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Merton Council

Overview and Scrutiny Commission



Date: 28 April 2021
Time: 7.15 pm
Venue: Virtual

AGENDA

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2 Declarations of pecuniary interest	
3 Minutes of the previous meeting	1 - 4
4 Universal Credit	5 - 12
5 Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy - To follow	
6 Demographic profile of Councillors and Senior Managers	13 - 30
7 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report - Unavailable <i>Please note this report is unavailable at present and will need to be carried over to the first meeting of the next municipal year.</i>	
8 Member Survey results	31 - 40

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Overview and Scrutiny Commission membership

Councillors:

Peter Southgate (Chair)
Peter McCabe (Vice-Chair)
Ben Butler
Brenda Fraser
Edward Gretton
Paul Kohler
Nick McLean
Aidan Mundy
Geraldine Stanford
Billy Christie

Substitute Members:

John Dehaney
Joan Henry
Thomas Barlow
Edward Foley
Simon McGrath
David Williams MBE JP

Co-opted Representatives

Mansoor Ahmad, Parent Governor
Representative - Secondary and Special
Sectors
Roz Cordner

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. For further advice please speak with the Managing Director, South London Legal Partnership.

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny describes the way Merton's scrutiny councillors hold the Council's Executive (the Cabinet) to account to make sure that they take the right decisions for the Borough. Scrutiny panels also carry out reviews of Council services or issues to identify ways the Council can improve or develop new policy to meet the needs of local people. From May 2008, the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and Panels have been restructured and the Panels renamed to reflect the Local Area Agreement strategic themes.

Scrutiny's work falls into four broad areas:

- ⇒ **Call-in:** If three (non-executive) councillors feel that a decision made by the Cabinet is inappropriate they can 'call the decision in' after it has been made to prevent the decision taking immediate effect. They can then interview the Cabinet Member or Council Officers and make recommendations to the decision-maker suggesting improvements.
- ⇒ **Policy Reviews:** The panels carry out detailed, evidence-based assessments of Council services or issues that affect the lives of local people. At the end of the review the panels issue a report setting out their findings and recommendations for improvement and present it to Cabinet and other partner agencies. During the reviews, panels will gather information, evidence and opinions from Council officers, external bodies and organisations and members of the public to help them understand the key issues relating to the review topic.
- ⇒ **One-Off Reviews:** Panels often want to have a quick, one-off review of a topic and will ask Council officers to come and speak to them about a particular service or issue before making recommendations to the Cabinet.
- ⇒ **Scrutiny of Council Documents:** Panels also examine key Council documents, such as the budget, the Business Plan and the Best Value Performance Plan.

Scrutiny panels need the help of local people, partners and community groups to make sure that Merton delivers effective services. If you think there is something that scrutiny should look at, or have views on current reviews being carried out by scrutiny, let us know.

For more information, please contact the Scrutiny Team on 020 8545 3864 or by e-mail on scrutiny@merton.gov.uk. Alternatively, visit www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny

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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.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

17 MARCH 2021

(7.15 pm - 9.15 pm)

PRESENT: Councillor Peter Southgate (in the Chair),
Councillor Peter McCabe, Councillor Ben Butler,
Councillor Brenda Fraser, Councillor Edward Gretton,
Councillor Paul Kohler, Councillor Nick McLean,
Councillor Aidan Mundy, Councillor Geraldine Stanford,
Mansoor Ahmad, Councillor Billy Christie and Roz Cordner

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors

Zoe Gallen, Cathryn James (Interim Assistant Director, Public Protection) and Kelly Marshall (Strategic Development Lead, Safer Merton)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

No apologies 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 as a true and accurate record.

4 BCU COMMANDER - CRIME AND POLICING IN MERTON (Agenda Item 4)

The Chair welcomed Liz Chapple, Borough Commander, to the meeting of the Commission.

The Borough Commander wished to acknowledge what an incredibly difficult week to ten days it's been. The events on Clapham Common are subject now to an HMIC review, that's welcomed by all parties, so please understand that I cannot answer any direct questions on the police handling of that particular incident.

In response we obviously have come together as a as a policing team now to make a very renewed effort on firstly re-establishing trust and confidence in our police officers in the area but also to look at revisiting what we're doing on the topics of violence against women and girls and seeing if there's any more we can do.

Looking ahead, our areas of focus include;

- Looking at those intervening periods between previous lockdown periods where violence occurred and putting our police officers and staff into targeted positions to try and prevent and mitigate any return of violence in those areas.
- As lockdown eases we are looking at our green spaces and making sure that we don't have a heavy amount of anti-social behaviour as it's those types of crimes that we know affect people very deeply in their communities
- Overall we want to increase our neighbourhood visibility and be out in the community

With regards to the crime figures for Merton, as you'll see under the offences percentage there has been a reduction in most of the major crime types. The areas where there hasn't been a reduction include anti-social behaviour, bicycle theft and domestic abuse.

In response to Commission Member questions, the Borough Commander provided further information;

Our officers receive a lot of continued professional development on vulnerable adults. Adults with mental health issues is the most prevalent issue that we come across on the streets at the moment. If officers do deal with an incident that involves a vulnerable adult, they will go back to the station or use their device to fill in an additional form that records the safeguarding concerns.

Following a Commission Member suggestion that providing search volume by demographic would be useful in future, the Borough Commander explained that the information available to help us understand the stop and searches at the moment is based on the ten year old census data. As you'll be aware there are new census packs out at the moment and so we hope that's going to give us more insight as it is what we can do.

There are five key areas that we are measuring ourselves on;

1. Having engaged and healthy people so they're well equipped to provide a service to the public
2. Increasing public confidence
3. Increasing victim satisfaction and we're doing some very good work to
4. Preventing and reducing violent crime
5. Improving our detection rates

There have been an extremely small number of dog thefts recorded (single figures) for our area for the year. It is a very emotive subject and has been reported and included in the national press but we're confident that it's not a significant issue in our area.

The Borough Commander agreed to provide written answers to questions received from the Commission prior to the meeting.

With regards to designing out crime it is very much a partnership effort because a number of the issues are within the remit of the council, such as additional lighting.

We do have specialist designing out crime officers who are working on a number of different projects and this is absolutely going to become an additional focus.

The Chair thanked the Borough Commander for her time tonight.

5 SAFER MERTON UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

The Assistant Director for Public Protection, along with the Domestic Violence Lead and Safer Merton Strategic Development Lead provided a presentation covering domestic violence and anti-social behaviour

I

n response to Commission Member questions, the team clarified;

Following a discussion on Domestic Violence support information being added to supermarket receipts and posters in testing centres, a Commission Member suggested including leaflets in home testing kits, which Officers agreed to look into.

Merton signed up to the Safe Spaces initiative/UK says no more. In the early days of lockdown, it started with a small number of Boots pharmacies agreeing to use their consulting rooms as a safe space if someone walks in and they need to call the police, a friend etc. because they're in danger. That Safe Spaces project has now blossomed with nearly all of the Boots pharmacies across the whole of the UK signed up.

