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# **Merton Council**

## **Council**

**10 July 2019**

### **Supplementary Agenda 5**

25 Public and Councillor Supplementary Questions and Replies

1 - 34

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**1. From: Shipra Gupta**

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

What steps is Merton council taking to reduce the gender pay gap amongst its employees and how long does the council expect these measures to take to achieve gender pay equality?

**Reply**

The gender pay gap at Merton depends mainly on which services are provided in-house, shared with other Local Authorities or by external contractors rather than any intrinsic pay inequality. For example, prior to the transfer out of predominantly male and relatively lower-paid staff in Waste and Street Scene services, there was a gender pay gap in favour of women.

The Council uses job evaluation to ensure jobs are equally and fairly graded, and all managers involved in recruitment and selection are required to attend training. Where possible interview panels are required to be diverse. We regularly review our terms and conditions to ensure there are not equal pay biases in the design and operation of our pay and rewards structures.

**2. From: Tamara Kohler**

**To the Cabinet Member for Schools and Adult Education**

What has the 1 in 75 to 1 in 40 rule change meant for funding at Merton schools?

**Reply**

It appears that the questioner may be referring to a local authority decision in Gloucestershire about SEN Top Up funding for schools. This would be entirely a local decision and a matter for Gloucestershire only. It doesn't have any impact on funding at Merton schools.

**3. From: Tom Killick**

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

Further to the answer to question 12 on 12 September 2018, what is the Council's position on Heathrow expansion in light of the current consultation?

**Reply**

I can confirm that officers from Merton are active participants throughout every consultation phase, and will continue to do so.

Our main cause of concern relates to the future possibility of noise from aircraft, and the potential impact on residents and quiet spaces, such as our parks.

Although so far the consultation doesn't provide the necessary clarity for officers to provide a detailed response, the consultation process will be developing over a period of time and that more detailed information will emerge as the process matures.

We will strongly urge residents and businesses to play an active role in the consultation process and make their voices heard.

As information becomes clearer Merton will adjust its stance to ensure that local residents and the borough is protected as far as possible.

**4. From: Samantha MacArthur  
To the Cabinet Member for Commerce, Leisure and Culture**

Who is expected to be most adversely impacted by the introduction of tennis court charges?

**Reply**

For clarity, charges for tennis court use are not being introduced as this activity has been "pay to play" continuously for many years in Merton.

The technology based booking system being adopted at four venues soon will simply ensure that existing fees and charges are more efficiently and effectively applied.

There is currently a standard hourly rate of £8 per court per hour for adults, £6.20 for concessions that applies to all users at all of our courts with the exception of Wimbledon Park where the fees are greater: £12 for adults at peak times; £9.20 for adults at off-peak times; and £8.20 for concessions at off-peak times.

Merton Council continues to support enterprises such as "Tennis for Free" at two locations (Tamworth Rec, Mitcham and Joseph Hood Rec, Morden) as it has done for many years.

**5. From: Jil Hall  
To the Cabinet Member for Schools and Adult Education**

How many children with an EHCP in Merton do not currently have a school place?

**Reply**

There are currently 16 children with an EHCP who are currently off roll (Children missing education). All of the cases are tracked at the Children Missing Education Panel.

**6. From: Hugo Forshaw  
To the Cabinet Member for Schools and Adult Education**

How many Merton schools do not receive the minimum funding guarantee and where does Merton rank against national indices of deprivation?

## **Reply**

Funding for all schools, academies and free schools is calculated through Merton's Schools Funding Formula. For the 2019/20 financial year £29,681 was allocated through the minimum funding guarantee to 4 of the 53 institutions.

### **7. From: Tony Burton To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport**

To ask for details of how the historic significance of the late 18th century Bishopsford Road bridge and its heritage features will be assessed and retained in the restoration work following its unfortunate collapse?

## **Reply**

The Council understands the heritage value of Bishopsford Bridge as well as recognising its location within the Wandle Valley Conservation Area.

The collapse was an unprecedented and unfortunate event. The Council's priority over the past few weeks has been to address the immediate emergency situation with regard to utilities, flooding and supporting vulnerable members of our community.

Regarding the bridge structure itself. Our priority is to stabilise the bridge to create a safe environment for our engineers to assess the structural condition of what remains of the bridge. This work will take up until the end of July.

Parallel to the structural assessment, there is an independent investigation underway to look into the cause and impact of the collapse.

Only after this assessment is complete, will we be able to understand the options open to us for repairing or replacing the bridge.

### **8. From: Pippa Maslin To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Health and the Environment**

Part of the justification for outsourcing waste management to Veolia was that it will improve recycling rates, yet there is no discernible hyperlink to any concrete evidence when one visits the council's website. How about a clear hyperlink to a regularly updated dashboard on the home page?

## **Reply**

Following the introduction of the new containerised collection service in October 2018, I am pleased to advise that we are continuing to experience an increase in our recycling performance.

The net impact of these changes has resulted in a current recycling rate of 44% compared to a historic average of approximately 36%. Taking into account the full year impact of the service change we are confident that this year we will achieve our stretch

target of 45% recycling performance and position us in the top quartile of all London boroughs.

The annual recycling rates for all UK councils can be found on the [Let's Recycle website](#) and on the [GOV.UK website](#). The Council has not historically published this information on its own website, however, as it was a stated priority of the rationale for the new service I agree it is something that Council should be making more easily accessible for residents to view.

I am working closely with officers and our colleagues in the South London Waste Partnership to provide links to monthly dashboards and performance reports on all areas of contractual performance to better inform residents, and we will ensure that recycling performance forms part of this.

### **Supplementary**

Thank you very much for the answer. My question is quite straightforward I hope. It's that, do the figures given in the answer, when it says the recycling rates, does that include the stuff that gets sent to the Beddington Incinerator or as people are preferring to call it, the Energy Recovery Facility?

### **Reply**

I actually don't know but I will write to you after the meeting to confirm.

### **9. From: Sandra Vogel To the Cabinet Member for Voluntary Sector, Partnerships and Community Safety**

What provision is being made to support the relocation or retention of voluntary and community organisations based at Worsfold House in plans for disposal and/or redevelopment of the site?

### **Reply**

In May 2013 The Council let Wandle Valley Resource Centre, (previously known as Worsfold House) Church Road, Mitcham to Grenfell Housing under a Tenancy of Will to be used for B1 Offices and D1 non-residential institutions such as school or training centre purposes. At that time the site was vacant and was listed in Merton's Local Plan Sites and Policies Development Plan Document (Adopted July 2014) as Site Proposal 17. Grenfell Housing merged with Evolve Housing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 and they continued to occupy the site as a temporary pop-up resource centre.

Evolve formally notified the Council that they would be ending their tenancy of the site on 30 November 2019 and provided a list of their 12 tenants. Evolve confirmed on 19 June 2019 that they would write to their tenants of the building, giving them notice on their facilities sharing agreements, to end on the same date. Under the agreement with the Council they were required to give one month's notice, but have provided six

months for their tenants to find suitable accommodation. Some of the tenants have already made contact with the Economic Development Officer in future Merton seeking advice regarding other suitable space to relocate. The Council have been advised today (2<sup>nd</sup> July) that tenants have been formally given notice and so the officers will contact all of the tenants in writing offering support in seeking alternative accommodation but the Council property opportunities are limited as most of these are currently occupied.

