

## **Committee: Sustainable Communities and Transport Overview & Scrutiny Panel**

**Date: 24th June 2014**

Agenda item:

Wards: All

### **Subject: Priorities for the next 4 years**

Lead officer: Simon Williams, Director of Community & Housing

Chris Lee , Director of Environment & Regeneration

Lead member: Cllr Andrew Judge , Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability,  
Councillor Judy Saunders , Cabinet Member for environmental cleanliness and parking  
Councillor Nick Draper , Cabinet Member for Community & Culture.

Forward Plan reference number:

Contact officer: Chris Lee, Simon Williams

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### **Recommendations:**

- A. That Members note this report and the presentation to be available at the meeting and make comments regarding the Administrations priorities within the remit of this Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To set out the initial priorities of the Administration over the next 4 years

## **2 DETAILS**

- 2.1 Cabinet members will present the Panel with an outline of their priorities over the coming 4 year term. This report provides an outline, but not exhaustive, overview of the challenges and priorities over this period
- 2.2 Financial austerity remains the context within which the priorities are set and the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out the savings required over the coming 4 years a large proportion of which will be found within the areas of work covered by this panel. The Environment & Regeneration Department have a savings target of £13.2 million over the period 2014-2018, £6.3 million of which has already been agreed by Council with a further £6.9 million yet to be identified. Community & Housing have a savings target of £10.9 million, of which £7.4 million has been already been approved with a further £3.5million yet to be identified.
- 2.3 The above savings were approved by Cabinet in February and Council in March. The savings targets for 2018-19 are not included in the above figures.

## **2.4 Outline Priorities**

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## **Economic Growth**

London and Merton's population is growing. The draft Further alterations to the London plan underline the fact that we will need to increase the supply of housing over coming years . Alongside this we will want to ensure that Merton's employment base continues to grow and that we attract investment to create new business and development particularly in our Town centres. We have a sound platform to work from with an adopted core strategy and CIL charging schedule as well as Development Plan documents that support development and regeneration and economic development plans to deliver growth.

Circle MPH have a responsibility and legal obligation to deliver the decent homes standard in the housing stock transferred from the Council. We will work to ensure that the Housing conditions of residents are improved and that any regeneration is both supported and viable. Priorities for the Administration will include:

- Delivering our regeneration plans in Town centres and working closely with Circle MPH to develop regeneration plans that are supported by residents and deliverable
- Exploring innovative ways to increase housing supply and developing a stronger housing supply programme
- Delivering our Economic development strategy to attract inward investment , create jobs and growth and invest in the skills of residents to be able to get into sustained employment.
- Utilising our land and property assets such as redundant car parks to catalyse development and growth.

## **A clean, green, sustainable borough**

Merton is a clean and green place to live, visit and do business but we face huge challenges if we are to save money whilst maintaining standards. The Council spends c £20 million cleaning the streets, collecting and disposing of waste. We will want to look at opportunities to do this more efficiently and in particular how we might be able to utilise the South London Waste Partnership. Across London and the rest of the country recycling levels are stagnating yet this remains a key area in which to generate income, reduce carbon emissions and offset costs . Due to recent renegotiations with our contractors we now receive significant income from recycle and thus creating a greater incentive to reduce waste being landfilled or in future being treated at the Energy from Waste Plant.

Mitigating and adapting to climate change will remain a key challenge and we will need to implement all of the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act as well as making further progress in reducing our carbon emissions and supporting residents and business to do likewise.

We are piloting the use of private enforcement capacity to crack down on those who make Merton untidy. This is expected to be at no additional cost and we shall evaluate the impact / benefit shortly in considering how we take this forwards.

In 2014 we ran the Merton Spring clean for the first time. We shall look to build on this and the Street Champions initiative and to proactively work with residents in maintaining clean neighbourhoods.

