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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 30 APRIL 2019

(7.15 pm - 10.15 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

Jason Andrews (Environmental Health Pollution Manager), Anita Cacchioli, Paul Evans (Assistant Director of Corporate Governance), Anthony Hopkins (Head of Library, Heritage and Adult Education Services), Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration) and James McGinlay (Assistant Director for Sustainable Communities)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

No apologies for absence were received

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 ACCESSIBILITY OF LOCAL STATIONS (Agenda Item 4)

The Panel welcomed Rory Jee, Route Enhancements Manager for Network Rail.

- The key challenge is funding. Network Rail are open for business and keen to help Merton develop solutions to rail-focussed accessibility issues that have been identified.
- The Department for Transport offered 300m funding across the country. The shortlist is developed using 5 or 6 key metrics, including foot fall, location proximity to schools and hospitals etc.
- There has been no feedback from DfT yet on how those metrics impacted the final list.
- Some stations have no easy solutions, whereas some can be improved with three or four smaller funding streams. There are minor and mid-tier accessibility improvements that can be looked at also.
- Responsibility for lifts differs between Network Rail and South West Trains – will check re; Wimbledon.

The Assistant Director of Sustainable Communities, added;
Merton do have a dialogue with TFL and would be very keen to engage with Network Rail.
The third Local Implementation Plan was consulted on from 12th March to 1st April and will proceed to Cabinet in June, before sending to TFL for their approval on 28th June.

The Chair asked if it would be useful for the LIP to come to Panel.
JM – Cabinet will take feedback in June but I can return to brief the Panel on the plan.

JM agreed the consultation results would be circulated for comment.

RESOLVED

“The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel welcomes this opportunity to raise issues about the need to improve accessibility in the borough and welcomes the attempt by Officers to access funding to address the work required at Raynes Park and Motspur Park stations. The Panel request that they should receive additional evidence from Officers at the 27 June Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Meeting to demonstrate that further action is being explored within the Local Implementation Plan to address how we will improve access for all residents and deliver on the Mayors Transport Strategy outcomes”.

5 CAPPAGH ENVIRONMENTAL PERMIT (Agenda Item 5)

Vice Chair Cllr Holden read Cllr Ormrod’s statement to the Panel.

The Panel heard representations from two residents on the Environmental Health permit issued to Cappagh.

Ann Lindsay - Due to the general deterioration of air quality in the area, over the last 3 years I have developed asthma. No2 readings are higher than the EU maximum recommended.
The Council claims to be addressing the issue but is still not dealing with Lorries.
School children are being affected by this pollution.
Council should ensure that the Wandle Path remains a clean sanctuary. For the sake of children, revoking the permit would show the Council puts the residents first.

Nicola Thompson – The whole process for approval has been a farce. The permit wasn’t listed for key decision, despite Councillors assuring me that it would be. Three things will rectify this.

1. A procedure needs to be implemented for environmental permits.
2. The Cappagh permit should be revoked for proper consideration.
3. The permit wording needs to be amended (concrete batching/cement unloading)

The Director for Environment and Regeneration apologised to members and residents that the process wasn’t followed correctly. We agreed a different procedure for this permit because of the level of public interest and there is currently an internal investigation into why it didn’t happen.

The Residential & Pollution Manager assured members that the granting of the permit has conditions attached and enforcement action can be taken should those conditions not be met.

In response to Panel Members questions, the Residential & Pollution Manager and the Air Quality Manager clarified the following;

- The vertical silo (disused) does not require a permit as it is not being used.
- As a Council, we were not aware the horizontal silo, which was being used, existed until the dust emission incident occurred last year and the site was subsequently inspected. Cappagh were advised to apply for a permit and immediately did so.
- The council, as a regulator, will support compliance with regulations as opposed to enforcing historical action.
- Examples of matters that may justify refusal of a permit would be – a history of complaints, incidents, emissions and the site not being operated or managed properly.
- The dust emission incident was a one off and of a short duration. Cappagh have taken steps to manage the disused silo which is now gated and locked. If conditions of the permit for the used silo are broken, the Council can take enforcement action.
- Officers will generally check and monitor permitted sites once or twice a year. If a complaint is received, we will inspect straight away.
- New information would need to be submitted in order to review the current permit.
- With regards to the wording of the permit, we have taken legal advice and the permit has been correctly applied.

RESOLVED - The Director of Environment and Regeneration agreed that the current process for approving environmental permits will be reviewed and the options for oversight explored to ensure public transparency.

6 MERTON ADULT EDUCATION (Agenda Item 6)

The Head of Library, Heritage & Adult Education Services summarised the report and asked the Panel for any questions.

We are well prepared for Ofsted, we are in an unusual position in that we may be inspected under either the old or new framework that will start in September 2019.

A self-assessment report is produced annually that provides a greater level of detail on service performance. Performance shows an upward trend in most areas including learner and enrolment numbers although overall retention was down and actions have been put into place to improve this for this academic year.

7 LIBRARIES AND HERITAGE - ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda Item 7)

The Head of Library, Heritage & Adult Education Services summarised the report and asked the Panel for any questions.

- As part of the London Libraries Consortium, you can return your borrowed books to any library in the Consortium.

- We place a lot of emphasis on staff training and customer standards. We have invested in training around challenging behaviour, homelessness awareness, signposting and engagement with youth groups.

Cllr Nick Draper stated how proud he is to be involved with this service and invited the Panel to celebrate the Heritage Discovery Day on 11th May 2019 in the Heritage & Local Studies Centre.

8 LONDON BOROUGH OF CULTURE (Agenda Item 8)

The Leisure & Culture Development Manager introduced the report.

In attendance were Sarah Tanburn and Somayeh Aghnia.

- Long term goals are to make an impact on the culture of the borough and increase community cohesion.
- Beginning guest curator season
- Commissioned four film makers
- Building productive relationships, including the British Film Institute, who have contributed staff time and leadership as well as enabling all the young applicants to participate in the BFI young film makers events and networks for the year.
- Keen to engage with more sponsors
- Exploring taking films into more unusual locations (Mitcham Fire Station)

9 SINGLE USE PLASTICS (Agenda Item 9)

Cllr Aidan Mundy introduced the report.

Recommendations 10, 9, 8 and 4 have future scope and food recycling is another opportunity to explore.

In response to Panel Member questions, Cllr Mundy commented;

- The Task Group would like to agree with officers the specific metrics to measure success.
- The Council use various levers to encourage use of own cups by staff rather than plastic, including price reduction on hot drinks.
- Cabinet will receive the report and, if the recommendations are agreed, they will ask the relevant officers to take this work forward by producing a report/action plan.

10 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Agenda Item 10)

The Performance Monitoring Lead raised the following indicators:

Parking

- SP493 – Number of London tribunal cases won - below target.

Discussion with the Principal Performance Officer revealed this figure is completely driven by London Tribunals so they decide which cases to deal with. This measure is removed for next year and will focus on % won rather than numbers.

Regulatory Services

- SP041 – Service requests replied to within 5 working days – down.

FOI requests and complaints are included within this measure so the figure is distorted and not a true reflection.

Street cleanliness

- CRP048 / SP455 – % of sites surveys deemed below standard much higher than target
- SP454 - % of fly-tips removed within 24 hours is much lower than target

The Director of Environment and Regeneration explained there is a technical problem with the Veolia Echo system and some vehicles don't have the ability to record at all so the figure is underestimated.

11 TOPIC SUGGESTIONS 2019/20 (Agenda Item 11)

Panel agreed to add the Local Implementation Plan to the June agenda. Other items included will be performance monitoring and the work programme for the municipal year.