

COUNCIL 10 JULY 2013

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Procedure at the meeting:

- The Mayor will call your name and ask if you have a supplementary question arising from the answer you have received.
- If you do not have a supplementary question then simply respond thank you, no.
- If you do have a supplementary question respond thank you, yes. You will be shown to a seat in the main chamber where you will present your supplementary question.
- Having put your question, please be seated whilst the Cabinet member responds.
- Once the response has been given, please return to your seat in the public gallery.
- The full text of your questions and answers will be detailed in the minutes of this evenings meeting.

Questions:

1. From Mr Adam Fields (attendance uncertain)

To Councillor Andrew Judge, Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration.

Question

“Can you tell me what training is given to Highways Safety Inspectors relating to the Disability Discrimination Acts?”

Reply

All Highway Safety Inspectors are fully trained in Technical and Legal aspects relating to Safety Inspections. The training includes the needs of the less able and the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act.

2. From Mr Anthony Fairclough (not attending)

To Councillor Andrew Judge, Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration.

Question

"Merton has a policy not to take action on urban foxes. What information and support does Merton provide to people on how to deter foxes? Many councils at least provide advice on their websites, as well as links to other sources of help. Will Merton do the same?"

Reply

When we receive enquires or are contacted by residents about urban foxes we will refer the resident to a charity called "The Fox Project". They can be contacted directly on telephone number 01892 826222. There is now also a link to their web site on the Councils web site, under Pest Control www.foxproject.org.uk

This organization offers residents help and advice on the deterrent of foxes.

3. From Mr Ben Saunders (in attendance)

To Councillor Mark Allison, Cabinet Member for Finance.

Question

"What is the pay gap between the highest and lowest earners at Merton Council and are all workers now earning the London Living Wage?"

Reply

The difference between the highest paid earner - £185,000 - and the lowest paid earner - £14,697 - is £170,303. This is a ratio of approximately 12:1, which was approved by the Council in its review of the annual pay policy statement. Information on senior officers salaries are set out on our Open Data Page.

Cabinet approved the implementation of the London Living Wage (LLW) on 1 July 2013. The link to the report is http://www.merton.gov.uk/democratic_services/w-agendas/w-fpreports/1283.pdf The LLW will be backdated to 1 April 2013.

Supplementary

I think the introduction of the London Living Wage is long overdue but very welcome indeed. Bearing in mind there are limited opportunities for members of the public to ask questions at Full Council meetings, can you explain why the announcement of the Living Wage was made after the deadline for public

questions but before the meeting itself, thereby making the question redundant. Do you recognise how frustrating that is?

Reply

I can only apologise for the timetabling mechanism that we have. In order to make the decision it has to be made at a Cabinet meeting, which is scheduled long in advance and because we wanted to do it as soon as we realised that the figures were in our favour, that's why it was announced when it was. I'm not sure of the timing of when the Cabinet papers were released so that the public would have known about it, and whether that gave you enough time to ask the question. If it didn't I can only apologise, but the intention was there and I'd rather do it, than announce that I'm going to do it and wait until September for the next full Cabinet meeting to introduce it.

4. From Cesar Sepulveda (in attendance)

To Councillor Andrew Judge, Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration.

Question

"Can the Council tell me why it sends cleaners down mine and my neighbours streets the day before rubbish is collected and not afterwards?"

Reply

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

Keeping our borough's streets clean is a priority for the council and we continue to seek ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of this service. This is especially important given the reductions in central government funding and consequent financial challenges facing Merton.

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. 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.

Supplementary

Could you give me an exact date of the proposals to my question? My original question was can the Council tell me why it sends cleaners down my street the day before the rubbish is collected and not afterwards.

Reply

I will answer those questions. I've provided a full answer here about how we structure our street cleaning and there is a weekly sweep undertaken of all streets in the authority, done at various times, different for each ward. I'm sure we can provide the exact time in full if that's helpful to you. We also provide the facility to go down and pick litter where it's in most need. We've done that because we think it's the most efficient and effective way of conducting that service, which is different to how it was done before, but we decided, given the financial constraints within which we're operating, that it wasn't the most effective and efficient way of undertaking that particular service. I think the proof of the pudding is our resident satisfaction which is in the answer I've given to the original question, which has improved on the cleanliness of our streets. We think it's working, in difficult financial circumstances.

5. From Mr Roderick Lowe

To Councillor Andrew Judge, Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration.

Question

"Does the council still own 152 Worple Road and, given it has been squatted on twice within the last 12 months, is the building and land to be sold for re-development, refurbished for Merton social services or fully privatised by an independent company?"

Reply

The Council does not own 152 Worple Road and I have no information regarding its future use.