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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 19 MARCH 2019

(7.15 pm - 9.35 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Laxmi Attawar (in the Chair),
Councillor Daniel Holden, Councillor Stan Anderson,
Councillor Ben Butler, Councillor Joan Henry,
Councillor Russell Makin and Councillor Anthony Fairclough

Steve Langley (Head of Housing Needs and Strategy), Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration), Paul McGarry (FutureMerton Manager) and James McGinlay (Assistant Director for Sustainable Communities)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mclean (with Cllr Dean substituting).

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

4 CABINET MEMBER PRIORITIES (Agenda Item)

Cabinet Member for Community & Culture - Nick Draper:

Looking back, we have achieved the opening of the new Colliers Wood library, Morden Leisure Centre, arts spaces, recreation grounds. We have begun work on Chapter House and the Canons. Now we are entering a new phase, my priorities are;

- We need to work in partnership and with commercial acumen.
- In Regulatory Services, we are a flagship service for London in Air Quality, alongside Richmond and Wandsworth.
- Look at the possibilities of Shared Frontline Services and pooled resources instead of the flaws.
- Adopt a more business-like attitude to events.
- Work with LoveWimbledon and local residents to for ideas to encourage more growth of Wimbledon Tennis – the biggest tennis tournament in the world.
- Adult Education – Working towards Good, then outstanding, and would like Scrutiny input on how to improve.

In response to Panel Member questions, the Cabinet Member for Community & Culture clarified the following;

- Plans are still ongoing for Merton Borough of Film.
- We are having conversations with the Transitions Task Group Chair on how to move forward with our Adult Education and SEN offer.

- We are exploring different ideas in terms of building on the Wimbledon Tennis brand. Twickenham rugby sell paraphernalia etc.

Cabinet Member for Environment & Street Cleanliness - Mike Brunt:

I have smaller portfolio but it includes high impact areas. Now that refuse collection has been rolled out, I intend to focus on;

- Street Cleaning. We are recruiting three new inspectors. We will focus on high density and high usage roads. Ensure all businesses have a waste collection agreement in place that fits their needs.
- Fly tipping. Abandoned waste. We have confiscated vehicles that have been used to fly tip (and crushed two of these where the owners have failed to come forward). Education residents on the issue. Introducing a new and enhanced system with Veolia – tagging bags, searching through and identifying culprits and issuing penalty notices.
- Local community recycling centres. Work needs to be done so these are used properly.
- Blocks of flats with less than ten flats. The transition has not been smooth for these residents but we are working through this to make the service better.
- Online reporting tool needs to improve so that residents can receive feedback.
- Build on our early successes with recycling. 20% increase in garden waste customers. 58% increase in food waste recycling. Reduction of 330 tonnes per month of waste going to landfill/energy exchange.
- Plastic bottles, cans and glass. Endorse Michael Gove’s deposit scheme for plastics. We need to encourage businesses to change their behaviour.

In response to Panel Member questions, the Cabinet Member for Environment & Street Cleanliness clarified the following;

- Agreed to provide information about cleaners employed today versus the day before the start of the Veolia contract by letter to the questioner.
- We are considering putting together literature for estate agents to pass to new tenants as well as online education tools.
- The energy exchange generates electric which feeds into the national grid and hot water for a local housing estate. The output will be published. A lot of investment has gone into the project and the centre will be open at the end of April. Panel Members expressed an interest in visiting.
- We continue to hold Veolia to account via monitoring the KPI’s and regularly scheduling Veolia’s attendance at my Councillor workshop meetings to discuss ward issues. I feel it’s important for Veolia staff to hear these resident issues.

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport - Martin Whelton

- Housing. Waiting on announcement of funding from GLA.
- Transforming Morden and building more homes is essential. We are meeting with developers, major construction firms and housing associations.
- More office accommodation in Wimbledon. It’s the second busiest station in Outer London and needs more capacity.
- Local Plan consultation
- Delivering affordable homes
- Housing Strategy
- Clarion estates regeneration – Shortlisted for a number of planning awards

- Parking consultation has just started
- Highways contract

In response to Panel Member questions, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport clarified the following;

- With regards to concerns about the challenges of an ageing population and whether there is enough emphasis on homes for older people and sheltered housing – We are carrying out extensive work on strategic housing market assessments which will feed into the Housing Strategy. We are realistic about the targets and we have put representations forward for the examination in public for the draft London Plan.
- Asked how the Schools plan figures, with no additional capacity needed, fit with the London plan - I don't have all the figures but school figures can and do fluctuate. There has been a dip over the past three years.

5 DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING CONTROL (Agenda Item 3)

James McGinlay summarised the report.

In response to Panel Member questions;

- We have no immediate plans to withdraw Capita support. We use very frugally and it provides resilience.
- Agreed to provide details of how many appeals logged in a year.
- Acknowledged that IT system isn't fit for purpose.
- Explained that neighbour disputes are determined by making an assessment against specific criteria.

6 HOUSING SUPPLY TASK GROUP - MONITORING RECOMMENDATIONS (Agenda Item 4)

Final report shared. All recommendations completed.

Head of Housing Needs agreed the task group recommendations helped to focus minds and added value.

7 UPDATE ON THE IMPACT OF THE HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT (Agenda Item 5)

The Head of Housing Needs summarised the report as the biggest change in homelessness law since 1977. The threat of homelessness has changed from 21 days to 56 and the Council has a statutory requirement to provide a personalised housing plan to each request. This change in law has increased caseload by 55%.

The Head of Housing Needs answered the Panel Member questions about the report;

- Section 2.6 highlights Section 21 - Residents feel that the issuing of Section 21 notices can be used in an aggressive way by landlords in response to resident complaints about minor issues. It's the biggest cause of homelessness in London. The 1988 Housing Act brought in non-fault evictions. Prior to this, it was much harder to evict with regulated tenancies.
- Government are beginning to look at tenure types.

- We have been running a rent deposit scheme for years. 22% still in tenancy. Agreed to share statistics of those in private rented and assisted by Merton.
- The Council carried out an estimated count of 26 rough sleepers in Merton.
- Government have given some funding towards homelessness prevention.
- Government are prescriptive in how to allocate – priority need blind but reasonable preference and helping hand up the list given to certain groups (homeless, overcrowded unsanitary conditions, severe medical issues)

8 TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION - PRESENTATION (Agenda Item 6)

Presentation given by Head of FutureMerton. A copy of which is attached with the minutes

In response to Panel Members questions

- Fully agreed that the Council needs to actively designate spots for delivery drivers on bikes, with the rise of delivery apps and the subsequent road congestion. We are working with Deliveroo and other apps to look at designated bays, as well as mapping the area with LoveWimbledon.
- Concept design for Figges Marsh will be sent to all Councillors shortly.
- Radical rethinking of the transport network in Morden. Looking at bus driver breaks. Rebalancing the ratio of pavements to road.
- We have fed back to those residents who participated in our workshops. There will also be a full public consultation before we cement the design.

9 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Agenda Item 7)

The Panel appointed Cllr Butler as the new Performance Monitoring Lead.

The full performance figures were unavailable as they were yet to be signed off by CMT. Only Libraries and Housing were provided in time for the meeting.

A panel member asked the Head of Housing Needs for clarification on CRP62 who agreed to come back with the details.

10 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)

Change Cllr Mclean as Performance Monitoring Lead to Cllr Butler.

Panel were reminded to complete the 2019 member survey