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## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

11 NOVEMBER 2015

(19.15 - 21.30)

**PRESENT** Councillors Councillor Abigail Jones (in the Chair),  
Councillor Russell Makin, Councillor Stan Anderson,  
Councillor Ross Garrod, Councillor Daniel Holden,  
Councillor John Sargeant and Councillor Janice Howard

**ALSO PRESENT:** Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration), Anthony Hopkins (Head of Libraries and Heritage Services), Cormac Stokes (Head of Street Scene and Waste), John Hill (Head of Public Protection), Christine Parsloe (Leisure & Culture Development Manger), Steve Langley (Head of Housing Needs and Enablement), Caroline Holland (Director of Resources), Rebecca Redman (Scrutiny Officer), Councillor Nick Draper (Cabinet Member for Community and Culture), Councillor Andrew Judge (Cabinet Member for Environmental Regeneration and Sustainability), Councillor Judy Saunders (Cabinet Member for Parking and Environmental Cleanliness), Councillor Mark Allison (Cabinet Member for Finance)

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor David Dean and Simon Williams.

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

Councillor Russell Makin declared an interest in the Mitcham Common Conservators and the Wandle Trust savings proposals.

Councillor Ross Garrod declared an interest in one saving within the budget report (item 6) which related to the saving of 1FTE which was a family member employed by the council (ENV11).

### 3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

Panel agreed the Minutes as a true record of the meeting with the amendment to apologies for absence regarding Cllr Imran Uddin who was in attendance at that meeting.

4 MATTERS ARISING (Agenda Item )

Councillor John Sargeant enquired about the email sent by Chris Lee regarding the health of HGV drivers and asked if the medical questionnaire that is completed by staff was a reliable measure of fitness for work. Chris Lee explained that HR had been consulted on the possibility of including a requirement to request information from GP's. Cormac Stokes added that the department are waiting for a response on this. However, if any issues are identified then occupational health will refer the individual for a medical check. Conversations are also on-going about seeking more information upfront from agency staff about their health.

The Panel agreed to reorder the agenda to consider the wheeled bins item after the Morden Leisure Centre Update.

5 PERFORMANCE REPORT (Agenda Item 4)

**Chris Lee introduced the report and highlighted his 3 areas of concern:**

**Levels of household waste recycled** – Performance for year behind target. A problem affecting all London boroughs. Council have attempted to raise the profile of recycling through initiatives and communications to encourage change in behaviour.

**Fly tipping** – Slightly below target but have had success in prosecutions.

**Major planning applications** – Latest upgrade to system is not fully reflected in performance data.

Councillor Janice Howard asked for a breakdown by ward of recycling. Chris Lee confirmed that this information is available and that there is a corresponding increase between landfill and a reduction in recycling.

Councillor Ross Garrod noted the positive performance relating to days lost through sickness for street cleaning and waste management.

Councillor Stan Anderson asked what the delay in planning applications being processed was caused by. Chris Lee explained that capacity is an issue due to staff turnover. There is a vibrant market and planners are in demand. The volume of planning applications is high but this some applications do not warrant a fee.

Councillor Russell Makin asked when the 13 week timescale starts. Chris Lee explained that the process starts after the application has been validated and on receipt of payment.

Councillor Imran Uddin enquired about income generation from regulatory and commercial services. John Hill reassured the Panel that performance is healthier than recorded on the dashboard.

**RESOLVED: Panel noted the report.**

6 MORDEN LEISURE CENTRE - VERBAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

Christine Parsloe provided the Panel with an update on the Morden Leisure Centre development. A newsletter had been shared with Members on progress. Christine Parsloe informed the Panel that:

- The design team (GT Architects) and technical team (BTP Environ) have been appointed;
- quantity surveyors (Theobald) have been appointed;
- Principal designer (health and safety) appointed;
- All are working together with the project manager reviewing plans, designs and iterations;
- Meetings between council and partners held regarding traffic and sustainability;
- First concept design to be considered in a few weeks;
- Wider consultation with Morden Park Playing Fields Community Trust scheduled;
- Main contractor will be procured shortly.

