

Merton Electoral Review – Draft Submission from Merton Council (06.03.19)

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Introduction

1. Merton Council welcomes the review of its electoral boundaries and the opportunity to submit representations to the Boundary Commission. This report has been produced by an officer working group and submitted to the council's Standards and General Purposes Committee for approval on 14 March 2019. Comments and recommendations from this cross-party committee have been incorporated into the report.
2. The working group reported to the Chief Executive and comprised the council's Monitoring Officer, Head of Electoral Services, Head of Democracy Services, Head of Policy, Strategy and Partnerships, Head of Future Merton, as well as IT and planning officers and the council's lead member on consultation and engagement.

Recommendations

3. Merton Council recommends that the number of councillors should be reduced from 60 to 57. The council considers that it can fulfil all of its required functions with a reduction of 3 councillors, whilst retaining the existing high standard of governance, scrutiny, partnership working and casework support to residents.
4. A reduction to 57 councillors would equate to an electoral ratio of 2,662 electors for each councillor in 2018, which is projected to increase to 2,858 electors per councillor in 2025. This would keep Merton in line with the electoral ratio in neighbouring boroughs, Kingston upon Thames (2,405), Richmond upon Thames (2,580) and Sutton (2,783). Croydon, which is a much larger borough, would be an exception at 4,028 electors per councillor.
5. Furthermore, the rate of predicted population growth in Merton is faster than that predicted for its neighbouring boroughs, so that the electoral ratio of those boroughs is likely to converge with Merton's (assuming those boroughs do not dramatically reduce the number of councillors). The population growth data is set out in Appendix 1.
6. In reaching this recommendation on the optimum size, the Council has considered all options, from retaining the existing number of 60 councillors, reducing to 57 and reducing to 54 or further. Full details of these projections are included in Appendix 1.
7. The council would not recommend a reduction of more than 3 councillors. One of the reasons for this is the impact that population growth and the changing demographics within the borough will have on the workload of both executive and non-executive councillors. Merton has a more mobile population than previously, new black and minority ethnic groups settling in the borough, an increase in social renters, an increased number of vulnerable older people as well as growing numbers of children and young people. Furthermore, the

increasingly challenging financial context will require the executive to continue to take difficult and sometimes controversial decisions that will need to be closely scrutinised by their councillor colleagues as well as by the thriving and active local resident population both individually and through community groups.

8. The council and local political parties have worked hard to attract high calibre prospective councillors that reflect the ethnic, socio-economic, gender and age profile of the borough. An increase in the workload of councillors would be likely to deter those who have employment and caring responsibilities and therefore would result in councillors being drawn from a smaller, less representative pool.

Summary of evidence

9. Supporting evidence for the council's recommendation on the number of councillors is set out in the main body of the report and is summarised thematically below.

Workload

10. National research by De Montfort University, published in July 2017¹, found that the workload of councillors is increasing and that they face greater demands on their time, greater weight and complexity of work and an increasing need to respond to demands placed on them by the council and by local communities.
11. This is certainly the case in Merton. Councillors already have a high workload in terms of attendance at meetings, representation on external bodies, involvement in partnership working, casework and community leadership within their wards:
 - councillors serve on an average of 3.4 council committees; 28 of the 60 councillors sit on 4 or more committees
 - in May 2018, councillors were appointed to 34 seats to represent the council on 17 external bodies. The councillors' register of interests shows that many more councillors also sit on the boards of local community organisations in a range of voluntary capacities
 - councillors are involved in a number of formal partnership bodies and attend regular partnership meetings during the year. All councillors attend their relevant community forum meetings
 - reduction in council budgets has resulted in reduced support for councillors from the council and an expectation that councillors should be self-servicing and deal with their own casework and other administrative tasks.

¹ The Voice of the Councillor, 2017, Final report of the De Montfort University and Municipal Journal Councillor Commission. <https://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/business-and-law-documents/2017/the-voice-of-the-councillor-2017-final-version-cc-rw-2.pdf>

Partnership

12. The Merton Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership) co-ordinates the delivery of services and other activities in the borough to improve the quality of life and physical environment experienced by Merton residents and visitors to the borough. Councillors have a central role to play in the Merton Partnership. The Leader of the Council chairs the partnership and its Executive Board. Councillors are also represented at senior levels on each of the four thematic boards and their sub-groups: Safer and Stronger; Sustainable Communities and Transport; Health and Wellbeing, and; the Children's Trust. In addition, to these thematic boards, Merton has an active Compact Board chaired by the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities, with other councillors regularly attending.

Overview and scrutiny

13. Merton has an active overview and scrutiny function that has been able to successfully hold the executive and other local service providers to account as well as influencing policy development through task group reviews and through pre-decision scrutiny.
14. The scrutiny function is widely respected, as demonstrated through the annual members survey and the inclusion of an example of good practice from Merton in the Communities and Local Government House of Commons Select Committee review presented to Parliament in 2018².
15. More than half of Merton's councillors are actively involved in scrutiny panels and task group work, including visits to local services, examination of good practice in Merton and elsewhere, plus engagement activities with service users and local residents.
16. The 2017/18 annual report of overview and scrutiny (in Appendix 6) sets out the activity undertaken by Merton's scrutiny councillors and the outcomes achieved.

Policy challenges and financial pressures

17. The financial pressures facing the borough means the council is looking to be an enabler; to build resilient communities and work with partners and the voluntary sector to provide services. There will be a greater emphasis on councillors to help drive this process. Many councillors in Merton are involved with local community groups and are trustees of local charities, working with them in their wards and referring residents to them for support and advice.

²Effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees, Report of the Communities and Local Government House of Commons Select Committee, 2018.

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcomloc/369/369.pdf>

18. The way the council operates is changing significantly to maximise the use of information technology in the way it provides its services. Enabling and encouraging contact through digital channels makes it easier for residents to interact with and engage with their councillors. This has increased the number of interactions that councillors now have with residents, increasing the number of cases they take forward on behalf of their ward constituents.
19. Since the last ward boundary review 19 years ago, the role and responsibilities of local government have changed considerably, as has the role that councillors play in this. The Local Government Act 2000, the Localism Act 2011 and the Care Act 2014 all set out new responsibilities, but also new freedoms, meaning councillors have been enabled to take on a more active role in decision making. The far-reaching changes to the UK welfare system since 2010 and the associated legislative changes have contributed to an increase in the volume, and complexity, of the casework that councillors are undertaking on behalf of their ward constituents.

Demographic change

20. Merton has a diverse and growing population. Overall numbers of residents are projected to increase by 6.3% from 209,421 in 2018 to 222,714 in 2025. This is a faster rate of growth than for neighbouring boroughs (see Appendix 1). The age profile is predicted to shift over this time, with notable growth in the proportions of older people (65 years and older) and of 5-17 year olds.
21. The proportion of Merton's population) from a Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic (BAME) group is expected to increase from 37% to 38% by 2025. Currently, English, Polish and Tamil are the most commonly spoken languages in Merton. Children and young people from BAME backgrounds make up 67.9% of those attending a Merton school.
22. There is a gap of 6.2 years in life expectancy for men between the 30% most deprived and 30% least deprived areas in Merton. The gap is 3.9 years for women.
23. Changing patterns of housing tenure are expected to continue, notably with an increase in the number of tenants in the private rented sector.
24. These changes in the number and profile of the population will have an impact on councillor workload in terms of policy development, casework and community involvement activities.

Borough Profile

Merton - the place

25. Comprising of 20 wards, the borough of Merton covers an area of approximately 14.7 square miles and has a population at 2018 of just over 209,000 residents living in 84,000 properties. The borough has five main commercial centres (Colliers Wood, Mitcham, Morden, Raynes Park and Wimbledon), each with well-developed characteristics of their own. The borough is predominantly suburban in character, with high levels of commuter flows in and out of central London.
26. Merton is well connected with both central London and neighbouring boroughs, with 15 mainline stations and 28 bus routes. Wimbledon is a central transport hub in the South London area while the suburban station at Mitcham Eastfields connects the east of the borough. Both the District and Northern underground lines run through the borough while the Tramlink provides connections between Wimbledon and Croydon via Mitcham and Morden.
27. Crossrail 2 is set to come to Wimbledon by 2031, and the Council has started masterplanning the expected changes in the town centre and the wider area. It has been announced that Raynes Park will also be a Crossrail 2 station and that this will double the current service towards central London by 2030. The changes to these two town centres is likely to include with them a number of new housing developments.
28. Population density is higher in the wards of the east of the borough compared to the wards in the west. In terms of its household makeup, 23.5% of households are private renters, with 10.4% of properties socially rented. 58% of social housing and 63% of private rented homes are flats, compared with only 24% in the owner-occupied sector. 9.2% of households in Merton are overcrowded.
29. There has been an increase in the number of homes in multiple occupation in Merton in recent years. Changes in the law in 2018 have increased the number of properties that now need to be licenced with additional resources required to ensure compliance and investigations. The council's HMO register in October 2018 had 161 HMOs with a Mandatory Licence, with more than 100 applications received since then. Issues relating to the rising number of HMO applications has been a key contributor in an increase in councillor case work.
30. The recommended default population projection to use for general London population projections is the Greater London Authority (GLA) Housing led projection. This model reconciles population growth with available housing supply and includes information about planned housing development.
31. The GLA housing led projection estimates that Merton's population will increase to 222,717 by 2025 and 232,473 by 2030.

Merton – the people

32. Currently 12.4% of the population is aged 65 or over, higher than the London average of 11.7%. The age profile of the borough is predicted to shift with a notable growth in the proportion of the population that are under the age of 16 and those over 50. By 2025, Merton's population of those aged 65-84 and 85+ are both set to increase, while the percentage of the working age population (18-64) is set to decrease.
33. The number of households is projected to rise to 99,000 by 2021, an average annual household growth of 2.2%, with much of the increase expected to be in single person households.
34. Merton has a rich mix of ethnicity, culture, and languages. GLA data at 2018 puts Merton's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population at 76,800, meaning BAME groups make up just under 37% of the population. The 2011 Census showed that the largest migrant groups in the population by country of birth are Polish, Sri Lankan and South African. Merton's BAME population is set to increase by 1% by 2025, whereas the White British/White Irish population is set to decrease from 45% to 42%.
35. In absolute terms the largest migration flows between Merton and other local authorities involve the surrounding boroughs. Migration inwards is typically younger families and couples moving in from Wandsworth, Lambeth and Kingston due to better affordability. Those that settle in Morden/Mitcham do not tend to move out of their area. Areas such as Colliers Wood/South Wimbledon are more transient due to the urban and suburban character of each area and the household type that these areas attract.

Deprivation and health and wellbeing

36. There are significant inequalities and extremes in the borough in terms of the level of deprivation in some wards. The more deprived areas are primarily in the east of the borough, which includes some of the top 15% most income-deprived in the country. Some of the wards in the west of the borough are amongst the top 5% most affluent in the country. Three wards are more deprived than the average for London: Cricket Green, Figge's Marsh and Pollards Hill.
37. Life expectancy at birth in Merton is 80.8 years for males and 84.2 years for females. Within the borough there are significant inequalities in health outcomes, aligned with deprivation. There is a gap of 6.2 years in life expectancy for men between the most deprived and least deprived areas in Merton. The gap is 3.9 years for women.

Policy Context

Challenges and Priorities

38. The council's emerging four cross cutting themes reflect the priorities for the organisation going forward:
- Resilient Merton - helping individuals and communities to work together and to help themselves
 - Collaborative Merton - actively collaborate across Council departments, partners and other sectors to provide the most efficient services for our customers
 - Smart Merton - adapt our ways of working and equip the organisation to meet increasing demand within reduced budgets
 - Ambitious Merton – maximising the opportunities and raising the profile of Merton, as a choice for Londoners
39. Merton's Community Plan sets the vision for how the council and the wider Merton Partnership works together to strengthen communities and improve the social wellbeing of the borough's residents. The Community Plan is in the process of being reviewed to shape the long term priorities for the Merton Partnership up to 2025. Councillors have an important role to play in the development of the new plan and in the various streams of engagement activity, to ensure that they are aware of the views of their ward constituents, particularly those whose voice is not always heard.
40. The current priorities for the council are ensuring that it is looking after the most vulnerable including adults, children and low income families, as well as securing affordable housing in the borough, improving air quality, increasing the number of school places, and the regeneration of Morden town centre.
41. Councillors play a key role in both the development of priorities and their delivery. They bring the views of their communities and their priorities to the debate either through consultation in Community Forums, policy development in Overview and Scrutiny or decision making at Cabinet and Council. They subsequently play a key role in monitoring performance of the council and its partners in delivering those priorities through Overview and Scrutiny. Further detail can be found in the section on governance and decision making.