**10. From: John Braithwaite  
To the Cabinet Member for Commerce, Leisure and Culture**

What is/was the average usage, by season, of each of the tennis courts where charges are being introduced this year (Joseph Hood, Dundonald Rec, John Innes) prior to the introduction of these charges?

**Reply**

We have no data on the usage of these locations in recent years as these sites are no longer staffed on a routine basis.

By introducing new court-side technology, as currently proposed, we fully expect to have full, accurate and thorough data in the future and by remote means.

Only the charging mechanism is changing as a result of current proposals, changing to one that is more efficient and reliable. Each of these courts is already a “pay to play” facility, even if collecting fees has not always been applied consistently on these sites.

**11. From: Philip Ling  
To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Health and the Environment**

What is the current status of the redevelopment of the Wilson Health Centre and when is the new centre expected to open?

**Reply**

The redevelopment of the Wilson Hospital is an NHS project, led by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), on NHS Property Land. The Council has been working closely with the CCG as the aspiration is to create a holistic health and wellbeing campus. However, the Council has no direct control over the timescales or delivery of the redevelopment.

The typical NHS financing route for a scheme such as the Wilson is via a LIFT Company programme. In the summer of 2018, there was a national change affecting how a rise in interest rates (until the point of construction) would be managed between the NHS and LIFT companies. This created delays across the country, and whilst this remains a national issue the CCG is actively exploring alternative methods of funding and remains committed to the delivery the scheme.

Over the past 12 months, work has continued on the technical aspects of service design, and local engagement has been undertaken through the Wilson Community Reference Group. More recently, the CCG announced the establishment of a Steering Group to oversee the redevelopment, which will include local residents and community representatives.

A comprehensive update was provided to the Health and Wellbeing Board in March 2019. That can be viewed here:

<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/documents/s27218/Report%20Wilson%20Update.pdf>

In that paper, the CCG confirmed the intention to open the Wilson by the end of 2022.

**12. From: Richard Hackforth-Jones  
To the Cabinet Member for Schools and Adult Education**

What percentage of children were offered a space at a school listed on their application form, even if the full 6 spaces on the form were not filled in, for primary and secondary school in each of the last five years?

**Reply**

The following percentage of Merton resident applicants received a preference school offer on national offer day (whether they used all their 6 preferences possible or not)

Primary school reception year:

2019 – 94.83%

2018 – 95.18%

2017 – 94.10%

2016 – 93.67%

2015 – 94.23%

Secondary school year 7

2019 – 92.84%

2018 – 91.01%

2017 – 94.61%

2016 – 95.42%

2015 – 94.30%

Please note that all applicants received a reasonable offer of a school place, although for a small number this was after offer day

**13. From: Sara Sharp  
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

What is the procedure and process for the selection and appointment of panel members to the Design Review Panel; and who appoints them, how long for, on what terms, and what evidence of experience is required?

**Reply**

When Merton's Design Review Panel (DRP) was first started in 2007, the procedure was to have a long list and short list of panel members, the short list consisted of members who would attend DRP meetings. After a period of a few years, they would be 'rotated off' the shortlist onto the long list, which was essentially a list of 'members in waiting'. At this time new members would be rotated onto the short list from the long list.

This procedure worked for a few years until all those still available on the long list had served time on the short list. Following this a different procedure has been used. There are about 20 members on the panel, who attend from 1 to 3 meetings a year. As vacancies have arisen, the panel membership has been refreshed by appointing new members and rotating some members off the panel. This has been done a number of times during the life of the panel.

The way this is done is to advertise predominantly through relevant professional bodies such as Urban Design London and the Urban Design Group. Individuals also become aware of the panel and can independently express a desire to join the panel. When a refresh takes place, these are also taken into account.

The panel is set up and run by Merton Council and reviews proposals only within the council's Local Planning Authority boundary. The panel is run and managed by the future Merton team in the council and it is this team that appoints panel members. New panel members sign a code of conduct and declaration of interest form. There is no set period for serving on the panel. The process has not yet seen all original members replaced by newer members, though this process is ongoing.

To serve on the panel, members must have relevant experience in professions relating to the built environment, and must demonstrate, by means of a CV, e-mail and telephone conversation, that they are suitable candidates. This will include amount of expertise, a proven track record and ability to work as part of a panel. Skill gaps on the panel are also taken into account. The majority of members are from the private sector and the purpose of design review panels is to bring together individual professionals to provide a collective critique of development proposals, independent from (but not instead of) the council's own design, conservation and planning officers.

**Supplementary**

Thank you very much for the answer. The DRP you say is managed by Future Merton Team, it's chaired by the Head of the Planning Committee, the note taking is taken by the urban designer and a member of the panel has a deep financial interest in the

Borough. So is the DRP independent and could we have the terms of reference when you appoint members made public as other Councils do please?

**Reply**

I'd like to thank Sara Sharp for her supplementary. It is chaired by the chair of planning but in the past it was chaired by a former conservative councillor John Bowcott. It consists of a number of planning experts from around the Borough who give their advice in terms of planning applications and in terms of the design of those as well. We do have an open process in terms of the recruitment of that but I will ask that the terms of reference is sent on to you in the post. Thank you.

**14. From: Viv Vella**

**To the Cabinet Members for Adult Social Care, Health and the Environment and Women and Equalities**

What is the council doing to promote mental health support services to BAME communities that currently have a low uptake of these services?

**Reply**

The majority of mental health services are commissioned and provided by the NHS. We work closely with our partners in health to try to ensure that services are accessible to all parts of our community.

The Council's social care duties in relation to adult mental health are fulfilled by South West London & St Georges Mental Health NHS Trust through integrated health and care teams. These arrangements are currently being renewed and access issues will be part of the new performance monitoring arrangements. As at June 2019, 35% of adult mental health social care service users were recorded as being from BAME communities.

Within the integrated mental health services provided by the Trust, the BAME proportion of patients is 42% for adult secondary care, 29.9% for CAMHS and 26% for older people services. These are broadly in line with the make-up of our community.

One of the challenges is to ensure that BAME communities have access to the full range of mental health services, including preventative and early intervention services and are not only seeking help at the point of crisis. For example, people from BAME communities are over-represented in those detained under the Mental Health Act but under-represented in accessing psychological therapies. This is a national trend. In Merton BAME communities make up 19.8% of patients in primary mental health services.

For this reason, the recommissioned Primary Care Mental Health Services service, Merton Uplift (which includes access to psychological therapies), has a focus on access by BAME service users, including incentive targets for BAME access. The new

provider, South West London & St Georges Mental Health NHS Trust, is linking with local BAME and faith groups to improve access. It is too early to judge whether they are making progress against this target.

Merton Uplift allows for self-referral and supports self-help, peer support, a wellbeing strategy, triage and face-to-face therapy. The Council is also supporting and promoting London-wide initiatives that support good mental health, such as Good Thinking self-help tools. The Council has also been working with the voluntary sector to improve the adult mental health offer. This includes supporting Imagine Independence to move to a self-referral model for peer support. These approaches help reduce barriers to access and sit alongside the targeted work of the Trust.

**15. From: Daniel Weir  
To the Cabinet Member for Commerce, Leisure and Culture**

How much money was secured by Merton from Crest Nicolson on the handover of Rowan Park and please can the Longthornton residents have confirmation that this money is ringfenced to be spent on the park only and brought up to standard agreed in planning?

