

Appendix B

Commercial Services Task Group Executive Summary

The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel commissioned this task group to consider commercial opportunities across the areas within its remit, covering; housing, environmental sustainability, culture and skills, libraries and Transport. Significant reductions in local government funding as well as an obligation to achieve value for money for our residents has provided the impetus for this review.

Councillors met with a wide range of witnesses including the Chief Executive and senior officers at Merton Council, senior representatives from private sector organisations and Directors in the London Boroughs of Harrow and Croydon. The task group members drew upon experience from their professional careers as well as knowledge about the local communities they represent.

It was agreed the review will focus on:

Parks and Green Spaces

Property

The regeneration of Morden Town Centre

Exploiting the Merton Brand

The task group recognised that a cultural change is needed to successfully embed a commercially-based approach across the council. This should be lead by councillors therefore a review looking at commercialisation should be a regular item on the Sustainable Communities Panel agenda.

Good practice examples of a commercially focussed approach came from the London Boroughs of Harrow and Croydon. The task chair visited these authorities and found that Harrow had appointed a Director to embed a commercial agenda within the council.

The regeneration of Morden Town Centre has the potential to yield significant opportunities to work in partnership with private sector organisations. This could boost the local economy through the provision of office or retail space. Merton has significant potential as a business hub given the advantage of good transport links into central London but cheaper rents than the capital.

The task group identified a number of opportunities and asked officers to look more closely at how they can be implemented, these included;

Consideration given to making best use of our preferential borrowing rates.

Generating income through innovative technology such as a solar street lighting system.

There may be opportunities to outsource the Merton brand for services.

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