Financial challenge and transforming the organisation

42. Local government continues to be affected by reductions in the level of funding that it receives from central government. Local Government Association analysis demonstrates that government grants to local government have fallen by nearly 40% since 2010 and that by 2020 local authorities will have lost 75 pence out of every £1 of core central government funding that it had to spend in 2015. Over the last five years in Merton, the council's revenue spend has reduced from £155.905m in 2013/14 to £135.05m in 2018/19.

43. The financial reality facing local government is central to the choices councillors make on how it continues to deliver its services. The organisation's strategic direction is based on a set of guiding principles that says the council should continue to provide essential services for residents and maintain, within limits, services to the vulnerable and elderly.
44. Councillors already have a key role to play in setting the council's budget, but as the financial challenges for local government continue to be impacted by increasing demand for services, there will be an even greater requirement for councillors to be fully informed and engaged around the tough choices they will need to make. Merton's Constitution requires Cabinet to consult with overview and scrutiny on the budget – this is currently conducted through two rounds of meetings, one in November and the second in January to enable scrutiny councillors to fully contribute to budget proposals and to refer comments and recommendations back for consideration by Cabinet.
45. Since 2010 the Government has sought to make the local government funding system more locally based. Whilst there still is a formula approach to distributing money based on need, more additional funding is being retained and decided on locally. One of the key implications is that decisions affecting the local economy now have a much greater impact on the council's income and expenditure, therefore the decision making of councillors will play a far more significant role in the council's ability to manage its budget than ever before. This will further increase from 2020/21 when revenue support grant will be phased out and local government will be reliant on council tax and business rate receipts.
46. The financial pressures facing Merton mean the council is aiming not just to be a 'place-maker' but a 'place-shaper'. The council is looking to be an enabler, working with partners, including the voluntary sector, to provide services, and there will be a greater emphasis on councillors to help drive this process. In looking to address the significant financial challenges the borough faces, Merton continues to support its vibrant and active voluntary and community sector recognising its importance as a strong asset in providing a range of services, particularly to vulnerable citizens. Many councillors in Merton are trustees of local charities, working with them in their wards and local communities, and referring residents to them for support and advice.
47. Merton Council continues to drive the use of information technology to streamline processes. Providing value for money services to residents by finding innovative solutions to increase efficiency is at the heart of the council's business model.
48. The greater use of technology and social media, and encouraging contact with the council to be through digital channels has also made it easier for residents

to interact with and engage with their councillors. This has increased the number of interactions that councillors now have with members of the local community, increasing the number of cases they take forward on behalf of their constituents. Further detail on councillor casework is provided in the section on the representational role of councillors.

Impact of national and local policy changes

49. The last boundary review in Merton was carried out in 1998, with the final results published in 1999. The Boundary Commission recommended that Merton should be served by 60 councillors – an increase from 57 - representing 20 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality. The recommendations sought to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor was ‘nearly as possible’ the same, having regard to local circumstances and that across the 20 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 6 per cent from the borough average.
50. Since the last review 19 years ago, the role and responsibilities of local government have changed considerably, as has the role that councillors play in this. The Local Government Act 2000 resulted in an overhaul of the way decision making is made by local authorities - Merton moved from a committee system to a Leader and Executive model of governance with Overview and Scrutiny, significantly increasing the work of councillors in decision making.
51. The Localism Act 2011 contained a number of proposals that gave local authorities new freedoms and flexibility, most notably including a ‘general power of competence’ that gave councils the legal capacity to do anything that an individual can do that is not specifically prohibited. This included giving councils more freedom to work together and encouraging them to seek more creative and innovative approaches. The Localism Act emphasised that by removing some of the boundaries and devolving power to a more local level, councillors would be much more enabled to take on a more active role in decision making.
52. Other key policy changes or legislation that have had an impact on the role of councillors include the Care Act 2014 that defines the primary responsibility of local authorities in the promotion of individual wellbeing. The Act enshrines the responsibility for adult safeguarding. The Local Government Association (LGA) highlights the crucial roles for councillors in examining how safeguarding is experienced by local people, how people are consulted and involved in developing policies and monitoring services, and how they can be involved in their own safeguarding plans and procedures. According to the LGA³: “Growing awareness of the prevalence of abuse makes it all the more urgent and

³ Councillors briefing 2015, Safeguarding adults, Local Government Association
<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/councillors-briefing-safe-5fc.pdf>

necessary for councillors to take action locally to ensure that everyone, including professionals, the voluntary sector and the general public are made aware of abuse and neglect, how to recognise and report it, who is responsible for intervening, and what people's rights are to protection, support, choice and advocacy".

53. The Care Act 2014 also requires local authorities to promote integration with the NHS and work with other key health partners to improve services locally. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 transferred responsibilities for public health services to local authorities plus a range of other services previously provided by the NHS including sexual health services and services to address drug or alcohol misuse. The Health and Social Care Act established Health and Wellbeing Boards as statutory bodies. Three councillors in Merton are members of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
54. Since 2010, the UK welfare system has experienced far-reaching changes, and councils have been required to implement the significant welfare reforms that have been introduced. These reforms have resulted in changes around eligibility and payments as well as delivery and implementation. Most notably has been the replacement of six key benefits with Universal Credit, claimants being required to meet certain conditions or face losing access to benefits, changes to assessment and entitlement to incapacity and disability-related benefits. The reforms to welfare provision have seen an increase in the amount, and complexity, of the casework that councillors are undertaking on behalf of their ward constituents.
55. The decision for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union in March 2019 will also have a range of significant effects on local government and the communities they serve. Merton launched its Hate Crime Strategy shortly after the EU vote which references that 74% of Londoners say they are concerned about hate crime and that recorded figures saw an increase after the referendum result, with more than 3000 allegations of hate crime made to UK police. Councillors have a vital role to play as community leaders and shapers of place and building cohesive communities.
56. According to the Census data from the Office of National Statistics, as at 2011 there were 18,690 EU nationals in the borough. This is 9.3% of the borough's population. Of this total number, 7,649 are from EU member states as of 2001, while 11,041 are from the EU Accession countries that became member states between April 2001 and March 2011. Since the last census, information from the council's electoral roll shows that the total number of EU residents in the borough has increased to 20,146.
57. A Cabinet role has been created to assess the impact of Brexit and ensure that actions are being taken as appropriate. The council has also set up a cross departmental task group to direct actions being taken in relation to Brexit. Work

is continuing within the scrutiny process to look at the ways the council can better support residents that are EU nationals as Brexit progresses. All councillors will be called upon to provide community leadership during the period of uncertainty following Brexit and, specifically, to support EU residents in order to achieve the optimum outcome for that individual, including to secure settled status if desired.

Electoral registration

58. Since the introduction of individual electoral registration (IER) in June 2014, the number of electors on the Merton electoral register initially decreased, before increasing to record levels after the occurrence of national polls from 2015 to 2017. Since 2017 the electorate has remained stable.
59. The fact that the electorate is now higher than pre IER levels show that Merton has successfully managed the transition to the new registration system. However, challenges remain, particularly around those electors that are classed as hard to reach, such as private renters, 18-24 year olds and students.
60. Merton has so far trialled tablet canvassing in 20% of canvass areas across the borough, to discover whether this is a viable way of increasing registration rates. A variety of canvass areas from both the east and the west of the borough were selected for the trial in order to have a cross section of communities involved. In 2017 the canvassers using tablets were responsible for 42% of all new registrations across the borough during the canvass. It is estimated that if tablet canvassing was introduced across the whole borough then registrations during the canvass could increase by over 30%.
61. Further reform of the registration system, in the form of changes to the annual canvass, (currently scheduled for 2020) will increase the use of data led solutions and make it easier and cheaper for electoral registration officers to engage in targeted activity aimed at those properties where officers believe that changes have taken place. This reform will also enable tablet canvassing to be introduced across the whole borough from 2020, therefore potentially increasing registration rates.
62. Merton has an electorate to adult population ratio of 93% based on 2018 figures. It is expected that the planned changes to the registration system will enable Merton to increase registration rates after 2020, which will in theory also increase this ratio. It is projected that the electorate will rise to around 162,915 by 2025, which based on an adult population of 170,818, is an electorate to population ratio of 95%. If in 2025 Merton is operating with 57 councillors, this means that the electorate to councillor ratio will have increased from 2529 in 2018 to 2858 in 2025.
63. Reducing to 57 Cllrs would return Merton to the same number of Cllrs that the council operated with from 1978-1998, prior to the previous boundary review in 1999.

Governance and decision making

64. Merton is made up of 20 three member wards, comprising a total of 60 councillors from four political groups. The political balance of the council is currently 34 Labour, 17 Conservative, 6 Liberal Democrat and 3 Merton Park Ward Independent Resident councillors.
65. The council and local political parties are committed to attracting prospective councillors who are as representative of the local population as possible. Merton's councillors are a diverse group, including many younger councillors who work full time, those with caring responsibilities, a wide age range, 35% women and approximately 25% from visible BAME communities.
66. Merton has operated the Leader and Cabinet model since October 2001.

Full Council

67. The full Council comprises all 60 councillors, is chaired by the Mayor of Merton and meets 7 times a year plus additional special meetings as required. The responsibilities of full Council include electing the Mayor of Merton and the Leader of the Council, appointing the Chief Executive and for agreeing the Council's budget and policy framework. There are a number of plans and strategies which make up the policy framework that are reserved to full Council to approve or adopt, which are listed in the Council's Constitution. The full Council also has responsibility for adopting or changing the Council's Constitution, making appointments to committees and panels of the Council and agreeing the terms of reference of those bodies.
68. The council's constitution provides that the responsibility for the adoption and alteration of policy documents within the council's strategy framework lies with the Full Council. New policies and proposed changes are considered in the first instance by the Standards and General Purposes Committee, and are also subject to scrutiny.
69. Council is used as an opportunity to hold the executive to account. At each ordinary meeting questions are put to cabinet members by the public and by non-executive councillors from each of the four political groups. Questions are submitted in writing before the meeting, and then each questioner is given the opportunity to ask a supplementary question at the meeting. The number of public questions has increased in recent years and averages 29 per meeting, with more than 40 received for the Council's meeting in February 2019. Motions from councillors provoke vigorous debate and all actions agreed are monitored to ensure that these are implemented.

70. A strategic theme report that focusses on one of the aspects of the Community Plan is presented to each ordinary meeting. This is a detailed report that includes an update on policy and service provision in that area, as well as performance management information and a report on scrutiny work that has been undertaken. There are councillor questions put to Cabinet Members and motions tabled on the strategic theme.

Appointments to committees

71. Appointments are governed by the requirements of Section 15(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and allocation of seats to political groups on each committee is made in accordance with the statutory requirements and principles.
72. There is a total of 122 seats on council committees distributed as set out in the table below:

Group	No. Councillors	% councillors	No. committee seats Dec 2018	% committee seats Dec 2018
Labour	34	56.7%	74	60.7%
Conservative	17	28.3%	32	26.2%
Liberal Democrat	6	10.0%	11	9.0%
MPWIR	3	5.0%	5	4.1%
TOTAL	60	100%	122	100%

73. The number of seats for each committee is set out in Appendix 2 and Council appointments to external bodies is set out in Appendix 3.
74. At present councillors serve on an average of 3.4 committees, including Council. 18 councillors serve on 4 committees, five on 4 committees, 4 on six committees and 1 on seven committees.
75. A total of 163 meetings are listed in the council's corporate calendar, including meetings of the executive, scrutiny, quasi-judicial bodies, advisory and consultative bodies plus community forums.

Cabinet

76. Cabinet consists of the Leader of the Council plus eight Cabinet members appointed by the Leader, each with specific portfolios aligned to the themes of the Community Plan and to the Administration's priorities. Cabinet leads on the preparation of the council's policies and budget, and makes recommendations

to the full council on the major policy plans and the budget and council tax. Where there is a relevant policy, Cabinet takes collective decisions within the adopted framework of plans and the procedural rules to implement them.

77. Individual Cabinet Members take an active role in policy formulation within their portfolios and have regular meetings with the Directors to provide political leadership. The Leader of the Council takes an active role in London wide and sub-regional policy development through bodies such as London Councils, the Local Government Association and the South London Partnership.
78. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport has delegated authority to approve the making of any order relating to traffic management or car parking.
79. Merton's Cabinet has a single sub-committee, the Merantun Development Ltd Sub-Committee, established in 2017. It has delegated authority to exercise the Council's rights and responsibilities as shareholder of the Merantun Development Ltd company. The sub-committee membership is made up of the Leader of the Council and the two Cabinet Members with responsibility for regeneration, housing and asset management.
80. The South London Waste Partnership Joint Management Committee, established in 2007, advises Cabinet on the operation of the waste management services provided by the South London Waste Partnership. It has two executive members from each of the member authorities (Merton, Sutton, Croydon and Kingston), appointed by Cabinet at its AGM.
81. The Joint Regulatory Service Committee, joint with Richmond and Wandsworth, advises Cabinet on the operation of the joint regulatory services partnership – licensing, trading standards, environmental health services.
82. It is expected that there will be an increase in joint committees and other forms of governance committees/boards to support to increasingly diverse models of service delivery used by Merton and its partners. The growing complexity and diversification of governance models will require a significant time input from executive councillors in future.