**Reply**

Under the S.106 agreement secured with the planning permission for the development £95,000 was secured towards the ongoing management and grounds maintenance of the Public Park and £20,000 for the future repair and maintenance of the Local Play Area and is ring-fenced for Rowan Park only. In addition, approximately £35,000 was secured as part of the transfer of the park to the Council and is ring-fenced for park improvements.

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

The question of step-free access at Haydons Road Station has been asked repeatedly. The council claims it "continues to lobby Network Rail for station improvements". When did officers last raise the accessibility issue for this site with Network Rail? How hard are you actually trying to make this station accessible?

**Reply**

Accessibility improvements to both stations and bus stops are raised regularly with Network Rail and with the GLA. On improving accessibility to Haydon's Road station, most recently the council raised detailed issues with Network Rail in September – October 2018 relating to additional gates and ramp access as part of enforcing a nearby development site. There is an opportunity now for residents to influence how funding is spent on improvements to Haydon's Road station specifically. Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) are currently asking passengers and stakeholders across

the GTR network to submit and rank their ideas to influence how the £15 million Passenger Benefit Fund is spent. All the Thameslink stations on the Wimbledon Loop in Merton have been allocated funding, including £80,000 for Haydon's Road Station. There is also potential to pool funding pots from several stations to deliver larger schemes. Details and survey link can be found on the GTR website at [www.passengerbenefitfund.co.uk/the-fund](http://www.passengerbenefitfund.co.uk/the-fund). The consultation closes at the end of July. This consultation provides the ideal opportunity for the local community to press GTR to bring forward proposals for a step free access to the westbound platform. Selected proposals have to be delivered by Sept 2021 and we would strongly encourage all residents interested in improvements to Haydon's Road station to respond to this consultation.

**17. From: Mark Gale**

**To the Cabinet Members for Leisure, Commerce and Culture and Women and Equalities**

Has the discriminating policy that this council and GLL (Greenwich Leisure Ltd) ironically trading as "Better", enforced upon Morden Leisure Centre without any accurate recording of local residents refusal data broken any Equality Act legislation and/or public sector Equality Duty?

**Reply**

The Council and GLL (Greenwich Leisure Ltd) operate the leisure facilities in Merton in accordance with the Equality Act Legislation and Public Sector Equality Duty.

**Supplementary**

Thank you very much for your answer to my question on accepting cash at Morden Leisure Centre. I'd also like to thank Merton Conservatives for their support shown publicly on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May and also the majority of the Cannon Hill by-election candidates including the winner, Lib Dem's Councillor Jenifer Gould. Here comes the question; why did it take eight months to overturn the discriminatory decision please?

**Reply**

I disagree I don't think it was a discriminatory decision. I think the first thing to say about that facility is that it is a state of the art facility there for the pleasure of our residents. We are modernising things but not only that, you will know that now you can purchase cards through the café so you can still use cash if that's what you prefer, so it's just to make sure that.

**18. From: Gail Morrison**

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

Research shows people are reluctant to buy electric vehicles if there's a scarcity of charging posts. The only way to overcome this is by offering mass lamp-post charging, as in Wandsworth. Does the Council plan to install charging points via the streetlamp system and when this will be implemented?

**Reply**

The council is working with Source London and Transport for London to deliver a mix of fast(7kw) and rapid (22kw and 50kw) publically accessible electric vehicle charging points across the borough. To date 105 EVCP have been installed or are in the process of being installed with another 37 charge points expected to be delivered by the end of 2019. The council remains interested in testing lamp column chargers (3kw), but with the rapid development of battery and alternative kerbside based charging solutions they may not necessarily represent the best approach.

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**From Councillor Natasha Irons to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport**

Following the recent collapse of the Bishopsford Road Bridge, would the cabinet member please update council on what work has been undertaken with residents and businesses in the area?

**Reply**

Since the partial collapse of the bridge, Merton Council has worked closely with its partners, FM Conway Ltd and the Environment Agency to monitor any bridge movement and stabilise the structure.

These stabilisation works will finish on Monday 8 July, subject to weather conditions, and work will then commence on a full structural inspection followed by an assessment to determine the extent of repair work needed. Following the emergency phase of this problem when the Council sought to support those most affected through our emergency planning arrangements the Council has now moved into a process of working towards business as normal.

Senior officers from the council have worked closely with affected residents and most recently attended a public meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019 to consider bus diversion proposals with Transport for London. Officers are arranging signage (“open as usual”) for nearby businesses and encouraging businesses in the area that pay business rates to apply to the council for business rates relief. We are working to establish a single point of contact via email and website for any enquiries relating to Bishopsford Road Bridge.

**Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor. Following our public meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July, what is the timetable for the reintroduction of the 280 bus route?

**Reply**

Can I thank Councillor Irons for her supplementary but can I also take this opportunity of thanking all the Council officers and contractors and everyone else who was involved in the aftermath of the partial collapse of the Bishopsford Bridge but also as well the work of the local councillors as well in terms of engagement with residents but also in terms of businesses in the local community and concerns that local residents have. In terms of the 280 bus, I have contacted TfL, one of the things we need to set a final timetable of is in terms of the turning from Morden Road into Wandle Road; adaptations do need to be made before that happens but I do hope that it takes place within the next month, but I will be in contact with Councillor Irons and the other Ravensbury Councillors when I have a date confirmed. Thank you.

**From Councillor Oonagh Moulton to the Cabinet Member for Commerce, Leisure and Culture:**

What is the Cabinet Member doing to ensure that litter from picnics and BBQs is removed quickly and efficiently from our parks and open spaces, and can she assure residents that there will not be a repeat of the public health hazards of last summer?

**Reply**

The Greenspaces team discussed this matter with our grounds contractor, idverde, in preparation for the start of this summer season, with Wimbledon Park specifically in mind as picnics and barbeque waste issues are much greater there and not such a significant issue at other open space venues.

A working practice has been put in place which involves a litter picking team attending the park from 7.30am daily in advance of the park's formal opening (8am on weekdays; and 9am on weekends). There is, furthermore, a dedicated litter picker who attends the park for 4 hours at the end of the day during the core summer period and at weekends.

These arrangements are over and above the standard litter picking and waste arrangements and designed to deal with the elevated popularity of Wimbledon Park for these social activities. Officers will also review these arrangements over the course of the seasonal period to ensure these arrangements address efficiently any issues with litter and waste from site users.

**Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor and I thank the Cabinet Member for her response. I note she states in her response that Wimbledon Park had much greater issues from picnics and BBQs and it is with that in mind that indeed the detritus from BBQs and picnics is really a disgrace at weekends. So why has she not hired Kingdom and other service groups to issue penalty fines and crackdown on those causing real problems and health hazards in the park? Thank you.

**Reply**

Thank you very much for your question. I don't know about fining but I know we are trying our best to make sure that, as you asked in your question, there's no re-occurrence of what happened last time, hence we have dedicated people coming in before the opening and an extra four hours after closing to make sure that the parks are clean for residents to use and I will look into what else we could do but I think there's a lot of resources we're putting into that to make sure that the park is kept clean.

**From Councillor Marsie Skeete to the Cabinet Member for Finance**

I note that overall satisfaction with the council rose to 70% in the latest annual residents' survey. What analysis has the cabinet member made of the underlying reasons for this, and the variation in satisfaction levels for individual services?

