

Agenda Item 3

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

28 MARCH 2017

(7.15 pm - 9.50 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Peter Southgate (in the Chair), Peter McCabe, Hamish Badenoch, Mike Brunt, John Dehaney, Sally Kenny, Dennis Pearce, Oonagh Moulton, David Williams and Agatha Mary Akyigyina

Co-opted Member Mansoor Ahmad

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Edith Macauley MBE (Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities) and Martin Whelton (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing)

Julia Regan (Head of Democracy Services), Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration) and Paul McGarry (Future Merton Manager)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Abigail Jones (substituted by Councillor Agatha Akyigyina).

Apologies were also received from co-opted members Helen Forbes and Colin Powell.

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 an accurate record of the meeting.

4 CRIME AND POLICING IN MERTON (Agenda Item 4)

The Chair congratulated Chief Superintendent Steve Wallace on his appointment as Temporary Borough Commander and thanked him for sending written responses to the Commission's questions (published as part of the agenda).

The Borough Commander said that it had been a very busy week for the Metropolitan Police in the wake of the attack in Westminster and that Merton officers had been working extended shifts as a result, and that normal service was now resuming. He added that further to his appointment as Borough Commander, Guy Collins, a very

experienced superintendent from Lincolnshire would be covering his substantive post.

Commission members asked a number of follow-up questions about the proposed Basic Command Unit (BOCU) model and how it might work in Merton. The Borough Commander said that the proposed groupings had been identified on the basis of risk, threat and harm factors for each borough. He said that the new groupings would provide resilience and would strengthen existing cross-boundary working and assured the Commission that he would ensure that Merton got its fair share of policing services under the new model. He added that co-terminosity with borough boundaries and court boundaries could be beneficial.

The Borough Commander provided additional information in response to questions:

- policing in schools is focussed mainly on secondary schools where there are more issues on which Safer Schools Officers can have an impact. Metal screening arches are used from time to time;
- there are relatively low levels of street robbery in Merton and a reasonable proportion of these are solved;
- the recent increase in burglary figures is in the context of a low baseline due to significant reductions in burglary in the last few years;
- there has been considerable police activity in Mitcham town centre to tackle loitering and street drinking as well as preventative and problem solving work;
- most fraud work is dealt with by a centralised specialist team 'Action Fraud' and so does not always show on local crime figures;
- on top of the MOPAC London priorities, the two local priorities for Merton are moped theft and household burglary
- councillors were urged to raise local concerns at meetings of the ward locations panel.

Councillor Edith Macauley, Cabinet Member for Community Safety Engagement and Equalities, added that the police had done a marvellous job in tackling crime hotspots in the borough. She also highlighted the work that the One Stop Shop had been doing in partnership with the Police to tackle domestic violence and support victims of domestic violence.

5 THE MAYOR OF LONDON'S POLICING PRIORITIES (Agenda Item 5)

Leonie Cooper, London Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth, said that the policing priorities set out in the Police and Crime Plan 2017-21 differ from the previous plan in that the focus is now on crimes that have a high impact on their victims whereas the previous MOPAC priorities focussed on high volume crimes. The new focus includes standing together against intolerance and hatred, keeping children

and young people safe and tackling violence against women and girls. There will continue to be a focus on violence against the person, particularly knife crime.

Leonie Cooper said that Assembly Members had received feedback from the pilots for the proposed Basic Command Unit (BOCU) model and that learning from these would be incorporated into future proposals, particular in relation to the need for effective public engagement.

In response to questions about the BOCU model and the total number of offences in each of the four boroughs proposed (Merton, Wandsworth, Kingston and Richmond), Leonie Cooper and Chief Superintendent Steve Wallace said that Wandsworth is the largest borough and has the highest number of offences but the best way to compare would be on a crimes per 1000 population basis. Leonie Cooper said that data on the previous MOPAC 7 priorities would still be collected but may be presented differently and that the London Assembly's Police and Crime Committee would ensure that performance management data would be available to hold the police to account.

In relation to reassuring Merton residents about the level of policing that would be provided, Leonie Cooper said that it would be a combination of public information and operational decisions taken by the police to direct resources to where they are needed most and will have most impact. Steve Wallace added that 999 calls would receive a response from the unit nearest at the time rather than by borough.

Leonie Cooper said that MOPAC would expect the police to bring forward improvements as a result of the changes to the model of policing. She said that other MOPAC projects such as updated IT equipment so that officers could update data whilst out and about would also lead to efficiency savings. Steve Wallace added that the four borough BOCU could enable the police to reduce the number of control rooms and other back office support to reinvest in frontline policing.

In response to a question about custody provision, Steve Wallace said that this would not be affected by the new model.

6 LOCAL AUTHORITY PROPERTY COMPANY - PRESENTATION (Agenda Item 6)

Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration, outlined the information on the slides in the agenda pack. He highlighted a number of key points:

- A local authority property company would use the council's land and capital to generate a revenue stream (estimated at £400,000 pa from years 4 to 30) for the council as well as stimulating the supply of housing;
- Over 100 councils have established or are in the process of establishing a local authority property company so there is an opportunity for Merton to learn from their experience;

- 77 housing units are proposed on a total of 4 sites initially, these will be mainly private sector rented units, around 20 of which will be affordable;
- The council retains ownership and control of the local authority property company through a Cabinet sub-group.

Chris Lee, Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), James McGinlay (Assistant Director for Sustainable Communities) and Paul McGarry (Head of Future Merton) provided additional information in response to questions:

- The proportion of affordable housing could be increased but this would reduce the revenue return to the council
- Nomination of property for groups of hard-to-recruit public sector staff would be possible but would have to be carefully managed and let at a market rent so that this would not impact negatively on voids or on the revenue stream
- The properties and sites will be owned by the council, through its stand-alone company, and can be sold at a time of the council's choosing
- The proposals have been drawn up in the context of a wider local plans, including the Local Development Plan and the Asset Management Strategy, identifying the need for housing and associated services in the borough as well as considering the most efficient use of public buildings
- How the revenue income is used will be a decision for the council, to be taken in the context of the need to balance the budget

Members welcomed the proposals as an innovative way to raise revenue from the council's assets without selling them. However, members did express some concerns about the accountability of the local authority property company. Chris Lee said that the functions delegated to the company were set out clearly in the report agreed by Cabinet. Members also stressed the need for the company's decisions to be subject to scrutiny.

RESOLVED: that the development and subsequent operation of the local authority property company should be brought to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel or to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on a regular basis

7 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda Item 7)

RESOLVED: that the Annual Report should be updated to include content from the final Panel and Commission meetings in March 2017 and should then be presented to Council at its meeting on 12 July 2017.

8 PLANNING THE COMMISSION'S 2017/18 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)

RESOLVED: that the Commission:

1. Will re-establish the financial monitoring task group at its meeting on 6 July 2017
2. Agreed the agenda items for its meeting on 6 July as set out in paragraph 2.12 of the report
3. Agreed that members will email suggestions for agenda items and task group reviews to the Head of Democracy Services

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