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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

7 OCTOBER 2014

(19.15 - 21.45)

PRESENT: Councillors Councillor Peter Southgate (in the Chair), Councillor Peter McCabe, Councillor Hamish Badenoch, Councillor John Dehaney, Councillor Brenda Fraser, Councillor Suzanne Grocott, Councillor Jeff Hanna, Councillor Russell Makin, Councillor Dennis Pearce, Councillor David Simpson (substitute for Councillor Oonagh Moulton) and co-opted member Denis Popovs

ALSO PRESENT: Chief Superintendent David Palmer, Claire Cuffie (Anti-Social Behaviour Supervisor & temporary CCTV Manager), Sophie Ellis (Assistant Director of Business Improvement), Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration) and Julia Regan (Head of Democracy Services)

1 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST - SEE NOTE OVERLEAF (Agenda Item 1)

None.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Councillor Oonagh Moulton (substituted by Councillor David Simpson) and from co-opted members Simon Bennett, Peter Connellan and Colin Powell.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 JULY 2014 (Agenda Item 3)

Agreed.

There were no matters arising.

4 POLICING IN MERTON (Agenda Item 4)

Chief Superintendent David Palmer attended on behalf of the Borough Commander. He provided a verbal response to written questions that had been sent to the Borough Commander in advance of the meeting. The questions and answers are set out below.

Q1) What are his views on how the Controlled Drinking Zone (CDZ) is working and what could be done to improve it.

Response – this is a helpful and effective power, particularly when used in conjunction with dispersal zones. Much of its use has been focussed on tackling

street drinking in Mitcham. The Police are working with the Council to ensure the provision of more permanent signage as the temporary signs have been removed by some members of the public.

Q2) What percentage of crime is committed in each of the three districts and what percentage of police manpower is allocated to each?

Response – 41% Mitcham, 28% Morden, 31% Wimbledon. However the type of crime varies in different part of the borough so caution should be exercised in comparing crime rates. The question on manpower is addressed in the response to question 7 below..

Q3) Is most crime committed within 200m of Wimbledon Broadway? Would he like to see a town centre police team to focus on that area?

Response – about 7% of all crime is committed in Wimbledon town centre.. A large proportion of this is shoplifting and low level disorder. A “homebeat” of two officers has recently been created for the town centre to provide permanence and facilitate effective working with local businesses. In an ideal world a town centre police team would be helpful but it is not a priority within current resources.

Q4) Given the need to make significant financial savings, what is the value of each of the two largest police stations in the borough?

Response – the Borough Commander does not have this information. Responsibility for buildings lies with the Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime (MOPAC).

Q5) What is the plan for the buildings that the police have vacated?

Response – there are no plans to vacate Wimbledon or Mitcham police station. Other buildings are leased and so, if and when vacated for efficiency reasons, would no longer be used by the police.

Q6) How is the new neighbourhood policing model working? Is it an effective model? Please base these responses on evidence and state what evidence has been used to support your views.

Response – there have been some teething problems but performance, as measured by the MOPAC indicators, has been exceptionally good. There has been a significant influx of new officers to the boroughs, the training of whom plus increased counter terrorism activity has lead to a significant reduction in the number of officers on normal duties. Police visibility has therefore been lower but will be greater again by the end of October, which will hopefully impact positively on public confidence in the police.

Q7) Where and how are officers being deployed across the borough?

Response – there are 332 police officers deployed in Merton. Deployment is demand led, with decisions made that balance between the volume, severity and impact of the various types of crime on the community. Numbers fluctuate but roughly 125 officers work in response teams, working 24/7 to respond to emergency calls and carry out other duties as required. About 123 are in local policing teams across the borough, patrolling in each ward (1 “homebeat” and one PCSO in each) and dealing with low level calls, appointments, problem solving and follow up work. There are 69 CID officers who investigate crime. The remainder are in the control room, back office functions, senior management and miscellaneous roles.

Q8) How frequently are officers pulled out of the borough and for what reasons?

Response – this varies, affecting about 1200 officer days in January-June 2014. Reasons include major sporting events, political events, public order and counter terrorism activities.

In response to an additional question, David Palmer said that court attendance by the police is directed by the Crown Prosecution Service and cover is arranged as appropriate.

Q9) What enhancements would the Borough Commander like to see made to the CCTV system?

Response – the quality of the image is the most important factor. Location also important to focus on crime and traffic accident hotspots. Having good operators in the CCTV control room is vital and three of Merton’s have recently receive police awards for good work.

Q10) Please provide an update on the sponsorship offer by the Baitul Futuh Mosque to pay the qualification fee for 50 local people for the certificate of policing knowledge that new recruits are required to gain prior to starting work with the police. How many of those recruits will be deployed in Merton?

Response – two are currently in training and due to be deployed in Merton.

In addition, 42 local people have passed the first stage of the selection process for recruitment of police constables. The Baitul Futuh Mosque has agreed to support and fund two of these and they will be returning to the Borough. The Mosque has agreed to support other local people in the process if they need assistance. .