## **Reply**

The survey results show that the vast majority of Merton residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live and that satisfaction with the way that the council runs things has increased since the last survey was carried out two years ago. People, particularly families, come and live in Merton because of our schools, parks and green spaces, libraries and sports and leisure facilities and this is reflected in the survey. More residents have also told us they feel safe in the borough and satisfaction with street lighting has increased.

The residents' survey was carried out soon after the largest service change that the council has made in recent times – to the recycling and rubbish collection service. This affected almost all households in the borough. Since the survey was done, recycling rates have continued to increase and action has been taken to improve street cleaning and the collection service. The council is working hard with Croydon, Sutton and Kingston, which together form South London Waste Partnership, to drive up Veolia's performance.

More service users than two years ago rated secondary education, primary education, libraries, leisure and sport facilities as good or very good.

## **Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor. In the past eight or nine years, the progress that our schools have made has been incredible. If you'd told me ten years ago that the state of the secondary school would be in the top five, I would have doubted you. I think most parents will think Merton is a great place for families, but what does the Cabinet Member foresee will be the biggest challenge for keeping it that way in the future?

## **Reply**

I'd like to thank my colleague for her supplementary and it won't surprise anyone to hear that I think that the biggest challenges facing the Council in terms of maintaining a very high level of resident satisfaction is going to be around resourcing and I think resourcing is going to be affected by the ideological insistence of keeping going with the austerity programme that we see from the Government and what happens with the new Prime Minister, who is likely to continue that I think for Local Councils. That's going to cause a major challenge and also Brexit, I have to say is going to be an enormous financial challenge if things go wrong there. But I would say that we in Merton have shown that we can achieve great things even at a time when our funding has already been cut by more than a half. We've got a new leisure centre, we've got a new library, we've got a fantastic football club coming back to the Borough, so we have shown time and time again that we will do all we can to keep Merton as a great place for Merton's families and we'd like to continue with that.

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

Does the cabinet member believe in nudge theory to change behaviour relating to parking?

### **Reply**

Nudge theory is a concept in behavioral science, political theory and behavioral economics which proposes positive reinforcement , indirect suggestions and other means as ways to influence the behavior and decision making of groups or individuals.

The Council believes that most residents will make the right choices in light of clear information regarding the impact that the motor car has on air quality and the climate alongside sensible pricing to reduce demand. This will include suitable available healthy and affordable modes of transport [active and public].

Governments across the world have adopted nudge theory and established units to promote its use across a range of public policy areas. There is no reason to believe that its application is not suitable for parking and car use.

### **Supplementary**

Yes Thank you Madam Mayor. Thank you to the Cabinet Member for his answer. Clearly the Cabinet Member doesn't know the difference between a nudge and blunt force trauma as otherwise he would not be taxing Wimbledon and Raynes Park 1.3 million more than Labour-controlled Mitcham. Will the Cabinet Member see sense and drop this unfair discriminatory parking tax?

### **Reply**

I'd like to thank Councillor Holden for his supplementary. He is of course, wrong, we will not be dropping our parking charge increases because we believe that the issue of air quality and emissions needs to be taken seriously. The opposition may not take it seriously, we do. This nudge behaviour is to obviously encourage people to take up more sustainable modes of transport so we will not be following the advice that Councillor Holden has offered to us tonight. Thank you.

### **From Councillor Carl Quilliam to the Cabinet Member for Commerce, Leisure and Culture**

Will the Cabinet member confirm the last time money was collected from the tennis courts at Joseph Hood Recreation Ground, Dundonald Recreation Ground and John Innes Park, how much was collected, what the charges were, and what the process was for deciding to reintroduce charges?

### **Reply**

For clarity, charges are not being "reintroduced" at these three venues. Tennis has been a "pay to play" activity continuously for many years in Merton and the current prices reflect those prices levied in the historical past, uplifted by an appropriate percentage annually to reflect inflation.

Whereas in the past these three park sites had dedicated site staff, some of whom were posted on site at weekends mainly to collect sports fees, this ceased around 2012. The court takings at that time were typically of the order of £2-3k per annum per site only and therefore somewhat out of balance with the staffing costs required to collect these fees at a time when the service was the subject to significant savings pressures. Consequently, the income from these venues dropped to nil, or very close to nil.

## 06: Non ST Questions

A new technology based tennis court booking system, developed by the Lawn Tennis Association, is being adopted at four venues, including the three named sites. This electronic system will ensure that our existing fees and charges are more efficiently and effectively applied and at no cost to the Council.

### **Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you to the Cabinet Member. Will the Cabinet Member consider a season ticket and look at potential free options for people who play tennis regularly but can't afford the new fees in these tennis courts?

### **Reply**

Thank you very much for your question first of all. I have spoken with officers about season tickets and whilst on one hand we are not ruling it out, we feel that it is not appropriate at this time. Can I just use this opportunity to make it clear that Tennis in Merton has always been a pay-to-play activity and these are not new charges at all, the charges are just being implemented more efficiently now and so we do have free tennis we support the tennis for free organisation that is across the country now I think it probably started in this Borough and so, actually when you look at the, sorry I think my time is over but thank you very much.

### **From Councillor John Dehaney to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport**

Would the cabinet member please provide information on what work the council is undertaking to improve conditions for tenants in the private-rented sector?

### **Reply**

The Council is committed in improving housing conditions for tenants in the private rented sector. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019 the Cabinet member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport submitted a report to cabinet for approval setting out his plans for how the Council's support to private rented sector tenants would be improved. This included the adoption of a new housing enforcement policy, the adoption of civil penalties and rent repayment orders and an indicative plan to develop selective licensing. In addition officers continue to discharge statutory housing functions in line with the Housing Act 2004 and have responded to 1253 cases of complaints of disrepair from private tenants. Officers continue to engage with private sector landlords both on a 121 basis and through its Landlord forum.

### **Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor. I thank the Cabinet Member for his response to my question but many residents in my ward Graveney are concerned about problems emanating from private rented properties. Can the Cabinet Member please outline how the benefits of the selective landlord licensing scheme is improving the living conditions of tenants and also how it can improve the area?

## **Reply**

I'd like to thank Councillor Dehaney for his supplementary but also all the work of him and all of his colleagues in the Graveney ward. I believe that landlord licensing is a key weapon in the battle to improve standards in the private rented sector, weed out landlords putting tenants at risk and to deal with crime and anti-social behaviour, rubbish in front gardens, noise and so on, often associated with bad quality accommodation. It will also help ensure that licenced landlord's properties must meet fire, electric and gas safety standards and be in a good state of repair. Licensed landlords must also be able to deal effectively with any complaints about their tenants. Everyone who lives in the private rented accommodation deserves the right to live in a safe and well-managed home, no matter what part of the Borough they live in and it's why we will be bringing further proposals forward to Cabinet in September for a selective landlord licensing scheme. Thank you Madam Mayor.

## **From Councillor James Holmes to the Cabinet Member for Schools and Adult Education**

The recent OFSTED inspection at Benedict Primary School downgraded their rating from 'requires improvement' to 'inadequate', what measures have been taken by the Cabinet Member since the inspection to improve performance?

