

Merton Council

Council

3 February 2016

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PUBLIC QUESTIONS RECEIVED FOR COUNCIL 3 FEBRUARY

1) From: Diane Kathryn Neil Mills

To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Question: With regards to right of light, with whom does the responsibility lie in terms of assessing compliance with the council's policy on this matter?

Reply

It is for the Council's Development Control team to assess compliance with policy of any submitted evidence. Often impact can be assessed by a simple site visit and development control planning case officers are trained to consider such impacts. If there is considered to be a significant impact on daylight or sunlight to neighbouring residential properties as part of any proposed development, then the applicant may be asked to submit a report on the matter from a suitably qualified individual. The methodology and conclusions in the report will be checked by a planning officer and clarifications sought if any discrepancies arise. The council can also undertake its own 'aspect value test' however this is a simple method normally reserved for simple small extensions.

2) From: Chris Wales

To the Cabinet Member for Environment Cleanliness and Parking

Question: "Could the Cabinet Member please indicate what the annual running costs of the Controlled Parking Zone scheme are; how much revenue it generates for the council and what the stated aims of the scheme are?"

Reply

Based on figures reported to Mayor's Office for the Parking Account for 2014/15, the running costs of the CPZ scheme were £2.3M and the net receipts from contraventions was £7.8M, which was used to fund transport related activity including contributing towards the cost of the Freedom Pass which costs Merton about £9m a year.

The aims of the Controlled Parking Scheme are to respond to the fact that traffic congestion is one of residents' top concerns and to manage the demand for on-street parking in residential areas. CPZs are only considered by the Council if they are proposed by residents. Similarly, they are only implemented after due consultation with residents which results in the majority of residents responding in favour of CPZ proposals.

3) From: Andrew Boyce

To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Question: Whether he feels any sense of embarrassment that the Council has refused to include four cottages in his ward on its local list of heritage assets, despite their dating back to the 1800s, having a clear association with Lord Nelson and the majority of consultation responses favouring their inclusion?

Reply

I am not embarrassed. As you know I initiated this local listing application, worked with others to collect signatures in support of it, insisted on a public consultation and spoke with yourself and others at the hearing on the application.

The decision reflects the fact that such matters are independent of me and based upon agreed criteria and factors. The Council has an agreed assessment criteria for establishing whether properties and structures in the borough are added to the Local List This is based upon national guidance and standards aiming at protecting certain buildings.

The criteria include a professional assessment of;

- Architectural style
- Age and history
- Detailing
- Group value
- Building materials
- Subsequent alterations

The proposal to list 30-40 Morden Road had been assessed negatively both by the Design Review Panel and Merton's heritage officers. It was determined that although listing enjoyed local support, the cottages do not meet the majority of the council's criteria. Although, I wanted a different outcome, I do not question that a proper decision was made.

4) From: Derek Manning To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Question: Explain the procedure for determining whether properties dating back to the early 1800s merit inclusion on the council's list of heritage assets, and why the decision on whether to include such properties on the local list is delegated to the Chief Executive of the council and not elected members?

Reply

The Council has an agreed assessment criteria for establishing whether properties and structures in the borough are added to the Local List. This guidance is set out in detail on the council's website: www.merton.gov.uk/listed_buildings

The criteria includes a professional assessment of;

- Architectural style
- Age and history

- Detailing
- Group value
- Building materials
- Subsequent alterations

Further to section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972, Council has delegated the authority to make these decisions to the chief executive. The power is not something that must be reserved to the cabinet or an elected member. In particular:

- Part 4F Section A11 of the constitution delegates planning, conservation and licensing matters to Planning Applications Committee and Licensing Committee and
- Part 3F, section 7.1, of the constitution authorises the chief executive to determine all town planning development control and miscellaneous matters, except for those matters reserved to the above committees

As you know from our meeting with the Chief Executive this week, our view is that the final decision should lie with elected members, acting within our listing criteria. I have therefore asked council officers to review this matter and to report back to me with proposals on the most appropriate way to proceed in determining changes to the local list in future.

**5) From: Sophie Shelton
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking**

Question: 'Will the Leader explain why Ridley Road in Wimbledon is being neglected? with the following outstanding , Recycling collection missed on 14/1/16 No street cleaning or litter picking since 1/10/15, street lighting is poor, old and inadequate, paving slabs are loose cracked and dangerous! please confirm the work program in writing'

Reply

I can assure Ms Shelton that Ridley Road, like other residential roads in the borough, receives regular refuse collection and street cleaning. Unfortunately on 14 January 2016 the scheduled collection crew were not able to complete their work due to a vehicle breakdown. The outstanding roads were allocated to a relief crew, and the waste collected shortly thereafter.

Ridley Road is scheduled to be swept on a weekly basis. During the bulk leafing period between October and December resources are concentrated on those roads that are heavy with leaf fall. In addition there was a necessary redistribution of resources over the Christmas and New Year period due to bank holidays etc. However our response team continued to visit the area and responded to issues that needed to be addressed. Ridley road was cleaned and checked on the scheduled day Monday 4 January 2016, and had been added for checking on a weekly basis to ensure the required standard of cleaning is being maintained.

There are no current plans to renew the street lighting or footways on Ridley Road as they do not meet the threshold for intervention. The Council has an annual investment programme for the renewal of footways and carriageways as well as upgrading lighting, Ridley Road will be prioritised when appropriate. All roads in the borough are inspected on a scheduled and regular basis to identify defects that have reached the intervention level following which works are ordered to make them safe.