Planning Applications Committee

83. The ten member Planning Applications Committee meets at least once a month to consider major and contested planning applications. There were 12 meetings in 2016/17 at which over 100 applications were considered and 13 in 2017/18, with almost 100 applications considered. In 2018/19 there have been 10 meetings and 42 applications to date.
84. Planning committee meetings are lengthy and demanding. Members are required to absorb complex written information and assess conflicting

representations made by the applicant and a range of objectors. In recent years the committee has dealt with a variety of contentious issues, the most high profile of which has been a decision on the location of AFC Wimbledon's football stadium (attended by so many members of the public that it was necessary to provide a screen outside the Council Chamber so that they could watch the proceedings). Other significant and contentious issues have included basements and extensions, the partial demolition of Merton Hall (a locally listed building), new school in SW19, school expansion and a multi-million pound regeneration programme for local Clarion housing estates.

85. Members of the Planning Applications Committee often carry out site visits to increase their understanding of the locality and the issues involved in the planning application.
86. Local ward councillors are also involved in providing written evidence and speaking at planning committee meetings on behalf of their constituents. When there are planning appeals hearings held by the Planning Inspectorate, councillors who made representations will attend to give further evidence.
87. It is expected that the council's ambitious regeneration programmes and plans for Crossrail2 will increase the number of significant and contentious applications that the committee will be required to deal with over the next ten years.

Licensing Committee

88. The Licensing Act 2003 transferred the responsibility for alcohol and late night entertainment licensing from the Magistrates Courts to local authorities. The Act requires each licensing authority to establish a licensing committee of at least ten, but not more than fifteen, members to discharge the authority's licensing functions. Merton's Licensing Committee comprises 12 members.
89. The licensing functions covered include street trading, licensing of premises, gambling and controlled drinking zones. The Licensing Committee also considers and recommends 'statements of policy' to full Council with regard to the exercise of its statutory functions
90. Licensing sub-committees, comprising any three members of the committee, meet as required to consider specific applications for personal and premises licences relating to the provision of food and alcohol, and to consider gambling applications.
91. The number of licensing applications considered by licensing sub-committees has increased in recent years. In 2016/17 they met on 10 occasions to consider a total of 12 applications. In 2017/18 they met on 13 occasions to consider a total of 17 applications and in 2018/19 they have met 12 times so far to consider a total of 14 applications.

92. Licensing sub-committee meetings usually take place in the daytime to enable licensees to attend. This limits the number of councillors who can serve on the sub-committees to those who are available during the daytime. Meetings can go on for a number of hours, due to their complex nature and significant level of interest some applications can generate.

Standards and General Purposes Committee

93. The 12 member Standards and General Purposes Committee has overall responsibility for corporate governance. The Committee is also concerned with the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct within the council; the enforcement of the Member Code of Conduct; and advising the council on ethical governance matters. The Committee monitors the registers maintained in relation to gifts and hospitality received by councillors and offered to and accepted by staff. The Council's two Independent Persons regularly attend as observers.
94. This committee also fulfils the role of an Audit Committee in accordance with CIPFA recommended best practice, and this committee has overall responsibility for ensuring controls are adequate and working effectively.
95. This Committee is responsible for a range of non-executive functions, including electoral matters and personnel issues. It also has responsibility for considering and making recommendations to Full Council on any changes to the council's Constitution. Its functions include ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies and procedures, and overseeing council accounts and audit activity.
96. A review was carried out on the effectiveness of the Standards and General Purposes Committee against CIPFA's guidance, Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities. This found that the Committee was meeting regularly and covered the range of governance issues, except risk management. Risk is however reported to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny on a regular basis as well as to Council on an annual basis as part of the business plan, therefore reliance could be placed on this.

Overview and Scrutiny

97. The overview and scrutiny function in Merton is well regarded, robust and has been successful in shaping local policy development and service provision as well as providing a critical friend challenge to the council's cabinet and to external service providers including the police and the NHS. Public involvement

is an intrinsic part of the function and it draws on councillors' existing networks as well as reaching out to other parts of Merton's diverse communities.

98. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission scrutinises corporate and cross-cutting issues and is the responsible committee for the scrutiny of crime and disorder under the Police and Justice Act 2006. The Commission is responsible for ensuring that the council has an effective overview and scrutiny function and for co-ordinating and supporting the work of three overview and scrutiny panels, aligned to the strategic themes in the current Community Plan:
- Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel – responsibilities include education, children's social care, child protection and youth services.
 - Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel – responsibilities include health, public health and adult social care.
 - Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel – responsibilities include housing, waste management, environmental sustainability, culture, enterprise and skills, libraries and transport.
99. Merton is a member of a standing South West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which takes an active role in holding local NHS providers to account and examining the Sustainable Transformation Partnership (proposals for new ways to provide efficient and modern services to meet future patient need). The JHOSC has established a sub-committee to scrutinise the plans for acute services, including controversial plans to reconfigure acute services at Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust.
100. Each of Merton's scrutiny bodies usually has one time limited task and finish group in operation at any one time to focus in depth on a particular policy or service. Membership is drawn from all non-executive councillors, not just those on the parent body, so that anyone with a particular interest in the issue under review has an opportunity to contribute.
101. Five scrutiny task groups have been established for the 2018/19 municipal year to examine:
- single use plastics
 - the transition from children's to adults' services for young people using health or social care services
 - mental health of children and young people in Merton
 - road safety around schools
 - financial monitoring
102. Each of the task groups will typically meet 6 to 8 times as well as carrying out visits to view services, consultation activities with service users and local residents, and visits to view good practice elsewhere. The task group will then

review all the evidence collected and will identify recommendations aimed at improving services and enhancing the customer experience.

103. The task group will produce a comprehensive report that is received first by the parent scrutiny body and then referred to Cabinet for a formal response and implementation. Merton's constitution requires Cabinet to provide a response within two months of the matter being considered. The vast majority of task group recommendations are accepted and implemented by Cabinet.
104. Call-in is used judiciously in Merton, with an average of 3.6 per year since 2013/14 (ranging from 0 in 15/16 to 7 in 2016/17). This reflects the extent to which pre-decision scrutiny is carried out, with discussion at the start of each municipal year between the scrutiny bodies and their respective Cabinet Members of important forthcoming issues and how best to scrutinise them.
105. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission is chaired by the Leader of the Merton Park Ward Independent Resident Group. The Panels currently each have Labour Chairs and Conservative Vice Chairs. The Chairs and Vice Chairs work together collaboratively to provide leadership and to ensure that scrutiny operates in a non-party political manner as far as possible.
106. The Chair is responsible for developing constructive relationships with the appropriate Cabinet Member(s) and with senior officers in the services being scrutinised. The Chair is also responsible for presenting recommendations from the panel to the appropriate body or person (e.g. Cabinet, Council, NHS Trust Board) and for ensuring that implementation of the recommendations is monitored by the scrutiny panel.
107. The Scrutiny Handbook sets out the council's expectations of scrutiny members at and between meetings. Members of scrutiny panels have a collective and individual responsibility for ensuring that scrutiny is Member led. This includes reading agenda reports and task group papers in advance of the meeting, asking relevant and timely questions at meetings and participating in activities that the panel has agreed to pursue outside of its formal meetings.
108. The activities that scrutiny members may be expected to take part in outside of formal meetings include:
 - becoming an active member of a time-limited task group
 - becoming a performance management or budget lead for the panel
 - visits to services in Merton and elsewhere
 - meeting with service users, local residents and other stakeholders to hear their views
 - taking part in training and development events.
109. The key principles of scrutiny in Merton, set out in the scrutiny handbook, are that it should always be member-led and evidence-based. The handbook also

contains advice for councillors and officers on their respective roles, guidance and practical steps on how to achieve successful scrutiny. It is based on experience of scrutiny in Merton, best practice research and examples from other local authorities.

110. Each year a survey of all councillors is undertaken to seek their views on the effectiveness of the scrutiny function and suggestions for improvement. The results are reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission together with an action plan containing measures for innovation and improvements over the coming year. The most recent survey was in March 2018. 90% of respondents responded that scrutiny was effective, with task group work rated the most effective element of scrutiny (85% rated this as effective), closely followed by pre-decision scrutiny (82%).
111. The council's constitution requires an annual report to be presented to Council, outlining the work of the overview and scrutiny function over the course of the municipal year. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission uses this as an opportunity not only to showcase the work carried out but also to demonstrate some of the outcomes achieved and the ways in which local residents have been involved in scrutiny. (The 2017/18 annual report is attached as Appendix 6).
112. In December 2017 the Communities and Local Government Select Committee published a report entitled "Effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees"(op cit – see footnote 1), which was the first national assessment in many years to consider how scrutiny committees operate. A large number of submissions were received from local authorities across the country. Amongst these, Merton was highlighted as a good practice example for its work on pre-decision scrutiny:

"Pre-decision scrutiny is also a vital part of a committee's role. By commenting on and contributing to a decision before it has been made, scrutiny committees are able to offer executives the benefit of their ability to focus on an issue in greater depth over a longer period of time. For example, the **London Borough of Merton's Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel** considered a site proposal for a new secondary school. As a result of its work, the Panel was able to provide a detailed reference to Cabinet focussing on how to optimise use of the selected site and mitigate any negative impact, helping the Cabinet to make a more informed and considered decision."

Effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees, Report of the Communities and Local Government House of Commons Select Committee, 2018.

Partnership working

113. The Merton Partnership was established in January 2002 as the overarching strategic partnership for the borough. Its aim is to work together with all partners on issues that are key to local people – including residents, workers and visitors – as reflected in the Community Plan.
114. Councillors have a central role to play in the Merton Partnership. The Leader of the Council chairs the partnership and its Executive Board. Councillors are also represented at senior levels on each of the four thematic boards and their sub-groups: Safer and Stronger; Sustainable Communities and Transport; Health and Wellbeing, and; the Children’s Trust. In addition, to these thematic boards, Merton has an active Compact Board chaired by the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities, with other councillors also nominated to attend.
115. In addition to formal representation on Boards, councillors are well represented at the Merton Partnership’s annual conference. The conference provides a platform for a wide range of local stakeholders, some of which do not have the capacity to engage in regular formal meetings, to address key issues of concern for the borough.
116. In Merton there is strong councillor engagement in promoting community cohesion in the borough. Councillors play an integral role in community engagement and supporting and encouraging community organisations that promote the interest of disadvantaged communities, to get involved in decision making and civic life.
117. Councillors have helped voluntary organisations (particularly in East Merton) representing seldom heard communities to have a voice, including Black and Minority Ethnic Communities, disability groups, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities and the Armed Forces. Councillors are also actively involved in working with the Faith and Belief community and they participate in events such as Inter Faith Week activities and Holocaust Memorial Day.
118. There are numerous activities that the council is committed to supporting on an on-going basis that contribute to promoting community cohesion, including Black History Month, LGBT History Month and the Celebrating Age Festival. Councillors take an active part in bringing people of different backgrounds together to celebrate the borough’s diversity on these and many other occasions. Armed Forces Day is organised by a councillor-led working group.

Representational role of councillors in the community

Casework

119. Ward councillors in Merton take a very active role to represent the interests of local residents. In addition to attending community meetings, this will involve the councillors in identifying and acting on local issues that affect the communities that they represent. Ward councillors will also provide advice and support to individual residents who request assistance with a matter, known as casework.
120. Casework will often require the councillor to act as a mediator between the council and the public as well as often between neighbours. Councillors are expected to be a liaison point between the people they represent and other organisations such as utility companies, NHS bodies and businesses whose actions may affect their residents' daily lives.
121. In Merton ward councillors largely manage and progress their own casework. Some support can be provided by their Group Offices, but the number of staff in these offices is small so councillors have to be self-sufficient at all times.
122. Councillors may be contacted at surgeries, by phone or in person whilst out in the ward but the bulk of their casework is received through email. A number of councillors also communicate with residents through social media.
123. The greater use of technology and social media, and encouraging contact with the council to be through digital channels has made it easier for residents to interact with and engage with their councillors. This has increased the number of interactions that councillors now have with members of the local community and increased the number of cases they take forward on behalf of their constituents. Furthermore, The extensive and growing use of email and social media has resulted in an expectation that councillors will respond with ever increasing speed.
124. Councillors have to be up-to-date on the issues affecting their wards and to be contactable and respond to their residents in an appropriate way. For example, some wards may have an older population who prefer letter or face to face contact, whereas a ward with a younger population may expect a social media presence.
125. When councillors require information from the council in order to progress casework or other enquiries they are advised to log these through a centralised member enquiry system so that the enquiry can be forwarded to the right team. Additionally, some councillors continue to contact individual council officers direct rather than through the member enquiry system. This means that the data collected by the team under-represents the full extent of casework and

other enquiries raised by councillors. Furthermore, experienced councillors will often be able to resolve the issue themselves without recourse to the member enquiry system and therefore this aspect of casework is not recorded centrally.