**RESOLVED: Panel noted the update.**

7 BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLAN (ROUND 1) (Agenda Item 6)

Caroline Holland introduced the report which included the updated MTFS and Capital Programme. There is a £15.1 million budget gap and proposals have been made to seek to address part of this within the E&R and C&H budgets.

The Chair invited Lyla Adwan-Kamara from Merton CIL to speak on this item. Lyla Adwan-Kamara highlighted the need to consider equalities around the proposals being made and to consider the cumulative impact of the agreed savings across all divisions, and across a wide range of services, on residents. She added that the reductions to the housing team needed to be reconsidered given the need and demand for housing by residents. Consultation was also noted as needing to be more inclusive and engaging a wider audience.

**ER10: Shared Service – Revised saving (p38)**

Councillor John Sargeant asked about retaining existing capacity within the service. John Hill explained that changes were being made to shift patterns as part of this which will be carefully negotiated with staff. Consultation is

underway on this already. This will enable the most effective deployment of staff.

#### **E&R Leisure & Culture Services:**

##### **ENV11 – outsource leisure and sports activities**

Councillor John Sargeant enquired about outsourcing services and what scope there was for this within culture and leisure services. Councillor Abigail Jones noted that the recently established scrutiny task group looking at commercial services would explore this further. Chris Lee added that this was further complicated by Phase C procurement concerning parks and leisure. The council are looking to make best use of assets and exploring opportunities for income generation.

#### **E&R Traffic & Highways:**

##### **ENV17 – reduce reactive works budget**

Councillor John Sargeant asked if it was worth making these savings. Chris Lee explained that the proposal was in line with the Capital Programme budget for footways which has not changed. Additionally, there are no significant insurance claims to indicate a problem in highways or that there would be an increase in these claims.

#### **E&R Greenspaces:**

##### **ENV21 – reduce grant to Wandle Valley Parks Trust**

Councillor John Sargeant enquired about the percentage of the trusts total income that the proposed reduction accounted for. Councillor Andrew Judge explained that it was not insignificant and that 4 boroughs currently contribute. The council will scale back their contribution to the same level as other boroughs.

##### **ENV22 – reduce grant to Mitcham Common Conservators**

Councillor John Sargeant asked if this was solely funded by Merton Council. Councillor Andrew Judge confirmed that it was partly funded with Sutton and Croydon.

## **8 RESULTS OF THE WHEELED BINS PILOT - TO FOLLOW (Agenda Item 7)**

Chris Lee introduced the report outlining the findings of the 6 month wheeled bins pilot undertaken in Lavender Fields ward. The potential financial benefits of the scheme were not yet calculated as this would require detailed waste and resource modelling. 1035 properties took part and the following key conclusions have been drawn from the pilot:

- Wheeled bins allowed a significant improvement in street cleanliness;
- There was an increase in recycling levels;
- There was an increase in volumes of waste. Although some of this was attributed to effective containerisation it is difficult to estimate the level of “new” waste.

Councillor Judy Saunders stated that it was right to take this scheme forward at this time and that the further detail on costs and financial benefits would be undertaken and planning around how to roll out this scheme more widely would take place.

Councillor Abigail Jones invited residents to speak who requested to do so to express their views regarding rolling out the wheeled bins scheme further. The views of residents in attendance are noted below. Two residents spoke in favour of wheeled bins and one spoke against:

- Positive scheme;
- Streets are cleaner;
- Purple boxes for recycling are useful;
- Do not feel demographic in pilot ward corresponds to the rest of the borough and would therefore question how representative it was;
- Pilot should have taken place across all wards;
- What we have at present for waste collection is acceptable;
- Need for a wider survey of residents on whether or not they want the scheme;
- Wheeled bins can be neglected and make the place look unsightly;
- Not necessarily the best way of keeping streets clean;
- Cant move the wheeled bins from the front to the back of the house easily
- In an age of austerity, is this the best way to spend council money?
- Boxes not adequate enough;
- Litter everywhere using existing boxes is embarrassing;
- Wheeled bins addresses issues with foxes

Councillor Janice Howard asked if wheeled bins could be various sizes to allow residents more choice. Chris Lee confirmed that the height of available bins would all be the same.

