

# **Merton Council Council**

**12 September 2018**

## **Supplementary agenda 2**

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|----|--|---------|
| 5  | Public questions to cabinet members<br>The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting.                        | 1 - 14  |
| 6  | Councillors' ordinary priority questions to cabinet members<br>The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting | 15 - 18 |
| 7a | Strategic theme: Councillors' questions to cabinet members<br>The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting. | 19 - 26 |

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**1. From: Alban Thurston**

**To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance**

Why have Merton's pension trustees ignored Divest Merton's requests to update the Pension Advisory Committee's webpage, [still now - in June 2018- showing appointments in December 2016 & March 2017 as 'future' \(sic\) meetings?](#) Why the misleading, clumsy, incomplete subsumation into the finance committee's webpage?

**Reply**

We are in the process of uploading details of our meetings onto the Council's internet site. All committee agendas, reports and minutes from March 2016 to July 2018 can be located by clicking on 'Find Meetings and Committees', then clicking 'Pension Fund Investment Advisory Panel'. This provides details of Meetings held by the Panel during this period. We are also in the process of uploading papers for meetings prior to March 2016.

Please note an old site still exists called " Pension Fund Advisory Committee" which is no longer in use and to avoid confusion will be removed.

**2. From: Tom Killick**

**To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health**

What assessment has the Council made of the impact of the South London incinerator on air pollution in Merton, and what steps will the Council take to monitor its impact on air pollution once it starts operating?

**Reply**

With regards to Air Pollution the waste treatment process is extremely efficient, robust and safe. Emissions are treated to meet required standards under the stringent European Industrial Emissions Directive, which is strictly enforced and monitored by the Environment Agency.

A recently published Health Protection Agency report stated that 'modern, well-managed incinerators make only a small contribution to local concentrations of air pollutants' and that any potential health impacts, if they exist, are likely to be very small and not detectable.

This facility will operate under an Environmental permit. This will require compliance with the requirements of all necessary standards protecting health and the environment.

The facility will be closely monitored by the Environment Agency to ensure that it meets the strict emissions criteria set out in the European Union's Industrial

Emissions Directive. In the case of NO<sub>2</sub> (nitrogen dioxide), the limits at Beddington will be stricter than the European Industrial Emissions Directive limits.

That said and to ensure that we as a borough are not complacent, Merton has included the ERF as 'risk premises' in our Annual Status Report relating to Air Quality in the borough, and we will be working with colleagues in Sutton through our Air Quality Cluster Group to ensure that there is long term monitoring in place to ensure any possible impact is recorded and addressed.

**3. From: Barry Smith**

**To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health**

From the Council's monitoring what was the effect of the Wimbledon tennis fortnight on air quality in Wimbledon?

**Reply**

This is a very difficult question to answer with any degree of accuracy. Air Quality trends are normally measured over a period of time; these trends can also be affected by weather conditions and cross boundary or regional pollution levels.

We measure Air Quality in the Borough by two methods; permanent automated monitoring and local diffusion tubes.

The permanent stations are extremely expensive and we currently have two in the borough; neither are situated near the Wimbledon Tennis Club.

We have increased the amount of diffusion tubes in the past year from around 20 to 50 and now have a better spread across the borough and particularly our busy high streets.

Each year the Council produces what's called an Annual Status Report (ASR). This report outlines how and where air quality is monitored in the borough. On review of the monthly trends in our ASR around the travel sites to the Tennis Tournament, we cannot see any specific increases in pollution.

**4. From: Sandra Vogel**

**To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health**

Air quality in Mitcham town centre has fallen since 2016 according to a Mitcham Society survey. Does Merton Council agree that something has to be done? Will the council lobby the Mayor of London for a Low Emission Bus Zone to cover Mitcham town centre and Cricket Green?

**Reply**

Improving air quality is a priority for Merton Council.

Citizen involvement in monitoring is always useful and can help identify local issues that the council's own monitoring network may not necessarily capture.

Air pollution measured by diffusion tubes is normally bias adjusted and annualised so we can see trends over seasons and sometimes years. That said, the monitoring provided by The Mitcham Society does present interesting information.

We are aware that air quality fails legal limits in a number of locations in the borough, and we will be considering things like Clean Air Zones and restrictions where necessary.

We are exploring innovative initiatives that have been pursued in other boroughs, such as 'play streets'; where applications to close quiet neighbourhood streets are encouraged to allow children to play in a healthy environment.

We also think that tackling engine idling in Mitcham could help improve matters.

We are currently recruiting a new Air Quality Officer in the Borough, funded through the Diesel Levy to help deliver the borough's [Air Quality Action Plan](#).

The AQAP identifies four Air Quality Focus Areas, one of which is Mitcham, and identifies a number of priorities to tackle air quality within them, including:

- to identify the key causes of traffic congestion and determine effective measures for improving traffic flow through those areas using detailed air quality and traffic management modelling tools
- to formalise anti-idling enforcement in order to minimise emissions from vehicles (this will also take place in other key locations such as schools)
- to evaluate the air quality benefits and feasibility of introducing 'mini' Ultra-Low Emission Zones in the areas of the borough identified as having the poorest air quality. The mini- ULEZ could incorporate measures such as restricting access to HGVs during peak traffic periods and lobbying the GLA/TfL to ensure that zero emission buses only access routes through Air Quality Focus Areas by 2020.
- Air pollution is recognised as a major contributor to poor health with more than 9,000 premature deaths attributed to poor air quality in London every year. People in London are disproportionately affected by poor air quality compared with other parts of England.
- In Merton, the fraction of mortality attributable to particulate air pollution is 5.3% (Public Health Outcome Framework indicator 3.01, Feb 2017). There are areas within Merton, particularly along main roads, where air pollution levels are consistently high and where people experience significant amounts of exposure, with an impact on respiratory illness.
- Public Health welcomes and supports the evidence and actions set out in Merton's Air Quality Action Plan, which includes Mitcham as an air quality focus area. These actions are a welcome step to reduce the health inequalities that arise from air pollution in London.