126. Data on number of member enquiries in each of the past two years and the current year shows a large increase this year (note – this data also includes enquiries received from the two local MPs):

Department	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19 (9 months)
Corporate Services	304	295	263
Children Schools and Families	124	128	149
Environment and Regeneration	1,495	1,677	2,354
Community and Housing	1,049	849	1,602
TOTAL	2,972	2,949	4,368

127. The main issues of concern raised through Member Enquiries are revenues and benefits (including council tax collection and arrears), school admissions, children’s social care, traffic and highways, waste services and housing needs.

Community Forums

128. Merton Council holds five Community Forums based on the main town centres of Colliers Wood, Mitcham, Morden, Raynes Park and Wimbledon. The Forums are public meetings that are open to anyone who lives, works or learns in the area. The Forums meet with different frequency, generally in relation to the number of attendees, with the more well attended Raynes Park and Wimbledon Forums meeting four times a year, Mitcham and Morden meeting twice a year and Colliers Wood once. This makes a total of 13 Community Forum meetings each year.

129. The meetings are chaired by a local ward councillor, appointed by full council. Other local ward councillors also attend, along with the Leader or other Cabinet Members to address particular agenda items. Meetings cover a wide range of local issues such as planning, regeneration, community safety, and updates from the MPs, Assembly Member and Council Leader. A range of local specific projects are also discussed and at every meeting there is an opportunity for attendees to raise any local issue they like. A summary report of each meeting is then presented by the Chair to the next full Council meeting.

Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy

130. In January 2018 Cabinet resolved to award each of Merton’s 20 wards £5,000 from the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy to spend on public realm improvements proposed by the ward councillors. Issues put forward by

the ward councillors included highway repairs, environmental spending, new benches, plants and money passed on to community groups to spend.

131. Cabinet reviewed this pilot project in January 2019 and agreed to continue the ward allocation scheme to make £15k available for each ward to bid for/spend across the remaining three years of the current electoral cycle. Councillors will work with residents and council officers to identify, prioritise and put forward applications for funding.

Appointments to outside bodies

132. Merton councillors are appointed to a total of 37 seats on 19 local, Londonwide and national organisations. These are bodies of strategic importance to local government (such as the Local Government Association and the Local Government Information Unit), to the governance of London (such as London Councils, London Road Safety Council and the London Home and Water Safety Council) and local communities (such as Safer Merton, Pollards Hill Community Committee, Merton Community Panel – Clarion Housing). The full list of outside bodies is set out in Appendix 3.
133. In addition, many councillors are also school governors, which is a complex and increasingly demanding role. Many are also actively involved in supporting a variety of community and voluntary organisations, including as board members.

The Mayor

134. Merton has a ceremonial mayor who is the first citizen of the borough and the official representative of the Crown. This is a high profile and non political role. The Mayor is elected at Annual Council for a period of 12 months. The Mayor then appoints a Deputy Mayor for the same period. The Mayor chairs full Council meetings.
135. The office of the Mayor of Merton is a busy one. Each year the Mayor represents Merton at more than 500 public engagements and civic and ceremonial events. The Mayor also entertains guests in the Mayor's Parlour at the Civic Centre for both formal and informal events.
136. The Mayor also becomes one of the Trustees on the Mayor of Merton's Charitable Trust, a registered charity, the purpose of which is to collect and distribute charitable donations for the benefit of the residents of the borough. Each year the Mayor will nominate one or more local organisations that s/he will support through fundraising events and other activities. The Trust may also choose to make donations to other specific organisations from time to time. The Trust Board usually meets at least three times a year.
137. Merton's councillors are very supportive of the mayoralty and take an active part in planning and attending civic and fundraising events. Furthermore, a

cross party group of councillors have worked with this year's Mayor and Deputy Mayor to review and revise the service level agreement that provides guidance on the role and activities undertaken by the Mayor.

Member development and training

138. Merton Council has a learning culture that views continuous development for all its staff and councillors as vital to its success. Provision is based upon the identified and agreed needs of the individual councillor, with an acknowledgement that they may have transferable skills from their work place and/or life experiences that they will be able to draw on.
139. The member development and training programme has been endorsed by the Standards and General Purposes Committee and is delivered through a variety of methods and at times that ensure equality of access for councillors' diverse personal circumstances, backgrounds and learning styles.
140. Appendix 4 contains a list of activities provided between May 2014 and May 2018 and the number of councillors attending.

Conclusion on council size

142. In carrying out this review the council has sought to identify the optimum number of councillors to ensure that it can retain its existing high standards of governance, scrutiny, partnership working and casework support to local residents.
143. The council has been mindful of the projected increases in population size to 2025 and beyond, and of recent and projected future changes in the age, ethnic and socio-economic profile of that population. These changes will pose challenges that will require open and transparent decision making processes that will enable the voice of local residents, community groups and other stakeholders to be heard. Having a sufficient number of councillors will be key to ensuring that good decisions are made and that these can be robustly challenged through overview and scrutiny as well as through wider democratic processes.
144. In the light of ongoing financial pressures facing local government and the declining size of the officer corps, the council has concluded that it would not be appropriate to retain the existing number of 60 councillors.
145. This review has concluded that a reduction of more than 3 councillors would increase councillor workload to a level that would put decision making and scrutiny processes under undue pressure. In a council that has four political groups, meeting the statutory requirements for political proportionality on council committees has resulted in most committees having 10 or 12 members. Councillors currently serve on an average of 3.4 committees; a reduction to 57 would increase this average to 3.5; reduction to 54 would increase this to 3.7.
146. The council believes that the increased councillor workload resulting from a reduction to 54 or fewer councillors would be likely to deter prospective councillors who work full time and/or who have caring responsibilities.
147. Data set out in Appendix 1 shows that a reduction to 57 councillors would equate to an electoral ratio of 2,662 electors for each councillor in 2018, which is projected to increase to 2,858 electors per councillor in 2025. This would keep Merton in line with the electoral ratio in neighbouring boroughs, Kingston upon Thames (2,405), Richmond upon Thames (2,580) and Sutton (2,783). Croydon, which is a much larger borough, would be an exception at 4,028 electors per councillor.
- 148. Merton Council therefore recommends that the number of councillors should be reduced from 60 to 57. The council considers that it can fulfil all of its required functions with a reduction of 3 councillors, whilst retaining existing high standards.**

APPENDIX 1 - ELECTORATE RATIOS AND POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Current arrangements – South West London

Local Authority	Electorate (3 September 2018)	No. of councillors	Avg. Electorate per Cllr
Croydon	281,944	70	4,028
Kingston upon Thames	115,451	48	2,405
Merton	151,765	60	2,529
Richmond upon Thames	139,321	54	2,580
Sutton	150,302	54	2,783

Merton Projections

Year	Electorate	No of councillors	Av. Electorate per councillor
2018 (3 Sept)	151,765	60	2,529
2018 (3 Sept)	151,765	57	2,662
2018 (3 Sept)	151,765	54	2,810
2025	162,915	60	2,715
2025	162,915	57	2,858
2025	162,915	54	3,017

**Population projections for CIPFA “near neighbours”
– GLA housing led model**

	No. Cllrs	2018	2020	% increase between 2018 - 2020	2025	% increase between 2018 - 2025
Ealing	69	350,784	361,833	3.1	397,010	13.2
Havering	54	257,511	261,830	1.7	284,971	10.7
Wandsworth	60	324,400	332,731	2.6	357,242	10.1
Croydon	70	391,296	400,272	2.3	421,090	7.6
Redbridge	63	305,910	312,264	2.1	328,279	7.3
Barnet	63	397,049	407,148	2.5	422,894	6.5
Merton	60	209,421	212,658	1.5	222,714	6.3
Brent	63	336,859	343,853	2.1	358,170	6.3
Hillingdon	65	309,926	316,253	2.0	329,302	6.3
Bexley	45	249,999	254,970	2.0	265,249	6.1
Kingston	48	179,581	182,728	1.8	190,330	6.0
Waltham Forest	60	283,524	290,024	2.3	300,284	5.9
Hounslow	60	278,264	284,358	2.2	294,459	5.8
Sutton	54	207,378	211,297	1.9	219,275	5.7
Enfield	63	337,697	342,993	1.6	356,949	5.7
Harrow	63	255,369	261,348	2.3	269,422	5.5
Richmond*	54	199,419	201,713	1.2	209,625	5.1

*Not a CIPFA near neighbour, included for comparative purposes as close geographical and other links

APPENDIX 2– Allocation of seats for each committee

Committees subject to Statutory proportionality					
	Seats	Labour	Conservative	Liberal Democrat	Merton Park Ward Indep Residents
Scrutiny committees					
Overview and Scrutiny Commission	10	6	2	1	1
Healthier Communities and Older People	8	5	2	1	0
Children and Young People	10	6	3	0	1
Sustainable Communities	8	5	2	1	0
SW London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Cttee	2	1	1	0	0
Committees					
Appointments	10	6	3	1	0
Licensing	12	7	4	1	0
Licensing misc	12	7	4	1	0
Planning	10	6	2	1	1
Standards and General Purposes	12	7	3	1	1
Appeals	6	4	1	1	0
Advisory Committees established by the Council					
Pension Fund Advisory Committee	3	2	1	0	0
Borough Plan Advisory Committee	6	4	1	1	0
Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations	5	3	1	1	0
Merton Heritage Forum	5	3	1	0	1
Member School Standards Panel	3	2	1	0	0
Total seats	122	74	32	11	5

APPENDIX 3**ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO CONSULTATIVE FORUMS AND OTHER BODIES**

ORGANISATION	Number of seats
Compact Working Group	2
Greater London Enterprise	1
Local Government Association	4
LGIU – Local Government Information Unit	1
London Councils – Greater London Employment forum	1
London Councils Leaders' Committee	1
London Councils Transport and Environment Committee	1
London Councils Grants Committee	1
London Councils Pensions CIV (Common Investment Vehicle) (Sectoral) Joint Committee	1
London Road Safety Council	2
London Home and Water Safety Council	1
London Youth Games	1
Merton Community Panel (Clarion Housing)	2
Merton and Sutton Joint Cemetery Board	5
Mitcham Common Conservators	4
North East Surrey Crematorium Board	3
Pollards Hill Community Committee	3
Groundwork London's Local Authority Strategic Input Board	1
Safer Merton	2

APPENDIX 4

MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, 2014-2018

Event Title

Budget Scrutiny
Briefing on the New Website
Chairing Skills
Child Protection
Dementia
Effective Opposition
Health Champions
Health in All Polices- Prevention Matters Workshop
Induction- Overview and Scrutiny
Induction- The role of a Councillor Part 1
Induction- The role of a Councillor Part 2
Induction- Keeping our people safe (Corporate Parenting, Safeguarding)
Induction- Community Leadership
Licensing for committee members
Licensing for ward members
Mind Mapping and Speed reading
Planning for committee members
Planning for Ward Members
Protecting yourself and your constituents
Public Speaking
Tools and Techniques to cope with paperwork
Understanding Budgets
Universal Credit and Housing

APPENDIX 5 ELECTORAL FORECAST METHODOLOGY

1. Introduction

1.1 The council has followed one of the suggested approaches by the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBCE) to produce an electoral forecast. This approach has used the LGBCE's preferred methodology as a baseline, with further work undertaken to ensure that there can be a high degree of confidence in the projected number of electors being forecast for 2025.

1.2 The following sections outline the steps that have been taken to produce the forecast and the assumptions that have been made.

2. Population Projections

2.1 The LGBCE offers a tool to assist authorities with the polling district level electoral projections (any of the polling district forecasts may be overridden with an explanation). The forecasting tool works in three steps.

- i. The LGBCE collects from authorities the number of local government electors per polling district for the last three years. For each polling district in each year, they then calculate the percentage of total electors registered to vote and average this across all available years.
- ii. Next, authority level registration ratios are calculated by dividing the number of registered electors in each year by the total adult population, and averaging this across all years. Office of National Statistics (ONS) Sub-National Population Projections (SNPP) are used of those aged 17 and above, with the category containing 17, 18 and 19 year olds multiplied by 0.6 to remove (approximately) those younger than 17 from the data. The LGBCE then multiply this average ratio by the ONS' authority level population forecast in the target year, which provides a predicted number of electors.
- iii. Finally, each individual polling districts percentage is multiplied by the total predicted electorate. This provides a localised elector count that is constrained by average authority-level population changes and ONS population forecasts.

2.2 The council is of the opinion that, as the methodology above essentially uses the past share of the electorate by polling district to share out the forecasted borough level electorate, this will not reflect the fact that certain parts of the borough are undergoing much more development than others, and are therefore likely to receive the larger share of the growth in electorate.