## **Reply**

Benedict is part of the Chapel Street Academy Trust, and therefore not a Local Authority School. The Local Authority keeps in regular contact with the Regional Schools' Commissioner (RSC) who has the responsibility for the performance of academies within their area. If the Local Authority has any concerns about the academies within Merton it is the role of the RSC to provide the challenge to the school. The Local Authority have expressed concerns to the RSC in the past about Benedict, particularly around financial management, and in light of the last Ofsted judgement the school received of 'requires improvement'. The Local Authority received reassurances from RSC, that in his view, the school was making progress in its improvement journey.

The process when an academy is judged to be 'inadequate' is led by the RSC, not the Local Authority, although the Local Authority keep in close contact with the RSC. The Assistant Director (Education) has had conversations with the RSC since the inspection to discuss Benedict. The decision about the future of Benedict (for example whether it stays with Chapel Street or moves to a different provider) will be made by the RSC following a conversation between the RSC and the Academy Trust which in turn would be scrutinised by the Head Teacher Board that the RSC works with. The Local Authority awaits the outcome of this initial decision.

The Local Authority is of the view that, whatever the governance arrangements, the school needs to be proceeding with school improvement activity immediately. As Benedict is not a Local Authority school, it is not working intensively with Merton School Improvement officers (for example, with a Merton Education Partner). Such support would not be automatic as Merton School Improvement is primarily funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (funding made available for maintained schools), but it is available for the Trust to use through purchasing a Service Level Agreement, as

three of the academies in Merton already do. Since the inspection, the school have bought in a small amount of support from Merton School Improvement, but they continue to source their core school improvement from the Trust.

### **Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor and I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for her reply. The results of the Ofsted report for Benedict are worrying as the Cabinet Member has acknowledged, our hands are tied to a certain extent but could I ask the Cabinet Member whether she has any plans to write to the trust to reinforce what officers are saying, that the trust should engage Merton's school improvement service and secondly whether the Cabinet Member has any plans at this stage to engage with parents to see if we can gauge how they feel and therefore allow the Council to have a say in the future? Thank you Madam Mayor.

### **Reply**

Thank you and thank you for your supplementary question. You're right it is a priority for us what happens to the school, whilst it is not a Local Authority school, these are Merton children who are attending Benedict. So I've been in close contact with the officers who are speaking to the school regularly. I'd be very open to speaking more directly with the parents of the school, I've been wary of wading in to the school where the school has lots of people wading in and trying to tell it what to do and I've been trying to be strategic but I'd be very open to that and I think that the Local Authority has though it cannot control what happens it can try and influence it and I would be happy to play part of that role to make sure that we improve the outcomes for some of those vulnerable children who attend Benedict. Thank you.

### **From Councillor Agatha Akyigyina to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Health and the Environment**

Can the cabinet member provide an update on Improving Healthcare Together following the recent publication of the draft Integrated Impact Assessment and Clinical Senate Report?

### **Reply**

As Council will be aware, Improving Healthcare Together is the NHS programme looking at a potential reconfiguration of services at Epsom and St Helier Trust.

On 26 June, two new papers were published: the draft Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA), and the Clinical Senates Report.

The IIA builds on work previously undertaken by the NHS, including the Deprivation Impact Analysis, which was commissioned following a request by the Council. It explores equalities, health, travel and environmental impacts, among other things. The Council was involved in the steering group which oversaw the development of the IIA, and the Leader has sent a number of letters to the Independent Chair of the steering group to make the Council's position clear.

## 06: Non ST Questions

The Clinical Senates Report was undertaken by the independent Clinical Senates of London and the South East and reviews the clinical model developed by Improving Healthcare Together. The report makes 94 recommendations for the programme to take account of.

The Council is in the process of comprehensively reviewing both documents and will be formally responding in due course.

### **Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor. I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response and I would like to know whether is the Cabinet Member satisfied that the Council's previous concerns have been addressed?

### **Reply**

Well can I thank her for her question and for her supplementary question. As my original written response said the Council has been involved in the work of the Integrated Impact Assessment and a Senior Public Health Consultant has been part of the steering group and as a result of that a number of our concerns have been addressed. Nonetheless in recent months the Leader has still had to write to the Independent Chair on two occasions to make clear that we do have ongoing concerns. So firstly we remain concerned about the impact of any potential service reconfiguration on other providers principally St Georges. The work that is being done to assess this is being undertaken separately from the Integrated Impact Assessment and we believe it is integral that it needs to form part of that work. Secondly, we remain concerned that the work still does not fully assess the impact on deprived communities. We've consistently asked for more detailed ward level information and analysis which we believe is essential in understanding the potential impact of any reconfiguration on some of our most deprived communities in the east of the Borough. So we will be comprehensively responding to both the Integrated Impact Assessment and the Clinical Senates Report and we will continue pushing these two points along with our ongoing support for St Helier Hospital to be retained and rebuilt on its' current site.

### **From Councillor Ed Gretton to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport**

Can the Cabinet Member please clarify to what extent the council held any discussions with TFL regarding TFL's misguided closure of the District Line throughout the weekend at the start of the Tennis Championships just when tourists were arriving from around the world?

### **Reply**

The Council works closely with TfL who ultimately are responsible for the safe operation of the transport network and we recognise that some essential works cannot be delayed. We were pleased to see that Transport for London managed to complete their work on improving the District Line between Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> June, prior to the Wimbledon Championships starting on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019. Wimbledon is the only part of London accessible by all four public transport modes of tube, train,

bus and tram and we look forward to continuing to work with Transport for London on improvements to these services.

### **Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor. Does the Cabinet Member responsible for Merton's transport agree with me that it might be a good idea to actually speak to TfL to make sure the District Line is actually operational just as the Wimbledon Tennis Championships are opening we've got thousands of campers coming from all over the world to our wonderful Borough, do you think it would be a good idea to speak to TfL going forward and make sure the District Line is actually open?

### **Reply**

I'd like to thank Councillor Gretton for his supplementary, clearly engineering works take place on a number of different weekends each year. Sometimes they disrupt people going to watch Fulham Football Club like my colleague Councillor Alambritis when they take place. In relation to his point, clearly there are something on most weekends in the country, football matches probably actually generate more people using the District Lines than the Tennis and the Tennis didn't start until the Monday. I also understand as well that South West Trains were running a full service. Now clearly with engineering works they do cause a level of frustration but I also know as well that as a result of the District Line upgrade, modern signalling will be installed and we will see an increased level of services as a result. I hope that we see less engineering works over the future years but clearly there's a lot of work going forward in terms of modernising the system and bringing it up to scratch. Thank you.

### **From Councillor Aidan Mundy to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport**

Can the cabinet member please give further details on the allocation of the neighbourhood fund schemes and proposals for ward allocation funded schemes from the Community Infrastructure Levy?

### **Reply**

Following a trial in 2018, funding of £15,000 is available for every ward in Merton to spend on specific types of public space projects under the Merton's Ward Allocation Scheme. The scheme was approved by Cabinet on 14th January 2019. The scheme is in the early stages of the three-year lifetime – from April 2019 ward councillors have been able to select from a list of project types to be funded by the £15,000 for their wards. The list is made up of small-scale public space project types which are not already covered by the council's existing highways and green spaces contracts and meet criteria set out by the government for spending the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy.

### **Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor and I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member and my ward colleague for his response and for the good work he has done so far in this area. I understand that a number of Neighbourhood Fund projects are going to be considered by Cabinet next week and would my colleague please give further details

on how these projects would bridge the gap between the East and West of the Borough?

