was not compulsory but participants were heavily encouraged to attend and Merton attendees were offered access to various services as an inducement
- feedback from the event will result in some changes to style and delivery of some of the presentations and steps will be taken to ensure, if provided jointly, that both boroughs make the same offer to attendees
- the event was funded by Merton Priory Homes so the cost to the Council was minimal

A member said that, due to the potential for head injury, he thought that the boxing initiative shouldn't be offered as an inducement to attend a gang call-in.

A member said that she had seen evidence that gang call-ins could be counter-productive and that there is minimal evidence of the effectiveness of the approach. Annalise Elliott said that the effectiveness of the call-in would be reviewed in six and twelve months time. She added that the Home Office regarded the Merton and Wandsworth call-in as successful and had asked for it to be written up as an example of good practice.

A member asked whether the call-in was just reaching out to those who were already prepared to make changes. A number of members asked whether the messages could be conveyed to a wider group of young people, for example through a DVD that could be made available to schools.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Commission should receive the six and twelve month gang call-in review reports. These should include numbers as well as percentage figures.
- 2) That the Head of Safer Merton should report to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel regarding the cost of providing a DVD for schools
- 3) That the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel should receive the Home Office peer review report on gangs and youth violence in Merton at its meeting on 4 July 2013

9. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF VOLUNTEERING IN MERTON

Councillor Peter Southgate, as chair of the task group review, introduced the report

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and thanked task group members for their hard work.

Members discussed the report and agreed to make a number of changes.

RESOLVED:

- 1) To amend recommendation 4 to include the offer of an opportunity to gain an accredited qualification in community volunteering
- 2) To amend recommendation 12 by replacing “feasibility” with “desirability”
- 3) To delete recommendation 16
- 4) To forward the review report to Cabinet for approval and implementation of the recommendations.

10. DRAFT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

RESOLVED to present the Annual Report to Council at its meeting on 10 July 2013, with an amendment to the final paragraph on page 6 to insert the words “whilst awaiting the actual outcome” after “front line”

11. MEMBER SURVEY 2013 – ANALYSIS

Members discussed the report.

The Chair of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel said that the Panel has combined its “information only” items into a single update item on its agenda. The update report covers 4-7 topics, takes 5 minutes to discuss and enables members to ask brief follow-up questions and thank officers. It also enables items to be identified as appropriate for future scrutiny.

A member suggested that some opportunities had been missed for pre-decision scrutiny of items prior to consideration by Cabinet. The Head of Democracy Services said that the following mechanisms were available to help scrutiny members identify which items to select for pre-decision scrutiny:

- Presentation by Cabinet Member(s) and Directors at first formal scrutiny meeting each year
- Informal meetings between Scrutiny Chairs, Vice Chairs, Cabinet Members and Directors
- List of forward plan items on the scrutiny work programme report at each meeting

RESOLVED:

- 1) To replace the action point on agendas with “
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that the Commission and Panels continue to review agendas to ensure they are not too full”

- 2) That the Head of Democracy Services should review the target on agendas

12. FINANCIAL MONITORING SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

RESOLVED:

- 1) to note the minutes of the task group meeting
- 2) 2) to ask the Director of Corporate Services to provide information and clarification of the VAT regulations relating to the Council

13. PLANNING THE COMMISSION'S 2013/14 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

- 1) To invite the Council's Leader and Chief Executive and the Borough Commander to the meeting on 16 July
- 2) To receive an update at the meeting on 16 July from Cabinet on progress made with the implementation of the recommendations of the civil unrest task group review

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Agenda Item 4

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION – CALL IN OF THE DECISION TAKEN ON THE SALE OF LAND ON THE BROADWAY (P4)
2 MAY 2013

7.15PM – 9:05PM

PRESENT: Councillors Peter Southgate (chair), Councillor Peter McCabe (vice-chair), Councillors Iain Dysart, Suzanne Evans, Suzanne Grocott, Samantha George, Diane Neil Mills, Judy Saunders, Russell Makin, Jeff Hanna, Richard Hilton, David Dean (substitute for Henry Nelles).

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Mark Allison (Cabinet Member for Finance), Councillor Andrew Judge (Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration), Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration), Benjamin Sherlock (Scrutiny Officer), Rebecca Redman (Scrutiny Officer), Wendy MacNab (Merton Resident), James McGinlay (Head of Sustainable Communities), Susan Sime (Senior Lawyer, Legal Services), Valerie Mowah, (Policy Officer, Spatial Planning), Jacquie Denton (Estate Surveyor, Property Management)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Peter Connellan, Jo Sullivan-Lyons, Councillor Chris Edge.

3 CALL IN – SALE OF LAND ON THE BROADWAY (P4)

Councillor Peter Southgate outlined the reasons for the Call In and introduced the signatories of the Call in request, confirming that the Monitoring Officer had deemed this call in valid. Councillor Peter Southgate outlined the process and the individuals who would speak during the call in.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

During the debate the Panel passed the following resolution on two occasions prior to discussing the information provided in appendix 3 to the report, after which the meeting resumed in public session.

RESOLVED: That the public are excluded from the meeting during discussion of appendix 3 as it involves the disclosure of information relating to the financial or business affairs of the authority.

Councillor Peter Southgate also emphasised that this Call In was an opportunity to look in detail at improving the P4 site in Wimbledon and to examine in depth the options for appropriate use of the site.

Councillor Peter Southgate reminded the Commission that the discussion should remain focused on the sale of the P4 site and not dwell on planning options. He also

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informed the Commission that he had received legal advice that if the decision was referred back Cabinet should receive the reference as they had made the decision. In addition, contrary to the views expressed in the call in, officer advice confirmed that the decision was not contrary to the council's budget and policy framework.

Councillors Suzanne Evans and David Dean disputed this and asserted that it was for the Commission to decide who would receive the decision, if it was referred back.

Councillor Peter Southgate explained that Paul Dale (Assistant Director of Resources) had informed him that the decision was consistent with the budget; that the Call In raisers' point about the Localism Act was covered in the report, that the Economic Development Strategy was not in the budget and policy framework, and that the decision on the sale of land on the Broadway was not contrary to the outcomes of the Community Plan – therefore there were no grounds to refer the decision back to full Council, should the Commission agree to this .

Councillor Diane Neil Mills stated that part of the decision was based on the Economic Development Strategy which was part of the council's policy framework and therefore should be considered for referral back to full council. James McGinlay confirmed that the Economic Development Strategy was not part of the council's policy framework.

Councillor Peter Southgate welcomed comments from the signatories of the call in.

Councillor Diane Neil Mills thanked members, officers and residents in attendance. She stressed the importance of the decision and outlined her objection to the sale of P4 due to a lack of strategic and financial arguments, which were contrary to the council's budget and policy framework.

Councillor Diane Neil Mills highlighted that the P4 site is of strategic importance, being in the heart of the Wimbledon cultural cluster as outlined in the Local Development Framework. She felt that it was key for LBM to support it, as it provides access to the nearby theatres and adds amenity value to visitors to the shops and offices in Wimbledon.

Councillor Diane Neil Mills gave her opinion that a surplus of parking spaces in Wimbledon did not render the P4 site redundant as a car park, as even a 50m distance can impact foot traffic to businesses nearby. She felt that the survey was flawed by being an aggregate survey. She suggested that any P4 proposal should be based on Better Value development as outlined in the Council's Core Strategy regarding provision of cultural facilities, especially in the East of Wimbledon.

Councillor Diane Neil Mills felt that LBM should secure new cultural assets in the Broadway area and develop their infrastructure. She believed that the proposal to dispose of P4 showed an absence of leadership and did not adequately leverage the site. She told the Commission that there had been no dialogue with theatre management on this decision which contradicted Merton Council's professed support for the theatre.

Councillor Diane Neil Mills stated that disposing of P4 with no restrictions on its use

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made it hard for cultural organisations to match the bids of commercial developers. She suggested that the council could and should dispose of the site if there was social benefit to the proposed use. She felt that the council should continue to support the New Wimbledon theatre by enabling the P4 site to remain in its current use as a car park.

Councillor Diane Neil Mills asked for clarity on how cultural proposals could compete if the P3 land was also put on the market with no restrictions on its development. She gave her opinion that if the P4 site was not developed with cultural facilities, then the P3 site should be.

Councillor Diane Neil Mills said a report should be made to ensure the best consideration as disposal would result in a loss of income.

Councillor Suzanne Grocott asked three questions. Firstly, why the sale was needed. Secondly, why it was needed now. Thirdly, what criteria had been used to justify it?

Councillor Suzanne Grocott said that the Cabinet decision suggested the P4 car park is surplus to need. She disputed this arguing that the car park is often used at 100% capacity. Also despite officers' claims that current users will find other places to park, they concede it is hard to give any estimates about this, and that no assumptions can be used to determine how drivers will choose to park.

Councillor Suzanne Grocott questioned how necessary the receipt of funds was at this time from the site if we had sufficient reserves at present.

Councillor Peter Southgate then introduced Wendy MacNab, a local resident. Wendy MacNab outlined her objections to the decision stating that she felt that the parking survey had been inadequate and did not show the real usage of the car park, nor did it look at the users of the car park or reasons for parking at the P4 site.

Wendy MacNab stated that December and January were the busiest periods for the New Wimbledon Theatre, but the survey did not cover these periods, also focusing only on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday periods.

Wendy MacNab pointed out that the survey itself stated that the P4 site was often over capacity. She told the Commission that if the site was developed it would reduce light levels, air quality and the view for surrounding areas and from the air – going against the Merton policy on maintaining views in the borough.

Wendy MacNab explained that although the Palace Cinema building had previously stood on the P4 site, it had been a gabled building and so did not impact on air space or views in the way that proposed developments might.

Wendy MacNab told the Commission that the P4 site was a crucial asset for theatre parking. For example, HGVs need to park for theatre events, and site development of P4 would restrict their ability to get near the theatre.

Wendy MacNab also pointed out that the open air space aids dispersal of traffic fumes and sounds, and provides light to theatre dressing rooms, as well as the Broadway itself. Wendy MacNab particularly pointed to the proposed massing

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allowance in the report, and its lack of mitigation features. She referred to the Local Development Framework allowance for permitted heights, and suggested that a square block building as in the massing diagram was not appropriate for the area. As mentioned in the site Development Brief, the area is close to residential areas which would be negatively affected by the introduction of buildings taller than 4 storeys.

Wendy MacNab mentioned that around the borough a lot of bulky buildings had recently been planned with resistance from residents.

Wendy MacNab suggested that an arts centre be approved by Merton Council to meet a demand created by the closure of the Sir Cyril Black Community Centre on St George's Road. The Broadway would be a suitable location for this arts centre. She stated that she felt the proposals as given were too focused on best value and not residents' needs.

Wendy MacNab made the point that the financial climate creates a risk of new offices remaining unused after construction. She was also concerned that an unregulated retail bid may not fit in with the character of the area. She asked what surveys justified the addition of more offices, and said that new residential developments needed to be big enough to house families, not just commuters.

Wendy MacNab gave her opinion that the £0.25m annual revenue that the P4 car park generates would be lost for a one-off gain, if the site was sold on the market.

Councillor Andrew Judge responded by clarifying that any bid on the P4 site would have to demonstrate that it contributed to Street Scene and the Wimbledon economy before it went ahead. He informed the Commission that the density, mass and appearance of any building would be considered by the planning committee if and when the P4 site is sold. The Cabinet decision to which the Call In referred did not specify the dimensions of any development that might take place – the massing diagram in the report was just for marketing purposes.

Councillor Andrew Judge said that recent consultation around the borough shows that there is no demand for an arts centre on the P4 site.

Councillor Andrew Judge read out an email from the Ambassador Theatre Group, dated 30 April 2013, which stated that they had been aware that the P4 car park was temporary and would be sold, adding that they had no objection to the sale.

Councillor Andrew Judge asserted that the theatre does not depend on the car park. He pointed out that many London theatres do not have their own parking, and that the New Wimbledon Theatre is near several public transport interchanges. Studies show underuse of parking spaces in Wimbledon even at peak times.

Councillor Andrew Judge pointed out that the P4 site was acquired by LBM at cost to the Council, under a compulsory purchase order. He advised that it is an asset of value and that LBM should consider maximising that value in financial terms.

Councillor Andrew Judge also pointed out that the gap in frontage on the Broadway was detrimental to the appearance of Wimbledon centre.

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Councillor Andrew Judge confirmed that if the site went to tender but no bid met the current value of the car park that the council would not sell. However, if the bid is higher than the current value, the Council has an obligation to sell the site for the benefit of Merton and Wimbledon. He also stated that an Arts centre could be proposed as part of a bid, but that so far this has only been proposed for the P3 site.

Councillor Andrew Judge added that it should not be assumed that the existing car park revenue would disappear if the site is sold, as the same car park users would continue to pay to park elsewhere

Councillor Mark Allison explained that development options should be considered and that a decision should be taken soon, despite reserves, to ensure a timely receipt of funds.

Councillor Mark Allison referred to paragraph 7.1 of the Cabinet report, which states that the Council has a legal obligation to obtain the best reasonable consideration of land value. Councillor Mark Allison felt that the only way to judge the best consideration of the P4 site's land value was for the market to demonstrate the value of the site. It was Cabinet's judgement that if the right price was offered on the market, then a sale could be decided under further consideration.

Councillor Peter Southgate asked for clarity on what the "right price" was. He questioned whether, if an offer that was higher than the Existing Use Value given in the exempt appendix was received, the site sale would then go ahead.

Councillor Peter Southgate asked how the figure for the "right price" was derived. The Director of Corporate Services, Caroline Holland said that the valuation was based on existing use. Caroline Holland confirmed that the needs of the area and planning assumptions would be considered before the best proposal was accepted.