The UK says no more website enables you to look up all the national businesses (including Morrison's and Boots) that have signed up to the Safe Spaces initiative.

We are looking at getting Domestic Violence information into churches and schools.

With regards to Anti-Social Behaviour, we have now set up a number of area-based action plans for ASB issues. We have plans for Mitcham and Wimbledon and one is currently being developed for Morden.

The Chair thanked the officers for their presentation and attendance.

6 PLANNING THE COMMISSION'S WORK PROGRAMME 21/22 (Agenda Item 6)

The Chair invited suggestions to be put forward for the Topic Workshops in June to inform the scrutiny work programmes.

Suggestions included:

- Designing out crime
- Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy update
- Demographic profile of councillors and senior council managers

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Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date:

Wards: All

Subject: Universal Credit Update

Lead officer: Caroline Holland

Lead member: Councillor Tobin Byers

Contact officer: David Keppler

Recommendations:

1. For Overview and Scrutiny Commission to note the contents of the report and advise of any further information required
 2. For Overview and Scrutiny Commission to consider for its next update to invite one of the Job Centre Managers to the meeting for a verbal update/presentation.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. To provide Overview and Scrutiny Panel an update on Universal Credit in Merton.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. The implementation of Universal Credit was always planned to be a phased and controlled roll out that only affected new claims to the benefits that were replaced by Universal Credit. The initial phase was for single claimants only, then families and households and then at a later stage the transfer of all other claimants that had not transitioned to Universal Credit.
- 2.2. Universal Credit is only for working age claimants and pensioners are not affected by the change.
- 2.3. Universal Credit has to be claimed on line and every claimant requires an on line account.
- 2.4. Initially Universal Credit was to be paid direct to the claimant including the rent element of Universal Credit. Early pilots saw increase in rent arrears and alternative measures were put in place so that the rent element could be paid direct to the landlord.
- 2.5. Universal Credit was implemented across Merton for single claimants only in January 2016. These claimants had no rent liability and were classified as the simplest types of claims to move on to Universal Credit.
- 2.6. By the summer of 2018 all new claims in Merton of working age claimants would have to be for Universal Credit rather than Housing Benefit. There are two exceptions to this rule, claimants in temporary accommodation and in supported accommodation still claim Housing Benefit.
- 2.7. Housing benefit live case numbers have reduced since Universal Credit was introduced –

January 15 – 13,136
January 16 – 12,682
January 17 – 11,633
January 18 – 11,078
January 19 – 9,463
January 20 – 8,181
January 21 – 7,278

- 2.8. Universal Credit is re-assessed every month for claimants and their entitlement will vary depending on their income and circumstances.
- 2.9. Universal Credit is administered by the Department of Work and Pensions via Job Centres. The Manager at Mitcham Job Centre has provided the latest figures for Universal Credit claimants in Merton as at November 2020. See appendix A.
- 2.10. These figures show numbers for residents within Mitcham and Morden and Wimbledon and show the increases in the past year and past five years. It also shows Merton's figures compared to London and Great Britain. It shows a breakdown for 18-24 year olds and all residents.
- 2.11. In Merton there was a 180% increase in claimants aged between 18–24 over the past year. Although the Manager advised that this increase was in fact from March 2020 to November 2020. This was lower than the London average of 204%, but for all claimants, the change in Merton was higher, 154% compared to 146%.
- 2.12. The Mitcham Job Centre Manager also provided a list of main developments. See appendix B
- 2.13. There is no indication yet as to the timeframe for the transfer of all remaining Housing Benefit claims that need to transfer to Universal Credit.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. None for the purpose of this report

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. None for the purpose of this report

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. None for the purpose of this report

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. None for the purpose of this report.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. None for the purpose of this report

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. None for the purpose of this report

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None for the purpose of this report

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. None for the purpose of this report

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

Appendix A – Claimant Claim numbers in Merton

Appendix B - Job Centre developments

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

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Constituency	Mitcham and Morden	18-24	All
Nov-20	Alternative Claimant Count	1,076	6,894
	Change on Year	648	3,984
	%Change on Year	151%	137%
	5 Year change	745	4,127
	%Change since 5 years ago	225%	149%
Constituency	Wimbledon	18-24	All
Nov-20	Alternative Claimant Count	481	3,179
	Change on Year	350	2,125
	%Change on Year	267%	202%
	5 Year change	363	2,090
	%Change since 5 years ago	308%	192%
Local authority	Merton	18-24	All
Nov-20	Alternative Claimant Count	1,557	10,076
	Change on Year	1,001	6,110
	%Change on Year	180%	154%
	5 Year change	1,111	6,221
	%Change since 5 years ago	249%	161%
Region	London	18-24	All
Nov-20	Alternative Claimant Count	80,136	504,815
	Change on Year	53,678	299,190
	%Change on Year	203%	146%
	5 Year change	55,326	293,396
	%Change since 5 years ago	223%	139%
Country	Great Britain	18-24	All
Nov-20	Alternative Claimant Count	478,289	2,599,455
	Change on Year	277,801	1,361,559
	%Change on Year	139%	110%

5 Year change

273,802

1,329,302

%Change since 5 years ago

134%

105%

Notes

Prior to April 2015, Universal Credit conditionality group was not available and thus the statistics do not include a small number of Universal Credit Searching for Work claimants before April 2015. Caution should be taken when comparing counts around this time, particularly at a regional or local level.

1. Figures show the number of people claiming unemployment related benefits modelled under Universal Credit conditionality. Statistics show those claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (including Credits Only), or Universal Credit Searching for Work (excluding those awaiting a Work Capability Assessment), or those 'additional' who would have been searching for work under Universal Credit had it rolled out. This comprises partners of Employment and Support Allowance or Income Support claimants, those claiming Housing Benefit or Child Tax Credit (but not earning more than the threshold, or disabled or with caring responsibilities).
2. Figures show claimant unemployment – this is not the same as unemployment as defined under International Labour Organisation and measured through the Labour Force Survey.
3. Figures are not seasonally adjusted.
4. Local Authorities are pre April 2019 boundary changes
5. Experimental official statistics – latest quarter released as provisional statistics and series subject to revision.
6. Coverage is Great Britain.
7. Statistical disclosure has been applied which guards against the identification of an individual claimant.

Appendix B

Job Centre main developments

1. Latest figures show unemployment in Merton(7.3%) lower than London average (8.2%)but higher than GB average(6.3%) for all age groups
2. Increase in last year are 154% increase to around 10K claims. 18-24 are 180% increase to 1550 claims.

