

Merton Council Council

21 November 2018

Supplementary Agenda 6

32 Public and Councillor Supplementary Questions and Replies

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1. From: Tom Killick

To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Further to the Council's answer to question 2 at 4 July Council meeting, what has the Council done since then to promote the use of reusable coffee cups and decrease the sale of single use plastics on its premises?

Reply

Merton has been engaging with the commercial catering company (Gosto Fino) that holds a formal concessionary contract for the civic centre. Contractually, it can only indirectly influence some operational elements and encourage the supplier to adopt ideas and good practice where this is commercially viable. The dialogue with Gosto Fino has been positive and the following changes are planned: reusable cups are to be introduced from the start of 2019 as an alternative to plastic lined paper cups. These will be purchased by customers as a one off cost and then provide a discount on any future beverages purchased. Customers will also be encouraged to bring their own cups and obtain a similar discount. Plastic cups will no longer be provided unless a customer specifically asks for one. Plastic straws are already no longer being supplied and suitable biodegradable paper alternatives are now given to customers. Metal cutlery will also be used rather than plastic cutlery for food consumed within any of the restaurant areas. For take away meals the supplier is currently trialling the use of disposable wooden cutlery. They are also looking at suitable alternatives to replace plastic salad containers and expanded foam hot food containers.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Deputy Leader for your reply. May I ask, given that other councils such as Brighton and Exeter have passed motions banning the use of single use plastics on their premises what if anything is stopping Merton Council from doing the same?

Reply

I'd like to thank him for his follow up; this is an issue I know is close to many people's hearts and the amount of waste that is generated by ourselves as consumers is unacceptable and we do need to reduce the amount of waste that we create and part of the reason I think for introducing the wheeled bins is to tackle that and to make people more aware of how much they use and to reduce and to encourage people to reuse their cups and plates and all those sorts of things.

We are in a contract with a contractor and therefore at this present time the best way of having results from the businesses end is to get into discussions with them which we have done and obtained concessions. When the contract is up for renegotiation we can take further action but at this stage we have taken the best

action that we can and I think that anyone who wants to know how determined we are to reduce waste should take great heed of the work that we've done already to reduce that and the work that we've done to tackle climate change, reduce emissions and so on and so forth. Thank you.

**2. From: Jeremy Woods
To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

What specifically is being done to prevent litter from fly tipping, failure to empty street litter bins, lack of adequate provision of street litter bins and failure to collect street cleaners' piles of collected green sacks?

Reply

Fly tipping is increasing in London and elsewhere in the UK and we are working hard to tackle those who cause this blight on our towns and neighbourhoods. We have measures in place to help towards the prevention and reduce litter and fly tipping. We have Enforcement Officers who issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to anyone caught depositing litter and dumping waste. For larger scale fly tips we prosecute where we have evidence of who may have deposited the waste. The evidence may come from someone witnessing the waste being dumped to evidence of the names and addresses retrieved from within the waste. Where we have known fly tip hot spot areas we may install a covert camera, where the necessary court authority has been given.

We have a number of litter bins that are placed within the borough in areas of residential properties, main shopping and small parades. Where there is a demand for a litter bin, each site will be assessed for need. We have relocated litter bins where they were not being used and relocated them to other locations.

We are working closely with our contractor to reduce the number of locations where the beat sweepers leave the green litter sacks. The agreed locations are being scheduled into the 'In Cab' system operated by the response crews for collection.

Finally, our new waste collection service is designed to reduce the amount of litter that gets on our streets. The Tidy Britain Group estimate that up to 50% of street litter was caused by our previous black bag collection. Whilst it is early days we are positive about the beneficial effect that the new arrangements will have on the environment.

**3. From: Tony Burton
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

Following the public celebration of the completion of the Rediscover Mitcham project will Merton Council provide a map and details of the areas of green space in Mitcham town centre proposed to be registered as Town Green and a timetable for this registration?

Reply

Merton Council has provided maps of the proposed green space designations in our Rediscover Mitcham newsletters. See page 8 of https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/0499_rediscover_mitcham.pdf

Re-registration of the new boundaries is subject to staff resources and time. At present the process is a non-priority priority action in the team's demanding work programme.

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

What discussions has Merton Council had with the Living Wage Foundation about becoming a living wage accredited employer?

Reply

Merton as an employer already pays the London Living Wage ensuring that no staff are paid below that level.

To become an accredited employer Merton would also need to require (or be working toward) its contractors to pay at least the London Living Wage.

The Council has ensured that contracts recently awarded pay the London Living Wage, however we have not had any formal discussion about committing to become accredited with the Living Wage Foundation.

5. From: Geoff Cooper To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

How is Merton monitoring the usage of electric car charging points across the borough and which locations have proved the most and least popular to date?

Reply

As part of the normal contract monitoring the council receives quarterly updates for publically accessible electric charge points managed by Source London. September 2018 was the best month to date with 566 charged hours. Over the last 4 months there has been 1800 hrs of charging representing around 40,000 green miles.

- The busiest site in September was Dudley Road with 17 customers and 44 charges
- The least busy site was St Barnabas Road with 1 customer and 3 charges
- Most used in 2018 - Wimbledon High Street
- Least used in 2018 – Strathearn Road.

By the end of 2018 Merton should have 67 publically accessible chargers across the borough (65 no 7.5kw and 2 rapid 52 kw chargers). An additional 32 charge points will be implemented in Spring 2019.

Residents, businesses and visitors can find the nearest electric vehicle charging point to them on publicly available websites including ZapMap <https://www.zap-map.com/>

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

What improvements has the council put in place with Veolia to ensure a more proportionate street sweeping scheme this year that avoids the massive build up leaves that was seen on some roads last year?

Reply

Our contract with Veolia provides for additional capacity to collect and dispose of leaves during the Autumn/early winter. This 'leafing season' runs for ten weeks starting at an agreed point between October and November and finishing in December/January. Exact dates are flexible due to the seasonal factors that can affect leaf fall. Given the relatively mild weather we are experiencing this year the programme has not yet commenced as we wait for more leaf fall before triggering the operation.

In addition to regular cleansing operations, additional autumn leaf clearance will be undertaken. Our leafing plan document lists those roads that historically have experienced heavy leaf fall or have been prone to flooding in adverse weather conditions. The plan allows for two visits across the ten week period by the leafing resource to each of the roads listed in the plan. The proposed leafing schedule is neither exclusive nor exhaustive and other locations will be cleared as required. All roads will continue to be cleansed on the normal cleansing schedule.

Supplementary

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to ask a supplementary. My question was regarding the collection of leaves at this time of year particularly pertinent. The supplementary question I'd like to ask is regarding cycle routes; I cycled along Manor Road today and it was particularly dangerous for cycles with the rain yesterday and nothing's been done to collect and clear that at all and there are many other cycle lanes and routes where similar difficulties apply and it is very dangerous for cyclists.

Reply

I'd like to thank Mr Braithwaite for his supplementary question as well as the first question. I will certainly look into what's happening regarding cycle routes. I know

that as has been explained in the answer, we have a ten week period where we actually program the collection and sweeping up of leaves, but outside that there should be sweeping and collection of leaves in areas where there is a risk of danger so I can specifically ask the officers to look at cycle routes and what we are doing about those at the moment. As an intermittent cyclist myself I know how important it is not to have wet and slippery leaves under the tyres. So thank you for the question and I will take that forward.

**7. From: Samantha MacArthur
To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance**

How much does My Merton cost to produce, including allocated staff time, and how much revenue does it generate?

Reply

My Merton is produced by the Council four times each year and distributed to all households in the borough. In the last residents' survey it was highlighted as the most popular way for local residents to keep informed about what's happening in Merton. The cost of producing each edition of My Merton, including costs for design, print, distribution and staff time, is £17k. This is offset by advertising income of £6k per edition, giving an overall cost to the Council of £11k per edition of the magazine, ie 12p per copy. A detailed breakdown of the costs of producing My Merton are published on the Council's website, please see: <https://news.merton.gov.uk/about-my-merton-magazine/>

**8. From: Tamara Kohler
To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health**

What is Merton council doing, either alone or in conjunction with the CCG, to improve on the childhood vaccination rates, currently the lowest in England?

Reply

To clarify the Merton and the London position on childhood immunisations, a large data issue has been identified across the whole of London recently. Due to a major change in the Child Health Information Systems (CHIS) that record the childhood immunisations data for London, migrating into 4 CHIS hubs, this has affected the accuracy of the reported data across London for 2017/18. NHS Digital who publishes the data have therefore put a caveat and asked that the data is treated with caution saying 'Local Authority (LA) COVER data in London has been provided by four newly-established CHIS hubs and as such reflect a system in transition. Changes in Local Authority coverage in the London region should be interpreted with caution.' Quarter 1 data has now been published for 2018/19 which shows some good uptake across some immunisations, however it still shows MMR 2nd dose and the pre-

school booster (Dtap/IPV Booster) for children aged 5 as being similar to the 2017/18 annual rates seen. We are working with NHS England, Merton CCG and partners to look at the approach around these particularly with the aim of putting any additional actions in place to improve the accuracy of the data as well as increasing take up.

