

Committee: Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 7th September 2016

Agenda item:

Wards: ALL

Subject: Air Quality Task Group – Suggested areas for review

Lead officer:

Lead member: Councillor Abigail Jones Chair of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny panel.

Contact officer: Stella Akintan, stella.akintan@merton.gov.uk; 020 8545 3390

Recommendations:

- A. That the Panel comment on the suggested areas for review
 - B. That the Panel appoint members to the Air Quality Task Group
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to provide the panel with some suggested areas for review for an Air Quality task group.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. At the topic selection workshop back in May, this panel indicated that it wished to carry out a task group review on air quality. Given the breadth of this subject, the task group will need to determine the scope of the review. The Centre for Public Scrutiny advises scrutiny task groups to focus on a specific area well defined area. This will enable councillors to consider an area in some depth. This in turn will lead to SMART, focussed and evidenced based recommendations which are more likely to be implemented.
- 2.2. A report entitled *Every Breath We Take* published earlier this year by the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health calculates that 40,000 people in Britain die early each year because of outdoor air pollution, a significant increase on the previous estimate of 29,000. Emissions from factories, power plants and traffic create smog linked to asthma, heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and dementia.
- 2.3. Merton's Air Quality Strategy states that the main local sources of atmospheric pollutants are road transport from the busy and congested roads in the Borough and the neighbouring areas of London. The principal roads through the Borough include the A3 trunk road, the A24, the A217, A236, A237 and A296. It is mainly those areas closest to busy and congested roads causing the most pollution; this is typical for Boroughs outside of central London.
- 2.4. Although the borough has a relatively good public transport network, comprising of underground, bus, tram and rail, services, Merton has a higher

than average car ownership as approximately 70% of households have at least one car. Given that some public transport routes are infrequent, particularly in the evenings and at weekends, together with the issue that parts of the borough are some distance from the nearest public transport station or high frequency bus routes, , leads to higher levels of car dependence in parts of the borough.

- 2.5. Possible task group reviews could look at one of the following:
- 2.6. **Promotion of car clubs;** Looking at flexible alternative to private car ownership such as different car club concepts. A task group could consider car clubs for both residents and council staff.
- 2.7. **Active Transport** refers to modes of transport that involve physical activity, predominantly walking and cycling. A lack of good quality information about walking and cycling is cited as a deterrent to active transport choices. A task group could consider how to improve improving street signage, maps and access to internet information for walking and cycling.
- 2.8. **Raising awareness of indoor pollution** - The *Every Breadth We Take* report also highlights the need to understand the link between indoor air pollution and health, including the key risk factors and the effects of poor air quality in homes, schools and workplaces. Local authorities through front line professionals and public health teams can play an important role in raising awareness of indoor pollutants such as risks from badly maintained gas appliances, radon gas and second-hand tobacco smoke, as well as pollutants and toxins from household cleaning products. The task group could also consider how our health partners are tackling this issue.
- 2.9. The Panel are asked to appoint members to this task group. Expressions of interest have already been received from:
Councillor Michael Bull
Councillor Daniel Holden
Councillor Abdul Latif

2.10.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel can select topics for scrutiny review and for other scrutiny work as it sees fit, taking into account views and suggestions from officers, partner organisations and the public.

Cabinet is constitutionally required to receive, consider and respond to scrutiny recommendations within two months of receiving them at a meeting.

- 3.1. Cabinet is not, however, required to agree and implement recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny. Cabinet could agree to implement some, or none, of the recommendations made in the scrutiny review final report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. The Panel will be consulted at the meeting

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. The Panel will consider important items as they arise as part of their work programme for 2016/17

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. None relating to this covering report

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. None relating to this covering report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the legal and statutory implications of the topic being scrutinised.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. 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.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None relating to this covering report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the crime and disorder implications of the topic being scrutinised.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. None relating to this covering report

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

-

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1.

This page is intentionally left blank