



London Borough of Merton

Report and Recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Review on Cleaner Town Centres in Merton

Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel

March 2011

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Acknowledgements

The task group would like to thank all the officers and external witnesses who have taken the time to provide written and verbal information and discussed ideas with us. We are particularly grateful to all the people who stopped to answer questions on town center cleanliness in Mitcham.

All contributors are listed in Appendix 3 of this report.

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Foreword by the Review Chair

Every one of Merton's town centres and shopping parades acts as a focal point for its local community, whether that be for transport, shopping or entertainment. They are, therefore, also some of the most frequently visited areas in our borough. In the same sense, they are often also a common component of any trip to the borough by an outside visitor and therefore act as a 'shop window' for Merton. An untidy town centre or shopping parade can tell a visitor a lot about how the local community and council value and look after their neighbourhood.

The crucial role of our town centres and parades was the reason why the task group chose to focus on them. In the time that we have had to do this scrutiny review, we have been fascinated to learn how the council and businesses work together to make them function. As ever though, whilst a lot has been done, there is still more which could be done. Sometimes this will involve an entirely new activity. Other times it will involve delivering the same outcome only doing it in a more intelligent and effective way.

We have identified several key themes when seeking to put forward proposals which would improve our town centres, including both process improvement and greater partnership working, whether that is between council departments and employees or between the council and businesses, residents or other interested parties. We have also recognised that whilst the current economic climate is not favorable for large-scale regeneration, that should not stop us all working together to improve what we already have.

I would like to put on record my thanks to all of the different council officers, businesses, residents and organisations in Merton who have helped us in this review. They have willingly provided their thoughts and ideas on how we could improve the look and feel of these key areas of our community and I am very grateful to them.

I would also like to thank my task group colleagues. As well as four councillors we were also fortunate to have a member of the public join our group after a request for volunteers. Elspeth Clarke's vantage point as a user of our different town centres and a 'council outsider' has been invaluable and I thank her for the time that she has given up to assist us.

Finally, my thanks go to Hilary Gullen, Scrutiny Officer. Hilary has invested a significant amount of time and effort in the work of the task group and her support has been much appreciated by all of us.

Henry Nelles
Chairman, Cleaner Town Centres Task Group

Executive Summary

The task group was set up in order to undertake a review of how clean our town centres and shopping parades are, with a view to making them more inviting, encouraging shoppers to visit.

The report is evidence-based, drawing on a range of written and oral evidence. This includes enforcement statistics (appendix 5), contributions from our town centre manager (appendix 2) and street trading officer (appendix 6). Senior council officers, representatives of local businesses and members of the public also gave information to the task group members at meetings as detailed at appendix 3.

Thirty-five questionnaires were completed by local residents, showing their particular concerns regarding shopping areas in the borough. The results of this survey can be found at appendix 4.

The task group recognises the benefits that appealing town centres and shopping parades can bring to help local businesses thrive, and in making Merton a great place to live, work and learn.

The task group has made 25 recommendations aimed at improving our shopping areas, these fall into three main themes; raising public awareness and civic pride, how local businesses can contribute to making the shopping areas more welcoming and what the Council can do both strategically and practically.

The recommendations are listed in full overleaf.

List of Task Group Recommendations:

	Responsible Decision Making Body
Recommendation 1 (para 13)	
Education is required to alert the public to the nuisance of litter, the cost to the council and local residents of clearing it up and the penalties that can result	Cabinet
Recommendation 2 (para 14)	
We recommend that following the savings proposal to cut the full-time post to support education programmes in schools, consideration should be given to encouraging schools to run programmes themselves. This should include assessing how effective the lessons are and looking into the most effective format of teaching (i.e. drama groups, junior wardens etc).	Cabinet
Recommendation 3 (para 16)	
We recommend that use of the NI195 (Detritus Measure) is reviewed – chasing a further improvement in this measure has, it is felt, led to an unnecessary diversion of resources away from litter collection etc. Consideration should be given to what is a good score in this measure rather than necessarily seeking to be ‘best in class’. This will provide more resources for other more visible street cleansing issues.	Cabinet
Recommendation 4 (para 24)	
We recommend that Cabinet review the specification of vehicles such as the Mini Johnson, so that items that are rarely used are not routinely provided.	Cabinet
Recommendation 5 (para 27)	
Street cleansing waste needs to be collected when seen. Too often it is left in a green bag for days waiting to be collected and acts as a source for other rubbish and fly tipping	Cabinet

<p>Recommendation 6 (para 28)</p> <p>We recommend that more solo cleaners should be introduced in residential streets. This should be in conjunction with better promotion of who the 'local street sweeper' is. Businesses should also be provided with their street cleaner contact details so that they can contact them (where possible) whilst on their round. This will improve the community value of the street cleansing team. Matching the skills of the solo cleaners to the 'patch' would enable those with excellent interpersonal skills to improve communication between business owners and council officers.</p>	<p>Cabinet</p>
<p>Recommendation 7 (para 30)</p> <p>We recommend that more consideration needs to go into planning approval for the '90 degree' shop signs and uneven shop frontages as they cause street fronts to look untidy when in large numbers. This issue could be resolved via the enforcement function/Core Strategy and specific planning policies.</p>	<p>Cabinet</p>
<p>Recommendation 8 (Para 32)</p> <p>We recommend that work should be undertaken with the borough's larger retailers and Chamber of Commerce to see if training could be given to smaller retailers on shop window dressing. A pilot partnership scheme could be set up with the larger retailer working with small businesses from other parts of the borough (to avoid competition).</p>	<p>Cabinet</p>
<p>Recommendation 9 (para 33)</p> <p>There is a rather fragmented approach to interaction between the council and local businesses at present. If the council were seen to have clear responsibilities that were efficiently carried out, businesses could then be encouraged to take more pride in their area and become involved in local initiatives.</p>	<p>Cabinet</p>

