

# Agenda Item 3

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## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

21 JUNE 2018

(7.15 pm - 9.45 pm)

**PRESENT:** Councillors Laxmi Attawar (in the Chair), Daniel Holden, Ben Butler, Joan Henry, Russell Makin, Nick McLean, Anthony Fairclough and Billy Christie

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Mike Brunt, John Dehaney, Nick Draper (Cabinet member for Community and Culture), Martin Whelton (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport), Dickie Wilkinson, Charles Baker (Waste Strategy and Commissioning Manager), Annie Baker (SLWP Strategic Partnership Manager), Anita Cacchioli, Cathryn James (Interim Assistant Director, Public Protection), Steve Langley (Head of Housing Needs and Strategy), Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration), James McGinlay (Assistant Director for Sustainable Communities), Annette Wiles (Scrutiny Officer), Will Graham (Business Support Manager, Veolia), Scott Edgell (General Manager, Veolia Environmental Services UK) and John Haynes (Communication Advisor, South London Waste Partnership)

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Anderson (with Cllr Christie substituting).

### 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 of the previous meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record.

Matters arising:

1. It was noted that the planning enforcement update and Panel member data request is included in the new work programme for 2018/2019; and
2. Officers offered to provide a further update on ANPR during the coming year.

### 4 UPDATE REPORT: ROLLOUT OF THE NEW WASTE SERVICE (WITH A FOCUS ON COMMUNICATION) (Agenda Item 4)

Cllr Brunt, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness, introduced the item. He highlighted that increasing recycling of food waste is key to the success of the new service that will be rolled out from 1 October 2018. Currently, only around a third of Merton's households are recycling food waste. On average around 3kg of

food waste per household per month is recycled in Merton. This is much lower than the borough's surrounding neighbours (ie: Croydon 4.7kg a month, Sutton 7.5 kg and Kingston 6kg). The new service will collect food waste every week.

The new service will be innovative as it will offer kerbside collections of textiles and household batteries once a fortnight. The change in the service aims to increase recycling, save money through switching to residual waste collections every fortnight and make Merton's streets cleaner by using wheeled bins to solve the issue of refuse not currently being contained.

Will Graham, Business Support Manager, Veolia, provided the meeting with a presentation on the communication to Merton's residents of the rollout of the new waste service. This highlighted:

- Residual waste will be collected 26 times a year (from wheeled bins), garden waste 26 times a year, dry mixed paper 26 times a year and food waste 52 times a year;
- As a result of the amount of change to the service, 75% of residents will have a change to the day of their collection;
- Collection of both textiles and batteries from the kerbside will be added to the service;
- There will be three lines of communication to residents: a welcome to the new service leaflet including differentiation for those that will not be part of the standard service, a service information pack which will include stickers for bins and notification of the new day for collections and visits to all houses of multiple occupation to undertake audits of containers to ensure all are being correctly used;
- The initial welcome to the new service leaflet will be distributed from 9 to 20 July 2018. This will include communication to those using blue and purple sacks, for whom there will be no change to their current service. This needs to be carefully communicated as well as information to those for whom there will be a service change;
- A pictorial approach is being taken in communications to support those for whom English is an additional language or who have an additional learning need;
- The communications to residents in flats will be different, reflecting their service is not changing and focusing on the issue of reducing contamination;
- A schedule of roadshows that will take place over the summer has been published. These will focus on explaining the service change to residents face-to-face. A range of other channels will also be used with focus on the issue of contamination; and
- Wheeled bins will be delivered to homes between 30 July 2018 and 28 September 2018 along with the service information pack.

In response to member questions, the following clarification was provided:

- (Cllr Brunt) Merton has learnt from the experience in Sutton and its communication of the service change. This is different from what is being planned in Merton as food waste collections were introduced at this point in Sutton. These are already in place in Merton. However, whilst there were difficulties experienced in Sutton with the service change, the benefits are now being felt as demonstrated

by Sutton achieving 7.5kg of food waste recycling on average per household per month. Merton hopes to achieve this success earlier following the service change. Achieving this success shouldn't be underestimated though given it involves 60k households moving to wheeled bins;

