

Merton Council Council

3 April 2019

Supplementary agenda 4

21 Councillor Non-Priority Questions and Replies

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Ordinary Council Questions

50. From Councillor David Williams to the Leader of the Council

Would the Leader please list the meetings and correspondence he has had since the last ordinary meeting of the council on 6th February 2019 to save St Helier Hospital?

Reply

Following ongoing discussions and regular updates sought by the Council at the end of 2018, the Improving Healthcare Together project team is continuing to undertake work on the Integrated Impact Assessment, looking in more detail in matters including transport, accessibility and deprivation. Since the last ordinary council meeting on 6th February, I have worked closely with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health to ensure Merton's interests are properly represented in this programme of work.

51. From Cllr Anthony Fairclough to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness

The presentation and collection of waste from those who live in flats above shops is causing lots of problems, what steps are being planned to resolve these issues, and to introduce a food waste recycling scheme for those on the bag collection services that don't currently have it?

Reply

The collection from flats above shops and time banded properties has not changed as part of the wider service change which was introduced in October 2018. These properties are part of the communal waste service and as such their collection frequency has remained weekly as a minimum and in some locations, particularly those in a time banding area, we have maintained a twice weekly collection.

Given the nature of these properties and the restricted storage facilities it has not been practical to implement a food waste collection service. As the general waste is collected weekly there are no issues with food waste disposed of as residual waste.

We have introduced an additional sack collection service for those properties which have been reassessed and deemed not suitable for wheelie bins. These collections follow the same frequency and schedule of the bin service with the general waste and paper and card being collected in sacks and the mixed recycling collected from the boxes. For these properties food waste is collected weekly from the existing caddies.

I have asked Waste services to look into the practicality of extending this service to the flats above shops with the aim of introducing a weekly food waste service for these locations. The challenge will be that in order to for this to be economically practical this would need to be assessed per location and individual properties could not opt in or out of their preferred service.

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

Could the Cabinet Member please explain why he has failed to take proper action to protect Merton against the plans of Heathrow airport to open up new flight paths over the borough?

Reply

Merton Council has and will continue to seek to ensure that any expansion of Heathrow airport has minimal adverse impact on the borough's residents and we have been active participants throughout the consultation process and will continue to do so.

Our main cause of concern relates to the future possibility of noise from aircraft on the borough, and the potential impact on residents and quiet spaces, such as our parks. We would strongly urge residents and businesses to play an active role in any future consultation process and to make their voices heard.

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

I was concerned to read in his report to Scrutiny on 19 March, that since commencement of the Homelessness Reduction Act, 2507 households have approached the Council for help with housing difficulties. Whilst it is encouraging to learn that this contact led to 426 instances of homelessness being prevented, could the cabinet member explain what has happened to the remaining 2081 households please?

Reply

The Council is committed to the prevention of homelessness and continues to maintain its position of having the lowest numbers of homeless households in temporary accommodation in London, with the exception of the City of London. You are correct when you point out that 2507 households have approached the Council for help with housing difficulties since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act. However of these, only 1322 triggered a homeless application in accordance with the Act of which 426 households were prevented from facing a homelessness episode. The remaining 759 households continue to receive ongoing case work, have ceased engaging with officers or have been offered temporary accommodation, noting that for the purposes of measuring prevention activities, those households entering temporary accommodation cannot legally be counted towards achieving a homeless prevention success.

54. From Councillor Nick McLean to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport

The Wimbledon Times reports that during fire checks carried out by London Fire Brigade in care homes, 57% received formal notifications to improve their fire preparations; what actions has the council taken in the last six months to ensure that Merton's care homes are fire proof?

Reply

We are working closely with the LFB regarding this matter and they are; Reviewing our contracted care homes in the borough and checking that appropriate fire safety processes are in place.

LFB will be presenting at our care home provider forum, jointly hosted with Merton Seniors Forum, an event attended by care home managers and owners, on 2nd April on the issue of fire safety and risk assessment in care home settings.

Merton Seniors Forum ran an article in their February newsletter on the issue of fire safety and risk assessment.

Our two in house residential homes and five Supported Living sites have regular fire safety checks and evacuation drills. All premises have site specific fire safety plans and individual personal safety plans for residents. In February all staff underwent refresher fire safety training.

55. From Councillor Ed Gretton to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness

Could the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness confirm how many of Veolia's and Merton Council's fleet of vehicles use electric engines, and how many use diesel?

Reply

Our current fleet of 91 vehicles which are under review consist of:-

- A) Diesel 92%
- B) Petrol 6%
- C) Hybrid / Electric 2%

We are in the process of reviewing our vehicle replacement programme for the 91 vehicles currently in use by the Council. We have explored the use of alternative fuels and new technology to help us to deliver services in the most cost effective and environmentally sustainable ways. With air quality concerns throughout London, and restrictions and financial penalties being imposed in various parts of London, it falls to us to lead the way in adopting new, less polluting technologies to deliver their services. Our waste collection and street cleaning contractor, Veolia operate a fleet of 27 vehicles which are assigned to Merton 7 of these are electric gluttons and the remaining 20 vehicles are all diesel. In addition to this fleet our contractor does utilise across the Partnership borough a number of hybrid vehicles (Diesel/Electric) totalling 26.

56. From Councillor Stephen Crowe to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness

For the last six months, please provide a breakdown of how many fines were issued and what was the total value of these fines in respect of: littering in Wimbledon, littering in Mitcham & Morden, fouling by dogs in Wimbledon, fouling by dogs in Mitcham & Morden, parking offences in Wimbledon, parking offences Mitcham &

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Morden, moving traffic offences in Wimbledon and moving traffic offences in Mitcham & Morden.

