

Merton Council

Cabinet Agenda

Membership

Councillors:

Stephen Alambritis (Chair)
Mark Allison
Kelly Braund
Mike Brunt
Tobin Byers
Caroline Cooper-Marbiah
Nick Draper
Edith Macauley MBE
Martin Whelton

Date: Monday 12 November 2018

Time: 7.15 pm

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

This is a public meeting and attendance by the public is encouraged and welcomed.
For more information about the agenda please contact
democratic.services@merton.gov.uk or telephone [020 8545 3616](tel:02085453616).

All Press contacts: communications@merton.gov.uk, 020 8545 3181

Cabinet Agenda

12 November 2018

1	Apologies for absence	
2	Declarations of pecuniary interest	
3	Minutes of the previous meeting	1 - 4
4	Preparing the Council for the UK's exit from the European Union	5 - 20
5	Regional Adoption Agency	21 - 30
6	International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance- Anti-Semitism definition	31 - 34
7	Council Tax Support Scheme 2019/20 and Council Tax Technical Reforms 2019	35 - 40
8	Vehicle emissions, public health and air quality - a strategic approach to parking charges	To Follow
9	Draft Business Plan 2019-23	To Follow
10	Financial Report 2018/19 – September 2018	To Follow

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.

Agenda Item 3

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.

CABINET

15 OCTOBER 2018

(7.15 pm - 7.41 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Stephen Alambritis (in the Chair), Councillor Mark Allison, Councillor Kelly Braund, Councillor Mike Brunt, Councillor Tobin Byers, Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Councillor Nick Draper, Councillor Edith Macauley and Councillor Martin Whelton

ALSO PRESENT Ged Curran (Chief Executive), Hannah Doody (Director of Community and Housing), Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration), Rachael Wardell (Director, Children, Schools & Families Department), Fabiola Hickson (Head of Law Property and Commercial), Roger Kershaw (Assistant Director of Resources), Amy Dumitrescu (Democratic Services Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

No apologies were received.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2018 were agreed as an accurate record.

Post-meeting note: Following a request from the Director for Community and Housing, the last paragraph on Page 1 of the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September has been amended to read "Following Feedback received, from the CEO of Merton centre for Independent Living had requested the inclusion of community care to the list of lead issues for focus as set out in the funding prospectus, and this was recommended to Cabinet for approval."

4 STAGE 2 CONSULTATION ON MERTON'S NEW LOCAL PLAN (Agenda Item 4)

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport presented the report which had been discussed at the Borough Plan Advisory Committee. The Cabinet Member highlighted the need for further housing in the Borough.

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Aidan Mundy, Chair of the Borough Plan Advisory Committee advising that cross-party feedback had been sought during discussions. Councillor Mundy encouraged all present to respond to the consultation, the responses to which would be looked at in November.

The Chair welcomed the cross-party approach that had been taken during the process.

RESOLVED:

- A. That Cabinet approved the second six week consultation on the new borough-wide Local Plan, to run for six weeks between October and December 2018.
- B. That approval for the final consultation documents was delegated to the Director of Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing.
- C. That Cabinet resolved to agree BPAC's recommendation to revise Merton's Statement of Community Involvement 2006.

5 DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN 2019-23 (Agenda Item 5)

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance presented the report and thanked all involved for their work. The Cabinet Member highlighted the current Council finances and advised that £20 million of savings were required by 2022/23 and the report set out previously agreed savings to be analysed, capital programme information to be assessed and new savings that had been identified. The Cabinet Member advised that further savings would need to be looked at and noted the £2 million saving from the Environment and Regeneration division from the introduction of wheeled bins.

The Chief Executive advised that the Equality Impact Assessments had not all been completed to the desired standard before the meeting and therefore a change was required to the recommendations. The Chief Executive advised that the recommendations would therefore now be amended to note the recommendations, not to agree them. This would not affect the progress of the project and the Equality Assessments would be included when the report progressed to Scrutiny.

The Director for Corporate Services advised that Directors had been asked to review the current savings and a number of new savings had come forward. The maximum levels of Council Tax had been assumed in the budget, however it was currently unclear what would happen in regards to funding and so there remained a level of uncertainty. The Director advised they would look to bring forward further savings over the next few months.

The Cabinet Member for Community and Culture asked what the impact of Brexit would be, to which the Director for Corporate Services responded that there would be a paper at the Cabinet meeting in November to assess the potential impacts of Brexit.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet considered and noted the draft savings/income proposals (Appendix 3) put forward by officers and referred them to Overview and Scrutiny panels and Commission in November 2018 for consideration and comment.
2. That Cabinet noted the proposed amendments to savings set out in Appendix 2 and incorporated the financial implications into the draft MTFS 2019-23.
3. That Cabinet noted the latest draft Capital Programme 2019-23 detailed In Appendix 4 for consideration by Scrutiny in November and noted the indicative programme for 2023-28.

6 FINANCIAL REPORT 2018/19 – AUGUST 2018 (Agenda Item 6)

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance presented the report and thanked all staff involved with the work. The Cabinet Member highlighted the current projected overspend of £2 and $\frac{3}{4}$ million in the Children Schools and Families division and advised that the report included ways in which this would be addressed.

The Director for Corporate Services advised that the savings progress and projections were being monitored.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport welcomed the work being done around safety outside of Schools and enforcement.

RESOLVED:

- A. That Cabinet noted the financial reported data relating to revenue budgetary control, showing a forecast net overspend of £2.78million, 0.5% of gross budget.
- B. That Cabinet approved the virement of £160k between Parking Services and Future Merton in relation to work related to CPZs.
- C. That Cabinet noted the position in respect of the Capital Programme contained in Appendix 5b and approved the adjustments summarised in the Table below:

Scheme	2018/19 Budget	2019/20 Budget	Narrative
Children, Schools and Families			
Cricket Green expansion	(955,730)	955,730	Reflects the estimated programme post contract award
Secondary School Autism Unit (Harris Morden)	(160,000)	160,000	Reprofiled in accordance with anticipated spend
Unallocated SEN (Further SEN provision)	(188,000)	188,000	Reprofiled in accordance with anticipated spend
Harris Academy Morden - Expansion	(143,560)	143,560	Reprofiled in accordance with anticipated spend
St Mark's Academy	(200,000)	200,000	Reprofiled in accordance with anticipated spend
Perseid Expansion	152,000	0	Virement to cover additional costs of expansion
Harris Academy Wimbledon - Expansion	(1,142,940)	771,440	Virement to Cover Essential Works at PFI Schools
Harris Academy Morden - Essential Wks	104,000	0	Virement to Cover Essential Works at PFI Schools

Ricards Lodge - Essential Wks	15,000	0	Virement to Cover Essential Works at PFI Schools
Raynes Park - Essential Wks	79,000	0	Virement to Cover Essential Works at PFI Schools
Rutlish - Essential Wks	21,500	0	Virement to Cover Essential Works at PFI Schools
Environment and Regeneration			
Bus Priority Scheme	150,000	0	New TfL Funding
School Keep Clear B750-7	190,480		£50k S106 remainder virement
Fleet Vehicles	(60,000)		Virement to School Keep Clear
Alley Gating	(1,510)		Virement to School Keep Clear
Street Trees	(2,310)		Virement to School Keep Clear
Street Lighting	(11,210)		Virement to School Keep Clear
Traffic Schemes	(5,600)		Virement to School Keep Clear
Surface Water Drainage	(2,700)		Virement to School Keep Clear
Footways	(18,110)		Virement to School Keep Clear
Anti Skid	(3,400)		Virement to School Keep Clear
Borough Roads	(44,710)		Virement to School Keep Clear
Total	(2,227,800)	2,418,730	

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 12 November 2018

Wards: All

Subject: Preparing the Council for the UK's exit from the European Union

Lead officer: Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services

Lead member: Councillor Mark Allison, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance

Contact officer: John Dimmer, Head of Policy, Strategy and Partnerships
(020 8545 3477 / john.dimmer@merton.gov.uk)

Recommendations: That Cabinet:

- A. Note the implications for the council and the borough of the issues highlighted in the report and the actions being taken to deal with them;
 - B. Note the establishment of a corporate task group headed by the Director of Corporate Services, that is looking at the implications of Brexit in more detail and directing actions being taken; and
 - C. Note the proposed approach for how the council can support EU residents, particularly those in hard to reach and vulnerable groups, with information and support to secure their rights around settled status.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to highlight the ways in which the council and the services it provides will potentially be impacted by the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. It also highlights the implications of Brexit for residents of the borough and the local community.
- 1.2. The report outlines cross cutting issues that will have an impact on the organisation as a whole, including analysis and commentary from organisations such as the Local Government Association, the Local Government Information Unit, London Councils, CIPFA and the No Recourse to Public Funds Network. It also sets out an early indication of the council's preparations.
- 1.3. There remains continued uncertainty about what 'kind of Brexit' the country will face, and until the final agreement is known it will be hard to determine its exact impact. However the council will need to be prepared for all eventualities (including a "no deal Brexit") and keep up-to-date with developments, regularly reviewing the areas of highest potential impact. This will enable it to strengthen its resilience and develop contingency plans in key areas such as workforce, regeneration, funding, legislation and community cohesion.

