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

**(19.15 - 21.25)**

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

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

### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 1)**

None.

### **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)**

None.

### **3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26TH FEBRUARY 2014 (Agenda Item 3)**

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

### **4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Agenda Item 4)**

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

Item 1- Declarations of Interest

Item 2 – Apologies for absence

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

Item 4 – Matters arising from the Minutes

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

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

Item 6 – Mini Holland Bid – Progress Report

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

Item 9 – Performance Monitoring – Verbal Update

Item 10 – Topic Suggestions for 2014/15

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

**5. REGENERATION IN MITCHAM AND MORDEN TOWN CENTRES -  
VERBAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**RESOLVED:** Panel noted the presentation.

## **6. MINI HOLLAND BID - PROGRESS REPORT (Agenda Item 6)**

Councillor Andrew Judge introduced the report and informed the Panel that whilst the council had been unsuccessful at stage 2 of the bidding process for the Mini Holland fund, the bid compiled by the council was visionary and of high quality and commended the Future Merton team for their work.

As part of this process the council engaged traffic engineers to consider the remodelling opportunities in the borough and did not wish to simply abandon the ideas and initial plans compiled for the bid document. The proposals also had cross part support at council and the Mayor of London's office has been supportive of Merton's bid throughout his process.

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

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

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

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

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

## **7. ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP REVIEW - ACTION PLAN AND PROGRESS REPORT (Agenda Item 7)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **8. DRAFT FINAL REPORT - CLIMATE CHANGE AND GREEN DEAL TASK GROUP (Agenda Item 8)**

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

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

Chris Lee explained that he councils focus at present in relation to climate change had been in the area of renewable energy. The council had delivered a number of initiatives which meant that it was generating electricity for which there were opportunities to sell and utilise the Feed in Tariff to generate an income as well as benefits for residents.

The ESCO would act as the legal vehicle by which Merton council could sell its surplus energy supply. There is a clear business case for an ESCO. Chris Lee added that he agreed with the idea of solar PV on social housing but this would need to be explored with Circle Housing/MPH.

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

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

Panel agreed to:

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

## **9. PERFORMANCE REPORTING - VERBAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 9)**

Chris Lee informed the Panel that the majority of indicators had been identified as Green according to the council's RAG rating system and were on target to be achieved. Chris Lee also highlighted that there was underperformance in the following areas and gave reasons as to why this was the case:

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **10. TOPIC SUGGESTIONS FOR 2014/15 (Agenda Item 10)**

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

- Council policy on cross overs and obstructions on the highway (Councillor Ian Munn)
- 20mph zones and limits (Councillor John Sargeant)

- Performance monitoring of Merton stock transfer to MPH (Councillor Samantha George)
- Recycling (Councillor Ian Munn)
- Planning and enforcement (Councillor Russell Makin)
- Mini Holland Developments
- Performance monitoring – Regeneration in town centres
- Progress Report – Adult Skills and Employability Task Group Action Plan
- Draft Inward Investment Strategy

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