Councillor Samantha George said she would have expected a more detailed valuation, including alternate uses for the site. She said she could not gain comfort that alternate uses had been considered, from the information that had been provided.

Councillor Peter Southgate said that he calculated a higher value for the site than the one given in the exempt appendix. It was his opinion that Cabinet should not base a valuation decision on the information given.

Councillor Mark Allison said that the multiple options for the site make concrete valuation difficult and abstract at present.

Councillor David Dean asked Caroline Holland why the sale was happening now. Caroline Holland explained that the disposal of the site and loss of income had been incorporated into the Medium Term Financial Strategy and that the council has long intended to sell the P4 site.

Councillor David Dean asked Caroline Holland if the current Return on Investment (ROI) was approximately 17%. Caroline Holland said that based on current information, this was correct.

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Councillor David Dean asked Caroline Holland if she thought this was a good ROI. She said that for a car park it was good, but that the Council does not yet know what ROI it could get instead.

Councillor Richard Hilton asked what the return on capital would be, if the council sold P4 at the Existing Use Value in the exempt agenda. Caroline Holland explained that a market test would not use the same figure. She said that the best consideration for the site had to be made.

Councillor Richard Hilton felt that any decision to go to market should be backed by an independent valuation including the value of alternate uses. He suggested that a mixture of residential and retail use could have been valued. He asked how good value could be decided when no independent valuation had been sought. Caroline Holland confirmed that Corporate Services had not sought an alternate use valuation. Councillor Iain Dysart asked why, if there was consensus about the existing income generation, Cabinet had assumed an alternate purpose would be better.

Caroline Holland explained that income from the P4 car park disposal had already been factored into the council's budget.

Councillor David Dean raised that the number one reason for retail success is proximity to transport links, and that in Merton and other outer London boroughs the most important transport link is car parks. If a car park is taken away, he said, business rates would reduce in turn. He asked how much rates were estimated to fall with the disposal of the P4 car park site.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration, Chris Lee responded that the survey had shown Wimbledon to be over-served by car parks. He conceded there had been no analysis of the impact of removing individual car parks but explained that there was a long term plan to redevelop the site for some time.

Chris Lee said that the Council needs to use its vacant sites for redevelopment to increase revenue to the Council. He felt that the car park at P4 was a good use of the site but not necessarily the best use, nor was it vital for retail or the theatre.

Councillor Jeff Hanna raised that the Call In request form mentions that the clarity of aims and desired outcomes was not met by the decision. He asked if there was a way to better know the value of the site before a market test. Caroline Holland said there was not. Councillor Jeff Hanna asked whether, if the Cabinet decision is ratified, the council would continue with the sale. Caroline Holland replied that, as explained in the report, the council is not obliged to accept any bid, including the highest.

Councillor Suzanne Grocott asked Chris Lee if there was a way to test the theory that P4 car park users would continue to park elsewhere, for example by making other spaces free to park in, and seeing if those spaces are used instead of P4.

Chris Lee said there had been no driver behaviour analysis, but that use of Wimbledon Centre's public transport links was to be encouraged. He said that Environment & Regeneration department are assuming that existing provision will be

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION – CALL IN OF THE DECISION TAKEN
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sufficient, and that the department is improving signage for car parks in the area. He said that while the P3 and P4 car parks are plainly visible to motorists, others will have better signage so drivers know where to park.

Councillor Suzanne Grocott asked if there was an aim to reduce cars in Wimbledon. She asked if there was evidence that other car parks had been increasing revenue since their signage was improved. Chris Lee replied that there were no figures but that they could be provided. He confirmed that the council is encouraging public transport use.

Councillor David Dean gave the example of Kingston and Croydon as similar boroughs that rely on car transport. He pointed out that the central London theatres Councillor Mark Allison had referred to had far better public transport links than Wimbledon.

Councillor David Dean said that in P4, the revenue per space was better than most car parks and that its high use indicated it was a very successful car park. He felt this could not be relied on to carry over to other car parks, as it was likely due to the site's central location.

Councillor David Dean stated that people dropping off disabled residents at the theatre may be disinclined to do so at P3 because of its distance from the Theatre. Councillor David Dean said that Wimbledon needed and deserved the P4 car park.

Councillor David Dean asked if the council could liaise with Kingston to discuss their car parking approach and if other car parks should be sold rather than the P4 site.

Councillor David Dean suggested that the council contact NCP to make an offer to lease the car park to them. Councillor Suzanne Evans supported Councillor David Dean's proposal. Councillor Suzanne Evans said that the current business plan for the P4 site did not make sense and that revenue-losing car parks should be closed down instead.

Councillor Suzanne Evans brought the Commission's attention to paragraph 3.4.1 of the Call In report, where it claims there is no evidence that closing the P4 car park will lead to a decline in local business. She asked if there was any evidence that closing the P4 car park would not lead to a decline in business.

Councillor Andrew Judge said that there will still be disabled car parking spaces near to the theatre. Councillor Andrew Judge pointed out that previous independent valuations of other sites have not equated to the actual market value.

It was moved by Councillor Judy Saunders and seconded by Councillor Peter McCabe:

That the decision be ratified, and not be referred to either Cabinet or full Council. She stated that the area has potential for development and that people will be able to park in Wimbledon whether P4 is a car park or not.

Councillor Andrew Judge explained that the council cannot take the P4 site to market without deciding to dispose of it, and that the P4 site has been on the disposal list for

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a some time. He reiterated that Cabinet would make a business decision after offers had been made, and that it would consider the quality, value, planning permission and contribution to Wimbledon that each bid offered.

The motion was put to the vote.

4 members voted in favour.

5 members voted against.

The motion was denied.

Councillor Diane Neil Mills stated that she felt that she had sufficiently explained why the decision runs contrary to the Local Development Framework (LDF). Councillor Diana Neil Mills added that the decision was also contrary to the financial and budgetary policy of the council. Councillor Jeff Hanna questioned the value of the car park to the culture and community assets in the area. He stated that the New Wimbledon Theatre had a capacity of 1670, which left almost 1400 people who do not park in the P4 car park. He concluded from this that the P4 car park was not vital for the theatre's survival.

Councillor Jeff Hanna said that the Call In signatories financial arguments had been challenged by Cabinet Members and the Director for Corporate Services, since LBM was not committing to a sale if no bids met the required value.

Councillor Iain Dysart asked what results had come from consultation with community groups. Councillor Peter Southgate said that the Wimbledon Municipal Group had declined to attend, indicating a lack of interest in the decision.

Councillor Samantha George pointed out that the day before the Call In, a cultural group had raised the prospect of an arts centre in Wimbledon with her and that this was not reflected in the report. She also felt that the Localism Act avenue for the site (via the Community Right to Bid) had been denied by expediting the sale. She felt the community groups should have a chance to bid.

Councillor Andrew Judge reiterated that the Wimbledon Municipal Group had expressed an interest in the P3 site for an arts centre development but not in the P4 site.

Councillor Peter Southgate felt that an independent valuation was needed before bidding begins, so that the bids can be objectively evaluated. He felt that the figure given in the exempt materials was too low.

Councillor Andrew Judge responded that the figure in the exempt paper was not a valuation. Councillor Mark Allison added that the P4 site has been on the council's disposal list for a long time. Councillor Samantha George said that the Council often market-tests, and asked why this had not happened for P4.

Councillor Diane Neil Mills disputed that no group was interested in P4 as an arts site or that the New Wimbledon Theatre would be unaffected. Councillor Diane Neil Mills stated that Wimbledon Music Group has expressed an interest in an arts centre, and

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ON THE SALE OF LAND ON THE BROADWAY (P4)
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that Wendy MacNab had already outlined her views that the lack of parking would be devastating to the theatre.

It was moved by Councillor Richard Hilton and seconded by Councillor Suzanne Evans:

That the decision should be referred back to Council instead of Cabinet.

Councillor Peter Southgate said that the decision should return to the decision maker which was Cabinet.

Councillor David Dean added that since the “disposal” aspect of the sale had been questioned, the decision was valid to return to full council.

The motion was put to the vote.

5 members voted in favour.

5 members voted against.

The chair used his deciding vote and the motion was denied.

RESOLVED: That the decision is referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration at its meeting on 10 June 2013. That the Commission forward the following recommendations to Cabinet for consideration in relation to the sale of land on The Broadway (P4):

- A. That Cabinet reconsider the decision taken on the sale of land on the Broadway (P4 site);
- B. That Cabinet undertake a more comprehensive valuation of the P4 site's value (including its on going value as a P4 site) before opening up to tender;
- C. That Cabinet compares bids received with the site's current value as a car park, and does not accept any bid that fails to achieve value against this benchmark

Furthermore, that the following comments be noted by Cabinet as an informative from the Panel:

- To consider the potential for the site to contribute to the emerging "creative quarter" in this part of the Broadway
- To reference provisions of the Localism Act allowing the community right to bid for public assets

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Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 16th July 2013

Agenda item:

Wards: All

Subject: Civil unrest – Cabinet’s action plan for implementation of task group recommendations

Lead officer: Annalise Elliott Head of Safer Merton

Lead member: Councillor Edith Macauley

Contact officer: Annalise Elliott Head of Safer Merton

Recommendations:

- A. That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission notes the work undertaken in respect of the Civil Unrest Action Plan.
-

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 A task group was set up in order to investigate and identify lessons learned from the civil unrest that took place in parts of Colliers Wood, Wimbledon and Mitcham in August 2011. This report highlights the recommendations that were made by cabinet and provides an update on progress made on these recommendations, as of May 2013.

2. DETAILS

- 2.1 Over five days in August 2011 around 15,000 people rioted, looting and damaging town centres in 66 different areas across England. The government established the Riots, Communities and Victims Panel, to investigate the causes of the riots and to consider what more could be done to build greater social and economic resilience in communities.
- 2.2 The Council, at its meeting on 23 September 2011, discussed the civil unrest that took place in parts of Colliers Wood, Wimbledon and Mitcham in August 2011. Council resolved that the Scrutiny Commission and/ or relevant Panels should receive and consider a report of events in Merton, and discuss any consequent initiatives, which might usefully be pursued for the benefit of the authority, its partners and the wider community.
- 2.3 From the outset, task group members agreed that they wished to keep the review as evidence based and focussed on Merton as possible. The task group had six meetings at which a wide range of evidence was considered including national, regional and local reports as well as discussion with the police, Safer Merton, youth service and emergency planning.

- 2.4 At Cabinet on the 22nd of October 2012 the implementation of the recommendations were agreed.
- 2.5 A preliminary update on the Action Plan was taken to Overview and Scrutiny in November 2012
- 2.6 Cabinet requested that they note the update to the action plan prior to Overview and Scrutiny, so the timetable was altered accordingly and can be noted below.
- 2.7 The update on the action plan was taken to Cabinet on the 10th of June. Cabinet did not request any changes, however the key message given was that criminality should not be rewarded and our response to the unrest should reflect this.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Not to undertake a review, however potential lessons may not be learnt to prevent similar problems in the future.

4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1 This report will go to Cabinet to note the progress on the recommendations.

5. TIMETABLE

13 th Sep 2011	Council discussed the Civil Unrest and resolved that a Scrutiny Commission be provided with a report of events
11 th October 2011	Civil Unrest was discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and a task group was recommended to start in January to pull together a report.
22 nd Oct 2012	The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission presented the report at Cabinet where the recommendations were noted and Cabinet requested an action plan, which they would then formally agree, prior to being taken back to the commission.
28 th Nov 2012	Initial feedback was provided to the Commission on the actions set out in the task group report.
28 th May 2013	Progress on the Civil Unrest Task Group Actions to be taken to LSG prior to being reported back to Cabinet in June and the Commission in July
10 th June 2013	Cabinet note and formally approve the progress made in relation to action plan.

Forward	
16 th July 2013	The Overview and Scrutiny Commission note the approved action plan and progress.

6. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None for the purposes of this report - financial, resource and property implications of implementing the agreed recommendations are met by the various council departments and the partnership and this will inform the actions taken, which will need to be delivered within an environment of financial and physical constraint.

7. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None

8. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This report covers all sections of the community and does not discriminate against any group. It should foster better community relations between the local residents and between partner organisations.

9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The implications are crime and disorder specific.

10. RISK AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None for the purposes of this report – risk management and health and safety implications of implementing the agreed recommendations have been accounted for. Reducing the opportunity for future incidents will improve the health and safety of our residents and visitors.