We welcome the recommendation to call on Transport for London to create a Low Emission Bus Zone in Mitcham. Lobbying for cleaner buses is also in our Air Quality Action Plan, an activity we will continue to do.

**5. From: Klaartje Dresselaers**  
**To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance**

At the Council Meeting on 4.7.2018 the Cabinet Member for Finance said that the Council was undertaking research and gathering best practice to develop an offer of support for EU Nationals. Has this work now been finalised and when will the support be launched?

**Reply**

Officers continue to assess the potential impact of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union on the council, services and residents of the borough. Our assessment is being informed by government policy documents, announcements and information; analysis and best practice from local government bodies and other boroughs. One of the key implications being researched is Settled Status and the rights of EU nationals that are currently living within the borough. We anticipate that this research will culminate in a briefing that will be available to the council's decision making process from early October. This briefing will look at the ways that the council can support EU residents, particularly those in hard to reach and vulnerable groups, through offering information and advice to those experiencing changes to their status. Cabinet will be asked to make a decision on agreeing to the offer of support, and the required allocation of resources.

**6. From: John Davis**  
**To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

Residents are perplexed as to who, following outsourcing, is responsible for keeping Statutory Footpaths clear of litter and encroaching vegetation. Mitcham has several paths that have been neglected - Tramway Path and Cold Blows being examples. Please advise responsibilities and time schedules of clearance for all Merton statutory footpaths.

**Reply**

The public rights of way are the responsibility of the council. The cleaning operation is provided on our behalf by our contractor Veolia.

The contractual standards for street cleaning reflect best practice from Defra's Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse. The contract is based on an output specification requiring the contractor maintain consistent standards across the entire borough. This is a move away from a frequency based approach where standards can fall between sweeps without any obligation on the contractor to resolve the issue. This

approach measures the contractor based on their output rather than the amount of resources they use or the frequency at which they clean the streets.

In order to achieve the required standard, the contractor is required to apply whatever resources, at whatever frequency to maintain the necessary contractual standards. In practice, this means the contractor will apply more resources to town centres than residential areas even though the contract requires the streets in both areas to be maintained to the same standard.

We are aware of the concerns regarding Tramway Path and our Neighbourhood Client Team undertake site inspections and work closely with the contractor's Area Managers to ensure that service standards are maintained and any rectifications are addressed in line with our contractual agreements.

**7. From: Rosemary Davis**

**To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

There has been an alarming loss of newly planted material due to recent extreme weather. Shrubs in Holborn Way and trees in Mitcham Fair Green and Colliers Wood are examples. a) What action is the Council planning to address this and b) Are the contractors to be held liable?

**Reply**

The extreme weather conditions of the summer of 2018 were both exceptional and challenging and impacted both newly-planted and existing trees and shrubs. The annual watering programmes and contractual obligations in relation to planting are commonly designed in advance of and costed around the typical summer season requirements and not extraordinarily protracted periods of drought and hot weather such as we experienced this past summer.

Insofar as existing resources and contractual obligations allow then these losses will be replaced. The Council's general policy is to replace lost street trees wherever possible and practical. Our contractors met their obligations.

We will continue to explore how we can engage Residents to assist in watering young/newly planted trees to assist, particularly at times of low rainfall.

**8. From: Tony Burton**

**To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport**

Given the growing number of flats in Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area what action will the Council take to control the proliferation of estate agent boards and will it introduce a Regulation 7 Direction under the Town and Country Planning (control of advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 to restrict deemed consent?

**Reply**

Any unauthorised estate agents advertisement boards can be reported to the Planning enforcement team for investigation and potential action. The use of Regulation 7 is an option and will be considered in the context of the overall demands on the enforcement service.

**9. From: Tamara Kohler  
To the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

How many families across Merton who applied for 30 hours of childcare funding were unable to access this due to lack of available spaces across the borough?

**Reply**

In Merton during the summer term, 962 children accessed a funded childcare/early education place. The Early Years' service has no recorded incidents/queries/concerns from families not being able to take up a place due to a lack of available places.

**10. From: Somayeh Aghnianejad  
To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance**

Has the council applied for power to retain the growth in business rates within the borough? If not, will it be doing so and if it won't be doing so, please explain why.

**Reply**

The distribution of business rates collected by local authorities is determined by central government and there are limited opportunities to influence it. When the Business Rates Retention Scheme was introduced in 2013/14, London boroughs shared the Business Rates collected in the ratio 50% to Central Government, 20% to the GLA and 30% to the London borough. Any growth in business rates generated was shared in the same ratio. The Government's stated aim was for local authorities to receive 100% of the rates collected but in return they would lose some of their grants such as Revenue Support Grant. Also local authorities that had high levels of business rates would pay a tariff and those who had lower level would receive a top-up.

In order to test how 100% business rates retention would work, the Government announced a number of pilots and a number of pools were approved. For 2018/19 London boroughs agreed to enter into a pilot pool arrangement based on 100% business rate retention but in return Government Revenue Support Grant was foregone. Also London overall had to pay a net tariff which means that the overall level of collected rates that will be retained is around 64% after the tariff is paid. The London pool will retain 100% of any growth in business rate income above baselines, and will pay no levy on that growth.

In order to be approved all London boroughs needed to be in agreement and the pool had the following principles:-

- The pool in 2018-19 would not bind boroughs or the Mayor indefinitely
- No authority can be worse off as a result of participating
- All members will receive some share of any net benefits arising from the pilot pool

On this basis Merton applied to be part of the pool as it maximises the potential income from Business Rates. All London boroughs backed the proposals and the pilot has commenced for 2018/19. Background details covering the pilot pool arrangements were reported to Cabinet on 11 December 2017.