Since April 2013, NHS England have been responsible for commissioning of all national immunisation programmes from local providers in line with agreed service specifications and hence are accountable for ensuring that the population are protected from vaccine preventable diseases. Local Authorities (through the Director of Public Health) have an oversight function to ensure plans are in place to protect their population, however do not commission any of these services.

The good news is that the annual childhood immunisations uptake has improved across all immunisations comparing 2013/14 (benchmark year) to 2017/18 with 2016/17 showing Merton having some of its highest immunisations rates. The 2016/17 rates are higher or similar to the London average. London has however historically lower vaccination rates than England.

Actions supporting improving childhood immunisations include:

- The Local Authority working with NHS England commissioners, Merton CCG and providers of immunisations through the Merton Immunisations Steering group which meets regularly with an action plan that is refreshed annually and data monitored quarterly.
- Childhood Immunisations is one of the 5 key outcomes under the Best Start in Life theme for the Health and Well-being Strategy (2015 – 2018). This keeps a focus on improving immunisations locally.
- Public Health promotion of childhood immunisations across the borough e.g. articles in My Merton (which is a publication that goes into every single home in Merton), Young Merton Together, Social media etc. Promotion of children's flu vaccinations through leaflets in all Libraries and Children's Centres
- Health Visiting services commissioned by LA are systematically (through universal health reviews) as well as opportunistically asking about the child's immunisations, promoting immunisations take up as well as signposting parents to their GP for their child to be immunised.

**9. From: Hannah Brown
To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

Will I ever receive the bins my council tax has paid for? (address supplied)

Reply

We are aware that not all domestic properties have received their new wheelie bins in advance of the service change in October. We are working with our contractor to

prioritise the delivery of new containers to the small number of dwellings that were unfortunately missed out of the initial delivery. I am pleased to confirm that Hannah Brown's bins have now been delivered.

**10. From: Sarah Potter
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

The Adult Education Budget will be devolved to the Mayor of London from 2019/20. What steps has Merton Council taken to ensure the borough will be able to offer residents a range of courses in line with its commitment to an adult learning service set out in its commissioning principles?

Reply

Merton remains committed to providing a high quality and sustainable adult learning service and is achieving this through its commissioning model.

The London Borough of Merton has been working closely with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the Greater London Authority (GLA) on the devolution of adult skills budgets. The commissioning principles and the strategic objectives of Merton's adult learning service fit well with the Mayor's new 'Skills for Londoners' strategy and will enable Merton to continue to develop its provision to meet the needs of local residents.

In discussion with the Mayor's Office we anticipate that devolution in the first year will be fairly light touch and we have been working collaboratively with the South London Partnership to ensure the best fit for adult learning in the region going forward.

**11. From: Patrick Battersby
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

Please advise what can be done to reduce Haydon Park Road becoming overrun by traffic. Most don't observe the speed limit. There are many vans and trucks. Most use it to turn left onto Haydon's Rd. Often you cannot enter the street from Haydon's Rd due to backed up traffic.

Reply

We take safety very seriously and we have an annual local safety programme. Rat running, perceived danger and excessive speed / volume of traffic are problems in a number of residential roads throughout the borough and regrettably due to insufficient funds and resource it is not possible to address them all.

Due to limited available resource and funding and the demand for action that outweigh the available funding, it is necessary to prioritise by giving first consideration to those areas with recorded personal injury accidents and areas outside schools and with high footfall. Engineering solutions are then considered to address accidents' contributory factors. According to our records over the past 3

years there has not been any speed related personal injury accidents in Haydon's Park Road and given that this road is already subject to a 20mph speed limit and traffic calmed it would make justifying any action extremely difficult. It should be noted that the existing traffic calming features are road humps which are the most effective traffic calming features permitted on the public highway.

With regards to speed this road is relatively narrow with parking on both sides and according to our latest speed data that were collected during 2014, average speed were found to be :

o/s 113 Haydon's Park Rd – 18 mph in one direction and 15 mph in the other

o/s 43 Haydon's Rd – 24 mph in one direction and 25 mph in the other – although this is higher than the speed limit of 20mph, it is not considered as excessive speed

Although there may be a perception of safety and no doubt there are those who may travel at higher speed, on average the speed is not considered as excessive. The Metropolitan Police is responsible for enforcement and as such speeding related concerns should be reported directly to the Police but as you may appreciate the resources are somewhat stretched dealing with other priorities. For locations with speed related issues TfL, in partnership with the Metropolitan Police undertakes many speed management initiatives, including Community Road Watch. Community Roadwatch is a road safety initiative which aims to reduce speeding in residential areas, and gives local residents the opportunity to work side by side with their local police teams, and use speed detection equipment to identify speeding vehicles in their communities. Concerns from members of the public on speeding, and other road offences, can be sent to Roadsafe London. This portal is an information and intelligence gathering tool that can inform police activity. The following link shows the address for the Roadsafe London website -
<http://content.met.police.uk/Site/roadsafelondon>

The Council does not deal with rat running issues; however, to address some of the complaints regarding rat running all the banned movements have been removed from Plough Lane / Haydon's Rd/ Durnsford Rd / Gap Road junction. With the banned movements removed, drivers are no longer compelled to use alternative routes. It is acknowledged that there is one sign that is yet to be removed and the Council is making the appropriate arrangements to rectify this oversight.

In response to HGVs using these roads, it should be noted that these roads are subject to a 7.5T lorry ban. However, they are permitted access and regrettably currently the Council is unable to undertake enforcement against HGVs. A solution would be the introduction of a width restriction, however, given the network of the roads in this area, one width restriction would have an impact on the surrounding roads. In recent years the Council has refrained from introducing such features as these impact on deliveries, emergency services and refuse vehicles.

As already mentioned given the volume of similar requests, limited available resources; other priorities and the fact that this area is subject to a 20mph speed limit and traffic calmed the Council will not be taking any action at this time.

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

It is good news that planning enforcement is finally under way at No1 Caxton Road. When will step-free access to Haydons Road station (southbound platform) be implemented, making it accessible to those of limited mobility, as per condition No25 on the planning notice (10/P2827)?

Reply

A planning enforcement notice was served on 11th October 2018. The original planning permission facilitated step access to the station via the planning condition . However, this agreement relied on Network rail as land owner agreeing to the implementation of the proposal. To date such agreement has not been secured but the issue will be revisited alongside the recent enforcement action.

They have until the 18th November 2018 to make an appeal. The compliance period is Twelve calendar months.

The Enforcement Notice requires:

Either;

- (i) Demolish the Unauthorised Development; and
- (ii) Make good any damage arising for the compliance with step 5(i) above;
and
- (iii) Remove from the Property all associated paraphernalia, surplus materials and debris arising for the compliance with step 5(i) above

Or:

- (iv) Implement the development (in its entirety) pursuant to the Planning Permission

6. TIME FOR COMPLIANCE

Twelve calendar months after this notice takes effect.

7. WHEN THIS NOTICE TAKES EFFECT

This notice takes effect on 18th November 2018 unless an appeal is made against it beforehand.

Supplementary

It's seven years since the Planning application referred to in my question put in advance was approved; I'm just wondering why impose a planning condition that you either cannot or will not enforce?

Reply

Thank you, well we are actually enforcing it in that we have issued an enforcement notice on the 11th October 2018 giving them until the 18th November which was the other day to comply or to make an appeal. It is regrettable that Network Rail have not complied with the Planning application because I think it is a breach of trust on their part that this has not happened and I hope that they do take action to actually comply with the enforcement notice that has been issued by the Council. Thank you.

**13. From: Paul Rasmussen
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

I would like to understand how Cappagh are able to ask for planning permission **again** when they have been caught breaking the law and rejected permission twice for very good reason? This is a waste of peoples time and energy and should be closed without opportunity to appeal.

Reply

There is a current licence application relating to a silo found on part of this site, this was found by council officers during an inspection and following a report made of a dust cloud by a resident and Councillor. It's important to note that this is not a planning application nor does this relate to the activities sought under the previous planning application.

**14. From: Thomas Shirley
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

Despite ongoing concerns the council has taken no action to prevent the use of Caxton Road and linked 'poets roads' being used as a rat run to avoid congestion on Haydons road. What can residents do to help the council take this matter seriously?

Reply

Due to limited available funding and the demand for action that outweighs the available funding, it is necessary to prioritise by giving first consideration to those areas with recorded personal injury accidents and areas outside schools and with high footfall. The Council does not deal with rat running issues, any restriction of traffic movement would need to be justified; the impact of any restriction would need to be assessed and an area wide consultation would need to be carried out. As previously explained, we do not deal with rat running and there is no justification in prioritising any form of engineering intervention in this road compared to other areas in the borough. The Council will not be taking any action at this time.

**15. From: Barry Smith
To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance**

In each of the last 2 financial years, in how many cases did the council use court summons, bailiffs or charge collection costs to residents for non-payment of council tax?

Reply

2017/18 – 9,289 summonses issued and 6,786 enforcement (bailiff) cases

2018/19 – 7,977 summonses issued and 3,780 enforcement (bailiff) cases (as at 13 November 18)

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

To what extent has the 76% decrease in spending on Local Welfare Assistance Schemes in Merton between 2012/13 and 2016/17 been the result of the council changing eligibility criteria for assistance, and what is the difference in the number of families receiving assistance from LWAS between these years?

