

Merton Council Council

17 November 2021

Supplementary agenda 5

29 Public and Councillor Supplementary Questions and Replies

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1 From Jonathan Foster

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Why have the missing speed cushions on Lower Morden Lane junction of Garth Road still not been reinstated?

Reply

The replacement speed cushions are scheduled to be installed by the Council's Highway contractors on 19th November 2021.

2 From Dawid Miskurska

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

The recent road resurfacing has not addressed this issue and I would like to know what is being done about the missing speed restrictor on Lower Morden Lane / Garth Road bend?

Reply

The replacement speed cushions are scheduled to be installed by the Council's Highway contractors on 19th November 2021.

3 From Imelda Cooney

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

I would like to know why every few months scaffolding is erected on blocks on Penfold Court and other blocks and I've never seen any contractors or workers on there or any work being carried out. I'd really appreciate the rationale behind this and also when any meaningful repairs and improvements will be made to Penfold Court

Reply

Penfold Court is not a council owned dwelling and is in fact a residential block of flats owned by the Clarion Housing Group. Any questions regarding repairs and improvements to the dwelling must be made directly to the Clarion Housing Group in the first instance

4 From Steve Baker

To the Cabinet Member for Housing Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

The recycling facility in the Co-Op car park in Wimbledon Chase is being removed “due to persistent fly-tipping”. Can you explain how depriving the local community of a much needed recycling facility will reduce fly-tipping?

Reply

Over the last year we have continued to see a sustained level of both fly tipping and contamination at this site.

Despite the service attempting to improve this situation by increasing the frequency of collections to three times per week along with twice weekly inspections by the Council’s client team, the Co-Op, as the land owner, have requested that we remove this site from their carpark.

5 From Amy Fionda

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Why not make collecting bulk waste from households free again (or at least, significantly, reduce the cost) thereby lessening the current increase in the escalation of flytipping?

Reply

The chargeable bulky waste service was implemented in January 2019, following a fundamental review of waste collection services which prioritised reuse and recycling services over previous unsustainable approaches to waste management.

Following the November Sustainable Communities Scrutiny and Overview Committee, it has been recommended to the service that a review of the bulky waste service is undertaken along with a financial impact assessment for providing reduced rates for those residents on a low income. Any recommended changes to the current policy will be presented for Cabinet consideration.

With regards to impact on fly tipping, there is little if any direct correlation between charging for bulky waste and fly tipping. This is because the majority of fly tips cleared by the council are those that are categorised as “a car boot load” and primarily consists of household waste in black sacks. When we introduced the fee payable collection service, we saw no impact on the fly tipping incident rate and other waste authorities across London report the same experience.

6 From Frank Pocock

To the Cabinet Member for Housing Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

How much did the borough-wide implementation of the blanket 20 MPH speed limit cost Merton Council?

Reply

Implementation of the borough wide 20mph speed limit was funded by the Council's TFL funding allocation. The project cost £257k to deliver over two financial years.

Supplementary

I thank the Cabinet Member for his written reply. Could he please now tell me how many penalty notices have been issued since the 20 mile per hour limit was introduced and if the Cabinet Member cannot tell me tonight will he commit to providing an answer within seven days thank you.

Reply

I'd like to thank Mr Pocock for his supplementary answer. Unfortunately no penalty notices have been issued for 20 mile per hour because it is actually a police enforcement matter. At London councils across all parties we have asked for enforcement powers to be granted to councils so obviously I hope he will support that happening because I think it is crucial that Local Government does have the ability to issue fines for people who do exceed 20 miles per hour thank you.

7 From Sue Brownrigg

To the Cabinet Member for Housing Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Why is the street lighting in Merton so bad? As a female walking home from work along Dorset Road I feel incredibly unsafe and vulnerable - and it is extremely dangerous not to be able to see the trip hazards caused by tree roots. No-one should feel unsafe when walking home from work.

Reply

The council is working closely with partners to ensure we capture and respond to the concerns raised around the safety of women and girls across the borough. The Metropolitan Police are piloting a service for anyone to anonymously tell the police about public places where members of the public have felt unsafe, this could be for

environmental issues, for example street lighting, abandoned buildings or vandalism and/or because of some behaviours, e.g. being followed or verbally abused. We would encourage members of the public and residents to use the online tool so this information can be captured. Although a London wide tool, Merton will be in liaison with the police to extract the Merton information. Locations can be highlighted by visiting www.police.uk/streetsafe

This will greatly assist us in providing a more targeted assessment and response to the locations highlighted. ‘

We are aware of the incident that took place in the Lidl Car Park and are unable to comment further on this as this is subject to an ongoing police investigation’.

Our lighting engineers have assessed various locations in the borough in response to enquiries and have found that whilst the street lighting levels are up to the industry standard, there are locations where the lighting is obscured by mature street trees. As there has been a mild Autumn, many trees still have leaves on them, which is unusual for this time of year. The Council is monitoring the situation and will be revising tree maintenance schedules to account for this.

We will continue to review street lighting levels to ensure we maintain a level which optimises safety whilst balanced against intrusiveness and light pollution.

Street lighting faults can be reported online at <https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/streets-and-pavements/street-lighting-faults>

8 From Clarissa Frattini

To the Cabinet Member for Housing Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Street lighting is inadequate. The streets are dark and street lamps are often obscured by trees. Many women feel unsafe to walk home in the evenings. Sarah Everard and the recent attempted rape of a teenager behind Lidl doesn't help. What can the council do about street lighting?

Reply

The council is working closely with partners to ensure we capture and respond to the concerns raised around the safety of women and girls across the borough. The Metropolitan Police are piloting a service for anyone to anonymously tell the police about public places where members of the public have felt unsafe, this could be for environmental issues, for example street lighting, abandoned buildings or vandalism and/or because of some behaviours, e.g. being followed or verbally abused. We would encourage members of the public and residents to use the online tool so this

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9 From Barry Smith

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

As the draft electric vehicle charging proposals from TfL are now available and make it clear that most non-rapid on-street charging will be provided by private companies, does the council have plans to start working with such companies now to provide charging for all residents reliant on on-street parking?

Reply

Yes, and Merton already works with a mixture of private companies to provide Electric Vehicle (EV) charging options to residents. Based on the draft London-wide EV strategy, which has just been launched, we are currently developing a Merton EV charging strategy which will be published in 2022.

Merton is currently in the top 20% of local authorities for the number of EV charge points available to the public. EV Chargers are currently available via Source London, Char.gy and rapid chargers are available from ESB Energy on the TFL network.

There are currently 258 EV charge points in Merton:

6 Rapid Chargers – ESB Energy
140 On Street - SourceLondon
90 Lamp Column Chargers - Char.gy
22 Superstore/Retail Park charge points.

All EV charge point locations in Merton can be found on <https://www.zap-map.com/live/>

Supplementary

Hi, thank you. You stated in your reply which I thank you for, that there were currently 258 charging points in Merton which equates to roughly one for every 300 homes in the borough. Clearly this is a long way from being adequate. What target does the council currently have for charging points in the borough and when do they expect this to be reached?

Reply

I'd like to thank Mr Smith for his supplementary question and I'd really reflect I suppose that the last response that I provided. And so while we are in the top 20% of boroughs for electric vehicle charging points we have seen a doubling of these vehicles within the last year which is really positive but that also means that there is more to be done. So we are waiting for the second phase of TfL's strategy so that we can understand how we can improve provision of electric vehicle charging. So we will be implementing measurement and metrics next year as part of our strategy.