**6) From: Lynn Robertson
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

Question: What is the budget split for spending at the Library network between fiction and non fiction – in paper media format?

Reply

Spending on printed book stock categories in our libraries varies each year depending upon the level of new stock that publishers produce and the subject areas. Customer demand for stock is also monitored closely and sophisticated technological systems are used to ensure that the right stock is purchased for our users. In the last full financial year 52% of available funds were spent on fiction stock and 48% on non-fiction. These figures are combined for stock purchased for both adults and children.

**7) From: Richard Hilton
To the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

Question: At the Council Meeting on Wednesday 19th November 2014, my constituent Mrs Nicola Reade-Lyons raised concerns about confidential documents she had been sent in error regarding child protection matters. What investigation was carried out as a result of this and have procedures been improved as a result?

Reply

The council has looked into this matter and has also asked the Information Commissioners Officer (ICO) to investigate. The ICO investigated and has not taken any formal enforcement action. The ICO has, however, looked into our procedures, and has recommended that the mandatory protecting information training staff are required to undertake, should be annually rather than every 18 months and that new employees should receive adequate data protection training before they start dealing with personal data.

**8) From: Tracy Wilson
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

Question: In November 2015, Merton Council stated that they had not agreed the needs plus one component of the CHMP regen plans. What will happen if homes are demolished and residents do not get what they were promised?

Reply

Circle Housing Merton Priory (CHMP) have stated that where there is under occupation in an existing property then rather than just rehouse under occupying tenants in a home which meets their needs CHMP will offer those tenants a property with one bedroom above their housing need if they wish .

**9) From: Doll Lambourne
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

Question: Merton Council stated that the Ravensbury Garages site would not be disposed of until regen plans are approved by public enquiry (2017), however CHMP are pushing for planning in 2016. Have Merton Council met with CHMP in private and made promises that should be disclosed to the public?

Reply

Ravensbury Garages remain in Merton Council's ownership and no deal has been made regarding any sale to CHMP. Individuals or organisations are allowed to submit planning applications for land that they do not own. There have been no promises made that require public disclosure.

**10) From: Annette Rae
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

Question: If Merton Council decide to sell the Ravensbury Garage for development, will Merton Council put the site up for tender sale to any interested parties to ensure the best possible sale price for Merton Residents?

Reply

Should Merton Council decide to sell any land in the borough, the sale is usually conducted through an open market tender. There are circumstances, where if a neighbouring land owner shares a boundary with the Council's land to be disposed, the neighbour has 'special purchaser' rights. This assumes that developing adjoining sites together will enable a better development across the sites. The Council must still obtain best reasonable value for the disposal, but the disposal is not subject to open market tender. Merton Council has not yet had discussions of this nature re. Ravensbury Garages

**11) From: Christopher Holt, Chairman, Ravensbury Residents Association
To the Leader**

Question: Reviewing Ravensbury's draft local plan (Cabinet Jan 2016), it appears that this has been drafted around CHMP's own architectural plans and not the opinions of local residents. Is Stephen Alambritis readying to break his promise to properly represent Ravensbury residents who want to save their homes, community and environment?

Reply

The Council's consultation on the draft Estates Local Plan starts on 1st February and is based upon standard and well tested approaches to planning consultation. It has been written by Merton's officers on the basis of their best professional judgement. The consultation process is designed to ensure the Council can hear and understand the opinions of local residents. We encourage all residents of the relevant estates to respond to the Council's consultation at www.merton.gov.uk/estatesplan

**12) From: Nicola Reade-Lyons
To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

Question: Who is agreeing the minutes from previous Council Meetings before they are signed-off and published? Are they amended if any errors are discovered after they have been published and how can the public be confident that what is recorded is an honest factual account of what is said in the meeting?

Reply

Draft minutes of Council and committee meetings are produced and publicised on the website as soon as practicably possible after the meeting. Minutes are not required to be a verbatim record of the meeting but are required to be a record of the decisions taken. They are included on the agenda for the next meeting of that committee and are then agreed by that committee as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to any changes made and agreed by that committee. Once agreed by the committee the minutes constitute a legal record of the meeting and cannot be subsequently changed.

PRIORITY QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL 3 FEBRUARY 2016

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

Would the Cabinet Member update us on the performance of our libraries?

Reply

Merton's Library Service is currently reporting record performance in 5 of its 6 key performance indicators. These figures include record numbers of people using our library service and going online to access our new e-services. In recent user surveys satisfaction is at near perfect levels with 100% of children satisfied with our services and 99% of customers satisfied with our e-services support. Resident satisfaction is also at record levels.

The service goes from strength to strength and the redevelopment of Colliers Wood Library is well underway. Since 2011 we have kept all our libraries open and extended their opening hours. We have received a lot of interest from central government and other boroughs in our delivery structure. Our schools and libraries membership scheme is only the second of its kind in England, giving all our school children first class access to libraries and reading.

Councillor Linda Taylor to the Cabinet Member for Education:

I would like to pay tribute to the staff and pupils at those various schools in the borough which were recently faced with bomb and security threats for the way they conducted themselves. This was clearly a very concerning experience for all involved. Can the Cabinet Member reassure me that a full review will be undertaken of the relevant emergency procedures in place to support the borough's schools?

Reply

Over 20 schools nationally and in Europe were disrupted by the spate of bomb scares over the last week or so. I understand that the majority of the schools affected both in the UK and in Paris received the same recorded message, probably distributed over the internet. It is thought that some of the schools may have been called by copycat hoaxers. The schools in Merton which had to respond to these alerts included Raynes Park, The Ursuline, Wimbledon College, Ricards Lodge, Bishop Gilpin and Harris Merton.