2.3 Instead the council considers that a development driven methodology based on the LGBCE's own methodology will better distribute the growth in the electorate across polling districts.

2.4 Therefore the council chooses to use the Greater London Authority's (GLA) population projections. Population estimates from the GLA estimate population based on the same variables as ONS, plus information regarding new housing developments and different scenarios of future migration. The GLA also produces several different projections (housing linked, central trend, long term, short term) that each give a different estimate.

2.5 The GLA's housing-led projection incorporates a housing trajectory taken from the Strategic Housing Availability Assessment (SHLAA). This model reconciles population growth with available housing supply. Through consultation with the councils Analysts Network – established to manage the Merton Data project - this model is recommended as the most likely and accurate scenario to use for future population growth in London. It is also the projections model recommended for use at borough level by the GLA.

3. Local Authority Electorate Forecast

3.1 Once the council had decided on what projections to use, the next step was to calculate the electorate to adult population ratio, which reflects the total amount of electors that are registered to vote from the adult population of the borough. Here the current number of electors was applied to the GLA 2016 housing led adult population projection for 2019 to give an overall percentage. This resulted in an overall electorate to adult population ratio of 93% for 2019. This contrasted to ratios of 94% in 2018 and 95% in 2017, which were partly the results of registration surges caused by national polls from 2016-2017.

Table 1: Local Authority Electorate 2017-19

Register publication date	Number of local government electors (inc. attainers)	Resident population aged 18 or over (GLA Housing Led)	Electorate to population ratio
1 January 2017	152,174	160,211	95%
1 January 2018	152,594	161,400	94%
1 January 2019	151,605	163,957	93%

3.2 The council recognises that the LGBCE cautions against calculating an adult to population ratio from data from a single year, and recommends that an average of the previous 3 years is used. This is to mitigate against risk that the ratio calculated may not be representative, as changes to the electorate can be much more volatile than in the population as a whole.

3.3 The council made the decision to use the latest electorate because when calculating electorate to population ratios on a ward by ward basis, using an average over 3 years would not accurately reflect those polling districts

where new development has occurred. The electorate in Merton has also been very stable during the previous 3 years, illustrated by Table 1 (above).

4. Ward level forecasts

4.1 After the overall population to electorate ratio was calculated, the next step was to calculate ward level forecasts. The current ratio of electors to adult population has been calculated for each ward and applied to the projected adult population for 2025 (this was considered to be a more accurate way of projecting electorate as opposed to using the overall electorate to population ratio of 93% across all wards). Adjustments were then made to the projected electorate figures for planned new developments.

Table 2: Ward Forecast Figures (Electorate ratio by ward)

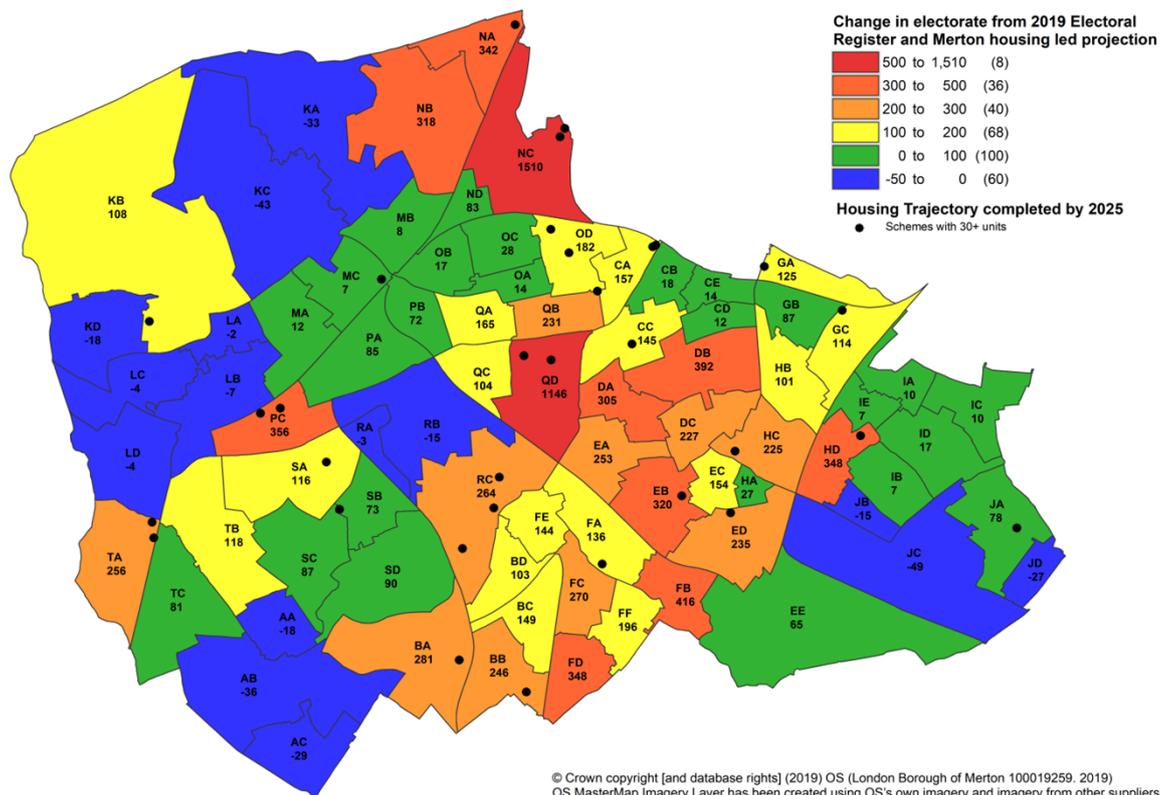
Ward	2019 estimated adult population (17-85+)	1 Jan 2019 local electorate	2019 ratio of electors/ adult population	2025 estimated adult population (17-85+)	2025 Council electorate forecast	2025 Council electorate forecast adjusted for development	2025 Electorate forecast LGBCE (for comparison)
Abbey	8834	7823	89%	9488	8402	9469	8225
Cannon Hill	7644	7208	94%	7973	7518	7575	7801
Colliers Wood	9499	8274	87%	9589	8352	8619	8629
Cricket Green	8962	8486	95%	9847	9324	9514	9087
Dundonald	7871	6928	88%	8187	7206	7442	7375
Figges Marsh	8968	8449	94%	9348	8807	9149	9088
Graveney	8000	7226	90%	8244	7446	7553	7770
Hillside	7760	6416	83%	7793	6443	6443	6927
Lavender Fields	8570	7847	92%	9579	8771	8771	8432
Longthornton	8205	7946	97%	8258	7997	7997	8574
Lower Morden	7297	7102	97%	7211	7018	7018	7642
Merton Park	7608	7132	94%	7573	7099	7377	7685
Pollards Hill	8050	8094	101%	7908	7951	8081	8777
Ravensbury	7774	7668	99%	9160	9035	9178	8197
Raynes Park	7890	7343	93%	7871	7325	7325	7873
St Helier	8527	8160	96%	9085	8694	8940	8716
Trinity	8215	7323	89%	8321	7417	7563	7938
Village	6943	6314	91%	6807	6190	6327	6777
West Barnes	8256	7601	92%	8568	7888	8056	8170
Wimbledon Park	9084	8265	91%	10008	9106	10518	8887
Total	163957	151605	93%	170818	157993	162915	162570

- 4.2 Once adjustments were made to the projected ward electorate figures for planned new developments, the overall borough electorate to adult population ratio increased to 95%, the same ratio as the LGBCE forecast. It is expected that planned changes to the electoral registration system will enable Merton to increase registration rates after 2020, and with a national poll currently scheduled for 2022, it is very likely that registration rates will again hit a ratio of 95%.
- 4.3 Electorate to population ratios are impacted by different registration rates in some areas, but also by the proportion of the adult population who are eligible to vote.
- 4.4 Attention is drawn to the electorate to adult population ratio for Pollards Hill ward, which is a statistical outlier at 101%. Here the council believes that the GLA ward based population projection is underestimating the true numbers of people that are living in Pollards Hill ward. Analysing historical electorate figures from 2016-19, the numbers for this ward are consistently higher than the population projections for the corresponding time period. Therefore, the 101% ratio has been used for the 2025 electorate projections for this ward.
- 4.5 Ravensbury ward and Wimbledon Park wards also have an electorate ratio of 100% or over as a result of planned new developments. These are now expected to increase population by greater numbers than the 2016 housing led population projections anticipated.
- 4.6 Crucially, the council's total projected electorate figure for 2025 of 162,915 was very similar to the LGBCE's projected figure of 162,570, which demonstrates that the council's projections are sufficiently robust.

Table 3: Council projections vs LGBCE projections

LGBCE projected electorate using forecasting tool	162,570
Council projected electorate	162,915

- 4.7 The figure below illustrates the estimated change in electorate by polling district from the 1 Jan 2019 electorate to the 2025 electorate forecasts.



Abbey (QA-QD)	Hillside (MA-MC)	Raynes Park (LA-LD)
Cannon Hill (SA-SD)	Lavender Fields (DA-DC)	St Helier (BA-BD)
Colliers Wood (CA-CE)	Longthornton (IA-IE)	Trinity (OA-OD)
Cricket Green (EA-EE)	Lower Morden (AA-AC)	Village (KA-KD)
Dundonald (PA-PC)	Merton Park (RA-RC)	West Barnes (TA-TC)
Figges Marsh (HA-HD)	Pollards Hill (JA-JD)	Wimbledon Park (NA-ND)
Graveney (GA-GC)	Ravensbury (FA-FF)	

5. Polling district forecasts

5.1 Merton's polling districts do not align with other statistical geographies that are used for population projections. Therefore, the first stage in developing polling district forecasts was to divide the total ward electorate population proportionally to the existing split per polling district using the 2019 electorate.

5.2 GLA 2016 housing-led population projections by ward and age was used to forecast the 2025 electorate in each polling district. The 2016 GLA housing-led population projection has been adopted by the council as the most accurate forecast for the borough.

5.3 The next step involved identifying the polling districts where new developments containing more than 30 units are scheduled to be completed and occupied by 2025 that were not already included in the 2016 housing-led population projections.

5.4 The following developments from Merton's housing trajectory were considered for inclusion in the forecasts.

- Development currently under construction
- Development with a current planning permission
- Development sites identified by the local plan with a high level of confidence they will be delivered by 2025.

5.5 The council uses set development rates to calculate how many units are likely to be delivered each year from developments currently under construction as part of its standard forecasting work. These are based on historic completion/build out rates and have been applied to the developments currently under construction to determine the total number of units that would be completed by 2025.

5.6 Similarly, the council has a standard methodology for identifying the conversion rate for developments where there is a current planning permission but work has not commenced.

5.7 The sites included in the Local Plan which were included in the forecasts were identified as follows:

- where there is planning permission plus developer interest and no significant obstructions to the site being developed
- those that had already been granted planning permission

5.8 The total number of units to be constructed by 2025 was estimated by combining the build out rate from the developments under construction, and those with planning permission. All of the development data had site addresses that allowed each site to be allocated to a specific polling district.

5.9 The number of units in these new developments expected to be completed by 2025 was then multiplied by the average household size in Merton (2.5⁴). However, because these estimates include adults and children, it was assumed that for each household there would be an increase of 2 adults⁵, so instead of multiplying by 2.5, the total number of units was multiplied by 2. The ward electorate to adult population ratio was then applied to each polling district where new developments were identified, and the housing development and baseline data were added together to give an adjusted forecast.

⁴ Average household size in Merton 2012 ONS Integrated Household Survey

⁵ DC1109EW 2011 Census data for household composition aged 16+

6. Other considerations

- 6.1 The LGBCE advises that electorate forecasts distinguish between student accommodation and all other types of accommodation. However, Merton does not have a significant student population and no halls of residence, so no adjustments have had to be made for this group of electors.
- 6.2 The LGBCE also advises that councils treat attainers (i.e 17 year olds) separately from the 18+ population. The number of young attainers is also low in Merton. Therefore the resident population aged 18 and over has been used as the basis of the projections.
- 6.3 Finally, the LGBCE recommend accounting for the fact that not all residential accommodation will be occupied, and that even if they are occupied the residents may not be eligible to register or may not have done so for other reasons.
- 6.4 As the population growth used for these projections are not constrained by development no specific adjustments have been made for empty properties as these are likely to have minimal impact on the electoral projections. There is insufficient historic evidence to accurately predict which properties are likely to be empty in 2025 across Merton.

APPENDIX 6

2017/18 ANNUAL REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2017/18

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Foreword

In December 2017, the Select Committee for the Department of Communities and Local Government published its report into the effectiveness of scrutiny in local government. It makes interesting reading (and not just for the positive reference to pre-decision scrutiny undertaken by Merton's Children and Young People panel into the site proposal for a new secondary school on p.9). The Committee concluded that the *organisational culture of the council* is the main determinant of whether scrutiny is effective or not, and adds: "In extreme cases, ineffective scrutiny can contribute to severe service failures " -witness the excessive death rate at Mid Staffs, and child sexual exploitation in Rotherham.