But.the biggest increases are to be found in the more affluent Wimbledon constituency where all claims up 200% and 18-24 up by 267%
3. Traditionally the east of the borough containing Pollards Hill and other areas of social housing have been the focus of DWP activity but recent figures show the increases in our non traditional areas. Does align to our place based approach
4. We have recruited over 70 new work coaches in Merton-doubling the staffing resource. We have also established a dedicated New Claims team meaning work coaches are able to continue talking to and helping claimants rather than being reallocated to that role (important though it is)
5. To accommodate these staff and in line with current social distancing guidelines we have secured a new temporary Jobcentre site-The Grange, Central Road. This is expected to go live in June/July 2021. Until then the new staff will undertake learning and consolidation in a serviced office site in Wimbledon (digital interactions only) Face to face interaction will only recommence when Government guidelines allow and work coaches will have on going discretion to deliver their interventions in the most appropriate format for the claimant-whether face to face, digital or a combination of both
6. We have excellent working relationships with many LA departments and sit on a number of strategic groups including Merton Partnership Executive , Safer and Stronger Merton and the Merton IOM and GMap
7. We meet regularly with the Economic Development team as well as Leaving Care Teams, Welfare and Benefits, Housing and TFEA as well as close links to Towards Employment the council led employment programme and external partners such as Clarion and Moat housing and Pollards Hill Community Centre
8. Merton Chamber of Commerce are the Kickstart Gateway provider and we have several Kickstart successes with a Merton candidate starting with Diamond Riding School (for disabled riders) Merton Council looking to become a Kickstart Employer following the recent rule change regarding the number of placements.

9. We have 2 Youth Hub bids moving towards sign off. One is LA led bid based out of Sound Lounge premises near Morden tube and one led by South Thames College Group at their Mitcham/Merton campus
10. We have an innovative on line monthly DWP session led by me delivered in partnership with Merton Libraries-in its second month delivering on benefit/Jobcentre topics. (What do DWP offer? How to navigate your way around your UC account)
11. Specialist provision for the borough include programmes for: Lone Parents; Graduates; 18-24 year olds; First and Second Line IT; Ex offenders as well as national programmes Job Finding Support (JFS), Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS), Work and Health Programme (WHP) and we share vacancies and opportunities with LA, external partners and Towards Employment
12. New national programmes for the longer term unemployed and for the self-employed are due to start April and 'Autumn' respectively

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 28 April 2021

Subject: Demographic profile of councillors and senior officers update

Contact officer: Rosie Mckeever, Scrutiny Officer, 020 8545 4035

Recommendations:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission review the information below and take a decision on whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny of this issue and if so, how.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Appendix A provides tables setting out the demographic profile of the population of Merton, of councillors and of council staff and senior officers. The information has been updated, where possible, at the request of the Commission so that it may review the situation and decided whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny of the under-representation of certain demographic groups amongst councillors and senior managers.
- 1.2. However, this work is incomplete. See points 1.3 to 1.6.
- 1.3. HR can only provide a demographic profile of Council Managers but not Councillors.
- 1.4. HR input indicated that there is a large element of double handling here in terms of Committees, because all these issues are discussed at the JCC who receive regular reports.
- 1.5. Electoral Services Team undertook a survey of Councillors last year to provide the data but unfortunately, due to the tight turnaround between meetings and the pre-election period, they did not have time to conduct such a survey of Councillors this year.
- 1.6. Electoral Services have requested we review this subject again after the 2022 elections, as currently the only change from last year's Membership is that we have one less Councillor now due to the vacancy in St Helier ward.

2 DISCUSSION

- 2.1. The Commission is asked to discuss and decide whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny and, if so, how and when. In particular, the Commission may wish to follow up on the under-representation of young people and women amongst councillors and of black and minority ethnic communities amongst senior managers.
- 2.2. **Updates received from HR;**
- 2.3. HR report regularly back to the JCC on all matters relating to RACE. A specific concern of the JCC has been the under-representation of BAME communities amongst senior managers.
- 2.4. The following actions are underway.

- In the year 2020/21 39% of applicants for posts graded MGA and above were BAME, 43% of those shortlisted were BAME yet only 29% of those appointed were BAME. It should be noted that there were just 17 appointments and with such a small cohort variances of +/- one person can cause large percentage differences. It is a council requirement that all panel members and chairs who take part in the recruitment and selection process must have undergone the relevant recruitment and selection training; regularly refreshing their skills every 2 years. It is the responsibility of the 'chair' of the panel to check that all panel members have attended such training. In the case of member-level appointments (Director and Chief Executive posts) training is provided to all panel members. The recruitment and selection training has been reviewed and new on line modules have been bespoke for Merton use. The new modules will be available at the end of April and all recruiting managers and councillors will be asked to undertake this training.
- Managers will be required to refresh this training every 2 years.
- CMT have recently approved that all Senior appointments will have a BAME member on the final panel and within all final recruitment panels held within the Council we actively encourage and support diverse panels.
- A new annual Equalities in Employment report which will be produced at the end of April each year will look at more in-depth data across all protected characteristics. This information will be a public document once approved by CMT. The Equality Steering Group will work with HR to identify a suitable action plan for recommendation to CMT.
- The bi annual survey has just concluded and results available. The results are broken down by across the protected characteristics and analysis of these findings will be presented to CMT at the end of April and the Equality Steering Group in May and any actions identified will feed into the overall Equality action plan which will be regularly monitored by the Equality Steering Group and progress reported back to CMT on a regular basis
- Merton have successfully been accepted as part of the WRES pilot. The WRES focuses on the social care workforce but Merton will be following the WRES standards and applying them across the whole of the workforce.
- HR and Communications are working proactively with the Race Equality Network (REN) to identify, whether there is a requirement for a specific pulse survey on RACE and if agreed that one would be beneficial what questions should be asked.
- L&D have produced training pathways so staff and managers are able to identify the Core, Optional and Specialist training required for themselves/ their teams.
- HR continue to ensure that when appointing agencies for senior recruitment that we ask them to demonstrate their track record in

producing BAME candidates and the number of successful BAME appointments. This is a practice that will continue.

2.6 The following further actions are also being taken:

- The BAME profile amongst senior managers is still below that of the whole workforce. Therefore, actions are being taken to ensure we have good practices in place and that these are adhered to.
- Sample checks will be introduced to ensure all shortlisting and interview panel members have up-to-date recruitment and selection training. This check will be undertaken in all cases for appointments at MGC and above. This training will include awareness of unconscious bias in the recruitment process.
- In addition to actions being developed at departmental level, L&D have developed a training programmes to support diversity and cultural awareness programme including “Unconscious Bias”, Anti-Racism training and have recently engaged 10 pairs of mentors/mentees supporting a 6 months pilot programme of Mutual Mentoring with the aim to achieve a more cohesive workforce able to serve our communities better.
- Where external recruiters are used for senior appointments – they are instructed to conduct additional searches and through their channels encourage applications from BAME candidates.
- The Council will seek to introduce diversity in panel representation for senior appointments and this can be done by panel participation or introducing stakeholders’ panels.
- During 2019/20, the L&D worked with CMT to review its leadership development offer and delivered a four moduled programme of training. The module on Talent Management and Coaching has recently been extended to all managers in the business to support the proactive and inclusive development of all staff. will
- HR will continue to remind and encourage staff twice yearly to update their personal equality data on iTrent so that our monitoring can be 100% accurate.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The Commission can choose its preferred approach to any future scrutiny, subject to officer resources being available to support the work.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. Not applicable.