Our schools managed this very difficult situation with their usual professionalism and worked in partnership with the council and local police to minimise the disruption and restore business as usual as soon as possible. The young people also responded magnificently and I am sure the whole chamber will agree we owe our school communities and police colleagues our thanks.

Due to the number of these alerts around the country Avon and Somerset Police have been appointed to lead an investigation into the circumstances and instigators.

The Director of Children's Services is also liaising closely with senior officers in the Metropolitan Police to consider learning from the events and future responses should they re-occur. Council officers, our secondary heads and local police colleagues have also met to look at any learning from events and to ensure we refine our critical incident responses accordingly.

Councillor Marsie Skeete to the Leader of the Council

Would the Leader update us on how we work in partnership with businesses in the borough to ensure a fair deal for local consumers?

Reply

The council provides regulatory services such as licensing, trading standards and environmental health which work in partnership with local businesses to ensure safety and a fair deal for local consumers provide advice on how to comply with the aim of businesses treating consumer fairly. However, it is accepted that many businesses will not comply with a rule unless they see the benefit of doing so and action would often follow in such cases. We are in the process of building a new relationship with the business community which involves changing the perception of regulation as red tape to making businesses understand the direct links between complying with "fair trading" laws and the effect that this has on consumer trust, retention and therefore growth. Businesses will come to understand that customer retention brings superior profit growth and our "rules" act as a guide book to treating consumers fairly before, during and after a transaction i.e. providing excellent customer service, thus retaining them.

We also support businesses to be more economically viable and reduce their own costs through the package of business support that is in offer, which should translate into a better service for residents. This includes:

- Merton's Business Support Service where businesses get free advice in growing their business, support with high growth and signposting on matters such as accounts, recruitment or business law.
- Business Rates discounts, especially encouraging businesses to locate in Merton and create jobs
- Shop Front Improvement Grants and Business Premises Improvements Grants that enhance the business offer and make the high street more attractive
- Brighter Business programme where the Council provides support to businesses to reduce their energy consumption.
- Supporting Business improvement Districts (BID's) who collect a levy which can be used to deliver services as decided by the BID Board. For example in Wimbledon Town Centre this has enabled the BID to host events and improve the public realm for its visitors.

You can see a full list of the business support package on our website at www.merton.gov.uk/business/businesssupport.htm

Councillor Oonagh Moulton to the Cabinet Member for Finance:

It is this administration's ambition for Merton to be 'London's best council by 2020'. Can the Cabinet member outline in detail a) the criteria by which residents and councillors will be able to judge whether or not the administration's goal has been achieved and b) how Merton's residents have been consulted on this to ensure their views help inform what it actually means to be 'London's best council by 2020'?

Reply

The administration recognises that there are major challenges facing all London local authorities at this time, due to funding pressures and demographic change. However, as a businesslike council, we strive to achieve the best that we can within those limitations, and we want our staff and councillors to aim to be the very best.

The criteria for measuring success results both from listening to the public and from analysing potential. As politicians we consult residents about their priorities in the most meaningful way at regular intervals through the ballot box, and at the last local elections, there was significant support for policies such as:

- A council tax freeze
- A call out service for residents to contact the council about dirty streets and a weekly refuse collection service
- New primary school places
- Maintaining a library service
- Opposing police cuts by the London Mayor
- Opening a new leisure centre in Morden

In addition, we are developing a performance management framework that draws on local and national indicators for us and our partners and aim to capture the progress we make towards our ambition. We anticipate that our Residents' Survey will feature heavily, as it already prioritises their key concerns as well as other existing indicators that allow us to benchmark our performance with other local authorities (such as the performance indicators monitored through London Councils, for example).

In developing service plans and TOMs (Target Operating Models) service leads have, on a service-by-service basis, examined the current requirements of customers, and undertaken analysis to anticipate future need. This will be critical in helping us understand how our services best meet customer expectations and, therefore, what should be measured.

Councillor Dennis Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Could he update us on the level of government funding we can expect as part of the local government settlement announced by government in the week before Christmas?

Reply

We are still awaiting final details of the settlement, but in the provisional settlement announced in December, Merton's Settlement Funding Assessment in 2016/17 (i.e.

Revenue Support Grant and Baseline funding from Business Rates) reduces by £9.4m (14.15%) to £55.5m from the equivalent 2015/16 figure of £64.9m. Over the period 2015 /16 to 2019/20 Merton's Settlement Funding Assessment is expected to reduce by 41.8% in real terms.

Councillor David Williams to the Leader of the Council:

What sort of 'Momentum' does the Leader see behind his maintenance of a 'business-like' approach to the pursuit of a Council tax freeze and the associated cuts in services?

Reply

I appreciate the Councillor's attempt at humour. To answer what I think may be his substantive point, he knows I am a man of my word. I promised residents a council tax freeze and I intend to deliver on that promise.

I'm sure he recalls his own brief tenure as Leader of the Council when he managed to hike up council tax by almost £100 whilst still attempting to shut down All Saints Day centre and Friends in St Helier at a time of increasing local government funding. Since being relegated to opposition by residents, he and his party have changed their policy and in 2014 promised a reckless 10% council tax cut that would have decimated local services in Merton – and was rightly rejected by residents.

From the tenor of his question it appears he and his party have now changed their policy on council tax for a third time. It remains to be seen how residents will reward them for what could be seen as indecisiveness or weakness but I am sure is simply down to not understanding the impact of his own government's assault on local services, the Conservatives in government having cut more than 40% of local council's funding since 2010. He is in good company however as it seems the prime minister is similarly unaware of the impact of his own policies, having written to his local Conservative council complaining about the cuts his government has caused.

