

COUNCIL MEETING 6 FEBRUARY 2013

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Motion 1 (Labour)

Submitted by Councillors Dennis Pearce, Mark Allison and Nick Draper

“Council recalls and reiterates its decision at the full council meeting of 12 September 2012 to:

“vigorously oppose [...]the proposal to close accident and emergency and maternity services at St. Helier Hospital [and] resolves to continue to do everything in its power to keep St. Helier Hospital’s accident and emergency, maternity services and other related services open, including encouraging residents to respond to the consultation.”

Council notes that since 12 September 2012:

- The proposed consultation on the closure of St. Helier’s A&E, maternity services and other related services, due to start last autumn, has been suspended
- Epsom Hospital has now been included in the Better Services Better Value review
- On 9 January 2013 the review recommended that two hospitals out of St Helier, Epsom, Kingston or Croydon University Hospital should lose their A&E and maternity departments
- Consultation on these proposals will begin in spring or early summer

Council further notes that on 7 November 2012 the Leader of the Council received a comprehensive letter from the Secretary of State for Health which stated: “Where an OSC or Joint OSC is not content with the adequacy of the NHS’s consultation with it, or does not believe that the changes being proposed are in the interest of the local health service, it can refer the proposals to the Secretary of State for Health for a final decision.”

Council does not believe that the closure of St. Helier A&E, maternity services and other related services would be in the interests of the local health service.

Council therefore urges Merton’s Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel to ensure that any proposals to close accident and emergency, maternity services and other related services at St. Helier hospital are referred to the Secretary of State for a final decision.”

Motion 2 (L/D)

Submitted by Councillors Iain Dysart and Mary-Jane Jeanes

“Council notes;

- The Mayor's Office for Police and Crime's recent announcement on proposals for the future of policing in London, and the draft Estates Strategy; .

- That the documents propose significant changes to London's policing, including; reduction of Safer Neighbourhood Teams to one dedicated police constable and one Police and Community Support Officer per ward; closing front counters at 65 police stations across the capital including Morden Police Office and Tooting Police Station and Former Section House; and opening new "contact points" in public and other buildings such as council offices, supermarkets and post offices.

Council believes the Mayor's consultation process to be seriously flawed, with;

- Just one event per London borough scheduled to last only one hour, with advance registration required;

- Presentations by the Deputy Mayor and police taking up most of the scheduled time, leaving little opportunity for residents to have their say;

Council calls upon the Leader to respond formally on behalf of Merton residents and the Council, expressing the borough's opposition to the proposals as they stand, and to their potential impact on community safety and crime levels in Merton"

Motion 3 (L/D)

Submitted by Councillors Iain Dysart and Mary-Jane Jeanes

"This Council notes the Coalition Government's proposals to bring forward legislation that will enable;

1) Same-sex couples to have a civil marriage ceremony;

2) Those religious organisations which wish to conduct same-sex marriages to do so;

3) Existing civil partners to convert their partnership to a marriage, should they so wish;

4) Individuals to change their legal gender without having to end their marriage.

This Council also notes that;

- The legislation will make it explicitly clear that no religious organisation or minister can be compelled to marry same-sex couples, or to permit their premises to be used for this purpose;
- A number of religious organisations do wish to perform same-sex marriages, but are currently prevented by law from doing so;
- An ICM poll in December 2012 found that 62 per cent of people support moves to legalise same-sex marriage.

This Council believes that;

- Marriage is a demonstration of a couple's commitment to each other;
- Every couple wishing to celebrate their relationship in the eyes of society in this way should be able to do so;
- Allowing same-sex couples access to marriage helps to ensure that this remains a relevant and vibrant institution;
- Community cohesion is improved by tackling the barriers of race, faith, culture, gender, age and disability, and helping people to make reasoned decisions about their own lives.

This Council therefore resolves to support the Coalition proposals to implement equal marriage and to ask the Leader to write to the Conservative Culture Secretary confirming this".

Motion 4 (Conservative)

Submitted by Councillors Chris Edge, Suzanne Grocott, David Simpson and Simon Withey

"This Council notes that during the budget scrutiny process for 2013-14 the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Mark Allison has failed to deliver in a timely and concise manner all of the relevant budget information necessary to enable councillors and residents to understand clearly the current and future financial status of Merton Council. In particular, the improved Service Report structure introduced by the former Director of Transformation whereby Service Reports summarising the relevant Business Plan objectives, financial information and forecasts are linked directly to the proposed budget savings and equality impact assessments, rather than as separate papers, has not been implemented.

As well as publishing budget papers late and with incomplete Service Plans, the Cabinet Member has for example:

- Consistently been unable to answer questions at Scrutiny on whether efficiency savings proposed for 2014-17 could be taken earlier;
- Failed to provide detail of how the administration actually intends to use the considerable amount of residents' money that has been allocated to earmarked reserves, thereby echoing the concerns highlighted in a recent report from the Audit Commission which found that increased earmarking by councils "does not always mean there is a plan for spending the funds";
- Repeatedly been unable to produce current and historic figures for the size and cost of the council's workforce, which are vital for the construction and consideration of the 2013-14 Budget and Business Plan;
- Refused to take certain savings even when they have already been agreed by Full Council e.g. the £20,000 staff-side saving; and
- Not brought forward reviews of potential service savings in a timely fashion for consideration. Despite repeated requests for reviews of the Council's translation services and the commercial waste service, no reports have yet been received.

The lack of complete financial data has meant scrutiny panels having to consider budget proposals and savings in the knowledge that the Cabinet Member still has further relevant budget information to publish. This has resulted in a poor and opaque scrutiny process without the openness and transparency that Merton's residents would rightly expect.

This Council is particularly concerned that, as a result of budgetary incompetence in managing the borough's finances, a number of frontline services valued by residents have been cut over the last two years whilst at the same time the council has consistently under spent against its budget by more than those same services cost to provide.

This Council therefore resolves:

1. To take a vote of no confidence in the ability of the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Allison, to carry out his duties as set down by the Leader of the Council; and
2. To request that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission reassures all those present at the annual Budget Council meeting on 6 March 2013 that the borough's scrutiny bodies have had the opportunity to scrutinise properly and in full all of the proposed cuts in departmental budgets as well as the proposed capital budget, and that councillors have received all of the necessary information on which to take a balanced decision."