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

11.1 Appendix 1 – Action Plan

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 None

Appendix 1

Updates on the recommendations for the civil unrest review

	Responsible decision making body
Recommendation 1	
We recommend that the Borough Commander provide a written statement setting out what mechanisms are available to the police locally for drawing in additional resources in an emergency and what changes have been made to those procedures in the light of the widespread unrest experienced in August 2011.	Police
Actions: Covered by the MPS Service Mobilisation Plan, which has been revised following the disorder and to incorporate structural changes under the One Met Model change programme. These are covered by a Standard Operating Procedure document. This is a restricted document and not for publication.	
Recommendation 2	
We recommend that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission invite the Borough Commander to attend a meeting in order to discuss the level of police resources that will be deployed in the borough after the Olympics, including the number of public order trained officers.	Overview and Scrutiny Commission Police
Actions: The borough commander received an invitation and clarification as to what is required from him and attended the meeting on the 28 th of November.	
Recommendation 3	
We recommend that a list of drivers who would be willing to volunteer during any future emergency is drawn up and that appropriate advice is issued to them immediately so that they understand the limits around what they may be asked to do.	Merton Transport Services (MTS)
Actions: Emergency folders showing all staff and contact details are held. These are reviewed six monthly and the folders are kept off site. It was this information that enabled such a strong response previously. The team has also undertaken toolbox training to enable any one to manage any need that MTS Operations and workshops might be required to assist with. Should anyone be asked	

<p>to formulate a response they would phone and request assistance from whatever staff would be of use.</p> <p>In addition they are now formulating an additional list of drivers who specifically wish to be considered for any emergency response. This information will be available to whoever needs it and it will also be placed in the emergency folders.</p> <p>The team is waiting for, and would welcome, standard operating procedures and guidance for staff. When that is available they will ensure all staff are aware of the content and, again, it would be placed in the emergency folders.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4 (paragraph 32)</p>	
<p>We further recommend that no volunteer driver should be put in a position where they would not be covered by insurance.</p>	<p>Merton Transport Services</p>
<p>All Council Staff who drive Council vehicles are covered by Council insurance.</p> <p>On occasions, like with the Civil Unrest situation, the Police Officers who drove Council vehicles were able to do so under the cover of their Police Insurance.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 5</p>	
<p>We recommend that the council's corporate management team identify who in the council is best placed to maintain contact lists for businesses and community leaders that can be used by the police and other partners during an emergency. Officers should review existing options and identify the most suitable contact lists for future use.</p>	<p>Corporate Safety Services and the Policy, Partnerships and Strategy Team.</p>
<p>Actions:</p> <p>Raised at CMT and agreed that Corporate Safety Services will maintain a list of business contacts. CMT agreed that a starting point would be to use the contact list of businesses compiled by the Merton Chamber of Commerce. The Policy, Strategy and Partnerships Team will maintain a contact list of community leaders.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 6</p>	
<p>We recommend that the Head of Communications identify the best ways in which the Council could post website and social media messages during any future emergency</p>	<p>Communications Team</p>

<p>situations to encourage positive behaviour and support from local residents.</p>	
<p>Actions: The head of communications has addressed it the media emergency plan incorporates a wide range of channels including social media now.</p>	
Recommendation 7	
<p>We recommend that Cabinet explore with the corporate management team the scoping of new service for those 18-24 year olds at risk of anti-social behaviour, but not currently supported by any existing service, including a business case relating to the costs and benefits of commissioning such a service.</p>	Cabinet/ CSF
<p>Actions: Sits with the cabinet member for CSF and the cabinet member for community safety</p> <p>Work is already underway in supporting this group in the form of the Offender Management Panel however this only deals with a minority of ‘problem’ young adults. The troubled families programme now underway also looks to support relevant people within this age grouping.</p> <p>The Ending Gangs and Youth Violence Peer Review took place during the week of the 18th of March. The report outlining the findings and possible recommendations is due imminently and will then be taken forward and signed off by the partnership.</p>	
Recommendation 8 (paragraph 51)	
<p>We further recommend that Cabinet consider the role of central government, and whether the relevant Minister should be lobbied to review the need for such a service - whilst recognising the role that voluntary sector organisations might have.</p>	Cabinet
<p>The council has proactively looked for ways to develop its capacity to work with older young people 19-25. As examples we have implemented our Transforming Families Service that enables us to work with older siblings as long as the family overall meet the eligibility criteria. We have also bid to MOPAC for specific resources to undertake targeted work with young offenders in this older age range. At the time of writing we are yet to hear the outcome of the bid.</p> <p>We would like to ask Cabinet if they wish Ministers to be lobbied?</p>	

Recommendation 9	
We recommend that the work by the youth service to identify appropriate provision for the young people who are most in need is widened to assess need more generally and advise on resources necessary to address this, not precluding the possibility of making a growth bid.	Cabinet/ Children Schools and Families (CSF)
<p>Actions: Sits with the cabinet member for CSF and discussions as part of the corporate budget setting programme have been undertaken.</p> <p>There was no process for growth, which CSF could bid into for 13/14 due to the significant budget pressures on the Council overall. A successful bid has been made to MOPAC for work with girls at risk of sexual exploitation and deterrence and diversion from gangs. The money is initially for one year only.</p>	
Recommendation 10	
We recommend that the police continue to review how the way in which stop and search is carried out locally and the information provided at the time could be changed to minimise the perception of unfair treatment. This could include a clearly written flyer (with a phone number for feedback), visiting youth clubs and taking other opportunities for positive interactions that will build good relationships with young people.	Police
<p>Actions: This has been driven centrally as a response to both the disorder and the Commissioner's concerns that Stop and Search powers to not engender public confidence. The review has been conducted under the 'Stop It' project. Locally numbers of stop and search have fallen dramatically and performance has improved. The uses of s.60 and s.44 terrorism searches have all but ceased. Stop and search continues to be monitored locally by an effective stop and search monitoring group.</p>	
Recommendation 11	
We recommend that there is a discussion at the head teachers group, to which the police are invited, on whether it would be helpful to ask the school based police officers (or another police officer) to talk to pupils about stop and search.	CSF/ Head Teachers Group
<p>Actions: The police to set up meetings via the schools officers to meet head teachers and formulate an offer that can be delivered across the school environment (and</p>	

other youth provision).

The Safer Schools Partnership has continued to meet and to respond innovatively to this issue. Initial feedback from the recent Home Office peer review commended the Partnership for their work, which they felt included good practice.

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 16th July 2013

Agenda item: 7

Wards: All

Subject: Customer Contact Programme Update

Lead officer: Sophie Ellis, Assistant Director of Business Improvement

Lead member: Cllr Betteridge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Implementation

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

Contact officer: Evette Crichlow (Programme Manager, Customer Contact)

Recommendations:

- A. Commission to note and comment on progress to delivering the Customer Contact programme.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Commission with an update on the Customer Contact programme and to highlight, for information, the key next steps.
- 1.2. The programme last reported to the Commission on 28 February 2013 and the Council's Customer Contact Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 11th March 2013. This can be found in appendix A for ease of reference.
- 1.3. The Strategy provides the context for customers, other stakeholders and services to be engaged in the Customer Contact Programme which will deliver the strategy and ensure customer needs are aligned with business priorities across all access channels.
- 1.4. The Programme is now in the Analysis and Design phase. The outputs from this phase will provide the basis for the specification of business requirements for the procurement of key technology that will enable the customer transformation set out in the strategy. It is expected that the procured technology solution will support all access channels and will enable the development of a 'personalised view of customer data'.
- 1.5. A programme plan and brief for the first phase have been prepared and the outputs of the Analysis and Design phase are expected to be as follows:
- (i) Channel & Service Analysis
 - Service engagement and prioritisation
 - Identification and implementation of 'quick wins' and rapid improvements
 - Demand and Volume data analysis
 - Identification of avoidable contacts and opportunities for reduction
 - Pinpoint Savings for next financial year

- Reusable service engagement process
- (ii) Procured technology
 - Integration of systems to deliver a personalised view of customer data
 - Improved access to information for both staff and citizens
 - Transactional website/portal
 - Document management
- (iii) Customer Insight Analysis
 - Customer segmentation analysis
 - Service demand analysis
 - Location and geographical analysis
 - Customer experience and journey mapping

1.6. The remainder of this report sets out the activities that are planned and underway to give a sense of the progress that is being made.

2 ACTIVITY TO DATE

- 2.1. The **Customer Contact Strategy** was approved by Cabinet on 12th July 2012 and provides the context for customers, other stakeholders and services to be engaged in the Customer Contact Programme.
- 2.2. The **Programme Manager** (fixed term 2 year appointment) took up the post in April 2013. The position had previously been covered by an interim appointment who was tasked with developing the Customer Contact Strategy and specification of requirements. Both of these deliverables have been achieved.
- 2.3. A **market engagement** event was held on 6th June 2013 with a view to understanding the current market provision for enabling technologies and shaping a procurement exercise going forward.
- 2.4. A visit has taken place to Hammersmith and Fulham to learn from their customer transformation journey which started late 2001 and took an incremental approach, resulting in a move to customer self-service, migration of back office services to customer contact centre and a single customer view, all of which support the approach planned by Merton. Visits have also being arranged to Croydon and Bexley to ensure we benefit from the **best practice** of other local authorities.
- 2.5. Each service in the Council is working on having a **Target Operating Model (TOM)** that clearly sets out its vision for the future – how it will continue making the transition towards becoming not just a good service, but a great service – and a delivery plan that sets out a route map for getting there. We are working to ensure that the Customer Contact programme supports and enables the delivery of the agreed transformation.
- 2.6. The following service areas have identified the Customer Contact Programme as an enabler in their TOM delivery plans. Subject to validation

and approval, these service areas will be engaged and prioritised as part of the programme to ensure they are supported to deliver their target operating models.

Programme/ Project	Workstream	Lead	Start date	End date
Community and Housing				
Housing				
Housing Options Self-Service tool	Scope out, develop and implement an on-line Housing Options self-service tool (subject to implementation costs)	Steve Langley	01 Apr 2013	31 Mar 2014
Housing Register Pre-Registration self-assessment tool	Scope out, develop and implement an on-line Housing Register Pre-Registration Self Assessment tool	Steve Langley	01 Apr 2013	31 Mar 2014
Housing Register 1:1 application process	Implement a new face to face interview process for applicants wishing to join the Housing Register	Steve Langley	01 May 2013	31 Mar 2014
Libraries				
Assisted digital support	Working with key partners both within the Council and externally, including the CAB, develop a comprehensive information and support service in keeping with the e-Gov agenda	Anthony Hopkins/ Lisa Mustoe	01 Apr 2013	01 Apr 2015
ton Adult Education				
Increased automated systems	Introduce electronic registers and increased of Moodle the online portal for tutors and students	Sidra Hill	01 Jun 2013	01 Dec 2013
Children schools and families				
Customer Access School Admissions	Admissions service identified for specific customer contact initiatives - minimising unavoidable contact via work	Paul Ballatt	01 Apr 2011	01 Mar 2014

	with Merton Link & increasing on-line applications. Have significantly shifted to e admissions already (above London average rates) but will continue to maximise electronic channels & explore any synergies through the programme			
Environment and Regeneration				
Highways & Traffic				
Self Service	Switch to self-service; create a dedicated online customer portal for customers to submit highway related license applications online including payment, and to view progress on works on site.	Mario Lecordier	01 Apr 2013	01 Apr 2014
GIS	Introduce GIS online reporting so customers can report faults on services, all faults will report straight into a back office system that can be sent directly to the term contractors to fix.	Mario Lecordier	01 Apr 2013	01 Apr 2014
Environmental Health, Trading Standards & Licensing				
Deliver shared service option	Create a shared regulatory service to reduce back office operational costs and transform the way customers access the service, including the introduction of flexible/mobile working.	Ian Murrell	01 Apr 2013	31 Mar 2015
Development Control & Building Control				
Self service	Utilise the internet, website, and online platforms to move towards more self-service and reduce time spent on avoidable contact. Introduce e-forms for building control applications and enforcement complaints to reduce back office costs.	Neil Miligan	01 Apr 2013	31 Mar 2016
Enforcement shared	Explore the option of enforcement shared services	Neil Miligan	01 Jun	31 Mar

services	to reduce costs.		2013	2015
Parks & Green spaces				
Channel Shift/Mango Booking System	Channel shift to online by increasing customer awareness/usage of the mango (booking live system) this will enable back office costs to be reduced or alternatively resources focused on generating additional income/selling existing and new products, including introducing bundling. Establish Parks Facebook/Twitter accounts to better communicate with residents and use as a benchmarking platform in responses to residents' complaints.	Doug Napier	On-going	On-going
Parking				
Channel Shift to CRM/Online	The channel shift to online will reduce the number of avoidable calls coming through to the back office via a fully online PCN system which will enable customers to view the contravention online via photos/film when they type in the PCN number. Implementation of CRM system will further help reduce avoidable contact calls that come through to the parking office.	Paul Walshe	01 Apr 2014	01 Apr 2015
Mobile Phone Payments	Implement Mobile phone payments for all parking related activities, this will enable the council to start phasing out some cash collections.	Paul Walshe	01 Jan 2013	31 Mar 2014
Explore Sub-regional Shared service	Explore the possibility of a shared back office parking function with other South London boroughs to identify cost savings and a more	Paul Walshe	01 Jan 2013	31 Dec 2013

	efficient service.			
Leisure & Culture				
Channel Shift/Mango Booking System	Channel shift to online by increasing customer awareness/usage of the mango (booking live system) this will enable back office costs to be reduced or alternatively resources focused on generating additional income/selling existing and new products, including introducing bundling. Establish Parks Facebook/Twitter accounts to better communicate with residents and use as a benchmarking platform in responses to residents' complaints. Roll out and sell the mango booking system to Private schools and organisations as an effective end to end booking platform and take a commission per transaction.	Christine Parsloe	01 Jun 2012	On-going
Cemeteries on line	Move the cemeteries service online via the Mango system to stop paper processes and start to transform and change current behaviour of undertakers that frequently utilise the council service	Christine Parsloe	TBC	TBC
Property Services				
IPF Mapping system	Fully implement the IPF Mapping system so all internal council departments and external customers can easily access maps around council land ownership. Current mapping system is through use of old ordnance survey maps.	Howard Joy	01 Jan 2012	31 Mar 2016

Programme Governance and Structure

- 2.7. The council's Customer Contact Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 11th March 2013 and clarified the vision and approach for the programme as well as our customer standards.
- 2.8. Governance for the programme has been refreshed and now consists of a **Programme Board** (management and control focus) chaired by Caroline Holland, Corporate Services Director (programme sponsor), a **Programme Steering Group** (design and delivery focus) chaired by Sophie Ellis, AD Business Improvement and Five **Working Groups** (Communication, Business Analysis, Customers, Procurement and ICT) led by Steering group members. The scope and terms of reference for the Board and all groups have been agreed.
- 2.9. Customer Contact will be a phased programme over three years with the first phased focused on the detailed Analysis and Design. The five working groups are tasked with leading each of the following workstreams in this initial phase.