- (Charles Baker, Commissioning Manager, Waste and Fleet Services): there are challenges reaching those for whom the assisted collection service will be appropriate. This is because the service will not simply go to those that already receive an assisted collection. Potentially, there will be new residents who will be eligible. Work is therefore ongoing through appropriate community groups to raise awareness of the service;
- (Will Graham) Advice will be provided on the disposal of existing refuse bins. However, there are no plans for these to be removed by Veolia other than those that were part of the Lavender Fields pilot study. Suggested that existing bins can be made into composters;
- (Will Graham) The service is anticipating an annual 4% churn in residents. It is planned to use the new service leaflet to introduce the service to new residents moving into the borough following the initial rollout. It was mentioned that this might be distributed to new residents with their council tax bill. The website will also continue to carry introductory information;
- (Will Graham) After the first few cycles of the new service, residents who fail to present rubbish correctly will have their container(s) tagged with a reminder of the service requirements. After a second tag, a reminder letter will be sent with this recorded within Veolia's systems. A third tag will generate a visit;
- (Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration) The LB of Merton has the power to and is already using this power in relation to waste enforcement. There will be an amnesty during the introduction of the new waste service and some tolerance of additional bags of waste being left alongside the new wheeled bins whilst residents get to grips with the new bin size. Thereafter there will be a balance between discretion and appropriate enforcement given the requirements are reasonable;
- (Will Graham) Residents will be directed to the website to order extra and larger bins;
- (Charlie Baker) The process to request a larger bin will be clearly stated in the service rollout communications. The ability to request will be based on a range of criteria including having a household of five or more, or additional clinical waste etc;
- (Chris Lee) Sutton's communication of the new service rollout has been carefully reviewed. As a result, LB Merton is supplementing Veolia's communication plans. The only item in the plan that is not being actioned is the advert on Sky. Additional resource is being made available to supplement the back office operation given an increase in resident calls is anticipated. There will also be a temporary increase in the neighbourhood client officer team;
- (Will Graham) Wheeled bins will be delivered to households taped shut with the start date for usage clearly stated. Until this date, residual waste should continue to be presented in black sacks at the curtilage by 6am on the day of collection. Wheeled bins will need to be stored by households until the new waste service starts;

- (Chris Lee) Based on learning from others, there will be no mixed approach to waste collection (so no households will continue to have black sack collections whilst others begin to receive collections using wheeled bins). Collections using wheeled bins will begin simultaneously for all residents across the borough;
- (John Haynes, Communication Advisor, South London Waste Partnership) To support those who may have difficulties with communication (learning difficulties, English as an additional language etc) a pictorial approach has been taken. This has been informed by the template materials developed by the organisation *Recycle for London*, all of which have been user tested. Where it is not possible to provide differentiated versions of some communications, it will be possible to contact the South London Waste Partnership (SLWP) for help. Proactive work is also ongoing to support residents through community groups;
- (John Haynes) A full range of communication channels is being used to ensure engagement of harder to reach groups. For example, use of social media including sponsored posts;
- (Chris Lee) Communications are being distributed through school bags;
- (John Haynes) Following the new service rollout, it will be possible to run cross regional, harmonised communication campaigns. This will include an annual newsletter;
- (Will Graham) Examples of communications will be shared with Councillors prior to use;
- (Chris Lee) Residents will not have to pay for additional boxes or larger bins where these are needed. After the service rollout, communications will continue through channels such as My Merton, council tax bills and the website;
- (Chris Lee) Currently, Merton's waste service tolerates unlimited residual waste that is collected weekly. Only 50% of residents participate in the food waste service now. It is assumed the remainder put food waste in with residual waste when this should be going to recycling. It is assumed that with the move to fortnightly residual waste collections, having rotting food waste for a longer time period will not be tolerated and this will generate an increase in use of the food waste service. This is supported by the experience in Sutton. Seven litre food caddies are available for kitchen counters. The outdoor caddies hold 23 litres of food waste and will be collected every week, making this a more attractive approach to handling household food waste;
- (Cllr Brunt) Is an optimistic advocate that this will reduce the quantity of rotting food waste in with residual waste;
- (Chris Lee) Noted that ultimately, the aim should be to completely reduce the quantity of food waste; that this should be out of the waste stream altogether;
- (Will Graham) Clarified that it will be possible for textiles and batteries to be presented with residual waste collections at the kerbside for collection but not within residual waste; and
- (Charlie Baker) The communication strategy makes clear that the assisted bins collection exists and how to request to participate in this.