10 From Sandra Vogel

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

Please provide tree canopy cover a) by ward and b) for the borough, and plans to increase tree canopy a) by ward and b) for the borough, and information held on the loss of tree canopy a) by ward and b) across the borough over each of the last 10 years.

Reply

Please find below the data the service currently holds on canopy cover. . In terms of the canopy cover over this 10 year time period, the service does not maintain this information, as much of the cover is on private land or outside of the planning process.

In terms of the plans of the service to increase canopy cover, the service has recently commenced a project to develop a Tree Strategy for the Council's trees. Within this project, the service will develop a strategic approach to improving not only the number of trees planted, but it shall also focus on preserving and enhancing our tree canopy cover.

LBM TREE-RELATED CANOPY COVER / MANAGEMENT	% of the borough	area km ² [LBM Total Area 37.6 km ²]	GI analysis (%)
Tree canopy under LBM (individual & group) outside woodland	4.09%	1.5 km	20%
LBM woodland cover direct control	2.40%	0.9 km	12%
Tree/woodlands privately owned under partial LBM control (planning control)	7.40%	2.8 km	36%
Tree/woodlands outside LBM control (commons & National Trust)	6.64%	2.5 KM	32%
Merton tree canopy cover	20.5%	7.7 km	100%

GI = Green infrastructure is defined as tree and other vegetation cover

11 From Tony Burton

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Following the commitment in 2017 to undertake annual reviews of the Local List of historic buildings and other structures to ask Merton Council why only one such review has since been undertaken and when the next one will start and finish?

Reply

The Local List is reviewed annually by our Conservation Officer with additions and demolitions being incorporated. Last year's Local List was submitted to Council in November. The Conservation Officer is currently working on this year's List. Additionally, the definitive record for London is maintained by Historic England – the Greater London Historic Environment Record (GLHER). There is a dedicated team that produces this. It is also referred to in the Mayor's London Plan. We liaise regularly with Historic England.

12 From Nicola O'Reilly de Brett

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Does Merton Council have a plan to urgently address the very high air pollution in West Wimbledon? Please can through traffic on West Barnes Lane prior to the

Tesco barrier be reduced? The barriers cause queues of traffic which idle pumping fumes out whilst waiting. Has the council considered closing the barrier or some other way of reducing the pollution?

Reply

For the purposes of this response, we assume the level crossing referred to is the West Barnes level crossing. As the level crossing – and the associated barriers – are the responsibility of Network Rail, and are operated in a manner that maximises road safety, the Council has limited control over their use.

However, to tackle the issues with idling, we have recently held two anti-idling events at West Barnes level crossing; one in conjunction with Idling Action London following a workshop at Sacred Heart Primary

This area is also highlighted for interventions in our idling action plan for the borough. This includes funding from the Local Government Association (LGA) for a Behavioural Insights project to look at anti-idling messaging at West Barnes Lane level crossing to help reduce the impact of emissions from queuing traffic. An interactive LED sign will be installed in January 2022 and its impact reviewed and reported upon.

In addition, we have included this location in our new 'Breathe London' Monitoring network which also includes traffic and transport monitoring. The data gathered will help us understand the levels of pollution; the interventions needed and measure success of any work in this area. This work is part of our Air Quality Action Plan – a comprehensive approach to improving air quality throughout the borough. Parking Services Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) have received anti-idling refresher training in September 2021 and in principle are equipped to engage with Idling drivers as part of their day-to-day duties. The difficulty the CEOs encounter is that idling is usually the secondary offence, primarily drivers who idle are parked illegally and CEOs must first deal with the parking contravention. CEOs will be invited to high profile idling events such as the one scheduled in Colliers Wood on the 23rd November.

13 From John Davis

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

We have seen several instances recently of TPO'd trees being felled or butchered. In view of the current shortage of qualified Council Officers in planning department, what safeguards are in place to protect other such trees, and prosecute the recent offenders?

Reply

With regard to prosecution, we recently prevented a developer from mistakenly felling a large horse chestnut tree which had a TPO on it. Once a member of the public brought the matter to our attention, we were able to contact the developer and tree surgeon and stop work. Unfortunately, by this time the tree had already been considerably damaged and might not be saved. An enforcement officer attended the site to inspect the damage, and the developer has been notified that we will be taking action against them.

14 From Shirin Shah

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

My question that I would like answering, is what are Thames Water and Merton Council doing to prevent continuing flooding of Wydell Close. Our driveways and gardens are constantly suffering sewage water contamination.

Reply

We have undertaken detailed investigations including high pressure jetting of the highway surface water drainage system, which includes the road gullies and their connection point to the outfall into the Pyl Brook. No defects have been found in our system. We are also proposing to install a 4G gully sensor in the lowest gully in Wydell Close, which will remotely monitor silt and water levels and allow us to react should these levels exceed the pre-set thresholds for response.

There was a public meeting held onsite with the MP, Thames Water, the Environment Agency and Merton. This issue in Wydell Close is sewerage and foul water flooding, which Thames Water are responsible for. Similarly, Thames Water would also be responsible for installation of their FLIP devices if it meets with their criteria for internal foul water flooding.

We are meeting regularly with Thames Water regarding this issue to ensure actions are being fulfilled. Merton are also undertaken a 'section 19' flood investigation into this matter under the Flood & Water Management Act requirements.

More help is provided on the Thames Water page here:

<https://www.thameswater.co.uk/media-library/home/help/emergencies/flooding/sewer-flooding-guide.pdf>

Most importantly, please can you ensure that this flooding issue is noted and recorded as sewer flooding on Thames Water's sewer flooding questionnaire:

<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=zb56VRQyu0-OUUFLaOu3ljewBCxI7CJHjCHCf31I76FUMEMwNkxRVdIMEVVS1BPM0xZVVBTvjZFU4u>

15 From Rosemary Davis

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

In Cricket Green, Mitcham, we welcomed the idea of a school street, but have not noticed any traffic reduction during the designated hours, even during school term time. What traffic flow data, and number of prosecutions has the council obtained since creating school streets?

Reply

As the school street in question was introduced during the pandemic when traffic flow and public transport were not operating at normal levels, a before survey would not have been a true reflection of mode and level of transport. In the absence of this, an after survey would not provide meaningful data for comparison.

However, it is true to say that we continue to have moderate levels of non-compliance which suggests that the full benefit of school streets has yet to be fully realised. We are nonetheless confident that traffic levels are reducing, and will reduce further.

16 From Joyce Bellamy

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Recently we have been advised of several planning breaches involving trees felled without council permission, even when within Conservation Areas. What enforcement has LBM enacted to bring the perpetrators to book and how will the council publicise responsibilities of owning trees to their owners to prevent future breaches?

Reply

Please see Q13. Where breaches are brought to our attention, we will act which could include a requirement to plant replacement trees. With regard to publicising responsibilities of owning trees, it would be impossible to do this to all owners. There is however general information on the Merton website, and production of a

Tree Strategy which will be widely publicised, commenced on 1st November. Additionally, anyone wishing to do work to trees is required to complete an application form available both on the Merton website and through the Planning Portal. There is extensive advice on this on the Planning Portal.

17 From Andrew Biden

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Does the Council have any plans to introduce further LTNs within the borough to support its net zero target? If yes, where? If no, why?

Reply

Merton Council is supportive of LTNs as a method of improving road safety and creating quieter, healthier streets which enable more active travel choices for residents. The Council has recently made permanent, the experimental LTNs introduced in 2020.

The Council is supportive of introducing further LTNs, subject to consultation with residents and local councillors. At present, due to the TFL's financial pressures and interim nature of the TFL Local Implementation Plan funding, there are no live projects to introduce new LTNs. This will be reviewed in the next financial year if funds are available. In the meantime, if residents wish to explore an LTN for their area, we welcome local dialogue amongst residents to determine support in principle for new LTNs.