Councillor John Sargeant expressed concerns regarding:

- Not being consulted during the pilot scheme;
- The disbenefits of the increase in the volume of waste as a result of the use of wheeled bins during the pilot;
- If the ward selected for the pilot was representative;
- Lack of consultation of residents

Chris Lee apologised that the Panel had not been engaged in the Pilot sooner if this is what they had hoped to do. Cormac Stokes added that the department will engage throughout the process should the scheme be taken forward. He added that no one ward is typical of Merton as a whole and that the pilot was purposely focused in this area. The report outlined indicative costs at this stage and more detailed analysis would need to be undertaken.

Councillor Ross Garrod thanked officers and the Cabinet Member for carrying out this pilot in his ward and noted the positive response he has received from residents to this scheme. He added that the scheme had clear benefits for residents, particularly in relation to recycling, street cleanliness and waste collection and that the council operates an assisted lifting scheme for elderly residents that struggle with their litter bins/boxes.

Councillor Ross Garrod suggested that the council look into the benefits that may also be realised from operating this scheme in relation to the impact on staff sickness and potential decrease in muscular skeletal problems from use of lorries that lift wheeled bins.

Chris Lee stated that it was too early to provide reliable data on the potential impact on staff sickness levels. However, data on expected recycling levels and associated revenue generated could be provided, although they should still be treated with some caution at this stage.

Councillor Daniel Holden expressed his disappointment that the sample for the pilot wasn't representative. He felt that wheeled bins were unsightly and that the current box and bag collection was sufficient. He also added that the council need to consider the size preferences of residents. Councillor Daniel Holden also asked if a mixed collection scheme could be in operation to increase resident's choice.

Cormac Stokes explained that not one size fits all but that, where wheeled bins have been introduced across the country, councils have opted for a default size but have made alternatives available by exception.. A one size bin would be offered as the default and alternatives could be made available by exception, usually based on storage constraints and/or household size. Although volumes may differ the height of the bin would need to be standard to suit vehicle lifting requirements..

Councillor Daniel Holden expressed concerns that the wheeled bins generate more waste and may therefore be counter productive to waste collection targets set by the council. Costs also need to be considered. Is this an appropriate use of council funds at this time.

Cormac Stokes added that there is generally a policy of no side waste for those with wheeled bins and that research has shown that the effective diversion of waste to recycling and waste reduction measures are directly related to the reduction in residual waste capacity provision.

Councillor John Sargeant added that there would need to be standardisation across the borough but that the council need to acknowledge that it is a contentious issue and doesn't suit all homes. He asked officers to look at scope for flexibility of approach.

Councillor Daniel Holden raised the issue of disabled residents and families with pushchairs being unable to use paths because wheeled bins are placed on them. Cormac Stokes confirmed that all wheeled bins must be placed on the property, not the path ways. This would require education, crew training and enforcement as a last resort

**RESOLVED:** Panel noted the report and agreed to forward a reference to Cabinet to consider alongside the report on proposals for rolling out wheeled bins, which outlined the following recommendations from the Panel:

- That Cabinet undertake a more detailed analysis of detailed costs and projected savings of the wider roll out of the scheme before making a decision;
- That, should the scheme be rolled out, Cabinet ensure choice for residents in the size of the wheeled bins and if they wish to participate in the scheme;
- That Cabinet consider the impact of wheeled bins outside homes on the street scene;
- That Cabinet consider the impact on disabled users if wheeled bins are used in terms of accessing pavements and homes

## 9 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)

**RESOLVED:**

- Panel agreed the work programme
- Panel agreed to hold a separate briefing on Crossrail 2 to feed into the consultation
- Panel agreed to comment on the Draft Heritage Strategy, ahead of Cabinet consideration, via email.