- 1.4. In response, the Leader of the Council has created a Cabinet role to assess the impact of Brexit and ensure that actions are being taken as appropriate. The Leader has also asked the Director of Corporate Services to establish a task group to look at the implications of Brexit in more detail and direct actions being taken.
- 1.5. At a meeting on 12 September Council welcomed the news that the Council's Risk Register is being updated with regards to Brexit, and called on Cabinet to ensure the register maintains a robust and up to date account of the risks of the UK leaving the EU with no deal, and to implement any recommended measures as soon as possible.
- 1.6. Council also expressed its support for the work being carried out through the Scrutiny process into ways for Merton to better support citizens from the EU27 as Brexit progresses, particularly looking at what support can be given as their rights change. Council agreed to support the call for a People's Vote on any final Brexit deal.
- 1.7. Updates relating to Brexit continues to be released on a regular basis, and announcements and analysis highlighted in this report is subject to frequent change and speculation. Information in this report was accurate and up-to-date as at October 2018.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1. On 23 June 2016 Britain voted to leave the European Union (52 per cent voting to leave). London was the only region within England to vote with a majority to remain in the EU, with 59.9 per cent of the vote (2.26 million votes).
- 2.2. The government formally triggered the process of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union on 29 March 2017. The terms – which continue to be negotiated – will have a range of significant effects on local government and the communities they serve. Local authorities have a unique and important perspective to bring to the negotiations as community leaders, service providers, employers and shapers of place.

3 DETAILS

- 3.1. On 12 July the Government published its white paper on the [Future Relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union](#). The proposals in the white paper are informing the ongoing discussions between Government officials and EU negotiators about the terms of the UK's withdrawal. The withdrawal agreement and the framework for the future relationship will need to be finalised in the autumn to allow time for ratification before the UK leaves the EU on 29 March 2019.
- 3.2. The key points outlined in the white paper would mean:
 - That the UK leaves the single market and the customs union; instead there would be a new free trade area for goods and “new arrangements” for services
 - Free movement of people would be ended, replaced by a framework for mobility that would allow UK and EU citizens to travel across each

other's borders without a visa for tourism, temporary business and study

- The creation of new partnerships between the UK and the EU on security and cross cutting issues such as science, research and innovation, culture and education and data and information sharing
- The establishment of institutional mechanisms to govern the new arrangements and resolve disputes

- 3.3. [In the LGiU's view](#), the white paper provides greater clarity on the government's thinking on some key issues for Local Government. These include the proposals on labour mobility which acknowledges the importance of EU citizens being able to come to the UK to work. However it is noted that the white paper appears to focus on those with professional qualifications, rather than lower skilled workers. Further detail is awaited on the Government's future policies on immigration from EU member states.
- 3.4. Decisions are ongoing about the terms of the 'deal' that the UK will negotiate to exit the EU. There is the potential for the UK to become a '3rd Country', the relationship that currently exists for Norway and Switzerland. In this scenario border checks and customs arrangements would be subject to enhanced controls and processes while freedom of movement would be ended. It is unclear what this would mean for the framework for mobility proposed by the Government's white paper. However, it should be noted that other's '3rd country status' was achieved as a result of negotiating an agreement, and so a 'no deal' Brexit could result in the UK also failing to achieve this status.
- 3.5. The Government continues to state its intention to negotiate a deal, however, the current impasse to date in negotiations between the EU and UK means that 'no deal' preparations are important and likely to be twin-tracked with negotiations, possibly right up to March 2019. The LGA has produced a ['No Deal' briefing](#) that identifies the key issues for councils and highlight where clarity needs to be provided by Government.
- 3.6. Over the summer the Government have published a series of technical notices to set out what citizens, businesses and organisations would need to do in a 'no deal' scenario. Three sets of papers have been published to date with at least one more set expected in October. The LGA have analysed them against their headline concerns for local government, with the notices so far dealing with some, but not all, issues. For example, there is advice on future procurement processes, but technical advice on the residency/employment status of non-UK EU workers under a 'no deal' departure has yet to be published.
- 3.7. In an [appendix](#) to their report, the LGA have provided a summary of the issues contained in the 76 Technical Papers published to date, highlighting where there are direct implications for local authority services. The LGA have stated their goal that this can act as an initial checklist for leaders and chief executives of those issues where local government has received advice for 'no deal' planning and local preparations will be expected.

- 3.8. With the possibility of a 'no deal' withdrawal, non-UK EU citizens will be seeking reassurance about their future in the UK. The anticipated reciprocated 'settled status' for non UK EU citizens may only be possible under a deal with the EU. The LGA is seeking assurance on employment/residency/access to services and voting/standing rights in a 'no deal' scenario, which it is hoped will be addressed in a future technical guidance note.
- 3.9. Councils' business continuity and emergency planning duties relating to the impact of 'no deal' will need to be considered. There is the need to reassure communities that plans are in place for any immediate community cohesion work. In the short-to medium term, there could be scenarios under 'no deal', such as the possible return of large numbers of largely elderly UK citizens from other parts of the EU, the key skills the local workforce will need, and the additional capacity that will be needed if more regulatory checks are required to keep on importing from or exporting to the EU.
- 3.10. The Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies Secretariat and CLG's Resilience and Emergencies Division have begun discussions with Local Resilience Forums to ensure preparedness for key issues; councils will be contributing to this alongside their own scenario planning that they should be doing. The council has provided information to London Councils who are preparing a high level London local authority overview of the implications of exiting the EU.

EU Funding

- 3.11. Since the result of the referendum, one of the biggest concerns from councils has been addressing the potential funding gap from no longer having access to EU funding, estimated by the LGA to be up to €10.5 billion (£8.4 billion) UK-wide, unless a viable domestic successor to EU regional aid is put in place. While Merton is not currently in receipt of any EU funding that will need to be replaced, it will no longer have access to put funds for projects such as the regeneration of Morden Town Centre where there may previously have been the opportunity.
- 3.12. In its 2017 General Election manifesto, the Government pledged to create a UK Shared Prosperity Fund that would replace the money that local areas are currently in receipt of from the EU. Despite the uncertainty over the replacement of EU funding, the LGA has argued that there is the opportunity to give local areas a greater say over how to target regional aid funding for local projects of benefit for local people that can support infrastructure, environment, enterprise and social cohesion.
- 3.13. The LGA have produced a briefing: ['Beyond Brexit: future of funding currently sourced from the EU'](#) which provides analysis of a number of options aiming to inform the design and delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 3.14. ***What the council is doing:*** a review has been carried out that confirms that the council is not currently in receipt of any EU funding. The task group will continue to review developments around a UK Shared Prosperity Fund to

ensure that the council is aware of funding that may become available in the future.

Citizenship and migration

- 3.15. EU Settled Status is the new indefinite leave to remain status which will protect the rights of non-UK EU citizens when the UK leaves the EU in March 2019. In June 2018 the Home Office launched a [Statement of Intent around EU Settled Status](#) with further details on the Scheme. It outlines who will be able to apply, what requirements applicants must meet, how to submit an application and how the process of obtaining status will work practically. The statement clarified some issues for councils, like the waiving of the £32.50 fee for children in care, which has now been agreed.
- 3.16. Under the scheme EU citizens living in the UK can apply for 'settled status' if they want to continue living in the country after June 2021. The scheme will open fully by March 2019. Under the settlement scheme it will be mandatory for EU citizens to have 'settled' or 'pre-settled' status from 1 July 2021. Applications for settled status can be made once the individual has lived in the UK for five years (unless they were not resident in the UK by 31 December 2020). The deadline for applying will be 30 June 2021. Applications may be made after this date if looking to join a family member already in the UK. The Government has indicated that a person who fails to apply by the end of June 2021 may have no lawful basis to remain in the UK, but it is currently unclear what the consequences of this will be.
- 3.17. Councils directly or indirectly employ a high proportion of non-UK EU citizens but as the LGA have highlighted, there is also the need for local authorities to consider the scheme as 'leaders of place', for example in their role as corporate parents for children in care, but also in supporting hard to reach and vulnerable groups that will require information and support around changes to their status. Local authorities can play a key role in reducing the possible negative impacts on communities that may arise when people are applying for, or in some cases may fail to secure their status.
- 3.18. The LGA have highlighted that councils should also begin exploring how many children in their care will have to go through the planned EU Settlement Scheme. The No Recourse to Public Funds Network has provided a [guide](#) for councils providing more information on the roles and responsibilities of councils in the scheme with a focus on EU children in care and young people leaving care, EU nationals receiving social services' support and groups at risk of not securing their status.
- 3.19. [London Councils research from August 2017](#) puts the overall number of EU nationals living in London at 1 million - 12 per cent of the total population. European Economic Area (EEA) employees represent one in eight of all employees in London. The research shows that London is particularly reliant on migrant care workers, with nearly three in five of its social care workforce (59 per cent) born abroad. 10.6 per cent of London's social care workforce were born in the EEA and are without British citizenship.