18 From Kevin Clarke

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Please will you clarify when the Decent Homes Standard was formally suspended following the Council Meeting on 7-Jul-2014. Also on which date was the Decent Homes Standard reinstated?

Reply

The Decent Homes Standard is part of the Stock Transfer Agreement between Merton Council and Clarion Housing. The Decent Homes Standard was temporarily suspended in 2014 (for Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury Estates only).

This was to provide a period of time for Clarion to assess whether the Decent Homes Standard on these estates should be met through refurbishment or via regeneration. This also provided time for Clarion to engage residents on the options which

concluded that regeneration was the preferred route to ensure Decent Homes for the longer term.

In 2018, Planning Permission was granted for the redevelopment of Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury estates. The Decent Homes Standard was not reinstated as regeneration of the estates is the approved way forward to achieving the decent home standard as well as providing additional homes, and more sustainable homes for residents for the long term. Had regeneration plans not been supported or approved, then the temporary suspension of Decent Homes would have been reinstated.

Due to delays in the delivery of Clarion's regeneration programme. Merton's Cabinet's Decision in September 2021 includes the agreed recommendation that: That Cabinet agreed to support an amendment to the Stock Transfer Agreement to commit Clarion to delivering Decent Homes Standard upgrades linked to any failure to achieve regeneration delivery milestones to ensure these works are guaranteed to be delivered within a specified timeframe irrespective of the status of Merton Estates Regeneration Project. Where it is necessary to upgrade block decorations and door entry systems or replace old kitchens and bathrooms with new, Clarion are continuing to do this on a case by case basis to ensure decency in tenants home prior to regeneration.

The Decent Homes Standard remains in place for the remainder of Clarion's stock in Merton. Clarion have also committed, as part of the regeneration project, to maintain properties on the estates pending the reprovion of homes.

19 From Mervin Eubanks

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

Willow Lane, Mitcham, is blighted by fly-tips, uncleared for months. A single camera is in operation, but all we see is a "Council Aware" notices on the rubbish. The tips are a health hazard, and over spills are a danger to legitimate traffic. When will any meaningful clearance be done?

Reply

I am pleased to advise that the Council is actively supporting those responsible for managing this land and assisting them in finding a long-term solution. A project team is well established with representatives from all impacted stakeholders including the Mitcham Conservators.

To support the funding of this project, the waste service has submitted a bid for two fixed CCTV units to cover this stretch of Willow Lane. The Conservators have agreed to contribute to this with the clearance of the fly tip.

20 From Mary Butler

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Can you please provide details of all tree preservation orders in the Borough within Conservation Areas and not on land owned by Merton Council.

Reply

All tree preservation orders in Merton are listed on the Council's website at <https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/planning/tree-preservation-orders/list>

All trees in Conservation Areas are protected. Maps of all of Merton's Conservation Areas are also available online at

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/conservation-heritage/conservation-areas-list>

21 From Mary-Jane Jeanes

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Applications for tree work lack essential information. Will the Council make it compulsory that all applications i) specify the species; ii) specify the exact locations on plans; iii) give precise reasons for the proposed work; iv) ensure that all this, and other relevant documents, are published on Planning Explorer?

Reply

Application forms for tree work are in a standard national form and are available both on the Merton website and on the planning portal.

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/planning/tree-preservation-orders/apply>

There is extensive advice and information on the Planning Portal to assist with completion of the form. Information required on the form includes the species, the location, the description of works required. Where the tree is protected by a TPO, the reason for undertaking the work is required.

We currently do not have the full information available to be publicly searched online but this is an issue we are currently looking into addressing.

22 From Rob Cossins

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

What is the council's plan for increasing the number of new electric vehicle charging points across Merton and will the council establish targets?

Reply

Although there is more work to be done, Merton is currently in the top 20% of local authorities for the number of EV charge points available to the public. EV Chargers are currently available via Source London, Char.gy and rapid chargers are available from ESB Energy on the TFL network.

At present there are 258 EV charge points in Merton:

- 6 Rapid Chargers – ESB Energy
- 140 On Street - SourceLondon
- 90 Lamp Column Chargers - Char.gy
- 22 Superstore/Retail Park charge points.

Based on the draft London-wide EV strategy, which has just been published, we are currently developing a Merton EV charging strategy which will set out our plan for increasing the number of EV charging points. This will be published next year.

All EV charge point locations in Merton can be found on <https://www.zap-map.com/live/>

Supplementary

Thank you Mayor. So thank you to the Cabinet Member for their answer. Hillside has a lot of flats and roads with no off-street parking available. So will the Cabinet Member visit me here in Hillside to see the need for themselves and help us to rapidly increase the spread of electric vehicle charging points across the area? Thank you.

Reply

I want to thank you for your supplementary question. So I completely appreciate the concern. We've seen a rapid increase in the number of electric vehicles over the past year. We've seen a doubling. While Merton is in the top twenty percent of boroughs for EV charging points, we know that there is more to do. We are planning

our electric vehicle strategy for next year but I am happy to meet with him and to look at the specific area in question.

23 From John Braithwaite

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social and Public health

Anti-idling measures are outlined on the Merton Council website, yet there does not seem to be any move to enforcement. Are parking wardens trained and empowered to ask people to turn their engines off, and if not why not?

Reply

Parking Services Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) received anti-idling refresher training in September 2021 and are equipped and empowered to engage with Idling drivers as part of their day-to-day duties. The difficulty the CEOs encounter is that idling is usually the secondary offence, primarily drivers who idle are parked illegally and CEOs must first deal with the parking contravention. CEOs will continue to take action and be involved in specific anti-idling events such as the one scheduled in Colliers Wood on the 23rd November.

24 From Matthew Willis

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Our town centres need certainty. Without scapegoating Network Rail, TFL, or the Department for Transport, what are the Council doing to have Crossrail 2 confirmed or cancelled?

Reply

On 31 October 2020 the Secretary of State for Transport wrote to the Mayor of London confirming the basis upon which TfL would receive financial support from HM Government in light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on TfL's finances – referred to as the 'H2 Funding Settlement'. This in effect confirmed that there would be no development funding available for Crossrail 2 for the foreseeable future. Within the H2 Funding Settlement it was stated that:

“In relation to Crossrail 2, prioritises safeguarding activity and brings an orderly end to consultancy work as soon as possible. DfT will support such safeguarding activity for this project as required.”

TfL are working with Government to make the necessary arrangements for the Secretary of State to update the Safeguarding Directions, so that they reflect the

most up to date plans for the scheme as soon as possible. To date, there has been no indicative timescale for updated safeguarding.

Regardless of the timetable for if or when Crossrail 2 may materialise, Merton Council absolutely see the need for the safeguarding to be updated. The last official safeguarding was in 2015, which didn't include any land south of Wimbledon Station. The Council has also called for TFL and DFT to at least proceed with updating the safeguarding so that it is concurrent with the latest Crossrail 2 route.

The situation at present is that there is land safeguarded in Merton that may never be needed for CR2 and other sites which CR2 identified in their 2016-2018 consultations that isn't formally safeguarded. We agree that certainty is needed. With TFLs current budget position, it is unlikely that any further safeguarding work will progress without DFT's agreement.

25 From Dan Collins

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

What reviews and subsequent actions are being taken with regards to the state of the streets around the borough due to rubbish? It has become all too frequent to find either fly tipping, un-emptied/overflowing public bins, or rubbish bags left out and torn by foxes. We should seriously be considering a review of how efficient our current spending on this area is, and if deemed so, look at methods to invest further to tackle these issues.