Q11) What support is provided to schools to combat crime in schools and what statistics are available regarding the level of crime in schools?

Response – there are police officers assigned to all secondary schools in the borough. The level of crime is modest and usually dealt with by the school. PCSOs

do some work with primary schools and could do more in particular schools if a ward councillor indicates that there is a need for this.

Commission members thanked David Palmer for his responses and asked whether written responses to questions could be provided in advance of the meeting in future. David Palmer undertook to discuss this with the Borough Commander.

5 CCTV REVIEW (Agenda Item 5)

Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration, introduced the report and drew the Commission's attention to the summary of the findings of the independent review, set out in paragraphs 2.4-2.7 of the report. He said that an action plan had been developed and the CCTV steering group would oversee its implementation. Most of the recommendations would be implemented, except the ones on internal recharging as this would not be an appropriate way of working within the council. At its next meeting, Cabinet will be asked to approve £460k of capital funding over a two year period.

Chris Lee introduced Claire Cuffie, Anti-Social Behaviour Supervisor & temporary CCTV Manager. He said there would be a restructure and a permanent manger would be appointed. The post would be funded from existing resources.

In discussion, members of the Commission sought reassurance that there would be a return on investment made in upgrading the CCTV equipment and asked whether there was any evidence on this from other places. Chris Lee said that, although definitive cost-benefit data is not available for the service, the graphic user interface that would be installed would provide some performance management information on what the images had been used for and the outcome.

Chris Lee added that the service provides a public benefit and is very helpful to the police as well as having an impact on crime and the fear of crime. There are fixed costs associated with providing the service and there will be opportunities to attract income to offset some of this cost. For example, discussion is currently taking place with the Wimbledon Business Improvement District regarding the future location and funding of cameras. Also, reduction in revenue costs will be achieved through cheaper maintenance contracts and reduction in the staffing budget. Commission members expressed concern about the weaknesses in management of the service that had been identified by the review. Chris Lee said that he accepted those findings and had already taken steps to address the issues raised and would continue to do so.

Members of the Commission also sought reassurance that the privacy issues identified in the review were being addressed. Chris Lee said that these would be addressed on the individual cameras that are affected.

In summary, Commission members said that although they recognise the complexities involved, there is a need to demonstrate value for money and good management of the service. The Commission therefore:

RESOLVED that the Commission be kept informed of progress made through a report from the CCTV Steering Group that will provide an update on measures taken to improve management of the service, identify appropriate performance indicators, procure new equipment and review existing maintenance contracts as well as the development of a new CCTV strategy. Report to be received at Commission meeting on 25 March 2015. The Commission further requested the opportunity to comment on the CCTV policy when it has been revised.

5a CCTV REPORT - EXEMPT APPENDICES (Agenda Item 5a)

6 CUSTOMER CONTACT PROGRAMME UPDATE (Agenda Item 6)

Sophie Ellis, Assistant Director of Business Improvement, introduced the report, highlighting the progress that had been made in respect of the competitive dialogue tendering process and the detailed specification setting out outcomes sought in respect of customers and the council.

Sophie Ellis provided additional information and clarification in response to questions:

- Planet Press is a software system to streamline process for mass mailing
- retention of information and data will be determined by the requirements of the Data Protection Act and advice from the council's Information Governance Team
- the bidders will be asked to work out how existing data will be transferred and to ensure that there are accurate master datasets of customers and addresses
- information about all other projects currently underway has been shared with the bidders
- provision has been made for break clauses and penalties if the contractor fails to meet service standards or timescales

Members of the Commission said they were pleased with progress made and that they welcomed the cautious approach taken to this ambitious programme. The Commission will receive a further update in March 2015.

7 PROPOSAL FOR A NEW APPROACH TO THE APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS (Agenda Item 7)

The Chair introduced the proposals for a formal process for the appointment of non voting co-opted members, drawing on procedures that the Healthier Communities and Older people Overview and Scrutiny Panel has recently put in place.

The Vice Chair (who is the Chair of the Healthier Communities Panel) said that the Panel wanted to attract co-opted members from across the community through an open and transparent recruitment process. He said that a similar approach had been used by the Standards Committee and this had resulted in co-opted members who had made an effective contribution to the committee. Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services, added that the proposed approach could be adopted flexibly to meet the specific individual needs of the Commission and the three Panels.

The Commission RESOLVED to adopt the proposed approach and recommended that appointments be made for a 12 month period and that positions be advertised in My Merton.

8 FINANCIAL MONITORING TASK GROUP - NOTE OF MEETING ON 22 JULY 2014 (Agenda Item 8)

The Commission noted the minutes of the task group meeting.

9 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TRAINING PROGRAMME 2014-15 (Agenda Item 9)

RESOLVED: to agree the training programme set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report.

10 WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15 (Agenda Item 10)

RESOLVED: to agree the work programme, with the addition of an update on CCTV to the Commission's meeting on 25 March 2015.