**Reply**

I'd like to thank Councillor Mundy for his supplementary. One of the projects that has obtained money and there will be nearly £1million is proposed to be allocated in Community Infrastructure funding, one of our key criteria has actually been bridging the gap. So £130,000 to the Commonsides Community Development Trust which covers three wards in the East of the Borough including our own ward of Pollards Hill which we both represent, to help support provision to vulnerable people but also as well building social capital and ESAL classes but also as well building the resilience of Pollards Hill residents including pathways into work and giving them support in what are some of the most deprived areas in the Borough. We also have funding in terms of employability; Children's Schools and Families Employability Programme nearly £61,000 to increase the Labour market for Merton residents aged 16-25 including funding for a full time employer engagement employability officer and associated incentives such as work experience vouchers and HVV drivers and also as well money to Merton Council Vestry Hall which is based in Mitcham to run and manage initiatives to support members of the community over 16 years at risk of developing a mental health disorder. There's also as well money to the Polka Theatre and a key criteria of that is in terms of actually engagement with schoolchildren in the East of the Borough it does actually some fantastic work and I know it's done a huge amount of engagement already and obviously it's received funding from the Mayor and this future funding will allow it to even thrive further. Thank you.

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

The proposed parking fees increase will have varying impacts on different communities, what discussions has the Cabinet Member had with Age UK Merton and care homes who will be disproportionately effected?

**Reply**

Whilst we have not specifically consulted with individual community groups the parking charges consultation was very widely advertised and was extended in duration. Articles were placed in My Merton distributed to every household, 6,000 street signs were placed across the Borough, statutory consultees, resident and business associations were asked to provide their views, which led to over 3,000 responses being received.

**Supplementary**

Yes Madam Mayor, thank you. I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response. Looks like a rather passive approach was taken in the consultation, there could have been more effort to engage with vulnerable groups of course the elderly being a significant one; they obviously rely on cars for their own independence as well as their carers and their family visitors also rely on cars, so there seems to be an element of discrimination here in making their lives harder and more isolated, so will

the Cabinet Member commit to abandoning what is this discriminatory tax against the elderly or at least making an exception in their regard?

**Reply**

I'd like to thank Councillor Howard for his supplementary, we don't actually believe it is discriminatory because obviously many older people suffer the ill effects of air pollution as well and part of the funding in terms of transport charges goes towards Freedom Passes which is funding for all Freedom Passes, six million pounds a year to everyone over sixty years of age and also we've seen many older people who have disabilities are in receipt of blue badge holders as well. We've had an extensive consultation with many groups making representations across the Borough and that will all be considered when we make a decision on this at next Monday's Cabinet meeting. Thank you.

**From Councillor Anthony Fairclough to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport**

What evidence is there that the proposed increases in parking permit charges in CPZs will reduce car ownership?

**Reply**

Price is a long established and recognised economic tool to manage demand. Where prices remain low demand increases, all other things being equal. Over the last 10 years where car parking and permit prices have been frozen the number of cars registered in Merton rose from 69,500 to 71,900.

Decisions on car ownership take price into account. This might be at the point when a decision on car replacement is being made or at some other point in time but car owners or prospective car owners will weigh up future costs as well as alternate transport options. This administration believes that Merton is not isolated from these economic principles and that sensible and appropriate pricing strategies for parking and permits will assist in reducing car use and ownership.

**Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor and I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his reply. Many residents especially those in Wimbledon and Raynes Park tell me that they're worried about the possibility of the extension of controlled parking zones if these plans for parking charges go ahead. So will the Cabinet Member confirm whether he will in fact seek to extend controlled parking across the Borough as the logic of his scheme seems to dictate and in fact the reasoning behind his views? Thank you.

**Reply**

Well can I say thank you to Councillor Fairclough for his supplementary. Clearly any extension of controlled parking zones has to be generated by petitions of residents, we don't unilaterally have controlled parking zones. We take the shambles which is Sutton at the moment, where I understand there's been over 30,000 people because the Liberal administration mismanaging the whole CPZ process and actually trying to unilaterally impose them as well so any controlled parking zones will be by consent and when a majority of people actually favour them because it is important that

## 06: Non ST Questions

residents are actually listened to if we do want to extend controlled parking zones here in Merton so we don't have any plans for a controlled parking zone across the whole of Merton, though no doubt this will be something that the Liberal Democrats will have their next focus leaflet that we have plans, we have no plans whatsoever, Thank you Madam Mayor.

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

Does the Cabinet Member believe that local residents are satisfied with the administration's ability to manage rubbish and street cleaning?

#### **Reply**

The Annual Residents survey conducted earlier this provides a snapshot of satisfaction with a range of services and showed that at that time resident satisfaction with waste collection and street cleaning had dropped when compared to previous years. Whilst disappointing, this was perhaps not surprising given the point in time that the survey was carried out [Jan / Feb2019], coming so soon after the largest waste collection service change the borough has experienced.

Since that survey was undertaken, a further survey was undertaken by West Co on behalf of the South London Waste Partnership in March 2019, which asked residents about the new recycling and rubbish collection service. This showed much higher levels of satisfaction, with 82% of residents surveyed expressing satisfaction with the waste collection service they receive and 84% stating that they have had no issues regarding the service.

However, I accept that for residents in some parts of the borough the service is still working as well as we would like it to, which is why we are working hard with officers and Veolia to improve performance.

I will be writing to all councillors shortly to announce some of the initiatives we are taking and am keen to visit as many wards over the summer as possible to understand the particular challenges faced in different parts of the borough and what solutions might be required.

#### **Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor. Councillor Byers is I believe the third Labour Cabinet Member to be responsible for the clean streets of Merton in the space of about sixteen months; there's a bit of a merry-go-round Madam Mayor. Does he believe he is still going to be in the seat in a years' time and does he think he's going to be able to finally deliver some clean streets for our Borough?

#### **Reply**

Well who's to say where anyone will be in a years' time, I very much hope to be and I think the service is improving, it has improved since the initial roll-out last year, it is still patchy in parts of the Borough, so there are parts of the Borough where it is not working as well as we would like it to, but there are parts of the Borough where it is working

## 06: Non ST Questions

now and we are seeing real improvements. I am very committed to working with colleagues across the Chamber over the summer; I've already had a couple of enjoyable ward tours with colleagues and I look forward to many more in August and September and then we will use all of that data to create ward level specific plans based on the fly-tipping strategy that we are currently developing to try and tackle the hotspots in every single ward. Thank you.

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**From Councillor Stan Anderson to the Cabinet Member for Women and Equalities**

Can the cabinet member provide information on how representative the elected members are of Merton's population in terms of gender and ethnicity?

**Reply**

The council and local political parties are committed to attracting prospective councillors who are as representative of the local population as possible. Merton's councillors are a diverse group, including many younger councillors who work full time, those with caring responsibilities, a wide age range, 37% women and approximately 25% from visible BAME communities. The council doesn't currently collect data on gender and ethnicities and therefore I have instructed the Head of Democracy Services to collect this data from elected members as soon as possible.

**Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor and thanks to the Cabinet Member for her response. What does the Cabinet Member believe would be the best ways to attract and retain more diverse Councillor population?

