

Agenda Item 3

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

16 FEBRUARY 2022

(7.15 pm - 10.20 pm)

PRESENT: Councillor Peter Southgate (in the Chair),
Councillor Peter McCabe, Councillor Ben Butler,
Councillor Sally Kenny, Councillor Billy Christie,
Councillor Nick McLean, Councillor Aidan Mundy,
Councillor John Dehaney, Councillor Thomas Barlow,
Mansoor Ahmad, Roz Cordner and Dr Stannard

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors

Zoe Gallen, Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services),
Cathryn James (Interim Assistant Director, Public Protection),
Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration), Louise
Round (Managing Director, South London Legal Partnership and
Monitoring Officer) and Katy Saunders (Safer Merton Business
Support)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Cllr Paul Kohler (with Cllr Simon McGrath as substitute).

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 1)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

The Chair reordered the agenda items. Item 4 'CHAS proposals' was moved to the last item of business in order to enable a private session, due to the commercially sensitive information contained within the report.

4 CHAS PROPOSALS (Agenda Item 4)

The minutes for this item are exempt from publication.

5 HATE CRIME STRATEGY 2022-26 (Agenda Item 5)

The Community Resilience Officer introduced the item and talked through some key points from the report.

Hate crime is a strategic priority for the Community Safety Partnership and key pieces of work so far have included:

- Formation of the Hate Crime Strategy group, which has representatives from the Council, police, and the community.
- Launch of our Hate Crime advice surgeries, third party reporting scheme and the marking of Hate Crime Awareness Week each year.
- Hate Crime Strategy 2022-26 (and the previous strategy 2017-21). The strategy is based around 4 strategic aims, so preventing hate crime, protecting the victim, providing support to hate crime victims, and developing a partnership approach to tackling perpetrators.

In response to further questions:

- Hate Crime Advice Surgery occurs once a month in in the Civic Centre.
- One of the key pillars of our strategy is expanding the number of third-party reporting centres we have in the community. Further exploration is also planned with local businesses and colleges so that reporting centres are accessible to young people.
- Safer Merton Community Safety survey 2021 - 24% of respondents listed hate crimes being a fairly big or very big problem and we will be undertaking further investigation with our data analysts around the exact demographics and findings of the survey.
- Officers to circulate the Stop Hate Helpline details to Members.

6 SAFER MERTON - SAFETY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS (Agenda Item 6)

The Head of Community Safety outlined the contents of the report including information on the existing partnership response to violence against women and girls, the work of the task group, and plans for additional interventions to improve safety.

The report also makes a recommendation to the committee that Merton Council will sign up to the Mayor's Night Safety Charter in a statement of the Council's commitment to improve safety for women and girls.

Merton Community Safety Survey 2021 noted that there was an increase in the proportion of female respondents reporting feeling unsafe outside at night - 45% compared to 38% in the 2019 survey.

Metropolitan Police are stepping up activity focused around preventing night-time violence. They're piloting a scheme called Project Vigilant, which is an operation focused around tackling predatory male behaviour around the night-time economy hot spots.

In response to Commission Members questions, the Head of Community Safety elaborated on the following points:

- The Safer Merton team will be looking at linking in with the Met Police in relation to hearing and understanding the views of women and girls in Merton about where they feel unsafe.
- Welfare and Vulnerability Engagement (WAVE) is a training programme for door staff and staff in the night-time economy. Designed around spotting when someone is vulnerable or needs additional support.
- A Commission Member raised the point that there is not enough information in the report about the fundamental issue of how we stop men being violent towards women, the Cabinet Member commented that there is a piece of work that Cllr Eleanor Stringer is leading on to work with schools on educating young people on the issues of violence against women and the Head of Community Safety agreed more of an emphasis is needed and would be included in the upcoming Cabinet report.
- The lighting team are conducting reviews of the lighting in certain parts of the borough, and that's something we'll continue to do on a location-by-location basis when identifying the locations of concern be that through individual reports or through the work of the Crime Stoppers survey, for example.

The Commission RESOLVED (10 votes in favour) to endorse the recommendation to Cabinet that Merton Council sign up to the Mayor's Night Safety Charter.

7 REPURPOSING THE HIGH STREETS - TASK GROUP REPORT (TO FOLLOW) (Agenda Item 7)

The Commission RESOLVED that the recommendations from the task group be forwarded to Cabinet.

Commission Members commented that they found the report quite light and not necessarily reflective of the conversations they were part of in the task group workshops.

It was felt it would have been helpful to have a bit more detail and a summary of what was said at each meeting including the SWOT analysis for each high street.

8 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)

The work programme was noted.

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