The 100% pilot pool has only been approved for 2018/19 to date and the Government stated in the Local Government Settlement that it intends to move to a system of 75% business rates retention across local government in 2020/21 and may look to apply this to pools in 2019/20. So there is some uncertainty as to future funding levels at this time.

**11. From: Shipra Gupta**

**To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport**

What steps is the council taking to ensure that baby changing facilities across the borough are available to parents of both genders and are not confined just to the Ladies toilets?

**Reply**

The Building Regulations do not specify an absolute requirement for unisex changing facilities for babies. However, they are encouraged and the Council also encourages developers/designers to provide unisex changing facilities in all cases of new development and also in any retrofit developments where possible. We shall continue to encourage this and use what limited powers we have.

**12. From: Joyce Pountain**

**To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport**

A sound map shows Wimbledon will be subjected to 54 decibels of noise from over-flights if a third runway is built at Heathrow.

See <https://www.wimbledonsw19.com/#pages/wimbledonsw19:info:heathrowrunwayeffectonwimbledon001> Why is Merton not joining Hillingdon, Richmond, Wandsworth, Windsor/Maidenhead and Hammersmith/Fulham to oppose the third runway and protect its residents?

**Reply**

The Council acknowledges the opportunities as well as environmental implications of the third runway at Heathrow and will continue to engage in the consultation and

discussion as this progresses. We also recognise the need for airport expansion in the south east in terms of supporting the economy and jobs but currently we have not taken a position on Heathrow airport expansion.

**13. From: Ingrid Dickenson**  
**To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

I have been monitoring the state of a street tree at the north end of Haydons Road, outside the Streetside Diner at No 294. It is clearly dead and needs replacing. Could you please let me know when a new tree will be planted?

**Reply**

The Council's highways tree team is aware of this dead tree.

In general terms, our policy is to replace lost trees wherever practically possible and this location will be added to the list of opportunities for replanting between December 2018 to March 2019

**14. From: John Tippett-Cooper**  
**To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport**

At January 2018, Merton had 22 homes which had been empty for more than 10 years. How many are still empty and what steps have they taken to ensure these are brought back into use? Note: Data Sourced from Answer to Public Question 24 at Council meeting on 4.7.2018

**Reply**

The Council has no legal requirement to have an Empty Homes Strategy and a dedicated resource to deal with such dwellings is not available.

Where officers receive complaints regarding named dwellings they will respond on a reactive basis, providing the owners with appropriate advice and assistance in helping them get their homes back into use. Currently records obtained from Council Tax suggest there are 26 Empty Homes which have been vacant for more than 10 years.

**15. From: Philip Ling**  
**To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance**

Over the last five years, how many instances have there been where confidential data held by the Borough has been lost to cyber-attacks? What steps has Merton

taken to notify residents affected by this and what steps have been taken to prevent any future such loss?

### **Reply**

Firstly, I can confirm that the Council already has very robust cyber security arrangements and measures in place to ensure the security of its information, and having checked the data security log I can confirm that no confidential data has been lost to any cyber-security attacks over the last five years.

Therefore, and on that basis no specific additional steps have needed to be implemented to prevent any future loss of information but the Council continues to monitor and develop its cyber security arrangements in accordance with central government guidance and industry best practice.

### **16. From: Richard Shillito To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

What steps is the Council taking to provide public water fountains (apart from that at the Mitcham Clock Tower) both on its own land and with partner agencies

### **Reply**

The Mayor of London is proposing a roll out of new water fountains for the public to refill water bottles. The Mayor's current strategy favours central London locations with high footfall including train stations and west end shopping locations. 4 have been installed with a further 16 to be rolled out in central London.

We will continue to explore funding and bidding opportunities to provide drinking water fountains or facilities in town centres and around transport stations working with partner agencies and the Mayor of London. We have also sought clarification on whether the water bills and maintenance of the fountains would be an ongoing revenue burden on Merton tax payers which is a matter we need to be mindful of in the current financial climate.

The Council's Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel will, this year be setting up a task group looking at ways to reduce single-use plastics in Merton. The Council also supports Sustainable Merton's 'plastic-free-Merton initiative and we encourage all of Merton's businesses to join Thames' Water's refill campaign. We believe there are also a lot of more localised measures that will achieve the same objective such as Thames Water's refill scheme.

Many businesses in Merton's high streets and town centres are already signed up to Thames Water's 're-fill' scheme where residents can re-fill water bottles free of

charge at certain businesses. We would encourage more to sign up to this excellent initiative. [www.refill.org.uk/refill-scheme/london/](http://www.refill.org.uk/refill-scheme/london/)

**17. From: Phillipa Zielfa Maslin  
To The Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

Many residents welcome the cancellation of the Diynamic festival and hope that the Eastern Electrics festival never returns. Please could Council explain exactly how the views of residents will feed into the process of deciding whether or not the already advertised 2019 Eastern Electrics festival goes ahead?

**Reply**

Council officers are aware of the scope and content of the views expressed by local residents about the 2018 Eastern Electrics Festival and will share these with the event producers who will do likewise with the comments and enquiries that they received directly via their resident's hotline. These will be considered and discussed at the event de-brief sessions that are underway involving key Council officers and other relevant agencies, including the police and other emergency services.

The Eastern Electrics event producers have not yet formally applied for an event licence for Morden Park in 2019, but should that occur, residents will have an opportunity to express their views via the formal licensing process.

Officers will, nevertheless, expect and ensure that suitably improved and robust measures are included within their event management plans to deal with the avoidable issues identified during the 2018 event should such an application be received.

