

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

1) From Councillor Richard Chelley to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration (ST)

How much money has been raised in fines by the mobile CCTV traffic cameras since their introduction to date?

Reply

TO BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PERFORMANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION

The annual residents' survey in the borough consistently shows that traffic congestion is a major concern of people living in Merton. A key part of tackling this issue is to ensure that traffic and parking regulations are properly respected by those who use the borough's roads. To undertake this effectively requires the council to have an appropriate and sensible approach to enforcement, with an important element being the use of vehicle based cameras. Since being introduced individuals who have failed to properly respect traffic and parking regulations and were observed doing so by these vehicles have received Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) totalling £1,861,470. This is for the entire road network across the borough.

Merton has adopted a transparent and open approach to traffic and parking enforcement with our policies and procedures fully published on the council website. And, we have gone further than ever before in establishing a parking charter for the borough to deliver fairness for all of our road users.

2) From Councillor Chris Edge to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

How will the new borough-wide CDZ be enforced?

Reply

TO BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY, ENGAGEMENT AND EQUALITIES

The Borough wide CDZ will be enforced in the same way as existing CDZ's. Officers will target hot-spot areas and deal with issues that arise as appropriate. Police will only confiscate alcohol if the person is acting in an inappropriate manner that is linked to or causing ASB or a criminal offence.

3) From Councillor Richard Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

What plans are there for the introduction of a new football stadium for AFC Wimbledon in Wimbledon Park? Does he agree with the Leader of the Opposition that this would be a good thing?

Reply

This answer touches on both my portfolio and that of Councillor Andrew Judge, Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration.

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

My Cabinet colleagues and Leader of the Council have always believed that bringing AFC Wimbledon back to their home borough is a cause to be cherished, and the Leader's support for that cause has been well documented.

This administration has been working closely with AFC Wimbledon to help them identify a viable site for a stadium in Merton. The Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium site, in Wimbledon Park ward, would be a deliverable option, particularly as Plough Lane is the club's traditional home and the existing site is sorely in need of investment. Cabinet and senior officers in our regeneration team are in active discussions with the relevant land owners and stakeholders of the Greyhound site to determine credible development options for sports intensification on that site. Land owners and developers including the club will be invited to make representations at the Sites and Policies DPD Public Inquiry this autumn, to demonstrate to the council, the public and the Planning Inspector, how a redevelopment of the site can be delivered.

4) From Councillor Peter Walker to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities

Can the Cabinet Member give us an update on the effect of the CDZ on central Mitcham?

Reply

The CDZ in the town centre has been very effective. It has reduced ASB and street drinking in the area. The area is now cleaner with less litter, urine and general unkemptness.

5) From Councillor Henry Nelles to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Can the Cabinet Member outline what he plans to do to help support the St Helier Pub Group's campaign to make the former Morden Tavern an Asset of Community Value?

Reply

Under the procedure agreed by Cabinet on 10th December 2012 I must be consulted on the decision by the Council on whether to list or not to list a nominated asset. No part of this land is owned by the Council. So far as I am aware, the land and building is owned by developers who have a comprehensive planning permission for a mixed used development including housing that is needed locally. The old pub building itself will, under the permission, likely become part of this mixed use development, without any prior change in ownership. The protection afforded by Community Right to Buy is to include an asset in a List of Assets of Community Value, giving local community organisations the chance to bid when they come up for sale, requiring a delay for these purposes. Given that the Pub in its old form as a single entity is unlikely to be sold as such, it is an open question as to what purpose could be achieved by a listing as a community asset. However, I await the professional assessment and advice in relation to this nomination.

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

6) From Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Local pubs can act as real community hubs. In light of the loss of a number of pubs around the borough over the last couple of years, what is the Cabinet Member doing to strengthen Merton's Pub Protection Policy? Will he consider calls by CAMRA to issue Article 4 Directions in order to protect local pubs of community value?

Reply

The council is proud that Merton's pub protection policy has been used by CAMRA as a good example of such planning policies. The council has produced and consulted on a new planning policy as part of its Sites and Policies Plan, which seeks to protect pubs that have a community function. This policy has been informed by the information we have sought and received, including from CAMRA. The council has looked in to CAMRA's suggestion of issuing Article 4 Directions in order to protect pubs that are assets of community value. However government rules state that an Article 4 Direction can't be implemented for a year without the council being liable for compensation. This means that Article 4 Directions wouldn't have the effect of giving the necessary protection to pubs that CAMRA are seeking. The council and CAMRA are seeking opportunities to ask the government to amend national planning rules that allow pubs to change to other uses without the need for planning permission.

7) From Councillor Henry Nelles to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Given the strength of public opposition by residents living off the Broadway to the increasing number of applications for ever taller buildings along The Broadway, please can the Cabinet Member outline what he proposes to do to reduce the prevalence of ever larger buildings along this stretch of central Wimbledon?

Reply

The last two words of my fellow ward councillor's question highlight the issue we face. 'Central Wimbledon'. Wimbledon is a large, urban centre in the southwest London region and is the economic powerhouse of the borough. We mustn't overlook the fact that Wimbledon is part of one of the world's greatest cities. It is a unique place, characterised by the juxtaposition of being a linear urban centre adjacent to high quality residential areas. Historically, this has always been part of Wimbledon's character which residents, who choose to live in, and enjoy the amenities of a quality town centre on their doorstep must accept.

The east end of The Broadway contains a number development opportunities, mostly tired and out-dated office blocks in need of regeneration and investment. High land values in central Wimbledon and development economics mean that we must accept a measure of growth if we wish to

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

attract investment to these buildings and improve the function and architectural quality in this part of the Broadway.

Merton's Core Planning Strategy (2011), in line with government and regional policy supports a growth agenda to strengthen the local economy and provide much needed housing. The Core Strategy Tall Buildings policy and evidence base (supported by the Planning Inspectorate) sets out the Council's position on taller buildings in Wimbledon Broadway. This is also in conformity with London Plan policies.

Merton's policy, to reduce the prevalence of 'ever larger' buildings is to discourage inappropriately large, one-off towers. Our approach to urban design is to manage a gradual increase in height across the length of the Broadway to lessen the overall impact of individual buildings. The council accepts that this is the only way to encourage redevelopment of existing eyesore sites.

I would like to conclude that building height is not the only determinant in the acceptability of planning proposals. The Council's role as planning authority is to make a balanced judgement between the immediate impact on neighbouring residents and the greater benefits to the borough. Good urban design, architectural quality and innovation, appropriate siting and use of landmark buildings and the impact on the local economy are all important factors in creating a successful place. I trust officers and colleagues on Planning Applications Committee to make the appropriate judgements.

8) From Councillor Henry Nelles to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Can the Cabinet member tell me what plans there are to upload details of Merton's Public Rights of Way onto the council's website?

Reply

The Council holds a hard copy of the definitive Public Rights of Way maps that members of the public can inspect during office hours. The Council is also taking steps to make as much of the information it holds to be made available on-line, which will include details of Merton's Public Rights of Way maps.

9) From Councillor Henry Nelles to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Implementation

Can the Cabinet Member confirm the grace period that is given to drivers wishing to park in council car parking bays to obtain the correct change and get their ticket before they are considered eligible for a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN)?

Reply

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

There is no grace period required by law. This matter has been subject to a ruling by the High Court which applies to pay and display facilities throughout England.

However, in Merton we take a more flexible approach and before issuing a Penalty Charge Notice enforcement officers monitoring the Pay and Display machine(s) that serve the parking bays will allow motorists, who are queuing at the pay and display machines, time to purchase and display a valid pay and display ticket in their vehicle. In such circumstances, no PCN will be issued by officers.

To further assist people using our pay and display facilities it is our intention to introduce the additional facility of cashless payment for parking in the 2013/14 financial year. This will provide motorists with the ability to pay using their mobile phone, as well as maintaining the existing cash based machines for users who prefer this method of payment.

10) From Councillor Miles Windsor to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

The council has the power to issue fines to people caught dropping cigarette butts in public areas. Can the Cabinet Member advise how many such fines were issued in each of the last 3 years? How many have been issued so far this year?

Reply

THIS QUESTION WILL BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PERFORMANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for such matters are recorded in the same category as items such as general littering. This is known as a section 87 offence and separate figures, as requested, are not available.

However, the total number of FPNs for all items is as follows -

Break down of FPN issued section 87 for litter		
Year	Total	
2010/2011	487	
2011/2012	210	
2012/2013	185	

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

2013/2014	105	To date

11) From Councillor Janice Howard to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Implementation

Can the Cabinet Member tell me how many fines Merton have handed out in each of the last 3 years for contraventions of the council's rubbish/recycling policy? In particular, how many fines has Merton issued in the last 3 years to residents who have left their bins or recycling out at the wrong time?