Reply

The eligibility criteria have had only some small changes to it since it was first introduced. The reason for the decrease in spending is due to a reduction in applications. In 2014/15, when we spent the most, we received 636 applications and last year, 2017/18 we received 337 applications.

**17. From: Jill Hall
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

What consideration has Merton Developments given to adopting PassivHaus energy standard for homes it intends to build in the future?

Reply

Merantun Development Ltd will be considering the most suitable range of sustainability measures and building regulations spec for the sites and the build product. This will be done as part of the pre-planning design process which has just been tendered.

**18. From: John Tippett-Cooper
To the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

What is the council doing to ensure that the 45% of residents eligible for free childcare for 2 year olds who are not currently taking up this entitlement are fully aware of their rights?

Reply

Staff within the Early Years and Children's Centre Service are working continuously to identify and support the 45% of parents who are eligible for free childcare, who are not taking up their provision.

Every 8 weeks or so, the department receives lists of families who may be eligible and these families are contacted in a variety of ways:

- Direct communications to families– differentiated messaging according to parental circumstance
- Face to face contact for families who have not taken up their entitlement (Staff from the Childcare Engagement team are tasked with contacting those families on the lists of eligible families, and are expected to make contact to explain the offer to parents and encourage take up)
- Follow up contact with families
- Promotion in community buildings
- Promotion via multi agency partners
- Promotion via articles ie My Merton
- Information on the Family Service Directory
- Social Media – Twitter and Facebook

Whilst there is significant activity, we are aware that some families choose not to take up their funded place, and key findings in research carried out by the DfE and the Greater London Assembly identified that is lower take up in areas where, for example, there are high number of EAL and some families from specific cultural and religious backgrounds may prefer to spend time at home with their children.

**19. From: Ingrid Dickenson
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

WHY has Merton Council not yet fined Cappagh at Waterside Way for their 'illegal' release of toxic cement dust on the Riverwalk although the incident was filmed and witnessed by a Merton Councillor but instead accepted a Part B permit application to legalise their previously illegal action?

Reply

The Council must act lawfully in dealing with such issues. Officers did consider formal action against the site for not having a permit for a silo, however the incident that occurred could not be linked to this particular silo. This was located in a completely separate part of the site and was found following a thorough inspection. This IS the reason for this permit application. Officers did carefully review the evidence provided against the powers that we have available. The only powers we currently have to control dust on the site would be under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 Section 79, with this legislation there is an escalating approach to enforcement and there needs to be an impact on property or residents.

This kind of action is also reliant on issuing legal notices and then proving contraventions to take prosecution action. In determining action under nuisance

legislation we also need to show that this is a regular occurrence. That said we have written to the site operator reiterating their need to comply with this legislation.

We do have a duty to consider Licence Applications of this nature and we have levied an additional fee on the Application due to the fact that we found a silo on site which was not permitted, something we are entitled to do.

**20. From: Shipra Gupta
To the Cabinet Member for Education**

How much has the Council spent on legal advice to school governors in the current financial year and the last financial year (including costs re charged to schools)?

Reply

The council has not incurred any expenditure on advice to school governors in the current financial year or the last financial year. Legal advice to schools is paid for by the schools except in very exceptional circumstances. The total cost of legal advice commissioned by schools under the Merton Schools Service Level Agreement and funded by the school governing body was £21,456.60 (26 cases) in the financial year 2017/2018 and £11,365.20 (21 cases) in the current financial year to date.

In employment tribunal cases where the council and a school are co-respondents, the council and the relevant school have agreed to share the cost of legal advice and representation. In the financial years 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 there have been a total of 3 fee sharing arrangements in respect of 3 cases (these 3 cases have all been active matters across both of the financial years in question). The costs of the schools' legal advice under the fee sharing arrangements are contained within the above figures. The above figures for the number of cases in each financial year include the 3 cases where there has been fee sharing.

**21. From: Siobhan Wilson
To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

What are you going to be doing about all the uncollected rubbish everywhere? The area looks worse now than before the bins were brought in.

Reply

We are currently bedding in the new service and am pleased with how well our residents have embraced the service change and adopted to the new containerised system. Monitoring and inspections, together with reports from residents and Members, indicate that the standard of street cleanliness in the town centres has improved since the new service was introduced. We are also recording increased levels of recycling. Residential streets are also looking better but there are some pockets where concern remains. These streets are under close monitoring and the focus of attention for the NCO team. Veolia are responding well to these concerns.

**22. From: Emily Robertson
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

Given that the Child Poverty Action Group reports that Merton has failed to achieve even half of its affordable housing target (19% against a target of 40%), what action is the Council taking that will help it meet the 40% target?

Reply

The construction of affordable homes varies year-on-year and is reported each year in the council's Authority Monitoring Report. Between 2010 and 2017 30% of the new homes built in Merton were affordable. During the same seven years 38% of the total number of homes built in Merton were a result of "prior approval" conversions from offices, shops or storage to residential and government rules require these homes, and any homes built on small sites, to be exempt from providing any contribution to affordable housing. The council is working with registered housing providers and housebuilders to optimise the delivery of affordable homes by allocating sites for development, by requiring the publication and independent review of developer's viability assessments and by developing a new Local Plan and housing strategy towards the delivery of more affordable homes.

**23. From: Maria Daskalaki
To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

What are you going to do with bins that are NOT "unreturned", but don't fit in gardens, simply not big enough to accommodate them so they are left outside blocking access? remove all these bins from properties & grant access to shared large ones, emptied every day!

Reply

We recognise that not all houses will have space to accommodate bins and where this is not possible we arrange alternative waste collection methods.

The new service provides for bins to be presented to the curtilage of the dwelling. This is to ensure that our pavements are kept clear of refuse containers restricting access for pushchair / wheelchair users. This requires householders to set out waste bins within the confines of their land as close to the edge as possible.

As part of the roll out of the new service a subcontractor was engaged to undertake a borough wide delivery of the new wheelie bins. We continue to work closely with the main contractor to undertake specific re-assessments of households in locations where we have been advised that the new bins are not suitable due to lack of storage space on the property. Our priority at present is to complete these reassessments and then where applicable arrange for all excess bins to be removed. We envisage that all excess bins will be collected by the end of the month.

Residents are able to share bins if they wish, however the frequency of collection will be retained as scheduled.

24. From: Eve Cohen
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

How many dog poo bins have been removed from Merton Borough over what timescale, and how many dog poo bins remain?

Reply

Following changes in legislation that allowed for the co-collection of dog waste along with the general street litter it was agreed to remove the designated dog waste bins. All bins were removed and therefore we no longer provide any dog waste bins in our streets or parks.

As part of this decision we have promoted the use of general litter bins for the disposal of dog waste.

In addition, any location where a dog waste bin was removed, we have ensured that either an existing bin was nearby or a new litter bin was installed.

Supplementary

Thank you very much. I'd like to ask the Cabinet Member who answered my question about dog poo bins; there is a sign at the main entrance of the Civic Centre which refers to the 500 dog poo bins and a commitment to empty them regularly and I'd like to know when this notice is going to be updated or removed along with the other out of date items on it.

Reply

I thank you for your supplementary question and for your initial question. I wasn't aware of the notice myself and I'll ask for it to be removed forthwith.

25. From: Daniel Weir
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

How and why was the decision made to drastically cut the Rowan Park community centre space (which should have opened 5 years ago) recently. It is part of a section 106 and we have had previous reassurances/emails from the council that this would not happen.

Reply

The council welcomes the delivery of a new health centre, pharmacy and community space at Rowan Park. Funding has been approved by Merton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to undertake the development of the health centre and pharmacy and this means that the community space, which forms part of the same building, can now progress.

The council is aware that the cost of delivering the facilities has increased but we have not received a formal request to reduce the community space. We continue to work with Merton CCG and Crest Nicholson homes to determine the most viable route to ensure that these much needed facilities are delivered as soon as possible.

**26. From: Marie Davinson
To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

Who is responsible for 'local recycling centres' such as the one in the car park adjoining the Civic Centre car park? When will these 'recycling centres' have separate containers for paper/card from other mixed recycling in line with the new waste service introduced in October?

Reply

The local recycling centres are managed by the Council and are collected on our behalf by our waste collections contractor, Veolia.

There are currently no plans to introduce a separate paper and card service at these locations as residents can dispose of this material separately as part of the new kerbside collection. We aim to review the provision of these neighbourhood recycling centres over the next few months as many are a magnet for fly tipping and offer only limited benefit in terms of recycling.

Any excess paper and card can be taken to our Civic Amenity site at Garth Road.

**27. From: Ursula Faulkner
To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance**

How much of LWAS (Local Welfare Assistance Schemes) assistance is provided in the form of cash and how much is provided in loans or vouchers?

Reply

2017/18

Emergency cash - £17,825

Essential household items purchased - £21,657

2018/19 (as at 13 November 2018)

Emergency cash - £6,305

Essential household items purchased - £9,715

No loans or vouchers are given

**28. From: Gemma Anderson
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

Why did Merton commission a vehicle speed survey on Haydon Park Road in June 2018? and why were the results not made public?

Reply

The Council is not aware of any traffic surveys being undertaken in this road during 2018. Please note that although companies should seek the Council's approval for undertaking surveys, more often than not they do not. It could be that surveys were done without our knowledge.