Communications and change

- 2.10. The approved Customer Contact Strategy clarified the vision and approach to channel management and migration as well as our customer standards.
- 2.11. Our immediate steps will be to ensure that the strategy and standards are communicated internally and that all staff across the organisation are regularly informed and engaged through the design and analysis phase, so that:
- Staff understand the vision of the customer contact programme
 - Staff feel involved in the development of the customer contact programme
 - Staff feel the decision making process is transparent and open
 - Service delivery levels continue with minimum disruption during the developmental period.
- 2.12. The Customer Contact Programme is essentially a cultural change programme, which will be enabled by technology, and we understand that this change cannot be managed separately from the transformation of the business, where the change is embedded.
- 2.13. Managing this change will involve assessing who is impacted, what the impact is and when it will occur and this will form the basis of our communications plan.
- 2.14. Work is underway to identify the processes and systems that will be affected by changing the ways in which our customers can contact the council and we have identified those internal and external to the organisation that will be impacted.
- 2.15. We plan to establish all of the activities needed to persuade, motivate and engage those impacted by the change to ensure that as many activities as

possible can be foreseen and ownership assigned, with agreed dates for completion.

- 2.16. Below sets out some of the activities required as part of the design and analysis phase of the programme to address key critical success factors in managing change:

Critical success factors	Change management activities - Design and Analysis phase	Timescales
Ready		
The new organisation, roles and / or structure are designed to support the change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Align communication and implementation plan with the Flexible working and mobile working activities - Engage with HR on any organisational design work 	June - September 2013
Change impacts fully understood and actions are in-place to ensure readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete customer-adaptive survey to determine the extent to which the organisation has the ability to cope with, sense, and respond at speed, to accelerating change in customer access – Change readiness assessment 	June 2013
Future business processes are defined, designed & documented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review departmental TOMs and work with services to enable delivery of their plans - Identify dependencies and impacts on other areas of the organisation or service delivery areas - Process mapping of 'as is' and 'to be' processes, by channel and by service. 	June – August 2013
Able		
New culture & behaviours understood & actions in place to move towards them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publicise new Customer Standards - Work with HR and Learning and Development to clarify the required changes to culture & behaviours 	July 2013
Staff have the necessary skills to deliver the new ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage with Learning & Development to identify skills requirement 	September 2013
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify high-level 	August/ September 2013

framework is in place to support new ways of working	performance measures and baseline; as the basis for the new performance framework	
Willing		
Leaders take ownership in driving change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weekly sponsor meetings - Monthly programme Boards - Regularly attend CMT and DMT - Cabinet member briefings 	On-going
People are engaged and informed via relevant communication	<p>Internal - Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technology Showcase - Annual Staff Conference - Insight e-newsletter - Staff & Managers bulletins - Chief Executive briefings - Intranet front page - News - Merton 2015 blog - Corporate posters <p>External - Customers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - My Merton magazine - Merton Council website - Local press releases - Leader's press briefing - JC Decaux advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 July 2013 - 23/24 Oct & 5/6 Nov 2013 - 6-8 weekly - Weekly - Monthly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quarterly
Rationale for the change is established and understood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publicise Customer Contact Strategy - Communicate quick wins and opportunities for rapid improvements - Identify change agents, including departmental and service champions at all levels 	July 2013

2.17. As the programme progresses and is informed by the outputs of the first phase, additional activities will be identified and planned in order to drive best practice in the implementation, delivery and sustainability of the cultural change required.

Business Analysis

2.18. Engagement with staff and services is underway with the cross cutting analysis of existing contact channels (face to face, telephone, post, online) and services.

2.19. This analysis has built on the work completed as part of the options appraisal, as well as a number of previous pieces of work including the Deloitte review of customer services, the scrutiny review of customer

access, and work undertaken in relation to Target Operating Models (TOM's).

- 2.20. Two Business Improvement Advisors and the Web Manager are currently documenting the 'as is' position in terms of processes, demand and volume data and opportunities for improvements; as well as 'to be' analysis for recommendations – including process re-engineering where required.
- 2.21. We understand that identifying some early quick wins or rapid improvements will be essential to helping us engage people early and demonstrate the potential benefits of the programme.
- 2.22. This analysis will also inform the service engagement and prioritisation that will be required for future phases of the programme, and is likely to be based on:
- (i) Quick financial benefits - Services whose cashable savings can be enabled by the programme
 - (ii) Rapid improvements - Services that can make immediate changes to improve staff and/ or customer experience and satisfaction
 - (iii) Readiness of the services to engage - Appetite of management and staff to make changes in their service area and adopt the required behaviours

Customers

- 2.23. We want to ensure that we looking at customer interaction from both sides. So, as well as undertaking analysis from the council's perspective of what channels are currently used and where the scope for improvement and change exists, we need to look at customer interaction from the customer perspective to understand more about our customers' behaviours and motivations in their interactions.
- 2.24. We have engaged the consultancy services of Red Quadrant to work with Merton to deliver customer insight analysis, which will inform key actions, design decisions and potential policy implications for the Customer Contact programme and wider Council.
- 2.25. This contract will begin in July 2013 and will build on the existing ACORN segmentation undertaken for the options appraisal, but will be expanded to include the level of analysis required to design a transformation programme. The objective will be to provide a detailed understanding of the three way relationship between Merton's customers, channels and services. In order to successfully implement a channel shift strategy we will need to understand:
- How our customers expect and desire to access services?
 - Which channels are appropriate to our customers?
 - Which services and combination of services our customers use?
 - Which channels are appropriate given the nature of our services?
- 2.26. The methodology used will include the following:

- (i) Customer segmentation analysis to understand who Merton's customers are, including socio-economic analysis and recommendations using a recognised segmentation dataset
- (ii) Service demand analysis to understand the reasons Merton's customers contact the council and their motivation and purpose
- (iii) Location and geographical analysis of where Merton's customers live and where they contact the council
- (iv) Customer experience and journey mapping analysis and recommendations, identifying which channels Merton's customers use to contact the council, which services customers need and how they can be usefully clustered together
- (v) Customer engagement in the form of questionnaires and/or focus groups in order to validate the analysis and recommendations

2.27. This work will also include dashboard reporting and the development of a framework to allow us to measure our performance on the basis of customers' experience and to review and improve service delivery and ensure that customer needs have been identified and met.

Procurement

2.28. In order to enable the delivery the vision set out in the Customer Contact Strategy we intend to procure a system(s) that will provide:

- Integration of systems to deliver a personalised view of customer data
- Improved access to information for both staff and citizens
- Transactional website/portal
- Document management

2.29. Both the internal and external analysis identified above will inform the business requirements for the enabling technology, related services and on-going support. This will increase the likelihood that the system will comprehensively meet the needs of the organisation and enable the delivery of the Customer Contact Strategy

2.30. 45 companies attended the market engagement event held on 6th June 2013 which indicated a mature market for what we propose to deliver. Based on information provided, 15 companies responded to a feedback questionnaire in support of the Council's vision for Customer Contact and the Competitive Dialogue approach.

2.31. A Delivery Manager has been recruited to lead the procurement process and this contract is anticipated to last 12 months.

2.32. The next step will be to issue an OJEU notice which is expected to be published in July/ August 2013.

ICT

- 2.33. We are in the process of developing an understanding of the council's requirements in relation to supporting and enabling technology (web, electronic document management, customer portal/ personalised view of data), although as part of the dialogue process, vendors and suppliers will be engaged to establish the best value, flexible and resilient solutions that meet our needs.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. The design of the programme is taking into account the options appraisal that was undertaken throughout 2012.
- 3.2. A visit has taken place to Hammersmith and Fulham to learn from their customer transformation journey. Further visits have also being arranged to Croydon and Bexley to ensure we benefit from the best practice of other local authorities, as well as developing a network of organisations undergoing customer transformation.
- 3.3. Feasible and cost-effective alternatives for the technology enabler will be explored as part of the procurement process.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. The governance arrangements for the programme are designed to ensure that businesses across the organisation are fully engaged in the development of the approach.
- 4.2. It is expected that specific customer groups will be engaged as part of the programme. It may then be necessary to undertake formal consultation to reflect specific changes to how services are delivered via specific access channels. The programme will provide regular updates to the Commission in this regard.

The programme will also provide a monthly update on all workstreams via the intranet.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. The Customer Contact Programme is a three year programme and the activities, milestones and deliverables of the first phase have been planned.
- 5.2. The outputs of the analysis and design phase, including the procurement process, will inform the timescales for the rest of the programme.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. An initial programme budget of £2.3m has been approved (Cabinet 12th July 2012), along with up to £1.2m for Electronic Document and Records Management (Cabinet 18th February 2013). The cost implications of this will be addressed as part of the programme planning activity.

- 6.2. The programme will continue to work with services to assess potential savings from self-service and channel shift. The business case for the programme – in relation to benefits and savings – will be updated once the outcome of the procurement exercise is known.
- 6.3. Any property implications are likely to come from the assessment of the provision of face-to-face services in specific locations across the borough. It is expected that any such implications will be managed and aligned with any existing property rationalisation plans, e.g. the flexible working programme.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. Legal input will be required as part of the procurement exercise and the establishment of suitable contracts with vendors and service providers.
- 7.2. There may be some impact on the provision of some statutory services, e.g. Regulatory services, but this will be established and managed through the engagement of the relevant services and will depend on whether specific processes can feasibly be delivered through different channels and by different means.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. There are not expected to be any human rights issues from the programme.
- 8.2. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken as required for specific service changes.
- 8.3. Community and other key stakeholder groups will be engaged as part of the programme and any implications will be managed with the relevant officers in the Council.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. There are not expected to be any crime and disorder implications.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. All risks, assumptions, issues and dependencies will be actively managed as part of the programme.
- 10.2. There are not expected to be any H&S implications.

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

- A. Customer Contact Strategy

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. Previous Cabinet Report (for information only; not provided)

12.2. Previous OSC report (for information only; not provided)



CUSTOMER CONTACT STRATEGY

v.4 Final

Approved by Cabinet

11th March 2013

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Executive Summary

The way in which Merton borough residents and service users want to access services is changing. People who routinely buy services and goods over the internet and by phone, and who communicate via SMS (text messaging), Facebook and Twitter increasingly expect the same sort of flexibility when accessing public services.

Our residents' survey¹ demonstrates that Merton's residents already use a range of different access routes into council services. Younger residents in particular no longer want to come to council offices but instead prefer to use the web, e-mail and SMS when contacting the council.

People are also increasingly expecting public services to be delivered in an holistic way and that the council is proactive in interpreting their requirements and responding to them swiftly. When someone contacts the council they expect that there is a coherent and complete 'view' of them within the organisation – this is their experience of other organisations so why not the council? Customers do not want to speak to several different departments and service teams about the same issue, which means that services can no longer afford for their business systems and their relationships with customers to exist in isolation. For the sake of good customer experience, and effective and efficient services, a single, comprehensive view of customers across the organisation is needed.

In parallel with this, and in the context of a very difficult financial climate, local authorities in general are having to find ways to spend less money on service delivery and be more efficient – especially at the point of contact with the customer. Merton is no exception; in fact the council is responding to the need to make significant spending cuts. Two effective ways to reduce the cost of services are firstly to resolve queries and requests first time round (to reduce unnecessary time spent revisiting the same query); and secondly to help people do what they need to do quickly online or, if they have one, through their smartphone so they don't have to contact the council at all.

This strategy, then, brings together those service users who want swifter resolution of their queries and the ability to deal with straightforward transactions themselves (through a self-service function) and the council's desire to provide services more holistically but also more cheaply. It sets out the principles and vision that will shape the consequent transformation of our contact with customers over the coming months and years and the outcomes we will aim to achieve for customers:

- Fair access to services
- Choice of routes into the council wherever possible
- Service design and delivery influenced by customer experience
- We get it right first time and on time.

This overarching strategy also introduces four supporting strategies:

- Avoidable contact – to reduce the need for customers to contact us multiple times for a straightforward enquiry;

¹ http://www.merton.gov.uk/council/performance/merton_residents_2012_final.pdf

- Channel shift – to introduce cost-effective, efficient and user friendly access channels into council services;
- Digital inclusion – to ensure that customer who do not have access to digital technology at home or at work are not disadvantaged in contacting us;
- Accessibility – to provide an appropriate range of contact routes and meet the needs of customers with special requirements.

Our customer contact programme will deliver the strategy, drawing on customer intelligence and experience to redesign services so they are intuitive for customers, introducing better management of access channels so that our services are more cost effective, and introducing the technology needed to achieve our ambition.

Introduction

Local context

Merton is an outer London borough, situated to the south-west of the capital. It is suburban in nature, with many residents commuting into and out of the borough to work. Sixty-seven per cent of residents work outside the borough, one of the highest figures in London. It has a population of 199,693 (2011 Census), and the population is younger than the national average with a median average age of 34.

According to the Office for National Statistics, in 2009 around 80% of households in London had home internet access with over 75% of the same population accessing the web in the last 3 months. This usage figure varies from 96% accessing the web in the last 3 months for the 16-24 age group down to 30% of the over 65s. Seventy-three per cent of the population accesses the web every day.

Broadband coverage in Merton is widespread. In 2009, 40% of the population were able to access the internet via a mobile phone or other portable connection. Eighty per cent of the UK population owned a mobile phone in 2008 and 81% of the population in London currently have access to digital TV channels.

Statistics indicate that in the highest income decile group, 98% of households owned a home computer and 96% had an Internet connection in 2008. This compares with 33% of households in the lowest income decile group who owned a home computer and 26% who had an Internet connection. Whilst it is difficult to find specific figures for the availability of communications technologies in Merton, a survey of 380 visitors to the Link in 2010 showed that 52% of Merton residents using the Link had internet access.

A defining characteristic of the borough is the disparity between the more prosperous west and the poorer, more deprived east of the borough. This presents particular challenges for the local area and the delivery of this strategy will seek to provide a range of choices of access designed to ensure that no individual, group or community is disadvantaged through lack of access to the services that are needed (refer to the 'digital inclusion' section).