Reply

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for contraventions of the council's rubbish/recycling policy are normally recorded in the same category as items such as general littering and the dropping of cigarette butts and chewing gum. This is known as a section 87 offence and separate figures, as requested, are not available.

However, the total number of FPNs for all items is as follows -

Break down of FPN issued section 87 for litter		
Year	Total	
2010/2011	487	
2011/2012	210	
2012/2013	185	
2013/2014	105	To date

In relation to your particular point about residents who leave their bins out at the wrong time, in such cases we would firstly look to work with residents to resolve any issues or difficulties. We follow government guidance which is only to consider taking formal action if there are continued contraventions which become a nuisance to other residents. Our general practice is to leaflet any properties where this may be an issue. If the property continues to create an environmental nuisance by their actions in this respect we would issue a Section 46 Notice requiring them to put in place appropriate arrangements we would recommend. Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for such matters are only issued as a last resort and are recorded in the same category as items such as commercial and industrial waste contraventions. This is known as a

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

Section 47 offence and separate figures for residents leaving their bins out at the wrong time, as requested, are not available.

However the total number of Section 47 FPNs issued in last three financial years is as follows:

2011-12	4
2012-13	6
2013-14	2

12) From Councillor Janice Howard to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, has made £2million available to local communities for 'pocket parks'. Can the Cabinet Member tell me how this has been advertised and promoted by the council to residents groups in Merton considering that the deadline for this strand of funding is 23rd July?

Reply

With 114 separate parks and open spaces, unlike some central London boroughs, there is no shortage of green recreational space in Merton. The opportunities are even greater when one considers some of the very large and significant open spaces owned and managed by others: Wimbledon Common, Mitcham Common and Morden Hall Park, for example. Of the borough's 26 recognised park friends groups, none operates in an open space that would qualify for funding under this scheme as all are greater than the 0.4ha threshold.

The scheme, moreover, requires 100% match funding. This authority believes that it can secure better value from its investment in parks for its local communities by directing its resources to its 25 Key Parks and has some exciting plans already in the pipe-line including a soon-to-be-completed green gym at King George's Playing Fields and improvements to its play facilities at various sites across the borough within the next 12 months.

13) From Councillor Debbie Shears to the Leader of the Council

We note that there are formulated proposals to bring sport back to Morden Park Playing Fields. The Leader is on record calling for the establishment of a Village Green on the site. Could he tell me what progress he has made on this, as he promised to residents four years ago?

Reply

The long-standing recreational use of this site by the local community is not currently under threat (the previous administration, under Cllr Shears, having put in place plans that posed that very threat) and therefore the protection afforded by its registration as a Village Green does not need to be pursued.

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

14) From Councillor Miles Windsor to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

What has been done so far in seeking to secure funding from the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, for a Mini-Holland cycle scheme in Merton?

Reply

I welcome the Mayor's cycling vision for London and the opportunity for Merton to bid for funding to radically improve cycle infrastructure and the levels of cycling within the borough. I have met with Andrew Gilligan, the Mayor's cycle commissioner and have worked with officers in Traffic & Highways and futureMerton to prepare a cycle vision for Merton and we have submitted an expression of interest for Merton to be considered as one of the Mayor's mini-Hollands.

Our bid is to make Merton the best borough in London for cycling and to make cycling the transport mode of choice for short trips. Our bid focuses on Wimbledon as our mini-Holland; building on the success of the Destination Wimbledon project, funding could provide segregated routes through the town centre and provide an opportunity to review the gyratory system. Our bid is ambitious and also includes projects for Colliers Wood, Raynes Park, Morden, Mitcham and the Wandle Valley creating a coordinated and integrated borough cycle network. If successful, we'd also seek to bring the Mayor's Cycle Hire scheme to Merton. We await a response from the Mayor's office later this summer.

15) From Councillor Margaret Brierly to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Further to the question on this back in March, can the Cabinet Member tell me when we will finally see the 2013-14 work programme of traffic works in the borough?

Reply

The 2013/14 Traffic Work Programme is currently being finalised for approval by myself at the end of July 2013. The work programme will be available once approval is confirmed.

16) From Councillor David Dean to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

I see that the Mayor of London has just awarded £5.4 million to improve air quality in the capital. What will the Labour administration be doing to take advantage of this so that Merton residents can benefit?

Reply

The Pollution team in Environmental Health was successful in obtaining £230,000 in grant money for individual and partnership air quality projects in the borough. Projects include:

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

- 1) Reducing air pollution from one the borough's largest industrial estate in Willow Lane through the introduction of green walls, dust suppressants on the roads and other dust management schemes for businesses in the estate. To also roll out Smarter driving training for business fleets within the estate. (Grant £120,000)
- 2) School campaign across South London boroughs to carry out further work on school travel plans, car anti-idling schemes and air quality engagement and awareness through education / public awareness initiatives with the schools. (Grant £40,000)
- 3) The production of a Construction Logistics Plan for the South London boroughs to be implemented on redevelopment sites within the borough, which has a number of direct benefits including reducing road congestion around construction sites, increased road safety, fewer vehicle movements with reduced air pollution. (Grant £70,000)

17) From Councillor Linda Taylor to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

I see that 19,000 youngsters across London have benefited from Boris Johnson's 'Make a Splash' programme to date. How many of these youngsters are from Merton?

Reply

'Make a Splash' participation in Merton, 9th Jan – 30th Mar 2012

Group	Unique Child Swimmers	Comment
Years 4-9 school-time	594	This is made up from 12 schools in total
Harris students school-time	268	Including years 12 and 13
Sub-total	862	There were 424 non-swimmers at initial stage and only 176 at final stage 12 weeks later – a success of 58.5%
Community swimmers	353	Children learn to swim lessons were most popular
Total	1,215	

18) From Councillor Maurice Groves to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Please can I have a breakdown of all the charges and payments associated with the Mitcham regeneration project? Can you please advise the amount of money left in the budget?

Reply

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

The Rediscover Mitcham project is a complex regeneration project with multiple funding streams and agencies involved. It is too simplistic to assume that all the funding is sitting in one pot waiting to be spent. In most cases, where there are external funding partners, the council does not receive funding up-front; instead, the council cash-flows the project and claims funding back from external agencies at key stages of project delivery.

Rediscover Mitcham has £6,266,677 of funding allocated until 2015:

OLF Related Business Support and Community Empowerment Activities

£514,000 Mayor of London's Outer London Fund

£40,000 LBM match funding for OLF activities
(not including Capital covered below)

£554,000 sub-total for OLF.

Public Realm Works

Up to £2,984,164 TFL Major Schemes / STEP Programme

£858,513 TfL Local Implementation Plan annual funding allocated to Mitcham Town Centre

£1,500,000 LBM match funding for TFL investment from Borough Capital Resources

£370,000 Various Developer Contribution (S106) funding for Mitcham Town Centre

£5,712,677 sub total for public realm

Explanatory Notes

Business Support and Community Empowerment Activities

Outreach and engagement started in June 2012 and has since ramped up to include events, communications, business support, design fees, collateral and artworks focussed in Mitcham Town Centre, to date costing a total of £100,217. Over the coming year the remainder of the monies will be allocated to construction and implementation covering areas such as shop-front upgrades, parade lighting, seating and improvements to the market square.

Public Realm Works

The main Rediscover Mitcham works are due to begin in January 2014. Between October 2012 to date, officers have been working on developing the scheme in terms of design, consultation and technical assessment (such as traffic modelling).

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

To date £282,465 has been spent on developing the scheme (specifically surveys, design, consultation, project management) with £133,051 additional development costs programmed between July 2013 and January 2014. Total development costs for the scheme will be £418,513 and total construction costs £5,374,164 with the total budgeted cost of £5,792,677. This makes development costs 7.8% of the construction cost which is very cost effective in comparison with other public realm schemes.

19) From Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities

By how much has street crime in Merton reduced as a result of the excellent work undertaken in the Borough by our local Street Pastors?

Reply

It is very difficult to prove the full impact of the street pastor service to be able to evidence their good work through to a reduction in street crime. However it is believed that their efforts have contributed to a reduction in incidents of crime and also prevented people from becoming victims of crime.

20) From Councillor Logie Lohendran to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Implementation

Since the last Full Council meeting, I understand the council has purchased 5 more mobile CCTV vehicles. Can the Cabinet Member tell me by how much the council's income generated by parking fines has increased since the introduction of these additional vehicles? Please also provide a breakdown of the total income generated in fines since the introduction of mobile CCTV vehicles in Merton.

