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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

26 FEBRUARY 2024

(7.15 pm - 9.05 pm)

PRESENT: Councillor Edward Foley (in the Chair), Councillor Michael Brunt, Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina, Councillor Billy Hayes, Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, Councillor Paul Kohler, Councillor Nick McLean, Councillor Stuart Neaverson, Councillor John Oliver, Councillor Tony Reiss and Roz Cordner

ALSO PRESENT:

Zoe Gallen and Katy Saunders (Safer Merton Business Support)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from co-opted Members, Mansoor Ahmed and Oona Stannard, and Councillor Eleanor Stringer

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 a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

Matters arising:

It was proposed and seconded that Members organise a working group looking at realigning the scrutiny panels. There were 4 votes for, 6 against.

A Member queried the line 'The Leader committed to take away the feedback about the request for further information to be included on the capital programme items' – This line is to be clarified with the Leader.

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

The Chair invited Detective Chief Superintendent, Clair Kelland, to provide an overview of the crime figures and answers submitted.

Neighbourhood crime types across the borough of Merton have reduced over the past 12 months, including personal robbery and burglaries. Embedding 'Met insights' has seen significant success. This is an evidence-based approach to target prolific offenders.

In response to questions:

Cricket Green Ward Panel –Input from a younger demographic is needed.

The Borough Commander responded that it is a struggle to increase engagement with younger communities. We held a ‘New Met for London’ event that was just for young people, and we continue to target and engage with youth groups across the BCU. There is a disconnect in social media choices between the police and young people.

Merton Council is also looking at how we can broaden our reach in this area.

The Participation and Engagement officer suggested a joint working session with Schools Officers about what already exists.

TNO’s up – Shoplifting offences have increased. There is a slight spike in domestic abuse offences. Theft is up 21%. We are working with Neighbourhood Watch, carrying out bike marking, etc.

A Commission Member shared some of the results of a survey undertaken in Wimbledon Park ward, with 94 out of 105 women responding that street lighting is too dark, and they feel unsafe and vulnerable.

The women’s running club will feed back any intel on where in the borough feels safe/doesn’t.

The Borough Commander was thanked for her attendance.

5 SAFER MERTON - VAWG STRATEGY (Agenda Item 5)

The Chair invited the Community Safety Team Manager and Domestic Violence Lead to provide a summary of their VAWG report.

Since our last update to Commission Members, Merton has formed a partnership with six other south London boroughs to tackle domestic abuse perpetrators, having successfully secured funding for the project. The programme is designed to tackle domestic abuse across south London and on ensuring perpetrators stop their abusive behaviour. The programme also includes specialist support services for associated victims and survivors.

The departments focus for the next 12 months includes:

- Recruiting a VAWG Officer
- Promoting Bystander training and continuing work on White Ribbon accreditation
- Borough of Sport Women’s Running Club
- Reinvigorating Ask Angela and anti-spiking kits.
- Male Allyship campaign
- IDVA

In response to questions, the Head of Community Safety provided further information:

- The 17 spaces in the refuge units feature a mixture of single female, and mum and children occupancy etc. We are working with our partners to increase capacity.
- Annual delivery plan – this is the VAWG action plan which is monitored and updated by the VAWG Strategic Board.
- Monitoring effectiveness – DA IDVA service performance is fed back. i.e. 80% of service users felt safer.
- VAWG Strategy due to be reviewed this December and this will be shared with the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.
- Restorative justice – took advice from MOPAC and other 32 other boroughs, but in terms of Domestic Violence it is not possible.
- Para 3.1 and 3.2 – Broad strategy of 8pm lighting lower than p3. We are working with highways teams; some residents feel the LED is not as bright as it needs to be and we are looking at pockets in the borough that feel darker.
Action: Zoe Gallen to speak to team re; is this a Merton or national standard?

6 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 6)

The work programme was agreed.