**RESOLVED:** Members highlighted two areas of concern: support for residents needing assisted collections and residents needing to store wheeled bins for anything up to two months prior to use. They requested that information be provided at the September 2018 meeting on the numbers registering for assisted collections

compared to using this service prior to the rollout. They also asked that Veolia be requested to return to the Panel at its meeting in February 2019 to report on the rollout of the new service.

## 5 CABINET MEMBER PRIORITIES (Agenda Item 5)

Cabinet Members took it in turn to highlight their priorities and answer member questions.

Cllr Brunt, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness: excited about his new role and making a difference for the community. In addition to establishing a successful food recycling system his focus is on Merton's streets needing to be cleaner. Once the new service is introduced, this will decrease the waste on streets, as this will just be as a result of people dropping litter and fly tipping. On the latter, he aims to improve the functionality of the website for reporting to make this less clunky and more user friendly. However, these reports do go straight into Veolia's vehicles with tips being addressed within hours. Highlighted the need for tips to be reported quickly and addressed before they attract further rubbish. Noted that he is working on the faster removal of Veolia's green street sweeping bags as these can attract further waste to be dumped.

In response to member questions, Cllr Brunt clarified:

- The enhanced call centre supporting the rollout of the new waste service is key. This will be supported with additional resource once the communication of the new service begins;
- Noted that there is a role for ward councillors in supporting the rollout of the new service. They can use their local knowledge to help officers. For example, notifying where there is no front garden for storage of wheeled bins. This will be the key criteria for determining whether a household will be expected to use a wheeled bin;
- Those in flats and shops will not be expected to use wheeled bins. Highlighted that the service provided will fit with need;
- Ward councillors will be provided with a bank of frequently asked questions; and
- Confirmed he is willing to go out on visits with councillors to look at the environment and street cleaning in their wards.

Cllr Draper, Cabinet Member for Community and Culture: focused on looking at support for those with disabilities and inclusion:

- Dementia: Working to make the borough dementia friendly. Library and leisure centre staff have been provided with dementia friendly training. The aim is to provide support that is discrete and effective. Looking at how this might also be applied to Merton's parks;
- Learning disabled: just awarded the contract to deliver training through Merton's libraries including life skills, travel training and work skills. Working for Merton to become a disabled confident employer;
- Diabetes: noted that more advanced cases of diabetes can result in considerable health impacts and disability. Funding has therefore been allocated for a

programme across all Merton's green spaces to encourage healthier lifestyles as a way to prevent and treat Type 2;

- Mental health: supporting outdoor therapies and support offered through Merton's libraries; and
- Physical disabilities: seeking to offer access to sports for those with disabilities including those that are hidden (and for example, may be linked to age). Examples include *walking football* and water sports. These are not known well enough. To be more inclusive, the new leisure centre will use the highest building standards based on the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. This will be evaluated with these standards then built into Merton's other leisure facilities.

In response to member questions, Cllr Draper clarified:

- It was a joint decision to reinstate the *Changing Places* adult changing facility in the new Merton Leisure Centre. This happened during the early part of week commencing 18 June 2018. This situation resulted from the process of reconfiguring the leisure centre to remove the plant room off the roof of the building to achieve a half a million pound cost saving. This was a mistake which when it was realised led to the changing facility being reinstated. Reinstating the facility will have cost implications and result in some loss of facilities for staff;
- In 2019, Merton will become one of the 6 boroughs that were awarded Cultural Impact status and will deliver a cultural programme focusing on film. The community will lead the delivery of this festival across the borough; and
- Provision of additional services for disabled residents is achieved in partnership with adult and children's social care. There are limited resources available to support this work.