Reply

As part of a current review of the mechanical street sweeping service, we have invested in specialist mechanical pavement sweepers which will tackle weeds and detritus in our residential roads, along with pavement washers for our town centres and transport interchanges to improve overall standards.

The service has successfully bid for additional funds to develop a number of street improvement project including a mobile fly tipping clearance unit, a jet washing programme to target "grot spots" and additional beat sweepers.

Fly tipping is a priority area for the service, and we have launched a pilot programme to specifically address small bags of waste dumped on our streets. Since its launch in October 2021, this pilot programme has issued approximately £15,500 in fines to offenders. This action coupled with bespoke communications sent to 2,500 residents within the pilot areas will provide the basis for consistent innovation and investment in our fight against fly tipping.

Our client team have undertaken more than 6,100 street inspections this year and have used these inspections to hold Veolia to account. In addition, regular independent inspection have been undertaken in line with National Indicator 195(Ni195) to determine the effectiveness of street cleansing in Merton. Findings from these independent inspections show that 88% of streets were assessed to be within the required standard for litter.

In addition, we have invested in a new, user-friendly reporting tool so that residents can raise issues with ease. This tool, which will be available by the end of the year, will notify residents once a reported issue has been resolved and provide the service with data which will drive better allocation of resources.

26 From Dr Pippa Maslin

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

In Merton, the absence of robust policy to safeguard our trees means that many are under threat, primarily because of insensitive development and a lack of care. This undermines efforts to mitigate climate change. What are the key dates for the production, consultation period, and adoption of a Tree Strategy?

Reply

The development of the Merton Tree Strategy commenced on the 1st November. Currently, officers are working with an independent consultant to undertake the baseline collation of information and data. This will also include borough wide site visits with officers to better understand the composition of the Council's urban forest.

The process will include interviews and consultation with external stakeholders and partner colleagues within departments in the Council. The information captured during this phase will be utilised for drafting the first draft strategy. Following this drafting and in the new year, the draft will be circulated for secondary consultation and a survey undertaken to determine feedback. The information from this stage will be used to prepare the final draft strategy prior to presentation to committees to seek official approval and adoption of the developed strategy. It is envisaged that the whole process shall take 16 weeks from commencement.

Finally, the council does have a robust approach to safeguarding trees, including when there are proposed developments to provide more housing or improve the local economy. Trees and arboriculture are considered in all major applications, and the council has a track record of demonstrating that it is possible to build new much-needed homes and increase provision for local businesses while also increasing the number of trees.

27 From Paula England

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Given there is a procedure for removal and sale of vehicles. How many vehicles have been removed, sold or otherwise disposed of, per month, since 01/11/19? What was the total net amount of sales proceeds? What percentage of total dues did the total net proceeds represent?

Reply

Since 1 November 19 we commenced removal on 129 cases. Not all of these would have been actually removed as the debtor would have settled the debt before the vehicle was towed. Others would have been paid before the vehicle was sold.

We sold six vehicles – total proceeds £4,895

In three cases the sale proceeds cleared the debt and fees incurred

28 From Jeremy Hudson

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

When the Council sold the freehold of Wimbledon Park Golf Club to the All England Lawn Tennis Club in 1993, both parties publicly and solemnly promised to their local communities that the land would not be built upon. In the light of the Club's professed intention to renege on that promise, what are the Council doing to uphold that promise?

Reply

The Council are currently considering the hybrid (part outline and part detailed) planning application submitted by the All England Lawn Tennis Club for their landholdings at Wimbledon Park; planning reference 21/P2900. Covenants relating to land are not a planning matter so will not be considered as part of determining this application.

The Council as the land owner with the benefit of this restrictive covenant takes this matter extremely seriously. At present there is no requirement for the Council to take any action since there is no breach or immediate pending breach of any of the restrictive covenants that were placed on this land in 1993. The Council will ensure that appropriate legal consideration is given to this matter as and when necessary and will act appropriately.

29 From Sarah Golby

To the Cabinet Member for Children and Education

Why has Merton Council declined to join incentive schemes that encourage parents to switch to using reusable nappies? For example, the Real Nappies for London scheme which currently has 8 participating boroughs.

<https://www.realnappiesforlondon.org.uk/apply/>

Reply

Thank you for your question on encouraging parents to switch to using re-usable nappies. With finite resources, this has not been a priority area for funding in Merton. The Council however remains committed to reducing waste and recycling as part of our waste management strategies and to see how we can better use our communication channels to promote re-usable nappies to new parents going forward. For example through our Health Visiting services who support families with newborns and our Children's Centres.

30 From Richard Weekes

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Could the Council please provide the street sweeper route and frequency map for Graveney Ward

Reply

Our contract with Veolia is an output based specification that requires our streets to be maintained to the required acceptable standard. In areas in which our roads are below the established standard, the service provider is required to attend to these areas and ensure that the road is brought back up to standard in the agreed time scale. As such the contract is not based on a prescribed frequency of sweeping or litter picking.

It is important to note that Veolia's schedules will vary depending on pedestrian foot traffic, land use and need. The schedules are continually reviewed in order to ensure the efficient deployment of the suitable resource.

I have asked the Waste Services Team to look into ways in which we can improve our customer offering and look at publishing the street cleansing service in a format

that allows our residents to use an easy look up table to search for their specific street and see the current frequency of the local street cleansing schedule.

31 From Roy England

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

What constitutes "exceptional circumstances" for vehicle removal, who decides what they are; who decides that a vehicle should be put forward to the Head of Service for agreement for removal, how many vehicles, by month, has the Head of Service been invited to remove and how many has he approved?

Reply

For the collection of council tax, and parking fines the discretion to undertake a removal is with the Enforcement Agent and not the Head of Service. The department do not deal with abandoned vehicles where the process may be different. I can get a written answer to you from the Enforcement Agent regarding your question about exceptional circumstances.

32 From Richard Poole

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Can the Cabinet Member responsible please give an update on the rollout of permanent enforcement measures for each of the School Streets schemes introduced in the borough since 1st April 2020?

Reply

'In Merton we have one of the highest numbers of School Streets in Greater London, with a total of 28. To ensure compliance with operating times - to improve road safety and reduce pollution - we have introduced a number of fixed ANPR cameras. Enforcement officers also monitor School Streets equipped with CCTV equipment.

33 From Guy Lockwood

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

Can the Cabinet Member explain what steps have been taken to improve Veolia's street cleaning performance, and why these steps have not led to improvements across the whole borough?

Reply

In order to hold the contractor to account and improve service standards we created a Neighbourhood Client Team who undertake site inspections and walk-about with local ward Members who have concerns about littering in their area. During the first half of this year, our client team have undertaken more than 6,100 street inspections and, as a result of the data they have gathered £47,092 has been deducted from Veolia for underperformance.

In addition to this regular independent inspection have been undertaken in line with National Indicator 195(Ni195). Findings from these independent inspections show that over the last 6 month we have seen a sustained improvement with the level of street cleansing standard and 88% of streets were of the required standard for litter.

Supplementary

Thank you very much Mayor. I thank the Cabinet Member for their answer. However, the standards in Wandle ward and Haydon's Road are still way below what residents expect. I therefore ask, will the cabinet member consider a localized improvement plan in Wandle and Haydon's Road to improve standards?