**18. From: Chris Stanton  
To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

Are Veolia's roadsweepers and idverde's staff required to recycle waste they pick up from streets and parks respectively?

Under guidelines issued by the Environment Agency all waste collected direct from our pavements and highways cannot be recycled. This is due to the contamination that it they may have picked up directly from the street. To help mitigate this we have installed dual litterbins in our town centre where the recycling material can be disposed of separately from the general waste and in doing so can be recycled.

**19. From: Andrew Boyce  
To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

What performance measures are in place to monitor the performance of the contract managers specifically employed to monitor the performance of outsourced contracts such as Veolia's?

**Reply**

Following the outsourcing of the waste collection and street cleansing service to Veolia we have established a new clienting team who are responsible for the day to day contract monitoring and compliance at a borough level. The Neighbourhood Client Team undertake site inspections and work closely with the contractor's Area Managers to ensure that service standards are maintained and any rectifications are addressed in line with our contractual agreements. They also undertake visits and walk-about with local ward Members who have concerns about littering in their area in order to address the issues in a proactive manner.

In order to hold the contractor to account there are a series of 'Service Performance Indicators' (SPI) which are used to measure the level of performance against an agreed criteria and service standards.

This is further supported by the South London Waste Partnership who monitor the contractor performance, specifically those necessary at pan-borough level.

**20. From: Richard Szmidt  
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

Given the extreme noise and anti social behaviour suffered by the residents of Lower Morden Lane due to this year's Eastern Electric Festival what measures are being taken to prevent a recurrence in subsequent years?

**Reply**

The observations and findings of the Council officers and other key agencies who attended or were directly or indirectly involved in the Eastern Electrics event will be shared with the event producers in order for them to better understand the scope, scale and location of the anti-social behaviour issues that were experienced during their 2018 event.

Council officers will expect that the event producers will introduce measures within their event management plan to address and mitigate any such issues, always assuming that they apply to hold the event in Morden Park in 2019. For example, revised and improved stewarding and toilet provisions.

**21. From: Vincent Bolt  
To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

How many Merton staff have been issued with body-worn cameras & for what length of time is the footage from these retained?

**Reply**

All 32 Parking Civil Enforcement Officers have body worn Cameras plus the 4 Team Leaders. 4 Officers in Environmental Enforcement have recently been issued with cameras. The footage is deleted within 24 hours unless the officer marks it as evidential to be used in an incident. If evidential footage is kept it is stored for as long as needed for example until a case is heard at court.

13 Enforcement staff have been allocated a body worn camera.

**22. From: Nicola Thompson  
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport**

Latest DoT figures indicate that many people are too scared to cycle on the road. What is the council doing to improve conditions for our growing numbers of cyclists and encourage others to swap cars for bikes, especially in the urban town centre areas of Wimbledon and Morden?

**Reply**

In recent years we have introduced a number of new cycle infrastructure as well as improving existing – some examples include

1. Additional and improved cycle parking throughout the borough
2. Cycle lanes / shared surface e.g. Croydon Road and Beddington Lane
3. Improved permeability through streets and neighbourhoods including removal of obstructions e.g. Fleming Mead Barrier removal linking Quietway link to/from Colliers Wood and Tooting
4. Improving cycling permeability on the Railway path between Raynes Park and Wimbledon by widening pinch points and removing vegetation.
5. Clapham Common to Wimbledon Quietway - Elements include:
  - Providing lighting columns on Wandle Trail between Plough Lane and Borough Boundary with Wandsworth.
  - Construction of shared-use path on the Wandle Meadow and Garfield recreation Ground including lighting.
  - Widening of footbridge across the Wandle Meadow leading to Garfield Recreation Ground.
  - Providing a parallel crossing for cyclist across Haydons Road at junction with South Park Road.
  - Provide lighting on the bridge underpass at Wandle Meadow
  - Creating a Shared-Use Path with lighting between Green Lane Riding Stables and Arthur Road.
  - Improving safety for cyclists at roundabout of Carshalton Road/Croydon Road by widening the path and converting it to shared space around roundabout
  - Construction of speed table with refuge island on Croydon Road opposite Ravensbury pub to assist provide safer crossing for cyclists.

- Provide shared use path on Commonsides West at railway bridge in both directions.

Proposed cycle schemes for this financial year 2018-19 include:

- Pedestrian/cycle phase at the junctions of Croydon Road and Windmill Road.
- Constructing a segregated cycle path between New Malden and Raynes Park alongside railway embankment in partnership with Kingston Council.
- Providing a segregated cycle path on West Barnes Lane between Camberley Avenue and junction with Coombe Lane to provide a safer route into Raynes Park.
- Morden to Sutton Quietway (awaiting scheme approval from TfL)
- Improving capacity of Civic Centre Cycle Parking to help encourage more staff to cycle to work
- Improving Watneys Road to make it more welcoming for cyclists and Pedestrians.
- Providing a short section of cycle track on Ravensbury Park and remove obstructive barrier. Currently there is conflict with pedestrians on the shared path.
- Provide a cycle path with lighting in Morden Park to provide a Quietway link and improve on existing path network within the park.
- Provide secure cycle parking for residents.
- Making improvements on the West bound path of Bushy road in what currently is inadequate for cyclists.
- Making improvements to cyclists/pedestrians on Station Road and Wandle Bank.
- Melrose Ave – improving existing contraflow cycle lane
- New and improved cycle lane along Bushey Road (west bound) between Martin way and Grand Drive
- Figge's Marsh – improvements to existing cycle lane (provision of new segregated cycle facility)
- South Rd / East Rd - Improve existing junction to facilitate cycle access

As well as physical measures we provide cycle training. Bikeability cycle training is provided to primary, secondary and adults at beginner, improver and commuter levels. Scooter training is a popular pre-cursor to cycle training as it develops balance skills as progression to cycle training. Cycle training for adults increased by 6% in 2017 and numbers in the group training sessions at weekends have also increased.