Reply

Fines issued for the following town centres 1st October 2018 – 31st March 2019

Littering Offences,

Mitcham 1205

Morden 111

Wimbledon 1439

Total value of fines is £30,040

One dog fouling FPN issued for Mitcham, (Figges Marsh)

| Area (Type) | Moving traffic | Parking |
|--|----------------|---------------|
| Wimbledon (On-street parking) | | 17,018 |
| Wimbledon (Off-street parking) | | 3,290 |
| Wimbledon (Total parking) | | 20,308 |
| Wimbledon (Moving traffic) | 9,411 | |
| | | |
| Mitcham and Morden (On-street parking) | | 5,683 |
| Mitcham and Morden (Off-street parking) | | 1,956 |
| Mitcham and Morden (Total parking) | | 7,639 |
| Mitcham and Morden (Moving traffic) | 19,156 | |
| | | |

| | Wimbledon | Mitcham and Morden |
|----------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Moving traffic | £1,282,798.00 | £2,518,136.00 |
| Parking | £1,583,755.00 | £620,746.00 |

57. From Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport

Regarding planning enforcement please provide a breakdown, for the last six months: how many planning enforcement actions were initiated in Wimbledon, how many planning enforcement actions were initiated in Mitcham & Morden, how many planning enforcement actions were concluded in Wimbledon, how many planning enforcement actions were concluded in Mitcham & Morden, how much money was recovered from those responsible for planning violations in respect of costs incurred by the council in taking planning enforcement actions in Wimbledon and how much money was recovered from those responsible for planning violations in respect of costs incurred by the council in taking planning enforcement actions in Mitcham & Morden.

Reply

Unfortunately it is not possible at this time to extract the information from the current system in such detail on an area basis. There has been 238 enforcement cases created for the borough in the last 6 months and our records show that 352 cases were closed. It should be noted that there was purge of much older cases at the end 2018 which resulted in a batch of cases being closed. A new upgraded system called 'Assure' will be introduced within the next 6 months and this will have far greater capacity to undertake bespoke reporting of the nature requested.

There are very few circumstances where money can be recovered from individuals responsible for breaches of planning control. The contravener has to pay a planning application fee if they appeal against any enforcement notice served. Again the system does not allow an interrogation to separate these particular application from normal planning applications. Each year there are on average around 8 such appeals with an average fee of around £500 paid to assess each planning application. Direct action can result in charges being placed on the land registry against a property, but there have been no such actions in the last 6 months. The Council has also in the past used the Proceeds of Crimes Act (POCA) to successfully retrieve income from unauthorised residential lets, but there has been no such actions in the last 6 months.

58. From Councillor Nigel Benbow to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport

Please provide a break down by month and by ward for the number of parking meters broken into and the amount of money stolen for the most recent three month period for which figures are available.

Reply

There are no Figures to report and we have had no thefts in this period.

Council questions under the strategic theme (Children and Young People with a focus on Schools)

59. From Councillor Hayley Ormrod to the Cabinet Member for Education

Can the Cabinet Member please confirm how much Merton Council charges in interest to schools for loans where schools are required to buy capital products outright?

Reply

Merton charge the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) maturity interest rate plus 2% admin fee for any loans required by schools for capital products. The PWLB rate changes daily and differs depending on the loan period.

60. From Cllr Carl Quilliam to the Cabinet Member for Education

What practical action has the Cabinet member taken to support the NEU funding campaign?

Reply

I am a member of the NEU Councillors' Network, made up of councillors across the country working to put pressure on the government to urgently address the chronic underfunding of schools. I signed the open letter to the Education Secretary, Damian Hinds MP, and with the Leader of Merton Council joined other councillors to present the letter to the Secretary on 2nd April. We will be writing to the borough's MPs requesting their support for the NEU campaign following the motion passed at council on Wednesday 3rd April.

61. From Councillor Adam Bush to the Cabinet Member for Education

The last Labour government decision to use PFI contracts to fund our schools has turned out to be a disaster. How is the council assisting schools who have PFI contracts which aren't delivering maintenance to schools that had been expected? And how does the council expect to deal with this issue when the schools are returned to the council?

Reply

Council officers are continuing to monitor and challenge the PFI contractor to ensure they meet their contractual obligation to maintain the buildings. Officers have recently agreed a further, more robust approach with the four schools that the headteachers support, and will be implemented within the next two months. As implicated by Councillor Bush, this is particularly important as we are now within the last 11 years of the 25 year contract and so it is important that the schools are returned to the council or academy provider in good condition.

62. From Councillor Nigel Benbow to the Cabinet Member for Education

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Can the Cabinet member for Education provide an update on the construction timetable for the new Harris Wimbledon School at High Path, and will he commit to installing a proper air purification system within the school, which not only addresses NO2 risks as currently planned, but also extends the air filtration systems to mitigating both PM10 & PM2.5 exposures?

Reply

The council has now successfully completed the complex exercise of ensuring the entire site is vacant and it has been passed to the Department for Education (DfE) on a 125 year lease to build the school. Demolition work is progressing well, and the DfE's contractor is on course for August 2020 completion.

As a Free School/new Academy the design of the school is the responsibility of the DfE but air quality was assessed as part of the Planning Application.

Officers do not anticipate that the pollution exposure within the school will be of health concern. The challenge will be to the way in which travel, to and from the school, contributes to pollution and exposure, as is the case for many schools. We have committed to a scheme of monitoring to ensure that we keep a close eye on air quality at this site.

There are a number of filtration devices on the market that profess to filter a number of pollutants, however many remain scientifically untested, as time and technology moves on we will consider the best methods of reducing exposure to poor air where necessary. The entire site is now vacant and has been passed to the Department for Education (DfE) on a 125 year lease to build the school. Demolition work is progressing well, and the DfE's contractor is on course for August 2020.

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