Reply

The council has not purchased any vehicles since the last full council meeting on 27 March 2013. The annual residents' survey in the borough consistently shows that traffic congestion is a major concern of people living in Merton. A key part of tackling this issue is to ensure that traffic and parking regulations are properly respected by those who use the borough's roads. To undertake this effectively requires the council to have an appropriate and sensible approach to enforcement, with an important element being the use of vehicle based cameras. Since being introduced individuals who have failed to properly respect traffic and parking regulations and were observed doing so by these vehicles have received Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) totalling £1,861,470. This is for the entire road network across the borough.

Merton has adopted a transparent and open approach to traffic and parking enforcement with our policies and procedures fully published on the council website. And, we have gone further than ever before in establishing a parking charter for the borough to deliver fairness for all of our road users.

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

21) From Councillor Simon Withey to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration (ST)

How much Section 106 funding has been returned to developers in each of the last 3 years because the council hasn't spent it? In each case, please provide details of the name of the site, the ward and the amount of S106 funding that was returned.

Reply

Year	Ref	Site	Ward	Amount refunded	Reason for refund
2012/13	320/4	7-13 Church Road, Mitcham	Cricket Green	10,738.00	Specific highways works had been completed by the applicant and no further costs were incurred.
2010/11	260/2	Former Morden Farm Middle School, Aragon Rd, Morden	Lower Morden	14,500.00	Specific highways/fencing works complete and no further costs incurred.
2010/11	218/2	Grove Mill, and 475, 477 & 479 London Road Mitcham	Ravensbury	5,000.00	Specific highways works not carried out following development which was completed circa 2006. Reasonable period for spending monies had elapsed.

These refunds were necessary because the S.106 legal agreements required specific works to be funded and the monies that were subject of the refunds were not needed. The council could not legally spend these monies on alternative schemes.

In two of the above cases the works were completed with the council's associated costs paid for utilizing a portion of the monies paid under the agreement. The unspendable balances were the amounts refunded. In the other instance the legal agreement stated that the payment must be used to carry out specific highways works adjacent to the development site to facilitate traffic entering/exiting the site. The development was completed approximately seven years ago and the works were not carried out. At the time the refund was considered it was decided that the reasonable period for spending the monies had elapsed, in particular that if there was a need for the works then they should have been carried out immediately following construction of the development and that the monies should be refunded.

22) From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

What is Merton's expenditure on park maintenance for each of the past four years (2009/10, 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13)?

Reply

2009/10	£3,511,000
2010/11	£3,568,000
2011/12	£3,119,000
2012/13	£3,087,000

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

--	--

Note: Above are the annual budgets for Merton's Greenspaces service including overheads and corporate support costs, but excluding cemeteries.

23) From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

What is Merton's expenditure on street cleaning for each of the past four years (2009/10, 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13)?

Reply

Due to falling Government grants for local authorities, this administration has sought to improve efficiencies while maintaining services as far as possible. Like for like Government grant has fallen by 17% between 2010/11 and 2013/14. Relative to that, Merton's expenditure on street cleaning has been protected. It has fallen by 11% between 2009/10 and 2012/13. Expenditure figures are as follows:

- 2009/10 = £4.097m
- 2010/11 = £4.193m
- 2011/12 = £3.578m
- 2012/13 = £3.634m

Keeping our borough's streets clean remains a priority for the council, as outlined in the "July agreement" (of 2011). Officer proposals to further reduce expenditure on street cleansing in response to funding cuts as part of the Government's austerity measures were rejected by Cabinet in October 2011. However, we continue to seek ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of this service. As part of this work, in April 2011 the council adopted a modernised street cleansing strategy in order to improve efficiency and the overall standards of street cleaning in the borough. These were scrutinised as part of the Budget process and agreed by Council on 2 March 2011.

A key driver of this strategy was the focusing of resources in areas of most need. In addition to regular weekly street cleaning new mobile street cleaning teams were introduced so that if residents see a problem that requires action they can request a further clean to their street. This targeting of resources replaced the previous costly and inefficient mechanism of additional litter picking.

The latest Annual Resident's Survey shows Merton is out-performing the London average in the quality of its services in these areas with 71% of Merton's residents rating our refuse collection as good, 5% above the London average. The survey also shows that 57% of Merton's residents rate our street cleaning as good, 4% above the London average.

Residents can report any incidents of littering that require attention by calling the council on 020 8274 4902 or by completing an online enquiry form, which can be found at www.merton.gov.uk.

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

24) From Councillor Iain Dysart to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration

Lib Dem councillors in West Barnes have recently handled a tree works application. Whilst it appeared on the works list, no residents of the affected road were notified or site notice displayed. We would have been happy to help with the former.

We were told that resource issues prevented the Council from issuing direct notifications, and enforcing the requirement for site notices. How can he justify this position?

Reply

To comply with our statutory requirements, all tree works applications are advertised in our weekly planning list and the essential details are summarised on the Council's website.

In addition to this, and as useful practice, each applicant is sent an acknowledgement letter and Proposed Tree Works Notice, with a request to erect the Notice on site for public display. However, this is not a statutory requirement, and the applicant can choose to ignore this request.

Whilst it is appreciated that local residents and Councillors wish to have greater involvement in tree matters, in practice this would place a greater burden on already limited resources.

25) By Cllr Mary-Jane Jeanes to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration

Whilst appreciative of financial constraints, it has, by common consent, been in excess of 20 years since Stanley Avenue and Blakes Terrace in West Barnes ward were resurfaced, whilst others nearby have been treated much more recently.

Will he ask officers to give these roads, from which we are presenting a petition, urgent priority in this financial year?

Reply

The Council uses a robust prioritisation model for determining the roads for inclusion in its annual footway and carriageway planned maintenance programmes. This model benchmarks and ranks all roads in the borough in comparison to each other and considers a range of criteria such as Officers Assessment, Condition Survey results, Road Classification, Safety Inspector Priority, Reactive Maintenance Expenditure, Traffic Volumes, Population Density, Emergency, Bus and Cycle routes, Traffic Generators (schools & hospitals etc), Ward Deprivation and Complaints Received.

According to the current output from this model, Stanley Avenue is ranked 228th and Blakes Terrace is ranked 349th of 1167 roads in the borough. Therefore, it is not proposed to include either of these roads in the resurfacing programme for 2013/14. Whilst it is accepted that these roads may not have

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

been resurfaced for many years, unfortunately, current funding levels for planned maintenance only allow for 20 - 30 roads to be resurfaced per year meaning that a frequency of more than 20 years between resurfacing is inevitable.

26) From Councillor Richard Chellew to the Leader of the Council (ST)

We have an extremely bright and capable Chief Executive. What is Cabinet doing to encourage him to share his expertise with less fortunate boroughs?

Reply

We prefer that the Chief Executive devotes his energies to Merton.

27) From Cllr Richard Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

What is the total sum of money found to be either missing or inadequately accounted for across all Council departments and schools for 2012/13?

Reply

The adequacy of accounting is judged by the audit of accounts by our new external auditor Ernst & Young and this will be signed off by September 30th for 2012/13. The council received a positive audit opinion in 2011/12. Internal audit carry out an annual review programme of the schools and main council. This has identified various small amounts that require investigation and action.

28) From Cllr Suzanne Evans to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities (ST)

How many diversity/equality officers does the Council employ, either as employees, on contract, or freelance, and at what cost?

Reply

The Council employs one Equality and Community Cohesion Officer. They spend a proportion of their time ensuring the Council meets its statutory equality duties and the remainder of their work relates to partnership working such as drafting the Armed Forces Community Covenant, secretariat for the borough's Interfaith Forum and supporting the Celebrating Age Festival. The cost of the equalities element of this work is approximately £25k.

29) From Cllr Suzanne Evans to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Implementation? (ST)

What is the current annual cost of running the Council press office and how many staff and/or contractors work in the press office at present?

Reply

There are currently 4 FTE who provide the press office function – a total cost of £147,106 with running costs of approx £28k. This brings the total to just over £175k.

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

30) From Councillor Richard Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

Can the Cabinet Member please state the percentages by which each Council department will be asked to reduce their budgets in 2014/15?

Reply

The council is still working through the implications of the very recent Spending Review on its Medium Term Financial strategy and will determine the approach that it will take to balancing the budget in due course.

31) From Cllr Suzanne Evans to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

Can the Cabinet Member please tell me how many members of staff will benefit from the recent adoption by the Council of the London Living Wage?

Reply

Merton's lowest rate of pay before the adoption of the London Living Wage (GLPC spine point 4) was £8.08 per hour. In total, 16 employees earned less than £8.55 per hour (the London Living Wage). Of these, 6 employees work in schools.