Residents' perception of the council and our services feed into the council's corporate priorities and shape the focus of our communications work. Results from our 2012 Annual Residents Survey revealed:

- Crime remains residents' number one concern. However, levels have steadily dropped over recent years, and are significantly lower than the pan-London score.
- Council tax remains the second top concern. Although the level has steadily dropped over recent years, it is still well above the London score.
- Concerns over traffic congestion remain high and are still significantly greater than the London score.
- Concern about rising prices, lack of jobs, lack of affordable housing and the number of homeless people are all significantly lower than the pan-London score.
- Concern over the standard of education is significantly higher in the 35-49 group, these are likely to be respondents who have children at a school age.
- Seventy-nine per cent of residents agreed the council as doing a good job and 54% agreed that they get value for money.

- Thirty-seven per cent of residents perceive the council as difficult to get through to on the phone; this is lower than the pan-London score of 46%
- There was a significant drop in the proportion of residents agreeing that the council responds quickly when asked for help although this is still in line with the London wide score.
- Recycling facilities saw a big leap in performance this year, and is ahead of the London wide score
- Seven services are rated significantly above the pan-London score: policing, parking, recycling facilities, parks and open spaces, refuse collection, local health services and repair of roads and pavements
- Three services are rated significantly below the London wide score: housing benefit services, secondary education and council housing.

The council faces a number of major challenges in communicating and engaging with residents, staff and other stakeholders.

- The lightning speed in which information can be shared and discussed through social media, means that the council must be more sited on using this medium to engage with the community.
- Reductions to local authority grants are having an impact on services that will affect their delivery to residents and other stakeholders, such as voluntary organisations.
- There is an increasing call for transparency and greater public scrutiny of council activities and spending – our systems need to meet this challenge.
- The changing delivery landscape – localism, Big Society, the end of PCTs and the introduction of Clinical Commissioning Groups – means that councils have to work in new ways with different people.
- Merton takes on public health services from April 2013; these will undergo a complex transition from Merton and Sutton PCT to the council.
- The tough economic climate means that services which support people are more important than ever.

Latest research

In July 2012 RedQuadrant carried out a survey of fifty local authorities to identify current and future models of customer contact². The key findings from this survey are:

To improve service, help customers to get things done

The three most important factors identified in improving service to customers were streamlining work processes, shifting customer interaction to cheaper methods of contact, and improved systems integration (linking business systems so that the ‘front’ and ‘back’ office is connected and staff and customers can access all the systems they need in one go).

To improve online service, help customers to get things done online

Most councils are looking to prioritise online customer contact because it is cheaper, but will also continue to service a mix of face-to-face and telephone contact, with customers choosing the most appropriate mix to suit their personal needs. The most critical thing is that however a customer contacts their council they should experience the same level of service and be able to resolve their query first time on time.

² Local Authority Customer Contact Survey - Part One (July 2012), RedQuadrant

It is still very hard to get things done online

Fifty-four per cent of local authorities still only have limited interactive transactional e-services while only 25% have achieved a substantial increase in customers' accessing services online and fully interactive websites.

Demand for online services has increased – but so has demand for other access 'channels'

There was a mixed picture in terms of 'channel shift' – or customers moving to different means of accessing council service such as via the web – over the past three years. Internet transactions have increased for 95% of authorities, telephone for 62% and face-to-face for 35%, with a decrease in face-to-face and telephone contact reported by 12% and 13% of authorities respectively.

There is no single agreed future model of local authority customer contact

Councils are moving over the next three years to a variety of customer contact models – some will prioritise self-service as the preferred means of contact, while others are developing a mixture of contact methods for different types of services and different groups of customers. Overall there is a general (but not complete) move away from traditional models where most transactions need to be dealt with by a range of professionals within departments or service areas.

Digital inclusion is increasingly important

A majority of authorities are making an effort to support digital inclusion using a variety of methods such public access to PCs, assisted self-service and training for customers.

Why change is needed

Customers have long been at the heart of Merton's service design and delivery. As an organisation we are committed to ensuring that we put residents, tax payers, service users and visitors to Merton first. We want our service users to experience a council that understands that it exists to meet their needs and treats them with respect. We want them to know that the council provides them with excellent value for money.

The results of our annual survey of residents from 2012/3 indicate that there is work for us to do. Thirty-seven per cent of respondents felt that it was difficult to get through to the council on the phone; whilst this is lower than the perception across London as a whole (46% of London residents find their council difficult to get through to on the phone) it demonstrates that access to our services could improve: just 54% of respondents felt that the council responds quickly when asked for help. The survey also demonstrated that residents are already using a range of different channels to access the council: its website (21%), Facebook (4%) and Twitter (2%) as well as printed material. When asked, 26% of younger respondents stated that they would prefer to contact the council via the web, 19% via e-mail, and 7% by text message (SMS). None of the younger respondents wanted to contact council services through council offices.

Inevitably, the national and local context in which we design and deliver services continues to change and evolve. In addition to those set out above, these are some of the key factors that have prompted us to review our strategy for customer contact:

Our customers want a greater say in decision-making

By better understanding how customers interact with services delivered by the council, listening to feedback and engaging service users in service design we can ensure that this is the case.

Our customers want an open and honest relationship

By using the information they provide more intelligently we can develop a more consistent customer experience and ensure there is greater transparency and visibility of their interactions with us.

Our customers want to engage on their terms

By increasing the range of access points (e-mail, internet, telephone etc) available for services we can make sure that customers are better able to engage at a time and in a way that suits their lifestyle.

The need to reduce financial expenditure

Following the government's Comprehensive Spending Review the council is having to make spending cuts of [*figures to be added following Council decision in March*]. This makes it all the more important that we interact with customers in the most efficient way. By resolving more customer queries and requests at the first point we can minimize the impact of these savings on front line services.

The need to join-up public services across providers

By understanding customer needs and providing appropriate and effective access routes into services we can ensure high-quality services are commissioned, provided and delivered jointly with other key public sector partners, where appropriate and possible.

The drive towards greater localism

By introducing alternative routes into services, partnering with other providers, and increasing transparency and therefore local power within communities and localities we can draw closer to customers and become more agile and responsive.

The need for individual services to anticipate and plan for demand

The provision of different levels of services to specific customers requires greater insight into customer needs, behaviours and motivations, plus more information for customers on the services we offer. This will ensure the right service is delivered to meet their need and reduce inefficient activity that doesn't add any value for customers.

The need for services to operate in a coherent way and 'know' their customers

By holding an intelligent picture of our customers (rather than isolated islands of information) it will be easier for our customers to communicate, interact and receive services. It will also mean that our staff are supported and empowered to deliver excellent customer service at the first point of contact.

The need to design and deliver services around customer needs

If we are to ensure customers consistently experience the most streamlined and coherent route through our services, we need to understand – on the basis of evidence – customer pathways and this can inform the way we improve and simplify our processes in partnership with other providers so that they make sense to our

customers. This resonates with our adoption of lean thinking in business improvement and placing the customer at the heart of services.

To support these changes, we will need to transform the way we work, the way our systems interact with each other and the way some of our services are designed. This strategy is intended to capture what change is necessary and how we will know we've succeeded. Everyone in the council has a part to play in achieving this change.

About this strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to clearly and explicitly state what customers can expect when they access our services and how we anticipate this will change over the coming months and years. The strategy will be supported by a number of action plans and delivered through a comprehensive programme of change activity that will touch on every service in the council. Staff right across the organisation will need to be involved in designing, planning and delivering this transformation.

In developing this strategy, we have drawn on feedback from residents and service users as well as our residents' survey. Our approach has also been informed by learning from what has worked well in other local authorities and research undertaken elsewhere to better understand how public services are best delivered in the modern world.

Elected Members will play an important role in our continuing to develop our understanding of, and engage, our customers – they act as a primary route of access into our services and so are a rich source of insight into customers' needs. We also want to acknowledge the significant role local volunteers can play in shaping public services and will look to work closely with them over the coming months as we develop the action plans that will deliver our strategy.

What do we mean by customer?

Throughout this strategy, we use the term 'customer' to include anyone who benefits from the services we provide. Our customers, then, are those people for whom we work to commission, contract, deliver, and enable services. They are also local citizens, or people coming into the Merton area to work or visit. They may be direct service users, employees of the council, employees of other organisations, elected Members or partner organisations, such as the Police or GPs.

In many cases our customers may be better defined as those who derive secondary benefit from the way we organise and deliver our services and not just those who are in direct receipt of them. We know that 'customers' are not always willing recipients of council services, for example when in receipt of a parking penalty notice or anti-social behaviour order. In these and other instances, the council is delivering its regulatory responsibilities that reflect its broader role in influencing and improving civic life in the borough and, in some cases, protecting our most vulnerable residents. There are circumstances, then, where 'customer satisfaction' will relate not solely to the experience of the direct recipient of the service (although there is always a need to take this into account), but to the experience of those impacted more widely by the service.

Importantly there will also be times where the council has a responsibility (under law) to prioritise the **needs** of individuals or groups in the borough as part of its role in supporting public life. Where resources are finite and there are competing demands and conflicting needs and desires the council will need to make decisions about services that reflect the wider interests of the borough rather than specific customers.

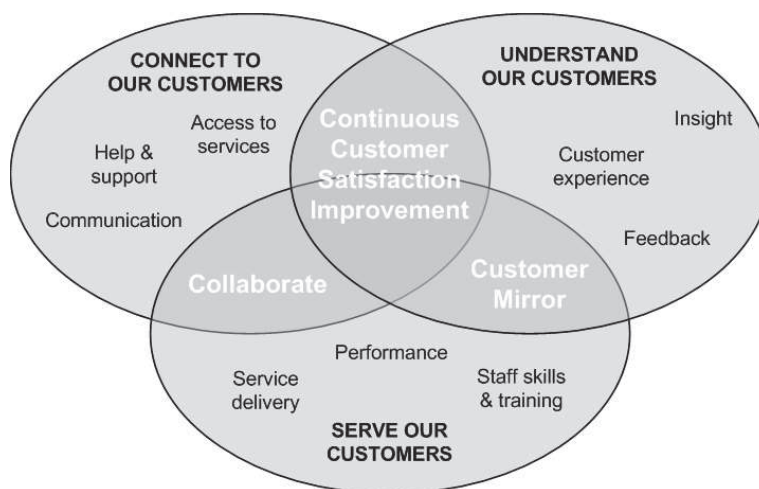
For this reason, when we involve service users in the design and delivery of our services, as we commit to do in this strategy, we will look to draw on a range of evidence that reflects the wider experiences of those who live, work or use services in the borough rather than simply straightforward satisfaction measures for the direct recipients. In

acknowledgement of our responsibility to ensure our services offer good value for money, we will also take account of the cost of service provision as an indicator of our ability to provide customer satisfaction for the public as a whole.

Our focus

Continuous improvement is a central theme for Merton, something we are all ceaselessly working to deliver. In the area of customer satisfaction we will look to achieve continuous improvement by focusing on three key areas:

- The way we **connect** to our customers so that they can access services
- The way we **understand** our customers' needs and wants
- The way we respond to and **serve** our customers and monitor our success



As this diagram illustrates, by focusing on these areas, we undertake to **collaborate** with customers as we design and deliver services so that they remain at the heart of everything we do. We will also be able to measure our performance on the basis of customers' experience – in effect they provide a '**customer mirror**' that reflects back to us how well we are doing.

We know that improving customers' experience will involve change for all of us. We will need to improve the way we use our business systems and provide information to service users. Managing and driving this change is therefore a key driver for this strategy and the work programmes that will enable its delivery.

Ongoing review

We will treat this strategy as part of our core business so that it is embedded within our routine work. In order to ensure the activity associated with it continues to evolve as our customers' needs change we will review it annually.

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Director of Corporate Services are accountable for the strategy and supporting programmes; the Assistant Director of Business Improvement will be responsible for its implementation.

Providing value for money

This customer contact strategy is designed to ensure that the services we commission and deliver can be conveniently and efficiently accessed by our customers. But our services also need to be designed and managed to be affordable at a time of scarce resources and funding reductions.

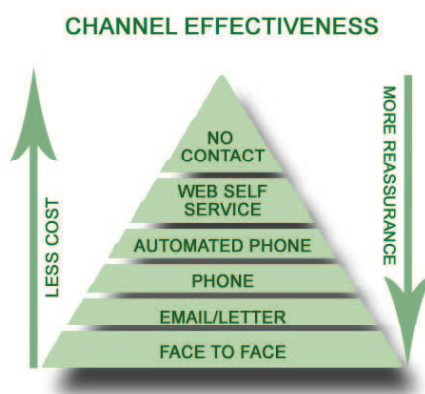
Our strategy will also need, therefore, to ensure that services are accessed in the most cost-efficient way. An important part of achieving this objective is ensuring that services are right first time. Responding to repeat calls or rectifying things that were not handled correctly first time round is not just frustrating for customers but an inefficient use of council time and therefore public money. In delivering this strategy, then, it will be essential that we streamline our processes so that every interaction and intervention adds value for the customer.

We will also need to work with customers to move interaction, wherever it is appropriate to do so, to the most efficient means of contact with the council. We will need to be transparent about the cost of different types of service provision so that customers are engaged with us in the task of reducing the cost of council services.

This will be particularly appropriate to the provision of generic or transactional services, that is to say those services that do not require in-depth, specialist support but rather can be resolved relatively quickly and easily. Examples of these might be:

- Enquiry handling and information provision
- Service requests and application handling
- Appointments, bookings and payments
- Eligibility, assessment and approval

The following model shows how for some types of contact a greater level of personal contact is required, particularly for customers that require some level of direct assistance or reassurance.



It is essential that such services continue to receive the necessary level of specialised and customised contact – it is not the aim of this strategy to undermine this. We understand that whilst the methods of contact that are cheaper to service (self-service, internet) may appear desirable in terms of value for money, they may not always be appropriate to the service being delivered.