**Reply**

Thank you Madam Mayor and I'd like to thank the Councillor for his supplementary. I think it is incredibly important that the people of Merton see themselves properly represented in this Chamber. We know that it is a country-wide issue with the age-average of Councillors as well as gender, race, disability and sexuality not fully representing the population they're elected to represent. Here in Merton I am making it a priority to ensure that we can offer support for Councillors; I believe that by making members feel that their caring duties, parental duties, physical, mental health are supported, they're more likely to feel able to stay on as elected representatives or indeed to attract a wider group to consider it in the first place. I'm currently undertaking this work to strengthen the support and guidance that we give to Councillors.

**From Councillor Nick McLean to the Leader of the Council**

What discussions has the Leader of the Council had with the Local Borough Commander and MOPAC to save Wimbledon Police Station since the last ordinary meeting of the council on 3<sup>rd</sup> April?

**Reply**

The BCU Commander Sally Benatar addressed the Scrutiny Commission on the 24th April and said the following

Police stations

Sally Benatar read out a prepared statement:

“ The intention set out in our consultation document in 2017 was for Mitcham Police Station to be the 24/7 front counter location and Response parade site for Merton Borough, with Earlsfield Police Station remaining the Response parade site for Wandsworth Borough and with Wimbledon Police Station to be sold.

After eleven months’ experience of working at greater scale across the boroughs, it has been identified that there is a need to review the operational implications of continuing to operate with two separate Response parade sites for Merton and Wandsworth, as opposed to having a shared parade site covering both boroughs. This internal review is now taking place.”

In response to concerns raised by members of the Commission, Sally Benatar said that she had requested this review to investigate the most efficient way of using police resources now that these were deployed at greater scale within the BCU. She stressed that this was a separate matter to the location of the 24/7 front office (police station) and that there would continue to be one of these in each borough, the location of which would be a matter for MOPAC.

The Commission and the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities requested further detail of the review to be made available in a briefing to councillors. Members of the Commission said they wished to be fully sighted on decisions that would have an impact on policing in Merton and that there should be a public consultation. Sally Benatar said that there had not been a public consultation when the Kingston and Richmond Response parade sites were merged and there was no plan to have a public consultation on how Response policing is delivered as this is an operational policing decision. The public consultation on front counters was a separate issue. Sally Benatar undertook to take the Commission’s concerns back and said that she would share a briefing note with them as soon as she could.

RESOLVED: the Commission agreed to invite the BCU Commander to a future meeting for an update on police estate matters as well as crime statistics and other policing issues.

### **Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor and I’d like to thank the Leader of the Council for his response. Will the Leader agree to a future report to Council on his discussions to save Wimbledon Police Station?

### **Reply**

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his supplementary and I’m sure he’s pleased with the information in the written answer in particular the resolve ‘the Commission agree to invite the BCU Commander to a future meeting for an update on police estate matters as well as crime statistics and other policing issues’, but I would like to point the Leader of the Opposition to a newspaper that’s nicknamed “The Thunderer”; it’s the Times. Now in a letter to The Times, we had last Friday five former police chiefs have warned that resources have been drained to dangerously low levels in Policing. The former Commissioners have united to condemn the emasculation of British Policing under Theresa May and urge her successor to make law and order a priority. So when we’re talking about resourcing and about the state, the Mayor of London’s been forced to look at the state because of this emasculation

of the resources to Policing, not just in this Borough but throughout the country. So I would bounce back his supplementary question and say would he have a meeting with the next Prime Minister at his earliest opportunity to repay and to refund back the £1billion in cuts to Met Police that's forcing the Mayor of London to make drastic cuts to the state, but we as a party in the London Borough of Merton want a presence for the Police in Mitcham and in Wimbledon and will continue to argue for that.

**From Councillor Rebecca Lanning to the Cabinet Member for Voluntary Sector, Partnerships and Community Safety**

Since being the first borough to work with the Met on rolling out the Ask for Angela campaign in 2016, can the cabinet member update on statistics of gender-based hate crime in Merton?

**Reply**

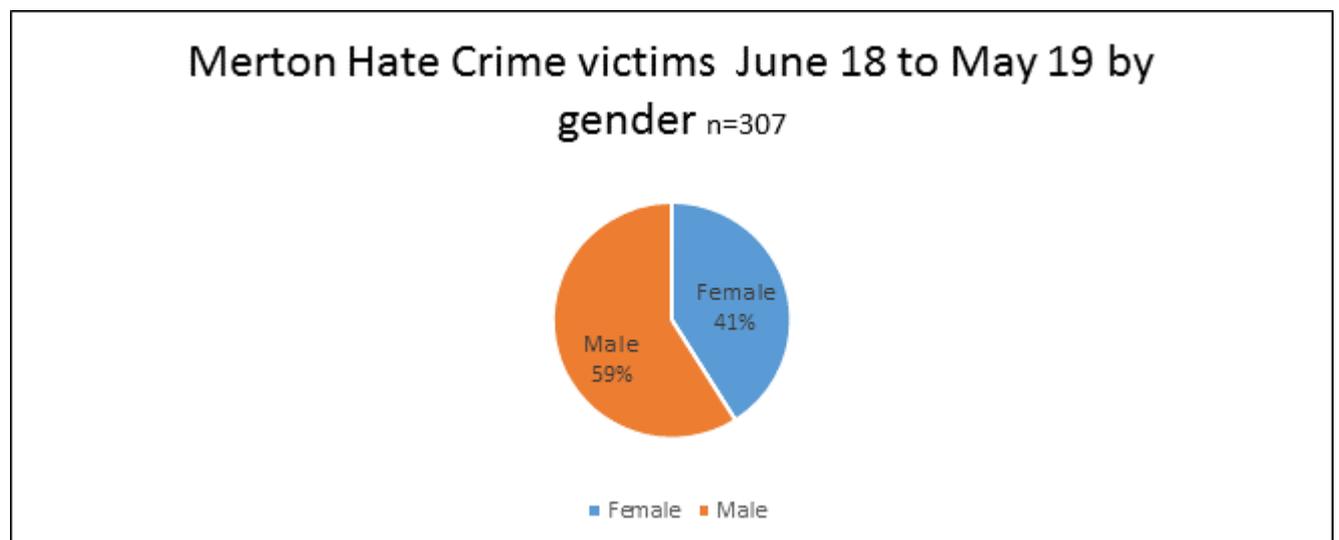
Nationally and in the MPS the five monitored strands of hate crime are:

- Race;
- Religion/faith;
- Sexual orientation; (Gay/lesbian)
- Disability;
- Gender-identity (Transgender)

Details of hate crime victims and offences for each of the above strands are publically available via

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/data-and-statistics/hate-crime-dashboard>

Work undertaken locally as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> hate crime profile to be published later this month shows that the gender split for Merton victims of the above hate crime stands in the last 12 months is :-



When this exercise was first completed the previous year (aug 17 to Jul 18) the relative proportions were 60% male and 40% female.

Misogyny

While some police forces are trialling, the recording of Misogynistic incidents it is not currently a criminal offence and the MPS are not participating in the trials.

So for London there are no figures for gender based hate crimes

For Sexual offences (rape and other sexual offences) the majority of victims (89%) are female.

### **Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor and can I thank the Cabinet Member for her response, particularly for highlighting the gender disparity with regard to sexual violence, with 89% of victims being women. Could the Cabinet Member update us on what the Council is doing to tackle this gender disparity?