- 3.20. According to the Census data from the Office of National Statistics, as at 2011 there were 18,690 EU nationals in the borough. This is 9.3% of the borough's population. Of this total number, 7,649 are from EU member states as of 2001, while 11,041 are from the EU Accession countries that became member states between April 2001 and March 2011. Since the last Census, Information from the council's electoral roll shows that the total number of EU residents in the borough has increased to 20,146.
- 3.21. London Councils estimates that 64 per cent of EEA+ Nationals in the UK arrived at least five years previously and are therefore potentially eligible for "settled status" on this basis. A further 8 per cent were born in the UK but do not report having British citizenship.
- 3.22. At the time of the London Councils report, data sources were indicating that migrants' intentions to move to or remain in the UK are changing as a result of the economic and social consequences of Brexit. ONS data from August 2018 shows the number of EU citizens moving to the UK has continued to decrease over the last year. EU net migration was 87,000 in the year to the end of March 2018, returning to a level last seen in 2012. Some 226,000 EU citizens came to the UK and 138,000 EU citizens left. Separate data from the Labour Force Survey for April to June 2018, shows there were 86,000 fewer EU nationals working in the UK than a year earlier - the largest annual fall since comparable records began in 1997.
- 3.23. In September 2018, the Migration Advisory Committee published its final report [on the impact of EEA migration in the UK](#). In the Committee's view, while EEA migration has had impacts, many of them seem to be small in magnitude when set against other changes – e.g. the fall in the value of the Pound after the referendum vote to leave the EU probably raised prices by 1.7 per cent - a larger impact than the effect on wages and employment opportunities of residents from EEA migration since 2004, although over a different time period. Therefore according to the report: "small overall impacts mean that EEA migration as a whole has had neither the large negative effects claimed by some nor the clear benefits claimed by others."
- 3.24. The report recommends that if the UK is in a position where it is deciding the main features of its immigration policy, then there should be a less restrictive regime for higher-skilled workers than for lower-skilled workers in a system where there is no preference for EEA over non-EEA workers. The report argues that higher-skilled workers tend to have higher earnings so make a more positive contribution to the public finances.
- 3.25. In the Committee's view any routes into attract low-skilled workers should not be based around sectors. The report states 'serious concern' about social care, but that this sector needs a policy wider than just migration policy to fix its problems and that this is an illustration of a more general point: "that the impacts of migration often depend on other government policies and should not be seen in isolation from the wider context." The report is also clear to not recommend that the public sector should receive special treatment in the migration system.

- 3.26. In return, just over 4.5 million Britons live abroad, with approximately 1.3 million of them in Europe, according to figures compiled by the United Nations. British in Europe, a group which campaigns for the rights of British citizens who live elsewhere in the EU, said the draft terms of the Brexit transition deal only guarantee the right for Britons on the continent the right to live, work, and receive healthcare and pensions in their current country of residence. That means freedom of movement, the EU policy which gives citizens the rights to work and study anywhere in the continent without applying for a visa was not contained in the provisional transition deal.
- 3.27. In December 2017 the government [reached an agreement with the European Commission on citizens' rights](#). This aimed to provide a level of certainty to UK nationals in the EU and their families and allows UK nationals in the EU to continue living their lives 'broadly as they do now.' Following the agreement on the Implementation Period, all UK nationals lawfully residing in another EU Member State on 31 December 2020 will be covered by the citizens' rights agreement, meaning they will continue to have the same access as they currently do to healthcare, pensions and other benefits and will be able to leave their Member State of residence for up to 5 years without losing their right to return. The UK and EU Commission have also agreed that EU27 Member States may require UK nationals and their family members covered by the agreement to apply for a residency document or status conferring the right of residence.
- 3.28. As with other parts of Brexit, there is a continued lack of clarity on the exact position of UK citizens currently living and working in the EU. The fall in the value of the pound means that the cost of living abroad has increased, and with the potential for a diminishment in the level of rights that UK citizens have access to then there is the possibility that some may choose to return to the UK. Large numbers of UK citizens returning home could put pressure on the availability of housing. In addition, with a proportion of those living abroad being older, that moved following retirement, there could be the added impact from those returning on healthcare and older people's services.
- 3.29. ***What the council is doing:*** *a recommendation has been put forward to Cabinet to agree that the council, as a leader of place, should be supporting EU residents, particularly those in hard to reach and vulnerable groups, with information and support around changes to their status and how to secure their rights under the settlement scheme. It is proposed that the council should develop a communications campaign and publish information online, brief staff working in the customer contact centre, send out information through channels such as MVSC bulletins and work with advice agencies and providers such as Citizens Advice.*
- 3.30. *At a meeting on 12 September Council expressed its support for the work being carried out through the Scrutiny process into ways for Merton to better support citizens from the EU27 as Brexit progresses, particularly looking at what support can be given as their rights change and the related uncertainty created by that process. All councillors were encouraged to engage with that review.*

Communities

- 3.31. According to a report put together by London Councils on the [implication of exiting the EU](#), over one third of Londoners were born abroad with migrants being a key part of local communities and the economy. As outlined in the report, councils have an important role to play in promoting integration and community cohesion, especially at a time of significant upheaval and uncertainty.
- 3.32. Many areas saw a rise in reported hate crime immediately following the referendum result and evidence gathered by London Councils from boroughs shows different European communities expressing concern about their future. As the report emphasises, ‘a rise in reported hate crime alone is an imperfect measure of community cohesion and might indicate a positive increase in the rate at which such crimes are reported’ however it is clear that councils have a key role to play in building and protecting social integration in their local area as emphasised by the Casey Review into integration.
- 3.33. Merton launched its [Hate Crime Strategy](#) shortly after the EU vote. The strategy references that 74% of Londoners say they are concerned about hate crime and that recorded figures saw an increase after the referendum result, with more than 3000 allegations of hate crime made to UK police in the week before and after the vote on June 23rd. This led the head of the National Police Chiefs’ Council to make the following statement: “The referendum debate has led to an increase in reporting of hate crime. It is very clear in the last couple of weeks that more people have been aware of experiencing such incidents than we have had before”. It should be noted however that the level of reported instances of hate crime has reduced since this point.
- 3.34. ***What the council is doing:*** *the council, through Safer Merton will continue to monitor developments within the community and any increases in hate crime linked to Brexit should they arise. An objective is in place in the Hate Crime Strategy Action Plan to reassure the public before, during, and after the process of the UK exiting the EU. Through the communications campaign set out above, to counter any false rumours, ‘myth busting’, and offer reassurance to Merton’s communities about the council’s support of a diverse and tolerant borough and zero tolerance approach to hate crime.*

Workforce

- 3.35. Brexit could have wide ranging implications for the future public sector workforce. It is estimated five per cent of the local government workforce and seven per cent of the social care workforce is from the EU-27 countries. While this is a lower proportion than some sectors, recruitment difficulties resulting from a fall in EU migration are likely to impact on local government via the social care and construction sectors, with the LGiU arguing that workforce issues are inextricably linked to the financial challenges facing local government. The impact that Brexit could have on the wider national workforce that will be vulnerable to reductions in the supply of labour from the EEA, could also have other indirect implications for council services.