The Council will work with TfL and neighbouring boroughs to bring forward a borough-wide dock-less cycle scheme possibly, including a trial of e-bikes, to recognise potential barriers posed by longer travel distances in outer London.

**23. From: Emily Robertson  
To the Cabinet Member for Education**

How is the council proposing to allocate school funding over the next three years given the government's extension to phasing in the new national funding formula?

**Reply**

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to consult schools on the formula it uses to allocate funding to schools. Merton will continue to consult all schools, academies and the schools forum every year on whether they want to use the local or national funding formula values to allocate school funding.

**24. From: Rachel Waitt  
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport**

In answer to a Public Question (27) at the Council meeting on 4.7.2018 the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport said that Merantun Developments will be policy compliant with regards to affordable housing provision. What directions have been given to the Board of Merantun Developments to ensure this?

**Reply**

Merantun Development Company will develop sites subject to bringing forward satisfactory Planning Applications and being granted planning permission. The planning policies that apply to Merantun are the ones that apply to all developers and planning applicants and as such they will be required to submit applications that meet the Councils planning policies on all matters including affordable housing. The Board of Merantun Development Company are aware of this and no specific directions have been needed or provided.

**25. From: Emma Maddison  
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport**

What steps is the council taking to ensure that baby changing facilities across the borough are available to parents of both genders and are not confined just to the Ladies toilets?

**Reply**

The Building Regulations do not specify an absolute requirement for unisex changing facilities for babies. However, they are encouraged and the Council also encourages developers/designers to provide unisex changing facilities in all cases of new development and also in any retrofit developments where possible. We shall continue to encourage this and use what limited powers we have.

## **From Councillor Dennis Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Education**

With the recent news that Harris Academy Morden has become the latest in a long line of schools in Morden being rated Outstanding by Ofsted, can the Cabinet member guarantee that this focus on improving the borough's schools will be maintained?

### **Reply**

The Local Authority continues its rigorous and relentless focus to ensure that the Borough's schools continue to improve. The ambition is for all schools to be good or better and to increase the proportion judged to be outstanding. The Education Division has plans and mechanisms in place to enable this to happen, including its refreshed School Improvement Strategy and 'Support and Challenge' groups for schools where matters are of concern.

The capacity for school improvement is limited, as it is in all local authorities. This in the context of national policy, whereby resources for this function are no longer directed to the same extent towards local authorities.

## **From Councillor Nick McLean to the Cabinet Member for Finance:**

How would the Cabinet Member for Finance rate the Council's ability to collect Council Tax from residents?

### **Reply**

The Council tax team have had continued improvements over the last 5 years or more and at the end of 2017-2018 we achieved our highest ever rate of collection for Council tax, collecting 97.69%.

At the end of July, 4 months into the financial year we collected 39.91% of the Council tax due. If we continue at this rate, we are forecast to exceed our target the rate we achieved last year. I am confident in our ability to collect the majority of council tax due to the authority.

## **From Councillor Russell Makin to Cabinet member for Children's Services:**

How is the council meeting the increase in demand for Early Years childcare in the borough?

### **Reply**

There have been recent, new duties to secure sufficient childcare/early education for eligible families for 30 hours of funded (free) childcare and education. To date there appears to be sufficient provision across the borough for Merton families to access this new entitlement. 962 children took up a 30 hour funded place in the summer term.

Between March 2016 and March 2018 there has been an increase of 100 Ofsted registered childcare places (Ofsted published data). The estimated under 5s population during this period has been stable and predicted to slightly decrease over the next 5 years.

**From Councillor Andrew Howard to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport**

Does the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport believe that Merton Council treats motorists fairly?

**Reply**

Yes, I do. Firstly, we maintain our highways excellently and in comparison with the rest of London our highway condition and levels of investment compare well ensuring motorists can move safely and smoothly through the borough. Secondly, we manage congestion hot spots and enforce against those who breach moving traffic regulations thereby keeping traffic moving. Thirdly, we manage parking providing an efficient controlled parking zone service and the efficient enforcement of highway and off street parking. Our parking charges are fair, transparent and reasonable and in comparison with the rest of London below average.

**From Cllr Hina Bokhari to the Leader**

In the last month we have seen some shockingly Islamophobic and Antisemitic statements made by leading politicians that have worried many people. Will the Leader of the Council take this opportunity to make a clear statement to reassure all Merton residents that as a Council we will stand firmly against Antisemitism and Islamophobia and work for a more open and inclusive borough?

**Reply**

Merton is a proudly diverse borough. Many people are uncertain about their place in society after the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union. Ethnic and faith communities have reported anxiety about a climate of hostility targeted at them. Hate crime has no place in our communities, in our society, in Merton. Our borough succeeds and thrives when the community is united, and it's a big part of what makes Merton a wonderful place to call home, and we should continue to strive to make the borough welcoming to all.

Our Hate Crime Strategy sets out our zero tolerance approach to Islamophobia, Antisemitism and any other hate crime, and ensures that it underpins all the work of the council. As Leader of Merton, I reaffirm my commitment to ensuring the council looks after everyone, and that we all work together for an open and inclusive borough.

**From Councillor Pauline Cowper to the Cabinet member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities:**

Merton is leading the way in London for Community Sponsorship – what are the ambitions of the Council to expand the programme?

**Reply**

Merton is proud that through the work of the Faith and Belief Forum the Raynes Park Salvation Army successfully sponsored a Syrian refugee family in February 2017. After the arrival of the family the Salvation Army held a workshop to share their experience of Community Sponsorship with other Faith and Belief and Voluntary organisations. As a result the Wimbledon Synagogue successfully pursued an

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application to the Home Office to participate in the scheme and will shortly welcome another refugee family into the borough.

