

Agenda Item 3

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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

27 JUNE 2019

(7.15 pm - 9.30 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Natasha Irons (in the Chair),
Councillor Daniel Holden, Councillor Ben Butler,
Councillor Anthony Fairclough, Councillor David Dean,
Councillor Owen Pritchard and Councillor Geraldine Stanford

Jason Andrews (Environmental Health Pollution Manager),
Cathryn James (Interim Assistant Director, Public Protection),
Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration), Ben
Stephens (Head of Parking Services) and Dr Dagmar Zeuner
(Director, Public Health)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mundy (with Cllr Fraser 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 agreed.

Matters arising:

1. Local Implementation Plan moved to 8 January 2020.
2. The Director of Environment and Regeneration updated the Panel that the revised proposal for agreeing environmental permits is with the legal department for their input.

4 PARKING CONSULTATION (Agenda Item 4)

The Director of Environment and Regeneration introduced the report. There were over 3000 responses to the consultation and the issues raised have been reflected upon and influenced changes.

At the invitation of the Chair, residents shared their thoughts on the proposals.

Sara Sharp: The scheme deems the health in the west of the borough is more important than the east. No extra public transport provision or cycling infrastructure. Doesn't make sense to increase charges on one side of the borough but not on the other if you want air quality to improve. There is more that could be done. Stop the school application on one other boroughs most toxic air sites, air quality monitoring, scrap Christmas car parking, ensure TfL clean up the bus fleet, better anti idling

campaign, include AQ measures in planning applications, address that 50% of free permits belong to council workers.

Jamie Attle: Proposed charges are too high - ½ day parking increasing from £1.50 to £3.50 is a 133% rise. It's a win/win for the Council but residents will suffer. It will have a negative impact on selling properties. A public meeting should be organised to hear resident's views. Transparency is needed with regards to how much it costs for parking administration as the charges should only cover the Council's expenses.

Helen Clark Bell: LOVE Wimbledon fully support Air Quality proposals but this parking proposal does not have any measurable objectives in improving Air Quality. The only town centre change has been that of St Georges Road and Queens Road. The 20 minute free bays are monopolised by food delivery bikes. Electric Vehicle charging points are not mentioned, neither is impact of the ULEZ. The Councils' anti-idling campaign is weak. Dock less bikes are repeatedly dumped in the town centre.

Eve Cohen: I fully support any initiative that will improve air quality but the increase in residents parking permit charges will not do this. Only those in a CPZ and parking on street are affected by residents parking permits. It will not reduce cars in other areas or with off street parking. The council is sending out a mixed message - Car park charges are being increased during the day but remaining at a low fixed fee for the evening. Does the council want people to reduce vehicle usage and improve air quality or not? Charges should be based on the level of vehicle emissions. How does this policy tackle vehicle pollution when it is not tackling the through traffic including buses which causes much of the pollution across the whole borough? The walking and cycling experience needs to be made easier and better. Secure cycle parking is needed. The anti-idling campaign needs to be ramped up. Those that truly need their cars for work e.g. electricians, plumbers, gas persons, nurses, doctors etc. should have some concession made until such a time as they can afford to change their vehicles to less polluting models.

Cllr Nigel Benbow: Highly unpopular decision. No evidence that this scheme will improve our air quality. The proposal doubles the amount we pay for parking permits in Wimbledon, but the Mitcham and Morden side of the borough have lesser charges. Some parts of the borough do not have CPZ's so residents there will not be paying anything at all. Many people need their cars for commuting or seeing family and friends. The Council wants to encourage visitors to Merton, but the ridiculous charges will have an impact on this. The Director of Environment and Regeneration thanked the speakers for their useful comments and explained that charges will help the Council to invest in complementary measures to support this.

In response to Members questions, the Director of Public Health, the Director of Environment and Regeneration and the Environmental Health Pollution Manager replied with the following points;

- There is a divide between life expectancy in the east and west of the borough. East Merton wards (Figges Marsh, Cricket Green) have the highest mortality and illness figures.
- Major high streets are the most polluted.
- Mitcham has a reading of 63.7. Alongside increasing parking charges, the Council is investing in cycling infrastructure and improving the quality of Mitcham Fair Green.
- Air quality statistics across London and locally, ownership of vehicles, use of car parks and the modal shift to using public transport will be the key indicators used to judge success of the strategy.
- Carer permits are available.

- With regards to staff parking permits, we recognise that we are a big user of motor vehicles. We are reviewing this. There are some contractual issues but we hope to have the review concluded within the next six months.
- CIL bids will be coming to Cabinet in the near future, which does include tree planting.

Councillor Daniel Holden raised a motion that recommended to Cabinet that this panel does not believe that the substance of the report has changed substantially or materially since January, therefore we recommend that Cabinet scraps their plans to implement the parking tax. . This was seconded by Councillor David Dean and moved to a vote. Three voted in favour, five against. Motion fell.