The DCLG report provides a benchmark against which to assess the effectiveness of scrutiny here in Merton, and in this annual report you can read about what we have been doing:

1. The Commission investigated difficulties with the recruitment and retention of teachers (at the request of headteachers), and visited the Merton Refuge to see for themselves the help and support given to victims of domestic abuse.
2. The Children and Young People panel contributed to the achievement of a very successful outcome to the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services.
3. The Healthier Communities and Older People panel kept up their scrutiny of our health partners (Epsom & St Helier NHS Trust, Merton CCG, and St George's and SW London Mental Health Trust) and contributed to improved outcomes for their patients eg. with traumatic brain injuries.
4. The Sustainable Communities panel established a task group to investigate air quality, and robustly scrutinised the quality of services provided by Veolia and Clarion.

We have experimented with different ways of conducting scrutiny this year, by bringing in expert witnesses, paying site visits and conducting "deep dive" enquiries to understand how individual services work in detail.

No doubt there is more we could do, for example to attract greater public involvement in scrutiny reviews where appropriate. We will be reviewing the DCLG report in more detail next year to see what we can learn from it. But to go back to its starting point, I think we can be confident that the *organisational culture of the council* is conducive to effective scrutiny here in Merton.

For that we have to thank our hard working scrutiny team, headed up by Julia Regan and ably supported by Stella Akintan and Annette Wiles. They manage to work harmoniously with members, officers and other stakeholders to achieve effective outcomes for our residents – which is what good scrutiny is all about.

Councillor Peter Southgate
Chair, Overview & Scrutiny Commission

What is overview and scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000. Merton operates a Leader and Cabinet model, where the Cabinet makes the executive decisions of the authority on behalf of local residents.

Overview and Scrutiny's main roles are:

- holding the Cabinet to account
- improving and developing council policies
- examining decisions before they are implemented
- engaging with members of the public
- monitoring performance of the council and its partners

Scrutiny can look into services provided by other agencies and other matters of importance to the people of the borough. Scrutiny has legal powers to monitor and hold to account local health services (Health and Social Care Act 2001) and to scrutinise crime reduction and community safety issues (Police and Justice Act 2006).

Principles

Overview and Scrutiny at Merton is:

- open to the public
- informed by methodically gathered evidence
- based on careful deliberation and discussion
- conducted in an appropriate manner

How Overview and Scrutiny works in Merton

Merton Council has an Overview and Scrutiny Commission, which acts as a coordinating body supporting three Overview and Scrutiny Panels with individual areas of responsibility:

- Children and Young People
- Healthier Communities and Older People
- Sustainable Communities

Commission and Panel meetings take place throughout the year and members of the public are welcome to attend. Dates, agendas and minutes for these meetings can be found on the council website:

<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>

More information about Scrutiny at Merton can be found at

<https://www2.merton.gov.uk/council/decision-making/scrutiny.htm>

or by phoning the scrutiny team on 020 8545 3864 or emailing scrutiny@merton.gov.uk.

Scrutiny achievements 2014-2018

Councillors involved in scrutiny have indicated that they have found this to be a rewarding and influential role, as highlighted from feedback from our last survey (2018) of scrutiny councillors, co-opted members and Cabinet members:

“I believe the overview and scrutiny function gives me the opportunity to learn from others by way of practice, policy, communication and link working, also an opportunity to identify where changes need to be made and practice and habits need to be changed.”

“The Task Groups are very good and enable in depth discussion on potential policy direction.”

“Cabinet continues to be responsive to suggestions from scrutiny when reviewing the budget”

Scrutiny has resulted in real changes in policies, service provision and council budgets over the last four years. Some of the highlights are set out below:

Improvements to local services

Over the last four years scrutiny has made recommendations that have had a significant impact on services provided by the council, its partners and other external organisations:

Care leaver accommodation

The recommendation of the Sustainable Communities Panel that a *House of Multiple Occupation* be piloted as an alternative option for care leaver accommodation has now been realised. This resulted from the Panel taking a workshop approach to focus exclusively on the issue of housing and specifically care leaver accommodation working in partnership with members of the Children and Young People Panel.

Energy Supply Company updates

Council officers continue to pursue the scrutiny task group recommendation that Merton should establish an energy supply company (ESCO). Discussions are ongoing with a housing scheme provider and as part of these setting up an ESCO is still being explored. It has been established that the business case for an ESCO is dependent on having a housing development opportunity as well as the necessary level of demand for energy and heating. Proving the business case therefore cannot be achieved until the development is more advanced.

Type Two Diabetes

The task group review on tackling type two diabetes in the South Asian community led to culturally appropriate services being provided for this group. This includes education sessions and ensuring NHS health checks are provided at a younger age.

The task group review also raised the profile of this important issue. This has contributed to the Health and Wellbeing Board identifying tackling type two diabetes as a priority area.

Brain injury

The Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the services available for people who had experienced traumatic brain injury. It became apparent during the scrutiny process that Merton had lower provision than its neighbours, which led to a decision by the Merton Clinical Commissioning Group to provide additional services in the Borough.

Childhood immunisations

A cross cutting scrutiny review on improving the rates of childhood immunisations in the 0-5 age group has led to successful outcomes. The review was conducted because Sutton and Merton had the worst immunisations rates in London and key partners including NHS England, the local authorities and the clinical commissioning groups did not have a joint approach to tackling this issue but worked in silos. As a result of the recommendations arising from the review and the positive manner in which they were received a strong partnership approach with regular meetings and a joint action plan was in place and overall there has been an increase in immunisations rates amongst the 0-5 age group

Holding external bodies to account

The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel is pleased that it successfully managed to scrutinise two key external bodies during this municipal year: Clarion Housing and Veolia UK. Merton transferred its social housing stock to Clarion in 2010 which was subject to an agreement lasting five years. Now that this has concluded, there is no obligation on Clarion to continue to participate in Merton's scrutiny process. Therefore, the Panel is pleased that it secured the commitment to attend this year and in future years.

Merton's waste, recycling and street cleaning services are now provided through the South London Waste Partnership by Veolia UK. It was therefore important that when faced with performance issues it was willing to participate in the scrutiny process with its representative having appeared at two of the Panel's meetings. A Veolia manager also attended and answered questions at the Commission's call-in meeting on the size of the residual waste containers.

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission is responsible for the scrutiny of cross cutting and strategic issues, crime and disorder and issues relating to the council's "corporate capacity". The Commission acts as a coordinating body in supporting the three Overview and Scrutiny Panels and has responsibility for developing and keeping scrutiny under review.

Scrutiny reviews

Recruitment and retention of teachers

The task group was set up in order to investigate the difficulties that schools in Merton were experiencing with the recruitment and retention of teachers and how Merton Council and its partners could assist with this. The task group heard from local headteachers, newly qualified teachers and council officers as well as examining information about teacher recruitment and retention nationally.

The task group noted that good school performance has a positive impact on both recruitment and retention and were therefore encouraged by evidence of sustained improvement in performance in Merton schools and the high proportion of schools that have been rated "good" or "outstanding" by Ofsted.

The task group found that the council already has appropriate systems and structures in place for teacher recruitment. It has made recommendations aimed at using these more effectively and promoting them more widely to headteachers. Similarly, there is a range of benefits already on offer to teachers, so the task group has made recommendations to re-invigorate their promotion as well as encouraging governing bodies to organise activities that would promote staff health and wellbeing.

The cost of local accommodation was found to be a key factor affecting both recruitment and retention. The task group has made a number of recommendations that are intended to improve teachers' experience of the private rented sector, including the proposed introduction of an interest free loan to assist teachers with payment of rent deposits.

Shared and outsourced services

The Commission has continued to receive reports on progress made by Cabinet in responding to recommendations made by the scrutiny review of shared and outsourced services. The recommendations were intended to stimulate a more consistent and rigorous approach to selecting delivery models and challenging officers on the most appropriate model for each service.

The Commission has welcomed progress made on identifying different service models for a number of services and on the development of a draft toolkit and business case pro-forma. Members expressed disappointment that more had not

been done to bring proposals for large or strategically important outsourced services to scrutiny at an early stage when there was still time to have some influence on their development.

Strategic issues and pre-decision scrutiny

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive attended to set out their priorities for 2017/18, pressures on services and on housing supply in London and the financial challenges facing the council. The Commission asked them questions on issues including emergency procedures and building safety, commercial activity undertaken and planned by the council and how service performance was being addressed with Clarion.

The Commission commented on the annual report from Merton Partnership, particularly in relationship to use of the government's apprenticeship levy, SEN funding and the night time economy. Members suggested that all priority areas in the action plan should have measurable targets and a full set of data.

A presentation on the findings of the residents' survey 2017 showed a positive shift against many of the measures. A notable concern was street cleanliness. Members agreed that they wished to see the survey continue on a biennial basis.

The Commission was pleased to hear that significant progress had been made against wide-ranging objectives in the council's equality and community cohesion strategy action plan. It will continue to review the action plan on an annual basis.

The Commission has continued to receive updates on the customer contact programme and has been pleased with the increased level of use of online services. The Commission noted the delay in completion and the budget overspend. Members were assured that various Apps for reporting streetscene issues could still be used. Members were informed of the commercial discussions with the supplier and the options that were being considered for ongoing support and hosting for the technology.

The Commission was pleased to hear that the Registration Services had received positive feedback from the General Register Office. Members also welcomed the completion of works at Morden Park House that would enable the council to maximise income from its use for ceremonial and other functions.

Scrutiny of crime and disorder

The Borough Commander attended twice during the year to present the latest figures on crime and answer questions about policing in the borough. The Commission expressed concern about the 4.1% increase in total notifiable crimes in March and

noted that the context for this was one of crime reduction previously since 2011 and a low base compared to other boroughs.

Questions to the Borough Commander have focused on operational changes and how the new 4-borough Borough Command Unit would work. Members also asked questions about safeguarding, knife crime, Traveller encampments and the Eastern Electrics festival in Morden Park.

The Commission sent a response to the MOPAC Public Access and Engagement Strategy in order to express its support for the retention of a front office in Wimbledon, agreeing the need to debate the best way to resource policing in the borough but questioning the wisdom of such large cuts to police budgets at a time of increasing terrorism and civil unrest.

The Manager of Merton Refuge outlined the services and support provided by the Refuge. The Commission also received a report setting out progress that had been made on tackling violence against women and girls, including domestic violence. Members who subsequently visited the Refuge to speak to service users, their children and staff were impressed by the facilities and services provided.

Safer Merton and Merton Centre for Independent Living provided an update on the hate crime strategy and associated action plan. The Commission resolved to continue to support the partnership work on hate crime and requested a more detailed analysis of next year's figures.

Call-in

One call-in request was received by the Commission in 2017/18:

Residual waste container size

The Commission heard a call-in further to pre decision scrutiny on this issue by the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel, in January 2018. Cabinet's decision was that the standard size of wheeled bins for both residual waste and paper/card should be 180 litres, with 240 litre and 140 litre alternatives to be an option for larger and smaller households respectively.

The call-in signatories and invited witnesses raised considerations relating to consultation processes, resident views, the consideration of different options and the assisted collection scheme. Commission members expressed varying views about whether the proposals were sufficiently flexible and whether consultation specifically on size should have been undertaken. The Commission voted to uphold Cabinet's decision.

Finance and performance monitoring

The financial monitoring task group has continued to monitor quarterly financial management reports. In particular, it has scrutinised the forecast overspend, capital programme and lack of progress on achieving savings in some service areas. It has scrutinised a number of areas in depth including asset management, the Wimbledon tennis championship, the council's approach to commercialisation, and the service and financial position of the council's CHAS company.

Scrutiny of the budget

The draft business plan, medium term financial strategy and proposed budget savings proposals were examined in detail, alongside equality impact assessments for each of the savings. The Commission examined progress made with savings that had been agreed in previous years and commented on the size of the capital budget, given that it was underspent in the past.

The Commission made a recommendation to Cabinet in November 2017 in relation to the proposed use of reserves to balance the budget, the predicted shortfall in savings from previous years, the vacancy rate and use of agency staff, and the longstanding and persistent pressures in adult social care as well as the unfunded costs of supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking children and those with no recourse to public funds.

A further recommendation was made to Cabinet in January 2018 noting the substantial budget gap predicted for 2020/21 and beyond, recommending that officers should be encouraged to be entrepreneurial and pursue innovative solutions (subject to an acceptable level of risk), and that Cabinet recognize the importance of effective and appropriately planned project management to ensure projects are achieved on time and maximize potential savings from those projects.

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Areas of responsibility: scrutiny of issues relating to children and young people. This includes education, children's social care, child protection and youth services.