The scheme is dependent upon voluntary organisations committing to sponsoring a refugee family and the council aims to continue to encourage local groups to consider Community Sponsorship.

### **From Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport:**

Will the Cabinet Member please explain why opposite South Merton Station vehicles are allowed unrestricted parking right up to the bollards on the bridge, thus causing extreme difficulties for buses and the many large lorries travelling from Morden to Bushey Road?

### **Reply**

The Council relies on road users to report obstructive parking. Upon receiving a complaint, the Council investigates and undertakes the statutory consultation for the introduction of the appropriate waiting and loading restrictions if deemed necessary. We recently received one complaint regarding this location and a consultation is programmed. Although it is suggested that at times buses cannot pass due to obstructive parking, London Buses have not raised this point with us and thus far we have only received one complaint which we are acting upon.

Residents can also now report illegal parking via <https://www2.merton.gov.uk/transport-streets/parking/illegal-parking.htm>

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**From Councillor Agatha Akyigyina to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness:**

What are the recycling targets for Merton and how will the changes to waste services help meet, and hopefully exceed, these targets?

**Reply**

Over the last 5 years Merton's recycling rate has plateaued at between 36-38% compared to an annual target of 42%. The new waste collection service has been designed to promote recycling at the kerbside and encourage residents to participate in the food waste service which will continue to be a weekly collection. With the current service of unlimited black sacks collected every week we have found it challenging to encourage our residents to participate in the food waste service. We currently estimate that less than 50% of our residents use this valuable service which directly contributes to our overall recycling performance and significantly reduces our disposal cost.

Our Neighbouring boroughs of Sutton and Kingston have already introduced this alternate weekly wheeled bin waste collection service and both have experienced an increase in recycling rates in excess of 45% .

**From Councillor Adam Bush to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness:**

Does the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness consider that the administration has performed well with regards to recycling?

**Reply**

Yes, in the context of the current service and waste collection methodology but the proposed new service should significantly improve performance. Our ability to improve our recycling rate is directly attributed to our residents' engagement with the service and the methods of collection and storage employed.

To address this, we have carried out a comprehensive borough-wide communication programme, involving doorstep encouragement with the aim to achieve a sustainable behaviour change and encourage recycling and food waste diversion.

In addition to this last year Merton was one of the 5 successful London boroughs being funded by Resource London to carry out a food waste campaign. The campaign, partnered with Sainsbury's, with their "waste less save more" campaign.

Despite this level of engagement over the last 5 years our recycling performance has remained static between 36-38%. 21% of this waste can be attributed to the kerbside collection service, as such if we are to increase our overall recycling performance we need to encourage behaviour change at the kerbside and ensure that our waste collection service is designed to encourage our residents to recycle all suitable materials at the kerbside. Our new waste collection arrangements from October 1<sup>st</sup> should significantly improve performance.

**From Councillor Eloise Bailey to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport**

The Cabinet Member indicates in the Strategic Theme Report that he intends to argue against the “deliverability” of the 10 year housing target for Merton in the draft London Plan. Given the need for housing, can he outline what he intends to do to enable the housebuilding we need?

**Reply**

Merton Council absolutely recognises the very challenging situation that is London’s housing crisis and the Council is already working hard to accelerate the delivery of housing and proactively promotes development in a plan-led way. We have a significant amount of new housing planned such as 700 homes at Plough Lane, 2,900 planned through Clarion’s Estate Regeneration programme and the Council owned Merantun Development Ltd is progressing with delivering homes on small, council-owned sites.

Our Local Plan actively targets new housing growth in areas of good public transport accessibility and we are working with TfL and the Mayor of London to seek a development partner to deliver a major housing-led regeneration of Morden town centre. We are a proactive pro-growth borough and we have a lot of identified potential to deliver new housing, improved neighbourhoods and to boost our local economy – however good growth must be plan-led and created in dialogue with our local communities, which Merton’s regeneration, local plan and masterplanning projects are.

Merton’s annual housing target is currently 411 homes per year. We consistently achieve this target as it’s based on a sound assessment of land supply and good strategic planning. In 2016/17, our current monitoring year, 648 new homes were completed. This overachievement is down to completed large schemes at Colliers Wood Tower and Atkinson Morley boosting numbers.

Merton’s new housing target in the draft London Plan is 1328 homes per year. This ambitious target highlights the pressing need for homes. This would mean that Merton has to achieve twice as much housing as we delivered in 16/17.

To put the challenge into context, Merton would have to build the equivalent of the Colliers Wood tower every 8 weeks. Or two (existing) High Path estates every year.

Merton promotes a plan led approach and our new draft Local Plan and Call-for-Sites has identified developable land that can come forward for housing. We will be consulting residents on this in October 2018.

However, Merton is not blessed with lots of large brownfield sites ready for redevelopment. The Mayor’s target heavily relies on small-plot infill and expecting residents to redevelop their own homes at greater densities. In terms of Merton’s historic performance in small-sites and subdivisions over the past 10 years, we know that the GLA assumptions will be incredibly challenging.

We have made representations on the Mayor’s methodology applied to Merton via our response to the draft London plan and at the London Plan enquiry in autumn-winter this year.

The challenge for the council, and our residents who also clearly accept the need for more housing and more affordable housing is to work with the Council positively and identify and support development proposals through the planning system, our regeneration programmes and new local plan preparation.

We are a pro-growth borough but good growth has to be pitched at a deliverable level. We are working hard to ensure that Merton's housing target is fair, achievable and delivers the right kind of places that will make Merton an even greater place to call home.

**From Councillor Sally Kenny to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

Can the Cabinet member confirm the number of prosecutions for flytipping in the past three years?