Recommendation 10 (para 34)	
We recommend that consideration be given to a civic award for Best Shop Premises to be run at times of local/national celebration, where residents can vote for their favourite in each town centre. On consultation, business representatives felt that this would be better than an annual 'forced' competition in the first instance.	Cabinet
Recommendation 11 (para 36)	
We recommend that in future, (dependent on funding) the design and running of capital assistance grant schemes should be run working closely with the chamber of commerce and other small and local business groups.	Cabinet
Recommendation 12 (para 39)	
We recommend that when litter/recycling bins are ordered in the future, the design should have a much larger hole to allow pedestrians to place refuse fully in the bin.	Cabinet
Recommendation 13 (para 42)	
We recommend that as the current time between reporting a problem and its being acted on appears somewhat slow, an investigation should be carried out into the different communication systems in place and consideration given to the investment of technology which will allow street sweepers to quickly report issues. All members of the team need to be given the role of 'eyes and ears' of the council, doing more than just street sweeping but also reporting fly tips, pot holes, uncollected street cleansing waste etc. A link also needs to be established from when a report of waste, dirty streets etc is recorded to action being taken.	Cabinet
Recommendation 14 (para 45)	
We recommend that consideration should be given to putting in additional conditions in the commercial waste contracts stating when commercial waste should be collected, or instead promote the idea that shops in an area coordinate their commercial waste arrangements to minimise disruption on the footways.	Cabinet

Recommendation 15 (para 46)	
We recommend that better publicity of the success of enforcement of littering/fly-tipping should be encouraged via My Merton as we acknowledge that local media is unlikely to cover this. More publicity to residents on the number of fines issued and the amount of money collected should be conveyed to reiterate the point that littering is an offence.	Cabinet
Recommendation 16 (para 47)	
We recommend that enforcement of A-boards and Newspaper Stands should be increased – shops increasingly encroach the pavement with several A-boards and other stands selling fruit, newspapers etc outside their shop. Retailers need to be informed that it is not acceptable to let these encroach onto the pavement, especially where there are several outside of the same business.	Cabinet
Recommendation 17 (para 49)	
We recommend that, to assist with the problem of cigarette and chewing gum litter, all office premises and bars should be requested to attach a cigarette bin to their buildings and should inform their staff to use it. Particular areas, such as Hartfield Road, have a particular problem with this. The chewing gum boards on lampposts should be replaced with the attachable boxes for both gum and cigarette ends. Regard should be given to the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Act legislation and further education campaigns. Investigation is also needed to review special coatings for pavements to reduce chewing gum nuisance.	Cabinet
Recommendation 18 (para 51)	
We recommend that a better form of partnership needs to be established with commercial property agents so that they provide comprehensive information to new leaseholders on what is expected of them, contact numbers for assistance and details of their town centre manager etc.	Cabinet
Recommendation 19 (para 52)	
We recommend asking officers to review the system of checking staff performance.	Cabinet

Recommendation 20 (para 54)	
We recommend that consideration needs to be given to whether the current location of the market is the best place or whether other locations such as 'on-street' would be more successful.	Cabinet
Recommendation 21 (para 56)	
The electronic notice board needs to be repaired and moved as it cannot be seen at its current location.	Cabinet
Recommendation 22(para 65)	
We recommend that consideration should once again be given to the outsourcing of the town centre manager role. Outsourcing to a professional provider may yield dividends which are greater than the cash cost. The Town Centre Manager should be a more clearly defined co-ordination/hub role. A sense of teamwork needs to be fostered between the Town Centre Manager and the Street Cleansing Team and contact details for all parties should be shared.	Cabinet
Recommendation 23 (para 67)	
We recommend that residents should be asked if they want to get involved in improving their local town centre. Town centre residents groups could be set up with the support of the council and town centre manager.	Cabinet
Recommendation 24 (para 71)	
We recommend that town centre regeneration needs to set realistic short, medium and long-term objectives, which are more imaginative than massive capital investment.	Cabinet
Recommendation 25 (para 73)	
We recommend that a schematic diagram of all the different groups should be produced, showing the link from the decision- makers to the forums and, if necessary, rationalisation needs to happen.	Cabinet

Report of the Cleaner Town Centres Task Group

Introduction

Purpose:

1. At the Scrutiny Topic Selection Evening in June 2010, those members interested or involved in the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel discussed possible topics for review that had been suggested by members of the community, councillors and officers.
2. The Council's Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, at its meeting on 29th June 2010, agreed to establish a task group review on 'Cleaner Merton'. At this meeting the following members were appointed to the task group: Cllr Nelles, Cllr Saunders, Cllr Hanna and Cllr Sargeant. The Chair suggested that the task group would need to consider how to restrict its potential work to manageable proportions, and following discussion at the first task group meeting in July the remit was narrowed down to 'Cleaner Town Centres'. Cllr Nelles was unanimously elected Chair.
3. At the Panel meeting on 14th September, the terms of reference were agreed as follows:
 - a. To investigate factors affecting the level of cleanliness in town
 - b. centres and shop parades
 - c. To examine good practice in other boroughs
 - d. To make recommendations for improvement
4. Other questions identified were:

How the following factors affect the level of cleanliness:

 - a. Seasonal variation
 - b. Enforcement and legal powers
 - c. Resources available
 - d. Partnership working with local businesses for overall presentation of the retail areas
 - e. Guidance available for new shops and businesses
 - f. Positioning of waste bins to best encourage use
 - g. Disused retail premises
 - h. Whether a civic award scheme would encourage business support

5. *What the Task Group Did:*

- a. The Task Group has had six meetings (29th July, 23rd September, 27th October, 1st November, 23rd November and 17th February) at which a wide range of evidence was considered including:
 - b. Discussion of the review at community forum meetings – (please see appendix 1)
 - c. Discussion with local retailers and Chamber of Commerce representative
 - d. Verbal and written evidence from Town Centre Mangers
 - e. Statistics and verbal evidence from the Enforcement Officer
 - f. A visit to see street cleaning machinery in action in the borough
 - g. Verbal and written evidence from Waste Operations Officers
 - h. Questioning local people in Mitcham about their views on town centre cleanliness.
6. Task Group members attended all five community forums to introduce the review and ask for comments from residents. The Communications Team set up Twitter and Facebook items, coverage in the Local Guardian and an item in the February edition of My Merton on Scrutiny Task Groups in general. The task group were very pleased to have a member of the public involved in their work and welcomed Elspeth Clarke to the task group meetings.
7. As well as gathering feedback from Community Forums, task group members also spent time on Mitcham Fair Green on 19th November with a questionnaire seeking the views of local residents. Thirty five residents responded. Pigeon nuisance was mentioned by nine people as a concern. Other comments included the lack of enforcement around dog fouling, littering and environmental issues. The results of this survey can be found at appendix 4.
8. Members of the task group received evidence at the subsequent meetings from officers and external witnesses.
9. This report sets out the task group's findings, conclusions and recommendations. The task group's recommendations run throughout the report and are set out in full at the front of this document.

Background to the Review

10. At the first Panel meeting of the Municipal Year, Cllr Betteridge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Implementation, explained to the task group that cleaner streets generally were a priority for this administration.

11. Litter/dirt on the streets was listed in the annual residents' survey 2009 as being one of three factors of most concern by 27% of residents. This was an increase of 6% on the previous year. The street scene also emerged from this survey and similar ones as a key concern among local residents, in particular street cleaning. It was also acknowledged that cleaner town centres will help draw shoppers to them and boost local retail outlets.
12. Concern about litter was greatest in the east of the borough. A number of initiatives are underway including a LEAN review of street cleaning and waste collection, new arrangements for litter picking, investment in street sweeping machinery, a revised focus on enforcement, piloting the use of additional and different cleaning equipment, increasing capacity of response crews to deal with known hotspots and fly tips and increasing visibility by investing in new high-vis jackets and branding of cleaning fleet to raise awareness of activity.

What we currently do

13. Keeping Merton's town centres clean and tidy is a mammoth undertaking; it takes dedication and a considerable amount of hard work to maintain the high cleanliness standards we expect within the town centres. Members of the public are not always aware of the cost of clearing up litter or of the penalty fines that can be issued.
Education is required to alert the public to the nuisance of litter, the cost to the council and local residents of clearing it up and the penalties that can result. (Recommendation 1)
14. **We recommend that following the savings proposal to cut the full time post to support education programmes in schools, consideration should be given to encouraging schools to run programmes themselves. This should include assessing how effective the lessons are and looking into the most effective format of teaching (i.e. drama groups, junior wardens etc). (Recommendation 2)**
15. Standards of street cleanliness are presently maintained through programmed work determined by schedules that have developed over a long period of time. Although these are successful in many areas, as shown by the results of random inspection and National Performance indicators, they do not always fully resolve litter problems.
16. **We recommend that use of the NI195 (Detritus Measure) is reviewed – chasing a further improvement in this measure has, it is felt, led to an unnecessary diversion of resources away from litter collection etc. Consideration should be given to what is a good score in this measure rather than necessarily seeking to be 'best in class'. This will provide more resources for other more visible street cleansing issues. (Recommendation 3)**

17. Town centre areas are swept on a daily basis seven days a week between the hours of 06.00 and 14.00 by manual solo sweepers with the assistance of mechanical sweeping machines. In certain Zone 1 town centres (Mitcham, Wimbledon, Colliers Wood, Morden and Raynes Park) there are evening sweepers who continue to clean these town centres from 14.00 – 22.00 and a night time service between 20.00 and 04.00 between Wednesday and Sunday.
18. There are a total 19 solo sweepers deployed to the town centres and Zone 1 roads who use tools (brooms, boards and litter picks) and a barrow to sweep and collect litter in their town centre area. The litter is contained in bags, which are kept in double bin/wheeled barrows, and when full these bags are deposited into euro bins at selected sites and collected by a mobile team.
19. Additionally two mobile teams in caged vehicles are allocated between 20.00 and 04.00 as a night time service in the four main Town Centres and a Town Centre mobile team empties the street sweeping euro bins in the evenings between 14.00 and 22.00 and additionally empty street litterbins and collect fly tips.

Town Centre Mechanical Sweeping

20. Mechanical sweeping commences early in the morning to beat rush hour traffic in Town centres. This additional resource speeds up the cleansing process in the Town centres so the town centres are clean and tidy first thing in the morning.

Johnson Majors

21. The Johnson Major street sweeping/cleaning vehicles undertake channel and road cleaning in town centres and residential areas. Town centres are cleaned daily. These vehicles provide an enhanced service and support the manual staff in relation to health and safety and to ensure that the channels are kept free of litter and detritus build-up.