Councillor Daniel Holden raised a motion that the panel recommends to Cabinet that council officers proactively work with TfL and other partners to clean up the bus fleet as per the February Council motion, and consider an aggressive tree planting strategy to help mitigate emissions in areas with poor air quality, the panel also recommend a more extensive roll out of electric charging points, and that the council undertakes a promotional campaign to encourage residents to switch to electric vehicles. This panel therefore concludes that until these action are under taken it does not recommend the implementation of the parking tax. This was seconded by Councillor David Dean and moved to a vote. Three voted in favour, five against. Motion fell.

A panel member proposed the panel recommends to Cabinet that the Council carry out further consultation with specific equality organisations, disability groups and individuals with protected characteristics. This was seconded by another panel member and moved to a vote. Three voted in favour, five against. Motion fell.

RESOLVED

Panel resolved (eight votes for, none against) to make the following reference to Cabinet;

The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel welcomes this opportunity to comment on the proposals and on the results of the public consultation. The Panel would like contribute additional thoughts/raise issues for consideration prior to a final decision being made by Cabinet.

1. The Panel requested that Cabinet should receive additional evidence to demonstrate how public transport accessibility issues will be addressed and improvements achieved.

The EIA action plan relies heavily on the uptake of the blue badge scheme, but with a 10.7% of the Merton population over 65 years of age and a further 1.7% over 85, it is not only the disabled population (10.8%) that will be affected by the increase in charges. How will the elderly population that cannot apply for a blue badge be supported in using sustainable travel/public transport as an alternative to owning a car? Are car clubs a suitable option?

In light of the 'Access for all' funding not being granted, a number of Merton's stations remain without step free access. The action plan refers to working with TfL but there are no substantive plans mentioned.

EIA action plan quote "Access improvements to public transport infrastructure... Respondents to the survey recorded comments regarding

accessibility issues in relation to public transport... The Council works closely with TfL and Network Rail to ensure that the Highway infrastructure accommodates the efficiency of public transport services. This includes accessibility”.

2. The Panel also reiterated their original request of 14 January 2019 that Cabinet should receive additional evidence to demonstrate that increasing parking charges results in a decrease in traffic, and on the link between higher costs for high polluting cars and changing the behaviour of drivers. To date, has this evidence been supplied?

3. The Panel welcomes the review planned 6-12 months after implementation of the new charges and recommends that the Panel has an opportunity to carry out pre-decision scrutiny of the findings of this review. However, a clearer outline of what measurements will be used to track the success? I.e. an increase in permits for electric cars, a fall in overall applications for standard resident permits, increase in cycle usage, air quality improvements?

4. The Panel recommends and encourages Officers to investigate alternative options to improve air quality and take a more proactive approach in terms of sustainable travel

For example, Waltham Forest and Kingston, who have upgraded their streets and road networks to help tackle key issues surrounding road safety, air quality, public health and ease the burden on the public transport network.
 - *Waltham Forest’s Mini Holland cycling infrastructure*
<https://www.enjoywalthamforest.co.uk/about-mini-holland/>
 - *Kingston Go Cycle*
https://www.kingston.gov.uk/info/200382/go/1258/go_developments

5 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Agenda Item 5)

Councillor Ben Butler was appointed as Performance Monitoring Lead.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration addressed key points;

- Veolia have sourced additional vehicles and staff to address the volume of fly tips. Not all the new vehicles have the I.T system installed so there is under reporting in terms of those collected in less than 24 hours.
- We are finalising a planning enforcement action plan with additional resources to address the backlog of cases.

The Panel would like to see longitudinal analysis added to the performance data to follow long term trends as a Panel.

A Panel Member asked if we could produce data that matches that of LG inform? This would allow us to compare our data with other Boroughs.

ACTION: Scrutiny Officer to discuss with Performance Team.

6 SETTING THE WORK PROGRAMME 19/20 AND APPROVAL OF TASK GROUP (Agenda Item 6)

The Chair thanked those that attended the topic workshops on 20 May.

Work programme 19/20 was agreed.

The panel debated which task group to undertake. Majority felt that scrutinising Veolia and the new fly tipping strategy plus a task group on this subject would lead to a duplication of work. Therefore with six voting in favour and two against, the Panel has set up an Economy task group to look at how we can promote community wealth in Merton through local procurement. The task group will consider how procurement behaviour can be changed and how anchor institutions, such as the council, police, colleges, housing associations, can be encouraged to buy the goods and services they need from local businesses wherever possible. The Panel appointed Councillors Owen Pritchard, Ben Butler and Natasha Irons to this task group. An invitation will be extended to all members.

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