Councillor Dennis Pearce, Panel Chair: "It has been a pleasure this year to scrutinise a service that has received such a positive outcome from its Ofsted inspection and it is good to note that the cross party working of this Panel was complimented as part of Ofsted's report. It is also important to note that this year we have worked in partnership with the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel to bring attention to the issue of care leaver accommodation, reflecting that this is an issue that needs to be addressed across Departments. It is important to acknowledge this valuable way of working. We have also continued to grow in our role of scrutinising child and family health and wellbeing. This remains new to the remit of the Panel but one in which we are growing in confidence".

Scrutiny reviews

Prevent task group

The decision to form this task group was set against the background of the four terror attacks that happened between March and June 2017; the Panel wanted to reassure itself that Merton's schools are successfully implementing the duty and doing everything possible to prevent Merton's young people from becoming radicalised and doing so in a way that doesn't cause stigmatisation of individuals or communities. Recommendations include looking at the role of the wider Merton community in helping prevent radicalisation amongst Merton's young people and Merton's schools continuing to share their best practice to support each other in fulfilling the duty. The report will be presented to Cabinet in the new municipal year before the action plan comes to the Panel.

Care leaver accommodation

Members of the Children and Young People Panel were pleased to support the work of their colleagues on the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel when it took an in-depth look at accommodation for care leavers. It is evident that there are issues that sit across Panels and it is beneficial for us to work collectively and in partnership with officers from several departments across the Council. The officer response to the detailed reference that resulted from the workshop was welcomed by the Panel and has already resulted in a *House of Multiple Occupation* being piloted to provide alternative accommodation for care leavers.

Routes into employment for vulnerable cohorts

This task group reported in February 2017 with the action plan for the implementation of the recommendations being presented to the Panel this year. Members have asked officers to clarify why it is not possible to ensure through standard terms that contractors and service providers offer apprenticeships for Merton residents. A further review of progress against the recommendations is due

within six months.

Strategic issues and pre-decision scrutiny

Ofsted inspection

The Panel dedicated a whole meeting to looking at the outcome of the Ofsted single framework inspection and comparing this to the performance of other London boroughs. This emphasised that Merton is in the top 10 of local authorities nationally for its provision of children's services. Highlights include that managers and social workers know their children well, Merton's systematic model and approach to safeguarding is regarded as robust by Ofsted, the approach to care proceedings is credited with being the best out of the boroughs using the South West London courts and the adoption service receiving a rare outstanding judgement.

With the help of Kathy Bundred, Children's Improvement Adviser for the Local Government Association, Merton's success was quantified and highlighted as one of a small number of authorities judged to be doing well in the provision of children's services. The session also focused on features of authorities with children's services judged good or higher providing the Panel with a framework for future scrutiny of the service.

Harris Wimbledon Secondary Academy

Following its reference to Cabinet in July 2016 on the new secondary school, the Panel has continued to work with officers to review progress on the delivery of Harris Wimbledon and to understand the associated issues. This has been achieved through regular updates from the Cabinet Member for Education, information in the Department Update Report, member questions asked through matters arising and through a dedicated item. Members have focused on admission criteria, demand for the new school and how the needs of Merton Abbey Primary are being accommodated through the shared use of the site. Members resolved to ask Cabinet to seek formal written reassurance from the Elim Church that under its management Merton Hall lettings will enable the venue to remain for the use of all the community and will be fully compliant with equality legislation. It was reported to the Panel, at its meeting in January 2018, that Elim had confirmed in writing it will be offering the church site to the local community for groups and individuals to hire when it is available and that there would be no restriction on those groups accessing services, meetings and clubs etc. No bookings will be taken that conflict with the Constitution of Elim's charity.

Merton Safeguarding Children Board

The Panel received the annual report of the Merton Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB). Members used the session to understand how the board will sustain its focus on improvement, what support is provided to young people with a custodial sentence, what is being done to address knife crime and how the service ensures the child's voice is heard.

Corporate parenting

The corporate parenting annual report was received by the Panel with the focus on improving placement stability for Merton's very complex young people highlighted

along with the challenge of child sexual exploitation.

Health and wellbeing strategies for children and families

Officers from Public Health and colleagues from the Clinical Commissioning Group provided the Panel with an update report on health and wellbeing strategies for children and families. This focused on activity to address and progress being made on childhood obesity as well as looking at Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Members sought to understand satisfaction with the CAMHS service. This is a new area of responsibility for the Panel and one in which it is growing in confidence. During this year, training has been provided for Panel members on those areas of the public health strategy that relate to children and young people.

Think Family

The Panel benefited from a briefing on the *Think Family* initiative which recognises and promotes the importance of a whole-family approach, working across children's and adult's services.

Performance monitoring

Performance monitoring data

The Panel has continued to review progress against a basket of agreed key targets (Key Performance Indicators) with Councillor Mike Brunt continuing in the role of performance monitoring lead for the Panel. However, access to this data has been limited this year by the implementation of the new Mosaic information management system by the Children, Schools and Families Department. This situation has been carefully monitored by the performance monitoring lead and the Panel. Data started to become available again for the last Panel meeting of this municipal year.

Education, Health and Care Plans

Having carefully monitored performance in provision of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), the Panel requested a deep dive session to improve its understanding of why the 20 week statutory target wasn't being met and what further work was in hand to improve performance. This established that whilst the target wasn't being met, the number of tribunals had notably decreased and that performance was on track to transfer all existing SEN statement to EHCPs by March 2018. The Panel also learned how the EHCP process was being streamlined to achieve the 20 week target including getting requests to the assessment panel quicker. At its final meeting of the year, it was noted that good progress had been made in transferring SEN statements to EHCPs (with only 20 outstanding). Also, between March 2017 and March 2018, there had been an increase in the number of plans being achieved in the 20 week timescale from 19% to 37%.

Schools annual report

The Panel took its annual schools report, dedicating almost an entire meeting to look in depth at the performance of Merton's schools from September 2016 to August 2017. This covered achievement at each stage of education in addition to looking at attendance, exclusions and elective home education. It was highlighted that 93% of Merton's schools are now judged good or outstanding with 95% of Merton's pupils

attending good or outstanding schools. Based on its key stage 4 results, Merton is placed first in England, above both London and national averages whilst progress in maths and reading at Key Stage 2 places Merton 10th in the country. School attendance has improved (moving Merton from 10th to 8th nationally) and numbers of those not in education, employment or training are very low. Members noted the need to focus on the achievement of pupils in receipt of SEN support at all stages of education whilst officers were questioned on elective home education given this has increase by 174% over the last decade.

Financial monitoring

Members used the two budget and business planning sessions this year to explore how the costs of Harris Wimbledon will be covered, look at how budgetary pressures are monitored, explore how efficiencies are being achieved by keeping staff sickness and the use of agency staff to the lowest possible level and discussed additional opportunities for the Children, Schools and Families Department to generate income.

The Panel resolved that it wishes to receive financial information on a more regular basis through the Department update report. This is to allow any significant financial items to be understood earlier (to be picked up in the next municipal year through the work programme). The Panel passed a reference on the budget and business plan: 'Recognising the excellent progress already made by the Children, Schools and Families Department in revenue generation, officers should explore additional opportunities for revenue generation in the same way as they are exploring opportunities for cost savings'.

Call-in

No call-in requests were received by the Panel in 2017/18.

Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

This Panel has responsibility for the scrutiny of issues relating to health, public health and adult social care. This includes promoting good health and healthy lifestyles, mental health issues, and reducing health inequalities for people of all ages.

Councillor Peter McCabe said *"The role of this Panel is crucial in bringing democratic accountability to the local health economy. Over the past year this panel played an important role in speaking up on behalf of local people and most importantly seen changes to local services as a result."*

Responding to local issues

South West London and St Georges Mental Health Trust - proposed change to diagnostic autism spectrum disorder service.

The Chief Executive of South West London and St Georges Mental Health Trust attended the Panel to address public concerns that they would no longer provide diagnostic Autism Spectrum Disorder Services for children. The Panel were informed that there had been a significant increase in the demand for this service therefore it was under review but no immediate changes would be made to the current provision.

Personal Independent Payment process

The Chief Executive of Merton Centre for Independent Living (Merton CIL) and Merton and Lambeth Citizens advice reported a number of re-occurring issues when supporting people through the Personal Independent Payments process (PIP) . This included

- Many medical centres are inaccessible for wheelchair users or those with limited mobility.
- There are no assessment Centres in Merton therefore people are required to travel out of the borough.
- Many people are struggling to complete the application forms especially vulnerable people and those with mental health issues.

The Partnership Support Manager from DWP accepted the Panel's concerns and reported that service had been contracted out to the Independent Assessment Service, home visits are available for those who are not able to get assessment centres. After a robust discussion it was agreed that a meeting will be held with the chair and vice chair, independent assessment teams client champions, Merton CiL, Merton and Lambeth Citizens Advice and Adults First carers organisation to address these issues. The outcomes from the meeting which is due to be held in May will be reported back to the panel.

Merton Clinical Commissioning Group – changes to some services

Last year Merton Clinical Commissioning Group (MCCG) consulted with the Panel about proposed changes to some services. It was reported that they were facing significant financial challenges meant that they had to review current provision. Proposed changes included ending availability of gluten free products on prescription. The Panel expressed concern about plans to restrict the provision of IVF services and asked MCCG to conduct a full 90 day consultation. However having consulted with scrutiny committees across South West London MCCG decided not to go ahead with the proposal.

Financial Monitoring

Budget and Business Plan 2017-18

The Panel considered the budget for 2017-18. The Chief Executive of Merton Centre for Independent Living (Merton CIL) addressed the Panel in regards to the Adult Social Care Budget. She expressed concern that not all the proposals had been subject to consultation. The Director for Community and Housing reported that many of the draft savings were still under review and a consultation would take place if significant service changes were proposed.

Scrutiny of key partners

South West London and St Georges NHS Trust – update following CQC inspection

The Acting Medical Director from South West London and St Georges NHS Trust attended the Panel to discuss progress with making improvements since the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection rated the Trust as Inadequate. The Panel were informed that significant progress had been made. The Panel asked a number of questions about specific services as well as areas of concerns expressed by their residents. The Panel were satisfied that the Trust were addressing the issues raised by the CQC inspection

Epsom and St Helier University NHS – 2020-2030 vision

Epsom and St Helier University NHS Trust attended the Panel to discuss their vision for 2020-2030. The Trust highlighted that there are significant challenges with their current estate which is spread across two sites and requires significant rebuilding and regeneration. The Panel were keen to emphasise their support for maintaining all services on the St Helier site.

Services for people who have experienced traumatic brain injury

The Panel considered the services Merton provide for people who need support and rehabilitation after an incidence of brain injury. The Panel met with clinicians at St George's Neuro-rehabilitation Centre, Merton Clinical Commissioning Group, Merton Safeguarding Adults Manager and the Assistant Director for Adult Social Care. The Panel were informed that while there were areas of good practice, provision for Merton residents was lower than neighbouring boroughs, especially within the psychological services. As a result of the scrutiny by this Panel, MCCG agreed to increase service provision in the borough.

Scrutiny Reviews

Tackling Loneliness in Merton

The Panel commissioned a review to look at how to tackle loneliness amongst older people. The topic was suggested by the school council at Abbotsbury Primary School.

The task group met with the British Red Cross, Libraries Manager, Merton Clinical Commissioning Group, Street Pastors, Voluntary Sector Organisations and Adult Social Care colleagues. The task group found that there are services available but it can be difficult to identify people who are lonely. Recommendations sought to try and raise the profile of this issue across existing strategies and to develop an agreed list of organisations that people who are facing loneliness can be referred to. The Panel were pleased that all the recommendations were implemented by March 2018. They have also asked for a further update in six months time to consider the impact of the changes that have been made.

Tackling Type Two Diabetes in the South Asian Community

The Panel conducted a task group review looking at how to reduce the high levels of type two diabetes in the South Asian community, of which there is a higher prevalence than in other ethnic groups. Since this task group has been completed, the Health and Wellbeing Board has identified type two diabetes as a priority. The Panel received an update on the progress with implementing the recommendations and were pleased to find that there has been significant progress and a range of projects will be taking place in the community as part of the wider strategic framework for diabetes.

Scrutiny Review of Homeshare Schemes

The Panel commissioned a task group to consider if a Homeshare scheme would be beneficial in the borough. Homeshare brokers a relationship between older people who have a spare room with a younger person who will give around ten hours of support with tasks around the home. The task group found that although Homeshare schemes exist in Merton, they do not have any links or referral arrangements with the council.

A Homeshare scheme could help to address some of the council's priorities such as tackling loneliness amongst older people and access to housing for young people. The task group found if there are stringent safeguarding measures in place, a scheme of this nature could be beneficial for Merton residents. Adult Social Care was asked to lead on taking this work forward.

Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel
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Areas of responsibility: scrutiny of issues relating to housing, environmental sustainability, culture, enterprise and skills, libraries and transport.

