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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

14 JULY 2015

(19.15 - 21.50)

PRESENT

Councillor Peter Southgate (in the Chair),
Councillor Peter McCabe, Councillor Stan Anderson,
Councillor Hamish Badenoch, Councillor Brenda Fraser,
Councillor Jeff Hanna, Councillor Abigail Jones,
Councillor Brian Lewis-Lavender, Councillor Oonagh Moulton,
Councillor Katy Neep, Denis Popovs and Geoffrey Newman

Dr Kay Eilbert (Director of Public Health), Amy Potter (Public Health Consultant), John Hill (Head of Public Protection and Development, Julia Regan (Head of Democracy Services), Chief Inspector Mark Lawrence and Chief Superintendent Stuart Macleod (Borough Commander))

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

None.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)

None.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 MARCH (Agenda Item 3)

The Commission agreed the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

4 POLICING IN MERTON - PRESENTATION BY BOROUGH COMMANDER (Agenda Item 4)

The Borough Commander, Chief Superintendent Stuart Macleod, introduced the report. He said that the crime statistics showed that Merton is on a par or better than most neighbouring boroughs and highlighted the achievement in reaching the MOPAC target of reducing overall crime by 20%. He also explained the approach that had been taken regarding the review of the deployment of police across the borough and the changes that he had put in place.

Commission members welcomed the report and were pleased with the level of detail and explanation as well as the approach taken to the deployment of officers in Merton.

The Borough Commander and Chief Inspector Mark Lawrence provided some additional information and clarification in response to questions:

- the increase in crimes of violence with injury is a Londonwide, and to some extent national, trend primarily caused by a more robust process for reporting such crimes rather than an actual increase in incidence
- the Borough Commander will continue to press for a two sector model but doesn't anticipate this being achieved in the near future due to financial pressures facing the Metropolitan Police. In the meantime, it is helpful to retain flexibility so that changing circumstances can be responded to in an appropriate manner
- crime statistics suggest that there is not a need for a town centre team in Morden at present but this will be kept under review
- the Police work closely with the Public Health team, especially on licensing issues and this has been helpful
- all police officers receive mandatory first aid training twice a year plus ad hoc training on issues such as mental illness.

RESOLVED: the Commission thanked the Borough Commander for providing such a thorough report and sending it in advance of the meeting. The Borough Commander and Chief Inspector Mark Lawrence were also thanked for answering questions comprehensively.

5 STOP AND SEARCH MONITORING DATA - PRESENTATION BY THE CHAIR OF MERTON'S STOP AND SEARCH MONITORING GROUP (Agenda Item 5)

Christine Matthews said that she had just stepped down as Chair of Merton Independent Stop and Search Monitoring Group after more than ten years in the role. She is still Chair of the Pan London Group.

Christine Matthews briefly introduced the report as well as providing information on the composition and remit of the monitoring group that holds the police to account for every aspect of the stop and search process. She said that the latest figures, for May 2015, showed that there were 136 searches in Merton and 26 arrests – an arrest rate of 19.9% which compares well to the MOPAC target of 20%.

Members said that the data that had been provided was helpful and noted the low numbers in Merton compared to other boroughs. Christine Matthews said that she had brought this to the attention of the Chief Inspector. Factors such as demographic composition, in particular a high proportion of school age residents, help to explain the data. Christine Matthews said that the data raises questions that require further detail and this is what the monitoring group does – for example, a piece of work carried out some years ago revealed that only 50% of those stopped were borough residents.

In response to questions about whether the police had got the balance right in terms of the number of stop and searches carried out, the Borough Commander said that that is a matter of opinion and a contentious subject. His view is that there are times when it is appropriate for searches to be carried out and that officers should not be shy of doing so. The powers relating to the circumstances under which stop and

search can be carried out have been reduced and there has been a sustained “Stop IT” campaign to reduce the numbers.

In response to a question about the ethnic profile of the police compared to the local community, the Borough Commander said that a lot is being done to encourage people from black and ethnic minority communities to join the police but change would take some time.

Christine Matthews said that they also monitor complaints but that the level is low and in her opinion this is because young people in particular find it difficult, or intimidating, to make complaints about the police and that it would be good to find a better mechanism.

In response to questions about working with young people, Christine Matthews said that it had been hard to get young people representatives on the monitoring group. She cited a recent football event that had been a successful way of raising young people’s knowledge of stop and search as well as being a fun activity for them. The Borough Commander added that there had been a lot of engagement through the school police officers too.

RESOLVED: to thank Christine Matthews for all the work and the valuable role she has carried out in holding the police to account whilst Chair of the Merton Independent Stop and Search Monitoring Group.

The Borough Commander formally added his thanks to Christine Matthews.

6 ENSURING THE COUNCIL HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON HEALTH - PRESENTATION BY THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH (Agenda Item 6)

The Director of Public Health, Kay Eilbert, introduced the item and said that she welcomed the opportunity to ask the Commission for help in embedding public health work across the council.