5 TIMETABLE

5.1. Not applicable.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. There are no property or resource implications at this time.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. None for the purposes of this report.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. The Commission is asked to discuss the report and decide whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny or to receive further information.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None for the purposes of this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None for the purpose of this report.

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

None

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. Appendix A – Updated demographic data available

12.2. Appendix B OSC January 2020 Demographic profile report.

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Appendix A – Demographic data (updated for OSC 2021)

Table 1 - Gender

	Merton Population	Council Staff	Council Managers	Merton councillors	National councillors
Male	49.4%	32.1%	52.9%	66%	63.3%
Female	50.6%	67.9%	47.1%	34%	35.7%
No data		0.0%			1%

Data Sources

Population – GLA population data for Merton, 2020

Staff – HR data for all Merton Council employees, March 2021

Managers – HR data for the top 5% earners in Merton Council workforce, March 2021

Merton councillors – data from iTrent HR/Payroll System

Table 2 - Age

	Merton Population	Council Staff	Council Managers	Merton councillors	National councillors
16-24	12.6%**	2.7%	NA	0%	0.6%
25-49	50.5%	47.0%	NA	38%	20.5%
50+	36.9%	50.3%	NA	59%	78.9%
No data		0.0%		3%	

Data Sources

As Table 1, except for:

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

** data relates to residents aged 15-24

Note – 11.7% of Merton councillor respondents were aged 70+

Table 3 - Ethnicity

	Merton Population	Merton councillors	National councillors
White	63.2%	69.2%	95.8%
Mixed/multiple	5.3%	5.1%	0.9%
Asian/Asian British	20.3%	12.8%	2.1%
Black/Black British	9.3%	7.7%	0.9%
Other ethnic group	1.9%	2.6%	0.3%
No data		2.6%	

Data Sources

Population – GLA population data for Merton, 2020

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

National councillors – Local Government Association national census of councillors, 2018

Table 4 – Summary of ethnicity data

	Merton Population	Council Staff	Council Managers	Merton councillors
White	63.2%	65.3%	87.8%	69.2%
BME	36.8%	34.7%	12.2%	28.2%
No data		(10.0%)	(14.9%)	2.6%

Data Sources

Population – GLA population data for Merton, 2020

Staff – HR data for all Merton Council employees, March 2021

Managers – HR data for the top 5% earners in Merton Council workforce, March 2021

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

Table 5 - Disability

	Merton Population	Council Staff	Council Managers	Merton councillors	National councillors
Disabled	12.6%	5.4%	4.6%	2.6%	16.1%
Not disabled		94.6%	95.4%	92.3%	
No data		(14.0%)	(24.1%)	5.1%	

Data Sources

Population – 2011 census data – long term health problem or disability

Staff – HR data for all Merton Council employees, March 2021

Managers – HR data for the top 5% earners in Merton Council workforce, March 2021

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

National councillors – Local Government Association national census of councillors, 2018

Table 6 - Religion

	Merton Population	Council Staff	Council Managers	Merton councillors
Buddhist	0.9%	0.8%	0.0%	0%
Christian	56.1%	59.1%	50.0%	41.0%
Hindu	6.1%	2.4%	0.0%	2.6%
Jewish	0.4%	0.2%	0.0%	0%
Muslim	8.1%	5.8%	2.0%	7.7%
Sikh	0.2%	0.8%	2.0%	0%
Other religion	0.4%	3.7%	4.0%	5.1%
No religion	20.6%	27.2%	42.0%	33.3%
No data		(39.6%)	(43.0%)	10.3%

Data Sources

Population – 2011 census data

Staff – HR data for all Merton Council employees - % for each category based on respondents only, 44.2% staff and 43% managers did not provide data (31 March 2021 data)

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

Table 7 - Sexual orientation

	Merton councillors	Council staff	Council managers	National councillors
Heterosexual/straight	79.5%	96.2%	89.5%	88.3%
Gay or lesbian	7.7%	1.8%	12.0%	4.2%
Bisexual	0	0.7%	0.0%	1.7%
Other	0	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%
Prefer not to say	12.8%	(32.5%)	(34.5%)	5.6%

Data Sources

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

National councillors – Local Government Association national census of councillors, 2018

Staff – HR data for all Merton Council employees - % for each category based on respondents only, 32.5% staff and 34.5% managers did not provide data (31 March 2021 data)

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Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 22 January 2020

Subject: Demographic profile of councillors and senior officers

Lead officer: Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services

Lead member: Councillor Laxmi Attawar, Cabinet Member for Women and Equalities

Contact officer: Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services Julia.regan@merton.gov.uk

Recommendations:

- A. That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission review the information on the demographic profile of councillors and senior council officers (see Appendix A); take a decision on whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny of this issue and if so, how.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Appendix A provides tables setting out the demographic profile of the population of Merton, of councillors and of council staff and senior officers . This information has been provided at the request of the Commission so that it may review the situation and decide whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny of the under-representation of certain demographic groups amongst councillors and senior managers.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1. As part of the topic suggestion campaign earlier this year, the Muslim Women of Merton suggested that the Commission should review the council's approach to involving Muslim women in local democracy. The Muslim Women of Merton (MWM) would like the council to commit to reviewing the representation of Muslim women in local politics and senior leadership across council life following the lines of enquiry that MWM have suggested below:
- 1) How many female, Muslim council employees at team leader/manager grade are there at present and how has this fluctuated over the past 10 years? Is this figure representative of the local population?
 - 2) Will the council commit to collecting ethnicity and faith data of their councillors on an ongoing basis in future?
 - 3) How does the council currently measure engagement with the Muslim community and is it regarded to be adequate?
 - 4) How might the council improve engagement and consultation with the Muslim community on the above issues and how could Muslim organisations assist this process?
- 2.2. In discussing this suggestion at the topic workshop in June, members noted the advice from the council's Equalities and Community Cohesion Officer

that the lack of diversity in local politics and senior leadership at the council also affects the wider BAME community and other protected characteristics.

- 2.3. The Commission, at its meeting on 4 July 2019, therefore agreed to receive a report setting out the demographic profile of councillors, council employees and senior management. The intention was to compare this data with data on the local population and to consider what steps it wished to take in relation to any under-representation, for example recommendations to Cabinet, further report, task group review.
- 2.4. Subsequently, at a meeting of Council on 10 July 2019, the Cabinet Member for Women and Equalities, in response to a question, undertook to collect data on councillors so that she could assess the extent to which councillors are representative of the local population. A questionnaire was then laid round at a meeting of Council on 18 September and then emailed to all councillors to provide further opportunities to complete the form.