32) From Councillor Peter McCabe to the Leader of the Council

I'm concerned at the number of pay day loan companies springing up in the borough. How many of these companies are there in Merton? What powers do we have and what measures can we take to encourage our residents not to make use of their services?

Reply

There are at least 5 pay day loan companies in the borough that we are aware of (there is no requirement to classify the type of business within the business rates register). Unfortunately, the Council has no power over these types of shops/organisations. This is a matter for central government and I know our Labour colleague in Walthamstow, Stella Creasey MP, has been pressuring the government for increased regulation of these companies.

However, as a council we do as much as we can to direct people towards more sustainable means of support. Staff signpost residents in financial difficulty that they deal with to a variety of support organisations or schemes, these would include CAB, Credit Union via Merton Priory Homes, Merton's own Local Welfare Support Scheme, Department of Work and Pensions budgeting loans scheme and Sure Start Maternity Grants, as well as offer support and advice from Merton's Welfare Benefits team.

One way forward would be to provide a high street presence for the local credit union so that it is as amenable to the public as are, sadly, the pay day loan companies. The council is looking into this.

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

33) From Councillor Peter Walker to the Leader of the Council

Has the Leader of the Council any observation to make on the claim by the new Leader of the Opposition that the Conservatives were responsible for the winning of the recently announced best Council award?

Reply

As with all great achievements in life, this was a team effort. However, I believe our hard working staff who give their all to deliver public services day in day out are to be congratulated the most.

34) From Councillor Sam Thomas to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

Could he update me on progress in extending our Legal Services shared service?

Reply

I am pleased to say that the Legal Shared Service project is on track to be delivered according to plan on the 1st October 2013. A great deal of work is on going with colleagues across Merton, Richmond, Sutton and Kingston including:

- Accommodation works at Gifford house to be the legal teams base when it expands to double its current size, with the introduction of mobile and flexible working practices to make the maximum use of the facility.
- The installation of a new case management system to be used across all four Council's to give more effective work management and improve service quality further.
- The transfer of staff from Sutton and Kingston into a new delivery team of 45 lawyers and support staff providing much increased resilience and new specialisms in house to benefit all four Councils.
- Work with all staff involved to introduce a shared culture that is customer focused, supportive of Councils and each other, performance and efficiency led and takes a pride in excellence.
- The introduction of a new governance framework to give ownership and oversight by the four Councils to ensure the new shared service delivers members and officers priorities.

35) From Councillor Richard Williams to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

What assessment has he made of the implications of the recent Spending Review for the Council's budget in 2015/16?

Reply

As with most Government announcements concerning funding allocations to its departments, the implications for councils of the Spending Review 2013

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

are difficult to unravel at this early stage and further information is required to be able to estimate at an individual local authority level.

On a national level the Spending Review confirms that a further £11.5 billion of reductions will be made in 2015/16 and provides a breakdown of these across government departments. The overall cuts to government expenditure limits has been distributed unevenly across departments, with funding for health, schools international development and frontline military budgets being protected, meaning a greater burden of cuts falling on remaining departments. The Department for Communities and local Government has received one of the largest cuts of all departments at 10%.

With the move to Business Rates Retention in 2013/14 any reductions in funding will fall on council's Revenue Support Grant (RSG) element of funding. It is estimated that, nationally, the year on year reduction to RSG in 2015/16 will be 18.3%.

The Spending Review also included a package of growth measures aimed at stimulating the economy, some of which will have implications for the council but mainly of a capital nature. These cover areas such as transport, education and skills, encouraging local growth, science and innovation and other areas including libraries, flood protection and low carbon energy generation projects. Despite the 10 per cent reduction in RDEL the government is predicting there will be a reduction of local government spending of 2.3 per cent. "Local government spending" here includes central government grants to local authorities (including Revenue Support Grant) plus the OBR's forecast of council tax and the local share of business rates, and is a measure of resources available for council services. It also probably includes transferred health service funding that will be matched with equal spending requirements. (see below) Clarification has been sought from DCLG and Treasury on the discrepancy on the two figures but has not yet been forthcoming.

Council Tax Freeze Grant will continue in 2014/15 and 2015/16. Grant of 1% (on 2013/14 Band D council tax levels) will be available to councils that freeze their council taxes. London Councils advise that it seems likely that the freeze in grant for 2015-16 will only be awarded for one year. Council Tax Freeze Grant awarded for 2013-14 will continue to 2015-16.

The Government confirmed the intention to hold the council tax referendum threshold to 2% for the next two years.

The Troubled Families Programme is to be expanded with a payment by results scheme used.

The DfE and DCLG will work with local government to examine the scope to improve outcomes, reduce burdens and drive efficiency in children's services, and report back on progress in the autumn.

Schools:

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

Education Services Grant to be reduced by £200 million (20%) in 2015-16.

Real terms protection of the schools budget and pupil premium.
Commitment to consult on how to introduce a national funding formula for schools in 2015-16.

Continued roll out of academies with the aim to drive down the central costs of the programme and deliver savings of £150 million in 2015-16.
Funding for 180 new Free Schools, 20 new Studio Schools and 20 new University Technical colleges a year.

DfE to consult this autumn regarding how these reductions can be implemented.

Early Years

15 hours a week of free early education for all three- and four-year olds will be maintained.

Free entitlement still extended to most disadvantaged two-year olds in September 2013 and to around 40 per cent in 2014-15.

Health and Social Care Integration

£3.8 billion will be put into a pooled budget for health and social care services shared between the NHS and local authorities. This shared budget includes the existing NHS funding for social care of just under £1 billion; an additional £2 billion from the NHS and further funds for carers and people leaving hospital who need support to regain their independence.

It also includes £350 million of capital funding for projects to improve integration, including IT funding and improving facilities for disabled people. An extra £200 million will be available to local authorities from the NHS in 2014-15 for investment in new systems and integrated ways of working. The Government will also ensure that both local government and Clinical Commissioning Groups are given their funding allocations further in advance and are working towards the same outcomes, to encourage local services to work together.

New Homes Bonus

The Government has committed to create a Single Local Growth Fund under the strategic direction of LEPs. It is planned that £2 billion will be available in 2015-16.

As part of the funding package, the Government is proposing that £400 million will come from New Homes Bonus. Although the scheme will continue to operate as a financial reward scheme for local government, there will be a new requirement for a proportion of this funding to be pooled by local authorities as part of the Single Local Growth Fund. It is then expected that LEP and member local authorities will then agree how to spend this funding. The government has confirmed its intention to consult on the mechanism for this.

In line with SR 2010, the Government has also confirmed that it will continue to set aside £250 million for the purposes of NHB in 2015-16. As in previous

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

years, the Government will continue to top slice an additional amount from the local government control totals to fund this grant.

Looking beyond 2015/16

The Institute for Fiscal Studies suggest that the current spending plans could lead to reductions of 7.6% p.a. in both 2016/17 and 2017/18.

Work will continue on analysing the implications of the Spending Review 2013 and updates will be provided to members in reports as part of the Business Planning and budget process for 2014-2018.

36) From Councillor Richard Williams to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

What assessment has he made of the Council's ability to provide services of a reduction of a) 5% b) 10% or c) 20% in the Council tax base?

Reply

The council tax base was reduced in 2013/14 for technical reasons because of the changes in the working of Council Tax Benefit. Officers are not aware of any government proposals that would reduce the council tax base in future years. In most years Merton has a small increase in the council tax base.

Clearly, due to the Government reductions in funding, Merton council has already had to make significant savings in recent years and it becomes more difficult each time.

In July 2011 the council agreed an approach to strategically planning its services in the response to the pressures it faced. The priorities remain to continue to provide everything that is statutory and maintain services, within limits, to the vulnerable and elderly.

Due to the sound financial management that the council has put in place, the council is well positioned to continue to address as effectively as any council, the challenges that the continuing government funding cuts presents.

Members will be kept informed throughout the business planning process of progress that is being made to balance the budget for 2014/15 and over the MTFS period 2014-2018 as a whole.

37) From Councillor Richard Williams to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

Can he detail the reserves held by the Council, the purpose for which each reserve is held and any limitations on the use of any reserve

Reply

The data requested is shown on pages 10 and 11 of agenda item 7 to the General Purposes Committee of 27th June 2013. This item was also

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission – financial monitoring task group of 25th June.

The item elsewhere on this Agenda - Strategic Objective Review – Corporate Capacity with a Focus on Local Government Finance – contains detailed explanations of the proposed uses of reserves.

38) From Councillor Richard Williams to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

How many Council staff will benefit from the Council adopting the 'Living Wage'?