In contrast to the Conservatives, Merton's Labour administration have taken a business-like and honest approach to council tax. We won't hike it up by £100 like he did. And we won't cut it by 10% like he later promised. And we won't pretend it's not the government's fault that services up and down the country are being decimated. We'll continue to freeze council tax just like we promised while looking after those who need our help the most. That is what residents voted for. That is what they expect from us. And that is what they will get.

Councillor Tobin Byers to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Could he update us on his approach to council tax?

Reply

Council tax has long been a top concern for Merton residents but as a result of this Labour administration's council tax freeze it is no longer the top concern, vindicating

our approach on this issue. However, although it is no longer the top concern, it is clear some residents still struggle to pay, due to the high cost of living, particularly in relation to housing costs. I think many residents feel that as a tax it's not as fair as it should be, with residents on lower incomes paying a greater share of their income, proportionately, compared to more affluent residents. I believe this is why residents voted for a Labour administration whilst also rejecting the Conservative's unfunded 10% council tax cut which would have decimated local services.

In line with our promise to residents my approach to council tax has been to freeze it again this year, delivering on our manifesto commitment. We have also agreed to continue to ensure those on the very lowest incomes continue to be protected from council tax increases. Due to our business-like approach and good financial management, we have also been able to mitigate some of the worst effects of the government's cuts to local services. We have used our July Principles to focus on the services residents value the most and to look after those most in need of our help.

Councillor James Holmes to the Cabinet Member for Education:

Could the Cabinet Member advise the latest position regarding the site for a new secondary school and confirm which Merton owned sites are being put forward for consideration?

Reply

The council continues to work closely with the Education Funding Agency to identify a site for the planned new Free School in Merton. Two specific options are being actively pursued neither of which are in the sole ownership of the council.

Unfortunately I cannot disclose details of these sites at this stage, in order to protect the commercial interests of the EFA and the council and also to ensure the current owners of the sites are not destabilised. We will make an announcement as soon as we can.

Councillor Sally Kenny to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Could she update us on the work we are doing to deliver the public health agenda in Merton?

Reply

The main statutory duties for public health that were conferred on local authorities by the Health and Social Care Act 2012 include the following:

1. Strategic leadership and advocacy for health and wellbeing
2. Commissioners of services including sexual health and substance misuse
3. Commissioning support to the local NHS
4. Oversight for health protection
5. Production of an independent Annual Public Health Report (APHR) and membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board

Since 2013, the Public Health team have been working across all of these areas to improve health and wellbeing of Merton residents, with the aim of increasing life expectancy and reducing health inequalities:

- Public Health have championed health across the whole of the local authority's business, for instance:
 - Coordination of a Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2018 – *Merton the Place for a Good Life* that covers themes across the wider determinants of health from education and employment to community safety, with a strong focus on prevention and reducing health inequalities, and joint accountability for implementation;
 - Working with planning and licensing colleagues to shape the availability of healthy options on our high streets through responding to alcohol licenses and commenting on planning applications, using public health data and feedback from local residents;
 - Current work with colleagues across the council from all Directorates on a 'whole systems approach to obesity', part of a Sector Lead Improvement Programme through the Association of Directors of Public Health.
- As commissioners of services from smoking cessation to sexual health, we are working to ensure value for money (efficiency and effectiveness) in both procurement and performance management. From 1st October 2015, Public Health took on commissioning of the Healthy Child 0-5 services, which includes health visiting and Family Nurse Partnership (more intensive support for young parents aged 19 and under), which provides an opportunity for closer working with our children's centres, and development of an integrated 0-19 pathway across the local authority and NHS.
- Public Health provide valuable commissioning support to Merton CCG, with a regular programme of Health Needs Assessments (HNAs) to inform commissioning decisions and strategies (recent HNAs include Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Cancer, Neurological conditions, Falls Prevention, Dementia Cardiovascular Disease, Mental Health), and input to a number of the CCG's Clinical Workstreams e.g. 'Keeping Healthy and Well'. We have ensured that common prevention indicators are built into the CCG Operating Plan, linked to the 2015-18 Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and have worked in partnership with MCCG to procure a new Community Health Services contract to start in April 2016, ensuring that the core service specifications have a stronger focus on prevention and referrals for the four key lifestyle factors: alcohol, physical activity, healthy diet, smoking.
- The Director of Public Health maintains oversight for health protection, for instance assurance of cancer screening programmes, and development of an action plan to improve immunisation services in the borough which was recently reviewed at Scrutiny.
- Merton's second Annual Public Health Report was published in autumn 2015, titled 'The Time for Prevention is Now: Keeping People Healthy Reduces Health Inequalities'. It celebrates the progress made in improving public health since the transition of public health from the NHS to local government, as well as the challenges that remain to embed prevention across the business of the council and partners in order to reduce health inequalities.

In recognition of the strong work of council to deliver the public health agenda in Merton, the council has been shortlisted in the Public Health category of the 2016 Local Government Chronicle awards.

7a) Strategic Theme Questions Priority (Sustainable Communities)

Councillor Ian Munn to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration

Could he update us on discussions he has had regarding Crossrail 2?