Importantly, we will engage customers themselves in determining where it is appropriate to move services to cheaper methods of contact. This is absolutely critical, not only because we want to improve satisfaction with our services, but also because the move to more efficient provision relies on collaboration between us as service provider, and our customers as service users.

Our commitment to our customers

Our ambition is to make sure that every customer experiences services **right first time and on time**.

Our commitment to our customers is that we will work towards this by:

- Putting customers at the heart of our business
- Making services and relevant information accessible to everyone
- Understanding our customers' needs and wants
- Communicating clearly and openly
- Dealing with complaints proactively
- Keeping our customers informed
- Treating everyone with dignity, respect and courtesy

The above commitments, together with the outcomes, provide the framework for the activity that will deliver this strategy.

Fundamentally we are aiming to make it easier for customers to access services through more cost-effective access routes that are:

- Clearly signposted and more convenient;
- Designed with customers' needs in mind - this means we listen to their needs and make more effort to find out what they want in the future;
- Accessible from home, work or on the move and, when accessed via the internet, at any time of the day;
- Delivered utilising modern access channels (including web, mobile and social technologies) to keep them informed of the services we provide, as well as more traditional channels.

Outcomes for our customers

It is important at the outset to clearly articulate what impact this strategy will have on customers' experience of our service. It is this, after all, that will provide the measure of our success. We know that moving to different, more cost-effective ways of contacting the council won't be an obvious or easy choice for everyone. Our customer outcomes are designed to provide us with a framework that will help us ensure that the activity associated with this strategy delivers benefits:

Outcome 1: All customers have fair access to services

- We value diversity and will ensure that the Customer Contact programme will address (and not introduce) any barriers to individual access to services.

Outcome 2: Customers can access services in different ways

- Wherever possible, we will encourage and enable customers to determine their interaction with the council
- We will work with service users to ensure the most appropriate and efficient access to individual services
- Wherever possible, we will provide seamless delivery across the principal access channels – face to face, telephone and online

Outcome 3: Customers influence the design & delivery of the services available for them

- We will make sure we learn from our interaction with customers to further improve access to services
- We will place customer experience and feedback at the heart of service commissioning and re-design

Outcome 4: Customer needs are, wherever possible, resolved at the first point of contact and on time

- We will ensure we have a consistent and comprehensive understanding of our customers and, as far as possible, anticipate their needs
- We will ensure all access points have access to and provide consistent information, advice and tools to resolve queries at the first point of contact
- All front-line staff will be trained and enabled to provide resolution at the first point of contact for as many queries as possible.

Outcome 5: Customer feedback drives service improvement

- We will place customer feedback at the heart of our performance management framework
- We will place customer feedback at the heart of our commissioning framework
- We will publish satisfaction levels against a set of measurable customer service standards

Implementation

Achieving the outcomes set out in this strategy will require that we continue to develop our working practices so that the customer is firmly placed at the centre of all we do.

Building on work already undertaken using lean and other tools to support continuous improvement, we will need to:

- Integrate front and back office processes and systems to create a culture of ‘first time on time’;
- Transform our service delivery process end-to-end to allow the council to provide an holistic service to the customer;
- Forge stronger links with other public and private sector partners to ensure that delivery is seamless in a growing local governance environment; and
- Embrace the power and application of web, mobile and social technology to empower people to become more self-sufficient.

We will need to develop a ‘**single view of the customer**’ across all our business systems, so that there is a complete and comprehensive picture of a customer’s interactions, whilst maintaining privacy and ensuring access to sensitive data is appropriately restricted in line with the Data Protection Act. We will need to ensure that this can be viewed by both staff and customers, so that at any given time customers can use a ‘**customer portal**’ to view the status of all their interactions with us in a way that is meaningful.

To ensure services are organised around customers, rather than for the convenience of the organisation, we will look to design this capability around key customer journeys for the most common service requests and ‘life events’ such as moving into the borough, becoming a parent, applying for a school place, amongst others.

The customer contact programme

We will invest the necessary resources to plan a comprehensive programme of activity that delivers the outcomes set out in this strategy. We will work with customers of individual services on a case-by-case basis to plan in detail how access can be improved and simplified.

The following key workstreams will form the **building blocks** for this programme of work:

Customer Insight: using feedback and direct customer involvement to identify the different needs of different groups of customers and organise routes into the service appropriately. More focussed collaboration and communication will be needed to determine where the use of online (or assisted) self-service access points can be used to increase efficiency and reduce cost.

Service Redesign: re-designing service delivery routes on the basis of a better understanding of customer experience in order to reduce avoidable and repeat contact as well as duplication and administration across the council.

Channel Management: determining, on the basis of customer insight, how services will be organised and delivered across all the access points or channels into the council, including face-to-face, telephone, email, Internet, mobile/social technology (including SMS text messaging, social media, 'apps' and mobile web) and post. Channel Management Plans will be developed for each means of access.

Information and Technology: the role of information and technology in supporting delivery of this customer contact strategy is crucial. We will invest in newer technologies to support the delivery of new channels , including online information and transactions, automated telephony (interactive voice recognition) and systems to enable e-bookings and e-payments as well as the tracking of service requests, applications and other documents.

Performance Management Framework: in order to review and improve service delivery and ensure that customer needs have been identified and met.

Business Change and Training: to ensure we have the skills and capacity to ensure the customer is central to what we do. Specific training programmes will be developed will ensure staff are supported through business change and appropriately trained to deliver the changes implemented.

Next steps

This strategy has set out the overarching objectives and principles that will guide and shape the way we adjust and improve the accessibility of our services. Some detailed work will now be needed to plan in detail how we deliver the ambitions set out in this strategy and, importantly, how we ensure those who use and rely on services are involved in this process.

We will begin by planning how we will communicate our ambition and engage service users more widely in the process of action planning for particular services. We will also undertake more detailed research to better understand how different groups (or 'segments' as they are often called) of customers access different types of services. This will help us prioritise what changes will be most effective most quickly, across which access channels and in which service areas. We will develop a channel management plan that sets out how we plan to make best use of each of the different access channels (e-mail, post, web, telephone, etc) that are available.

We will work initially with those services that are most relevant to the majority of residents (known as 'high volume' services), planning in detail on a case-by-case basis new and revised ways of access that are appropriate and relevant to those services and those who use them. We know that if we are to succeed it is absolutely critical that this design work is informed and guided by service users and led by staff within the services who best understand customer needs. Importantly, where significant changes are to be introduced, we will undertake equalities analysis to ensure that we pay proper regard to our duties in these areas. We will also undertake a Privacy Impact Assessment for the overarching programme to ensure that we meet our duties in relation to the management of sensitive data.

Working in parallel with the planning and design activity we set out above, we will procure and implement the necessary technical infrastructure (new systems and hardware) and supporting processes to enable the new ways of working that this strategy involves.

We will develop a performance management framework, and an evaluation plan so that we can review our efforts and know exactly what has been achieved. This will also inform future phases of the programme beyond the first two-year plan.

Customer Access Strategies

The following strategies are designed to support the overarching Customer Contact strategy. They set out in more detail how we will work to:

- Reduce avoidable contact (Avoidable Contact Strategy):
- Work with customers to shift services to more cost-effective access channels where appropriate (Channel Shift Strategy);
- Reduce the potential for some service users who don't have access to digital technology (the internet, for example) to be excluded from services (Digital Inclusion Strategy); and
- Ensure our services are accessible to all (Accessibility Strategy).

Avoidable Contact Strategy

Our Vision for Avoidable Contact

“To reduce the need for our customers to contact us multiple times for a straightforward enquiry”

Why Should we Minimise Avoidable Contact?

The customer experience for both citizens and businesses when contacting their local council should be one which is responsive, timely and efficient. However, both local authorities and their customers also have limited resources and want to interact as efficiently as possible.

By identifying customer contact that is ‘avoidable’, the council can redesign services to remove unnecessary, valueless contact which is both frustrating for the customer and inefficient for the provider.

We will work with our services and our partners to re-design processes that reduce the need for customers to make contact with the council and its partners multiple times to complete one transaction. For example, notifying a change of address once rather than contacting multiple agencies, paying for school meals by direct debit instead of by cheque each term or chasing up progress on a reported incident or fault.

The Key Actions That We Will Take To Reduce Unnecessary Contact

1. Analyse service data from our main customer access channels and work with specific 'high customer volume' services to look for opportunities to reduce the need for customers to make unnecessary or multiple contact with the council
2. Increase the number of customer queries that we are able to resolve first time on the telephone by redesigning our services
3. Proactively report on service status to customers

Channel Shift Strategy

Our Vision for Channel Shift

“To design cost effective, efficient and user friendly means of contacting the council and then encourage our customers to use the channels that are most effective”

What is Channel Shift?

Channel Shift is the process by which organisations seek to encourage customers to access, or interact with, services via channels other than those to which they currently choose – usually because they are more efficient to run.

We will work with customers to understand where channel shift is appropriate and beneficial. Through excellent communication we will encourage customers to shift to new and more effective channels.

The Key Actions That We Will Take To Create Channel Shift

1. Ensure that information relating to a service is available through all relevant channels so that there is no disadvantage to a customer through using alternative means of contact.
2. Provide status updates for any transactions that are started on the web but cannot be completed online – for example reporting a fault – to ensure that if a customer chooses to use the web they can continue to do so without having to resort to additional means of contacts in order to finalise their transaction.
3. All generic services including information services will be designed around the user for 24/7 mobile web access first wherever possible

Digital Inclusion Strategy

Our Vision for Digital Inclusion

“To ensure that customers who do not have access to digital channels at home or work are not disadvantaged when communicating with the council”

What is Digital Inclusion?

Over 40% of the UK population does not access public services online. This is often because they don't have access to digital services; often this digitally excluded group includes socially excluded and hard to reach groups who are likely to have the greatest need for public services.

Digital access also matters for the delivery of efficient public services, because when people cannot access services online they invariably access them via alternative means which are generally more expensive. It is therefore important that this strategy includes plans for engaging these hard to reach groups.

The priorities set out in the Digital Britain report reinforce the importance of digital inclusion. The report sets out the Government's plans to drive digital participation and reiterates the Government's commitment to ensuring that public services online are designed for ease of use by the widest range of citizens (refer to the new gov.uk website)

The Key Actions That We Will Take To Reduce Digital Exclusion

1. Continue to provide public internet access at our key locations, e.g. Libraries.
2. Provide full mediated (assisted self service) access to our website for the public in our contact centre
3. Widely advertise our full choice of contact channels, particularly to hard to reach groups, e.g. transient and socially excluded groups and provide "outreach" services wherever possible.

Accessibility Strategy

Our Vision for Accessibility

“To provide an appropriate range of contact channels for each of our services, with some channels providing enhanced access for customers with special requirements.”

What is an ‘Accessibility of Contact’ Strategy?

In the context of this document, accessibility of contact refers to the ease or difficulty that a customer may experience whilst using different access channels to obtain services from the council. For example, someone with hearing difficulties may find the telephone unusable and may prefer to communicate through email. Equally a customer who is disabled may have limited opportunity to visit the council for specific face-to-face services and may need services to be delivered at their home either by mobile visiting teams or via tele-support (i.e. online video conferencing).

We will specifically develop **assisted digital** services to support and encourage our customers to use more cost effective online access channels.

An overall initial **equalities analysis** will be undertaken for the programme and services will deliver specific detailed analyses for significant changes to the way customers access services.

The Key Actions to Provide Efficient and Effective Access to Services

1. Continually engage with groups representing those with specific requirements for the way they contact us and ensure that an appropriate choice of channels is available to those individuals
2. Ensure that we widely advertise our choice of contact channels, particularly to hard to reach groups, for example young people or vision impaired customers

Glossary

Apps – computer software specifically designed for mobile phones, particularly Smartphones. They enable the phone to work like a mini computer. There are an increasing number of apps available for a whole range of functions e.g. games, rail timetables, maps, news, etc. Many apps are available free of charge.

Assisted Digital – assists customers who do not have access to digital channels at home or work to communicate with the council with support from trained staff at existing public offices and other associated sites with Internet access. Assisted digital can be provided through phone and web channels.

Channel – A means of communication by which a service is delivered or accessed. Examples of direct channels used by the public sector include post, telephone, mobile telephone, web, digital television, kiosks and face-to-face (services delivered in physical locations, such as JobCentrePlus).

Channel preferences – the preferences that customers have in terms of contacting and doing business with the council, for example, by phone, by e-mail, etc.

Channel shift – Channel shift is when somebody stops using one channel, for example telephone, and uses another one, such as online. The aim is to design cost effective, efficient and user-friendly means of contacting the council and then encourage customers to use the channels that work best for them. Channel shift may involve a customer being directed to the website in future to access information or complete a transaction with the council, rather than ringing the contact centre or visiting Merton Link.

Channel strategy – An organisation's plan for the channels it will use to deliver services to its customers. A channel strategy explains how an organisation will meet the demands of its customers using the resources it has available.

Cost per channel – the estimated cost of dealing with a customer contact for each different channel (face-to-face, phone, letter, e-mail, online).

Customer – A person, business or other organisation using/interacting with a public service. The person could be using the service for personal reasons (e.g. registering the birth of a child, finding out information), for business reasons (e.g. paying business rates), either for themselves or on behalf of someone else.

Customer insight software – computer software that can analyse information about customers in order to try and understand their behaviours and preferences e.g. analysing what they buy in order to target sales. In a local authority context, customer insight software has been used to profile key customer characteristics e.g. their preferences for doing business with organisations, or to target actions at specific groups of customers rather than universally.

Customer relationship management (CRM) – the main component of a CRM solution is a single customer database, allowing information to be collected once but used many times to build up information on customers and use that information to provide customers with services relevant to them.