- 3.36. CIPFA's Brexit Advisory Commission for Public Services has published a report which examines options for how the [Brexit agreement could protect the needs of UK public services](#). It advocates that the UK should be looking for a bespoke agreement which allows free movement between the UK and the EU of skilled public sector workers such as doctors, nurses, academics and technicians, alongside a quota system for lower skilled positions in key sectors where there are labour shortages. The report highlights that the public sector will continue to require high skilled and lower skilled staff from the EU, as will other sectors that are important for public services such as construction, IT, engineering and transport.
- 3.37. The commission proposes that central government and the public sector should do more joint planning and risk assessment on Brexit. Specifically, the issues arising from Brexit should be considered alongside other public sector challenges, rather than being considered in isolation. It also recommended that the Government consider the idea of regional variations in migration policy, so that areas most dependent on EU staff can continue to recruit them, however the Migration Advisory Committee's report on the impact of EEA migration argues the opposite; there should be no regional variation and no special dispensation for the public sector.
- 3.38. During the 2016-17 parliamentary session the health select committee held an inquiry into the impact of Brexit on health and social care. It published a [report](#) on its findings in April, with one of the key impacts likely to be on the social care workforce of the future. An [LGiU briefing on the key findings from the select committee](#) enquiry highlights that the UK will continue to need lower skilled workers from overseas, at least in the short-medium term. 'If health and social care providers find it difficult to fill shortages with workers from the EU-27 countries, gaps may open up which could put upward pressure on pay and terms and conditions, raising costs. This could put further stress on local authority budgets.'
- 3.39. It is estimated that EU-27 workers make up around seven per cent of the adult social care workforce in England, with a further nine per cent from outside the EU. The significant proportion of overseas workforce in social care is driven by low wages and challenging working conditions, which in turn are exacerbated by the squeeze on local authority budgets. This has historically been seen as a reason for carework being a less attractive proposition for British workers.
- 3.40. ***What the council is doing:*** HR are looking to review the current workforce and understand the service areas where there might be the most significant implications of a high proportion of EU nationals. In particular this will look at the care sector and the workforce of the council's contractors. As part of this work HR will be looking at the options for supporting staff that may be required to apply for Settled Status.

Laws, legislation and devolution

- 3.41. The proposals in the Government's white paper on the Future Relationship between the UK and the EU for a non-regression on environmental standards suggest that there should be little change to environmental law

which governs some local authority functions. The white paper also stated the Government's intention to adhere to a common rulebook on procurement and state aid.

- 3.42. As part of the Brexit negotiations local government leaders are pushing the case for further devolution and public service reform, to ensure that it does not mean a transfer of powers from the EU back to central government.
- 3.43. EU law and regulation underpins many council services (such as waste and environmental standards). The Withdrawal Act 2018 provided for all EU law to be brought into UK law to ensure that there was legal certainty for businesses and residents. The Withdrawal Act is now law and this legal certainty remains in place under 'No Deal'. However, many UK laws refer to EU regulations or to EU agencies. The Withdrawal Act gives ministers the ability to amend such laws where EU institutions or processes are mentioned. The Government has said that it is working to assure people of continuity (at least in short-medium term) that it will name UK successor agencies to EU regulators.
- 3.44. As EU law is incorporated into the domestic statute, local government has a central role to play in deciding which should be kept, amended or scrapped. For example, there are many EU-origin laws which commentators highlight could be improved through amendment; including public procurement, state aid rules and new approaches to waste, recycling and landfill. Equally there are a number of areas where it is helpful for EU-origin laws to remain, including air quality, transport, consumer rights laws and the provision of service regulations.
- 3.45. ***What the council is doing: the task group, which will have a representative from Legal Services, will regularly be reviewing policy developments relating to Brexit and the implications this could have. DMTs will be reviewing legislation and technical guidance updates as it relates to the specific service areas within their departments and reporting this information to the task group.***

Regeneration, house building, skills and the high street

- 3.46. Councils with house building plans and development programmes will need to ensure that their plans are sustainable given the potential impact on infrastructure funds and the loss of housing loans from the European Investment Bank. Rising build costs will affect the financial viability of schemes and could result in stalled development. A loss of labour from the EU national could also impact on the construction sector and skills shortages.
- 3.47. The construction industry is significantly dependent on EU migrant workers, both for skilled and non-skilled roles. A shortage of workers could therefore lead to higher project costs or as a consequence building schemes having to either be reduced in scale or scrapped altogether. This could have a significant impact for the council's regeneration schemes such as that for Morden Town Centre and on the Council's Housing Company and the program of construction outlined in its establishment.

- 3.48. In a post-Brexit environment, where demand outstrips supply, it could lead to UK workers demanding higher wages to work the jobs where shortages have emerged. This could have a significant impact on the ability of the government to achieve their objective to build one million new homes, as well as locally the Mayor of London's ambitious housing targets.
- 3.49. Alongside the workforce issues, research suggests that approximately two-thirds of construction materials for house building and other schemes are imported directly from the EU. This could have two issues; a weaker pound will lead to rising costs for imported materials, while at the same time the UK risks losing its tariff-free access to the single market, as well as facing the imposition of duties and limits on quantities, exacerbated in a 'No Deal' withdrawal.
- 3.50. It is widely accepted that the UK has a significant skills gap. If bridging the gap in the skills that public services need can no longer be met through migration (EU or non-EU) then there will have to be a drive to improving the skills of UK workers. In the LGA's view, the workforce challenges of Brexit needs to be a catalyst for a fundamental rethink of skills development in the UK. In CIPFA's view migration policy should be integrated with greater local control over skills and aligned with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (the proposed successor to European Structural and Investment Funds).
- 3.51. A London Councils briefing on the [impact Brexit could have on London's skills challenge](#) notes that London's economic success has been driven by being a leader in financial, professional and technical services, creating a strong demand for highly skilled, highly productive labour. A skilled workforce is vital if London's economy is to continue to grow. In the briefing it is argued that to meet the challenges in London of high levels of youth unemployment, a rapidly growing population and a number of key sectors that are heavily reliant on migrant labour, London needs an efficient skills system that is responsive to business need and supports learner progression.
- 3.52. Since Brexit the fall in the pound has contributed to inflation rising to over 3% - significantly above the Bank of England's 2% target. This has made imported goods more expensive, with costs in many instances passed on to consumers. This come at the same time as wages rising at a slower pace than inflation meaning shoppers have less disposable income to spend in stores and restaurants. There are a number of wider reasons behind the continued decline in many high streets, such as the rise of online shopping, but Brexit is predicted to increase the pressures on many businesses and retailers and could lead to a further downturn. This will have a direct impact on the council in terms of the level of business rates it collects, but also more widely, there is the negative impact for the community if high streets and town centres in the borough are struggling.
- 3.53. ***What the council is doing:*** we are assessing the impact on planned and future regeneration activities, particularly the Estates Regeneration Plan. We continue to regularly liaise with business organisations via the Chamber of Commerce. We will also monitor any changes to business rate income.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1. The council could choose not to do any preparatory work or analysis on the potential impacts of Brexit, choosing to wait until there is more clarity or certainty from the government on the terms of the 'deal' to exit or future relationship between the UK and the EU. However this will leave the council ill prepared to deal with any changes to the way it delivers its services that will come about as a result of exiting the EU and a likely growing uncertainty amongst members of the community and the workforce that are EU residents.

5 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 5.1. A business continuity planning session on the impacts of Brexit, led by the Director of Environment and Regeneration was held at the Collective DMT session on 25 September 2018.
- 5.2. The report was presented to Corporate Services DMT on 26 September 2018 for comments and feedback.
- 5.3. The report was agreed by CMT on 2 October 2018.

6 TIMETABLE

- 6.1. December 13 -14 2018: the last European Council of 2018 seen as the last practical date for withdrawal agreement to be signed.
- 6.2. January-February 2019 (at the latest): Commons approval. The House of Commons must approve the agreed deal and Parliament must pass an Implementation and Withdrawal Bill that sets out the terms of Brexit in fuller detail.
- 6.3. The Settled Status scheme will open fully by March 2019.
- 6.4. The UK will leave the EU on the 29 March 2019.
- 6.5. After March 30th, 2019: Trade talks can begin between the UK and the EU. While Britain remained a member state, such talks were not permitted under EU law. Under the deal reached in principle in 2018, this is when the 21-month transition period begins. During this time most aspects of UK membership of the EU will remain in place, including free movement across borders and membership of the customs union and single market. But Britain will no longer have a vote.
- 6.6. The closing deadline for applications to be submitted for settled status will be 30 June 2021.

7 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. There continues to be uncertainty about what 'kind of Brexit' the country will face, and until the final agreement is known it will be hard to determine its exact impact. However the council will need to be prepared for all eventualities, including a 'no deal Brexit', all of which are likely to have a significant financial impact on the economy, and subsequently the level of funding for public services.