In parks we will look to maintaining and enhancing parks and greenspaces whilst seeking efficiencies and growing the volunteer capacity we attract through initiatives such as 'Dig Merton' which creates social capital. Priorities for the administration will include :

- Delivering Phase B of the SLWP – Energy from Waste Plant and looking to ensure that through the partnership we maximise opportunities for further sustainability through District heat network and other renewable energy.
- Working with partners on the SLWP to identify further opportunities for financial efficiency and carbon reduction.
- Delivering on our Climate change strategy and plan as well as the work done by Scrutiny. This includes further rollout of Solar Panels on Council and school buildings
- Developing further the community involvement in greenspaces through 'Dig Merton' and other initiatives for food growing and greening Merton – promoting good public health and well being and a greener borough.
- Increase enforcement action to improve cleanliness and change behaviour.
- Proactively engage with residents to help maintain cleaner neighbourhoods and town centres.
- Driving up waste recycling levels

### **Efficient and reliable services that meet customer's needs**

Whether statutory or discretionary the services we provide need to be provided at the right standard and deliver value for money. The Council transformation programme is overseeing a review of all services and looking at how they can be transformed so that we can meet our financial challenge whilst still meeting the needs of our residents and businesses. Many operate in changing legislative times eg. Planning development control management but all will need to transform. The Council customer contact programme together with our transformation plans will help shape the way these services meet the needs of our growing and changing population. Priorities for the administration will include:

- Ensuring the Customer contact programme delivers improvements in the services in E& R and C & H
- Delivering other transformation plans to sustain and improve services whilst reducing cost.

- Reviewing processes and improving performance management.
- How we can procure better to deliver savings and improved outcomes;
- Developing the role of volunteers to assist in efficiency and adding value;
- Overseeing the delivery of the shared Regulatory service with Richmond and other boroughs who wish to join

### **Sustainable transport and Fair parking policies**

Economic and housing growth will put increasing pressure on transport in London and Merton and we will need to continue our work to improve sustainable transport and reduce reliance on the motor car. Active transport [ cycling and walking ] has huge public health benefits and personal economic benefits as well as reducing carbon . We will look to build on the Mini Holland work and seek external funding for this and other sustainable transport programmes.

Our highways are in relatively good condition when compared to others across London but they rely on significant capital investment each year. We will want to look at how all of the money spent on highways and the public realm generally can deliver better outcomes through more intelligent planning such as through Home zones to reduce vehicle speeds and improving the look and feel of residential roads. Work is underway to research the effectiveness of 20 mph zones and limits which will inform future decision making on how we reduce vehicle speeds and accident numbers.

Whilst car ownership is reducing slightly the demand for on street parking remains high. As traffic and highway Authority we have a responsibility to reduce accidents and congestion and we discharge this through various controls including introducing Controlled parking Zones , parking management and the permitting of highway works. Parking control remains a high profile public service and one which may face change through legislation in the way CCTV enforcement operates. Priorities for the administration will include:

- Optimising the money we spend on the public realm to deliver the best outcomes for neighbourhoods and town centres;
- Investing in sustainable transport and in particular promoting active transport where possible through development of better safer cycling and pedestrian infrastructure ;
- Researching 20 mph zones and limits and learning from Homezones before considering longer term investment;
- Building on fair parking policies and our parking charter to ensure we manage congestion and the demand for parking space whilst supporting vibrant retail and other businesses.
- Ensuring all shopping parades have min 20 minutes free parking available to encourage support for local facilities.

## **Leisure and culture**

Merton is a great place to live and visit with plenty of opportunity to relax, play sport or pursue arts or cultural interests. We want to build on this and to ensure that we meet the needs of future generations. We will need to work smarter if we are to do this with less money as predicted. We know that Morden Park Pools is in need of replacement and we will shortly consider the results of the public consultation we will want to ensure that the replacement facility meets the needs of the population for the next 30 years or so. Equally we will need to look at how we develop sports and leisure facilities in other parks and greenspaces so that the growing population can enjoy and stay healthy physically and mentally. We will want to continue to support the arts and culture attracting external investment alongside our own to maximise the projects and events . Priorities for the administration will include:

- Developing the replacement Morden Leisure Centre ;
- Developing other sports and leisure facilities where appropriate in parks and green spaces;
- Seeking external investment in arts and cultural events in the borough

## **Libraries and heritage**

Libraries play a unique role in our community by providing a free and accessible space for all the community to enjoy and develop their learning. Over 1,200,000 visits were made to our libraries in the last financial year and 33% of our residents regularly use their libraries with almost 65% as library members.