**Reply**

The number of Prosecutions in relation to fly tipping is 21, some of which have been to court and some are pending hearing dates. Of those that have been to court, they have resulted in positive outcomes, with fines issued.

The figures for £400 fines issued for fly-tipping offences are as follows:

Yr 16/17                      total 16 paid fines

Yr 17/18                      total 23 paid fines

Yr 18 to date                total 12 paid fines

We continue to seek evidence and to pursue fly-tippers wherever and whenever we can, however this is extremely challenging.

**From Councillor Ed Gretton to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health**

The Mayor of London has said that London is experiencing a 'public health crisis', linked in part to pollution. What steps has the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness [**Air Quality is in the portfolio of the Cabinet member for Adult Social Care and Health**] taken to ensure that the boroughs children are kept safe from air pollution?

**Reply**

I am acutely aware of the problem with Air Quality in London and within our own borough. There are areas within Merton, particularly along main roads, where air pollution levels are consistently high and where people including children experience significant amounts of exposure, with an impact on respiratory illness. I meet regularly with our Pollution colleagues and have made this a personal priority. Merton has produced a new Air Quality Action Plan 2018 – 2023 that covers the steps we will be taking to tackle pollution in our borough over the next 5 years. The plan has 70 measures over 9 different themes to tackle every aspect of the air pollution agenda.

This Plan was built on the work of the Council's Air Quality Task Group that reported directly to Scrutiny last year, with many action measures warmly welcomed throughout the borough. The Plan and its implementation is strongly supported by our colleagues in Public Health, who welcome the opportunity to work jointly to improve children's health and reduce the health inequalities that arise from air pollution, a key determinant of people's health.

The Plan is bold and in taking difficult but important decisions, such as levying polluting vehicles and investing in staff to deliver the plan. The plan also has a specific category aimed at schools and protecting our children.

I would urge my colleagues to read the Plan and support its implementation in the borough over the next 5 years.

Link to the AQAP:

<https://www2.merton.gov.uk/Merton%20AQAP%2020182023.pdf>

**From Councillor Peter Southgate to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

Is Glyphosate/Glyphosate (marketed as Roundup) currently used as a herbicide by Merton Council for its contractors and is its future usage under review?

**Reply**

Glyphosate is currently used on both the parks grounds and highways maintenance contracts.

The Council has alerted its contractors to recent concerns these about his herbicide, they have confirmed they are reviewing matters with their suppliers.

The EU renewed the licence for the use of glyphosate-based weed killers, such as Roundup in 2017, it is licensed until 2022. Under UK and EU law it is therefore certified safe to use when applied by qualified staff as per the manufacturer's instructions. As such Merton's contractors will continue to use the product whilst this review is conducted.

**From Councillor Joan Henry to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport:**

Following the Mayor of London's investment in Electric Vehicle Charging Points, can the Cabinet member update us on the coverage and accessibility of these points across Merton?

**Reply**

There are currently 21 publically accessible (on-street) fast charge points (7kw) spread across the borough, which are able to charge a typical electric vehicle in 3-4 hours. A further 44 fast charge points are in the process of being commissioned by Source London.

The new Morden Leisure centre will provide an additional 5 fast charge points. A third batch of 39 charge points is currently going through the planning process and aim to be operational in late 2018/early 2019.

Transport for London are also rolling out a network of rapid chargers (50KW) across London capable of charging a vehicle in 15- 30 minutes including 2 chargers on London Road, Morden. These rapid chargers are aimed at taxis and other high

usage vehicles. As part of the Go Ultra Low Carbon Scheme (GULCS) Merton proposes to trial a number of lamp column chargers in 2019 aimed at overnight parking. The council is now ahead of target to deliver 125 publically assessable charge points by 2020/21.

We also have a number of charging points across the borough in new developments such as Brenley Park, Nelson Hospital, Asda Mitcham, Priory Retail Park and other off-street locations being negotiated as part of planning permissions.

Details of charging points in Merton and our roll-out programme are online at <https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/electric-vehicle-charging-points> Our web page also links to Source London with an online map of all available charging points

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

Will the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture clarify when the council intends to begin charging Little Leagues for using the boroughs sport facilities?

**Reply**

The Little Leagues currently enjoy a range of outdoor football pitches at various sites across the borough. The plan is that charging will commence for the forthcoming football season, beginning on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September.

**From Councillor Anthony Fairclough to the Leader of the Council**

Following his meeting with Michelle Dix on 4 July 2018 and his answer to a question from Cllr McGrath at full Council on the same day, what steps has the Leader of the Council taken to make the Independent Review on Crossrail 2 affordability, the Department of Transport and the Mayor of London aware of the his opposition to an additional tax on households living near a Crossrail 2 station?

**Reply**

Crossrail 2 is expected to cost £30bn. Given the recent delays with Crossrail 1, confidence may have been shaken with CR2. However Transport for London are not only committed to CR2, they have made it clear that affordability and funding is a clear priority to move to the next stage of planning.

Crossrail and Crossrail 2 are two separate projects. TfL are working closely with the DfT to further develop Crossrail 2 which is an essential part of the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy.

Crossrail 2's Independent Affordability Review has been considering ways to make the scheme more affordable. Following submission of its interim report to the Mayor and the Secretary of State, TfL await a decision on next steps which will allow the CR2 team to submit a Hybrid Bill in 2021 and begin construction by the mid-2020s.

It was confirmed in our meeting with Michele Dix that the land-value capture tax was just one of a wide range of potential funding scenarios being tested as part of the

Independent Affordability Review. It is right that CR2 and the Treasury assess all possible funding options, and it is just that; an idea that has to be considered. There is no firm proposal on the table for a local land tax to fund CR2, so, unless it does become a reality, we have no further information at present but will monitor closely.