Reply

Merton's lowest rate of pay before the adoption of the London Living Wage (GLPC spine point 4) was £8.08 per hour. In total, 16 employees earned less than £8.55 per hour (the London Living Wage). Of these, 6 employees work in schools.

39) From Councillor Ray Tindle to the Leader of the Council (ST)

Can the Leader of the Council tell me how much time the chief executive spent on the Municipal Journal award? How much time was spent by other Directors on it? What was the total cost of all work by the council and its employees on the MJ award?

Reply

The winning application was written by the council's in house communications team; the presentation to the judges was made by Councillor Alambritis, Lola Barratt and Ged Curran. The authority secured sponsorship for its attendance at the awards ceremony so no council money was spent at that event.

40) From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Implementation (ST)

How much budget has been allocated to the Customer Contact project and how much has been spent on the project in 2011/12 and 2012/13?

Reply

The Customer Contact Project has as budget of £2.4m allocated to it, approved in July 2012. Spend in 2012/13 was £53,700. Prior to this allocation, £69,625 was spent in 2011/12 to progress the project.

41) From Councillor Linda Taylor to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

How many apprenticeships have Merton offered to young people aged 20 and under in the past 13 months and in which departments?

Reply

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

Two in Children, Schools and Families (Schools and School Improvement) two in Corporate Services (IT and Legal) and one in Environment & Regeneration (Cleansing). Five in total for the period in question.

There are further apprenticeships on offer in the following departments, but with an age range of 16-24: Corporate Services 8, Environment & Regeneration 3, Children, Schools and Families 3, Community and Housing 1.

42) From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

Please explain fully the methodology for the calculation of early repayment of all types [fixed rate (ER, EIP and maturity) and variable rate (EIP and maturity)] of PWLB loans. Please also provide details of the most recent early repayment by Merton Council (2011?), including values for all variables utilised in the calculation, assumptions and actual calculation.

Reply

The methodology for calculating early repayments on PWLB loans can be obtained from the UK Debt Management Office at <http://www.dmo.gov.uk>. Details of the most recent early repayment by Merton Council, dated 1 April 2011, were published in the reply to Council Question 27 on the 13 July 2011.

43) From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

Of the services that Merton currently provides, please indicate which services are restricted to cost recovery only? Please also state the services on which VAT is and is not levied.

Reply

The Council provides a large number of diverse services for which it makes a charge. The services which are restricted to cost recovery only are not identified in any one place and a significant amount of work is required to answer this question and the cost of providing the information would be disproportionate. As it is not possible to answer this question within the available deadline, I have instead asked the Director of Corporate Services to brief the Councillor on this matter.

44) From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

Which London Boroughs are preparing to roll out free Wi-Fi? What is LB Merton's position on this as I understand that it is not included in the first wave?

Reply

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

Merton has been working as part of a seventeen borough collaborative procurement exercise to obtain competitive tenders for the installation of concessionary Wi-Fi services across London.

Whilst the procurement has been undertaken on a collaborative basis, each individual local authority has written its own bespoke specification which takes into consideration local conditions and specific technical requirements for the Wi-Fi services, some of which include free access for limited periods within certain locations.

The tenders are being evaluated and contracts let to suppliers by each of the boroughs on an individual basis, which has resulted in a number of authorities, e.g. Camden and Wandsworth, being further advanced with the implementing the works than some of the other boroughs.

Merton is still in the process of finalising its tender analysis and producing a report with a recommendation to award the contract, but it is anticipated that these works will be completed within the next two to three weeks.

45) From Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

What is the current allowance for the leader of one of the minority groups on the council? Can the Cabinet Member tell me whether the leader of the new Merton Coalition group is claiming this allowance?

Reply

The full scheme of members' allowances is detailed on the council's web page.

The scheme advises a 'responsibility allowance' of "£5,737" in respect of "Leader of Minority Group."

In respect of whether this amount is being claimed, it is not for me to divulge information which Cllr Evans can supply herself.

46) From Councillor Oonagh Moulton to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

Like me, I know that a number of councillors have had concerns raised with them about the council's relationship with Welbeck Law, and in particular the practices undertaken by its debt collectors. Can the Cabinet Member tell me what action the council is taking to investigate these serious allegations in a fully transparent manner, particularly in light of the Government's recent guidance to councils on tackling aggressive bailiffs?

Reply

The Council has been using Welbeck Law to collect unpaid council tax for over 5 years. There has been one complaint from a resident regarding the collection process and document serving which has been fully investigated

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

and upheld via the Council's complaints processes, has been rejected by the Local Government Ombudsman and rejected by the County Court. Welbeck Law are a firm of solicitors and are not a bailiff company. The Council monitors the performance of Welbeck Law under the Service Level Agreement it has. The company has assisted the Council collect in excess of £650,000 in unpaid council tax from the most difficult to collect cases through bankruptcy proceedings.

47) From Councillor Maurice Groves to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

In the early part of his time as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown raided about a third of the nation's pension pots. The present Shadow Chancellor seems equally confused about pensions (although of course he was the one advising Mr Brown at that time). Single pensioners in Merton currently receive a discount on their Council Tax. Can the Cabinet Member confirm that this discount will still be in existence on 22nd May 2014?

Reply

Although in my view the first half of this question is untrue, it is also clearly not a matter for this authority. The single person discount of 25% is a national legal entitlement that applies to all single households, both pensioners and people of working age. The council has no discretion to vary this and as far as is known the national government has no plans to change this. Further discounts are also available to households on low incomes, under Merton's own Council Tax Support Scheme. Government funding for Council Tax rebates such as this were reduced by 10% in April, but Merton has chosen not to passport the cut in support on to low paid households, but has absorbed the extra costs.

48) From Councillor Debbie Shears to the Leader of the Council (ST)

I am aware that there are a number of Council Champions, including a Veterans' Champion, a Community Covenant Champion and a Domestic Violence Champion. Can the Leader provide me with a full list of Merton's Council Champions; when each one was appointed; and the process under which they are appointed?

Reply

No Council Champions have been appointed under my administration.

I understand Cllr Maxi Martin was appointed Domestic Violence Champion under the previous Conservative administration and this appointment has not been rescinded. I am unsure of the date or process used in terms of this appointment as it was under the previous Conservative administration.

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

49) From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

What is the status of the capital funding that the Conservative administration allocated in the budget approved by Council in March 2010 for the removal of one way gyratories in Mitcham, Morden and Wimbledon?

Reply

The allocation of £5m agreed in the 2010/11 capital programme remains in the programme and is as yet unspent, this will be spent as and when deliverable regeneration / traffic schemes are agreed and following consultation with TfL.

50) From Councillor Henry Nelles to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities (ST)

I see that following the review requested by Conservative councillors of Merton's equality impact assessment regime, the Cabinet has decided to stick with the status quo. What is the annual cost to the Council of retaining its existing arrangements for equality analysis rather than following the Government's new guidance?

Reply

The Council undertook a substantive review of its approach to equality impact assessments in 2011. This took account of new guidance issued by DCLG in 2011. The review did not take place as a result of representations from opposition parties. The Council revised its approach to equality impact assessments to streamline the process and included guidance to clarify when it was necessary to undertake an assessment. This guidance makes it clear that an assessment only needs to be undertaken if a policy is being revised or services altered that would impact on people deemed as having a 'protected characteristic' under the Equality Act 2010. This is to ensure that when a decision is made that the Council takes account of any impact on those groups set out in the Act. Failure to consider the potential impact could result in a legal challenge to the Council's decision resulting in delays and costs.

The Council looked again at the process for undertaking equality impact assessments in 2013 and found that the process as it stood continued to represent good practice and that it was in line with DCLG guidance i.e. proportionate, timely and providing a simple audit trail.

The Council's guidance sets out that where an equality impact assessment is undertaken it should be done so at the outset of any process to revise a policy or change a service. That it is embedded in the process for considering any changes and that where possible it should involve existing data such as the census, published reports and management information. As such it is not possible to cost the time taken on equality impact assessments. However, the cost will be far less than dealing with legal challenges if the Council failed to consider the impact of decisions as it is required to do. However, should Conservative Councillors have examples of when and where the

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

administration should cease to consider equalities, I would as always be pleased to receive their representations.

51) From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

What is Merton's gross revenue from user fees and charges, by category (eg, parking services, leisure services, etc) for each of the past four years (2009/10, 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13)?

