

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.

Summary of Supplementary Question:

I want to very briefly just give a bit of background to the question I am going to ask, very sadly last year I found myself for the first time between contracts for quite some time and we had to move out of London to live with family and very fortunately found somewhere in Merton to live with days left on the clock to move house. Which is always a stressful time. Mr Mayor I received many house warming gifts, but my favourite has to be the one I had from Merton Council which said ' £110 please this

is a controlled parking zone buy one now 50% discount if you do'. My understanding of the scheme as outlined here by a member is that this is aimed at stopping congestion, which I understand. But what I would say is obviously moving house is a stressful time particularly if you only have days to do it. I would ask therefore the question; would the member agree with me that it would be fair to allow for a small period when a new resident moves in, a grace period if you like, to have the time to arrange for a permit without being charged and will she work with me to have a look into this.

Reply:

Thank you, it's nice to know that residents would like to work with us on different things especially when it's about bringing money into the Council.

It's not something we've considered before and I'm not sure it's something that we would consider in the future. I'm happy to look at anything but I don't want to complicate things by making different rules and regulations for different people. I do appreciate that you do come from an area where there wasn't a controlled parking zone. The reason we have controlled parking zones is not just because we say, well it looks a bit busy over there, we'll charge them over there for their parking it is because residents actually come to us. We don't implement any controlled parking zones, until residents come to us. And if we start looking at different rules and regulations about how long residents have lived in an area, I think we are just going to complicate the issue. I appreciate it's been an expensive time for you and I have every sympathy for that, but I think we also need to remember that its residents that asked us to implement controlled a controlled parking zone and that's residents that have been there for 15 years and residents that have been there for 5 months so I have sympathy with you but it's not an area that would be easy just to implement.

**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.

Supplementary Question:

What I would be interested to know from Councillor Judge is, as he is all too aware we are not willing to accept the Chief Executives decision, we intend to gather signatures for a local petition and in the outcome of his issuing a review of the procedures. Will he personally tonight give us assurance that he will be knocking on peoples doors with us to get those signatures on that second petition? Will he explain to them why that first one wasn't successful and not give us the usual answer of it didn't meet the criteria.

Reply:

I thank Mr Boyce for that as he knows I initiated the first local listing application and the first petition. I had great help from Mr Manning who's going to ask the next question and I think the application has been properly taken it's not a decision I agree with. I'm looking forward to a fresh procedure being introduced after May and looking forward to collecting fresh petitions and I know that maybe yourself and Mr Manning are to argue for the local listing at that time.

**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

Supplementary Question:

Good Evening, in the cabinet meeting of 18th January 2016 I'm sure I heard Councillor Andrew Judge make mention of his desires to further suspend the Decent Homes Standards for the 3 estates affected by the potential regeneration. However this has been minuted as delegate approval to the director of Community and Housing, consultation with the relevant cabinet member to finalise a revised delivery timetable for the implementation of the decent homes programme of Highpath, Eastfields and Ravensbury estate. Could a cabinet member confirm or deny this comment and the possibility of further suspension on Ravenbury, Eastfields and High path please?

Reply by Councillor Andrew Judge

I think there's a whole period before that. When the Decent Homes Standard comes to the end of the three estates and we are still engaged in consultation as a council it will be necessary the four of us to extend the period to be filled with these home standards. At least until the end of that consultation and so that Council can make a decision as to whether we are going to support the regeneration of these estates going ahead so that is the discussion that is going on at the moment, if its necessary for how long it's necessary.

But what we can't have is the period end while we are still consulting residents properly on the future planning of those estates. But we will only extend it just so long as it takes us to consult with residents properly, to analyse their responses and to reach a decision. If the decision is then, that we are going to cooperate with circle housing and we are going to support the regeneration then there will be a further period necessarily of a suspension of that decent homes standard. At the moment we are considering a temporary suspension.

**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.

Supplementary Question

At the last meeting on the 19th November 2014 I asked a question in regards to a series of data protection breaches at the Council meeting, this was on the 19th. Can it be explained why my subsequent question wasn't recorded at all in the minutes and now I have brought the issue to your attention, will the minutes be amended and my subsequent question added?