Digital inclusion - ensuring that the increasing use of digital technology does not exclude certain customers from properly accessing services they need.

Failure demand (avoidable contact) - is demand for a service when an organisation fails to do what the customer expects, or fails to do something how, or when, the customer expects it. This failure results in avoidable contact, including duplicate contact with the organisation on the same matter. Failure demand can be addressed by reducing the need for customers to contact the council.

Geodemographic segmentation – segmenting the population by recognising that people generally live in close proximity to other people who are demographically similar. The demographic profile is typically based on age, income/wealth, family size, lifestyle.

Insight – An insight into a customer is a deep truth based on an understanding of customer behaviour, experiences and attitudes, and their needs from a service. Organisations with insight into their customers can deliver the services their customers need, through the right channels.

Online transactions – Customers are able to undertake transactions independently online using an automated e-form linked to back office systems, or via an automated payments system. An example of an online transaction is renewing a parking permit or paying a council tax bill.

Open Data – data that is accessible (ideally via the internet), in a digital, machine readable format and that is free of restriction on use or redistribution.

Self-Serve – customers can carry out transactions with the council themselves, without the need for a member of staff to do anything. This may be by doing something online, for example, completing a form to request a service, or doing something using automated telephony. Payments can be self-service, as can using self-service access points in the face to face contact centre (Merton Link).

Service delivery – The process by which a customer receives or accesses a service. Service delivery often involves multiple stages, for example a public sector service delivery process may involve:

- Enquiries and requests for information (e.g. “What benefits am I entitled to?”)
- Service fulfilment (e.g. registering for benefits and payment of benefits to customer)
- Follow-up and after care (e.g. reviewing benefits entitlement after a change in circumstances)
- Public sector service delivery can involve a complex chain of actions across multiple organisations.

Smartphone – a type of mobile phone, with more advanced features than a normal mobile phone, e.g. touch screen facility, high speed data access, GPS (Global Positioning System) availability. They enable a user to browse the web, handle email, locate themselves on a map, for example.

Telephony automation – push button or voice recognition software is used to reduce the need for a member of staff to answer the phone.

Transactional e-service – customers are able to request a service online and receive an update when complete.

Web portal – enables a customer to sign-in via the web and access a range of services; it presents information from a number of different places in a single view for the customer therefore making it easier to access those services.

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 16 July 2013

Agenda item:

Wards: All

Subject: Overview and Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2013/14

Lead officer: Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services

Lead member: Cllr Peter Southgate, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Forward Plan reference number: n/a

Contact officer: Julia Regan: Julia.regan@merton.gov.uk 020 8545 3864

Recommendations:

That Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

- i) Consider their work programme for the 2013/14 municipal year, and agree issues and items for inclusion;
 - ii) Consider the methods by which the Commission would like to scrutinise the issues/items agreed;
 - iii) Identify one issue for an in-depth agenda item, if appropriate;
 - iv) Appoint members to the financial monitoring task group, to meet on 3 or 4 September, 29 October, 18 February and a later date to be determined by the task group;
 - v) Agree on an issue for in-depth scrutiny by a task group and appoint members to the task group. Note that the dates set aside for meetings of the task group are 3 September, 2 October, 31 October, 27 November, 19 December and 21 January. The task group may subsequently agree to change these dates;
 - vi) Consider the appointment of additional non-statutory co-opted members for the 2013/14 municipal year, to sit on the Commission and/or on the Task Group;
 - vii) Consider whether they wish to make visits to local sites; and
 - viii) Identify any training and support needs.
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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 2013/14 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 Overview and Scrutiny Commission;

- 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 discussion by councillors and co-opted members at a topic selection workshop held on 21 May 2013; and
- e) Support available to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to determine, develop and deliver its 2013/14 work programme.

2. Determining the Overview and Scrutiny Commission Annual Work Programme

- 2.1 Members are required to determine their work programme for the 2013/14 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 Commission has specific roles relating to budget and business plan scrutiny and to performance monitoring that should automatically be built into their work programmes.
- 2.3 At its meeting on 26 April 2012, the Commission agreed to establish a financial monitoring task group to lead on the scrutiny of financial monitoring information on behalf of the Commission, with the following terms of reference:
 - To carry out scrutiny of the Council's financial monitoring information on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission;
 - To advise on other agenda items as requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission;
 - To report minutes of its meetings back to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission;
 - To send via the Commission any recommendations or references to Cabinet, Council or other decision making bodies.
- 2.4 At the scrutiny topic workshop on 21 May 2013, members recommended that the Commission re-establish this task group. The Commission is therefore requested to appoint members to the group. It is proposed that the task group will meet four times during 2013/14 to enable the financial monitoring information to be examined on a quarterly basis. The meetings will be held in public and the agenda and minutes will be published on the Council's website, alongside those of the Commission.
- 2.5 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission 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.
- 2.6 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission has six scheduled meetings over the course of 2013/14, 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 work programme.

Principles guiding the development of the scrutiny work programme

2.7 The following key principles of effective scrutiny should be considered when the Commission 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** – The Commission 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 Commission. 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

2.8 There are a number of means by which the Overview and Scrutiny Commission 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:

Item on a scheduled meeting agenda/ hold an extra meeting of the Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Commission 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 ■ A variation of this model could be a one-day seminar-scrutiny of issues that, although important, do not merit setting up a ‘task-and-finish’ group.
Task Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A small group of Members meet outside of the scheduled meetings to gather information on the subject area, visit other local authorities/sites, speak to service users, expert witnesses and/or Officers/Partners. The Task Group can then report back to the Commission with their findings to endorse the submission of their recommendations to

	<p>Cabinet/Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This is the method usually used to carry out policy reviews
Commission asks for a report then takes a view on action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Commission may need more information before taking a view on whether to carry out a full review so asks for a report – either from the service department or from the Scrutiny Team – to give them more details.
Meeting with service Officer/Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A Member (or small group of Members) has a meeting with service officers/Partners to discuss concerns or raise queries. ■ If the Member is not satisfied with the outcome or believes that the Commission needs to have a more in-depth review of the matter s/he takes it back to the Commission for discussion
Individual Members doing some initial research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 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 Commission if s/he still has concerns.

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

Support available for scrutiny activity

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

- Work with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Commission 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.

2.11 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission will need to assess how they can best utilise the available support from the Scrutiny Team to deliver their work programme for 2013/14.

2.12 The Commission 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.

2.13 The Scrutiny Team will take the Overview and Scrutiny Commission’s views on board in developing the support that is provided.

3. Selecting items for the Scrutiny Work Programme

3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission sets its own agenda within the scope of its terms of reference. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission undertakes a coordinating role to ensure that any gaps or overlap in the scrutiny work programme are dealt with in a joined-up way.

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission has the following remit: -

- Formal crime & disorder scrutiny
- Safer communities: the role of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, safer neighbourhood teams, anti-social behaviour, drugs & alcohol treatment, domestic violence and road safety
- Stronger communities: community leadership, voluntary & community sector, public involvement & consultation; community cohesion, service delivery diversity & equalities
- Cross-cutting & strategic matters, inc. scrutiny of the budget & business plan and the approach to partnership arrangements
- Corporate capacity issues – communications, legal, human resources, IT, customer service
- The performance monitoring framework
- Financial monitoring
- Responsibility for keeping scrutiny under review

3.1 The Scrutiny Team has undertaken a campaign to gather suggestions for issues to scrutinise either as 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 Commission 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 21 May 2013 discussed these suggestions. This workshop was held in response to the finding of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission’s recent review of the scrutiny function that found a need to be more imaginative in the selection of topics and recommended a workshop approach.

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 the Commission 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 Commission. The Commission is requested to discuss this draft and agree any changes that it wishes to make.

4. Task group reviews

- 4.1 The Commission is invited to select an issue for in-depth scrutiny and establish a task group in order to carry out the review. The task group will subsequently meet to scope the review and draft the terms of reference that will be reported back to the next Commission meeting for approval.

5. Co-option to the Commission membership

- 5.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission 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. The Commission 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 Commission.
- 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 Commission 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 Commission/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 Commission 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 Commission members take into account certain considerations when setting their work programme for 2013/14. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission is free to determine its work programme as it sees 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 Commission's 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 a 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 2013, and by contacting the Scrutiny Team direct; 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 1 – Overview and Scrutiny Commission draft work programme 2013/14

14.2 Appendix 2 – Summary of topics relating to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission's remit suggested for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme

14.3 Appendix 3 – Selecting a Scrutiny Topic – criteria used at the workshop on 21 May 2013

14.4 Appendix 4 – Notes from discussion of topics relating to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, Scrutiny Topic Selection Workshop on 21 May 2013

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1 None

Draft work programme 2013/14**Meeting date – 16 July 2013**

Item/Issue
Borough Commander – update on the implications of the Police & Crime Plan for Merton
Civil unrest – Cabinet’s action plan for implementation of task group recommendations
Customer contact programme – update

Meeting date – 19 September 2013

Leader and Chief Executive – vision, key priorities & challenges for 2013/14
Cabinet response to request for options appraisal of 24/7 noise control service
Volunteering task group – Cabinet response and action plan
Public value reviews – report on the pilot reviews
Policy and service developments in response to demographic change

Note – report on options for use of equalities information within the budget setting process has not been included given Cabinet’s decision on 10 June to continue with approach used in 2012/13.

Meeting date – 26 November 2013

Budget scrutiny round 1
Borough Commander – rolling review of local policing (if agreed on 16 July)
Development/implementation of shared environmental health service – progress report
Review of local council tax benefit scheme

Meeting date 30 January 2014 – scrutiny of the budget**Meeting date 11 March 2014**

Borough Commander – rolling review of local policing (if agreed on 16 July)
Monitoring the Council’s equalities commitments
Analysis of annual members’ scrutiny survey
Customer contact programme update

Meeting date 30 April 2014

Single fraud investigation service
Civil unrest - progress report on implementation of task group recommendations
Gang call-in report (if requested by Commission)
Overview and scrutiny annual report

Description of topic suggestions received in relation to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Local policing model

Who suggested it?

Environmental and Regeneration Department Management Team
Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Member of the public suggested scrutiny should ensure that community police officers are around when school children are on the way home from school to keep anti social behaviour to a minimum.

Summary of the issue

The Mayor of London's Police and Crime Plan 2013-16 sets out the crime reduction strategy for London for the next four years.

This includes the implementation of a Local Policing Model that will transform policing to deliver more police on the streets, and a shift in focus towards the frontline, with the intention that they should be better equipped, better trained and better deployed and so more able to act directly for and with the public

By reforming the back office, including reducing the number of senior officers and supervisors, releasing under-utilised assets and reducing overheads, MOPAC will fulfil the Mayor's commitment to keep police numbers high despite a reduced budget.

The Plan intends to increase the number of police officers in every borough and guarantees that each borough will be led by a dedicated borough commander.

The Plan pledges to improve public access by bringing the police to the public in new ways, such as guaranteeing that every victim of crime is offered a visit and opening up more of the local policing estate to the public, whilst co-locating contact points in public buildings such as libraries, hospitals and council offices.

What could scrutiny do?

The Borough Commander has undertaken to attend the Commission's meeting on 16 July 2013 to update on the implications of the Police and Crime Plan 2013-16, as now published, for Merton.

He has been asked to provide a breakdown of all officers in the Borough as at 2011, both neighbourhood teams and other officers, setting out what teams they were attached to, how many in each team, with a one line summary of the role of each team, and with an equivalent breakdown for the year now started, and one for 2015. This information will help the Commission to understand exactly what changes are taking place.

Customer contact strategy

Who suggested it?

Corporate Services Departmental Management Team
Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Summary of the issue

During 2012/13, the Commission has continued its scrutiny of the development and implementation of this strategy. The strategy's key objective is to improve the way the council interacts with its customers. Strands of work include:

- making services more accessible and delivering them "right first time and on time"
- procuring and implementing IT systems to develop a customer management system
- increasing use of cheaper on-line and telephone transactions whilst retaining face to face contact for those who need or prefer it
- a change management programme to change the culture of the council so that the other strands of the programme can be delivered

The Commission has endorsed the proposals whilst raising some issues and concerns to Cabinet in relation to costs, benefits and impact on residents.

What could scrutiny do?

Commission could continue to receive regular updates.

Monitoring the Council's Equalities Commitments

Who suggested it?

Corporate Services Departmental Management Team
Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Summary of the issue

The Equality Act 2010 requires the council to publish equality objectives every four years to demonstrate how it will meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Commission received the draft Equality Strategy 2013-2017 at its meeting in November 2012 and made comments that were taken into account in writing the final document.

There will be an accompanying action plan that will be reviewed annually and the targets refreshed as appropriate.

What could scrutiny do?

The Commission could receive an annual update at its March 2014 meeting as part of the review of the action plan.

Changing demographics and citizenship

Who suggested it?

A councillor has suggested that the Commission could examine the changing demographic landscape and what the concept of "citizenship" means to so many disparate groups

Summary of the issue

The Commission had a presentation at its meeting on 30 April 2013, giving overall trends and ward level information from the 2011 Census. There was further discussion of these issues at a member workshop on 9 May.

- increase in population since 2001 – population density is now above average for London. Large growth in Wimbledon Park and Trinity wards, decrease in Hillside and Wimbledon Village wards
- younger population – mean age fallen from 37 in 2001 to 34 in 2011
- more diverse population - 16% fall in White British population, 6% rise in Other White population (predominantly Polish and South African)
- housing changes - 8% increase in flats and 6% decrease in terraced houses
- owner occupation levels still above London average but there has been a 67% increase in private rented accommodation (particularly around transport hubs)
- decline in car ownership, also particularly around transport hubs
- significant differences in the level of educational qualifications in different parts of the borough
- a decrease in economic activity – caused by increase in economically inactive (retired people and those looking after home or family) rather than an increase in unemployment
- Merton is a comparatively healthy borough but has significant geographical differences.
- Members said that they would also like to have some analysis of what is driving the demographic changes and how this will impact on council policies and service delivery.