**29. From: Sarah Warren
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

What are Merton's plans to address the results from the vehicle speed survey conducted in Haydon Park Road in June 2018 which recorded persistent and excessive speeds and hgv use in a designated 20mph zone?

Reply

The Council is not aware of any traffic surveys being undertaken in this road during 2018.

**30. From: Mark Blacker
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

In December 2016, Merton confirmed the banned movements at the Gap Road/Plough Lane Junction would be removed. This statement has been repeated again in 2017 and 2018. Today signage still has not been changed to remove the banned movements remain. Do Merton intend to do anything?

Reply

This was due to an oversight. Arrangements have been made to cover the banned movement by a sticker (over the next couple of weeks) until a new sign is manufactured and erected within the next 6 weeks.

**31. From: Philip Whiteside
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

When is the Council going to stop allowing motorbikes to use the tennis courts in Haydons Road Recreation Ground so the space can be converted back to a MUGA?

Reply

The Council has no current plans to deny the motor cycle training school, Advantage Wimbledon, from hiring the MUGA at Haydon's Road Recreation Ground.

This locally-based educational enterprise has operated successfully at this site for more than 12 years and operates at times when the demands for other casual and

hires for sporting and recreational purposes are very low. Indeed, the low demands and extremely low levels of income generated at this site from organised sport were historically the reason why the school was located at this convenient and accessible venue as long ago as 2007.

Advantage Wimbledon has not expressed any desire to re-locate from the venue where it operates within a discrete area of the park and with only minimal disruption to other activities that take place there, activities that include children's play, lacrosse, cricket and bowls.

The partnership that the school has established with the Council over many years, and under different administrations, has been mutually beneficial and productive. From a parks operational perspective, the benefits have included enhanced site security and significant levels of income annually that support the borough's green space management service overall.

Whilst we have explored alternate locations none suitable have been identified and as such we have no current plans for this use to be re-located.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor. Why at BARA's Committee Meeting on the 13th of August, this is in light of the answer to my question, which Councillor Draper has received the minutes of, when Councillor Draper said that it was inappropriate to have motorbikes in Haydons Road Recreation Ground and the motorbikes could be relocated to an alternative site tomorrow if the residents wanted to allow residents to upgrade to a MUGA, are the Council now going back on what Councillor Draper said?

Reply

Thank you very much indeed for your second question. I did say that it was in my opinion, not appropriate to have motorcycles in the middle of a recreation ground. I did not say that I could get them relocated the next day. I did say that it might be possible to enforce their removal, but that is a question open for legal dispute. What we have done since that point is look at alternative venues and to date we have not found alternative venues. I certainly, if I had a tardis, wouldn't have put motorcycles in that position. That was done by a previous administration, not on this side of the Chamber. That's not actually relevant. The relevance is that this is a good client of the Council who use our space and they use our space profitably not only profitably for themselves but for the benefit of residents in Merton. As I'm sure that everyone in the Chamber will know that motorcyclists do have considerably more accidents than do motorists and I think properly well trained motorcyclists are very important on our streets and what we can do to encourage proper training of motorcyclists is extremely important so I am loathed to the idea of removing willy-nilly this company from our parks. We have been looking for an alternative venue, we haven't found one yet as your question rightly says. Until we find one, we certainly wouldn't

consider trying to move or to remove the current occupant. I hope that answers the question.

**32. From: Emma Maddison
To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health**

What is the current progress on the redevelopment of the Wilson health centre, will it be delivered on time and on budget and has the alternative provisions for walk-in services proved sufficient to meet demand?

Reply

The redevelopment of the Wilson Hospital is an NHS project, led by the Clinical Commissioning Group, on NHS Property Land. Merton Council has been supporting the project with a view to creating a holistic health and wellbeing campus, however, the Council has no control over the timescales, budget or delivery of the scheme.

The CCG has recently reported funding problems, following a shift in Government policy concerning interest rate rises. The Council understands that the CCG is exploring alternative funding options.

The decision to close the walk-in centre was taken by the CCG; the Council had no say in it and was not consulted on it. Questions about alternative provision should be directed to the CCG.

**33. From: Richard Hackforth-Jones
To the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

Does Merton allow residents living close to the border with other boroughs to split their 40 hours childcare allowance between settings in different boroughs? If not, why not?

Reply

Yes, Merton operates the 30 hour childcare scheme in accordance with the DfE statutory guidance June 2018 . This allows a parent to use a maximum of 2 sites in a single day, which includes using settings across different boroughs.

**34. From: Somayeh Aghnianejad
To the Cabinet Member for Education**

How much has the Council spent on legal advice to school governors in the current financial year and the last financial year (including costs recharged to schools)?

Reply

The council has not incurred any expenditure on advice to school governors in the current financial year or the last financial year. Legal advice to schools is paid for by the schools except in very exceptional circumstances. The total cost of legal advice

commissioned by schools under the Merton Schools Service Level Agreement and funded by the school governing body was £21,456.60 (26 cases) in the financial year 2017/2018 and £11,365.20 (21 cases) in the current financial year to date.

In employment tribunal cases where the council and a school are co-respondents, the council and the relevant school have agreed to share the cost of legal advice and representation. In the financial years 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 there have been a total of 3 fee sharing arrangements in respect of 3 cases (these 3 cases have all been active matters across both of the financial years in question). The costs of the schools' legal advice under the fee sharing arrangements are contained within the above figures. The above figures for the number of cases in each financial year include the 3 cases where there has been fee sharing.

**35. From: Rudi Leoni
To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

Veolia continues to fail to meet contractual standards for flytips and street cleaning despite logging numerous reports over consecutive days. What is the root cause of Veolia's failure to resolve issues consistently and within contractual deadlines and when will alternative arrangements be made with costs recovered from Veolia?

Reply

The standard of service delivered at times has been below the level expected. There have been a number of contributory factors to this, including significant changes to the service in some areas particularly waste collection and issues with data transfer between IT systems held by all parties. This latter issue in particular meant that performance measurement against specific performance indicators has not been consistently achieved.

With reference to recovering cost, our aim is to ensure that we have the required performance standards as agreed in the contract. To achieve this, we are working closely with Veolia alongside our SLWP partner boroughs to ensure the contract performance is raised.

There are no current plans to make alternative arrangements to Veolia. I can confirm that the partnership does exercise the contract clauses that allow for financial deductions.

Supplementary

Thanks for the opportunity for the question. With regards recovering costs, how much in pounds, not percentage, has actually been deducted, not in negotiations, for the non-delivery of service for the 18 months the Veolia contract has been in place?

Reply

I'd like to thank Mr Leoni for his question, supplementary question and for the telephone conversations we've had as well over the past couple of months. Those sort of figures I wouldn't have at my fingertips as a supplementary question but I can get those answers and make sure he's furnished with them.

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From Councillor Ben Butler to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Can the Cabinet Member provide a statement updating Council on the NHS's Improving Healthcare Together 2020-2030 programme?

Reply

As Council will be aware, three Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) - Merton, Sutton and Surrey Downs - have come together to form a Committee in Common, to look at the reconfiguration of acute services currently provided by Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust. This builds on the work undertaken by the Trust itself last summer. The three options being considered are to downgrade Epsom Hospital and locate acute and maternity services at St Helier Hospital; downgrade St Helier Hospital and locate acute and maternity services at Epsom Hospital; or downgrade both hospitals and locate acute and maternity services at a new hospital in Sutton, next to the Royal Marsden. More information can be found on the website: <https://improvinghealthcaretogether.org.uk/>

Following a series of engagement events over the summer, three workshops were held on 30th October, 6th November and 14th November. The workshops brought together residents, clinicians and NHS staff and were asked to: (1) agree the criteria by which the different options should be scored; (2) agree the weighting that should be afforded to each criteria; (3) score the options, based on what was agreed at the first two workshops. The third and final workshop that scored the options took place on Wednesday 14th November.

The NHS has not published any details of the criteria, weighting or scores, and states that the next step is for the CCGs to look at the scores alongside the financial assessment, in order to make a decision on a preferred option. That decision will then form part of a Pre-Consultation Business Case that is due to be submitted to NHS England before Christmas, before formal consultation takes place next year.

Supplementary

Yes, thank you. I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his reply. Does the Cabinet Member believe the process that has been undertaken by the NHS has been fair and transparent?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Butler for his question and for his supplementary. I have very serious concerns about the process that has been pursued by the NHS and I feel the Council has been misled by the Clinical Commissioning Group around the work that they have committed to undertake. In my view the data that has been relied upon to inform the scoring of the options is either incomplete or not yet available, notably around deprivation, equalities impact, travel data and the impact on other acute hospitals like St Georges. We have raised these concerns repeatedly with the CCG; we asked them to delay the scoring workshop that took place last week until that work was completed and despite receiving numerous assurances that the work would be undertaken they have now progressed to scoring the options rendering any further work in my view redundant. The Council will continue to make strong representations, we will be sending another letter this week from the Leader of the Council setting out our concerns around the data that has been relied upon

and we will have to take further legal advice when a formal decision is taken to consider our options at that point in time. Thank you.

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

Is the Cabinet Member as confident as the Council Leader that all wheelie bins have been delivered?

Reply

Following the roll out of the new service on October 1st, we were made aware that there were a number of properties that had not received the new wheelie bins. We have addressed these concerns with our contractor who deployed additional resource to address this matter. For households who had not received the containers we have ensured that their waste was collected as scheduled.