(At this point there was a discussion regarding which way the Cabinet Member should face whilst speaking – it was explained that at Council members always face the Mayor to speak)

Reply

The minutes of all minutes are agreed by all Councillors at the subsequent meeting and they are a general reflection of what was said at those meetings, to the satisfaction of members, they are not a record of every word that is said because that is far too long and will take everybody far too long to read. The minutes that were agreed from the meeting in 2014 will have been agreed by Councillors at a following meeting and if there were any problems they would get published a few days beforehand for people to comment on them and for changes to be made. So those minutes are an accurate record.

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.

Supplementary Question

I would like to thank the cabinet Member for his answer, I understand the Cabinets Library taskforce is interested in Merton's Library success story could he update us on this national recognition for what Merton is doing?

Reply

I am very pleased to tell you that Cathy Settle, the Chief Executive for the leadership for Libraries taskforce, that's a taskforce that has been put together on I believe behalf of David Cameron, came to visit us in November and she was so impressed with our project for automatic enrolment of Primary School children that she's paying us a special extra visit on Library's day, this Saturday at Wimbledon Library. She's asked us to help upscale the scheme, to cover the whole of England. I think we should be particularly proud of that.

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.

Supplementary Question

I'm very pleased by what we've done learning from the events last week. But can we guarantee that any recommendations or approvals are fully and speedily implemented by Merton. We also agree to bring a report to scrutiny on what lessons can be learnt from this conflict particularly in respect to advice and support here in Merton.

Reply

There is a lesson to be learnt from last week, but I believe the Schools handled the matter correctly in terms of evacuating the schools. Secondary school heads have met with the Director of Children's services, in terms of how future issues can be approached and there's also been updated guidance issued by the Police. Our schools are a generally safe environment but there was clearly a threat for schools last week. In terms of scrutiny that's a matter for the scrutiny committee to determine, but I myself would have no problem with that.

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

Supplementary Questions

Can you update us on the shared regulatory service and our improved resilient service we can offer to residents and businesses.

Reply

We do have a regulatory service partnership with the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, which is a intelligence lead, risk based and proportionate enforcement. That partnership is growing and others are looking to join and in fact we are the home authority for a number of big well-known companies such as the jewellery channel, ebay, paypal, the rugby football union and many, many others so the partnership is growing and there’s also quite a lot of low cost training for businesses, we have chef of the year competitions, safer food better business and challenge 25 in relation to underage selling of restricted products and I know that others look probable to join that partnership.

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 business like 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.

Supplementary Question

I'm interested to see the cabinet member refer to the annual residents survey as a way of measuring whether Merton achieves London's Best Council. Of course he admits to members that there has been no reference survey here in Merton this year. So first of all there's no baseline for us to measure our performance, so could you tell me why he simply stood by and allowed the annual residents survey to fall by the wayside for 2015/16 rather than ensuring us transition from one survey to the other and what is he going to do to ensure that the opinions of local residents are not only sought but actually viewed by this Council.

Reply

Thank you for your question, we do aim to be London's best Council and I thank our opposition for being one of the best oppositions and I'll go along with that to continue to keep us on our toes. The true answer to this is that the other company that provides the survey were unable to offer that in the last 12 months or so. We have had to start looking at the alternative ways of offering our services and what that will provide. It is important to us that we survey residents, I know it's important to her to survey residents, heaven knows I'm sure she, like me will be hammering on a few doors in the coming weeks listening to people

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.

Supplementary questions

How has a further cut in our funding from central government affected the immediate and financial strategy and savings we will have made in the coming years?

Reply

I share with him his disappointment in the Governments approach in the funding of Councils, it's very disappointing in the way they have been going about things. The reality is that the level of funding is not as yet fully determined, there are still number of things being decided even at this late stage by the Government. But taking away the certainty that we need, 10 million pounds per year by the end of the midterm financial strategy obviously creates a great deal of challenges for us as a Local Authority in balancing the needs of our residents, particularly our most vulnerable residents and in balancing that against the determination we have to be a business like and efficient council and balancing obviously the needs of the residents who are still suffering because of the very high cost of living that we are experiencing in the country.

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.

Supplementary Question

I thank the leader for his reply, but he deals with an inaccurate history, for example ignoring Ken Livingstone £20 increase real term reduction against RPI over 4 years by contrast triple the rate of inflation increases average over 97 to 2006. But appears on the wrong side of the future, this is not 2014. Our neighbouring outer London Boroughs, Labour - Croydon, Lib Dem – Sutton and Conservative – Kingston are all planning to protect services for the vulnerable by increasing their council tax by 3.99% in 2016/17. My question is this he may wish to blame the government for his predicament but what will it take for him to sacrifice his political legacy and put real leadership before self-interest.