- 7.2. Brexit could have wide ranging implications for the future public sector workforce. Recruitment difficulties resulting from a fall in EU migration are likely to impact on local government via the social care and construction sectors. The costs of employing workers in these sectors is likely to increase as a way of attracting workers to fill the resulting vacancies. To cover workforce shortages there may be a greater need to use agency staff with the attached costs that this will bring. Agencies themselves may also suffer from shortages in the availability of staff on their books as a result of a fall in EU migration.
- 7.3. It is predicted by some economic models that Brexit could see a fall in the value of the pound which will have an impact on the costs and availability of goods and services, particularly those manufactured by, or provided by countries from within the EU. The introduction of trade tariffs could also result in an increase in costs for the council.
- 7.4. There is a potential funding gap for councils from no longer having access to EU funding, estimated by the LGA to be up to €10.5 billion (£8.4 billion) UK-wide if not replaced. In its 2017 General Election manifesto, the Government pledged to create a UK Shared Prosperity Fund that would replace the money that local areas are currently in receipt of from the EU, however further information and confirmation of this has yet to be provided.
- 7.5. Benefit entitlement for EU nationals and their family members is currently linked to a person's activities in the UK, for example, employment or having a right of permanent residence. It is still unclear what the consequence will be for those that don't meet settled status so there may become a larger number of EU nationals who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF). According to the No Recourse to Public Funds Network local authorities currently spend at least £43.5m per year funding accommodation and financial support for destitute migrants with NRPF to safeguard the welfare of children within families, adults with care needs and young people leaving care.
- 7.6. There could be financial implications related to the council having to bring in specialist advice to understand the potential changes to regulations and legislation.
- 7.7. There could be financial implications for the council in having to administer another General Election should the decision be made to call one as a result of a deadlock in negotiations between the UK and the EU on the terms of the exit.

8 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. Over the period of membership, a number of EU laws have been incorporated as part of domestic statute and there is not yet a definitive position on which laws will be kept, amended or repealed. There are a number of pieces of EU legislation that currently impacts on the way the council delivers its services including those linked to procurement, waste,

recycling, air quality, transport, consumer rights laws and the provision of service regulations.

- 8.2. There are a number of areas where it is likely to be decided that it is essential or helpful for EU-origin laws to remain and that the council will need to continue to adhere to. However local government leaders continue to push the case as part of the negotiations for leaving for further devolution and public service reform and have highlighted the opportunity that EU-origin laws could be improved through amendment.
- 8.3. The far-reaching implications of Brexit have been addressed in this report and as well potential amendments and repeals of legislation; there is the practical impact with regards the fall out of a no deal (or a hard Brexit). There is the effect this will have on the economy and in particular exchange rates and the impact on the contractors/suppliers that the Council is in contract with. In the short term it might be prudent for the council to carry out a due diligence exercise on the financial viability of suppliers/contractors with regards contracts which are high risk or high value. This is also the time to consider contingency plans with regards this area of concern, as well as those areas where EU nationals are directly and indirectly employed and the other areas identified in this report.

9 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Human Rights Act was passed into UK law in 1998. The human rights contained within this law are based on the articles of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Act 'gives further effect' to rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention. As outlined under the legal and statutory implications section, it remains unclear which EU-origin laws and regulation that the UK will continue to adhere to or seek to repeal.
- 9.2. Many areas saw a rise in reported hate crime immediately following the referendum result and there is evidence, collected both locally as well as regionally and nationally that shows different European communities expressing concern about the future. In the lead up to, and following the date of the exit of the UK from the EU there could be implications for community cohesion within the borough and the potential for instances of hate crime.

10 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. As set out under the community cohesion implications, there is the potential for the UK's exit from the EU to lead to a rise in community tensions and a rise in the number of instances of Hate Crime. Figures showed 3000 allegations of hate crime made to UK police in the week before and after the referendum vote on June 23rd.

11 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. The impact of the UK's exit from the EU has been identified as a key corporate risk in the Key Strategic Risk Register. A 'no deal Brexit' could have significant negative effects on a wide range of council services and businesses as a result of uncertainty and the failure to secure a smooth transition from EU membership.

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

None

13 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1. There are a number of articles, briefings and reports that have been used to put together this report, which are hyperlinked to in the document where relevant

This page is intentionally left blank

Cabinet Report 12th November 2018

Wards: All wards

Subject: Regional Adoption Agency

Lead officer: Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families Department

Lead member: Cllr Kelly Braund, Cabinet Member for Children Services

Contact officer: Paul Angeli

Recommendations:

Cabinet to support recommendations relating to transfer of components of Merton's adoption work to a Regional Adoption Agency; transfer of budget and TUPE of posts to new regional body.

-
- A. Agree that Merton enter into regional adoption arrangements as part of Adopt London South.
 - B. Agree that staff and finances (provisional 5.29 FTE and £298,791 of which £256,564 is staffing related) are transferred to Southwark who will be hosting Adopt London South on behalf of ten South London boroughs, noting that Merton will be the spoke authority for the South West authorities. The figures are provisional pending the outcome of an independent audit of all local authorities' proposed budgetary transfers.
 - C. Agree that Merton's DCS is vested with delegated authority to make more detailed decisions around the implementation of this proposal including signing off the inter-authority agreement between Merton and Southwark.

PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report summarises the business case for Merton entering regional adoption arrangements with nine other local authorities in South London as part of Adopt London South. All local authorities in England have been instructed by the Department for Education to enter into regionalised adoption arrangements by 2020. This report sets out the proposed approach to regionalisation for Merton and seeks formal agreement to begin implementing the new arrangements.
- 1.2 This report sets out indicative staffing FTE and financial implications of these proposals. The full business case with confirmed final finances will be available later in the autumn.

DETAILS

1.3 It is proposed that a new Adopt London South Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) is created through combining the adoption services for the ten South London Boroughs of Croydon, Greenwich, Kingston, Wandsworth, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Richmond, Southwark, and Sutton. These agencies wish to build on the success of their existing services to improve performance in meeting the needs of those children who require permanence through adoption by bringing together the best practice from each authority within the RAA. This proposal forms part of an overarching project to develop four RAAs across London.

1.4 This report describes how establishing a single agency will allow the ten authorities to provide a more cohesive, efficient and effective use of resources and development of practice to the benefit of children, adopters and others who gain from adoption services. It proposed that the London Borough of Southwark will host the RAA, the cost of development to be funded by the Department for Education.

1.5 In March 2016, the government announced changes to the delivery of adoption services setting a very clear direction that all local authorities' adoption services must be delivered on a regionalised basis by 2020. This followed a range of national policy changes since 2012, including the 2015 'Regionalising Adoption' paper by the DfE that sought improvements in adoption performance. Following the general election in June 2017, the Minister of State for Children and Families reaffirmed commitment to this policy. In March 2018, the DfE commenced the legislation that allows them to direct a local authority into a RAA if there is no progress being made.

1.6 The premise of regionalisation is to:

- Increase the number of children adopted
- Reduce the length of time children wait to be adopted
- Improve post-adoption support services to families who have adopted children from care
- Reduce the number of agencies that provide adoption services thereby improving efficiency & effectiveness.

1.7 . The South London RAA will be known as Adopt London South (ALS) and will build upon the previous positive practice established within the two South London consortia – South London Adoption and Permanence Consortium (SLAPC) and South West Consortium which have acquired over the years good reputations for delivering effective services.

1.8 The rest of this report sets out the issues and detailed proposals for delivering Adopt London South.

1.9 The business case is founded on a number of key assumptions:

- There is one host for the south London RAA and it is proposed this is Southwark; however, it is expected that staff will be located across all ten LA sites; and that there is a host site for the South West in Merton.
- There is one lead responsible officer and centrally located functions, likely senior management, performance, commissioning and back office will be located in Southwark.
- Wherever possible practice and processes will be the same across all south London boroughs; however, there is a recognition of the scale of the South London RAA (and that it is bigger than all other RAAs in the country), therefore there will be tailoring and delivery based within two spokes which are based on the existing consortia (Merton, Sutton, Kingston, Wandsworth and Richmond in the South West and Southwark, Lambeth, Lewisham, Greenwich and Croydon in the South East).
- All agencies have the resources available to actively lead on and participate in agreed work streams and achieve the deliverables within agreed timescales set out in the plan;
- Adopt London South (ALS) will share case work responsibility for the child at the earliest possible point, at the discretion of each Agency Decision Maker but in most cases at the point of the Placement Order being granted;
- Staff affected will retain their existing Terms and Conditions, including pension rights, holiday entitlements and sick pay policies. If it applies, staff will be transferred to the host authority under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations (TUPE). In Merton at this stage, and subject to formal consultation 4 FTE staff have been identified as potentially in scope for TUPE;
- Any applicable redundancy costs will be underwritten by the currently employing LAs as this will not be funded by the DfE or the host;
- Premises – ALS will be delivered from office bases in all ten locality areas. This will ensure: continuity of provision as far as possible; close working relationships with children's social workers and easy access for local communities to a service within their community. A small number of workers undertaking central functions (mainly senior management and back office staff) will work from a central base in the Host authority Southwark, and some functions will be delivered from the South West site of Merton. Merton will be able to charge for the use of premises and any related costs. To ensure the new ALS team is established with a cohesive and single culture it is expected that particularly in

the early stages that staff will be based for team building events, conferences, team meetings at Southwark's Tooley Street offices.

