

Colliers Wood and North East Mitcham Community Forum
21 October 2014
Chair's Report

Councillor Greg Udeh chaired the meeting. 25 residents attended, as well as eight other councillors and officers from the council and its partners. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Police Update

Unfortunately the police were unable to attend due to an operational issue. Any questions for the police could be sent to getinvolved@merton.gov.uk and would be taken up with officers.

Cavendish House Redevelopment

Michael Wood from Indigo Planning, Andrew Davies and Sarah Hufford from URB Group and Mark Maurizi from LDA Design set out the plans to redevelop Cavendish House including Donald Hope Library. Michael said that 140 people had attended the recent exhibition with 45 feedback forms received. These were generally positive with 80% agreeing that the plans would help regenerate the area. Following the exhibition the plans would be further developed and should be submitted for planning approval at the beginning of November. If approved it is possible the work could commence in mid-2015.

Mark Maurizi explained the design concepts behind the plans. This includes the stepping of the building to reflect the profile of the area and the use of colour along with brick finish to create a bright entry point into the town centre. The plans have taken into account the views of the Design Review Panel and community feedback. The presentation and images of the plans can be found at <http://www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communityforums/collierswoodcommunityforum.htm>

The new library facilities would be over three floors and include quiet space, space for community activities and children's activities. The development would be car free and none of the residents would be provided with on-street permits for the controlled parking in the area. Secure cycle parking would be available. Under the plans there would be a total of 60 units, mainly one or two bed with some 3 bed units on the top floor. Some affordable housing would be included but the exact number would not be known until a Viability Appraisal was completed. The site will also include a commercial unit but it was not yet decided what this would be.

Concerns about flooding were raised and in response Michael said that they had consulted with the Environment Agency and engaged a specialist hydrologist. The design will improve the resilience to flooding and will be much better than the current building. It was acknowledged that some disruption to the High Street will occur during construction but this will be managed through a Construction Management Plan that will be submitted to the Council as part of the planning application. In response to a question about pollution Maurizi said that the materials being used should resist the

damage from pollution but would need cleaning every few years. This would form part of the maintenance costs met by residents of the building. Maurizi also said that a sustainability audit would be submitted and that the building would have a high energy efficiency rating.

Concern was raised that central Colliers Wood would have another community facility but in neighbouring Lavender Fields ward there were insufficient facilities for the community. Opportunities to improve this situation have not been taken and money from section 106 money has been diverted elsewhere. The chair agreed to provide a response on the issue of section 106 spending following the meeting.

Merton Council Budget

Councillor Mark Allison presented an update on the Council's budget and how decisions would be for the next four years. The presentation can be found at: <http://www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communityforums/mitchamcommunityforum.htm>

Councillor Allison said that Council Tax would continue to be frozen at the 2010 level until 2018. Along with continued reductions in government grant this would create pressures on the budget of £32m over the next four years. The Council is reviewing every service to find savings or cuts and will be making announcements over the next few years. Decisions would be made using the 'July principles', which emphasis protecting the vulnerable.

Asked about spending on consultants Councillor Allison said that sometimes it was necessary to seek external challenge and advice to ensure the best value was being achieved. In response to a question about health funding to the voluntary sector Councillor Allison said that all the public health contracts had been maintained following the transfer of the service from the NHS to the Council but as these came up for review it was possible that new providers would be successful. Councillor Allison also said that they would have frozen council tax without the government grant for doing so but whilst they had considered reducing council tax they did not think this was sensible and had received a mandate for continuing to freeze it. Councillor Allison agreed it was important to take a firm approach with non-payers of council tax but was proud they had protected the most vulnerable from having to pay more.

Connecting Colliers Wood

Pip Howson from the Future Merton provided an update on the Connecting Colliers Wood programme was trying to achieve and how residents could get involved. The project was close to commencing with initial works on Holmes Place, Wandle Bank and Christchurch Road starting in November. This would see some disruption to buses but should be completed by Christmas.

Works to the junctions on the A24 would start in January and take around three months. The area would also be improved with new benches, tree planting and a new entrance to Wandle Park, with colours being used to

reflect the heritage of the area. The work will include replacing the railings near the Istanbul restaurant with a more attractive small wall.

When asked about the Colliers Wood Tower Pip said that the delays have occurred with Criterion Capital, the building's owner. They tried to secure a partnership with a house builder (Weston Homes) to implement the scheme last year and these contract negotiations failed in February 2014. Criterion has re-tendered the construction contracts and is now progressing with the scheme themselves. We are told that they are, very shortly, due to appoint construction firm JJ Rhatigan as contractors to commence with the scheme.

TfL will have their site compound to the rear of the tower, so people will see activity on site from November. However, we expect Criterion won't be far behind as they have agreed dual use of the site compounds for JJ Rhatigan and TfL.

Criterion & JJ Rhatigan have been working closely with the Council and TfL in coordinating the design details for the public realm, utility and drainage connections and site access arrangements during construction.

Any further updates can be found at
<http://www.merton.gov.uk/connectingcollierswood.htm>

Safer Merton consultation

Ian Callaghan from the Safer Merton team at Merton Council asked residents and local businesses to get involved in their annual survey of crime and community safety. The survey is designed to get beyond simple crime statistics and record how safe residents feel. The survey is open until 31 October and can be found at www.merton.gov.uk/consultations

Soapbox

Concern about illegal parking was raised around Tooting station and VB & Sons. The parking was dangerous and placing pedestrians at risk so more enforcement was needed. It was agreed to raise this with Parking services and provide a response.

The state of the Holiday Inn was also raised as pollution from the road was impacting on the condition of the paint work. This will be raised with the owners.

Officers were also asked to look into smell from the drains on the High Street near the junction with Cavendish Road.

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