Reply

Hi. So I'd like to thank him for his question and his supplementary. We are, when we're dealing with Veolia in this particular area, it's very important to note the areas where they are not as consistent as I would want them to be. There has been an improvement plan in the past and part of that is we're going to start seeing things like mechanicalised sweepers across our borough, including wards like Wandle and I think that will drive the improvements that you and all of us want to see on our streets. It will increase the frequency of street cleaning and increase the visibility of that so you can see that actually happening and I hope to see those fruits of that labour as we go forward.

34 From Simon Jones

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

What enforcement powers does the council have to ensure social housing in the borough meets the "Merton Standard" promised to residents back when council housing stock was transferred over to housing associations?

Reply

The Merton Standard does not apply to all social rented housing in the borough and only applied to the transferred former council housing stock following the stock transfer in 2010. The Merton Standard formed part of the offer to former council tenants and gave them some choices regarding choice of kitchen styles colours and finishes and involve residents in the selection process when meeting part of the Decent Home Standard. At no point can The Merton Standard be seen as an alternative for repairs to be carried out to tenants home and is not the legislative enforcement framework for residential rented dwellings, including social rented dwellings and these are found in the Housing Act 2004 and associated legislation

35 From Sivas Ranjan

To The Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

What guarantee can the Council give the public that the trees on Merton High Street will be protected and not felled as part of the High Path Regeneration?

Reply

There are no plans, and never have been any plans to remove the mature trees on Merton High Street as part of Clarion's estate regeneration programme for High Path.

The Council's adopted Estates Local Plan highlights that the tree belt south of Merton High Street is an "area of high landscape value" The plan also shows that the trees are to be retained.

Clarion Housing Group have secured outline planning permission for the regeneration of High Path Estate (with design detail expected phase by phase) The permitted planning approval for High Path regeneration shows the Merton High Street group of trees as retained, with building lines set further south from Merton High Street to account for the presence of the trees.



Approved masterplan showing Merton High Street trees retained.

Supplementary

My supplementary question is please can the Cabinet Member tell me when the trees outside Harris Academy will finally be planted?

Reply

I understand that the trees outside Harris are due to be planted shortly, but I'm sure we can advise him in due course.

36 From Andrew Boyce

To The Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

What consideration has been given to the provision of communal waste receptacles for those residents living on main roads and high streets, in small flats, with little to no internal storage space for waste receptacles?

Reply

For households with no external storage areas such as flats and communal properties, I am pleased to advise that we have maintained the weekly collection service and in areas of time banding this is increased to twice weekly collection as part of the blue and purple sack collection service.

I note the valuable feedback regarding communal receptacles on main roads, however, I would be concerned that this would have the potential to either be a

hindrance to the footpath or if placed in parking bays, reduce the space around local businesses to park. In addition, there is the added concern that the permanent installation of waste storage containers may contribute to localised fly tipping as historically experienced at some Neighbourhood Recycling Centres.

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From Councillor Peter McCabe to the Leader

Is the Cabinet Member aware of reports of the soaring building costs of the proposed hospital at Belmont which threatens the economic viability of the whole scheme?

Reply

I am aware that additional requirements have been imposed on the 40 new and enhanced hospital schemes by DHSC and that this impacts on the financial viability of the Epsom St Helier proposal. I have also become aware of potential constraints on the overall capital pot and I have written to the CCG requesting clarification of the implications and sight of any revised plans as a result. I have not yet received a response.

Supplementary

Thank you Mr Mayor. Question one to the Leader of the Council. My supplementary is that the economic assessment that the Council had done and was presented to the Health Scrutiny Panel suggested that this whole scheme was highly risky and we've recently heard in the health service journal that the funding, the capital funding, is being cut at the same time that building costs are going through the roof. Does he believe that this move and these plans are in the best interests of the people of Merton?

Reply

Short answer, no. Long answer, if the Government and the Health Service wants to have a look at the impact of Covid on communities like Merton where the most vulnerable people, the most at risk people, and the people with the worst health outcomes have been have had the worst outcomes as a result of Covid, then they will see that there is a need for a full general hospital in the areas of greatest health disadvantage and that means St Helier. So I hope that they will change their mind.

From Councillor David Dean to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency:

Given the recent fiasco and waste of public money on the Hartfield Walk project, what processes has the cabinet member put in place to ensure valuable CIL money is spent wisely, correctly and projects have the necessary planning & licensing permissions that may be applicable?

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Reply

The Hartfield Walk project is not a waste of public money. The Council received a CIL funding application from LoveWimbledon to deliver a series of placemaking improvements to what was an unassuming, blank space in Wimbledon town centre. The CIL bid sought to green the space by introducing planters, public seating, play graphics on the footway and to provide kiosks to support existing businesses. The kiosks also have green roofs to improve biodiversity. The project, as built, has delivered on these objectives.

The Councillor is mistaken regarding licencing. The business owners had the appropriate street trading licenses issued by the Council before, and after the Hartfield Walk improvements.

Cllr Dean's views on planning and the pre-planning communications should be directed to the applicant.

The Council already expects recipients of CIL funding to undertake their own due diligence on delivery matters such as planning. This will be strengthened in grant award contracts. It is disappointing that some of the Hartfield Walk structures were in place before planning permission was granted – despite officers raising such concerns

Supplementary

Well thank you very much Mr Mayor. I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for their answer. Part of the answer said the Councillor is mistaken regarding licensing but I think the Cabinet Member was mistaken in not reading the question, because the question is planning and licensing permissions. If I can just remind the Cabinet Member that you need planning and licensing permissions collectively together to gain consent for this kind of thing. But the two questions I really have to ask is - this is public land, public money, and it was council directed, so are they really happy that the processes were put in place, because they were flouted and the second thing is that was a question but I needed to get the answer correct because the Council Cabinet Member wasn't saying, but the second thing is we talked about a blank space. Were the four trees that were incarcerated by railings, invisible to the Cabinet Member? Thank you

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Dean for his supplementary. It was a Labour administration that introduced CIL into this borough which enabled a number of projects to take place.

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In relation to Hartfield walk, as he is well aware obviously the planning and licensing process is separate to the allocation of money, but I think we should welcome improvements to public spaces and I'd also like to congratulate Wimbledon Bid, 85 percent of businesses voted for them. I think it is a good thing that these things are happening in the borough and it's a shame that obviously Councillor Dean doesn't support improvements in Wimbledon town centre. Thank you.

From Councillor Stephen Alambritis to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Can the Cabinet Member provide an estimate of the number of Merton residents who have lost £20 per week as a result of the Government's decision to withdraw the extra Universal Credit paid during the pandemic, and what is the overall net loss after the Government's attempt to make amends through the Household Support Grant?

Reply

As at August 2021 there were 7,992 Merton residents in receipt of Universal Credit. This equates to an estimated yearly loss of £8.3 million for residents. The Household Support grant awarded to Merton is £1,186,607. The fund is not intended to just help residents in receipt of Universal Credit.

Supplementary

My supplementary for the Member for Finance is as follows. How does the Cabinet Member square the fact that the household support grant is a fraction of the amount of money lost by families in universal credit cuts and also that this very household support grant is intended to help out even more people than receive universal credit, and is he aware that the Labour Council in Exeter, supported by the Conservative councillors, unanimously called for a review of universal credit payment levels? Thank you.

Reply

Well can I thank him for his question and his supplementary question and quite clearly it cannot be squared and it will mean that all of our residents who are in receipt of universal credit - nearly 8 000 of them - are going to face very significant hardship as a result of the government's decision to scrap the 20 pound a week uplift. And I would like to praise his leadership during his 10 years on the council for retaining the council tax support scheme when the government's scrapped that and I am delighted that we are able to continue providing that for another year which is increasingly important. In respect of Exeter, I wasn't aware of that, but I'd like to praise the leadership shown by

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the Conservatives on Exeter City Council and I hope those opposite will support the council tax support scheme when it comes before us later this evening. Thank you Mr Mayor.