Customer satisfaction with library services is at an all-time high with some of the highest satisfaction levels in London whilst continuing to be the cheapest run service. Building upon this solid foundation we will continue make our libraries more accessible and provide cutting edge technology that is responsive to customer needs. We recognise that technology will play an even greater role in the way we deliver services and will make more information available and enable customers to complete more interactions online.

Building on the success of our volunteer project we will continue to redefine the Library & Heritage Service offer by providing a broader range of services in partnership with other providers and redevelop our sites where it has been identified. We will maximise the use of library space for other activities and provide services in a modern and inclusive environment.

Merton has a rich and varied history and the Heritage Strategy for the borough has gone some way towards improving the promotion of Merton's heritage and bringing in external funds to preserve its history for generations to come. There is more work to be done and increasingly through Merton Memories and other projects more can be done to digitise our stories.

Priorities for the administration will include:

- Progressing redevelopment plans for Donald Hope and West Barnes libraries.
- Investing in technology to provide excellent and innovative IT solutions.
- Nurturing the love of reading at an early age by providing a focused range of services to children and families to improve literacy levels.
- Put the community at the heart of all that we do by actively involving residents in service design and delivery.
- Revise the Heritage Strategy.

## **Adult Education**

Adult learning plays a pivotal role in strengthening communities, families and the lives of individuals through promoting continuous education. It contributes to the economic and social fabric of society. The benefits are significant in terms of reducing inequalities, preventing ill health, promoting mental wellbeing and increasing employability. Lifelong learning provides a second chance for many facing multiple barriers, often giving access to that first opportunity for employment, and rekindling confidence in ability to learn. It contributes to the skills base of communities. It enables people to retain an active and open attitude to life, and is one of the five key elements for ageing successfully.

In the current year Merton Adult Education (MAE) has attracted 5054 learners, which produce 7000 enrolments annually. In connecting with communities and enabling employability, MAE has prioritised offering a diverse range of courses meeting a range of need, bridging the economic disadvantage gap between the East and West of the borough. In addition courses are offered to individuals wanting learning for personal development. Student recruitment remains good; establishing key partnership links combined with undertaking a range of outreach and marketing activities has contributed to our overachieving our contract targets for the past three years. Successful implementation of this strategy has also resulted in a diverse intergenerational student profile.

Priorities for the administration will include:

- Developing the commercial based on local offer based on local employers.
- Agreeing the future delivery model for adult education in Merton.
- Moving even more quickly and flexibly to match supply to demand.

## **Housing**

Merton's Housing service aims to improve the quality, availability and accessibility of housing in our Borough during a time of change when new legislation is being introduced for housing tenancies, benefit payment and localism. It is now harder to get onto the ownership ladder, local house prices are still rising across the Borough and

there is less funding for new social rented homes. Effective pragmatic provision of housing, housing advice and homelessness prevention is integral to Merton Housing's ambitions. We will continually look at how we can effectively provide a service that best meets the needs of Borough residents, partners and stakeholders.

Priorities for the administration include:

- Maximise the supply of social and private rented sector homes
- Refresh the Homelessness Strategy
- Continue to prevent homelessness and minimise incidences of rough sleeping
- Minimise the use of temporary accommodation
- Respond to the needs of private sector tenants suffering disrepair through negotiation and enforcement
- Work collaboratively with Circle Housing Merton Priory regarding regeneration

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 This report provides an outline of the Cabinet Members priorities over the ext 4 years There are infinite alternative options.

### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1 None

### **5 TIMETABLE**

- 5.1.1 Further reports on these priorities can be brought back where the work programme of the Panel allows.

### **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no financial issues for this report.

### **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no immediate legal or statutory implications arising from this report.

### **8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no such implications arising from this report.

### **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no crime and disorder implications.

### **10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There is no health and safety implications for the council arising from this report.

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

11.1 None

**12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1 None