Councillor Abby Jones, Panel Chair: "It has been another extremely busy year for

the Sustainable Communities Panel to such an extent that it has necessitated our adding two further meetings to our schedule. However, I am pleased that as I come to the end of my time as chair, this Panel has achieved some notable successes. It was brave of the Panel to devote so much time to looking at the issue of care leaver accommodation but this has paid off; a pilot scheme using a *House of Multiple Occupation* to offer care leavers a different type of accommodation has been achieved. Additionally, at a time when more and more council services are being contracted out to external bodies, we have continued to effectively scrutinise both Clarion Housing and Veolia UK. In this year, we have also successfully piloted some new ways of working; using Twitter for resident engagement and working cross party to plan some items and more effectively use the time available to us. Both approaches have proved profitable and the Panel should consider how it uses these in the future”.

Graeme Kane, Assistant Director, Public Spaces, Contracts and

Commissioning: “Participation in the scrutiny process has been valuable for the Public Space team this year. It has afforded us the opportunity to engage with residents on the performance of the new waste and street cleaning contract, to listen to concerns and to allow us to explain the action being taken and demonstrate how this is beginning to improve the service. It has also given us the opportunity to engage with Councillors in the run up to introducing the new waste and recycling service, to consult on key aspects such as the size of wheeled bins, demonstrate the thorough preparation that is underway to rollout the new service and hear Councillors’ own ideas on aspects of the rollout such as how this can best be communicated to residents”.

Scrutiny reviews

Air Quality Task Group

This task group focused on air quality issues around building sites and fed into the review of the Council’s air quality action plan. Recommendations include that the Sustainable Communities Panel conduct pre-decision scrutiny of the scope of any review of parking levies which are a key way to influence decisions about vehicle purchases. The action plan to achieve the task group’s recommendations will be reviewed every six months.

Crossover Task Group

This task group was focused on a topic of great interest to Merton residents as it sought to balance the risks to flooding and street scene caused by crossovers with the desire of residents to park close to their properties at a time when the number of Controlled Parking Zones is growing. A recommendation is to address parking stress in controlled areas by limiting the number of annual permits issued per bay. Once this is reached no further crossovers should be allowed. Cabinet has requested to see the action plan before it comes to the Panel meaning this is now scheduled for the June 2018 meeting.

Commercialisation Task Group

This task group initially reported in November 2016 with the Panel now taking updates on progress against the recommendations. Panel members noted the

review of the Council's property portfolio that has been commissioned, progress on the redevelopment of Morden town center and the advice received that the development of an energy supply company can only be realised alongside a major housing development.

Housing Supply Task Group

This task group reported in September 2015. However, given its importance, the Panel has continued to receive regular updates on progress against the recommendations taking two this year at a six month interval. Panel members noted the consultation being conducted on designation change to allow for small scale developments and the progress being made with the Local Authority Property Company. The Panel has requested to receive a summative and final report on this task group during the next municipal year.

Strategic issues and pre-decision scrutiny

The Panel has undertaken pre-decision scrutiny on a range of strategic issues and Council priorities. These include:

Care leaver accommodation

At its meeting in September 2017, the Panel took the decision to use a workshop approach to focus exclusively on the issue of housing and specifically care leaver accommodation. Working in partnership with members of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel, an introductory presentation from officers on housing and homelessness was provided before participants were split into two workshops to focus on:

- the issues care leavers face with accommodation (supported by Grenfell Housing and Training that works with care leavers and supports them in their accommodation needs); and
- different approaches to care leaver accommodation (supported by Paul Chadwick, the former Director of Children's Services at Croydon).

This resulted in a detailed reference to Cabinet focusing on issues such as increasing the range of independent accommodation options, piloting the use of *Houses of Multiple Occupation*, the 'lead tenant model', greater use of the *Shared Lives* model and exploration of *Housing First*. The Panel was pleased to learn recently that a *House of Multiple Occupation* is now being piloted for care leaver accommodation.

New waste and recycling service

Prior to the rollout of the new waste and recycling service in October 2018, the Panel has been involved in scrutinising key aspects of the service (including the decision on the size of wheeled bin to be used) and the planning being undertaken to realise the change in service delivery. Given the degree of change involved, the Panel has resolved to receive a further update on the new service prior to rollout in the next municipal year.

Morden redevelopment

The Panel received a briefing on the Morden redevelopment from officers and Transport for London. This resulted in a reference to Cabinet recommending that

Merton Council should maintain sufficient control of the project. Panel members believe that merely retaining planning authority status, without an active share in the Joint Venture itself, would not be sufficient.

During this year, the Panel has also looked at Public Space Protection Orders, facilities for physical activity in playgrounds, plans to conduct a consultation on the local plan and safety issues arising from the Grenfell Tower fire and their implications for all high rise buildings in Merton.

Performance monitoring

Performance monitoring data

The Panel has continued to review progress against agreed key targets (Key Performance Indicators) for both the Environment and Regeneration and the Community and Housing Departments. This forms a key part of every meeting.

Additionally, this year the Panel has appointed a lead member for performance monitoring for the first time (Councillor Holden). Regular pre-meets have been held between the performance lead and officers to allow further time to be given to the scrutiny of the data and for key points to then be highlighted at the subsequent Panel meeting. This has worked well, allowing for greater discussion and understanding of the data that is presented.

Waste, recycling and street cleaning

Monitoring the performance of the waste, recycling and street cleaning contract has formed a key part of the Panel's work this year. At its meeting in November 2017, considerable time was devoted to looking at performance under the contract six months after it commenced. Following a number of submissions and representations from Merton residents, the Panel resolved a reference to Cabinet which sought its support for the Panel to sustain its scrutiny of performance under the contract. This was gained and the Panel has received detailed updates on performance at each of its meetings for the remainder of the municipal year. There has been further input from residents and the direct involvement of Veolia representatives allowing the Panel to highlight key concerns and look at how these are being addressed.

Clarion Housing

The Panel was pleased that Merton's largest social housing provider returned this year to answer questions on repairs and estates regeneration. As happened previously, the opportunity was taken to seek questions from all Councillors and not just Panel members. These were sent to Clarion in advance with its responses being published in the agenda pack. This allowed the Panel to explore a number of issues in much greater depth than might otherwise have been the case. It also showed, as reflected in member case loads, that there has been a welcome improvement in Clarion's performance on repairs.

Adult learning

The Panel scrutinised the performance of the adult learning service which has been inspected by Ofsted receiving a requires improvement judgement despite being on an

upward trajectory. The Panel resolved to look more at the *Prevent* duty to understand the requirements given this had been highlighted in Ofsted's recommendations.

Libraries and heritage annual report

Another strong annual report from libraries and heritage gave Panel members the opportunity to thank and congratulate officers and to specifically highlight the opening of the new Colliers Wood Library. It was also noted that the required savings are being achieved whilst all library sites and existing opening hours have been retained.

Automatic number plate recognition

Introduced to the borough in 2016, the Panel heard how there has been a 200% increase in the number moving motoring contraventions caught as a result of ANPR. The rate of appeals lodged since has also halved. This is because for each contravention captured an evidence package is provided which can be shared with the driver making it much more difficult to appeal. Members were also interested to hear how it is intended to trial the use of ANPR outside schools to see if this can enforce parking restrictions.

Planning enforcement

Members received a detailed update on the performance of planning enforcement learning that the backlog of cases has again built-up. Officers explained their plans to change working practices in order to address this backlog including beginning work with Capita to provide additional resource. Longer term plans include utilising technology to improve productivity. Panel members resolved to receive trend data on the number of planning enforcement cases that are more than six months old.

Town centre regeneration

The Panel was pleased to receive its annual presentation highlighting all that has been achieved in delivering work to date on the programme of town centre regeneration. The Panel congratulated officers on the success of these schemes, particularly Mitcham and Colliers Wood.

During this year, the Panel has also received updates on the Christmas Parking Scheme (to be reviewed during the next municipal year) the Eastern Electric event and the Local Authority Property Company.

Financial monitoring

The Panel used the two sessions on budget and business planning to focus on the reasons why planned savings haven't been realised, how the resulting funding gap is going to be addressed, new savings proposals, opportunities to increase commercial income from the regulatory service and to question officers on the content of the service plans.

Scrutiny of external bodies

The Panel is pleased that during this year it successfully managed to scrutinise two key external bodies: Clarion Housing and Veolia UK. Merton transferred its social

housing stock to Clarion in 2010 which was subject to an agreement lasting five years. Now that this has concluded, there is no obligation on Clarion to continue to participate in Merton's scrutiny process. Therefore, it was a notable success that a commitment to attend this year and in future years was gained.

Merton's waste, recycling and street cleaning services are now provided through the South London Waste Partnership by Veolia UK. It was therefore important that when faced with performance issues it was willing to participate in the scrutiny process with its representatives having appeared at two Panel meetings.

Different approaches

During the municipal year the Panel has piloted a number of different approaches to support it in achieving effective scrutiny. Keen to reach out and engage Merton residents in the scrutiny process, Panel members have taken to social media (Twitter) to promote upcoming items at scrutiny and to encourage resident involvement. This was specifically used at the November 2017 meeting for the item on Veolia's performance resulting in numerous submissions from residents which were used to inform Panel members and support their questioning of both officers from the Public Space team and the Veolia representative. Additionally, it resulted in a higher level of residents attending the meeting and representations to the Panel on Veolia's performance.

Following the visit to the Communities and Local Government Committee in December 2016, this year the Panel piloted cross party planning of session to maximise impact. This was specifically used at the November 2017 meeting for the item on Clarion Housing and enabled the Panel to use the available time more effectively. This resulted in a more systematic approach, allowing a broader breadth of questioning to be achieved.

Visits

Veolia ride-along

Conducted by Councillor Sargeant in June 2017, this was undertaken to identify issues to be addressed in preparing for the new service rollout in Merton in autumn 2018. The ride-along took place in Kingston and involved the Councillor talking to two waste teams and riding along with a third. The success of real time reporting and monitoring of the Veolia on-board computer (the Echo system) was noted as was the adaptation in the service provided for the 5% of residents requiring assistance. As a result of the visit, Councillor Sargeant highlighted that planning for the new service rollout as key. The Panel scrutinised plans for the new service rollout at its meeting in February 2018 with the intention that this will return to the Panel early in the new municipal year.

Merton College Adult Learning

The Panel had been involved in scrutinising the then plans to change both the venue and commissioning model for Merton's adult learning. In January 2018, Councillors Anderson, Holden, Jones and Makin visited Merton College to see the service for themselves following these changes. Members noted the quality of the facilities

available, the breadth of provision and the level of participation.

Call-in

The Panel has heard two call-ins during this municipal year:

Call-in	Outcome
Proposal for improving parking facilities in selected borough parks	The Panel resolved to accept all proposals within the report and asked the Cabinet Member to conduct a review in 12 months to ensure the changes are delivering the intended outcomes. This recommendation has been accepted by the Cabinet Member (due October 2018 onwards).
Decision to award the construction works for Merton Hall	The Panel resolved not to refer the decision back to Cabinet and therefore the decision was upheld and took immediate effect.

Get involved

The involvement of local residents, community organisations and partners is an important part of the scrutiny process and councillors are committed to responding to the views and concerns of residents.

Getting involved in scrutiny is one of the best ways to influence decision making at the council, as councillors will hear your experiences first hand. There are a number of ways you can get involved in the work of scrutiny at the council:

Suggesting an issue for scrutiny

The council's website contains an online form which can be used to make suggestions on issues and topics for future scrutiny:

<http://www.merton.gov.uk/council/scrutiny/scrutiny-getinvolved.htm>

Suggestions may also be made in writing, by email or by phone to the Scrutiny Team – contact details overleaf.

All suggestions received will be discussed by the relevant scrutiny Panel and the person who made the suggestion will be contacted to let them know what has happened to it.

Attending meetings

All scrutiny meetings are open to the public except where confidential information has to be discussed. A list of meeting dates and agenda items can be found on the council's website. <http://www.merton.gov.uk/council/committee.htm>

If you would like to attend a meeting simply come along to the meeting venue or, if you want more information, contact the Scrutiny Team – details overleaf.

Providing information and views

Members of the public can send in written views or speak on issues that are under discussion at the Overview and Scrutiny Commission or one of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

Information on current task group reviews and any deadlines for submission on information can be found on <http://www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny> or by contacting the Scrutiny Team – details overleaf.

Contact the Scrutiny Team

The Scrutiny Team provides independent and professional support and advice to the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and the three standing Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

You can contact the Scrutiny Team using one of the following methods: -

In writing:

Scrutiny Team
Corporate Services
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
Morden
Surrey SM4 5DX

By emailing:

scrutiny@merton.gov.uk

By phoning:

Julia Regan – Head of Democracy Services
020 8545 3864

Stella Akintan –Scrutiny Officer
020 8545 3390

Annette Wiles – Scrutiny Officer
020 8545 4035

For further information about overview and scrutiny at Merton please access our web pages using the following address <http://www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny>

