

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.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

15 JULY 2020

(7.15 pm - 8.30 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Peter Southgate (in the Chair), Peter McCabe, John Dehaney, Sally Kenny, Paul Kohler, Owen Pritchard, Nick McLean, Edward Gretton, Joan Henry and Natasha Irons

Co-opted Member Mansoor Ahmad

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Edith Macauley MBE (Cabinet Member for Voluntary Sector, Partnerships and Community Safety)

Kiran Vagarwal (Interim Head of Community Safety) and Julia Regan (Head of Democracy Services)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from co-opted members Emma Lemon and Colin Powell.

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 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

The additional information requested had been received by email. Members agreed that they would make a decision at the Commission's September meeting on whether to bring forward the Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy. ACTION: Scrutiny Officer to ensure this is covered as part of the discussion of the work programme.

4 MERTON'S PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER (Agenda Item 4)

The report was introduced by Kiran Vagarwal, Interim Head of Community Safety. She said that the report sets out proposals for a new more localised Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), based on analysis of data and currently subject to public consultation. The Commission was invited to make comments that could be taken into account by Cabinet when it is due to sign off the PSPO in November.

The Cabinet Member for Voluntary Sector, Partnerships and Community Safety, Councillor Edith Macauley, provided background on the legal framework and assured the Commission that the impact of the PSPO would be assessed to determine whether there was a need to extend PSPO coverage into other parts of the borough.

In discussion, several members of the Commission expressed concerns that the town centre areas in Wimbledon and Morden would be excluded from the PSPO and sought assurances that the problem drinking in these areas would continue to be addressed. They also expressed concern about displacement from the PSPO area into surrounding areas. Kiran Vagarwal said that other enforcement measures could be taken in these areas, including a localised PSPO for Wimbledon town centre in future. She undertook to investigate the boundary of the PSPO in relation to Morden town centre.

In response to a request to include the whole of Morden and Wimbledon town centres within the PSPO, Kiran Vagarwal said this would not be possible because the areas covered by a single PSPO have to be adjacent. She said that it was common for local authorities to address this by having several localised PSPOs.

Members urged Cabinet to submit applications for localised PSPOs for Morden and Wimbledon town centres at the same time as the Mitcham application. Councillor Macauley said that Cabinet would listen to views expressed during the consultation period, including the views of the Commission, and would consider whether a separate PSPO was required.

In response to a further question about street drinking outside Wimbledon Centre Court shopping centre, Kiran Vagarwal said that this was currently being monitored and that there were a range of intervention measures that could be applied should the problem recur.

In response to a question about enforcement, Kiran Vagarwal said that the localised PSPO helps to focus the response to those areas that most need it.

The Commission RESOLVED to make the following reference to Cabinet:

That the Commission supports action being taken to address street drinking that occurs to such an extent that it intimidates the public, makes an area undesirable and becomes an area that people wish to avoid. The Commission wishes the proposals to be expanded to include other areas where there is unacceptable street drinking, namely Mitcham and Wimbledon town centres. It is understood that this wouldn't cover all of the wards, just the town centre areas.

The Commission further RESOLVED that this reference should be included and responded to within the officer report to the meeting of Cabinet in November at which the consultation results and proposals for the PSPO would be considered.
ACTION: Director of Environment and Regeneration and Head of Community Safety.

5 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda Item 5)

The Commission RESOLVED to present the annual report to Council at its meeting on 16 September. The Chair agreed to make a change to his foreword replacing the words "a budget deficit of £35m" with "a budget deficit that is predicted to be substantial". ACTION: Scrutiny Officer

6 DISCUSSION TO IDENTIFY QUESTIONS TO ASK THE BCU COMMANDER WHEN SHE ATTENDS ON 9 SEPTEMBER (Agenda Item 6)

The Commission agreed to use its first meeting with the new BCU Commander, Chief Superintendent Lis Chappell, as an opportunity for dialogue in order to share concerns and priorities. A number of lines of questioning were agreed:

- Safer neighbourhood teams and community policing in wards (Councillor Gretton to lead on high level questions)
- Police plans on carbon reduction (Councillor Gretton to lead)
- The number and deployment of officers, current level of resources and demand, how scarce resources are used and the implications for Safer Merton, impact of policing the lockdown and wearing of masks (Councillor Owen Pritchard to lead)
- What is the police doing to tackle low level nuisance that may escalate to something serious and what is being done to assure residents that this is being addressed (Councillor Natasha Irons to lead)
- In the light of Black Lives Matter, what is being done to ensure that the police are representative of the communities that they serve and that stop and search is intelligence-led (Councillor Irons to lead)
- Does the BCU Commander believe it is important to have continuity and stability in senior police ranks? The turnover levels seems high and not conducive to good governance (Councillor Peter McCabe to lead)

The Commission resolved:

- To invite the Chair of the Stop and Search Monitoring Group to its meeting on 9 September to provide the most recent data and to take part in the discussion with the BCU Commander ACTION: Scrutiny Officer
- To inform the incoming BCU Commander, Chief Superintendent Lis Chappell, of the proposed lines of questioning. ACTION: Scrutiny Officer
- That the Chair would write a letter of thanks to the outgoing BCU Commander, Chief Superintendent Sally Benatar. ACTION: Councillor Peter Southgate

7 SCRUTINY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (Agenda Item 7)

The Commission RESOLVED to agree the scrutiny improvement action plan with the following additions:

- To include the option to hold scrutiny task group meetings remotely and to hold discussions with other authorities through Zoom or equivalent software in order to make it easier for members to attend
- To ensure that all scrutiny members feel safe during meetings and afterwards – all scrutiny members will take responsibility for this and the Scrutiny Officer will stay in the room till members of the public have left

ACTION: Scrutiny Officers and Head of Policy, Strategy and Partnerships

8 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)

The Commission RSOLVED to agree the draft work programme as set out in the report and to re-establish the financial monitoring task group, with terms of reference as previously agreed. Councillors Ed Gretton, Joan Henry, Natasha Irons, Paul Kohler, Peter Southgate volunteered to join the task group. The Scrutiny Officer will identify meeting dates and will email all non-executive councillors to see if there are others who would also like to join. ACTION: Scrutiny Officer.

The Chair announced that this would be the last meeting attended by the Head of Democracy Services, Julia Regan, and thanked her for the support that she had provided to scrutiny over the past 11 years.

From 1 August, officer support to scrutiny will be led by John Dimmer (Head of Policy, Strategy and Partnerships) with Rosie McKeever (Scrutiny Officer) having responsibility for the Commission, the Financial Monitoring Task Group and the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Stella Akintan (Scrutiny Officer) will have responsibility for the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee,