

Agenda Item 3

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

13 MARCH 2024

(7.15 pm - 8.45 pm)

PRESENT: Councillor Edward Foley (in the Chair), Councillor Michael Brunt, Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina, Councillor Laxmi Attawar, Councillor Billy Hayes, Councillor Paul Kohler, Councillor Stuart Neaverson, Councillor John Oliver, Councillor Tony Reiss and Roz Cordner

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Cllr Usaama Kaweesa (with Cllr Michael Butcher as substitute) and Cllr Nick McLean (with Cllr Thomas Barlow as substitute).

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 a true and accurate record of the previous meeting, with the following amendments:

Addition of the word 'now' to working group vote. "It was proposed and seconded that Members organise a working group looking at realigning the scrutiny panels".

A Commission member queried the accuracy of the line in section 5 "Restorative justice – took advice from MOPAC and other 32 other boroughs, but in terms of Domestic Violence it is not possible".

The Scrutiny Officer reviewed the meeting, and the transcript is below:

The Domestic Violence Lead stated that 'Restorative Justice is tricky to use with domestic violence cases because of coercive control. We took advice from VAWG leads across 32 boroughs and, as you know, MOPAC do not commission a Restorative Justice programme around VAWG because of the risks associated with cases.

We don't recommend any form of mediation between a victim and a perpetrator of domestic abuse because of that power dynamic and coercive control. It is something the sector looks at all the time, within community safety, in terms of whether there are any other crime types restorative justice could be used with.

Cllr Kohler requested to share an academic study about restorative justice with officers. The Domestic Violence Lead committed to reading it.

4 NIGHT TIME STRATEGY - PRESENTATION (Agenda Item 4)

Sarah Xavier, Economy Manager, gave a presentation to Members on the plans for the Night-time Strategy.

Next steps are to:

- Assemble Steering Group
- Map our stakeholders
- Work with champions, BID's and town teams
- Map out existing policy and what impact these have on NTE

In response to questions, the following was stated:

- The value of the night-time economy to Merton is yet to be calculated.
- James McGinlay, Assistant Director of Sustainable Communities is the Night-time Champion, with the Future Merton department leading on the work.
- Wandsworth is the first borough to have published their Strategy, which is divided into People, Place, Economy, and Transport. This strategy took 18 months of work.
- Officers recognised the importance of working collaboratively with the licensing committee during and after the consultation.
- Suggestions for stakeholders and partners that need to be involved in this work are always welcomed.

Night-time strategy to return to the Commission once further progress has been made with the consultation.

5 CIVIC PRIDE - SUPPORTING THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR (Agenda Item 5)

Polly Cziok, ED for Innovation and Change, introduced the report, alongside Octavia Lamb, Head of Policy, Strategy and Partnerships, and Amanda Roberts, Policy, Strategy and Partnership Officer.

In response to questions, the following information was provided:

Merton Giving Fund, next round of annual small grants to take place in May. We held several workshops with Merton Connected to assist people through the application process.

Any unsuccessful bids, that fell outside of the remit for criteria, were signposted to further support and full reasons given in feedback.

Action: Officers to liaise with Cllr Akyigyina to provide further information about the unsuccessful bids.

A Commission Member suggested that a short description of what each organisation does would be very helpful in future.

A Commission Member asked whether £500k to Age UK is adequate, and whether £1m out of £5m is enough for older people. Officers stated that there are other sources of funding for older people through Public Health and Adult Social Care.

6 TOPIC SUGGESTIONS 2024/25 (Agenda Item 6)

Members were reminded that the deadline for topic suggestions is 5 April.

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