Reply

I thank the former leader of the conservative party for his question. He referred to saying this is not 2010 or 2014. At 2014 you're still with us because it's still your manifesto charisma. You've said nothing against it you've not retracted it, you're still working on it to reduce and our council tax by 10%. A most negligent, indulgent policy I've ever seen. And you may use the term momentum in your original question, you may use that term, many of the labour party are inclined not to use that term. But you know to describe this Local Authority there are better terms, like ambitious, enterprising, fostering, vigour and if I need to describe your lot, opposite given the decisiveness, its shilly shally and it continues to be so

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.

Supplementary Question

Will he be listening to the voters of Merton and continuing his commitment in keeping council tax affordable for all of our residents?

Reply

It's quite true to say that these are very hard times for the people in the London borough of Merton particularly when it comes to the cost of living and housing. It's a great worry for a lot of people, so we do need to consider the impact of any increases of Council tax and then we need to consider that Council tax actually went up £100 for Merton residents when the other side where running the Council and that clearly had an impact on them as well. We also need to listen carefully to voters, who let's be honest about it, only 18 months ago made a decision about what they thought the Council tax should be and they were offered the opportunity of voting for a 10% council tax cut, but they decided not to go with what the conservatives promised from the Merton element but to vote for us and a Council tax freeze. And just as we listen to voters we need to listen to the whole community and that includes the scrutiny bodies because this is still a live matter and we have not yet come to the budget meeting and it's not yet been decided but clearly the impact that having to pay more council tax will have on the people will be a huge consideration for us.

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.

Supplementary Question

My question to the cabinet member is to firstly thank him for his answer, but to ask him if he is now in a position to rule out split site schools, something of which I've asked him to do previously, which parents and educationists and the DFE are so worried about.

Reply

In terms of split site schools, we, as the administration, have been clear that we do want a single site for our secondary schools; we believe that our schools are best placed on one site and that continues to be the preference of the administration. We hope to be in a position shortly that use/location of a secondary school site, but can I assure Council that is something of a high priority for this administration because we are committed to providing first places from 2014 and as an administration we fulfil that.

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 MCGG 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.

Supplementary Question

Could I congratulate the Cabinet member and her department for being short listed LCG public health award and ranked in the top 6 out of 32 London Boroughs for healthy and sustainable food in the latest report published by the natural health charity Sustain. Could she comment on how this was achieved please?

Reply

I'm happy to pass on congratulations to the public health team as I think they deserve it for their hard work, they have been hard working and very creative in their thinking, in their way of working. Case intervention is front in what they do and so I think it's also to do with Merton Councils support. I would also like to use this opportunity to welcome our director of public health. Who I am looking forward to working with, she has a history of delivering good results in her previous jobs, so I look forward to her continuing in that way here in Merton. So I'm looking forward to working with her.

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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.

Supplementary Question

I'd like to congratulate my Colleague on the work he did to coordinate the cross rail two proposal. But could he outline how he will continue to stand up for and promote the views of residents and businesses who will be surely affected by the scheme.

Reply

I think it's essentially by continuing the very strong course of arguments that we have already moved against the current proposals for Cross Rail two. We may support cross rail two in principal but not at the expense of people and businesses. So we will be discussing with Cross Rail two, we will be arguing with Cross rail two, we will be negotiating with Cross Rail two.

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.

Supplementary Question

My quick question today is what steps will the cabinet member and the council take to avoid having to repay parking fines relating to ANPR Cameras in light of a letter from Robert Goodwill MP who's in the department of transport who sent a letter to Council parking managers in December who said there uses are illegal in council public car parks.

Reply

I'm not sure I entirely know the answer to your question, but I will say that with ANPR, that at the moment we haven't even started it yet. In that there's a legal challenge on this so we haven't been able to start anything so I haven't actually had those discussions with the officers at the moment but I can certainly take that question to them and we can discuss that. I think that when we start to roll this out and hopefully it will be soon we can then look at the implementation and look at how we go forward with that. So thank you for raising that with me and I will certainly take

it back to them and we will have to see how the implementation starts and go from there.

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.

Supplementary Question

I would like to thank the Cabinet member for the answer to my written question and I would be quite interested to hear a little bit more about the exciting development, can you update us on the application for funding at the Wimbledon Library to be a cultural destination.