From Councillor Eloise Bailey to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

Can the Cabinet Member give an update on (a) drain cleaning by ward since August 2021 and (b) details of meetings he has personally attended with Thames Water and/or the Environment Agency on flooding during the period 2020-2021?

Reply

- a) Just this calendar year to date we have completed over 6500 gulley cleans across the borough. With a number of additional cleans to high priority gullies during July and August. The Council continues to undertake significant work to mitigate this risk and to ensure our highway assets flow as freely as possible.

The Leader of the Council has written to Thames Water following the flooding in July asking them to improve arrangements and invest in the necessary work to reduce this risk. Thames Water have arranged an independent review of this occurrence which will report in the new year. We hope to invite Thames Water to attend our Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel once they have completed the independent review to explain how they will address this recurring problem.

- b) I met with Thames Water on 20th October 2021.

Supplementary

Thank you Mayor. And I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his reply. When I asked for details of your meeting with Thames Water, I perhaps naively expected a little bit more than just the date of that meeting. Since there's no minutes that I've been privy to, would you mind telling us what the outcome or conversations during that meeting were?

Reply

I'd like to thank her for a question and for her supplementary. I met with Thames Water on the 20th of October and we had a very full and frank conversation. I'm more than happy to meet with you to discuss that further. But one of the key things I took from it

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was actually their need to communicate far better with residents in this borough about the work they're doing in this borough because some of it is actually quite positive. So I would very much like to push on that and if you'd like to meet with me to discuss that further maybe we could do something together to push them on that, more than happy to.

From Councillor Joan Henry to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Can the Cabinet member reassure me that the Council will be make it a priority to look after some of our most vulnerable residents by continuing to offer one of the country's most generous Council Tax Support Schemes?

Reply

At tonight's meeting we will be voting on adopting our 2022/23 Council Tax Support Scheme. The proposal is to again adopt the same scheme with the government uprating. This scheme still protects the most vulnerable residents and is one of the most generous schemes in the country.

Supplementary

Thank you Mr Mayor. I would like to thank the Cabinet Member for his reply. I'm delighted to support this later this evening. Does he share my concern for the increasing number of people on universal credit?

Reply

Well can I thank Councillor Henry for her question and her supplementary question and indeed her support for the council tax support scheme? I am very concerned about the number of people on universal credit and we know that our residents will face significant pressures in the coming months with inflation, energy and fuel costs all increasing, so it's more important than ever that we do retain the council tax support scheme and I thank her for her support and I hope all colleagues will be able to support it later this evening. Thank you Mr Mayor.

From Councillor Dickie Wilkinson to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

At its meeting on 3rd February this year, council agreed to create the role of Morden Champion to drive forward the regeneration programme. Could the Cabinet member

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please update us on the progress made towards appointing the Morden Champion since then?

Reply

A cross-party Members' steering group has been established to oversee regeneration activities in Morden town centre. This ranges from the delivery of CIL funded projects, updates on planning activity and the status of the overall regeneration programme. I am actively considering the appointment of a Councillor Champion for Morden.

Supplementary

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you to the Cabinet Member for their response. Can you assure us that the scope of this role and the appointment of this role will be discussed at the next Morden Regeneration Steering Group and that we actually turn pondering into action?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Wilkinson and for a supplementary question and firstly I'd like to thank him for all that he does in terms of supporting businesses in Morden town centre. Yes, it will be on the agenda of the next Morden Regeneration Steering Group and I look forward to engaging with all parties about delivering regeneration in Morden. Thank you.

Councillor John Dehaney to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

Would the Cabinet Member outline how she is improving the borough's streets and parks in the next few months?

Reply

Our Neighbourhood Client Team will continue to conduct site inspections and work closely with the contractor's Area Managers to ensure that service standards are maintained, and any rectifications are addressed in line with our contractual agreements.

In conjunction with the Assistant Director of Public Space, we are looking at restructuring this area in order to build greater resilience into the service with a focused

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neighbourhood approach which will be underpinned by a Cleaner and Green Programme Board.

To raise awareness of how our community can play their part in keeping Merton Clean, we will continue to expand our Keep it Clean, Love Merton campaign. This includes developing better communication of collection times, how to report issues and what penalties may be given if you are caught dumping waste on our streets.

We will continue to work on our pilot programme that specifically addresses small bags of waste dumped on our streets. Since its launch in October 2021, this pilot programme has issued approximately £15,500 in fines to offenders. We will be re-procuring a new environmental enforcement Contract with an increased specification to including the investigation and prosecution for fly tipping.

The service has invested in new street sweeping appliances that will be received shortly and deployed across the borough to improve the standards of sweeping on our footways.

This makes the service more effective and improves the physical collection of dirt and litter.

In addition, and in response to feedback from our residents, the service has also invested an additional £300k in a jet washing programme for "grot spots", a roving fly tipping response unit, improvements in signage and small infrastructure in our parks and a programme to improve biodiversity in urban areas.

Supplementary

Thank you Mr Mayor. Would the Cabinet Member tell me more about the 'Keep it Clean Love Merton' campaign?

Reply

I'd like to thank him for his question and for his supplementary and I would be delighted to tell you more about our 'Keep it Clean Love Merton' campaign. It is all about loving where we live and taking pride in our streets and taking pride in what a wonderful place is to live in Merton and part of that we've recently just finished and we're about to announce the winner of an anti-litter poster competition we ran amongst the primary schools in the borough and I can announce today, drum roll please, that the winner is

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Lola aged 8 from Wimbledon Chase Primary School. Her picture is amazing and I hope you will all see it around the borough shortly and we'll keep Merton clean thank you.

From Councillor Nigel Benbow to the Cabinet Member for Children and Education

Funding growth is often requested to meet the increased demand for travel care and support services for children and young people. Can the Cabinet Member for Children and Education assure this has a neutral impact on those with protected characteristics to ensure the needs of children and young people are met to the same high standards of service provision in line with acceptable requirements?

Reply

Any decision where it is proposed that provision for young people should change, is scrutinised to understand the impact on vulnerable groups, including those children with protected characteristics. Through this scrutiny officers will seek to ensure that these groups are well supported, and not affected in an unfairly negative way.

Supplementary

Would the Cabinet Member commit to a meeting with me to discuss how further improvements can be made? Thank you.

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Benbow for his question and his supplementary and I'm always happy to meet my ward colleague for a meeting about anything but particularly about something as important as this and something that I'm personally committed to about ensuring that young people and children no matter what their skills, no matter what their backgrounds, are protected and have access to the high level of services and outcomes that we want for all of our children. So I'll be very happy to. Thank you.

From Councillor Sally Kenny to the Cabinet Member for Children and Education

Can the Cabinet Member please update us on the continuing work of the Council in supporting disadvantaged pupils during school holidays?

Reply

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The council will be running and commissioning a range of Holiday, Activities and Food (HAF) Programs over the winter break. The council youth service will be running provisions at both youth centres, and the Adventure Playground will be open on an open access basis to local children in the first week. The three council provisions are focused on providing services in the three most disadvantaged areas of Merton. In addition, 10 voluntary sector providers have come forward to run a range of activities including sports and arts based work. There will be visits to Wimbledon Theatre Panto as well as workshops and Cinderella at the Polka. AFC Wimbledon and Tooting and Mitcham football club have also donated tickets for matches over the holiday. There will be some provision each day in the first week, between Christmas and New Year and on the first day in January. In the Government's recent Autumn Budget and Spending Review, there was notification of the continuation of HAF funding nationally next year. Details will be announced in early 2022.