The government delays in reaching a conclusion on Crossrail 2 are not only holding back economic growth, jobs and investment; the hiatus is causing concern in many of our communities where people and businesses simply want to know what's happening and Merton Council strongly urges the government to reach a positive conclusion soon so that we can all proactively plan for growth.

It's no surprise that government are pre-occupied with Brexit, to the detriment of other parliamentary business and nationally important projects such as CR2, HS2 and northern powerhouse rail. Investing in infrastructure should not be a north vs south choice for the government. Post-Brexit, UK still needs to invest in ageing and over capacity rail networks. The need for CR2 is clear.

London's population is still very much on the up, with the ONS expecting the capital to reach 10.1million by 2036 (that's a 14% increase from 2016). And with current services into Waterloo already running at capacity, the need to expand London's transport system is essential. Wimbledon Station will also reach peak capacity in the 2030s. Relieving overcrowding was Crossrail 2's primary objectives.

Our support for Crossrail 2 in principle remains. Merton and CR2 needs a decision from the government in order to determine with the CR2 team, the impact and also opportunity for new, essential infrastructure in Merton. We still believe that with Crossrail 2, it's a question of when, not if.

**From Councillor Laxmi Attawar to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport:**

How will the Mayor of London's Healthy Streets agenda be reflected in the regeneration of Morden Town Centre?

**Reply**

The Mayor's aim for 2041 is for 80 per cent of Londoners' trips to be on foot, by cycle or by using public transport. High quality public spaces can sustain this and can be achieved through a 'Healthy Streets Approach', measured by ten indicators which include (I suggest using the highlighted indicators):

1. Pedestrians from all walks of life
2. People choose to walk, cycle and use public transport
3. Clean air
4. Shade and shelter
5. People feel safe
6. Not too noisy
7. Easy to cross
8. People feel relaxed
9. Places to stop and rest
10. Things to see and do

Design details for the regeneration of Morden Town Centre will only be finalised once a deliverable scheme has been developed in collaboration with a development partner.

We have been working closely with our delivery partners, Transport for London, in preparation for the procurement of the development partner. Both parties recognise the need for Morden to be a healthier environment for residents, shoppers and commuters, and have adopted 'making Morden a London-wide exemplar of the Healthy Streets Approach' as core objective of the project.

Merton Council and Transport for London have jointly formed the Morden Town Centre Transport Steering Group, which is tasked with delivering the Mayor's Transport Strategy in Morden. This transport steering group is currently working to develop a set of requirements and parameters for the town centre, which will define how the Healthy Streets Approach can be realised through the Morden Town Centre project. This ongoing work is being directly supported by the same team that first created the Healthy Streets Approach, so we can be confident that the project will fully embody this Mayoral objective and become a good example of 'Healthy Streets' in London.

FM is working closely with Merton Public Health to ensure the Healthy Streets approach is adopted as part of the Morden Regeneration project by way of Health Impact Assessment, which is being produced by Public Health.

**From Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness:**

In light of the repeated failings of Veolia to keep Merton's streets clean, does the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness believe that appointing Veolia has been a success?

**Reply**

While so far the level of street cleansing since Veolia took on the contract has not met our required standard, it is reasonable to say that the full benefits of the service will not be experienced until we have introduced the service changes in October this year. The benefits of a wheeled bin service include the effective containerisation of waste will result in less wind-blown litter and reduced spillage. This enables an alternative approach to resourcing street cleaning and we are confident that this will deliver a higher quality of street cleansing. It should also be borne in mind that this contract continues to deliver significant financial savings, easing the pressure on other key services to find savings.

The number of recorded fly-tips across the borough has increased significantly over the last 18 months. The monitoring of fly tip clearance has indicated that the majority are being cleared within the required 24-hour response period. However, there have been some disappointing instances where this has not been the case. This is being addressed with Veolia. The NCOs are also working closely with the LBM Environmental Enforcement Team to address fly-tipping through communication with

residents, in-depth investigation of fly-tipped material and issuing of enforcement notices.

We will continue to monitor their performance closely and hold them to account for all areas of the service.

**From Councillor Billy Christie to Cabinet Member for Finance:**

What is the level of vital ongoing support provided by the Council to low income families dealing with the roll out of Universal Credit?

**Reply**

1 Merton has a Delivery partnership agreement with the DWP to provide Universal Support Delivered Locally. USDL provides:

a. Assisted Digital support

- i. physical access to UC by providing digital access from our Library PCs
- ii. one off advice on how to access the UC portals, make a claim and maintain their UC accounts and tasks – funded by the DWP grant and provided by the Welfare Benefits Team and the Libraries through liaison with Work Coaches and the Jobcentre Plus and self-referrals..
- iii. Ongoing long-term support is also provided by Merton case workers to specific clients as part of their care plans. These tend to be in Direct Payments Team and 14+ Team. Not funded by the DWP.

b. Personal budgeting support

- i. Initial assessment of this is done by the Welfare Benefits team through a triage process.
- ii. Cases requiring more in depth intervention are referred to the CAB for Merton and Lambeth. Merton funds this through the DWP funding.

NOTE: The DWP provide Merton with specified funding to provide the USDL as shown below:

ADS - £8108 for 151 cases

PBS - £16356 for 251 cases

Merton is then paid in addition to this for each case it receives beyond these. This requires Merton to submit quarterly MI stats to DWP.

2 Local Welfare Support Scheme provides advice and assistance in requesting UC advance payments. Where these are not available, instalments of up to 4 weeks can be made whilst UC applicants await their UC payments. This is funded by Merton through the management of the lump sum payment made by DWP in 2013 when crisis loans were abolished.

3 Housing Benefit assist DWP UC staff in working out UC claims where questions arise. This can speed up the assessment of UC.