3 DATA ANALYSIS

- 3.1. The tables in Appendix A set out the proportion of local residents, staff, managers and councillors grouped by gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion and sexual orientation. The data sources are listed below each of the tables.
- 3.2. The Commission is asked to note that the data sources differ in methodology and content, therefore providing at best an indication of the differences between the demographic of the resident population, council staff and managers, and councillors. In particular, the council's workforce is drawn from a wide geographical area including and beyond Merton itself. The provision of data by staff, other than age, is optional.
- 3.3. The Commission is also asked to note that the councillor data is based on questionnaire responses from just 39 of the 60 councillors. It may wish to recommend that this data is collected in a more systematic way in future, perhaps as part of the induction process following council elections.
- 3.4. Gender
- 3.5. Table 1 shows that women are over-represented in the council workforce as a whole but under-represented amongst senior managers (defined as the top 5% earners). 63% of councillors are men, both in Merton and nationally.
- 3.6. Age
- 3.7. Table 2 shows that staff and councillors are older than the local population - 50% of staff are aged 50+, as are 59% of councillors, compared to 36% of the local population. Note that the local population figures will include people in full time education, unemployed and retired so comparisons should be drawn with caution.
- 3.8. Ethnicity
- 3.9. Tables 3 and 4 show that the proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic staff is slightly lower than the local population (33% compared to 37%) but substantially lower amongst managers (11%). The sample size of 39 councillors is small so the results should be treated with caution – Merton

has 28% BME councillors compared to 37% of the local population and 4% councillors nationally.

3.10. Disability

3.11. Table 5 shows that the proportion of staff, managers and councillors declaring that they have a long term health problem or disability is lower than that found in the local population. Again the councillor data should be treated with caution due to the small number of respondents. Note also the inclusion of unemployed and retired people in local population figures.

3.12. Religion

3.13. Table 6 sets out the proportion of councillors, council staff and managers from each faith category compared to the local population. The data should be treated with caution due to the relatively high levels of missing data (data provision was optional) which may skew the results.

3.14. Sexual orientation

3.15. Table 7 sets out the declared sexual orientation of Merton councillors compared to councillors nationally. The Merton councillor data should be treated with caution due to the small number of respondents. Data for staff and managers is also shown and should be treated with caution due to potential bias caused by low response rates (data provision was optional).

4 DISCUSSION

4.1. The Commission is asked to discuss the information and decide whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny and, if so, how. In particular, the Commission may wish to follow up on the under-representation of young people and women amongst councillors and of black and minority ethnic communities amongst senior managers.

4.2. The Commission is asked to note that the selection of candidates to stand as prospective councillors is largely made by the political parties and that the council does not have a role in this. The council may undertake advertising and/or information events to bring the role of councillor to the attention of underrepresented sections within the community.

4.3. The Commission is also asked to note that following a December 2018 meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee With Ethnic Minority organisations where the under-representation of BAME communities amongst senior managers was discussed, there have been the following improvements:

- There has been an improvement on posts graded MGC and above for the year 2018/19. The data covers 11 vacancies for which there were 46 applications. 44% of applicants were BAME, 40% of those shortlisted were BAME and 33% of those appointed were BAME. It should be noted that there were just 8 appointments and with such a small cohort variances of +/- one person can cause large percentage differences.
- It is a council requirement that all panel members and chairs who take part in the recruitment and selection process must have undergone the relevant recruitment and selection training; regularly refreshing their skills

every 2 years. It is the responsibility of the 'chair' of the panel to check that all panel members have attended such training. In the case of member-level appointments (Director and Chief Executive posts) training is provided to all panel members.

- We are currently in the process of designing and procuring a new on line recruitment and selection course which we will ensure addresses how to avoid unconscious bias in the recruitment process. Managers will be required to refresh this training every 2 years.
- At a recent Head of level post within Childrens, Schools and Families the Director found that the black candidate that went through the long listing and short listing stage was not appointable. When providing feedback to the candidate the Director offered the candidate mentoring from her to enable the candidate to be able to progress to a higher level post at some future stage.
- HR are currently exploring with the Corporate Management Team the viability of producing career pathways for existing staff so that they can clearly see what they would need to do and be able to demonstrate in order to progress, along with any training and support that would be available to them. This is a big piece of work which would require appropriate resource.
- HR continue to ensure that when appointing agencies for senior recruitment that we ask them to demonstrate their track record in producing BAME candidates and the number of successful BAME appointments. This is a practice that will continue.

4.4. The following further actions are also being taken:

- The BAME profile amongst senior managers is still below that of the whole workforce. Therefore, actions are being taken to ensure we have good practices in place and that these are adhered to.
- Sample checks will be introduced to ensure all shortlisting and interview panel members have up-to-date recruitment and selection training. This check will be undertaken in all cases for appointments at MGC and above. This training will include awareness of unconscious bias in the recruitment process.
- The Workforce Strategy includes actions to run a diversity and cultural awareness programme including training, with the aim to achieve a more cohesive workforce able to serve our communities better. A training programme is being developed by Human Resources, in addition to actions being developed at departmental level.
- Where external recruiters are used for senior appointments – they are instructed to conduct additional searches and through their channels encourage applications from BAME candidates.
- The Council will seek to introduce diversity in panel representation for senior appointments and this can be done by panel participation or introducing stakeholders' panels.

- The Council is currently reviewing its leadership development offer and will explore adopting cultural competency as an element within the programme.
- HR will continue to remind and encourage staff twice yearly to update their personal equality data on the online system iTrent so that our monitoring can be 100% accurate.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The Commission can choose its preferred approach to any future scrutiny, subject to officer resources being available to support the work.

6 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

6.1. Not applicable.

7 TIMETABLE

7.1. Not applicable.

8 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

8.1. There are no property or resource implications at this time.

9 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None for the purposes of this report.

10 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

10.1. The data and commentary in this report highlight questions about whether there is an under-representation of certain demographic groups amongst councillors and senior council managers. In particular there appears to be an under-representation of young people and women amongst councillors and of black and minority ethnic communities amongst senior managers.

10.2. The work that has been carried out already by the council and planned further steps outlined in paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 will assist in addressing the under-representation of black and ethnic communities in the council workforce at senior level.

10.3. The Commission is asked to discuss the report and decide whether it wishes to undertake further scrutiny or to receive further information about the issues raised.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

11.1. None for the purposes of this report.

12 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None for the purpose of this report.