Reply

Yes I can, I'm going to read from an email sent to the ward Councillors for Hillside and to me today, by our Anthony Hopkins. Dear Councillors, I am very pleased to be able to inform you that following the recent mission of the Council's Proposal to transform the back state of Wimbledon Library into a multi-use cultural space. We have been awarded the funding in order to take the project forward. Now this is really exciting folks. Wimbledon Library, the back of Wimbledon Library used to be a theatre way back, it wasn't a very large or exciting theatre but it was a theatre. It is now the reference Library; it will stay the reference Library during the day only as it should be. But this money will help us to transform that space into a cultural space for use for performing plays, for meetings, for whatever Wimbledon wants, because we care. This is marvellous; I've got to make a point of getting the Hillside Councillors onside very, very early on. I think it's only right that they should have been involved as soon as I possibly could. It's really exciting; I'm looking forward to it. I hope to give you more news later. Thank you very much.

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).

Supplementary Question

I'm very sorry to hear that he's refusing to provide any assistance to mediate the traffic issues in the Dundonald grid area and I'm sure that residents will be sorry too. But doesn't he think that introducing more 20 mph speed limits where residents want them could help reduce accidents and address some of the issues at busy sites. And if so why is there no funding currently allocated by the administration for the expansion of 20 mph sites.

Reply

In fact this has been through scrutiny, we've agreed a possession in scrutiny at the crossing party, we don't support the limits that is signs without physical measures, because the evidence is there not effective. But we do support 20 mph zones and when we can get the funding from transport for London we will introduce them and in

terms of the Dundonald area, I would suggest that the characterisation of the answer is not true to the answer. We did not say we are not going to do anything about it, we say we investigate every accident area on the basis of the evidence and if the evidence suggests that through street management re-engineering we can reduce accidents we will do our utmost to act, but if the evidence suggests that actually in particular locations its simply driver behaviour and that no amount of street engineering will alter that fact then there's little we can do. Now there has been an accident in Merton Hall road recently and we are waiting for the police to report on that and we will look at that report very closely and no doubt we will see to act on any recommendations in that report.

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.

Supplementary Question

I grew up in Wimbledon and see many of my friends who also grew up here and who want to stay here struggling to do so, they can afford to rent let alone to buy. So does the Cabinet member agree that the governments proposed housing bill exacerbate London's housing crisis further and impact on local residents.

Reply

I can give you the short answer but it is the long one I'm afraid. I went up to the Housing department on Monday. The Housing department if you haven't been up there is actually a very vibrant place where officers are enjoying their jobs, they enjoy what they do. They have a tremendous success rate. They were looking really miserable, I asked why and the reason was that they just had a case where a woman, a mother of 2 school children who has been living as an exemplary tenant, always paying her ways in the private sector for 18 years was summarily evicted by her landlord because her landlord wanted to make a bit more money on the property. So she had to come to Merton, register as homeless and she is now sad to say in a

place and they were utterly miserable about it. Let me give you a couple of other statistics, a bloke called Tim Griggs, Councillor Tim Griggs, he's the leader of the Conservative group at Lambeth Council. He runs a company called legal mentor, which he failed to declare and legal mentor is an eviction specialist firm which boasts a near 100% record in repossessing homes for landlords. How about Tony Bucknall, the former Tory housing spokesperson in Camden who failed to carry out necessary improvements on a property he rents out and he's actually being sued by the council bearing in mind that the government voted down labours plans to make homes fit for human habitation as a matter of course. The LGA estimates that the Council will lose 80,000 social rental homes by 2020. 80,000, there are currently in this country 68,000 people living in temporary accommodation and Mr Mayor there is no decent way out for them. The housing bill by itself is really bad but the housing bill mixed with the benefits cap with universal credit which we have heard recently has paired all these things together on top of what else is being put forward will make it more and more difficult for hard working families up and down the country but particularly in London to find let alone afford the most basic, decent accommodation. Now we in my belief are heading towards the awful, sickening projects system that they have in the United States and I'd like to say Mr Mayor that's down to incompetence because that would afford the opposition, many of whom as decent people, would afford them a little comfort. But I don't believe it, I believe this is done by design, the design of a horrible government that despises the poor and wants to put them down in every way they can.

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.