Reply

The Council's cross-party response to the Crossrail 2 consultation is available online at www.merton.gov.uk/crossrail2

"The consultation proposals as they stand represent an unacceptable level of upheaval and disruption to our business community. We have made it clear to Crossrail that if the plans remain as they are, we would be forced to reconsider our support for the project. We are committed to our local businesses and the welfare of our residents and will stand by their interests"

"Crossrail 2 could be huge opportunity for Wimbledon and Merton. But the development of this significant scheme can only go ahead if businesses can continue to thrive throughout the works and disruption to residents remains at a minimum."

Key points from our consultation response:

- We don't consider a consultation consisting of a single option for Wimbledon Station to be a genuine consultation.
- The potential impact on Wimbledon town centre and Weir Road is unparalleled and places Wimbledon in a uniquely vulnerable position. We require a thorough analysis of alternative route and station options.
- Development in Wimbledon town centre should not be led by new residential development – maintaining the vibrancy of our town.
- We want to see over-line decking to accommodate new commercial space prior to the demolition (if needed) of town centre shops and offices.
- There is a lack of any socio-economic analysis of the impact of the construction, including impacts on our businesses and residents.
- Wimbledon station proposals need to fit within a council led masterplan; to ensure the long term benefits of Crossrail are maximised and that, as community, we control design quality and protect our unique character and heritage.
- Merton Council supports the Tooting Broadway CR2 interchange option to alleviate the Northern Line in Merton and provide step-free access to St Georges Hospital.
- There isn't enough detail in the consultation to fully understand the impacts in the Raynes Park area. Further options need to be explored regarding the level crossings in West Barnes ward to minimise any severance or disruption to local business.

The Council continue to meet regularly with the Crossrail2 team and are exploring alternative route and station options for Wimbledon including:

- Tunnelling the southwest trains fast-lines

- Tunnelling the CR2 route completely through Merton
- Northern alignment (district line platforms)

There is a great deal of work to do and the council is taking a lead by initiating a collaborative masterplanning process throughout 2016, where residents and businesses will be able to work with the Council and representatives from Crossrail to help formulate a plan for the future of our fantastic town centre.

The Leader of the Council has met with Lord Adonis, Chair of the National Infrastructure Commission to put the case for Wimbledon which we hope will be heard. As cabinet member, I am also in regular contact with Michele Dix, Managing Director, Crossrail2 and have a meeting set for February to discuss how a better solution for our borough will be achieved.

Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking:

What is the current status of the ANPR cameras roll-out across the borough?

Reply

The installation/roll-out of the ANPR cameras will start in April 2016 with completion and operation programmed for June 2016.

Councillor Katy Neepe to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture
Could the Cabinet Member update us on our heritage strategy?

Reply

The new five year Heritage Strategy was agreed at Cabinet on 7 December 2015. It sets out an ambitious programme of projects and has been devised with community stakeholders. In recent years the borough has significantly increased investment from external agencies and continuing this growth forward is a key element within our new strategy. The new strategy is focussed around four key objectives:

1. Raise Merton's profile by increasing public access to the borough's unique and diverse cultural heritage;
2. Safeguard the borough's varied heritage sites and resources, protecting and conserving them for the benefit of future generations;
3. Ensure that Merton's heritage provision is inclusive by working collaboratively to widen public engagement and participation;
4. To recognise the important contribution of social enterprise and secure ongoing funding and investment in Merton's heritage through partnership work, external funding and sponsorship.

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

I have just been reading the 2013-14 traffic report which showed that the two places with the most accidents in the borough are the junctions of Dorset Road/Kingston Road and Hartfield Road/Wimbledon Hill Road and that total casualties in Merton increased by 20% to 617 between 2013 and 2014.

Dundonald Councillors have asked numerous times for some safety improvements to be made within the Dundonald grid area (in particular Lower Downs Road and Kingswood Road) only to be told that resources have to be directed to the areas which have seen the most accidents. Given the findings of this report outlined above, can the Cabinet Member explain what the council is planning to do to address these accident hotspots and when?

Reply

The borough receives a budget from TfL (following an annual bid) to investigate and deliver the local safety programme. This involves looking at all the accidents throughout the borough and identifying those areas that could be addressed via engineering solutions. The budget is modest and therefore any engineering solution would need to be affordable deliverable and address accidents. There are a number of places with higher numbers of accidents and it is not possible to address them all. It is important to look at reasons for accidents. There are a number of factors that contribute toward accidents, these include poor driver behaviour, weather conditions, road works, type of road etc. For example in response to Dorset Road/Kingston Road, the accidents are primarily due to driver error for which there is no engineering solution; sightlines are clear, there is no physical feature that contributes toward any potential accident. Measures such as banning certain movements could be considered but by doing so, it is likely that traffic is likely to migrate to other roads which have poorer sightlines thereby transferring a larger problem. It is also necessary to prioritise certain categories of road, for example road that accommodate schools, nurseries, etc

We will be developing next financial year's programme shortly and accidents in key places will be investigated and the appropriate action will be taken. It is acknowledged that there have been concerns raised by Dundonald Councillors regarding Dundonald grid. However, this area appears to have a better accident record than other locations except for the most recent serious accident involving a young cyclist (reasons for the accident still to be confirmed by the police).

Councillor Abigail Jones to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

Can the Cabinet Member outline how he expects the government's proposed Housing and Planning Bill will affect Merton?

Reply

The forthcoming Housing and Planning Bill, whose second reading in the Lords started on 26 January 2016, proposes further changes to a wide variety of council-related activities. These include the definition of "affordable" homes, management of rogue landlords, duties on local authorities to grant permission for custom builders,

to sell high value housing, to register brownfield land and automatically grant planning permission on it. The Bill also proposes granting more intervention powers to the Mayor of London and the Secretary of State and revising the Compulsory Purchase Order process.