The council is using the Household Support Grant to ensure we continue to fund £15 per week school holiday supermarket vouchers for young people in receipt of Free School Meals, designating a further £600,000 to cover the recent autumn half term, the forthcoming Christmas holidays, the February half term and Easter holidays. The Government's Covid Support Grant, which previously helped to cover the cost of Free School Meals was insufficient for the summer holidays, but the council covered the gap with use of £75,000 from its own resources.

Supplementary

I thank the Cabinet Member for her response. Would she agree with me that while she has done absolutely the right thing in diverting funds from the inadequate household support grant towards making sure the borough's most vulnerable children don't go hungry this Christmas, this is not the position the council should find itself in and that Merton's children deserve better from this Conservative government? Thank you.

Reply

Thank you for your supplementary and the short answer is, yes I would 100% agree that whilst we are right to use whatever resources we can to support our children and residents who come from low income backgrounds, we do not have the resources to do this and this is Government's problem. We're talking about 6500 children of school age on free school meals that we're trying to get additional funds to but who have suffered through the cuts that have already been talked about this evening, such as the universal credit cuts, and Councillor Kenny will know from her role as Chair of Children and Young Person Scrutiny where just recently we had Poplar Primary School from just

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down the road come and talk about the challenges that they faced which included increasing levels of poverty among the children coming into the school and schools having to put in additional resources to support them. What we need is for those families to not be so poor in the first place. Thank you.

From Councillor Stephen Alambritis to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Following the welcome decision not to further increase parking charges, can the Cabinet Member reassure us that she is seeing a change in people's behaviour with regard car-use, and is the anti-idling message getting through?

Reply

Data from residential permit holders in Merton shows a shift towards cleaner, greener vehicles has been taking place in the last 18 months, since emissions-based charging was being considered by Cabinet. The number of Electric Vehicles registered in Merton has already increased from 482 in the first quarter of 2020 to 824 in the first quarter of 2021. There has been an overall shift of approximately 15% of residential permits into a lower emissions band, which is consistent across all areas of the borough and irrespective of the length of enforcement of any Controlled Parking Zone.

It therefore appears that the package of policies and measures already implemented by Merton, TfL and the Government may have had a greater influence than anticipated on accelerating the transition to lower emissions vehicles.

Merton has already implemented and will continue to deliver a wide range of measures to support sustainable travel choices and to tackle climate change and air quality. The full range of actions the Council is taking are set out in Transport Strategy (LIP3), Air Quality Action Plan, and the Climate Strategy and Action Plan.

With regard to idling, Parking Services Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) have received anti-idling refresher training in September 2021 and in principle are equipped to engage with Idling drivers as part of their day-to-day duties. The difficulty the CEOs encounter is that idling is usually the secondary offence, primarily drivers who idle are parked illegally and CEOs must first deal with the parking contravention. CEOs will be invited to high profile idling events such as the one scheduled in Colliers Wood on the 23rd November.

Whilst we believe the anti-idling message is getting through, we have a lot more work to do and will be carrying out more campaigns and advice to motorists.

Supplementary

I thank the Cabinet Member for her full and comprehensive written answer. I do have a supplementary and it is as follows, can the Cabinet Member confirm that she will

continue to pursue initiatives to encourage a bridge to more sustainable modes of transport? .

Reply

Thank you Councillor Alambritis for both your question and your supplementary question and I can reassure you that we are committed to such initiatives. We've rolled out the most school streets in London - more than a third of our suitable streets are also in an LTN. Within the past year we've introduced 20 cycle hangars and as I mentioned earlier in response to questions, we have, we're in the top 20 of London Boroughs for EV charging coverage and so we absolutely are committed to such initiatives. Thank you.

From Councillor Daniel Holden to Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that the introduction of the emissions based parking tax has been permanently cancelled rather than just temporarily stalled?

Reply

Yes. The Council is recommending to no longer proceed with the scheme because it is recognised that many residents are, and will continue, to suffer economically as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and other cost of living increases more generally. Travel patterns which shifted during the pandemic – including a reluctance to return to public transport – have continued longer than anticipated, with uncertainty as to when or whether they will return. Moreover, Merton has already observed a significant shift to cleaner, greener vehicles during the time emissions-based charging has been considered, potentially linked to London-wide policies such as the ULEZ charge, and borough initiatives implemented in Merton, including low traffic neighbourhoods and school safety zones, as well as the Air Quality Action Plan.

Supplementary

Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you to the cabinet member for their answer. Will the Cabinet Member make Merton's diesel tax less blunt, so that a car that is ULEZ compliant according to your own Mayor of London's criteria will not have to pay such a blunt levy in Merton?

Reply

I want to thank Councillor Holden for both his question and his supplementary question. As he'll be aware the reason that we are not progressing with emissions-based charging is because too many families right now are facing a cut to universal credit, a hike in their energy costs this winter, plus a substantial rise in national insurance contributions. So it is not appropriate for us to re-look at this measure.

From Councillor Nick Draper to the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Skills

Can the Cabinet Member explain how breaches of licencing conditions of events in Morden Park are dealt with, and include any examples form the past year?

Reply

Officers from Merton's Licensing Service have not been notified of any breaches in licensing conditions of events in Morden Park. However, should any breaches occur, the Licensing Team would follow the Council's enforcement protocol to deal with this matter. Officers are obligated to take a proportionate approach to enforcement and in the first instance would investigate to understand why the breach might have occurred and meet with the licence holder/Designated Premises Supervisor to establish whether there is any basis to any allegations.

Officers would consider what action would be appropriate based on the nature and severity of the breach. Options include:

- No action, where the breach may be minor and has been rectified
- Working with the licence holder/Designated Premises Supervisor to devise and agree an action plan to rectify the issues and preventing them from breaching the conditions in future,
- Written warnings which set out potential future sanctions if there is a further breach of the licence
- Review of the premises licence
- Prosecution
- Licensing officers would also assess the severity of the breach and look to engage other Responsible Authorities under the Licensing Act 2003 if necessary, such as the Police, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Fire Service to carry out joint enforcement action. Premises licence reviews and prosecution are used in extreme cases.

It is worth noting that the Licensing Team carry out proactive and reactive licensing compliance visits to licensed premises to investigate complaints or if concerns are raised. These visits ensure licence holders are complying with their business operating schedule. Sometimes these visits are carried out jointly with responsible authorities e.g. Police, Trading Standards, Environmental Health Section and Fire Service. Some of the visits may include test purchases to ensure compliance.

Supplementary

Thank you very much Mr Mayor. Thank you very much to the Cabinet Member for her answer. I'm really delighted to hear there have been no recent breaches of licensing conditions in events in Morden Park. Licensing and parks being two of my favourite things. I'm very aware of how important it is for the council to be able to hire out our green spaces for the good of the council's finances. Can the Cabinet Member update me on very recent work in the libraries, another of my favourite things, another aspect of her portfolio which brings in vital income as well as bringing communities together thank you.