22. Pedestrian Operated sweepers

23. These vehicles are allocated to Wimbledon, Morden and Mitcham and are in addition to the manual sweeping that takes place daily; they sweep pavement areas only to enhance the service provided.

24. We recommend that Cabinet review the specification of vehicles such as the Mini Johnson, so that items that are rarely used are not routinely provided. (Recommendation 4)

25. Shop Front areas are swept on a daily basis seven days a week between the hours of 06.00 and 14.00 by mobile sweep teams.
26. Four shop front teams of two staff each with a caged vehicle are allocated to clean selected shop fronts daily, clearing litter, emptying litterbins on the shop fronts and collecting fly tips.
27. **Street cleansing waste needs to be collected when seen. Too often it is left in a green bag for days waiting to be collected and acts as a source for other rubbish and fly tipping. (Recommendation 5)**

- 28. We recommend that more solo cleaners should be introduced in residential streets. This should be in conjunction with better promotion of who the 'local street sweeper' is. Businesses should also be provided with their street cleaner contact details so that they can contact them whilst on their round. This will improve the community value of the street cleansing team. Matching the skills of the solo cleaners to the 'patch' would enable those with excellent interpersonal skills to be able to improve communication between business owners and council officers. (Recommendation 6)**
29. The frontages of town centres seem to have neither rhythm nor pattern. A look along the Broadway in Wimbledon shows shop fronts which have altering heights of frontages and increasingly large 90 degree signs sticking out from the front, presumably so the pedestrian can see them, despite their being a similar sign in front.
- 30. We recommend that more consideration needs to go into planning approval for these signs as they cause street fronts to look untidy when in large numbers. This issue could be resolved via the enforcement function/Core Strategy and specific planning policies. (Recommendation 7)**
31. Larger retailers are typically better at 'dressing' their shop windows than some smaller shops who have lots of stickers in their windows for the lottery, international phone calls etc which are unsightly.
- 32. We recommend that work should be undertaken with the borough's larger retailers and Chamber of Commerce to see if training could be given to smaller retailers on shop window dressing. A pilot partnership scheme could be set up with the larger retailer working with small businesses from other parts of the borough (to avoid competition). (Recommendation 8)**
33. There is a rather fragmented approach to interaction between the council and local businesses at present. If the council were seen to have clear responsibilities that were efficiently carried out, businesses could then be encouraged to take more pride in their area and become involved in local initiatives. (Recommendation 9)
- 34. We recommend that consideration be given to a civic award for Best Shop Front/Window to be run at times of local/national celebration, where residents can vote for their favourite in each town centre. On consultation, business representatives felt that this would be better than an annual 'forced' competition in the first instance. (Recommendation 10)**
35. Previous schemes run by the council in the past, such as the Retail Shop Front Scheme, were too complicated for the money to be easily accessed.
- 36. We recommend that in future, (dependent on funding) the design and running of capital assistance grant schemes should be run working closely with the chamber of commerce and other small and local business groups. (Recommendation 11)**

Graffiti Service

37. The Graffiti team carry out regular scouting of the main Town Centres.

Recycling

38. At the moment certain Town Centres have dual recycling/litter bins these are Mitcham, Morden and Colliers wood. This has helped us to provide a recycling on-the-go service within these Town Centres. Unfortunately, the holes in some of the current bins are too small and become dirty, leading pedestrians to throw rubbish at the bin.

39. We recommend that when litter/recycling bins are ordered in the future, the design should have a much larger hole to allow pedestrians to place refuse fully in the bin. (Recommendation 12)

Monitoring

40. Daily Monitoring of Town Centres takes place and remedial action is taken as required. However, this is currently mainly a 'paper trail' process and has no formal link into the official council reporting system.

41. Local surveys are carried out by our Service Review Officer and include both Town Centre and Residential areas.

42. We recommend that as the current time between reporting a problem and its being acted on appears somewhat slow, an investigation should be carried out into the different paper systems in place and consideration given to the investment of technology which will allow street sweepers to quickly report issues. All members of the team need to be given the role of 'eyes and ears' of the council, doing more than just street sweeping but also reporting fly tips, pot holes, uncollected street cleansing waste etc. A link also needs to be established from when a report of waste, dirty streets etc is recorded to action being taken. (Recommendation 13)

Enforcement

43. There is a close link with the E&R Enforcement team who regularly carry out evening activities with the crews to target businesses who are either over-producing or to ensure that businesses do have waste collection contracts in place.

44. Commercial waste left out for collection can look unsightly, and due to different companies having different collection days, gives the appearance that this type of waste is not being dealt with effectively. Businesses only have to show proof that they have a commercial waste contract, there is no co-ordination of collections in any particular area.

45. We recommend that consideration should be given to putting in additional conditions in the commercial waste contracts stating when commercial waste should be collected, or instead promote the idea that shops in an area coordinate their commercial waste arrangements to minimise disruption on the footways. (Recommendation 14)

46. We recommend that better publicity of the success of enforcement of littering/fly-tipping should be encouraged via My Merton as we acknowledge that local media is unlikely to cover this. More publicity to residents on the number of fines issued and the amount of money collected should be conveyed to reiterate the point that littering is an offence and is costly to the Council and therefore to residents.

(Recommendation 15)

47. We recommend that enforcement of A-boards and Newspaper Stands should be increased – shops increasingly encroach the pavement with several A-boards and other stands selling fruit, newspapers etc outside their shop. Retailers need to be informed that it is not acceptable to let these encroach onto the pavement, especially where there are several outside of the same business.