Our Neighbourhood Client team are in daily discussions with the contractor to ensure that all reports of non-delivery of bins are addressed as a matter of priority.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you to the Cabinet Member for his answer. There are numerous reports from across Merton in particular my Hillside ward that proves the Cabinet Member and Council Leader are wrong on their answer. Will the Cabinet Member take this opportunity to apologise for the failure of this Labour policy and when will he finally get a grip on Veolia?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Holden for his friendly supplementary question. I have found myself a number of times apologising for the situation regarding the roll-out of bins. No pun intended on the roll-out of wheelie-bins there sorry. Veolia it seems were let down by their contractor and in turn let us down when the initial roll-out of the service started at the beginning of October. There was a shortfall in the number of bins delivered that's clear. I was saying it's not as big an issue as we thought initially but the calls that were coming in certainly meant that when I met with their General Manager Scott Edgell on the 10th of October to discuss the situation I sought assurance that they would put it right as soon as possible because there were flaws in their data system it seems. That has largely been put right, what I do agree still needs to be worked on and we are working on, is where there are refinement and swapping of bins and making sure that all properties get the most appropriate delivery or collection regime for their area and for their particular properties. So we are working on it, I don't apologise, I don't feel it's a fail to service you'll see an answer to a question further down the list which actually gives some very encouraging figures for the initial month of the new service so I don't apologise for that. I do apologise for the shortcomings in the initial delivery and in the time it's taking to actually get bins out and boxes and the food caddies, which is a considerable challenge and we are pressing Veolia to do that.

From Councillor Linda Kirby to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

Following the implementation of the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation and Liability for Housing Standards) Act on 1 October, what implications has this had on improving standards in the private rented sector?

Reply

This bill received its first reading in the House of Lords on the 29th October 2018 and the next event is the House of Lords on the 23rd November 2018. In summary the bill seeks to amend the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 to require that residential private rented accommodation is provided and maintained in a state of fitness for human habitation.

Supplementary

Thank you. Thank you for the response. Given this is Karen Buck's Labour MP's second attempt to get this homes bill through Parliament, do you think the Government has any idea of the appalling conditions that many families are living in in the private rented sector, or are they too busy arguing about Brexit to be bothered about what's happening to ordinary people in our society today?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Kirby for her supplementary and she is of course right that there has been years of inaction in terms of improving standards in the private rented sector. It took the terrible events of Grenfell for action to even be considered by this Government, and whilst they did reluctantly in the end because of a hung parliament allow further Landlord regulation, it hasn't gone far enough. I believe that regulations and standards do need to be tougher because some of the conditions in the private rented sector are appalling and you know we do need to use the powers, we do need further powers to undertake further regulation because I know obviously Councillor Kirby in her own ward and in many other wards across the Borough that conditions need to be improved and that's why I do support a landlord registration scheme to actually tackle these issues.

From Councillor Paul Kohler to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness

Please would Councillor Brunt detail how many of the 5721 Fixed Penalty Notices issued, and 485 prosecutions brought, in the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, were for dropping cigarette butts? And, how many of the 3834 Fixed Penalty Notices issued, and 217 prosecutions brought, in the period 1 April 2018 to date, were for dropping cigarette butts?

Reply

Between 1st April 2017 – 31st March 2018 – 4996 (97.26%) out of 5137 FPNs

Between 1st April 2018 – 15th November 2018 (as of writing) – 4073 (95.79%) out of 4252 FPNs

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Brunt for your answer. I would note in passing the figures I quoted were the ones given to the Sustainable Communities Panel; I note the figures are different I hope you can look into that difference because it doesn't make much sense. My question is though, that in the same period that we issued 5000 FPNs for cigarette butts, we issued 29 FPNs for fly

tipping. Is it a sensible use of resources to spend so much time on cigarette butts and so little resource on fly tipping?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Kohler for his initial question and supplementary. I will look into the discrepancy in numbers and make sure that's clarified. When it comes to littering generally, I make no apology for the fact that resource is put into fining people and giving Fixed Penalty Notices for dropping cigarette ends because as we all know, litter and fly tipping eventually starts from small beginnings. If there is just a little bit around, people think what's the point and they drop more. So, we all probably all go home and when we're going to work, we get into work or we get home and we think I wish I'd said something to someone who dropped something in front of me. We often don't have the courage to do that as individuals, but we have officers that I'm very proud of through Kingdom out there in the streets around our Borough going up to people saying do you really think you should be dropping that and giving penalty notices, so I don't apologise for that.

What we do with fly tipping is that we do go through bags, we do have cameras around the place and I think that actually I'm impressed with what goes on with fly tipping, we do need to do more of it. I went through some bags in the street which I saw today earlier and I took a picture of something which I hope is good enough as an address and proof to get a prosecution for that particular fly tipper and I'll be giving a witness statement for that.

So I think that we do that and what we are also doing and you may have seen it already or heard about it already but we impounded two vehicles last week which have been used for regular fly tipping in the Borough. One of them was crushed yesterday at Willow Lane for being un-roadworthy even though it had a valid MOT issued four months ago; it clearly was not roadworthy four months ago either so the Police are involved in looking at that MOT testing station, but that person has been asked to come in, it was destroyed because it's dangerous and it was crushed and destroyed yesterday. Another one, the owner has got fifteen days, that expires next week, that vehicle will also be crushed and they will be taken to court, whether they turn up or not they will be prosecuted and we will be making it public. You could say that it's easier to fine the people who are doing the small littering but that leads to big littering later on and we are coming at it from the other end as well and looking at fly tipping and stepping up and we will be naming and shaming.

From Councillor Dennis Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

Can the cabinet member update council on progress which has been made on implementing 20 mph zones across the borough and can he please explain the benefit?

Reply

Merton is committed to road safety and we have a number of initiatives that promotes road safety. One initiative is the introduction of 20mph speed limits. To improve the general road safety environment and in line with the Mayor of London's transport priorities which has been adopted within the Borough's LiP, it is proposed to introduce 20mph speed limits at locations around the borough.

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The objective is to change behaviour –to encourage drivers to travel at a consistent lower speed not just throughout the borough but from borough to borough. The borough limit will work alongside neighbouring borough's 20mph speed limits. (Neighbouring boroughs of Lambeth, Croydon and Wandsworth) This is expected to bring about a culture change so that it is socially unacceptable to drive over 20mph in London. This contributes to delivering the Mayor of London's vision zero initiative.

The Council has started its programme for rolling out a borough wide 20mph speed limit and we have provisionally secured funding through our LiP for next financial year which will be utilised to continue the roll out of the borough wide 20mph speed limit. Given the limited available funding this financial year, the Council has started from the borough boundaries where neighbouring boroughs have already introduced a lower speed limit.

In terms of benefits, it is considered that with a change in behaviour, there will be less aggressive driver behaviour; less likelihood of accidents; improved perception of safety; safer highway environment / experience for all vulnerable road users. Studies show that compared to 30mph, not only are the number of accidents reduced in 20mph roads, but also their severity. For instance, a pedestrian sustaining a fatal injury from a collision decreases from approximately 55% at an impact speed of 30mph to 17% at an impact speed on 20mph. There are also health benefits, as lower speeds help improve physical and mental health. As roads become safer so people are more inclined to walk and cycle more, providing regular exercise and enabling healthier lifestyles. Noise pollution is also reduced at 20mph and these measures support sustainable transport options and encourage modal shift.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor. I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his reply and I welcome the roll-out of the 20mph zones and the Cabinet Members' commitment to it. However, being purely parochial I wonder if he could tell me when they will be rolled-out in my own ward in St Helier?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Pearce for his supplementary and it's very good news that two zones have already been rolled-out since May in the East of the Borough in Longthornton and Pollards Hill but also as well in Wimbledon Village to show there's no bias between the West and the East of the Borough. We are also undertaking a further consultation for the remainder of Pollards Hill and Longthornton Ward along with parts of Figges Marsh. Over the next year and it's subject to funding, we do hope to have further roll-outs across the Borough so that by the end of this administration in 2022 the whole Borough is covered by a 20mph zone. I hope that St Helier is in the programme for next year; it's still to be finalised but I think it's a very welcome initiative that we are rolling this out because we do care about road safety and the safety of pedestrians and we also know that speed kills and that 20mph is far safer on our roads. Thank you.

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

In light of the repeated poor performance of Veolia to undertake its contractual obligations, and a shambolic delivery of the administrations unwanted wheelie bins,

does the Cabinet Member still believe that putting Veolia in charge of waste collection has been a good idea?

Reply

Whilst the contract performance has room for improvement the Council should note the benefits that this contract brings to the borough and the environment. The 4 Borough procurement and implementation will save Merton over 1.5 million pounds per year. The new refuse collection arrangements will reduce carbon, increase recycling and reduce litter on our streets. We will continue to work closely with Veolia on ensuring the contract delivers to the standards we expect.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for their response. Labour's decision to appoint Veolia has led to piles of rubbish in the Boroughs streets. Thousands of missed collections and has cost the taxpayer a minimum of £3.2million. Will the Cabinet Member take this opportunity to apologise to local residents whose lives have been blighted by Labour's disastrous policy? Thank you.