More details are available in a report to this meeting of full council (03 Feb 2016 Agenda item 7 "Strategic objective review - Sustainable Communities")

Together with London Councils, Merton Council is following the progress of this Bill and seeking to influence its final shape. We will update councillors once the Bill receives Royal Assent later in 2016.

Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:

Would the Cabinet Member explain a) how closing the Bowling Green at Joseph Hood Recreation Ground will deliver cashable savings when the use of mobile teams rather than specific grounds staff means virtually the same amount of machinery and staff will be required to maintain the remaining Bowling Greens in Merton and b) if the Cabinet Member agrees there will be very minimal financial savings - particularly when set against the loss of benefits to the health of Merton Bowling Club members - what the advantage therefore is for residents of forcing this club to merge with another one?

Reply

Bowling greens are very labour intensive facilities to maintain - approximately 240 hours per annum are spent on preparing this one green alone - and the Greenspaces team is facing a further reduction in its horticulture/sports team staff establishment of one full time post from April 2016 when the next season commences.

The Council's resource concerns in respect of bowling greens has been extensively discussed with the bowls clubs over the past 3 years and our current facility closure proposals have been anticipated since the start of the 2015 season. The context is that this service, overall, costs an estimated £77.5k per annum to provide. The total income received from all venues is in the region of only £16k per annum, and serves an estimated 190 active bowls club members only, currently spread over 6 separate venues.

Each individual bowling green consumes water & electricity, Materials (fertilisers, chemicals, seed, top dressing, etc), machinery operational costs (fuel & servicing) and where necessary items such as irrigation commissioning/decommissioning services.

The annual income received at each venue barely covers the non-labour elements of providing the service and in some cases, including at Joseph Hood Recreation Ground, it typically does not cover even this.

Our approach will deliver cashable savings in that we can reduce spending on both labour and non labour elements with less greens to manage and maintain.

The Council will, nevertheless, continue to support and manage four bowling greens across the borough in the coming season and with 4 bowling greens (2 public & 2 private) within 1.8 kms of Joseph Hood Recreation Ground (and two of these within 1 km distance), the Council's view is that there is sufficient opportunity and capacity for any individual who wishes to participate in the sport to do so within the local area with a minimum of inconvenience and there is, therefore, no obvious reason why the health of any current member of the Merton Bowls Club should be compromised by the decision to close this particular green.

Councillor Ross Garrod to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking

Could the Cabinet Member update us on the next steps regarding the Scrutiny panel's consideration of the results of the wheelie bin pilot in Lavender ward?

Reply

The Scrutiny panel considered the results of the wheeled bin pilot in lavender ward before Christmas. The report demonstrated significant levels of support from local residents with 89% of residents happy with the system and 95 saying they found wheelie bins easier to use than the existing black sack and recycling container system. The report also found that there was a significant increase in the cleanliness of local streets. The Scrutiny Panel made a number of recommendations including in particular that the costs and potential savings of a borough wide roll out be looked at in more detail, which fits with this administrations commitment to finding value for money ways of improving street cleanliness in the borough while also saving money. The panel's recommendations will be presented to Cabinet on 15th February after which Officers will provide a full response on all the matters raised. These include the size and cost of bins together with their potential impact on the streetscape and on pedestrians where they are left on footways.

Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:

What is the current status of the Cycle Quietways scheme from Wimbledon to Wandsworth Common?

Reply

There are a number of elements and their progress is outlined below.

Clapham Common to Wimbledon Quietway Update

Lighting and improved footpath alongside Wandle Trail and Wandle Meadow

Proposals were sent to the Wandle Trail stakeholders in August 2015 and there were concerns about proposed lighting elements for the sections between Wandle Meadow and the borough boundary with Wandsworth.

A new lighting design is being commissioned and Wandle Trail stakeholders will be consulted in April 2016. Construction is expected to begin in August 2016 which will involve path and lighting improvements along the trail.

Widening of Wandle Meadow Bridge

Works expected to begin August 2016.

Plough Lane improvement works

Due to perceived increased expected usage from the Quietway the existing Toucan crossing will be widened to 6m. It is proposed to remove the gate on the southern side of plough lane to provide improved permeability to the Wandle Trail for cyclists. It is also proposed to remove guard railing on the northern side of the crossing. The proposals are currently with TFL signals team and works are scheduled for April 2016.

Railway Bridge Underpass lighting

The design has been sent to Network Rail and currently awaiting approval of Basic Asset Protection Agreement (BAPA). Implementation date to be confirmed upon Network Rail approval. Works expected April 2016.

Haydons Road/South Park Road Junction

It is proposed to widen the existing refuge island at the zebra crossing to allow a safe crossing point for cyclists making the crossing from Cowper Road to South Park Road. Works expected April 2016. We are investigating whether there should also be a width restriction at this point.

Councillor Fidelis Gadzama to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Could he update us on the next stage in the hoped for return of AFC Wimbledon to the borough?

Reply

Since 10 December 2015 when Merton's Planning Applications Committee voted to grant planning permission (subject to legal agreements) to the AFC Wimbledon / Galliard Homes scheme officers have been working hard to finalise the legal agreement in accordance with the Planning Applications Committee's decision. The Mayor of London commented on the planning application during 2015 when it was being considered by Merton Council. Now details of the Council's planning decision have been submitted to the Mayor of London and we are hopeful that the Mayor will tell us his decision in the next few weeks.

Agenda Item 20

AMENDMENT TO MOTION AGENDA ITEM 7d COUNCIL MEETING 3 FEBRUARY 2016

Councillor Daniel Holden will move and Councillor Abdul Latif will second that the words underlined in the amended Motion below be inserted.