(Recommendation 16)

Improvements

48. Recent improvements made in our borough are; the removal of chewing gum, washing/steam cleaning of adopted town centre pedestrianised areas and cleaning of town centre furniture, and rapid response teams. However, the boards for chewing gum disposal were deemed unsightly.

49. We recommend that, to assist with the problem of cigarette and chewing gum litter, all office premises and bars should be requested to attach a cigarette bin to their buildings and should inform their staff to use it. Particular areas, such as Hartfield Road, have a particular problem with this. The chewing gum boards on lampposts should be replaced with the attachable boxes for both gum and cigarette ends. Regard should be given to the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Act legislation and further education campaigns. Investigation is also needed to review special coatings for pavements to reduce chewing gum nuisance.

(Recommendation 17)

Impact on Retail and other Businesses

50. Mitcham was found to have particular problems with empty shops, property falling into disrepair, vermin and nuisance caused by pigeons. A summary of empty shops was given by Shola Adenekan, Town Centre Manager and can be found at appendix 2.

51. We recommend that a better form of partnership needs to be established with commercial property agents so that they provide comprehensive information to new leaseholders on what is expected of them, contact numbers for assistance and details of their town centre manager etc. (Recommendation 18)

52. Given that although officer evidence is of a good frequency of litter collection, the public perception is of excessive litter in various locations. **We recommend asking officers to review the system of checking staff performance. (Recommendation 19)**

53. Mitcham Market – the market in Mitcham appears to be struggling, with footfall dropping off in recent months. The market traders need to be involved in a local business forum. All retailers in the town have an interest in attracting more pedestrian footfall.
54. **We recommend that consideration needs to be given to whether the current location of the market is the best place or whether other locations such as ‘on-street’ would be more successful. (Recommendation 20)**
55. The electronic noticeboard is concealed in its current location and is not working. If repaired, this could be used to remind the public to not feed the pigeons.
56. **The electronic notice board needs to be repaired and moved as it cannot be seen at its current location. (Recommendation 21)**

Town Centre Management – the current situation:

57. The London Borough of Merton has developed the Town Centre Management service over a number of years with a well-developed policy framework including a Town Centre Management Strategy (2002) and a Review in 2005. Whilst Town Centre Management is not a statutory service it is considered to be good practice by the Department of Communities and Local Government.
58. Town Centre Managers across the country do play a wide range of roles including tourism and hospitality management, marketing and promotion, crime and safety planning, economic development and urban regeneration, transport (both public and private) and retail development.
59. In Merton the current role of Town Centre Managers includes
- Co-ordination of Town Centre Services,
 - Events Promotion,
 - Partnership Building,
 - Business Involvement,
 - Action following regular inspections of town centres and
 - Dealing with enquiries and applications for town centre improvement grants.
60. Until March 2009 the Council employed Town Centre Managers in Mitcham (with 50% funding from the LDA) and Morden and Colliers Wood (shared post) and contributed to the funding of a part-time Town Centre Manager in Wimbledon (managed and employed by Merton Chamber of Commerce).
61. Since March 2009 the Council has employed a Town Centre Manager to cover Morden, Mitcham and Colliers Wood pending a refresh of the arrangements, whilst the Chamber of Commerce has continued to manage the part-time post in Wimbledon.

62. Oversight and co-ordination of the arrangements are provided by an officer in the Council's Regeneration Team. In addition each town centre, including Raynes Park, has a nominated senior management champion from the Environment and Regeneration Department whose role is to co-ordinate internal and external partnership arrangements and ensure that there are manageable and effective relationships in place.
63. The past Administration considered market testing the provision of an enhanced Town Centre Management Service - covering Mitcham, Morden, Colliers Wood and Raynes Park, through a competitive tendering exercise. However following the Council elections in May 2010 it was decided that the level of expenditure was not affordable due to the current difficult financial circumstances and the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Mitcham, Morden and Colliers Wood have in place Town Centre Partnerships with an equal membership drawn from the Council (including the Town Centre Champion), local residents, local businesses and statutory services such as transport and the Police.

64. The position in Wimbledon is more complex with a Town Centre Partnership, a Town Centre Management Board including businesses that contribute to the Town Centre Management Initiative, which also oversees the Going for Gold Programme and a shadow Business Improvement District Board. It was surprising to hear that town centre managers have little/no relationship with the cleaners in the town centre.
65. *Town Centre Management – the way forward* **We recommend that consideration should once again be given to the outsourcing of the town centre manager role. Outsourcing to a professional provider may yield dividends which are greater than the cash cost. The Town Centre Manager should be a more clearly defined co-ordination/hub role. A sense of teamwork needs to be fostered between the Town Centre Manager and the Street Cleansing Team and contact details for all parties should be shared. (Recommendation 22)**
66. There is no clear vision of what local residents in the vicinity of town centres would like their area to become in the short, medium and long term.
67. **We recommend that residents should be asked if they want to get involved in improving their local town centre. Town centre residents groups could be set up with the support of the council and town centre manager. (Recommendation 23)**
68. In addition to the main Town Centre Management services, the Council is piloting Community Toilet Schemes in Mitcham and Morden. The schemes involve private town centre businesses allowing access during normal trading hours to their toilet facilities in return for a payment from the Council towards the additional cost of cleaning etc.