The Principles

1.10 The principles, which the business case has followed, were agreed by the Adopt London Executive Board which was delegated by the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) to oversee the development of the four London Regional Adoption Agencies. These principles have been endorsed by the DfE:

- Local authorities involved in Adopt London and each of the four RAAs are committed to collaborating on adoption arrangements so that the best interests of children and their adoptive families are secured and kept at the forefront of decision-making.
- Adopt London will provide an overarching framework for enabling effective coordination, coherence and partnership working across London.
- Adopt London authorities, and the four RAAs will make sure that there is consistency of approach in relation to key strategic and operational decisions, e.g. about whether staff are transferred under TUPE arrangements or seconded. Project teams in the four RAAs and RAA governance arrangements should reflect the ambition to promote such consistency of approach.
- We are committed to working effectively together with Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs), making sure that their unique and important contribution is maximised and that VAAs are involved in the development of the RAAs and Adopt London.
- The focus of work over the next 18 months will be on establishing the four RAAs; in phase two, developmental work on the Adopt London hub will progress. We will use the Adopt London Executive Board to operate a virtual Hub in the coming period, with a view to exploring options for joint commissioning across London, maintaining common design principles for the spokes and exploring opportunities for further development of the Hub in phase 2.

The scope and delivery model

1.11 The decision to pursue four RAAs in London was agreed by ALDCS, and endorsed by the DfE in May 2018. This report does not revisit that decision, but provides more detail for how the agreed delivery model will work in south London.

1.12 Whilst a number of options were considered early on including the creation of a new single entity to deliver adoption services across South London, the preferred option is to combine the ten London boroughs with one borough becoming the host authority. Creation of new single entities is time consuming and costly and

not a preferred option elsewhere with RAAs already live.

- 1.13 Governance of the RAA will operate through a board comprising of senior representatives from all LAs with executive voting powers with non-executive advisory representation from Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs), adopters and adoptees. The RAA will continue to be accountable to Corporate Parenting Boards and other Local Authority bodies including local scrutiny panels.
- 1.14 The RAA will aim to provide a high-quality service to adopted children with improved outcomes; taking the best models of delivery from each of the nine services and considering the best level of geography on which to deliver (sub-regional, regional or pan-London). The RAA will also aim to provide savings through economies of scale.
- 1.15 It is important to note that each of the other London RAAs has between 5-7 local authorities, and no other RAA has gone before nationally which combines such a large number of Local Authorities. Therefore, ALS will be implemented as two spokes with the South West comprised of Sutton, Merton, Wandsworth, Richmond and Kingston (with Merton acting as a spoke office) and the South East comprised of Southwark, Lewisham, Greenwich, Lambeth and Croydon (with Southwark acting as both spoke office and overall hub).
- 1.16 The delivery model for the RAA addresses the five areas set out by the DfE as their minimum expectations of a Regional Adoption Agency:
 1. A single line of authority with the ability to act as a single service and a head of service in place.
 2. Transfer of staff into the organisation.
 3. Inclusion of core adoption functions of recruitment and assessment of adopters, early permanence and family finding, and adoption support.
 4. Pooled funding from local authorities into the RAA.
 5. Pan-regional approach to matching i.e. one pool of children and adopters.
- 1.17 Adopt London South will work collaboratively with 3 other RAAs across London namely:
 - Adopt London West – hosted by Ealing
 - Adopt London North – hosted by Islington
 - Adopt London East – hosted by Havering
- 1.18 Approximately 50-60 FTE LA staff, many of whom work part time, are expected to become part of the new organisation to deliver the following main services across South London:

- Recruitment and Assessment – to provide the prospective adopters;
- Permanence Planning – ensuring that children identified as requiring adoption achieve a placement;
- Matching and Placement – to match prospective adopters with children in need of adoption;
- Adoption Support – to help all affected by adoption;

The table below sets out the RAA and LAs will work together, summarising roles and responsibilities for each:

Function	Regional Adoption Agency	Local Authority
RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT		
Marketing and Recruitment Strategy	✓	
Adopter Recruitment and Enquiries	✓	
Assessment of Prospective Adopters – all Stage One and Stage Two functions	✓	
Completion of Prospective Adopter Report	✓	
Agency Decision Maker for approval of adopters	✓	
Post approval training	✓	
Matching	✓	
Post Placement training for Prospective Adopters	✓	
PERMANENCE PLANNING		
Early identification of a child possibly requiring adoption		✓
Tracking and monitoring the child possibly requiring adoption	✓	✓
Support and advice to child care social worker on the adoption process	✓	✓
Sibling or other specialist assessments if commissioned by LA	✓	✓
Direct work to prepare child prior to placement	✓	✓
Preparation of the Child Permanence Report		✓
Agency Decision Maker for “Should be placed for Adoption” decisions		✓
Case management prior to the point agreed by the LA ADM		✓
Case management from point agreed by the LA ADM		✓
MATCHING AND PLACEMENT		
Family finding	✓	
Looked After Child reviews	✓	✓

Function	Regional Adoption Agency	Local Authority
Shortlist potential families	✓	
Visit potential families	✓	✓
Organising child appreciation day	✓	
Ongoing direct work to prepare child prior to placement	✓	
Adoption Panel administration and management	✓	
Agency adviser role	✓	
Agency Decision Maker for Matching prospective adopters and child		✓
Placement Planning meeting administration and management of introductions	✓	
Support to family post placement and planning and delivery of adoption support	✓	
Ongoing life story work and preparation of Life story book	✓	✓
Independent Review Officer monitoring of quality of child's care and care plan		✓
Support prospective adopters in preparation and submission of application for Adoption Order – including attending at court	✓	
Preparation of later life letter	✓	✓
ADOPTION SUPPORT		
Assessment for adoption support	✓	
Developing and delivering adoption support plans	✓	
Agree and administer financial support to adoptive families pre and post Adoption Order		✓
Adoption support delivery including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support groups • Social events • Post adoption/special guardianship training • Independent Birth Relative services • Support with ongoing birth relative contact • Adoption counselling and training 	✓	
Financial support to adopters including adoption allowances		✓
NON-AGENCY ADOPTIONS		
Step parent/partner adoption assessments	✓	
Inter-country adoption assessments and post approval and post order support	✓	

Milestones and implementation

1.19 It is proposed that following formal endorsement of the delivery model and budget at the ten cabinets and committees over the autumn and winter 2018 that the structure for the proposed Adopt London South RAA will be subject to formal consultation through winter and early spring 2019. Phased implementation will begin from the point that the decision is formally endorsed at cabinets and committees and run through until early summer 2019.

1.20 The first key implementation task will be to appoint the permanent leader of the RAA. A phased implementation is being pursued because the logistics of setting up Adopt London South are greater and more complex than any other RAA given that 10 boroughs are being brought together.