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Bush for his supplementary question as well as the original question. I think that I would dispute his costs that he's put there and I would also refer him to the answer just in case we don't get to it a bit later on which shows that in the first month of operation there was a decrease of 1,200 tonnes of general waste going to landfill. Each one of those tonnes costs us in the order of £100 to get rid of so that's £120,000 in one month alone. The first month of roll-out when he's citing chaos and debris on the streets. Also we've seen an increase of 110 tonnes of food waste in the very first month and it's worth thinking that actually a refuse truck takes ten tonnes so we're talking 120 refuse trucks full of general waste that's not going to landfill or energy exchange and eleven trucks of food waste that is not going into landfill and is going to some sort of recycling and reuse. So I don't see that as being failure and I don't apologise for that. What I have already apologised for is some of the glitches with the initial roll-out and I will continue to apologise for that and it's something that I want to put right because my name is against that as well as the Council's so I'll be working on that but I think those point success and a big saving for this Borough not a cost.

From Councillor Simon McGrath to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness

What instructions will be given to Authorised Officers about exercising powers under Article 1(2)(c) of the proposed Public Spaces Protection Order 2018 (Dog Control), to demand members of the public in the company of a dog produce a device for removing dog faeces? How will use of these powers be monitored?

Reply

Article 1 of the proposed PSPO in respect of the clearing of dog faeces is primarily aimed at ensuring that faeces are not left behind within the relevant restricted areas by dog walkers where they might present a risk to public health and safety or otherwise contaminate the environment. That is an offence under the proposed PSPO.

The relevant parts of Article 1(2) (b & c) that refer to devices to remove dog faeces are designed to ensure that not having such a device - a plastic bag, for example - is not a defence, nor "a reasonable excuse" in the parlance of the current draft PSPO, for dog walkers not to remove their dog's faeces.

It is not the intention of Article 1(2)(c) that dog walkers would be routinely and proactively challenged by Authorised Officers to produce such a device irrespective of their dog's behaviour and be guilty of an offence if they fail to do so. The draft PSPO needs to be reviewed and amended if necessary in order to clarify that position, but conceivably there may be persistent or recognisable offenders who commonly or routinely do not carry such devices with them and this power would enable Authorised Officers to intervene in such cases, regardless of whether their dog has defecated or not.

It is the intention of the authority to monitor the effectiveness of its proposed new dog control PSPOs through the issuing of FPNs and by the various categories of offence, but the encouragement of appropriate and respectful standards of behaviour by dog walkers through educational and other awareness-raising means are also key elements to our approach to reducing and eliminating dog fouling nuisances across the borough.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for the response but I do think there's a certain amount of confusion here; everybody agrees that people who don't pick up dog poo should be fined, the question is whether somebody should be fined for not having a poo bag in the company of a dog. Now we are told that this is because somebody might use not having a poo bag as an excuse but that is very clearly excluded in item B. If there is a problem, if we find in due course there is a problem with persistent offenders but I think that is the time to introduce such an order rather than doing it now when we don't know whether there is a problem.

Reply from the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

Madam Mayor, I'm answering this question primarily because the PSPO refers principally to parks and open spaces. Thank you very much indeed for your supplementary question and thank you of course for your initial question as well. We've talked about this before, fining for somebody for not having a poo bag; a faeces bag, let's call it by its real name, rather than for the actual act of allowing a dog to foul a park. You think about it, you go out with your dog, your dog might not foul the park, it's entirely possible. You can also, get into a car without insurance and drive a car around and not kill anybody and not bump into anybody. But, if you get caught doing that, you get fined, prosecuted for not having a driving licence. This is the same sort of principle. If you go out without having something to pick up after the dog, then you're expecting not to pick up after the dog. It's worth fining purely on that basis, I make no apology for that. Thank you.

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

Can the Cabinet Member give us the figures for general waste, recycling waste and food waste in tonnages for the first month of the new service compared to this time last year and compared to the monthly average?

Reply

I am pleased to advise that following the introduction of the new waste service early indications suggest that there has been a significant improvement in the reduction of residual waste.

In October of this year we collected just over 2,600 tonnes of general waste compared to 3,839 tonnes in the same period last year. The monthly average in 2017 was 3,855 tonnes.

In addition to this we have seen an increase of 110 tonnes of food waste since the new service was introduced. Over the last 3 years we have seen a decline in food waste participation with a monthly average of 274 tonnes per month in 2017. In October this year we collected 384 tonnes.

We are currently awaiting confirmed waste data with regards to our recycling material which we expect to show an increase

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor. I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response and also I'd like to say the figures you gave in my response sound very impressive but for the benefit of everyone in the Chamber, can the Cabinet Member please suggest a way of envisaging what 384 tonnes of food waste looks like?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Akyigyina for her supplementary question there. My side will be relieved that I tried to weave the answer to that into the previous question because they know that I can talk a lot. 384 tonnes is about 38 truckloads, refuse truckloads of waste.

From Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness:

Why does Veolia not recognise some communal properties and recognise others?

Reply

Both the contractor and the council recognise communal properties.

We have experienced a number of data issues which has unfortunately resulted in some communal addresses being missed off the rescheduling of rounds. These have been identified and we are working closely with both IT teams [ours and Veolia's] to rectify this matter and ensure all communal properties are scheduled correctly.

Where collections have been missed we have ensured that the contractor has been informed and additional resource deployed in order to rectify this matter and meet our resident's expectations.

Supplementary

Madam Mayor thank you and I thank the Cabinet Member for his response. Would he tell us which organisation is principally responsible for the data failure, is it Merton or is it Veolia because let's be clear, Veolia has repeatedly failed to adequately serve residents of all types of property, and so I'd like to think that he will apologise again for the distress residents have suffered.

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Simpson for his question and supplementary question. I am working with officers to try and resolve the situation regarding certain blocks of flats. It seems to be a communication issue between ourselves and Veolia but certainly in terms of the practice there was before and under the new collection regime. We will find a solution to this, we will resolve it so I apologise for the time it has taken to do that but we will get it resolved. Inevitably there were going to be teething problems in the roll-out of this and I think that the very fact that the Call Centre has gone back to regular volumes of calls after only six weeks when you compare that in Sutton eighteen months after the roll-out of their new refuse service they still had long waits but we are down to and there's an answer that will come out on Friday to another question about call volumes but broadly speaking 50% of calls are answered within 30 seconds and we're down to the levels we were before the roll-out

From Councillor Dave Ward to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness

Can the Cabinet Member update us on initiatives in tackling fly tipping?

Reply

Where there is a known 'hot spot' area fly tipping signage is erected to bring to the public's attention the consequences of fly tipping waste. Enforcement Officers carry out joint partnership operations, with the Police stopping vehicles within designated areas and checking vehicles who are carrying waste. In such circumstances the driver is required to produce a waste carrier licence along with evidence on where the waste is being taken to be disposed of. Failing to produce relevant information will result in being issued a fixed penalty notice.

Properties where building renovations are being carried out are targeted and left a leaflet advising them of their duties and our powers. Residents and builders are reminded of their responsibilities when handing waste to a third party and their duty of care.

The Enforcement team, as a last resort, where suitable and with Magistrates Court authority undertakes covert operations (Hidden Camera). Such operations are normally progressed over a few weeks, capturing information of vehicles pulling up and fly-tipping waste. All evidence is viewed with the intention of bringing culprits in for an interview. Depending on the circumstances and volume of waste involved, we can deal with the case by either a fixed penalty notice or by preparing a case for prosecution.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor. The answer that the Cabinet Member has given mentions hidden cameras and the use of CCTV in fly tipping hotspots. Do you think we have enough resources for CCTV and hidden cameras to deal with the fly tipping problem and could we be getting any more?

Reply

I'll be as brief as I can because I think that minute is probably up already but it's the last question. I would always welcome more resources in the area of enforcement and fly tipping but what it comes down to in the end is the diligence of the officers who go out on our behalf, going through bags, identifying, yes some camera work but a lot of

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it comes from actually finding proof in the bags or on debris to find out where it came from and prosecuting and of course witnessing ourselves when we see it as Councillors.

From Councillor Eleanor Stringer to the Cabinet Member for Education/Regeneration, Housing and Transport

Would the cabinet member update council on improving road safety outside schools to encourage parents and their children to walk more and use cars less?

Reply

We offer schools a range of sustainable programmes such as cycle training for children and parents, while scooter training is provided for younger age groups. Kerbcraft, is a practical child pedestrian training programme offered to all primary schools, teaching children how to mitigate road risk when crossing roads to walk to school.

We also have some 'Kiss and Drop' and Walking Bus schemes whereby parents who have to drive, do not park but stop to drop children at a designated spot, and they are then walked to school by Walk Leaders. This helps reduce idling and congestion near schools.

Working with Transport for London Travel Trainers, we have provided a new travel training project for SEN Yr 6 pupils, showing them how to use public transport to travel to their new high schools. This has been very well received and in some cases, reduces the dependence on Council transport provision plus it also empowers pupils to adopt independent travel. We plan to work with more schools next year.

Another project promoting road safety and environmental choices is the junior and youth travel ambassador programmes, for both primary and high school children. We are also planning to work with the Council's contractors and other utility companies to provide information on the importance of a cleaner and greener environment. Parents can also join our walking groups as we provide regular weekly healthy walks in the boroughs parks and open spaces.