Agenda Item 7d – Strategic Theme Motion (Cross-Party)

Merton Council supports the strategic case for Crossrail 2 and recognises the benefits it would provide to London and could bring to Merton. However, our support for Crossrail2 is not at any cost and the Council has strong reservations about the proposals, which have recently been subject to consultation and have caused considerable concern and anxiety among many residents and businesses in the areas affected.

In particular we are concerned about the impact of those proposals on our town centres and particularly Wimbledon, which is now in a uniquely vulnerable position. These proposals would bring about an unacceptable level of upheaval and disruption to our residents and our business community for an extended period of up to ten years: to a greater extent than we are aware has occurred in any other town centre in recent history.

Residents are understandably particularly concerned about a reduced quality of life as a result of the disruption, noise and increased traffic congestion that such a lengthy redevelopment would bring as well as the apprehension of damaging impacts on residential properties and gardens. This Council also regrets the lack of information provided by Crossrail 2 to residents in Merton about its current proposals – including how compensation for blight will be considered – and in publicising proposals in the recent consultation.

Wimbledon is a very successful business centre with a low vacancy rate and a current unmet demand for modern office accommodation. We believe that it is vital that the vibrancy and quality of Wimbledon town centre is maintained before, during and after Crossrail2 works. We note that more than 3000 jobs are at stake and considerable amounts of commercial floor space.

Wimbledon SW19 is a globally recognised brand that has enormous potential for the future. This Council believes that Crossrail2 must fulfil that potential and not damage it. We understand that the consultation scheme is an early concept design. However, if the current proposals are not changed, we would be forced to reconsider our support for the project.

This Council believes that the options for delivering Crossrail2 through the Borough should be reassessed fundamentally with a view to minimising disruption to residents and ensuring that businesses continue to prosper in a high quality town centre that retains the heritage and essential qualities and character of Wimbledon that we all cherish.

We are also concerned at the potential negative impacts on Raynes Park and Motspur Park. Changes to these stations will be required and there need to be viable alternatives to the level crossings. We note that "diversions" as quoted as one option put forward seems to mean "close the level crossing and expect all vehicles to find alternative routes" which would lead to increased traffic congestion in the Raynes Park / West Barnes area. Closure of the level crossing at Motspur Park could result in many of the local businesses leaving.

This Council rejects the decimation of Wimbledon and potential damage to other affected town centres and wishes to see Crossrail 2 engaging with residents, businesses, councillors and other elected representatives in the areas affected at the earliest opportunity. We therefore invite Crossrail2 to join the Council, Love Wimbledon, landowners and our residents as soon as possible in a comprehensive master-planning process to create a framework for the future of Wimbledon based on the principles set out in this motion.

The amended Motion would then read:

Agenda Item 7d – Strategic Theme Motion (Cross-Party)

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In particular we are concerned about the impact of those proposals on our town centres and particularly Wimbledon, which is now in a uniquely vulnerable position. These proposals would bring about an unacceptable level of upheaval and disruption to our residents and our business community for an extended period of up to ten years: to a greater extent than we are aware has occurred in any other town centre in recent history.

Residents are understandably particularly concerned about a reduced quality of life as a result of the disruption, noise and increased traffic congestion that such a lengthy redevelopment would bring as well as the apprehension of damaging impacts on residential properties and gardens. This Council also regrets the lack of information provided by Crossrail 2 to residents in Merton about its current proposals – including how compensation for blight will be considered – and in publicising proposals in the recent consultation.

Wimbledon is a very successful business centre with a low vacancy rate and a current unmet demand for modern office accommodation. We believe that it is vital that the vibrancy and quality of Wimbledon town centre is maintained before, during and after Crossrail2 works. We note that more than 3000 jobs are at stake and considerable amounts of commercial floor space.

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COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2016 ITEM 10 AMENDMENT TO MOTION 1

This Council believes that webcasting, amongst the council's varied ways of communicating with residents, has had an important part to play in ensuring greater openness and transparency of decision making in Merton; enhancing democracy; and increasing accountability to the residents it is elected to serve, although viewing figures are relatively low, with the annual residents survey demonstrating that My Merton is the number one choice of residents to keep informed about the council.

Council notes that in 2014 the then Secretary of State Eric Pickles introduced a new law giving residents and the media the right to film, blog or tweet council meetings. In light of the significant cuts the government have made to local government budgets, spending money on unnecessarily filming and broadcasting meetings (at 80p a view and an average of 2,500 views a quarter, although the cost per individual viewer is likely to be significantly higher as some will be views by the same individual or repeat views of the same segment), to a much lower audience than that reached by My Merton (at 12p a copy and reaching 80,000 households every quarter), is not a good use of council taxpayers money.

This Council therefore regrets notes the decision taken as part of last year's Budget setting process to discontinue the webcasting service as from February 2016 and the failure to investigate recognises that other models of delivery, such as sponsorship have been investigated and will continue to be kept under review, or and notes that an in house service as happens in Wandsworth would cost at least as much as the current service.

Given that—unlike My Merton— a proportion of the costs of the quarterly publications of many local authorities including My Merton are now completely self funding partly covered by advertising revenue, this Council requests Cabinet at its meeting on 15 February 2016 to reallocate up to £15,000 from Merton's current communications and marketing budget of over £300,000 per annum in order to ensure continued webcasting of major meetings such as Full Council and the Planning Applications Committee, while also to keep under review and continue exploring alternative low cost ways of providing this important a fully sponsored webcasting service and ways of increasing advertising in My Merton where possible.