Reply

E&R				
	£'000			
Section	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Commercial Waste	1,421	1,424	1,460	1,460
Garden Waste	0	0	198	271
Pest Control	103	90	121	114
Leisure & Culture	440	362	464	454
Parks & Open Spaces	1,416	1,380	1,549	1,649
Environmental Health, Trading Standards & Licencing	310	328	385	403
Traffic & Highways	722	749	670	974
Building & Development Control	1,463	1,420	1,530	1,397
Vestry Hall	258	256	297	310
Parking Services	8,044	8,215	9,470	11,045

Corporate Services Income				
	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
CHAS	-2,928	-3,020	-3,400	-3,544
Schools	-1,157	-1,189	-1,249	-1,122
Other	-2,666	-2,429	-2,303	-2,568
TOTAL	-6,752	-6,637	-6,592	-7,233

CSF				
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Early Years & Children Centres	-702,665	-777,297	-884,313	-1,109,913
PDC	-239,024	-204,282	-216,393	-262,198
Schools Buy Back (including meals contract)	-1,554,186	-2,816,347	-3,207,224	-3,696,686

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

TOTAL	-2,495,875	-3,797,926	-4,307,930	-5,068,797

Community & Housing Income (R Codes)				
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Adult Social Care	(7,296,959)	(9,116,163)	(9,451,033)	(10,700,910)
Libraries	(569,121)	(283,414)	(561,931)	(310,086)
Adult Ed	(580,330)	(565,019)	(485,599)	(568,723)
Housing	(129,102)	(52,593)	(464,958)	(91,942)
Total Community & Housing	(8,575,512)	(10,017,189)	(10,963,521)	(11,671,661)

52) From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

Merton's cash increased by almost £11 million from 2011/12 to 2012/13, now totalling almost £80 million. Does the Cabinet Member believe that this is a good use of taxpayers' money and for what does he propose to use this?

Reply

An organisation's cash balances are not the best measure of a Council's financial management. They do not directly link to the availability of spendable resources; they can arise for a variety of reasons including improvements in cash flow management. Our Capital Strategy approved by Council in March 2013 states that internal cash resources will be used to fund the capital programme until 2015/16. I believe that is an appropriate use of taxpayers' money. If cash were not available it might be more expensive to fund the capital programme from other sources.

53) From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

Merton's General Fund Balances Reserve now stands at £19.2 million, far in excess of the level deemed prudent for an authority of Merton's size and character. For what does the Cabinet Member propose to use this?

Reply

There is no evidence to support the view that the general fund reserves are in excess of a prudent level for an authority the size of Merton. All Councils are required to have unallocated money for a rainy day, and the latest data we have suggests nearly two thirds of London Councils had between £13m and £31m while we have £19m. Our sensible, disciplined approach to finance has helped us protect priority services while ensuring we are the only Council in South London to freeze Council Tax for three consecutive years and maintain rebates for people on low incomes.

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

54) From Councillor Linda Taylor to the Cabinet Member for Finance (ST)

What is the cost of Merton adopting the London Living Wage of £8.55 per hour, and how does this compare to the £309 per annum that he advised it would cost back in November 2010 to ensure that all Merton employees are paid the London Living Wage?

Reply

The cost required to implement the London Living Wage for direct Employees of the London Borough of Merton is estimated to be less than £10,000 per annum.

Paying the London Living Wage to all agency workers from the outset of their placement, rather than after 12 weeks, is estimated will cost circa £41,000 per annum.

The cost of £309 was for one employee and was simply a snapshot in time answered though a previous 2010 Council question. The profile of the workforce has subsequently changed, as have a range of factors that have a bearing, such as pay freezes across local government, incremental progression and recruitment and employee turnover changes.

55) From Councillor Iain Dysart to the Leader of the Council (ST)

Following the Coalition Government's recent announcement of a further Council Tax freeze grant, which allows him to protect Merton's hard-pressed residents, will he now commit to so doing?

Reply

The generosity of previous years' council tax freeze grant has proved slightly illusory, which explains why around a third of local authorities refused to accept it earlier this year. Merton chose to accept the grant because our stated aim is to have low Council Tax anyway. Nevertheless, although the devil will obviously be in the detail, if it is as described, the potential availability of council tax freeze grant would be one of the few welcome features of a very negative spending settlement, which includes the loss of a further 10% of grant funding. The administration will clearly want to consider using the grant in future years in our financial planning, although the priorities outlined in the 'July agreement' of July 2011 and the views of Scrutiny will obviously take precedence.

56) From Councillor Linda Scott to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

What lessons have been learnt, and what action has the Council taken, following the tragic murder of local schoolgirl Tia Sharp?

Reply

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

When a child dies and where abuse or neglect is either known or suspected, Government guidelines require Local Safeguarding Children Boards to conduct a Serious Case Review. This will identify lessons to be learned and actions to be taken to improve the way professionals and organisations work together to safeguard children. A number of local agencies were known to have had contact with Tia and her family. The circumstances of her death and subsequent enquiries suggested that agencies might be able to learn lessons about the way they worked, individually and collectively, with the family. The Merton Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) Serious Case Review Sub Committee met on 3 September and confirmed that there should be a Serious Case Review in line with Government Guidance, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010'. The Serious Case Review was conducted between September 2012 and April 2013.

The Merton Safeguarding Children Board appointed an Independent Chair of the Serious Case Review Panel and an Independent Overview Report Author who are experienced in conducting such reviews.

The Serious Case Review Overview Report will be published on Wednesday 17 July on the MSCB website and until the report is made public it is not possible for more detail to be provided, however the MSCB has advised me that all agencies have co-operated fully and actively in the review and that any areas for learning and improvement have been actioned by all agencies in advance of publication.

57) From Councillor Peter Walker to the Cabinet Member for Education

Can the Cabinet Member say how often the so called Dundonald Tennis Club have prevented Dundonald Primary school from having their PE lessons on the Tennis Court area of Dundonald Rec?

Reply

The council has not recorded the specific number of instances but there have indeed been issues in recent weeks with apparent members of 'Dundonald Tennis Club' using the tennis courts during the school day without consultation with the school or council when the school had planned PE lessons on the courts. In one instance the school had organised a professional tennis coach as part of their sports week, yet could not use the courts appropriately for a class of pupils.

This is very regrettable as the school has worked in harmony with the community for many years in using the courts during school hours - the arrangement for the school to enjoy exclusive use during school hours has been advertised in the recreation grounds for many years without issues arising. The school is not changing its practices at all and there has never previously been incidents like the one described above. We are working to ensure the position is resolved satisfactorily for when the school returns in September.

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

58) From Councillor Peter Walker to the Cabinet Member for Education

Can the Cabinet Member say how many children enrolling in reception classes next September will not be offered a place in a school near to where they live?

Reply

All Merton resident applicants have been offered a place in one of their preferred schools, or an alternative school within two miles travel distance or a 45 minute public transport journey. Some applicants choose to name more distant schools due to work, childcare arrangements, or due to sibling links. 92% of applicants received one of their top three preference schools in the latest admissions round. There are a small number of applicants who have rejected offers made to them, and currently have not informed the council of alternative arrangements, and this is being monitored as children reach statutory school age.

Providing sufficient local school places has been achieved thanks to our forward planning, with 540 additional reception places available compared to 2007/08. We are aware that demand is forecast to increase again from September 2014 and we are planning appropriately for this.

59) Cllr Laxmi Attawar to the Cabinet Member for Education

Can the cabinet member update council on the expansion of Singlegate Primary?

Reply

This September the school is again providing 60 places, above its permanent admission number of 30, through our phase 1 works and a temporary classroom. We are progressing design work for the adjacent former Jamia building, purchased last year, which will allow the school to provide 90 places in September 2014. Last week Cabinet gave approval for the project to proceed and we expect to start construction work at the turn of the year.

60) From Councillor Stan Anderson to the Cabinet Member for Education

Following recent reports of bulge classes in other London Boroughs to provide additional school places, how many bulge classes do Merton plan to provide in 2013/14?

Reply

'Bulge' classes are generally defined as a one off class for a school to meet an urgent, sometimes unforeseen need. With GLA forecasts showing continued growth in the child population, Merton is implementing a well-planned primary school expansion programme. Merton has therefore largely been able to avoid 'bulge' classes, instead delivering permanent expansions. There are 540 additional reception places this September compared to 2007/08 which is equivalent to 18 'bulge' classes. All these places are either

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

already classed as permanent or are planned to be permanent. In 2013/14, Merton will have no bulge classes.

61) From Councillor Russell Makin to the Cabinet Member for Education

How many Merton primary schools are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted?
How does this compare to May 2010?

Reply

The following data shows the percentage of Merton primary schools judged by Ofsted to be either 'good' or 'outstanding' for the periods requested:

31/05/2010 = 67% (29 out of 43 schools)

31/05/2013 = 86% (37/43)

62) From Councillor Ian Munn to the Cabinet Member for Education

At the start of the 2010/11 financial year, how many additional primary school classes had been approved by cabinet? How does this compare to 2013/14?