We also intend to trial temporary road closures outside of couple of our schools within this financial year to improve road safety outside schools. We are currently working on the final details taking on board lessons learnt from other boroughs who have already introduced similar features.

Merton's Environmental Health team are also piloting anti-idling campaigns outside schools to help reduce poisonous emissions.

Merton engages with almost all schools in our borough on School Travel Plans. These Plans show how schools are encouraging children and parents to reduce car usage by using more sustainable ways of travel such as public transport, cycling, scooting or walking. Schools can attain Bronze, Silver or Gold status and are keen to record how proactive they are.

The Council is also exploring a pilot 'School Superzone' which will look to create a healthier environment around a school. A part of the focus will be road safety.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you for the response which also mentions School Superzones and I wonder if we could hear a bit more about those and if they will help

address some of the air quality concerns that me and many residents have been raising about air quality across the Borough that affects our schools.

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Eleanor Stringer for her supplementary question. As a Council we are looking at having car-free zones outside certain Schools where cars are barred during the start of the day and the end of the day. This is something that has been brought in in terms of many Boroughs already and it's a way of actually reducing air pollution but also as well emissions outside schools. I think it's a very welcome initiative it's worked very successfully in many councils like Camden, Islington and Croydon but in terms of any scheme would be subject to full consultation but it shows that this administration takes this issue extremely seriously and obviously I hope to work to introduce these schemes over the next year. It's also as well excellent that we have received funding for these projects from Transport for London and that we have a Mayor who is committed to working with the authorities and actually providing funding for these initiatives and schemes to actually take place. Thank you.

From Councillor Hayley Ormrod to the Cabinet Member for Finance:

What are the Councils plans for accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation?

Reply

Merton as an employer already pays the London Living Wage ensuring that no staff are paid below that level.

To become an accredited employer Merton would also need to require (or be working toward) its contractors to pay at least the London Living Wage.

The Council has ensured that contracts recently awarded pay the London Living Wage, however we have not had any formal discussion about committing to become accredited with the Living Wage Foundation.

Supplementary

Thank you for the response to my question. In 2016 the End Child Poverty Report said that almost a quarter of this Borough's children lived in poverty. Accreditation by Councils is proven to have a knock-on effect with local organisations following suit. To date Merton has nine. Therefore when will the Council speak to the Living Wage Foundation in order to start talks to get the necessary accreditation?

Reply

I'd like to thank her for her question and her supplementary. The conditions of staff who work for the Council are very important to us and that's one of the reasons why we pay the living wage in Merton. It's also why the most recent contract that we signed also pay the living wage. But at the heart of this there is a problem that we need to recognise and that quite seriously is that the funding that is available from the Government for Councils to provide their services is totally inadequate. After years of austerity unfortunately Councils are put under pressure to make a decision between paying staff and providing services and that is not acceptable. If you want all Councils to be paid up and signed up to the Living Wage campaign, then the Government has a responsibility to ensure that Councils are funded properly. If that

does not happen we will all be faced with a choice between paying people and providing services and that is not where any of us want to be so I would ask her to go back to her colleagues and speak to the Government and change things because Council funding is at breaking point and it needs to stop.

From Councillor Hina Bokhari to the Cabinet Member for Children Services

In light of the recent child poverty figures for West Barnes, which starkly illustrate the needs of many children in our ward and the surrounding areas. Will the Cabinet member produce a full impact assessment of the council's decision to introduce charges for the Raynes Park Little League and reconsider action to mitigate the charges as part of a wider plan to tackle growing inequality and health inequality across the borough?

Reply

The Council has no specific plans to undertake a full impact assessment on the introduction of charges for the Raynes Park Little League.

The charges in question have been accepted by the Little Leagues and are now implemented following a 12 month period of consultation and negotiation. The charges have been levied in order to cover the essential and basic costs of providing facilities, services and mitigating the environmental impacts of the several hundreds of children from all backgrounds who participate in Little League activities across the borough weekly during the season.

The charges in question are very reasonable and equate to £10 per child per season (or approximately 40p per session), a season that extends from October through to the spring months and represents a small fraction of charges levied within the borough by commercial providers of seasonal junior football sessions, commonly over £100.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for her reply. The Little League parents and people involved have talked to me regularly about what's going on at the moment. Yes they had to accept it because they didn't have a choice but to accept the charge. You call it reasonable, and if it is reasonable - £10, then the Council should be able to not charge these parents, or at least come up with a compromise; exclude the children who are free school meals for example, at least that would then be a way of us then bridging that gap.

Reply – from the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

If it's alright I'll answer this question because it is Madam Mayor a tiny bit déjà vu, repeating what happened at the last Council meeting and the one before that. We have increased these charges and I'm not going to rehearse the reasons for that at this moment in time. We are charging in exact the same way as the London Borough of Sutton for instance who have been charging for many many years and I do not believe, if I did I'd say so, I do not believe that London Borough of Sutton is causing unnecessary hardship to its' children by doing that same charging of the Little Leagues that we have now decided to do. I think any idea of assessing children on the poverty level, apart from being in itself expensive, would be, I think it would be as divisive as policy as you could possibly imagine quite honestly, and I would resist that in every way I possibly could. Thank you very much.

From Councillor Owen Pritchard to the Cabinet member for Education

Recent national news highlighted a worrying rise in school exclusion rates. Can the Cabinet Member tell us how Merton's schools fare on this issue?

Reply

There are two types of exclusion: fixed term and permanent. Comparative data for exclusions against a national benchmark is now available for 2016/17. There is always considerable delay in the comparative benchmark data being released. The benchmark data is provided as a rate.

2016-17	Merton	National	
Permanent Exclusion	0.21	0.20	Secondary
	0.01	0.03	Primary
	0.00	0.07	Special
Fixed Term Exclusion	7.99	9.40	Secondary
	0.92	1.37	Primary
	17.15	13.03	Special

Fixed term exclusions in Merton primary and secondary schools are below the national average. In special schools, this is still above national. Special school data can be skewed for LAs who have a special school for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs as Merton does. Work is being undertaken to try and improve the special school rate and early indications are that this has improved in 17/18.

Permanent Exclusion is below the national rate in Merton primary and special schools and in line with national for secondary schools. The trend over the past 3 years in Merton has been flat however we know from the unvalidated data for Merton schools that permanent exclusions have fallen significantly in 2017/ 2018 against a previous rising national trend.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor and I also thank the Cabinet Member for her response. May I also ask what are the Council doing to ensure positive outcomes for those children that are excluded?

Reply

I want to thank Councillor Pritchard for his original question and his supplementary. Firstly to say that we want all of our children to be in school and not excluded so exclusion happens as a last resort. I was fortunate to visit the Pupil Referral Unit just a few weeks ago and this is where children attend classes when they are excluded from the main school and I was able to have a tour of that facility, to see how they are supported and they have courses and hopefully some of them go through and be returned to normal schools, but failing that, there is the facility for them to have the education that they are not getting in the mainstream school. Thank you very much.

From Councillor Najeeb Latif to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Can the Cabinet Member comment on the success of the administrations vaccination promotion?

Reply

Since April 2013, NHS England have been responsible for commissioning of all national immunisation programmes from local providers in line with agreed service specifications and hence are accountable for ensuring that the population are protected from vaccine preventable diseases. Local Authorities (through the Director of Public Health) have an oversight function to ensure plans are in place to protect their population, however do not commission any of these services.

The good news is that the annual childhood immunisations uptake has improved across all immunisations comparing 2013/14 (benchmark year) to 2017/18 with 2016/17 showing Merton having some of its highest immunisations rates. The 2016/17 rates are higher or similar to the London average. London has however historically lower vaccination rates than England.

To clarify the Merton and the London position on childhood immunisations, a large data issue has been identified across the whole of London recently. Due to a major change in the Child Health Information Systems (CHIS) that record the childhood immunisations data for London, migrating into 4 CHIS hubs, this has affected the accuracy of the reported data across London for 2017/18. NHS Digital who publishes the data have therefore put a caveat and asked that the data is treated with caution saying 'Local Authority (LA) COVER data in London has been provided by four newly-established CHIS hubs and as such reflect a system in transition. Changes in Local Authority coverage in the London region should be interpreted with caution.' Quarter 1 data has now been published for 2018/19 which shows some good uptake across some immunisations, however it still shows MMR 2nd dose and the pre-school booster (Dtap/IPV Booster) for children aged 5 as being similar to the 2017/18 annual rates seen. We are working with NHS England, Merton CCG and partners to look at the approach around these particularly with the aim of putting any additional actions in place to improve the accuracy of the data as well as increasing take up.

Actions supporting improving childhood immunisations include:

- The Local Authority working with NHS England commissioners, Merton CCG and providers of immunisations through the Merton Immunisations Steering group which meets regularly with an action plan that is refreshed annually and data monitored quarterly.
- Childhood Immunisations is one of the 5 key outcomes under the Best Start in Life theme for the Health and Well-being Strategy (2015 – 2018). This keeps a focus on improving immunisations locally.
- Public Health promotion of childhood immunisations across the borough e.g. articles in My Merton (which is a publication that goes into every single home in Merton), Young Merton Together, Social media etc. Promotion of children's flu vaccinations through leaflets in all Libraries and Children's Centres
- Health Visiting services commissioned by LA are systematically (through universal health reviews) as well as opportunistically asking about the child's immunisations, promoting immunisations take up as well as signposting parents to their GP for their child to be immunised.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you to the Cabinet Member for her detailed response. The NHS is clearly not ensuring that enough children are being immunised in this Borough. This will harm children in the East of the Borough in particular. What is the Cabinet Member doing to bridge this health gap?