Supplementary Question

I thank the cabinet member for this answer and am glad to hear that he cared and I'm hoping for a decent answer to my question. So given your reply to Councillor Simpson on the 8th July last year that mentioned bowls club and your ambition for the savings group would you not agree that the club that's going to go down that path already with great success are the Merton bowls club and should be allowed to remain open. Consequently would you give serious consideration to allow Merton bowls club to remain open if they undertook and carry out the maintenance of the greens themselves. Since you have already agreed to meet with me and the bowls club would be willing to consider this genuine proposal especially since a petition that I will present later to keep the club open which is the oldest club in Merton 106 years old has been signed by over 1000 people online. This shows the strength and the willingness to keep this club open and other clubs in Merton I think we should agree to get together and talk these things over.

Reply

That proposal of getting the club to look after their own green has been on the table for three years and they have consistently refused to do so. On the basis that they would look after their own green which isn't a cheap thing to do, that's why we are stopping doing it, then of course would renegotiate. We would renegotiate it not only with that club but we would renegotiate it with other clubs that we are closing the green on. That's fine, if that had come across this during the three years of meetings we have had with this club where they didn't have a junior bowls team. The junior bowls team has arrived very recently where up until very recently they had 25 bowling members, if it would have happened at that stage then of course we would. Yes we will talk about it, we will talk about it soon, but I want to be sure that that's a genuine offer from that club because they have already refused to do so in the past.

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.

Supplementary Question

Could she comment on whether recent reports that wheelie bins could cost 7 billion pounds mean that she is considering gold plated bins and assuming this is another of Councillor Dean's invention. Could she explain how we would assure that any borough wide roll out would focus on achieving value for money for our tax payers.

Reply

I was a bit disappointed when I saw/read that it actually got to the paper as well about the 7 billion pounds it's going to cost for the roll out of their wheelie bins service. No they are not going to be gold plated or even gold for that amount of money, we have to accept that when we are going to implement something that's it's going to cost money for the initial roll out of course it will. But we have to think about the future which is what the supplementary question was about. The pilot scheme that we hold and this has gone to scrutiny already showed that after the pilot scheme, there were cleaner streets. This is what the residents were saying to us, there were cleaner streets, less fly tipping and increased recycling. That's one of the things that we really need to consider – increased recycling. But all these things if we did implement the wheelie bin service, these are the things that are going to happen across the borough now that would be a saving in itself, if we have cleaner streets, better recycling that brings revenue in. So at the end of the day I am happy with the way we are moving with this, I've made no secret about that I would love us to implement wheelie bins in the future. We are running this obviously in parallel with the South London Waste Partnership and with other boroughs that are going on and at the end of the day we have to look at the economy which will happen across the four boroughs. There will be a fall in resources and we are also looking at the ways and means that they are collecting their waste and what they're doing and there's things that we are doing that they want to look at and things they are doing that we want to look at. So it won't cost 7 billion pounds, there's a lot more discussion about this, it will be going back to scrutiny, it will be going back to cabinet, with no

doubt it will come back here 1000 times over. But I am happy to move this in the right direction.

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.

Supplementary Question

One thing that you didn't really mention was the lack of consultation present for Wimbledon town centre, it's not mentioned here. I want to ask why have they not consulted on this scheme in that section where it would impact most residents bearing in mind Wandsworth council are consulting residents on the entire length of their scheme on their side of the border.

Reply

Because we haven't devised the scheme yet, we are still looking at the different engineering issues in particular junction treatments and width restrictions there is no secret to the fact that systematic came in with proposals two or three years ago for large scale closures across streets and we've taken the view that they are impractical so Merton officers are looking at far more limited interventions primarily around south park road, with a view to endeavouring to reduce the traffic in South Park road. But as I've said it's not good to be aware of closure, once we've got a proposal that we think stands up in an engineering way then we will be consulting with residents.

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.

Supplementary Question

Can we confirm that the Conservative administration in Wandsworth has written to the Mayor of London regarding the AFC Wimbledon application?

Reply

By complete chance I've got a copy of that email on the 21st December. Dear Steven I am away from the office for a bit so please forgive this note that would otherwise be a call. As you know there is very significant concern in Wandsworth about the decision to approve planning permission to AFC Wimbledon for the proposed major developments. I intend to write to the Mayor of London proposing that this decision is called in by the Mayor for further consideration, I know you will understand our strength of feeling from our side of the boarder but I am equally

confident that this will not impact on the positive relationship Wandsworth council enjoys with Merton. With best wishes for the festive season. Some Christmas present, perhaps you think very disappointing, very disappointing for all those who want to see a higher quality regeneration of that site in Bell lane for AFC Wimbledon football club and for all the supporters and we will imagine they've got a direct line for Councillor's Office

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