69. At present there are 2 participating businesses in Mitcham and 1 business in Morden along with the Civic Centre. There are no reported problems with the pilot programme.
70. Large scale plans for town centre regeneration have been thwarted by the current economic climate.
71. **We recommend that town centre regeneration needs to set realistic short, medium and long-term objectives, which are more imaginative than massive capital investment. (Recommendation 24)**
72. Feedback from business representatives informed the task group members that there were too many different forums and groups, which didn't necessarily achieve a great deal.
73. **We recommend that a schematic diagram of all the different groups should be produced, showing the link from the decision-makers to the forums and, if necessary, rationalisation needs to happen. (Recommendation 25)**

Concluding remarks

74. The findings of the task group fall into three main themes:

- i) Raising public awareness and civic pride so that less litter is dropped, and bins are used.
- ii) Proprietors can contribute to making our shopping areas more welcoming by keeping their properties in good condition, making sure their windows and displays are attractive to visitors and making sure trade waste is put out only at appropriate times.
- iii) What the Council can do falls into two main categories - the strategic and the practical. Strategically parliament could be lobbied to change legislation for empty shops, and provide an effective Town Centre Management service with a well-developed policy framework and a remit to co-ordinate and improve communication between all parties involved in keeping town centers clean and tidy. Practically the Council can provide clear signage, effective working-practices for the cleansing and enforcement teams.

What Happens Next?

75. This task group was established by the Council's Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, and so this report will be presented to its meeting on 15th March 2011 for the Panel's approval.
76. The Panel will then send the report to the Council's Cabinet meeting on 21st March 2011 for initial discussion.
77. The Cabinet will be asked to provide a formal response to the Panel within two months.
78. The Cabinet will be asked to respond to each of the task group's recommendations, setting out whether the recommendation is accepted and how and when it will be implemented. If the Cabinet is unable to support and implement some of the recommendations, then it is expected that clearly stated reasons will be provided for each.
79. The lead Cabinet Member (or officer to whom this work is delegated) should ensure that other organizations to whom recommendations have been directed are contacted and that their response to those recommendations is included in the report.
80. A further report will be sought by the Panel six months after the Cabinet response has been received, giving an update on progress with implementation of the recommendations.

Appendix 1

Cleaner Town Centres: Community Forum feedback

Colliers Wood & North East Mitcham – 7.09.10

- Proliferation of advertising boards on Colliers Wood High Street a hazard for buggies and wheelchairs particularly
- Problems of access to Town Centres for older and disabled people. They should always be involved and consulted when streetscape is being designed or altered
- Cigarette ends at bus stops
- People should be encouraged to report the names of people allowing their dogs to mess, and do not pick up. Published convictions would have an effect
- Could local authorities raise a levy on takeaway firms to compensate for having to clear up litter generated by them? An example is the Kebab house opposite Marks and Spencer in Colliers Wood
- People are constantly reported for fly-tipping, and the council collects the rubbish. This may even encourage fly-tippers as they know this as well. Enforcement necessary, but a lot of fly-tipping takes place at night.
- At bus stops there is a stand-off between the shops and road sweepers about who is responsible for clearing litter
- Public education can work, for example in the reduction in problems with dog mess, but it doesn't seem to have helped with littering.
- Bins need to be fixed, or else they tend to be moved and concentrated in one small area.
- There have been more bins in Mitcham recently, which is welcome.

Mitcham – 6.10.10

- Art in empty shops
- Town Centre managers in each town centre
- A more sensitive approach to town centre management and development
- Northborough Road is a deterrent to shoppers, with a double yellow line and too large a pavement and a pillar box. It also has the only post office for a long way, and a pharmacy.
- There is inadequate free or low-cost short-term parking
- The Mitcham police front (public) office should be moved from the old police station to the new police office in the old Job Centre building
- Conduct a large advertising campaign against littering

Morden Community Forum 8.09.10

- One problem in Morden Town Centre is tracking down absent landlords
- Some street-cleaning machines have vacuum tubes on their roof, but in Morden these seem never to be taken down and used – possibly because it would require two workers. Wouldn't their use save time in the long run?
- Morden Town Centre is reasonably clean given the volume of people and traffic through it. The dual waste bins are working very well.
- Should the bins be in brighter colours, to encourage more young people to use them?
- Links between High Streets and car parks are often bad for litter, especially if they have corners where litter accumulates
- Rubbish collection and street cleaning need to be better coordinated
- People should be made responsible for clearing snow from the pavement outside their home and business premises.
- Could there be a 'postbox' system for bins, with a slit in the top, to prevent foxes getting in?
- Morden Town Centre needs to be brightened up to encourage shops to improve and bring in new ones
- Think about the need for public toilets. The Community Toilet scheme needs to be **very** visible, and they are only open when the shops are.
- One of the reasons that public toilets were closed was that they were used for cottaging, particularly at the end of a tube line. Automatic toilets are expensive.
- The alleyway from the station is used as a toilet

Raynes Park – 30.09.10

- Air cleanliness
- Major clean-up of Roehampton Estate, including shopping parades, (LBWandsworth) about 6 years ago, was a great success, and the area has remained immaculate
- Chewing gum in town centres – 'horrible little boards' to stick it on are no solution
- John Lewis, Kingston, entrance (and parts of Wimbledon Town Centre now) are gum-free because of coating applied to the pavement which enables gum to be removed easily
- LBHammersmith & Fulham have an improvement on boards (details not provided)
- Spit the gum into the foil wrapper inside the packet and that solves the problem
- Entrance to Raynes Park and Motspur Park centres are badly littered. How can Network Rail/SouthWest Trains be made to do something about it? Pip Howson is meeting with Stephen Hammond MP and rail representatives on 1 October, and will raise this issue
- Business Improvement Districts have been introduced elsewhere, with payments from local businesses to fund these sorts of improvements. LBM isn't actively pursuing these, but would be happy to listen to proposals from businesses
- The standard of public behaviour in many foreign countries is far better. This is fundamental and cultural, and needs to be tackled as such.

