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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

25 JANUARY 2023

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT: Councillor Edward Foley (in the Chair), Councillor Michael Brunt, Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina, Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, Councillor Paul Kohler, Councillor Nick McLean, Councillor Stuart Neaverson, Co-opted Members: Mansoor Ahmad, Becky Cruise, Dr Stannard and Roz Cordner

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Billy Christie, Peter McCabe, Eleanor Stringer, Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Brenda Fraser, Ross Garrod.

John Bosley (Assistant Director Public Space Contracts and Commissioning), Hannah Doody (Chief Executive), Roger Kershaw (Interim Executive Director of Finance and Digital), Paul McGarry (FutureMerton Manager), Jane McSherry (Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families), John Morgan (Executive Director, Adult Social Care, Integrated Care and Public Health) and Louise Round (Interim Executive Director of Innovation and Change)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from:

Cllr Gill Manly (with Cllr Edith Macauley as substitute)

Cllr Tony Reiss (with Cllr John Oliver as substitute)

Cllr Billy Hayes (with Cllr Martin Whelton as substitute)

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 with a few minor amendments.

Page 2 - Only a small number of employees are affected by the London Living Wage uplift, which will equate to an increase of around £16,000 on the Council's budget.

Page 3 - However the website is used for a multitude of different things and the emphasis now is on encouraging people to sign up to receive electronic communications.

4 BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLAN (Agenda Item 4)

The Chair invited Cllr Billy Christie, Cabinet member for Finance and Corporate Services to introduce the report.

Cllr Christie thanked the Chair for the opportunity to introduce the business plan updates from the October, December, and January Cabinet meetings.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services also thanked officers for their hard work and expressed his confidence and pride that the budget updates, growth proposals and the savings proposals are robust, reasonable and sustainable and that the Council has been able to put forward a balanced budget for the next two financial years.

The Chair invited feedback and questions on the October and December Cabinet reports that were included in the Members information pack.

Responses were given by Directors and Cabinet Members.

Closing Eastways Day Centre - We have had extensive discussions with the Alzheimer's society, they support the proposal and they are looking forward to working with us on the new proposal.

With regards to respite care for carers – We will look at an individual assessment for every single person that's affected and alongside that we will look at carers assessments. All will be looked at on an individual basis.

We are seeing an increase in double up care and our proposal is to review the people that are currently having double handed care to see if we can find means to make them more independent, using new types of equipment etc using money from the Better Care Fund.

The Chair invited comments on the January Cabinet additional savings included within the supplementary agenda.

Duke of Edinburgh award - This saving is not until the following year to give us time to do the consultation. Most London boroughs use the London Team to coordinate the Duke of Edinburgh Awards and it's likely to be a lower cost for the coordination from the London team, so we don't see that there being an additional cost to schools. We do currently organise some of the trips but there are other providers that can organise and deliver those trips, but schools could also provide those trips themselves. Part of the consultation and preparation for this saving is to work with schools to ensure that smooth transition.

The £2m cost of living fund is money that Merton Council has put aside specifically to support residents during the cost-of-living emergency.

We are not stopping road safety training for children. We are repurposing it to see if it can be done with an outside body. Road safety for children is important and the

proposition is to re-provision it and it will continue. We also have an idea for using our Public Health to provide that service so there is no stopping the service that's an absolute commitment.

We will not charge licensed coaches offering free training or charitable organisations to use public tennis courts.

Brightwell Centre – The Director of Children, Schools and Families explained that with regards to this saving the Council will work with our service users and our parent care forum to ensure that when we draw up the specification for the procurement of that service to be commissioned elsewhere, that we're really clear what is needed. That information will go in the specification to ensure that we get a comparable, if not better, service which is what we're hoping to do through this saving.

Members chose not to send a reference to send onto Cabinet.

5 SCRUTINY OF THE BUSINESS PLAN; COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS (Agenda Item 5)

There was only one reference for discussion from the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care explained that at the Healthier Communities Panel, we hadn't properly explained the position, more work was needed on the equality analysis, so the Cabinet Member undertook to go away and present the clarifications to the Commission.

The easiest way to provide the additional information requested was in the equality analysis which is part of the supplementary agenda.

We have a commitment to fund the £1.7million to voluntary sector over the next three years and £330k of that will be transferred to the public health budget. They will fund those specific projects around public health related themes.

The Adult Social Care budget has previously funded all the voluntary organisations. When the senior team in adult social care looked at this, they felt that so many of these grants were preventative and therefore entirely appropriate for funding from the public health budget. So, the money is coming from the public health budget to contribute to the preventative activities of the voluntary sector.

Examples of preventative activities are included in appendix one, all of which aim to support those in need, prevent, reduce, and delay the need for Health and Social care services, and which contribute to tackling health inequalities. Some of the organisations are:

- Wimbledon Guild providing one-to-one support for vulnerable isolated older people with limited connections in the community
- Age UK in Merton are providing advice and Living Well Services for older clients in Merton

- Merton Mencap are providing a Saturday hub for adults with a learning disability people with learning disabilities experience all sorts of exacerbated Health inequalities
- Common side Trust providing a drop-in Community Café, a range of activities for older and vulnerable residents living in Pollard's hill with a two-course hot meal Monday to Friday
- Merton Vision offering preventative activities including travel confidence

The Cabinet Member expressed that the voluntary sector is nimble, innovative and can make public money go further.

6 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MODEL (Agenda Item 6)

Kris Witherington, Consultation & Community Engagement Manager, gave an overview of the report that sets out proposals for changing our community engagement models in three key areas:

- face-to-face engagement
- relationship with our Civic Society groups
- digital offer for residents

The recommendation is to establish a wider team. Funding for these additional posts will be from part of an existing budget (internal review fund).

Forums could be chaired by an independent facilitator/host – maybe someone from the local press or minor radio personalities that we have in the area.

Representative sample - a broad cross-section of the population i.e., including young mums, students etc.

The proposals will give the Council the resources and tools it needs to be able to tailor consultations and methods of engagement depending on the subject matter.

7 IDENTIFY QUESTIONS FOR THE BOROUGH COMMANDER (Agenda Item 7)

Please can questions be sent to the Scrutiny officer by 17 February.

8 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)

The work programme was agreed.