

Merton Council Council

10 September 2014

Supplementary agenda

18 Non-Priority Questions And Response (Updated)

1 - 6

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Council 9 September Non Priority Question and Answers

NP1) From Councillor Michael Bull to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking:

Can the Cabinet Member with responsibility for street cleaning tell me what the actual record of street cleaning in the Apostles Area in Dundonald Ward is (i.e. how many times has this area actually been swept per week over the last six month period)?

Reply

The Roads within the “Apostles” are scheduled to be swept weekly by a solo sweeper and are cleaned as scheduled. Where we are unable to cover any roads due to resource issues then alternative arrangements are put in place. The Street Cleansing service will respond to any concerns raised about cleaning received normally within 24 hrs. I can confirm that we have received 50 requests for service within the Dundonald Ward between April and August 2014 which were all responded to.

NP2) Councillor Jill West to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:

In 2013 Merton was named ‘Best Achieving Council’ in the country. How is it then that Merton’s recycling figures compare so poorly with those of Rochford District Council, which was last year’s best performing local authority for recycling according to figures published by the government, with recycling rates of almost 67%?

Reply

The MJ Awards is an annual event which recognises the top performing councils in the country with Merton winning the main award "Best Achieving Council in the " in 2013. This category recognises not just one area of council business, but the achievements of the authority right across the organisation. The organisers praised the council for consistently delivering for its residents across all service areas, its excellent services and value for money as well as being one of the lowest spenders in London but often being in the top quartile for performance."

The figure of 67% for Rochford Council is excellent though Rochford is quite different from Merton with a small fraction of Merton's population. A better comparison would be with other London Boroughs. We have recently launched our “Mega Recycling Scheme” Merton’s Mega Recycle is a scheme to encourage Merton residents to recycle more, by

offering cash prizes. Merton's Mega Recycle is working with schools, residents associations and community groups. The Council will endeavor to increase their recycling rate to meet or exceed if possible the government's target as set which is 50% by 2020.

NP3) Councillor Stephen Crowe to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:

Can the Cabinet Member outline the latest timescales for the Mitcham regeneration project, including a detailed breakdown of what precisely is planned and when?

Reply

Phase 1: Fair Green improvements work programme (new market area, landscaped areas, perimeter street, lighting)

October 2014 Enabling works: Utilities diversions, Bus stop relocation

Late Nov 2014: Clock Tower removal and restoration

January 2015: Main construction works begin (7 months)

Wider scheme programme:

June 2015: Three Kings Pond improvements start

September 2015: Junctions improvement works begin:

Phase 2: Western Road/Raleigh Gardens/Upper Green West

Phase 3: London Road and St. Marks Road (new bus street if approved)

Phase 4: London Road/Raleigh Gardens/Upper Green East

Phase 5: Holborn Way

NP4) Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:

What is the average length of time that it takes for planning applications to be decided upon and how many applications per planning officer does this equate to? How does this compare to 4 years ago?

Reply

It is not possible to provide accurate figures for the average time taken to determine planning applications as this is not a report the recording system can run. From 1st Jan to 8 September 2014 there were 3001 applications determined (all types). This equated to 115 applications determined per officer (all officers including admin) in the team. 4 years ago, for the exact same time period there were 2218 applications determined at a rate of 84 per officer.

NP5) Councillor Janice Howard to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:

Further to publication of the report on the Morden Park Pools consultation, can the Cabinet Member outline the detailed timescales for the delivery of a replacement facility in Morden? Can he also advise what opportunities there will be for in depth scrutiny of the proposals?

Reply

Although I'm proud that our consultation on the makeup of the new facility has been so successful, I'm not yet in a position to give a detailed timescale. There are a number of factors which will determine the timescale including the makeup of the building itself – in particular the creation of the pools and other complex features. I am, however, determined that the project should be completed as quickly and efficiently as possible and a clear timetable will be agreed before the end of 2014 that will inform a more accurate detailed plan for the design, development, planning and construction phases and then the opening of the doors.

At this stage I think it would be foolish to dictate how the project will be scrutinized. However, as a former Scrutiny Chair I really want the positive support and ingenuity of the scrutiny process to underpin the process, and I look forward to helping make it as full and as enjoyable as I can.