- Dog mess. Make stickers bigger
- More coordination needed between public utilities and LBM about road works
- Could more work be done in primary schools, so that young children get used to good public behaviour from the start?
- Some pavements, including Raynes Park, are really dangerous
- Raynes Park Town Centre may get a Christmas Tree as part of the enhancement plan

Wimbledon – 21.09.10

- Don't remove planters and trees. Greenery is important in Wimbledon Town Centre.
- Recruit 'informal' tree wardens to keep the trees and planters healthy.
- Trees must be the right height – cutting the crowns of trees kills them.
- Choose evergreens so that there is green in winter.
- There are still problems with litter left behind after refuse collections.
- Could large, lockable, food waste bins be provided in the Town Centre for people to put chicken bones, etc, in?
- The bins for unwanted newspapers are either too small or not emptied frequently enough.
- Shops and other businesses should be encouraged to keep the area to the front of their businesses clean and tidy.
- People needed to be educated about chewing gum, and/or have places where they can stick it so that the pavements are not covered with it.
- Good quality paving stones would increase the attractiveness of the town centre.
- There are too many fast food shops creating litter.
- The Wimbledon Station lifts are filthy.
- Paladin bins in Spain are sunk into the ground. They are not cheap, but very effective.

Appendix 2: Shola Adenekan, Town Centre Manager, written evidence

Morden

There are 145 shops within the UDP boundary. Most of the shops are small independents. The main use classes are A1,A2 and A3. The shop front appearances are generally good. A town centre shop-front improvement grant scheme has supported 2 successful applicants on a match-funding basis. Continuity of the scheme is to be reviewed. There are 10 empty shop units all in private ownership.

Cleanliness is good. The town centre boundary includes areas under LBM and TfL control. Waste collection and road sweeping is of high standard. The residual problems lie in the alleyways (Reed) and the rear of 4 London Road. These are on-going private concerns.

Mitcham

There are 189 shops within the UDP boundary. Most of the shops are small independents. The main use classes are A1,A2 and A3. The shop front appearances are good. A town centre shop-front improvement grant scheme has supported 6 successful applicants on a match-funding basis. Continuity of the scheme is to be reviewed. There are 16 empty shop units all in private ownership.

Cleanliness is good. All of the town centre is under LBM control. Waste collection and road sweeping is of high standard. The residual problems are centred in the alleyway (Langdale Alleyway) at the rear of 1 Langdale Parade, Monarch Parade on London Road and the Fair Green area. Pigeon feeding is an on-going concern.

Colliers Wood

There are 176 shops within the UDP boundary. Most of the shops are small independents. The main use classes are A1,A2 and A3. The shop front appearances are good. A town centre shop-front improvement grant scheme has supported 4 successful applicants on a match-funding basis. Continuity of the scheme is to be reviewed. There are 24 empty shop units all in private ownership.

Cleanliness is good. Most of the town centre is under LBM control, there are some roads under TfL control and many businesses have private waste disposal contractors. Waste collection and road sweeping is of high standard. The residual problems are noticeable around the forecourt of the Brown and Root Tower.

Appendix 3 - Whom we spoke to

Officers:

Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration, 17th February
Cormac Stokes, Head of Street Scene and Waste, 17th February
Gary Williams, Public Realm Manager, 23rd September
Brian McLoughlin, Waste Operations Manager, 23rd September
Brian Hodge, Economic Regeneration Team Leader, 27th October
Shola Adenekan, Town Centre Manager, 1st November
Pat DeJesus, Community Waste Partnerships Manager, 27th October
Camille James, Area Cleansing Manager, 23rd September, 1st
November, 17th February
Ibrahim Walker, Enforcement and Inspection Manager, 23rd September
Francis Spear, Cleaning Supervisor, 1st November

External Witnesses

Roland Lee, Mitcham Post Office, 23rd November
Endi Ezengwa, Kiara Training College, 23rd November
Precious Williams, Kiara Training College, 23rd November
Diana Sterck, Chief Executive, Merton Chamber of Commerce, 23rd
November
Elspeth Clarke, Interested member of the public attending all task
group meetings.

Appendix 4 – Residents' Views

Survey Results from Mitcham, 19th November 2010

Would you know how to contact the council if you saw a problem with litter or flytipping in Merton?		Are you aware of the penalties for littering/flytipping?		Are you deterred from shopping in Mitcham due to the standard of cleanliness?		Are you happy with the cleanliness of Mitcham town centre?		
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Don't know
25	10	30	5	5	30	20	12	3

Additional comments: - negative

<p>Pigeons a problem x 9 Charity shop – bags left outside No dog dirt bins and dog fouling a problem and not enforced x 4 Wheelie bins needed Cyclists on pavements – no notices to stop them Competition with larger shops (florist stall comment) Street cleaners need to do more Wrong shops for elderly/need more clothes/toys shops and upgrade shops x 2 Too many betting shops Lots of shops opened in last year Shops could look better/need better shops Littering – no enforcement Enforcement officer needed for environmental issues x3 Litter put out too early for refuse collection Leaves Youths need policing x 2 Poor street lighting x 2 Doesn't feel safe in evening Bandstand – where did it go?</p>	<p>Street drinking needs discouraging x2 Need plants Need to empty bins more Need child friendly area More cleaning Better appearance of market stalls Too many signs on shops ?Langdale Alleyway – needs to be closed off Traffic too heavy Market stall holders should clean up after themselves Collective bin required rather than individual household collections Problem of front gardens of rented properties Need numbers to contact for fly-tipping, policing, noise nuisance etc. Litter around bus stops needs sorting out. More trees and flowers Abbey Mills style entertainment and stalls. St Mark's Car Park – people drive through no-entry sign, need camera to be re-adjusted. More seats</p>
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Additional comments – positive