Reply

It's actually me, so it was he not her, but I thank him for his question and for his supplementary. I think he's right that it does need to be improved the figures need to go up and the original answer outlined a number of actions that we are taking with health partners including NHS England and Merton CCG and that will continue to happen through the Health and Wellbeing Board and other partnership working.

From Councillor Pauline Cowper to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

Can the Cabinet member explain the programme of engagement for young people in the borough on The Canons project?

Reply

The programme is currently delivering:

- A set of 25 lessons around themes on The Canons and the history of Mitcham.
- A three year programme of photography skills called Canons in View for children in the Mitcham Cluster.
- Hands-on activities for primary aged children working with lavender, plants and calico printing.
- The Summer Garden Party for all ages.
- Playground workshops delivered by Studio Hardie, for children and parents in Mitcham.

Future projects are in the planning stages and include:

- A reminiscence project for intergenerational work between young people and the older generation.
- Projects across film, animation, and visual arts as part of the delivery of the interpretation plan.
- Workshops on traditional building skills.
- An archaeological dig with provision for all ages
- Community Wall with designs submitted by young people
- Further possibilities include a festival, performances, and a community-led gardening project

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor. Given the emphasis of this Council meeting's strategic theme, can the Cabinet Member please explain how these activities work towards bridging the gap?

Reply

Thank you very much indeed for your question and your supplementary question Councillor. I'm really excited about this one, it's really exciting that we have a divide that we know about in our Borough but what we have is an amazingly exciting project in the Eastern part of the Borough which involves children in all kinds of activities both curricular and extra-curricular. Extra-curricular means that they actually have to have their parents come with them and so people will be coming from across the Borough to perform these things – archaeological digs, can you imagine that as a kid. The wonderful thing about our children particularly, you see it in Mitcham schools and I'm not being anti-Wimbledon in saying this, is that they don't recognise the difference between rich and poor, they don't recognise the difference between black and white, they look to each other as friends and I want to see through this, children coming together, from the East from the West and bringing their parents with them and bridging that gap, through these activities, it's fantastic, it's fascinating, be there. Thank you.

From Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Education:

What timeframe does the council think is acceptable to consider education, health and care (EHC) plan cases from schools?

Reply

We have a target within the SENDIS service of 100% of EHC Needs Assessment requests, whether received from schools, professionals or parents being heard at SEND Panel within 2 weeks from receipt. We are currently achieving 96.3%.

Supplementary

Thank you to the Cabinet Member for her response. Despite your claimed response rate, I've had schools tell me that they have to constantly chase up for action and feedback and decisions on the various EHC plans for their SEND children. This is not good for the schools or the children themselves. Will the Cabinet Member apologise for this lack of communication with schools and put a plan in place to help bridge this health gap?

Reply

I want to thank Councillor Holden for his supplementary question. I think actually though you see the target of 100% I would say that's quite ambitious and I think that shows that we want each child to have the best education that they can have and to meet their needs. Therefore I think meeting 96.3%, I don't know who you spoke to maybe they might be in that percentage that we're not meeting but you can see that we have a 100% target which means that we have that ambition to make sure that we have everyone on board. Thank you.

From Councillor Billy Christie to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

Can the Cabinet Member tell me what opportunities are offered at the new Morden leisure centre for children and young families?

Reply

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The leisure centre has been designed around the needs and wishes of the community, it has an increased water area with the secondary pool being a large 15mx13m, this means that more learners can be accommodated.

The floor of the secondary pool is moveable so learners can be in very shallow water but the pool can get deeper as learners progress

The secondary pool can be completely isolated from any other area which means that any groups can use this area without being visible to other users

The main pool is 25m x 13m and starts at 1m deep so there is a natural progression from the secondary pool and plenty of room for families to swim together. The GLL schedule has a daily swim for under 5s and adults, parent and baby sessions and family swim times

The diving option extends from 1m to 3m to 5m boards, so both children and adults can progress with ease

There is a pool pod so people with mobility issues can access the pool in a dignified and easy way. In addition to the usual changing rooms, there are family changing rooms and a specialist changing room equipped for people with disabilities.

The gym is three times bigger than the previous one and instructors will be able to give both adults and teenagers instruction, which will give them confidence to use the gym equipment. There are also teenage sessions planned

The new spacious fitness studio offers a variety of classes and doubles up as a community space for local groups and organisations. There is plenty of room for children's parties

The café situated in the entrance foyer gives a comfortable place to relax with healthy food options available. It is situated so that non-members can use it perhaps after a healthy walk in the park.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you to the Cabinet Member for his response. Could I ask him Madam Mayor what measures are being taken to ensure that the fantastic brand new leisure centre in Morden is being publicised so that it is in fact accessed by as wide and varied a group as possible including by hard to reach groups?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Christie for his initial question and his follow-up question. I have taken a leaf out of the Leader's book because I have here, something else that no one else in this chamber currently has – tomorrow's MyMerton, which as you can see has the Leisure Centre on its' front page and has an excellent article inside on Page 6 with our handsome Leader and his trusty sidekick, there you go. That's going to 80,000 households throughout Merton and that will tell them about the Leisure Centre. Of course, it's advertised in many other ways, it's advertised all over the net and it's advertised by word of mouth etc etc and I tell you one thing; you see these happy kids on the front here, those children aren't the children in question, but what

we did, and I wish it would be my idea, what we did was we had a silent auction for the first people to swim in the pool and I'm really pleased to say that it was a family from St Helier my ward, a family of three little girls and mum and dad who were the first to swim in that pool and you can bet your boots that they're telling all their neighbours about it, so there you go. Thank you very much.

From Councillor Edward Gretton to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services:

Siobhan McDonnagh MP has said in an article in The Times on 15th November that Merton Council is often unaware of vulnerable children arriving at Connect House, is Merton Council unaware of the number of vulnerable children

Reply

Children's Services have liaised closely with colleagues and partners around this issue. We have sought to identify a mechanism that would allow us to identify vulnerable children. The current pan London safeguarding procedures require any local authority moving a child into another to notify the receiving authority if the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan, Child in Need plan or they are being assessed to ascertain their needs or because of a child protection concern. There is no other obligation for a local authority has to provide information if they are placing. Unfortunately, this means that Children's services are as a consequence not informed or made aware of any child who has vulnerability below these thresholds placed in Connect House.

I am due to visit Connect House with a specialist health visitor in the coming weeks

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor. Madam Mayor Siobhain McDonagh MP had been saying in The Times that the Council had no idea how many vulnerable children were arriving at Connect House in Mitcham in Cricket Green. Why has the Cabinet Member for Children's Services not been paying full and proper attention and giving every priority to this known location of concern in Mitcham?

Reply

I thank the Councillor for his supplementary question and what I would say to that is it is on our radar we are concerned about it and agree it's unacceptable that so many vulnerable children are placed in Connect House. We're not ignoring the issue, for example it comes up at our Violence against Women and Girls board, we also considered the numbers of vulnerable children there when we are told about them if they meet the thresholds. Unfortunately if they don't meet the thresholds then occasionally we're not aware of them. That's not acceptable, we're striving to do more and I'm due to visit on the 30th of November with a specialist health visitor, so I'll keep an eye out I'll make sure I'm aware fully of the issues and continue to strive to do the best for those vulnerable people.

From Councillor Laxmi Attawar to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Can the Cabinet Member please explain how Merton will be taking part in the Mayor of London's new Healthy Early Years scheme that he recently launched in Mitcham?

Reply

In Merton, the Early Years' Service, in partnership with Public Health colleagues and the Wandle Early Years Hub, is coordinating and championing the Health Early Years London (HEYL) programme across the early years sector. The HEYL scheme complements the Early Years Foundation Stage framework to look at children's health and wellbeing. To date we have attended the HEYL conferences, promoted the programme through our communications across the sector and identified a Merton programme coordinator.

There are various stages within the programme. Settings that sign up via the HEYL website receive support and advice from the local programme coordinator and to date 23 Merton Early Years settings have achieved First steps and 7 Merton settings are working towards Bronze. Settings that have signed up include private nurseries, childminders and Children's Centres. As part of the quality assurance and sign off process we will be working in partnership with Wandsworth Council through the shared Wandle Early Years Hub, working together to agree local arrangements to agree the applicants successful achievement of the HEYL Awards. The Early Years' service will continue to promote HEYL throughout the duration of the programme

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor and I have a supplementary. I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for her response but can the Cabinet Member please explain what else our children's centres do to support the health and wellbeing of the Borough's children?

Reply

I will thank the Councillor for her supplementary question. I think if I were to answer that fully I would be here for an age, but what I might talk about instead is some of the pioneering things we're doing within Children's centres. For example, as well as the Health Early Years London, we're also hosting Health Visitors there which means that we have increased referrals to Health Visitors and from Health Visitors picking up on some of the other schemes that we do; we're making sure that children have the building blocks for the best start in life.