Cllr Whelton, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport: this is his third year holding this Cabinet Member brief all be it with a slightly revised portfolio (parking has been added inclusive of the Automatic Number Plate Recognition System and the diesel levy). Will be looking to introduce a 20 mph zone across the borough to fulfil the commitment made in the manifesto. Housing remains one of the biggest issues for the borough and a new housing strategy will be brought forward by the end of the year to address a range of associated issues. Highlighted that the provision of affordable homes remains a priority but this has been frustrated by a loss of central government grants. Regeneration of estates (High Path, Ravensbury and Eastfields) is ongoing and is Clarion's biggest project. The detailed planning applications are just about to come forward and will be a big focus for the remainder of this municipal year. A new local plan is also emerging for which there has been a call for sites. This will be scrutinised by the Borough Plan Advisory Committee. Noted the desired to provide shared ownership homes linked to Merton's own need to retain staff. Having undertaken the regeneration of Mitcham town centre, the focus is now on Morden and the appointment of a development partner that will be subject to scrutiny. Already working with Transport for London as key partners in the Morden regeneration.

In response to member questions, Cllr Whelton clarified:

- As all street management decisions can be subject to call-in, the Street Management Advisory Committee will not be reinstated;

- The approach taken on the disposal of sites will balance best use against best value on a case-by-case basis. Noted the Council has a fiduciary duty to achieve the best return for residents. Four development sites have been identified for Merantun;
- The Council is working closely with residents on regeneration for example through the development of the Wimbledon masterplan;
- Whether the target for completion of the Morden regeneration by 2026 will be achieved will largely depend on the condition of the property market. It had been intended that this regeneration would take place during the last decade but this was impeded by the financial crash. Previously expected housing infrastructure funding did not happen. There is a need for realism and pragmatism. It is a big commitment with support already coming forward from the Mayor of London; and
- The Council is working closely with Clarion Housing as demonstrated by meetings held with Ruth Cook, Group Chief Executive, and Paul Quinn, Director of the Merton Regeneration. Given the regeneration will cause major upheaval, it is important residents be kept onside. Whilst the regeneration is ongoing, housing needs and repairs must continue to be addressed. Merton's memorandum of understanding with Clarion including the ten pledges for residents is important in ensuring this happens.

## 6 PERFORMANCE MONITORING: DEPARTMENTAL DATA SET REVIEW (Agenda Item 6)

Steve Langley, Head of Housing Needs, introduced the performance monitoring report for the Community and Housing Department:

- CRP059/no of people accessing Merton's libraries: noted this as particularly high performing and probably the best in London; and
- CRP061/SP009/no of households in temporary accommodation: this is the lowest number of households in temporary accommodation in London apart from the City of London. There are approximately 80,000 households in temporary accommodation in England, 53,000 of which are in London with only tiny numbers in Merton. Highlighted the support offered to those at risk of homelessness to help with their finances and work done to encourage others to remain within the family home. Noted the new Housing Reduction Act and that the Department remains unsure of how this will affect the service.

In response to a member question, it was agreed to take clarification outside of the meeting on the difference between CRP 059 (the number of people accessing the libraries) and SP480 (library visitor figures).

Chris Lee, Director, Environment & Regeneration, introduced the performance monitoring report for his Department:

- Highlighted that as this is data for April 2018, it is missing both quarterly and annual figures. He also noted that the monthly target figures might not be as accurate as required as this is still to be calibrated and properly profiled in some cases. Suggested it would be better to look at the data in detail in September 2018;

- Noted that on waste and street cleaning, the weekly reports to Councillors are shortly to be reinstated. Also that this service remains under constant focus by officers;
- Performance on the processing of major (CRP 051), minor (CRP 052) and other (CRP 053) planning applications is all above target. Closure of enforcement cases is still below target (SP 113) but the new approach is bearing fruit; and
- SP 414/the volume of planning applications is seen as an indicative measure of the rate of regeneration in the borough. Whilst this is down against target and the short-term trend is down, the longer-term trend is up.

In response to a member question, Chris Lee clarified that on CRP 094/SP 485/the number of fly tips, this is above target but outside the control of the contractor (Veolia). In relation to fly tips, the contractor's performance is judged on how quickly they are removed. The contractor's records of fly tips is improving with improved accuracy contributing to the increased number of reported incidents. The volume of fly tips will only be addressed by changing resident behaviour.

**RESOLVED:** To appoint Cllr McClean as performance monitoring lead for the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

## 7 SETTING THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2018/2019 (Agenda Item 7)

**RESOLVED:**

1. To accept the work programme for the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel as presented;
2. To undertake a task group on reducing the use of single use plastics in Merton; and
3. To receive information about opportunities for scrutiny training from the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the Local Government Association.