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

Appendix A – demographic data

14 BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1. None

Appendix A – Demographic data

Table 1 - Gender

	Merton Population	Council Staff	Council Managers	Merton councillors	National councillors
Male	49.3%	32.5%	52.9%	63%	63.3%
Female	50.7%	67.5%	47.1%	37%	35.7%
No data					1%

Data Sources

Population – GLA population data for Merton, 2019

Staff – HR data for all Merton Council employees, September 2019

Managers – HR data for the top 5% earners in Merton Council workforce, September 2019

Merton councillors - data taken from all 60 councillors on council website

National councillors – Local Government Association national census of councillors, 2018

Table 2 - Age

	Merton Population	Council Staff	Council Managers	Merton councillors	National councillors
16-24	12.3%**	3.5%	NA	0%	0.6%
25-49	51.5%	46.2%	NA	38%	20.5%
50+	36.2%	50.3%	NA	59%	78.9%
No data				3%	

Data Sources

As Table 1, except for:

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

** data relates to residents aged 15-24

Note – 11.7% of Merton councillor respondents were aged 70+

Table 3 - Ethnicity

	Merton Population	Merton councillors	National councillors
White	63.2%	69.2%	95.8%
Mixed/multiple	5.3%	5.1%	0.9%
Asian/Asian British	20.2%	12.8%	2.1%
Black/Black British	9.4%	7.7%	0.9%
Other ethnic group	1.9%	2.6%	0.3%
No data		2.6%	

Data Sources

Population – GLA population data for Merton, 2019

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

National councillors – Local Government Association national census of councillors, 2018

Table 4 – Summary of ethnicity data

	Merton Population	Council Staff	Council Managers	Merton councillors
White	63.2%	55.4%	70.9%	69.2%
BME	36.8%	33.1%	11.4%	28.2%
No data		11.5%	17.7%	2.6%

Data Sources

Population – GLA population data for Merton, 2019

Staff – HR data for all Merton Council employees, September 2019

Managers – HR data for the top 5% earners in Merton Council workforce, September 2019

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

Table 5 - Disability

	Merton Population	Council Staff	Council Managers	Merton councillors	National councillors
Disabled	12.6%	5.3%	4.6%	2.6%	16.1%
Not disabled				92.3%	
No data		15.0%	25.3%	5.1%	

Data Sources

Population – 2011 census data – long term health problem or disability, all ages

Staff – HR data for all Merton Council employees, September 2019

Managers – HR data for the top 5% earners in Merton Council workforce, September 2019

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

National councillors – Local Government Association national census of councillors, 2018

Table 6 - Religion

	Merton Population	Council Staff	Council managers	Merton councillors
Buddhist	0.9%	3.3%	0%	0%
Christian	56.1%	58.6%	55.6%	41.0%
Hindu	6.1%	2.6%	2.2%	2.6%
Jewish	0.4%	0.2%	0%	0%
Muslim	8.1%	6.3%	2.2%	7.7%
Sikh	0.2%	0.8%	2.2%	0%
Other religion	0.4%	3.3%	2.2%	5.1%
No religion	20.6%	33.3%	35.6%	33.3%
No data		44.2%	47.0%	10.3%

Data Sources

Population – 2011 census data

Staff – HR data for all Merton Council employees - % for each category based on respondents only, 44.2% staff and 47% managers did not provide data

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

Table 7 - Sexual orientation

	Merton councillors	National councillors	Council staff	Council managers
Heterosexual/straight	79.5%	88.3%	96.4%	88.0%
Gay or lesbian	7.7%	4.2%	2.1%	12.0%
Bisexual	0	1.7%	0.6%	0%
Other	0	0.2%	0.2%	0%
Prefer not to say	12.8%	5.6%	36.3%	41.1%

Data Sources

Merton councillors - data provided by 39 councillors via questionnaire

National councillors – Local Government Association national census of councillors, 2018

Staff – HR data for all Merton Council employees - % for each category based on respondents only, 36.3% staff and 41.1% managers did not provide data

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 28 April 2021

Subject: Analysis of the Annual Member Scrutiny Survey 2021

Lead officer: Rosie Mckeever, Scrutiny Officer

Lead member: Councillor Peter Southgate, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Contact officer: Rosie Mckeever; Scrutiny Officer, 020 8545 4035

Recommendations:

- A. That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission considers the findings arising from the 2021 Member Survey.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to consider the findings from the 2021 Member Survey.

2 DETAILS

Each year the scrutiny team carries out a survey to collect the views of Merton councillors and co-opted scrutiny members about how scrutiny is working - where things work well, where things do not work quite so well, and how they can be improved. The survey also evaluates the effectiveness of the scrutiny function as a whole and with the different work streams that make up overview and scrutiny.

Key findings

Overall, the results from this year's survey are positive:

Overall effectiveness: Regarding the overall effectiveness of scrutiny, 64% of respondents rated scrutiny as completely or somewhat effective. The result of 64% was the same for scrutiny's overall impact on the pandemic response.

Task groups: Task group work was once again rated the most effective element of scrutiny with 80% rating it as completely or somewhat effective. This was closely followed by performance monitoring with 76%.

Scrutiny team: Satisfaction with the team remained positive with respondents giving the team a satisfaction rating of 100%. In total, 60% of respondents rated the support provided as excellent, with the further 40% rating the team as good.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Whilst there is no statutory requirement to undertake an annual member survey, the findings enable members' satisfaction with the scrutiny process at Merton to be measured against previous years and to develop actions to improve the scrutiny process year on year

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

The member survey is conducted for a minimum of three weeks each year.

5 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

None for the purposes of this report.

6 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

There are none specific to this report.

7 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

It is a fundamental aim of the scrutiny process to ensure that there is full and equal access to the democratic process through public involvement and engaging with local partners in scrutiny reviews. Furthermore, the outcomes of reviews are intended to benefit all sections of the local community.

8 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

The Police and Justice Act 2006 requires every Council to have a scrutiny committee with the power to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken by the Council and the other responsible authorities in the exercise of their crime and disorder functions. The other responsible authorities are the police, the police authority (Metropolitan Police Authority), the fire and rescue authority and the NHS (Merton Clinical Commissioning Group and local NHS Trusts).

In Merton the responsible committee is the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

Under the 2006 Act, the responsible committee is required to “meet to review or scrutinise decisions made, or action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions, no less than once every twelve months”. In doing so, it may require the attendance of officers from the Council, the police and co-operating authorities.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None relating to this report

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

10.1. Appendix 1: Member Survey 2021 – analysis and findings

10.2. Appendix 2: Verbatim comments from Members

Member Survey 2021

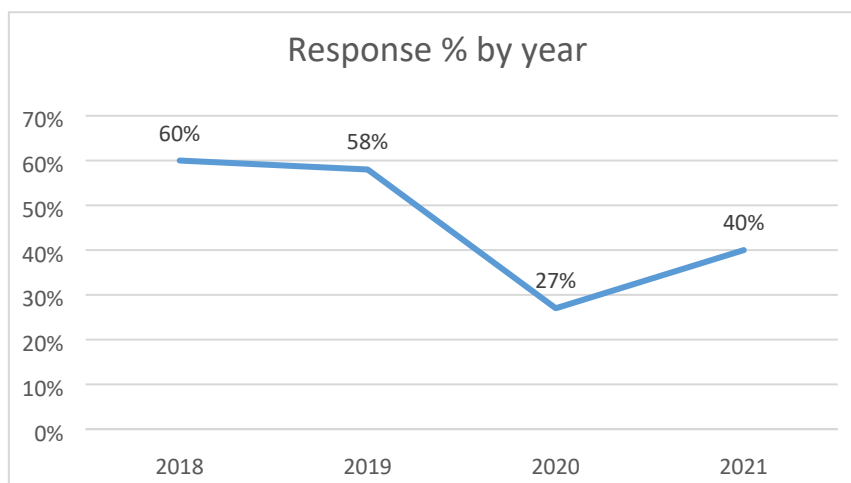
Survey respondents

The 2021 member survey was sent out to sixty councillors and two co-opted members giving a survey cohort totalling 62 members.