Motion now to read:

This Council believes that webcasting, amongst the council's varied ways of communicating with residents, has had a part to play in ensuring greater openness and transparency of decision making in Merton; enhancing democracy; and increasing accountability to the residents it is elected to serve, although viewing figures are relatively low, with the annual residents survey demonstrating that My Merton is the number one choice of residents to keep informed about the council.

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This Council notes the decision taken as part of last year's Budget setting process to discontinue the webcasting service as from February 2016 and recognises that other models of delivery, such as sponsorship have been investigated and will continue to be kept under review, and notes that an in house service as happens in Wandsworth would cost at least as much as the current service.

Given that a proportion of the costs of the quarterly publications of many local authorities including My Merton are partly covered by advertising revenue, this Council requests Cabinet to keep under review and continue exploring alternative low cost ways of providing a fully sponsored webcasting service and ways of increasing advertising in My Merton where possible.

COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2016 **ITEM 11** **AMENDMENT TO MOTION**

This Council notes that, as part of Merton's Workplace Health programme, a network of volunteer Health Champions has been introduced to help their colleagues to lead healthy lifestyles by raising awareness of activities that are available to support healthy living. This is part of Merton's broader programme of developing Health Champions in the community which has been in operation since early 2014 and is run in partnership with Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC) and LiveWell Merton, training and supporting people who live, work or volunteer in the borough to volunteer their time motivating other residents to make realistic health changes to benefit their long term health.

Given that responsibility for Public Health has moved from the NHS to Merton Council, it is important that the local authority sets a strong example in promoting preventative health measures in areas of concern such as smoking, obesity, diabetes etc. and this Council congratulates all those staff members, Councillors, and volunteers, residents and GP practices in the community, who have so far signed up to become Health Champions.

This Council recognises that residents and local community leaders ~~also~~ have an important role to play in taking forward the prevention agenda here in Merton, particularly given the ongoing demand for local health services.

This Council therefore congratulates those Councillors who are already Health Champions, notes that there will be training for Councillors who are interested in becoming Health Champions, and resolves to urge all councillors to help promote preventative solutions to the health issues facing local communities in Merton by attending this training where possible and becoming Health Champions and by encouraging other community leaders and interested residents across the borough to continue to do the same.

Motion now to read:

This Council notes that, as part of Merton's Workplace Health programme, a network of volunteer Health Champions has been introduced to help their colleagues to lead healthy lifestyles by raising awareness of activities that are available to support healthy living. This is part of Merton's broader programme of developing Health Champions in the community which has been in operation since early 2014 and is run in partnership with Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC) and LiveWell Merton, training and supporting people who live, work or volunteer in the borough to volunteer their time motivating other residents to make realistic health changes to benefit their long term health.

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and volunteers, residents and GP practices in the community, who have so far signed up to become Health Champions.

This Council recognises that residents and local community leaders have an important role to play in taking forward the prevention agenda here in Merton, particularly given the ongoing demand for local health services.

This Council therefore congratulates those Councillors who are already Health Champions, notes that there will be training for Councillors who are interested in becoming Health Champions, and resolves to urge all councillors to help promote preventative solutions to the health issues facing local communities in Merton by attending this training where possible and becoming Health Champions and by encouraging other community leaders and interested residents across the borough to continue to do the same.

COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2016 ITEM 12 AMENDMENT TO MOTION 3

This Council believes that a civilised and prosperous society should support its most vulnerable and elderly citizens and is therefore disappointed that since 2010 the government has failed to adequately fund social care.

Given the demographic pressures faced by the borough's adult social care services in light of the government's 40% reduction in local government funding since 2010 (source: Local Government Association) with further government cuts announced and the projected 9% increase in the older population of Merton between 2015 and 2020, this Council notes ~~welcomes the approach taken by the Government to enable councils to respond to growing local need for social care through:~~

- A £1.5billion expansion of the Better Care Fund to support better health and social care integration by 2020, although significantly more will be required to properly fund social care; and
- Allowing those local authorities responsible for social care can choose to levy a new social care precept of up to 2% on council taxpayers, -provided the money raised is spent exclusively on adult social care, although this ring-fencing contrasts with the government's previous policy, which the Conservative Secretary of State boasted was to have "Significantly reduced the ring-fencing of local government grants, giving councils power and discretion to focus their resources on frontline services"; and
- the administration's promise to freeze council tax, a regressive tax that disproportionately impacts residents on lower incomes; and
- the opposition's pre-election promise of "A council tax reduction of 10% on the Merton element" which would lead to swingeing cuts in adult social care and across the council.

and welcomes the continued examination of these issues through Merton's Scrutiny process.

Motion now to read:

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Given the demographic pressures faced by the borough's adult social care services in light of the government's 40% reduction in local government funding since 2010 (source: Local Government Association) with further government cuts announced and the projected 9% increase in the older population of Merton between 2015 and 2020, this Council notes :

- A £1.5billion expansion of the Better Care Fund to support better health and social care integration by 2020, although significantly more will be required to properly fund social care; and
- local authorities responsible for social care can choose to levy a new social care precept of up to 2% on council taxpayers, provided the money raised is spent exclusively on adult social care, although this ring-fencing contrasts with the government's previous policy, which the Conservative Secretary of State boasted was to have "Significantly reduced the ring-fencing of local government grants, giving councils power and discretion to focus their resources on frontline services"; and
- the administration's promise to freeze council tax, a regressive tax that disproportionately impacts residents on lower incomes; and
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