<p>McDonalds sending out own litterpickers General cleanliness good x2 Alright as is, like playground.</p>	
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Appendix 5

Written evidence on Enforcement from Ibrahim Walker, Enforcement and Inspection Manager

Breakdown of S33 { Fly Tipping }

PASSED TO LEGAL SERVICES	PROSECUTIONS BY LEGAL SERVICES
38	36

S33 Fly-tipping can only be dealt with by summons to a Magistrates Court

Breakdown of S34 Trade Waste (£300 Fines) Issued Penalty Notices - SEP09 to SEP 10

	ISSUED	FULLY PAID	PART PAID	ABANDONED	UNPAID	PASSED TO LEGAL SERVICES	PROSECUTIONS BY LEGAL SERVICES
Sep-09	8		3	5			
Oct-09	5		2	3			
Nov-09							
Dec-09							
Jan-10	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Feb-10	1	1					
Mar-10	3	1	1			1	
Apr-10	3		2	1			
May-10	7	2	3	1	1		
Jun-10	4		4				
Jul-10	3	2				1	
Aug-10	8	1	4	1	2		
Sep-10	9	1	2		5	1	
Total	51	8	21	11	8	3	10

S34 FULLY PAID = £300

S34 PART PAID = £180 - (i.e. DISCOUNT IF PAID WITHIN 10 DAYS)

Some S34 Offences Prosecuted did not result from Unpaid Fixed Penalties

Breakdown of S87 (£75 Fines) Issued Penalty Notices - SEP09 to SEP 10

	ISSUED	FULLY PAID	PART PAID	ABANDONED	UNPAID	PASSED TO LEGAL SERVICES	PROSECUTIONS BY LEGAL SERVICES
Sep-09	10		8	2			
Oct-09	4		1	3			
Nov-09	3		2			1	
Dec-09	2	1	1				
Jan-10	9	1	6			2	
Feb-10	26	2	19	3		2	
Mar-10	93	23	44	24		2	
Apr-10	53	7	26	8	12		
May-10	51	6	33	4	6	2	
Jun-10	30	8	9	4	6	3	
Jul-10	12	3	7		2		
Aug-10	8	1	3	1	3		
Sep-10	18		6	3	9		
Total	319	52	165	52	38	12	9

S87 FULLY PAID = £75

S87 PART PAID = £50 - (i.e. DISCOUNT IF PAID WITHIN 10 DAYS)

Appendix 6

Response from David Ryan, Technical Officer (Street Trading) to issues raised by the task group:

Mitcham Market appearance:

The market traders have been using the canopies provided for them as part of the relocation. It has now been two years since the move and those original canopies have long since been replaced. Weather conditions and a constant process of packing and unpacking result in all canopies looking tired and scruffy in a short period. The regularity with which a trader replaces their canopies often determines the appearance of their stall. Having regard to the struggle the traders have been having since the relocation and in the current economic downturn, we feel it unreasonable to require canopies to be replaced frequently.

An explosion in the pigeon population has also added to the general feeling of dirtiness in the town centre. Requests have been made for the market to be included on the street cleaning rounds as we receive many complaints from traders in relation to the mess.

Stall Anchor Points

Anchor point options have been considered and attempts have been made to install suitable units. Funding and safety issues have so far restricted attempts to have a suitable anchor point system installed. Our Highways department has so far not provided an alternative option for the anchor points. We are also advised that funding that has been set aside to provide anchor points may no longer be available in the next financial year.

Stall Traders and Stall Appearance

Traders go where they believe they can make money. Based on the demographic and affluence of the area, certain types of traders will not trade in Mitcham (e.g. farmers' markets). Attempts have been made to hold specialist markets and to bring back traditional traders who have previously stood in Mitcham Market but to no avail. A butcher stood for the first time last Friday and we hope to be able to make this a weekly occurrence, but without the trade, they will not remain. As an example, this butcher has driven down from North Wales to attend several markets in the Greater London area, so the economic difficulties facing markets and retail both locally and nationally are affecting Mitcham. No-one is willing to wait six months to establish themselves as a business in the current climate, all are looking for somewhere that will provide them with a good quick income on a daily basis. If the location does not they move on quickly.

The market and its traders have been moved to a location that has seriously affected the traders' takings. Council decided to push ahead with this despite the onset of a global recession, which still persists. 50% of the traders operating in the market at the time of the move have ceased trading in the borough, with most taking their trade to other markets in busier town centres.

Only a serious investment in the infrastructure of the market would change its appearance. By nature markets are scruffier than high streets unless they are in more purpose-built accommodation. All traders have invested in the equipment they use to trade from, with some old traders and all new traders being required to use a steel frame stall. These are now 100% in use in the market.

On the flipside of this, the traders have seen little or no investment or change to the town centre, one that has seen a dramatic drop in footfall in the last four months. Many moved in the hope that the regeneration of the town centre would happen around them and this is something that has not materialised. The decline in footfall in the town centre can be attributed to a number of factors such as the decline in the number of businesses located in the Mitcham area, the lack of investment by property owners (such as ASDA) who still own the main shopping site and the investment by major companies (such as M & S) in Colliers Wood.

Acknowledgement

The members of the Cleaner Town Centres task group would particularly like to thank those members of the public who gave their views in Mitcham, business representatives and officers who offered their expertise and advice at our meetings.