Response rate

The survey was completed by 24 councillors and 1 co-opted member, giving an overall response rate of 40%. The response rate continues to fluctuate yearly.

Diagram 1: Member survey response rate



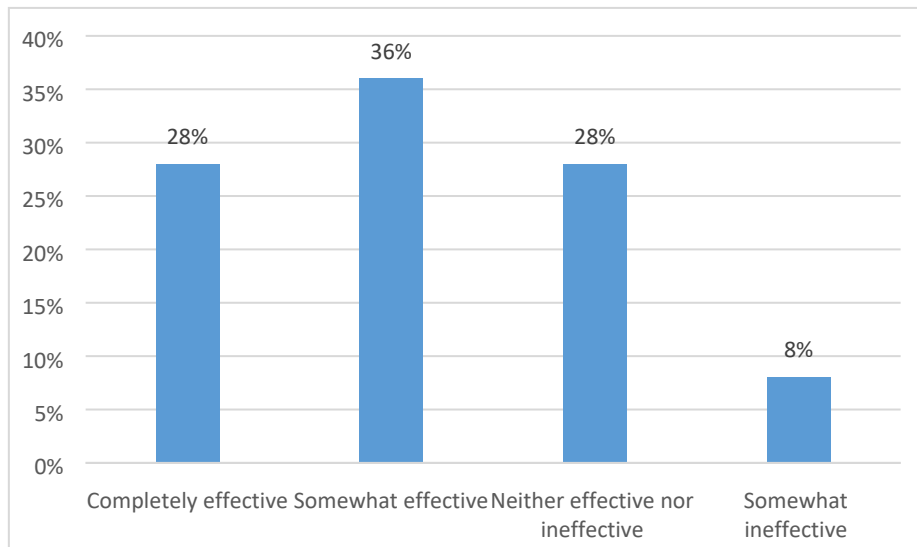
The majority of this year's respondents have been actively involved in the scrutiny process over the past year:

- 48% of respondents are a member of the scrutiny commission or panels
- 36% are other non-executive members'
- 46% have attended a scrutiny meeting as a visiting member to observe/make a contribution

Effectiveness of the scrutiny function

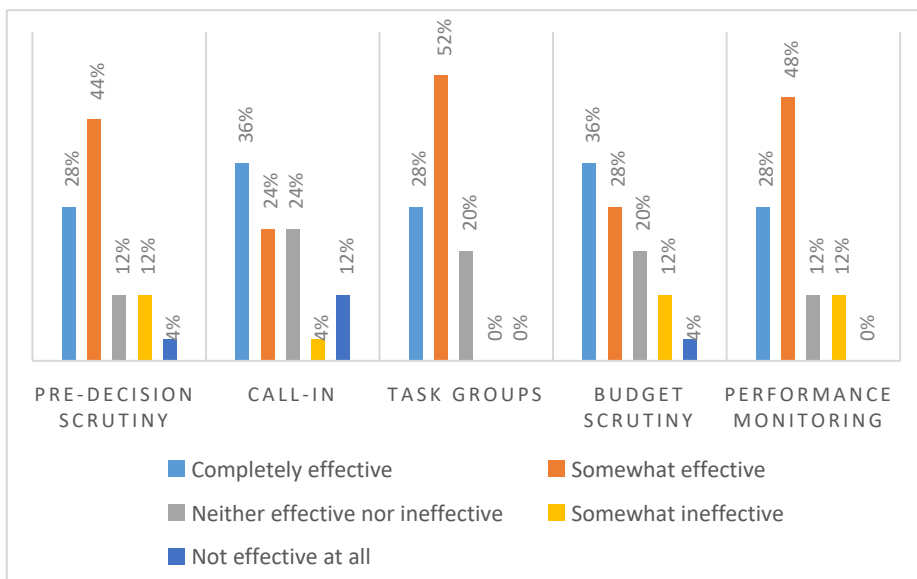
The survey asked respondents to consider the overall effectiveness of scrutiny. A comparison with last year shows that the proportion of respondents who consider scrutiny to be effective overall has remained the same at 64%.

Diagram 2: The overall effectiveness of scrutiny



There has been a decline in those rating scrutiny as completely ineffective which is now at 0%.

Diagram 3: The effectiveness of the different aspects of scrutiny in 2020/21



Pre-decision scrutiny 72% rated the effectiveness of pre-decision scrutiny as completely or somewhat effective in 2020/21.

Call-ins

Call-in continues to be an area with the lowest rates of satisfaction. It is the most political element of scrutiny and does not usually result in a request to Cabinet to review its decision. There were three call-ins in the last municipal year.

Task groups

Task group work was once again rated the most effective element of scrutiny with 80% rating it as completely or somewhat effective. This indicates that members continue to find task groups a productive and effective way to contribute to policy development and have a tangible impact on decision making.

Budget scrutiny

The effectiveness of budget scrutiny continues its downward trend with 16% of respondents finding it somewhat ineffective or not effective at all. As with previous years, this may reflect the realities of tight budgets giving scrutiny little opportunity for influence.

Performance monitoring

The effectiveness of performance monitoring has increased slightly on last year at 76%. One member cited "*performance monitoring*" and the "*improved scrutiny of contractors*" as an example of where scrutiny has a demonstrable impact on decision making by Cabinet.

Development of the Commission/Panel Work Programmes

This year 76% of respondents agreed they have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Commission/Panel work programmes.

Scrutiny Agendas/Workload

Only 64% of respondents agreed that Commission/Panel agendas are the correct length. This requires further investigation as to how to improve this score.

- 28% of respondents indicated that there should be more meetings to accommodate all the items
- 36% suggested the Commission/Panels be more selective when setting agendas

The topic suggestion process and subsequent workshops to prioritise selection of agenda items are intended to help members to select those items that are of importance to the public, related to underperforming service areas or issues on which scrutiny can have an impact.

Scrutiny impact on decision making by the Cabinet

This year councillors feel decision-making by the Cabinet has been influenced to some extent by comments from the Commission and Panels; 44% (with 28% strongly) for the Commission and 52% (with 28% strongly) for the Panels.

As with previous years, there is a belief that scrutiny could be improved through greater sharing of scrutiny chairs across the four political groups.

“At the moment the chairs of the panels and the chair of the OSC is in the gift of the administration (or at best, the administration group). This does not make for effective scrutiny of administration decisions, and it means that in most instances only the pre-agreed/approved recommendations have a chance of passing”.

Better organisation

The survey provided a list of actions that could be taken to improve the organisation of scrutiny business and respondents were asked to tick all the items that they supported:

Diagram 4: In what ways do you think scrutiny business might be better organised?