Reply

Since April 2010 cabinet has approved 15 additional forms of entry, which equates to 105 extra classes across the seven years of primary school.

63) From Councillor Russell Makin to the Cabinet Member for Education

What was the total cost of the school capital expansion programme for primary school approved in the budget of 2010/11? How does this compare to 2013/14?

Reply

The 3-year capital programme approved by Council in March 2010 for 2010/11 to 2012/13 provided £31.553 million for primary school expansion. The capital programme approved by Council in March for the 3 years 2013/14 to 2015/16 provides £52.853 million for primary school expansion.

64) From Councillor Sam Thomas to the Cabinet Member for Education

Can the cabinet member outline what steps he has taken following the inadequate Ofsted report for Benedict?

Reply

As cabinet member for education I take the issue of a failing school very seriously and I expect robust actions to be taken to prevent this happening. I firmly believe that children have the right to be educated in a school that provides a high standard of education and put their interests first. Any inadequate report is unacceptable and as cabinet member I strongly support the necessary steps that are needed to address these matters.

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

However once a school is placed in special measures by Ofsted the DfE has responsibility for converting the school to an academy. Academy sponsors are approached with a view to taking on the school and the DfE makes a recommendation to ministers. It is the minister who makes the final decision. The Governors of Benedict school met with the DfE to understand the options and voted to become an academy school. Subsequently sponsors visited the school and then were invited to present to Governors their vision for securing a successful future for the school. Governors wrote to the DfE expressing their preference for one sponsor. The minister has written to the Chair of Governors and CSF Director informing them that Chapel Street Educational Trust will be the sponsor. It is likely that the school will transfer to academy status on November 1st 2013.

65) From Councillor Mary-Jane Jeanes to the Cabinet Member for Education

Does he welcome the Department of Education's consent for Chapel Street Community Schools Trust to establish a school in the Raynes Park and West Barnes area. Given the long distances many West Barnes children have to travel to school, does he regret that the Council failed to take a lead and advocate expansion or a new school locally?

Reply

Colleagues will be well aware of the significant expansion of primary school provision in Merton which the present and previous administrations have progressed since 2008-09 which has included an additional 15 forms of entry since May 2010. In the latest admissions round for September 2013, all Merton children have been offered places and, indeed, more parental preferences were met than in previous years. The admission figures for the Raynes Park and West Barnes area also show that sufficient school places have been provided, and that the main pressure on school places is elsewhere in the borough. I am aware of the proposed Free School planned for the Merton/RB Kingston border I am ensuring that officers engage with the provider to ensure that Merton residents are able to access this new provision.

66) From Councillor Iain Dysart to the Cabinet Member for Education

Does he agree with the new Director of Public Health's comments that parents should be banned from driving to school gates, to help tackle the problem of childhood obesity?

Reply

Childhood obesity is, without doubt, an important public health challenge for the council. Reducing levels of childhood obesity is a priority in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and local partner agencies need to work with children, families and schools to promote healthy eating and active lifestyles. School meals supplied in our schools comply with nutritional standards and Merton's school meals provider recently achieved the Food for Life Gold Standard. In

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

our primary school expansion strategy we are committed to providing local places to enable children to walk or cycle to school wherever possible. All Merton schools have travel plans which promote sustainable means of travelling for pupils and which discourage use of cars. While I understand the sentiments behind the comments attributed to the new Director of Public Health, the council has no powers to ban parents from taking their children to school by car.

67) From Councillor Suzanne Evans to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

Please provide full details of the current residency and other requirements to obtain social housing in the borough at present, together with details of how priority is accorded on the waiting list.

Reply

The rules for nomination to a housing association home are contained in the Housing Register and Nominations Policy, which is a public document and which passes through the Scrutiny process. The policy describes how the council priorities housing applicants to ensure that those in the greatest need, as described by the definition of reasonable preference, are given a head start to access social housing

Households who do not reside in Merton are denied access to the Housing list and those who have not lived in Merton, through their own choice, for a minimum of one year, are not eligible for an offer of social housing. This does not apply to HM armed Forces serving or having left services in the last 5 years

68) From Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

I have a resident who has been living with his parents and his young son whilst waiting on the council's housing list for 7 years. Understandably he really wants to stay in the area where his parents live as they support him with care for his son, who is also very happy at his local primary school. However, my resident gets up to second or third on the waiting list and bids for a property but then is consistently thwarted by the system.

Could the Cabinet Member tell me i) how many families are currently on the council waiting list; ii) how long it takes on average for a family to get placed in a dwelling; iii) how many children each family has on average; iv) does a family get extra housing points if they have lived in the borough for a long time as my resident has done; and v) if not, why not?

Reply

Although I believe the case you mention has now been resolved, we are only too well aware that many households must wait for accommodation far longer than we would like. However with 7491 households seeking a home, of which 3982 households are families with children, (2270 seeking 2 bed

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

accommodation, 1308 seeking 3 bed accommodation, 299 households seeking 4 bedroom accommodation, and 38 households seeking 5 bedroom accommodation), we are only too well aware that demand for a home greatly exceeds supply.

It's not possible to say with any degree of accuracy how long a household will wait for an offer of accommodation as this is dependant on a number of unknown factors involved in the equation. For example we have no way of knowing which size, type and location of properties will become available in any given period. In our experience there is no such thing as an average number of properties becoming available in any given month. However, households can assist the Council in improving their prospects for rehousing by being flexible in the areas they will move to and the type of properties they will consider.

The Council does not award additional priority for applicants living in the borough but we do recognise time spent on the register by awarding waiting time points. Households not living in the borough are denied access to the housing register and will have had to live in Merton for a minimum of one year before they can be considered for an offer of a home.

69) From Councillor Logie Lohendran to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Could the Cabinet Member give an update as to how HealthWatch is progressing and when we expect it to be fully operational?

Reply

Healthwatch Merton will be having a launch event on 17 July at Grenfell Housing and Training. The event will have guest speakers including the Chief Executive of Healthwatch England, Dr Katherine Rake. Also at the event they will be launching their new website www.healthwatchmerton.co.uk and be introducing their new staff team led by manager Dave Curtis. The manager will take up his post from 29 July.

Once the staff are in place work will begin on recruiting and training the volunteers needed to deliver the new information and advice service. This is expected to become fully operational in September.

70) From Councillor Maurice Groves to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Could the Cabinet member tell me what role the council has in holding Health Watch to account?

Reply

Healthwatch Merton will be delivering against the contract agreed between the Council and MVSC. The Council will be receiving quarterly updates and will be monitoring performance against an agreed performance framework.

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

Updates will also be provided to the Health and Well Being Board and Healthier Communities and Older People's Scrutiny Panel.

71) From Councillor Debbie Shears to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

As she will know, the Liverpool Care Pathway (LCP) is a type of care used in hospitals when patients are at the end of their lives. There has been recent concern voiced by Andrew Boff, a Conservative GLA member, about the lack of public information regarding over 65s on the Liverpool Care Pathway (LCP). Could the Cabinet Member therefore give me an up to date figure of how many Merton residents over the age of 65 are currently on the Liverpool Care Pathway; how many have been removed; and how many died during 2012/13?

Reply

Merton Public Health itself does not hold any data on end of life care (EOLC) - which is an area of work that Merton CCG leads on and Public Health supports. On discussion with the GP lead for EOLC at Merton CCG, the following was fed back:

- The LCP in the community (under care of SMCS- Sutton and Merton Community Services) was halted pending the outcome of the Rabbi Neuberger review* so there should be no patients dying in their own homes or in Merton care homes formally on the LCP. Merton residents do, of course, die in other places such as hospitals, hospices and care homes.
- The use of LCP, if re-instituted in the community, will be monitored by Merton CCG as commissioners but it does not appear that there is any requirement for other providers to report this level of detail. It is not known if they audit their use of the LCP.

* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/independent-review-of-liverpool-care-pathway-to-be-chaired-by-baroness-neuberger>

72) From Councillor Logie Lohendran to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

Can the Cabinet Member tell me how many people in Merton are at present housed in B&B/hostel accommodation? Of this total how many are under the age of 18years?

Reply

There are 5 households in Bed and Breakfast accommodation of which one is under the age of 18 years.

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

73) From Councillor Logie Lohendran to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

With the current shortage of suitable housing in the borough, what is the Council doing to refurbish empty homes in Merton? In each of the past three years, how many homes have been renovated and brought back into use for the benefit of families in Merton?

