

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.