Commission/Panels to be more selective when setting agendas	36%
More use of external experts to provide context and challenge	32%
Background policy guidance provided	32%
More meetings to accommodate all the items	28%
Guidance provided on possible questions to be asked at meetings	20%
Councillors supported to conduct their own individual reviews	20%
Cross-party pre-meetings to agree lines of questioning for some agenda items	8%

36% of respondents agreed that they would like the Panels to be more selective when setting agendas though it is clear some respondents felt holding more meetings would instead help to accommodate all the items.

There is also a wish from respondents for more thought to be given to lines of questioning on some agenda items in advance of meetings wither through guidance provided by scrutiny officers or questions being discussed at the previous meeting (as the Commission does for the Borough Commander).

Quality of evidence presented to overview and scrutiny

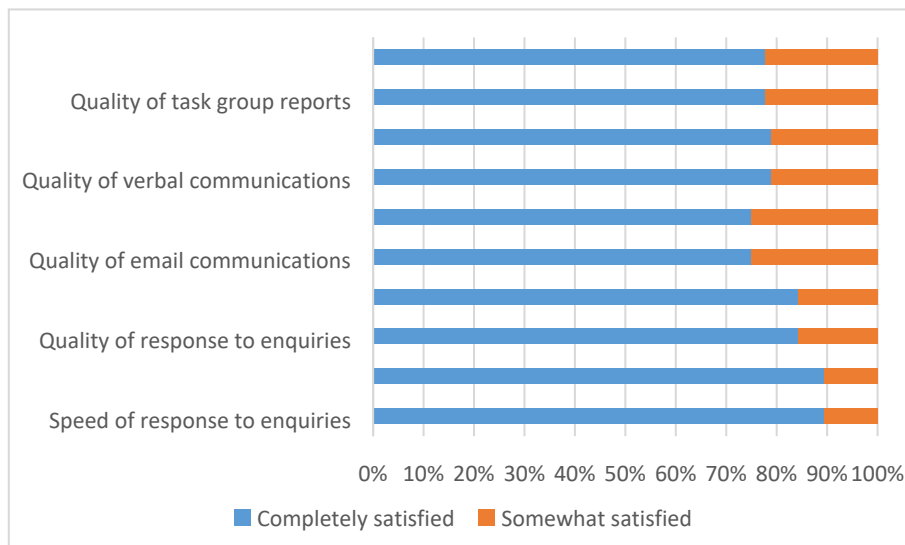
36% of respondents said that the evidence presented to overview and scrutiny has been good and meets the needs of the session. This seems rather low and it would be helpful to know if respondents had specific instances in mind and if they have any suggestions for how this could be improved.

“Reports need to improve; poorly presented, often late, lack suitable information, objectives and data”.

Support from the Scrutiny Team

Satisfaction levels remain high, with 60% rating the support provided by the scrutiny team as excellent and 40% as good. Members were also invited to rate their level of satisfaction with different aspects of the scrutiny team’s work:

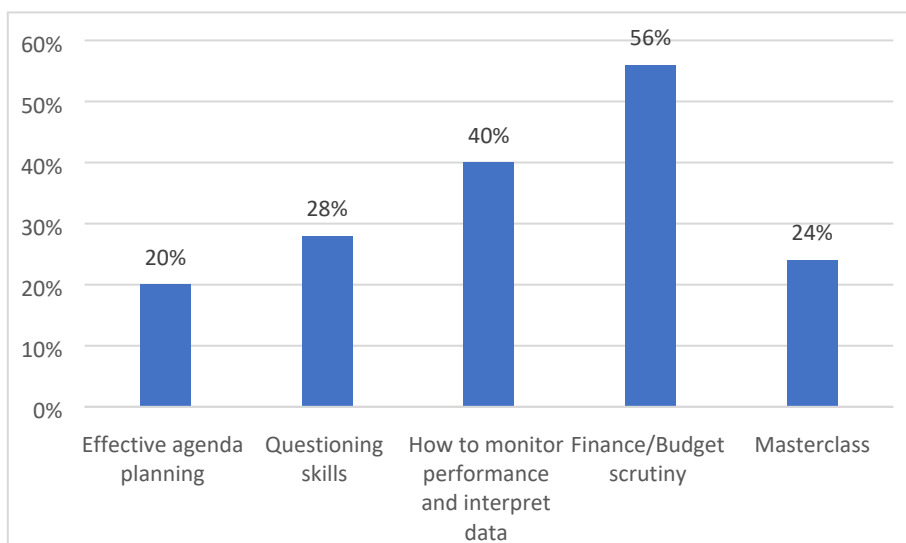
Diagram 5: Satisfaction with scrutiny team



Members’ training and development needs

The skills and knowledge, which members bring to the overview and scrutiny process, are crucial to its effectiveness, so the survey asked what scrutiny related training and development opportunities they would like to have provided in the coming year:

Diagram 6: Demand for Member training



One respondent suggested training from a Parliament select committee clerk may be useful.

Scrutiny's response to the pandemic?

When asked what best practice we could sustain from our pandemic experience and response, there was a general consensus that the option for virtual meetings should remain in place.

Respondents felt that the use of remote meetings has improved public involvement in scrutiny and *“the use of video technology and remote meetings enables attendance when people cannot be physically present in the Civic Centre”*.

A mixture of in-person and virtual meetings and tasks groups could lend itself to greater flexible working opportunities for Members and officers, as well as encourage wider participation from residents.

Verbatim comments from members

7. Please give examples of where the Commission and/or Panels have had a demonstrable impact (other than on Cabinet decision-making):

- Climate change debate
- Improved scrutiny of contractors
- I cannot think of a single example

9. In what ways do you think the Commission/Panel business might be better organised?

- At the moment the chairs of the panels and the chair of the OSC is in the gift of the administration (or at best, the administration group). This does not make for effective scrutiny of administration decisions, and it means that in most instances only the pre-agreed/approved recommendations have a chance of passing.
- Reports need to improve; poorly presented, often late, lack suitable information, objectives and data.

12: Please use this box to provide any comments on the support offered by the scrutiny team.

I would like to thank the scrutiny officers for helping us with our desire to ensure scrutiny still happens and for putting up with long meetings of SC and OSC.

12b: What best practice could we sustain from our pandemic experience and response?

- That Panels can meet remotely, rather than be cancelled (ostensibly the cancellation of the Panels was to preserve officer time, but I believe the panels could have been sensible about agendas)
- Remote meetings have facilitated, in certain cases, greater involvement from the public which could be sustained in the long-term with a mixture of meeting in-person and virtual meetings / task group meetings to enable wider participation.
- Virtual meetings must continue to be an option going forward.
- The use of video technology and remote meetings enables attendance when people cannot be physically present in the Civic Centre.

13: Please use this box for any further comments/suggestions you have about the overview and scrutiny function, including how it can be improved.

- It is quickly becoming overtly party political so people can impress on social media. I suggest you consider moving it to no longer being broadcast.
- The scrutiny function is completely ineffective, largely because of the lack of engagement and command of the issues by councillors. Cabinet completely disregards the scrutiny process and there seem to be no consequences other than bad unscrutinised policy being formed.
- The Chair of the OSC should rotate frequently.