1.21 See the table below summarises the key milestones for delivery:

Stage 1: Mobilisation & on going Project Management	Stage 2: Vision & Design	Stage 3: Service Analysis- Measure and Understand (As is)	Stage 4: Service redesign workstream initiation (Future State)	Stage 5: Monitoring, evaluation and benefits	Stage 6: Transition arrangements/shadow and testing phase	Stage 7: Implementation
This stage ensures that there is an established rationale for integration whilst putting in place the building blocks for defining and scoping the change.	This stage involves working with senior stakeholder to understand and develop the vision for these integrated services and articulate the 'end state'.	The stage involves refining the scope of the project, identifying the cohort to work with and measuring the current situation (the 'as is') and understanding the level of change required to achieve the defined aims and objectives. This is important in providing a solid evidence base for the 'to be' model and developing options for the services and functions in scope.	This stage involves designing the 'to be' model, understanding and developing the options available in order to achieve the desired outcomes and identify the level of change required.	This stage reviews the initial benefit profiles and puts in place monitoring and evaluation measures for the testing and implementation phases	This stage involves working with operational teams to prototype and test out the agreed integration model/option and monitoring effectiveness of it. This stage allows for refinement to confirm the solution as correct/optimum before changes are mainstreamed.	Subject to the evaluation of stage 6, this stage involves fully implementing the new model and associated improvements
Deliverable: March - May <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lockdown scope Set up PMO function Project team in place Project plan signed off Workstreams developed and leads identified 	Deliverables: April - May <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish clear design features & evaluation criteria Agree key outcome measures and anticipates benefits Articulate vision for the new service 	Deliverables: May - July <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of current position Stakeholder engagement HR analysis of workforce implications and options Review benefit profiles Complete current position statement Identify opportunities for change and improvement 	Deliverables: July - November <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service design model options Legal appraisal of options and impacts Agree support service functions Completed Business Case Sign off and permission to proceed Complete transition and full implementation plan 	Deliverables: August - September <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree on evaluation approach Set performance measures/KPIs for new service Review benefit profiles and produce realisation plan 	Deliverables: October- November <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies/procedures, referral routes agreed Functions & Structure agreed Systems tested Legal requirements for new entity in place Future model governance and SLAs agreed 	Deliverables: November - April 19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisation review process Engagement and change management process Fully implement the new model Go live with new service

2. Options Considered

2.1 Entering into these regional adoption arrangements through a Regional Adoption Agency hosted by Southwark is the only option being considered which meets the requirements of regionalisation as set out in the legislation.

2.2 There will be approximately 30 FTE social worker positions within Adopt London South, and approximately 50-60 FTE in total including management, administration, performance, commissioning, panel advisor and administration capacity. 5.1 FTEs from Merton have been identified as in delivering services in scope. One third of the capacity in the new RAA will be focused on adoption in the South West (Sutton, Wandsworth, Kingston, Richmond and Merton), as this is where one third of the adoption work happens. Funding from the South West also accounts for around one third of the RAA budget.

- 2.3 It is proposed that to ensure clarity and maintain and improve timeliness that specialist teams will operate in each of the spokes (recruitment, assessment, family finding and matching team, and a post adoption team).

3. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The budget for the RAA has been built through each of the 10 authorities considering the agreed scope and outcomes for the RAA and identifying the existing budget available to deliver these activities. LAs have ensured that sufficient resource is retained to deliver the activities, which will remain the responsibility of the local authority.
- 3.2 Merton has identified a staffing budget of £256,564 which will transfer to Southwark to host Adopt London South. A proportion of this will be used to cover hosting charges incurred by Southwark (for example HR, IT, legal, finance), the remainder will be used to resource Adopt London South. We are awaiting confirmation from Southwark of the agreed final hosting costs per borough. Data has been collected on boroughs' adoption allowances, including the proportion funded by ASF and the proportion funded by LAs. However, this is not included in the proposed base budget, which will be transferred to Southwark as it will be retained by the boroughs. However, expertise in securing ASF will sit within the RAA and the RAA will have a role in the future in reviewing the approach to allowances across 10 boroughs. In total the approximate budget for Adopt London South to deliver all the services within scope is likely to be in the region of £3.5 million.

4. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In March 2016, the government announced changes to the delivery of adoption services proposing that all local authorities' adoption services be delivered on a regionalised basis by 2020. This followed a range of national policy changes since 2012, including the 2015 Regionalising Adoption paper by the DfE that sought improvements in adoption performance,
- 4.2 The government has reinforced their policy ambition through provisions in the Education and Adoption Act 2016. The Act also gives the Secretary of State a new power to direct one or more named local authorities to make arrangements for any, or all, of their adoption functions to be carried out on their behalf by other local authorities named, or by another agency. Therefore, the entering into regionalised arrangements is not voluntary, but required.
- 4.3 The new regional adoption arrangements will be governed by a board, and be subject to an inter-authority legal agreement which sets out the terms of the arrangement. This agreement will need to be signed between each member authority and Southwark prior to the formal go live of the new arrangements.

4.4 In resourcing the new RAA, if it applies staff will be subject to TUPE.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

5.1 No specific implications from this report

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 No specific implications from this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 No specific implications from this report.

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

None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 12 November 2018

Wards: All

Subject: International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance- Anti-Semitism definition

Lead officer: Neil Thurlow - Community Safety Manager

Lead member: Cllr Edith Macauley, Cabinet member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities

Contact officer: Neil Thurlow, x 3240

Recommendations:

- A. That Cabinet formalise the adoption of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism and its examples
 - B. That Cabinet approve the above to also be included within the Merton Hate Crime strategy
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 This report is being brought to Cabinet to ensure that the group are aware of the boroughs adoption of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism and to request that the Cabinet approve its use within the hate crime strategy
- 1.1.2 Safer Merton has been leading on hate crime since 2016 and adopted this new definition in June 2017. This adoption was undertaken by the service and with the LBM Safer Merton hate crime pages being updated accordingly. However, there is no record of taking this through Cabinet for oversight and approval.
- 1.1.3 Hate crime is a strategic priority for the Merton Community Safety Partnership, is a Mayoral priority for London and is a cross party governmental priority. It is defined as “any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a personal characteristic; specifically actual or perceived race, religion/faith, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identity.
- 1.1.4 Anti-Semitism- a form of Hate Crime, has been a crucial part of national politics recently and continues to be a problem in this country and it is right that as a Local Authority, we are able to demonstrate the seriousness with which we take it as we do for other forms of Hate Crime.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. IHRA definition of Anti-Semitism is *“a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities”*
- 2.2. Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled

against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for “why things go wrong.” It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits

- 2.3. Contemporary examples of anti-Semitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:
- a) Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
 - b) Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
 - c) Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
 - d) Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
 - e) Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
 - f) Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
 - g) Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
 - h) Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
 - i) Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
 - j) Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.

- k) Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel
- 2.4 All of the above categories have been adopted and will be formally recognised in the revised Safer Merton hate crime strategy following the approval of CABINET
- 3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**
- 3.1. N/A as LBM adopted this definition in June 2017
- 4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**
- 4.1. N/A as LBM adopted this definition in June 2017
- 5 TIMETABLE**
- 5.1. N/A as LBM adopted this definition in June 2017
- 6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**
- 6.1. N/A
- 7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**
- 7.1. N/A
- 8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**
- 8.1. N/A as LBM adopted this definition in June 2017 and this recognition may aid community cohesion
- 9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**
- 9.1. As Safer Merton oversee the work, as lead service, the team ensure that all crime and disorder concerns are considered within this work
- 10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**
- 10.1. N/A
- 11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**
- Merton Hate Crime Strategy
- https://www2.merton.gov.uk/strategic_work_plan_2017-2021_-_website_edition.pdf
- 12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 12.1. Hate Crime Safer Merton Strategic Work Plan 2017 – 2021

This page is intentionally left blank

Committee: Cabinet

Date:

Wards: All

Subject: Council Tax Support Scheme 2019/20 and Council Tax Technical Reforms 2019

Lead officer: Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services

Lead member: Councillor Mark Allison,

Contact officer: David Keppler, Head of Revenues and Benefits

Recommendations:

1. That the uprating changes for the 2019/20 council tax support scheme detailed in the report be agreed, in order to maintain low council tax charges for those on lower incomes and other vulnerable residents
 2. That Council adopts the new 2019/20 scheme.
 3. That Council agrees to implement the proposed council tax technical reforms concerning the increased empty property premium from 1 April 2019 and subsequent years following the amendments to Section 11B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report details the proposed changes to Merton's adopted council tax support scheme to ensure that the level of support awarded stays in line with the old council tax benefit scheme had it continued and therefore residents are not worse off due to the new scheme.
- 1.2. The report also details the change incorporated in the council tax technical reforms regarding long term empty properties and the additional premiums councils can charge.
- 1.3. That cabinet agrees to implement recommendation 1, 2 and 3 above.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. **Council Tax Support Scheme 2019/20**
- 2.2. As part of the Spending Review 2010, the Government announced that it intended to localise council tax benefit (CTB) from 1 April 2013 with a 10% reduction in expenditure. These plans were included as part of the terms of reference for the Local Government Resource Review and the then Welfare Reform Bill contained provisions to abolish CTB.
- 2.3. Following a formal consultation exercise full Council agreed on the 21 November 2012 to absorb the funding reduction and adopt the prescribed default scheme in order to maintain low council tax charges for those on

lower incomes and other vulnerable residents. CTB was formally abolished with effect from 1 April 2013

- 2.4. Council have subsequently agreed to continue with the same scheme on an annual basis for 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19.
- 2.5. Each year the government “uprate” the housing benefit scheme and the new council tax support scheme for pensioners. This is where state pensions and benefits are increased by a set percentage and the government also increase the applicable amounts and personal allowances (elements that help identify how much income a family or individual requires each week before their housing benefit starts to be reduced) and also non dependant deductions (the amount a non child who lives with the claimant is expected to contribute to the rent and or council tax each week).
- 2.6. The government have stated that under the new local council tax support scheme pensioners must not be worse off and that existing levels of support for them must remain and this protection will be achieved by keeping in place existing national rules, with eligibility and rates defined in Regulations broadly similar to those that previously existed. This is known as the Prescribed Pensioners scheme.
- 2.7. When full Council adopted the governments default scheme in November 2012 it was not clear what would happen with regards to the uprating of the default scheme from April 2014 onwards. Advice received from the then Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) at the end of September 2013 stated that if a Council did not formally agree a revised scheme for the following financial year which would include any “uprating” then its local scheme for the previous year would automatically become its default scheme and as a consequence the “uprating” would not take place and many residents would face an increased council tax bill.
- 2.8. This means that if Merton wants to continue with its council tax support scheme which is broadly similar to the old council tax benefit scheme it would have to formally consult and agree on the “uprating” each year. Merton has subsequently agreed this approach in prior years and is now seeking agreement to the same for 2019/20.
- 2.9. It is estimated that if the uprating was not applied the expenditure of the scheme, if everything else remained constant, would be approximately cost neutral. Increases in payments for non-dependants living in households would not be applied and some residents receiving disability benefits or premiums could face higher council tax bills.
- 2.10. The government will uprate the housing benefit scheme from the 1 April 2019 and the detail of this process is unlikely to be known until early December 2018. The government will also uprate the prescribed pensioner scheme for council tax support from 1 April 2019, with the details announced in December 2018. Once the detailed information is known it is proposed to use the data from these to uprate the council tax support scheme.
- 2.11. The uprating of the council tax support scheme will be effective from the 1 April 2018.
- 2.12. A formal consultation exercise regarding the change of the scheme was undertaken between 24 August 2018 and 19 October 2018. Only 4

responses were received, 2 opted to apply the uprating and 2 opted not to apply the uprating. Only one comment was received which was in favour of ensuring that those residents in receipt of council tax support continue to “receive as much as possible to help prevent them getting in to the debt spiral”.

- 2.13. This level of response is in contrast to the consultation exercise undertaken in the summer of 2012 when the Council first proposed to absorb the funding reduction and ensure that no Merton residents would be worse off due to the change in scheme. Then there were 1,007 responses of which 820 opted to retain the same level of support as council tax benefit and keep the level of contribution towards the council tax down for eligible applicants. Only 69 opted to implement a new council tax support scheme that’s offers less assistance and means that certain groups of people would have to pay more council tax.
- 2.14. The Council has also consulted with our major precepting authority, the Greater London Authority (GLA). The GLA is content to endorse the broad approach taken by the council however, it believes the council should review the proposed changes as a whole and if one proposed change results in a greater saving to the council that could be used to reduce the need to apply other proposals then they suggest the council does this so that it would help to reduce the financial burden on some individuals and families in Merton who see their council tax support reduced.
- 2.15. **Council Tax Technical Reforms**
- 2.16. In 2012 Local Government Finance legislation was amended to give billing authorities discretion to remove or reduce the discounts and exemptions awarded for empty properties and second homes and to give authorities the option to charge up to an additional 50% premium on long term empty properties (over two years empty).
- 2.17. On 6 February 2013 full council agreed to remove the discounts and exemptions on empty properties and second homes and also agreed that a review of the empty homes premium would be undertaken for the full year 2013/14 and reported back to Cabinet for consideration for the 2015/16 budget process.
- 2.18. On the 19 November 2014 full council agreed to implement the empty homes premium of 50% from April 2015.
- 2.19. Since April 2015 the council has charged taxpayers 50% premium on properties that have been empty for over two years.
- 2.20. Although the number of properties affected by this fluctuates the council has approximately charged between 160 and 190 taxpayers the additional premium per year.
- 2.21. Based on the latest figures of 166 as at October 2018 being charged at Band D this premium will raise approximately £97,000 council tax for Merton this year.
- 2.22. The Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Bill (the Bill) has now been approved by both Houses of

Parliament. The Bill received Royal Assent on 1 November 2018, becoming an Act and law.

- 2.23. The provisions of the 2018 Act amend Section 11B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (Section 11B, as amended) to allow billing authorities to increase the premium on empty properties from 50% to 100%.
- 2.24. The Section 11B, as amended, provides for the increase and implementation to take effect in the financial year commencing 1st April 2019.
- 2.25. Section 11B, as amended, also gives billing authorities the ability to charge higher premiums in subsequent years for properties that have been empty for longer periods of time.
- 2.26. Billing authorities are now empowered to increase the premiums payable over time as follows: -
- From 1 April 2019 – 100% premium for properties that have been empty for 2 years or more
- From 1 April 2020 – 200% premium for properties that have been empty for 5 years or more
- From 1 April 2021 – 300% premium for properties that have been empty for 10 years or more.
- 2.27. As at October 2018 there were 166 long term empty properties being charged the 50% premium. Of these, 13 have been empty for 10 years or more, 18 empty for between 5 and 10 years and 135 empty for between 2 and 5 years.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. The only alternative option for the Council Tax Support Scheme based on the consultation undertaken would be not to undertake the uprating of the scheme and continue with the existing scheme. This would result in some of the poorest residents facing increased council tax bills from April 2019
- 3.2. The alternative option for the Council Tax Technical Reform changes would be not to implement them or delay implementation and review at some further stage.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. A consultation exercise has been undertaken and the results of this are detailed in 2.12 and 2.14 above.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. The key milestones for council tax support scheme are detailed below:

Task	Deadline
Consultation with public and precepting authority on proposed change to the	24 August 2018 to 19 October 2018

scheme	
Report to full Council for agreement to proposed change to the scheme	21 November 2018
Detailed analysis of the housing benefit and prescribed pensioner schemes uprating to establish exact parameters to be applied for the uprating of the council tax support scheme	December 2018 – or as soon as the information is available from the Department of Work and Pensions
Deadline for agreement of amended scheme	11 March 2019
Testing of IT software for amended scheme	February 2019
Implement amended scheme	1 April 2019

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. Based on current expenditure for 2018/19 it is estimated that £11 million will be granted in council tax support for 2019/20 based on 2018/19 council Tax levels. This figure includes the Greater London Authorities share of the scheme (£2.2 million), the cost for Merton is £8.8 million. This is an increase on the previous year which is due to the council tax increase last year.
- 6.2. It is estimated that if the uprating was not applied the expenditure of the scheme, if everything else remained constant, would be approximately cost neutral.
- 6.3. The council has recently submitted its Council Tax Base Return (CTB) to Government. This is based as at October 2018 and incorporates the latest information on council tax support and discounts and exemptions. This will be used to calculate the Council Tax Base for 2019/20 and the MTFS 2019-23 will be updated as appropriate during the budget process.
- 6.4 Council Tax Proposed revisions to Empty Property Premiums
Based on the 166 properties as at October 2018 outlined in paragraph 2.27 and using Merton's current Band D Council Tax, the revisions to premiums would result in additional income to the Council as follows:-

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Merton Premium from Empty Properties	97	194	230	246
Additional income		97	133	149

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The Council must formally agree its council tax support scheme for 2019/20 by no later than 11 March 2019.
- 7.2. If a new scheme is not agreed by this date then the scheme the council administered for the previous year (2018/19) would become the default scheme for 2019/20.
- 7.3. The Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 amends the provisions of Section 11B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, to enable the Council, as the Billing Authority, to increase the empty property premium payable as detailed in 2.26 above.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. A formal consultation exercise has been undertaken. The results of this are detailed in 2.12 and 2.14 above.
- 8.2. Any changes to the council tax scheme which results in reductions of support will mean some residents facing an increase in their council tax bills. Some of these residents, due to the yearly uprating undertaken by the Department of Work and Pensions, would not have previously been faced with increased council tax bills. In the past it has sometimes proved difficult in collecting council tax from residents who are on limited income and or benefits.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. It is possible that taxpayers may not pay the additional premium, however, since the 50% premium was implemented in 2015 this has not been the case and taxpayers have paid. .

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The Council will need to continue to closely monitor the cost of the council tax support scheme to ensure it is affordable for future years. Although in previous years we have not seen an increase in caseload, it is possible that the full impact of the welfare reform could result in more families located in inner London moving into Merton which would result in an increase in council tax support expenditure

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

None

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Consultation letter from GLA