### **Reply**

I thank Councillor Lanning for her supplementary question and I confirm that we are very concerned as a Council that 89% of women suffer from sexual violence and we're monitoring the position to ensure that we prosecute the perpetrators of this crime and we keep a good eye on this to make sure they are brought to justice.

### **From Councillor Eloise Bailey to the Cabinet Member for Woman and Equalities**

What will the cabinet member's role overseeing equality impact assessments (EIA) involve on a day-to-day level? And how will she seek to improve the EIA carried out by the Council, and their ability to change Council policy?

### **Reply**

The Equality Analysis (EA) process is well embedded in the council's day-to-day business. The Equality and Community Cohesion Officer supports the process by regularly briefing the Senior Leadership team, Departmental Management Teams and supporting individual managers to conduct EAs and consider the equalities implications of proposed changes to policy and service delivery.

Managers have the tools to robustly conduct EAs for policy changes and service reviews. A framework is in place that ensures that the basket of saving proposals put up to Cabinet are accompanied by EAs that have considered the effect that the proposed changes will have on the Protected Characteristics.

The EA is constantly under review to reflect any changes in legislation, guidance and case law. The EA process is overseen by the Cabinet Member for Women and Equalities and this is discussed on a regular basis with the Head of Policy, Strategy and Partnerships.

### **Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you to the Cabinet Member for your answer. I'd just like to know, what improvements would you like to see to the process and what do you feel like could be better?

### **Reply**

I am currently working on that and I'd like to see a better tolerance of everybody in this society across the Borough so that there is no people understand the different and diverse communities that live here and there's more acceptance and I will talk about that later in my strategic theme.

### **From Councillor Russell Makin to the Cabinet Member for Women and Equalities**

Can the cabinet member outline the reasons for the inequalities in life expectancy between the east and the west of the borough, and the work being done to address this?

### **Reply**

The reasons for the inequalities in life expectancy between the East and West of the borough are multi-factorial and span the whole life course from before birth until old age.

The Annual Report of the Director of Public Health in 2018 (<https://www2.merton.gov.uk/Annual-Health-Report2018.pdf>) described these factors, the current situation in Merton and the range of work in short, medium and long-term which could be done to address them. One of the goals of the current strategy of the Health and Wellbeing Board has been to reduce the gap between East and West. Examples are the work to develop the Wilson Hospital for health and wellbeing and the implementation of social prescribing in GP practices in the East. The recently refreshed Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2024 "A healthy place for healthy lives" has built on this, with a set of principles and ways of working, the first of which is to tackle health inequalities.

Complementing the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board, many other council services and functions contribute to a reduction in inequalities. Corporate capacity to bridge the gap was the main strategic theme of the November 2017 council; a summary paper (<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/documents/s20179/Strategic%20Theme%20Nov%2017%20final.pdf>) summarised the work which continues.

### **Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor. Can the Cabinet Member reassure us that her role will mean that she plays a key part in addressing ongoing inequalities between the East and West of the Borough? Thank you.

**Reply**

I'd like to thank the Councillor for his supplementary question. My role underpins work that is carried out across all portfolios, so in your original question we looked at work being done in Health and Social Care but inequalities arise in all areas and I look forward to working with colleagues to address the needs of residents across the Borough.

**From Councillor Brenda Fraser to the Cabinet Member for Voluntary Sector, Partnerships and Community Safety**

I'd like to congratulate the cabinet member on a wonderful Windrush Day 2019 celebration. Can she tell me how the council will continue to support the Windrush generation?

**Reply**

We are proud of the borough's Windrush Day 2019 celebrations and are grateful for the support received from the West Indian Friends and Families Association and Black and Minority Ethnic Voice, (particularly with the heritage and thanksgiving service) that made the events so successful. We will look to see how we can celebrate Windrush Day annually.

We will continue to work with these organisations and will be guided by them to try to meet the needs of the Windrush Generation, many of whom are now elderly and may require support from our Adult Social Care provision as well as sign posting to the support available in the voluntary sector.

Additionally, the council has recently promoted the Windrush Compensation scheme to local residents by including an article in My Merton.

**Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor and I thank the Cabinet Member for her answer. I would like to pose this supplementary question; would the Cabinet Member agree that the Government has created a hostile environment for the Windrush Generation especially as they were not immigrants but British subjects and that this concern this hostile environment concerns friends and relatives for the EU with regards to Brexit?

**Reply**

I thank the Councillor for her supplementary question and I agree with her a hundred percent that when we had the celebrations here on the first Saturday of the Windrush Generation we had stories from people who had lived and worked here for many years and they suffered from hostile environment. We're going to make sure that because of Brexit and in view of hate crime we're going to monitor the position to ensure that people who have worked and lived here all their lives are treated equally as everyone.

**From Councillor Mary Curtin to the Cabinet Member for Women and Equalities**

Can the cabinet member outline what work is being done by the council to better understand 'hidden' disabilities, and therefore provide more appropriate services to them?

**Reply**

The Department for Transport has recently published new guidance which aims to extend access to Blue Badge parking permits to people with 'hidden' disabilities. This is aimed at people with conditions such as dementia, autism, anxiety disorders or reduced mobility who can experience significant difficulties and stress in finding a parking space. Problems with transport for people with hidden disabilities is often an underlying factor in isolation and loneliness which can exacerbate their condition. These changes should help combat the negative impact of road travel difficulties for people with these types of condition.

The new guidance is due to come into effect on 31 August. Officers who administer the Blue Badge scheme in Merton are working closely with colleagues from across the council to operationalise these changes. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) provides a detailed assessment of health needs for the borough and this has recently been supplemented by a disability health and care profile and a severe mental illness profile published in 2018.

The council published a revised Autism Strategy in 2018 along with an autism profile. The strategy and action plan take a whole life course approach, encompassing children, young people and adults with autism and taking into consideration the needs of families and carers. An Autism Partnership Steering group has been established to support the implementation and monitoring of the plan.

As part of the newly expanded Strategic Partner Grants programme we launched a new peer support and wellbeing programme with Imagine Independence in July which supports people with a range of mental health issues including Depression, Anxiety, Bipolar and Agoraphobia. We have just launched a new service for adults with Autism with Merton Mencap as part of the grants program for people that need support but would not normally have eligible needs via the care act.

The council has contributed funding and is working with partners across London to promote [www.good-thinking.uk](http://www.good-thinking.uk) which is a London Digital well-being service. This has been created in response to the most common mental health issues experienced in London for which early intervention and pro-active self-management of wellbeing can have a positive impact (anxiety, sleep deprivation, stress and low mood). As part of the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board we are working with colleagues in Thrive London to develop a series of community conversations in Merton to understand what matters to residents around mental health and wellbeing, to campaign against stigma and to identify areas of improvement in mental health and wellbeing in Merton. These will take place in September and October 2019.

**Supplementary**

Thank you Madam Mayor. I note with interest that there will be a series of community conversations in Merton September and October about mental health and wellbeing. Can I please request the Cabinet Member reports back to Council on the findings of this vital issue later in the year?

**Reply**

I'd like to thank Councillor Curtin for her supplementary question. Absolutely, it is imperative that we start to better understand hidden disabilities in order to be able to ensure that the Council services are tailored for everyone and it's through conversation in the communities at a local level that we can really start to refine the understanding.