

Merton Council Council

4 July 2018

Supplementary agenda 3

21 Supplementary Agenda 3 - Councillor Non-Priority Questions 1 - 4
 and Replies

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ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 4th JULY 2018

Non-Priority Questions

From Councillor David Williams to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:

Given it is the 75th anniversary of D Day on 6th June 2019, what are the Cabinet Members plans for Merton?

Reply

There are no plans at present for commemorations of this event next summer, but as and when details of national and / or London-wide initiatives to commemorate the event are known Cabinet will look to support them with an appropriate programme in Merton.

From Councillor Hina Bokhari to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

Can the Cabinet member confirm what has been agreed in relation to the future of Merton's paddling pools as part of the IDVerde contract, including outlining any improvements? Given the impressive weather, will the Council consider opening paddling pools two weeks earlier than the planned 21st July date?

Reply

The Council's paddling pool and water play facilities seasonal schedule has been established for many years and coincides with the period of the state school holiday period when usage is, correspondingly, maximised. The maintenance and running of the pools is included in the idverde contract specification.

There are no plans for any significant investment beyond the c£20k that is invested annually to maintain the facilities at the required standard. Any future improvements would hopefully be externally funded and we have benefitted from philanthropic funders who have gifted resources to improve or renew facilities.

The season could, conceivably, be extended beyond the current six week arrangements by the provision of voluntary or community contributions, as has occurred at Wimbledon Park on occasions in the recent historical past. The forthcoming paddling pool season will commence as planned and according to the established opening regime on Saturday 21st July and will be open daily, weather permitting, until Sunday, 2nd September.

From Councillor David Williams to the Leader of the Council:

Would the Leader please list the meetings and correspondence he has had since the last ordinary meeting of the Council on 7th February 2018 to save St Helier Hospital?

Reply

Since Epsom & St Helier Hospital Trust undertook its engagement process last year, the Leader and the Cabinet Member have had ongoing discussions with the commissioners, who will be responsible for making any decisions about the future of St Helier Hospital. Merton Clinical Commissioning Group has recently formed a Committee in Common with Sutton CCG and Surrey Downs CCG in order to progress the work undertaken by the Trust. They recently announced a period of engagement to take place over the summer and early autumn, which the Leader and Cabinet Member will be fully engaging in.

From Councillor Anthony Fairclough – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Richmond Council is funding a free event for EU nationals resident in that borough, delivered by Citizens Advice, to help them with the steps needed to protect their future in the UK post-Brexit. Will you instigate a similar session in this borough?

Reply

We recognise and support the contributions that residents who are originally from EU countries make to our local community and the vitality of the local area.

The council is currently undertaking research and gathering best practice in order to develop the offer of support to be made available to local EU nationals. We acknowledge that there is a role for local authorities in supporting the most vulnerable EU residents within their communities, such as adults and children in care, the elderly and those with limited English language skills or digital access.

The council recently attended an event organised by London Councils for local authorities to be aware of the settlement scheme and the implications for EU nationals residing in London boroughs.

On 21 June 2018 the Home Office released the latest details around the EU settlement scheme that will come into effect later this year.

We will look at how successful the Richmond event is and how the CAB organised it, but at present our preference is to make our services available throughout the year, rather than to focus on a single day that might not suit the personal arrangements of our hard-working EU residents.

In the interim, the council continues to fund a comprehensive information and advice service in the borough through Citizens Advice, Law Centres and Merton Centre for Independent Living where residents can seek advice.

From Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport:

Will the cabinet member consult with ward councillors and community groups about the proposed disposal of land in St Georges road, Wimbledon, and indicate what type of ownership, planning permission and use will be allocated to it?

Reply

The former Community Centre site in St Georges Road represents a unique regeneration opportunity in central Wimbledon. In accordance with Merton's Local Plan policies and Economic Development Strategy, the Council will use its land assets in Wimbledon to leverage the maximum benefit of the town, economically, socially and environmentally; and in accordance with the imminent Future Wimbledon Masterplan.

The Council is currently in commercially restricted discussions about the future of the site. We are of course happy to consult with ward members at this early stage about the site; in advance of reaching any commercial property deal. Discussions are some way off from Planning, so it is premature to discuss planning details at the moment.

Cllr Eloise Bailey to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

When was the last time Merton Council brought a prosecution against a landlord for providing unsafe accommodation, and how many have been brought in each of the last 5 years?

Reply

The Council's last prosecution against a private sector Landlord was in 2011 for breaches of HMO management regulations and improvement notices under the Housing Act 2004. There have been no prosecutions since this time. Prosecution should only be used as a last resort and officers work hard to ensure that Landlords carry out their repairing and management obligations without recourse to legal prosecutions. This is achieved by advice, guidance, and informal action and where necessary and appropriate the service of improvements notices, preliminary notices. In the last four years 289 notices were served.

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