Reply

In the past three financial years the following numbers of dwellings have been brought back into use through Empty Property Grants:

2010/11 - nine

2011/12 - three

2012/13 - two

Altogether, since the start of the Empty Homes programme in 2008, the Environmental Health (Housing) team have brought 27 homes back into use for people on the Housing waiting list through grants, and a further 50 homes back into use through enforcement and advice.

Currently, the sub-regional funding available to employ an Empty Property Officer has been exhausted, though it is hoped to employ an Empty Property Enforcement Officer for 2014/15 through sub-regional funds. In the meantime, Environmental Health are encouraging the owners of empty homes to contact one of the three external organisations providing Empty Property Grants and tenant management services to return vacant homes back into use and manage tenants from the housing waiting list.

It should be noted that the overwhelming majority of empty properties in Merton are in private ownership, and that of these the majority are empty for reasons other than the owner's financial inability to refurbish them. Although compulsory purchase is contemplated in extreme cases it is an expensive process, which would inevitably have consequences for Council Tax payers if adopted as a borough-wide policy.

74) From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Implementation

What is Merton's policy on the issuing of PCNs for LB Merton vehicles?

Reply

PCNs are issued to any LB Merton vehicle contravening parking or traffic regulations unless they are undertaking statutory duties necessitating such parking.

75) From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Implementation

How many PCNs have been issued to LB Merton vehicles over the past five years?

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

Reply

The council is only required to hold data for closed parking cases for a period of 18 months. As such, existing data shows that 69 penalty charge notices have been issued to LBM vehicles.

76) From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Implementation

What is Merton's policy on the issuing of PCNs for non LB Merton tradesman's vehicles?

Reply

Any vehicle found to be in contravention of parking or traffic regulations will receive a PCN. The legislation provides the motorist with an avenue of appeal which they are expected to use if they believe they have a genuine reason for parking at that location e.g. loading and unloading, and the issuing officer did not observe any exemptible activities.

77) From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:

What are the current administration's plans for the removal of one way gyratories in the town centres of Mitcham, Morden and Wimbledon?

Reply

This administration believes that gyratory systems can have a detrimental impact on the quality of environment in our town centres. However it takes a lot of capital investment to achieve; in some cases, prohibitively so; and there are a number of implications that need to be considered, particularly impacts on the flow of traffic / levels of congestion and the need for third party land acquisition.

Morden

The council remains committed to the vision set out in the Core Strategy which seeks to improve Morden Town Centre through new development at the station site and seeking investment in the public realm. Morden's gyratory is owned, managed and maintained by TFL. The cost of improving Morden town centre including the gyratory removal is anticipated to be in the region of £8m. The council is willing to consider matching TFL investment in their network and have made provision in our regeneration budgets from 2015/16. Despite a Mayoral pledge to invest £4m from TFL in Morden, this does not currently feature in TFL's Business Plan that runs until 2015.

In order to help build a business case the Council has commissioned transport consultants to build a traffic simulation model to test the impact of a number of options to relocate the buses from outside the underground station and wider changes to the road network, including the potential to modify or remove the gyratory system in Morden. This work is being undertaken in parallel with viability work for the redevelopment of several core sites adjacent

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

to Morden Station and early feasibility work by TfL for the Sutton to Morden Tram.

Mitcham

In the scoping phase of the Rediscover Mitcham project, officers explored ways of removing the Raleigh Gardens gyratory. It is not possible within the scope of the current project for a number of reasons:

- It would require all through traffic in Mitcham to pass through Fair Green and Upper Green East. To ensure that road junctions had sufficient capacity to handle two-way working, junctions would need to be enlarged including the acquisition of private land. This is both too costly and harms the environment in Mitcham unnecessarily.
- The current proposals out for consultation now as part of Rediscover Mitcham consider the introduction of a bus only street on the former London Road route. This puts public transport at the heart of the town centre, but also creates capacity on the rest of the road network to smooth out traffic flows, and reduce the size of overbearing road junctions for the benefit of pedestrians and cyclists.
- It should be noted that the proposed changes as part of Rediscover Mitcham will not preclude the future removal of the gyratory.

Wimbledon

The council has limited resources to spend on all our town centres. Having recently invested in Wimbledon in 2010-2012 for the Destination Wimbledon project, we are now rolling out a programme of investment in all our town centres, with Mitcham and Colliers Wood as our current priorities.

We don't have any plans, or resources, at present to remove the one way system in central Wimbledon. If we are successful in the Mayor's mini-Hollands cycle bid, we will of course be reviewing the traffic system in Wimbledon and seek to further improve the street environment in the town centre, with a particular focus on cycle provision.

It should be noted that the works that have taken place in the town centre over the last 3 years will not preclude the future removal of the gyratory.

78) From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Given the Mayor of London's support for the removal of one way gyratories across London (as clearly set out in the Mayor's report of 8 May 2013), what discussions have taken place between LB Merton and the Mayor of London and/or TfL regarding the removal of one way gyratories in Merton?

Reply

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

There have been discussions with Transport for London regarding the borough's aspiration to remove the gyratories in all of Merton's main town centres over a number of years. However, as discussed in detail in question 77, there has always been an acknowledgement that to achieve such changes will require significant capital investment.

Since the 8th May 2013 there have been no direct discussions with the Mayor of London/Transport for London regarding the matter.

79) From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Did officers measure traffic flows before and after the implementation of the works on Merton High Street? What has been the impact on traffic flows along Merton High Street since the introduction of the cycle lanes? And what was the cost of the cycle lanes?

Reply

Did officers measure traffic flows before and after the implementation of the works on Merton High Street?

A video survey was conducted on the Haydon's Road / Merton High Street junction in July 2012 and one the South Wimbledon junction in June 2013.

As the works are not yet complete it would not be sensible to carry out after surveys; A survey will be carried out a minimum of six months after all the works are completed particularly the junction improvements at Haydon's Road junction.

What has been the impact on traffic flows along Merton High Street since the introduction of the cycle lanes?

The westbound cycle lane between Haydon's Road and South Wimbledon Station is not yet operational. It is therefore difficult to quantify modal shift but as the cycle lanes does not conflict with parked vehicles or movement of traffic, a negative impact is extremely unlikely; in fact the expectation is that there will be an improvement in traffic flows / safety for all modes.

What was the cost of the cycle lanes?

The on-footway cycle lane reduced the overall cost of the footway construction since the cycle lane was constructed in asphalt therefore considerably reducing the need to renew the existing paving. This resulted in a savings of 50% (£4,000). The delineating material, thermoplastic markings and antiskid from South Wimbledon to the Savacentre is approximately £20k. This is for 900m of uninterrupted cycle lane east bound and 900m west bound.

80) From Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Last month the Cabinet deferred a decision on whether to introduce 24/7 enforcement of noise nuisance in Merton. Following this further delay, can the Cabinet Member tell me when the administration now plans to make its

NON-PRIORITY QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

decision on whether to tackle the issue of noise nuisance which causes such distress to those residents affected by it?

Reply

On the 10th June 2013, Cabinet acknowledged that the existing service meets current demand and a self funded 24/7 service was not feasible. Cabinet recommended that the decision to whether to proceed or not with a 24/7 noise patrol service is deferred pending a further report to Cabinet, discussing the possibility of MASCOT working more closely with the council's noise enforcement service and the potential of the planned shared regulatory service with neighbouring boroughs. Discussions with MASCOT are currently taking place and it is hoped to report back at the earliest opportunity. In respect of Shared Services, this is a comprehensive transformation programme involving Merton, Richmond & Croydon that includes all aspects of the environmental health, trading standards and licensing service. This will take approximately 18 months to establish. However, one of the main drivers for this project is the greater resilience that will be achieved for all service areas, including noise enforcement, which will allow for a more efficient response and exploration of best practice across the sub region.

81) From Councillor Henry Nelles to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

I note that the Mayor of London has prioritised large parts of Colliers Wood for his street trees programme and that he requires bids from local councils to be in by 16 August 2013. Will the Cabinet Member join me in welcoming this scheme to Colliers Wood and tell me what plans he has to submit an application for more street trees prior to the application deadline?

Reply

I can confirm that the council will be bidding for Round 2 of the Mayor's Street Tree Initiative. It is also important to note that all applicants are required to provide a minimum contribution (match funding) of 50% towards the cost of the programme. The funding is only available for the planting of new trees and does not cover the on-going maintenance costs, which is currently not available and will need to be identified by the Council.

82) From Councillor Maurice Groves to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Would the Cabinet Member recommend the reading of the report presented to the Healthier Communities & Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel on Wednesday 3rd of July 2013 on NHS Croydon's finances to all of Merton's councillors and to the wider public?

Reply

I would recommend they read it.