Kay Eilbert set out how the council worked on many of the influences on health, which offers significant opportunities to ensure that all council work has a positive impact on health. She said that health outcomes in Merton are generally good but there are significant inequalities within the borough.

Kay Eilbert stressed that public health have taken a two pronged approach in recognising the part played by individual choice but also working to help people to choose the healthy option – the slide on page 41 shows that this is more difficult when individuals face barriers such as unemployment, poor housing or lack of education. She said that the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-18 has built on this approach - copies were handed out at the meeting and the strategy has been published on the council’s website.

Kay Eilbert and her colleague Amy Potter, Consultant in Public Health, provided additional information and clarification in response to questions:

- discussions are taking place with service departments in order to progress the use of health impact assessments
- the council is constrained by licensing and planning policy but there are powers that have been used by other boroughs (such as restricting clusters of fast food outlets) that could be introduced in Merton
- work is being done to educate consumers and food outlets on using less fat, salt and sugar
- the public health team has a good relationship with the licensing team and has been making representations on individual licence applications as well as commenting on a draft statement of licensing policy that is currently out for consultation
- the community health champion scheme is another example of a successful approach

In response to questions about the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Kay Eilbert said that progress reports would be taken to the Health and Wellbeing Board as the owner of this partnership strategy but reports could be provided to scrutiny too if required. Amy Potter added that some of the targets look modest because they relate to items with a worsening trajectory and the target has been set to stop this deterioration. Also a three year target period is a relatively short period of time against much longer term goals. Kay Eilbert said that every attempt has been made to model targets realistically.

The Chair suggested that more could be done by scrutiny to raise the profile of public health and that it would be useful to keep a watching brief on the work of the health and Wellbeing Board.

RESOLVED: the Commission requested that any subsequent reports to scrutiny should contain baseline data, targets and data setting out progress at key dates.

7 REPORT OF THE IMMUNISATION SCRUTINY TASK GROUP (Agenda Item 7)

Councillor Brenda Fraser, chair of the immunisation task group, introduced the report. She said that the task group had agreed to focus on 0-5 year olds and had worked with partners and with support from the public health team. She added that she is keen to ensure that implementation of the task group's recommendations is reviewed to ensure that there is an impact.

Members expressed concerns about the quality of the data on immunisation rates. The Director of Public Health, Kay Eilbert, explained the difficulties and said that the data has been much more accurate since it has been extracted from the information system where GPs record the immunisations and analysis therefore no longer needs to await a separate submission from GPs – this has increased the recorded uptake rates in Merton.

Denis Popovs, co-opted member, said that he had experienced difficulties in registering with GPs and in getting information about immunisation. Kay Eilbert undertook to raise this with the Clinical Commissioning Group.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Commission endorses the recommendations arising from the scrutiny review, with the addition of a recommendation that the public health team should take every care to ensure that the immunisation data received from Public Health England is accurate
- 2) That the Commission agrees to forward the review report, with the additional recommendation, to the Health and Wellbeing Board for approval and implementation of the recommendations by means of an action plan to be drawn up by officers and relevant partners working with the Cabinet Member
- 3) That the Commission would monitor the resulting action plan

8 REPORT OF THE SHARED SERVICES SCRUTINY TASK GROUP (Agenda Item 8)

Councillor Peter Southgate, chair of the task group, introduced the report. He said that this is the first in a series of task groups to review different models of service delivery. He informed the Commission that this is a fast moving area, for example, since the review completed, Cabinet has received a report on changes to the shared HR service and the establishment of a new shared service for audit.

RESOLVED to endorse the report and recommend that the task group should address the following issues in its future work on service delivery:

- To include a recommendation that the council should keep an eye on what is happening elsewhere and evaluate this with a view to establishing whether a similar approach would be beneficial to Merton
- To seek evidence on the approach to scoping out the options for different models of service delivery and advocate a more consistent and rigorous approach as appropriate

9 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16 (Agenda Item 9)

RESOLVED:

- 1) To agree the Commission's work programme for the 2015/16 municipal year as set out in Appendix 1
- 2) To re-appoint Councillors Hamish Badenoch, Suzanne Grocott, Peter McCabe, Dennis Pearce and Peter Southgate to the financial monitoring task group
- 3) To appoint Councillors Hamish Badenoch, Suzanne Grocott, Russell Makin, Peter Southgate and Imran Uddin (subject to their agreement) to carry out a task group review of outsourced services, followed by a review of commissioned services. The Head of Democracy Services should email all non-executive councillors to see if they would like to join the task group.

10 MEMBER SURVEY 2015 - ANALYSIS (Agenda Item 10)

Councillor Peter Southgate introduced the report, drawing attention to the fall in the overall satisfaction level and the list of proposed actions on page 136.

Members discussed whether an independent review of the scrutiny function would be useful and agreed to implement the proposed actions and review progress next year. There was general agreement that, if an independent review was commissioned in future, it should include an assessment of the option to return to the committee system.

11 NOTE OF THE FINANCIAL MONITORING SCRUTINY TASK GROUP
MEETING 1 JULY 2015 (Agenda Item 11)

Noted.