NP6) Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Finance:

Can the Cabinet Member provide me with a) a full list of currently vacant positions in the council; and b) the current actual employee FTE and headcount figures (broken down for teaching staff i.e. teachers, assistants and managers and separately broken down for permanent staff, temporary staff, consultants and agency staff)?

NP7) Councillor James Holmes to the Cabinet Member for Education:

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that Merton's school expansion programme is on budget? If it is not, can he advise which specific school expansions are overspent and, in each case, by how much?

Reply

All current school expansion projects are within the overall budget allocations.

NP8) Councillor Adam Bush to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking:

Does the administration have any plans to assist medical practitioners in Merton who have trouble parking in the borough when on home visits to their patients?

Reply

I have asked officers to draw up proposals for consultation that would allow GPs and others, who have to make essential home visits to residents, to park in CPZs and shared use bays across the Borough for that purpose. Recently, I have also met with practitioners and administrators at the Lambton Road medical practice and discussed these emerging proposals. I anticipate that a report detailing proposals and options will be ready in the autumn.

NP9) Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

The current Government has increased funding to councils for the Disabled Facilities Grant from £169 million 2009/10 to £185 million in 2014/15. What impact has this increased government funding had on the number of home adaptations undertaken each year by the council for residents here in Merton?

Reply

The council's allocations of grant from government for Disabled facilities grants for 2014/15 is in the region of £460K and is supported by a capital contribution direct from the authority. Since 2009/10 the Council has increased the number of major adaptations to disabled persons in 2009/10 50 homes were adapted rising to 93 in 2013/14.

It is not currently possible to say how many homes will be adapted during 2014/15 until year end.

NP10) Councillor David Williams to the Leader of the Council:

Would the Leader please list the meetings and correspondence he has had since the last meeting of the Council on 9th July 2014 to save St Helier Hospital?

Reply

I am delighted Cllr Williams retains such an interest in our campaign to save St Helier Hospital, despite his continued denial that the hospital is at risk. The most significant occurrence since our last meeting has been that I have been the recipient of a reply from the Secretary of State,

Jeremy Hunt, to my letter to him calling for the removal of the Chair of the CCG from his post. Disappointingly, the Secretary of State has refused to remove the Chair from his post, again displaying this Conservative government's lack of concern for our local hospital.

NP11) Councillor Oonagh Moulton to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:

I welcome the new outdoor gym equipment that has been rolled out in open spaces in certain parts of the borough and the health benefits that outdoor gyms provide. Can the Cabinet Member tell me what plans there are to install these in open spaces in other parts of the borough, such as Wimbledon Park or Cottenham Park for example, so that in the future all Merton residents are able to enjoy the health benefits they offer?

Reply

There are two new green gym projects currently in the pipeline for the current financial year: one is currently planned for Morden Recreation Ground and the other at Canons Recreation Ground. Beyond that, there are plans to introduce green gym equipment also to Dundonald Recreation Ground in Wimbledon as part of the park's redevelopment proposals linked to the expansion of Dundonald Primary School when that project commences. In addition to the above, CHMP have money set aside to deliver green gyms elsewhere in the borough, and these are discussed at their Community Engagement meetings around the Borough.

Whilst there are no specific plans for a green gym at Wimbledon Park (or, for that matter my own ward Colliers Wood) at the current time, there are proposals to introduce outdoor table tennis there imminently to add further to the very diverse sports and health-based facilities offered there.

NP12) Councillor Brian Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

How many births took place at a) St Helier Hospital and b) Kingston Hospital in each of the last 5 years?

Reply

	Total Number of Births that took place			
	Epsom & St Helier Hospital		Kingston Hospital	
	Resident in Merton Wards	Resident in Non-Merton Wards	Resident in Merton Wards	Resident in Non-Merton Wards
2009/10	518	128	502	49
2010/11	561	149	543	47
2011/12	556	117	525	56
2012/13	542	131	568	79
2013/14	481	143	525	81

Note: Figures relate to those who are registered with a GP in Merton.