What could scrutiny do?

The Commission could request a report from the Directors, asking them to set out what service and policy changes are likely to be made response to demographic change. The Commission could then select one or two services to examine in detail in order to provide a challenge to the service review process and/or refer these to the relevant Scrutiny Panels..

Alternatively the Commission could set up a task group to examine one of the demographic changes in more detail. For example, to investigate the impact of the growth in private sector rented accommodation in Merton.

Noise nuisance

Who suggested it?

Environmental and Regeneration Department Management Team
Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Summary of the issue

During 2012/13, the Commission has received two reports about the Council's noise nuisance service. The Commission noted that there had been an increase in the number of noise complaints since 2009/10. It also noted that the number of enforcement notices has reduced as a result of officers resolving issues at an earlier stage, thus avoiding cost of legal proceedings.

The Commission agreed that, bearing in mind the financial constraints facing the service, they wished to do more to help local residents who are afflicted by noise nuisance and to enable the service to become a beacon of excellence.

The Commission therefore sent a reference to the Cabinet asking it to explore options for providing a 24/7 service through an "invest to save" approach that would deal with complaints promptly and further reduce the need for court action as well as sending a message to residents that anti-social noisy behaviour will not be tolerated.

It also asked officers to provide an update on work being carried out to assess the feasibility of developing a shared environmental health service across the five south west London in order to give greater resilience and make savings. This has subsequently been discussed at Cabinet

and delegated authority to progress towards implementation of such a service has been given to the Director and Cabinet Members.

What could scrutiny do?

The Commission is expecting a formal response from Cabinet in relation to its request to explore options for providing a 24/7 noise control service. Cabinet will be considering its response at its meeting on 10 June and this will be reported to the Commission's meeting on 19 September.

The Commission could also have an agenda item to receive a progress report on the development of the shared environmental health service.

Review of local council tax benefit scheme

Who suggested it?

The Head of Revenues and Benefits has suggested that the Commission review this scheme towards the end of 13/14 to feed into the 2015/16 budget process.

Summary of the issue

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Local Government Finance Act have abolished Council Tax Benefit and made provision for its replacement by local support schemes from April 2013, with a 10% reduction in expenditure.

On 21 November 2012 full Council approved that the Council would absorb the funding reduction for council tax support and adopt the existing default scheme as its local council tax support scheme. It also agreed that a review of local schemes would be undertaken for the full year of 2013/14 and that changes arising from the review will be developed for consideration for the 2015/16 budget process.

During 2012/13 the Commission and the financial monitoring task group have examined the local scheme, commented on the principles and costs and compared the scheme to those adopted by neighbouring authorities.

What could scrutiny do?

The financial monitoring task group has recommended that the Commission (or the task group?) should receive a report on the review of the local scheme undertaken for the full year 2013/14, including information from neighbouring boroughs, as well as the success of exemptions and discount measures in achieving target savings.

This report could be taken at the Commission's meeting in November so that there will be meaningful information on the impact of the new schemes. This date would also enable the Commission's recommendations to impact on decisions taken in regard to the 2015/16 budget process.

Welfare reform – wider picture. .

Who suggested it?

Corporate Services Departmental Management Team
Community and Housing Departmental Management Team

Summary of the issue

The government has introduced major changes to the welfare environment, mainly through the Welfare Reform Act 2012. These measures are complex and will have a significant impact on councils. In summary the changes are:

Localised support for council tax (set out in previous item)

Localised welfare support – from April 2013 elements of the discretionary Social Fund budget (community care grants and crisis loans) were devolved to councils to determine how this is spent

Universal credit – will be rolled out between October 2013 and 2017. Will replace a number of individual tax credits and benefits, including housing benefit. Councils have no formal role but it is likely they will be invited to participate in face to face delivery for those people unable or unwilling to transact on -line

Benefit cap – introduced from April 2013. Designed to ensure that no household or individual in receipt of benefits receives more than average earnings after tax and national insurance. Pending the roll out of universal credit, the cap will be delivered by councils through housing benefit.

Social housing size criteria – from April 2013 there will be a reduction in housing benefit (“bedroom tax”) for those deemed to be under occupying. Pensioners are exempt.

Introduction of single fraud investigation service (SFIS) – during 2013 the SFIS will bring together the investigative services of DWP, councils and HM Treasury into one service for investigating all benefit and tax credit fraud. Council staff transferring into the SFIS will remain employees of the council. Councils will need to make other arrangements to investigate other fraud such as that associated with tenancies or council tax.

What could scrutiny do?

Receive information outlining the changes and discuss potential implications for residents and for the Council. This could be achieved through a report and/or presentation to the Commission (at a single-issue meeting?) or through a task group review.

Alternatively, as this is a very broad area, scrutiny could focus a task group review on one aspect such as:

1/ Helping people back into work

or

2/ How under occupancy will be dealt with sensitively by registered providers and the council.

or

3/ the change from Disabled Living Allowance to Personal Independence Payment and the effect this may have upon adult social care.

Financial and performance monitoring

During 2012/13, the financial monitoring task group has scrutinised financial monitoring information on a quarterly basis. It has also examined and commented on the draft service plans for 2013/14.

The Commission will be asked whether it wishes to continue to delegate this work.

Budget scrutiny

It is suggested that, as in previous years, the Commission should put aside some time in its meeting in November and prepare to devote the whole of its January meeting to budget scrutiny.

Annual reports received by the Commission in past years

Analysis of Members' survey

Overview and Scrutiny annual report – for approval prior to submission to Council

Follow-up on past scrutiny reviews

Balancing the night time economy

The Commission, at its meeting in April 2012, received an update on progress with implementing the recommendations and agreed to seek a further update in 12 months.

Civil unrest

The task group examined reports of the civil unrest that took place in parts of Colliers Wood, Wimbledon and Mitcham in August 2011. Recommendations addressed future levels of policing; communication with local businesses, community leaders, residents and young people; and preventative work, particularly with the 18-24 age group.

The Cabinet's action plan for implementing these recommendations will be reported to the Commission in July 2013.

Agreement of agenda items for Commission's meeting on 16 July 2013

The Commission, at its meeting on 30 April 2013 agreed to invite the Leader, Chief Executive and Borough Commander to attend Commission meetings in order to set out their priorities for the year ahead.

The Commission also agreed to receive a report from Cabinet on progress made with the implementation of the recommendations of the civil unrest task group review.

Selecting a Scrutiny Topic – criteria used at the workshop on 21 May 2013

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

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 Overview and Scrutiny Commission, Scrutiny Topic Selection Workshop 21 May 2013

Attendees:

Councillors Peter Southgate, John Dehaney, Jeff Hanna, Logie Lohendran, Diane Neil Mills and Dennis Pearce.,
Councillor Mark Allison, Cabinet Member for Finance
Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services (note taker)

Local policing model

Noted that the Borough Commander will be attending the Commission's meeting on 16 July and that he will be asked to provide a breakdown of all officers in the Borough as at 2011, both neighbourhood teams and other officers, setting out what teams they were attached to, how many in each team, with a one line summary of the role of each team, and with an equivalent breakdown for the year now started, and one for 2015.

Noted that residents are very interested in policing and in the longer term implications of the model.

Recommended that the Commission conduct a "rolling review" of local policing by inviting the Borough Commander to a further two Commission meetings during the year.

Customer contact strategy

Recommended that, due to the detailed nature of this issue, the Commission should delegate the receipt of regular progress updates to the financial monitoring task group.

Monitoring the Council's equalities commitments

Recommended that the Commission should receive an annual update at its March 2014 meeting on the Equality Strategy's action plan.

Discussed how equalities assessments have previously been incorporated into the budget setting process and expressed interest in finding out how other councils approach this. Councillor Mark Allison said that he thought that DCLG had changed the rules in relation to these – ACTION: Julia Regan to check.

Recommended that the Commission should receive a report from the Director of Corporate Services in September setting out cost effective options for continuing to have an element of equalities assessment within the budget setting process. This would enable the Commission to take a view on what information to request for the budget scrutiny meetings.

Changing demographics and citizenship

Recommended that the Commission should request a report from each of the Directors on what service and policy changes are planned in response to changes in the demographics. Agreed that Members don't want to see more data, they want to know how the data has been applied to policy and service decisions, in particular how services are being reviewed in order to meet changing needs

Agreed that scrutinising the concept of citizenship was unlikely to add any value and therefore should not be pursued.

Noise nuisance

Noted that Cabinet will be considering (on 10 June) its formal response to the Commission's request that Cabinet explore options for providing a 24/7 noise control service.

Recommended that Cabinet's response should be reported to the Commission's meeting on 19 September.

Recommended that the Commission should receive a progress report on the development of the shared environmental health service.

Review of local council tax benefit scheme

Recommended that the financial monitoring task group receive a report in November to review the local scheme and information from neighbouring boroughs with a view to having a report to the Commission at a later date so that the Commission can impact on decisions taken in regard to the 2015/16 budget process. ACTION: Julia to check timetable with Head of Revenue and Benefits. Julia will also check whether the single person discount can be varied by the Council.

Welfare reform

Recommended that the Commission receive a report on the single fraud investigation service in order to understand how this will work and what the financial impact on the Council will be.

ACTION: Julia to consult Director of Corporate Services on the timetable so that report can be programmed at an appropriate date

Financial monitoring

Recommended that the Commission should continue to delegate financial monitoring to the financial monitoring task group

Recommended that the task group should receive follow-up information on the Merton Translation Service at its meeting on 25 June (at which meeting it will discuss the Final Accounts).

Budget scrutiny

Recommended that the Commission should put aside some time in its November meeting and devote the whole of its January meeting to budget scrutiny

Annual reports and past scrutiny reviews

Agreed to continue to receive these reports

Agenda Item 9

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION - FINANCIAL MONITORING TASK GROUP

25 JUNE 2013

(19.00 - 20.10)

PRESENT Councillors Peter Southgate (in the Chair), Iain Dysart and Gregory Udeh

Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), Paul Dale (Interim Assistant Director of Resources), Miriam Adams (Interim Treasury & Insurance Manager), Steve Bowsher (Chief Accountant) and Brian Thompson (Head of Accountancy)

1 APOLOGIES (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Diane Neil Mills and Councillor Suzanne Grocott.

2 MINUTES OF MEETING 19 MARCH 2013 (Agenda Item 2)

Noted.

3 REVENUE OUTTURN 2012/13 AND FINAL ACCOUNTS (Agenda Item 3)

Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services, outlined the format and content of the report. This report will be presented to general Purposes Committee on 26 June 2013 – the external auditors (Ernst and Young) will be at the meeting and may be invited to comment on their findings so far.

Caroline Holland said that the accuracy of the outturn predictions had improved this year in respect to the revenue accounts, though less so on predicting movements in reserves, and had deteriorated in relation to the capital programme.

All officers present provided additional information in response to questions on the detail of the report. These are set out below.

Revenue outturn and variance analysis

Client income for adult social care was higher than expected and this contributed to the underspend in Community and Housing – paragraph 3.8 of the report. Sutton and Wandsworth councils also had an underspend on adult social care.

The government definition of capital expenditure has been clarified and this resulted in some items (such as temporary classroom buildings) being moved from capital to revenue expenditure. (paragraph 3.7)

1

All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the committee/panel. To find out the date of the next meeting please check the calendar of events at your local library or online at www.merton.gov.uk/committee.

The pension strain referred to in paragraph 3.10 relates to early payment of pensions for over 55's being made from the General Fund and not the Pension Fund.

Brain Thompson, Head of Accountancy, said that the outturn variance on recharges (shown in Table 1) is a residual balance of central support costs that haven't been reallocated to departments. The net impact on the accounts is zero.

Reserves and balances

In response to a question about whether the level of General Fund reserves could be justified, Caroline Holland said that it is in the middle of a range identified as acceptable in a report to Cabinet. She added that the level of General Fund balances is kept under review and that updates on the use of reserves will be included in the quarterly monitoring reports that will be received by the task group during 2013/14.

Caroline Holland described each of the categories of reserves (set out in the table at paragraph 6.1) and the level of spend during the year.

Caroline Holland said that a close eye is kept on earmarked reserves and money is transferred back to revenue if it is not going to be used for the specified purpose.

The Council Programme Board monies will spent on investment, including work associated with implementation of the customer contact strategy and a new electronic document management system.

Capital outturn

The capital budget underspend was considerably more than predicted and will result in the re-profiling of the capital programme for future years.

Caroline Holland confirmed that there is a limit to the Council's capacity to spend capital and that the most spent in a previous year was £42m so it is unlikely that the £57m capital programme will be spent in 2013/14. In response to a question, she added that if there was a need for a larger capital spend, for example for a new secondary school or expansion of an existing secondary school, this would require additional revenue support.

Miriam Adams, Interim Treasury & Insurance Manager, said that the lower income from investment was due to a combination of factors including the base rate remaining at 0.5%, quantitative easing and lower returns from lower risk investments that the council makes (mainly UK banks and AAA rated companies).

Whole of Government Accounts (WGA)

Brian Thompson said that the Council had all the data ready to make the accounts return but the delay from the Treasury meant that the WGA could not be prepared. Many Councils were chasing the Treasury for progress.

RESOLVED: Task group members expressed concern that the WGA data collection tool has still not been received from HM Treasury.

Statement of Accounts

The Pension Fund is doing relatively well compared to other councils. The actuaries have provided assurance that the next revaluation will not have an undue impact.

RESOLVED: task group members agreed that they were satisfied with the explanations provided at this meeting and did therefore not wish to make a reference to General Purposes Committee.

4 DATES AND PLANS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS (Agenda Item 4)

To be confirmed at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 16 July 2013.

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