Reply

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Draper for your questions and for your supplementary. As I know that I meet you in the library playing your guitar so you do know what's happening there, which is well appreciated by the young people. However, there are various things happening for example we now have technology at the doors of some of our libraries, for example Raynes Park and Mitcham, so that the residents can actually access without having to worry about staff inside that does help also to save some money because then you don't need to worry about who is standing at the door. Because these things are very new there are some issues and some people have complained that they don't know anything about that's happening however if you go online you will find that there are newsletters and over 20 000 of our residents have access to these things, so I would advise everyone, including our member here who has just asked the question, and I know I don't need to tell him, but if you go online you will find all the answers you want and so therefore that's only some of it but at the moment we've got Barclays Bank which we all, some of us, petitioned because we thought they were leaving. They have left in terms of the building, but they are now going to be in three of our libraries Mitcham library Pollards Hill and Colliers Wood, shortly. We don't exactly have the date yet - they will be there three days a week so therefore, they are not gone, they will be accessible, and also we've asked for the machines to be put in so when they are not there people can actually access it. Thank you

From Councillor Janice Howard to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency:

Can the cabinet member tell me how many penalty notices have been issued since the introduction of the school streets prohibition scheme?

Reply

Merton has a higher proportion of Schools Streets than any other borough in London, as recognised by the London Boroughs Healthy Streets Scorecard, which has this year published data to show the health of each borough's streets according to nine indicators. Indeed, the 2021 Scorecard revealed that more than two in five of Merton's schools now have a School Street (41%). Since introducing these schemes to help children to be safe from traffic, and to reduce levels of air pollution, there have so far been 27,709 penalty notices. A higher volume of notices coincided with the initial introduction of the scheme, and therefore at the start of enforcement (for the first two weeks of operation), a notice was issued for a vehicle entering the street for the first time, but no further charge was issued to the same vehicle.

Supplementary

Thank you Mr Mayor I do have a supplementary question. I thank the Cabinet Member for their response. However, we've heard from many residents who have unwittingly been caught driving in these streets and say the signage is totally inadequate. What plans are there to review the signage and pay back local residents who have been caught more than once indeed some several times? Thank you.

Reply

Thank you Councillor Howard for your question and for your supplementary question. We have had a number of concerns about multiple PCNs in both school streets and in LTNs. I think we're reassured that the school street signage is very clear and is large, LTN signage possibly is something that we are reviewing. We are looking at both overall and I would be interested in hearing more from you as to the specific challenges in specific school streets, so I welcome a discussion about those areas. Thank you.

From Cllr Paul Kohler to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Will the Cabinet member confirm, regardless of the outcome of the Planning Applications concerning the land in question, that the Council will enforce the restrictive covenants, to which the AELTC agreed, when Merton sold the freehold of the Wimbledon Golf Club land to them in 1993?

Reply

The Council as the land owner with the benefit of this restrictive covenant takes this matter extremely seriously. At present there is no requirement for the Council to take any enforcement action since there is no breach or immediate pending breach of any of the restrictive covenants that were placed on this land in 1993. The Council will ensure that appropriate legal consideration is given to this matter as and when necessary and will act appropriately.

Supplementary

Can I thank the Cabinet Member for his response and hope he'll forgive a lawyer's trepidation about his commitment to give appropriate legal consideration to any future breaches of the covenant. So for the avoidance of doubt, can the Cabinet Member and give a commitment that the council will enforce the covenant and not allow the All England Club to erect any permanent buildings on the land to which the covenant applies?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Kohler for his supplementary. It was a Labour administration in 1993 that introduced this covenant when the land was sold. I understand, you, Mr Mayor, were the then chair of the Environment Committee in 1993 when this was put in and took place. Obviously this covenant is in place and it is staying in place. Thank you.

From Councillor Laxmi Attawar to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

Can the Cabinet Member update us on the number of FPNs issued for fly tipping offences?

Reply

Over the last 12 months between October 2020 and Sept 2021 we have issued a total of 248 Fix penalty Notices (FPNS) for Fly tipping. Our Fly-tipping Strategy has the primary aim of aligning our approach in tackling fly-tipping, not just through efficient and targeted enforcement but through wider engagement with service partners, community groups and stakeholders. The goal of the strategy is to provide an overall reduction in fly-tipping incidents and an improved satisfaction of our residents regarding the cleanliness of the streets within their communities

As part of our fly tipping action plan, the service has reinforced the Council's zero tolerance to fly tipping at identified target areas in which we have deployed additional resources in the issuing of FPNs for fly tipping. The primary focus in the short term is to address the dumping of rubbish on the streets such as furniture and black sacks. We know that the majority of residents do not do this but sadly, there is a small minority who think it is ok. To date, we have written to over 2,500 households within the pilot areas advising them of the correct way to dispose of their waste along with reminding them the discarding of waste outside of our collection schedule is a criminal offence. To take action against these people and tackle their anti-social behavior, we have increased the number of enforcement officers patrolling this area. Anyone caught dumping rubbish will be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice of up to £400 or prosecuted under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which can result in fines, Court action and a potential criminal record. Since the pilot has commenced, the service has issued 55 additional FPNs.

Supplementary

Thank you Mr Mayor. I have a supplementary question and I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for her answer to my question. It's good to hear about offenders being caught in and paying fines but as well as these reactive measures can the Cabinet Member tell us what preventative measures she is taking in the battle against fly-tipping?

Reply

I'd like to thank her for her question and her supplementary. Well the council adopted a fly-tipping strategy in 2019 and part of that along with enforcement and preventing reoccurrence was early intervention and one of the things we're working at the moment is a project looking at flats above shops and in properties like that where you have quite a high turnover in residents, also quite a limited space in terms of storage. We're looking at - we are installing permanent signage around those properties so that they

know exactly where and when to put their rubbish out. We're creating an online one-stop shop so they can see when their collections are but also order new purple blue sacks more easily and we're increasing the communications with those people living in those types of properties. We're looking at other ways that we can proactively help people deal with their waste as well and hopefully I can share those as we move forward.

From Councillor Hayley Ormrod to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency:

How can the residents on the Eastfields, Ravensbury and High Path estates trust this administration to ensure Clarion delivers on its promises when the Labour administration allowed so many of the 'ten commitments' to be broken?

Reply

In September 2014, near the start of the project, the council jointly signed up to the following list of 10 commitments with Circle Housing Merton Priory, now the Clarion Housing Group to ensure residents get the best out of any regeneration proposals for the three estates:

1. Circle Housing Merton Priory will consult with residents, consider their interests at all times, and address concerns fairly.
2. Current homeowners will be entitled to at least the market value of their home should they wish to take the option to sell their home to Circle Housing Merton Priory.
3. Current tenants will be entitled to be rehoused in a new home of appropriate size considering the number of people in the household.
4. Existing Circle Housing Merton Priory tenants will keep all their rights and have the same tenancy agreement, including rent levels, in the new neighbourhood as they do now.
5. All new properties will be more energy efficient and easier to heat than existing properties, helping to keep down residents' fuel bills.
6. Circle Housing Merton Priory will keep disruption to a minimum, and will do all it can to ensure residents only move once if it is necessary to house them temporarily while their new home is being built.
7. Circle Housing Merton Priory will offer extra help and support for older people and/or disabled residents throughout the regeneration works.

8. Circle Housing Merton Priory will continue to maintain the homes of residents across the three neighbourhoods throughout the planning process until regeneration starts, including ensuring a high quality responsive repairs service.
9. Any growth in the number of homes will be in accordance with the Council's Development Plan so that it is considered, responsible and suitable for the area.
10. As a not for profit organisation, Circle Housing Merton Priory will not profit from any regeneration and will use any surplus to provide more housing or improve existing neighbourhoods.

As Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency I do not accept that the 10 commitments have been broken as the majority have been implemented in full. As Cabinet Member I continue to meet regularly with Clarion Housing to ensure that tenants receive the very best outcomes from the regeneration plans but also that they tackle the repairs issues both on the three estates and on other estates in the borough.

Supplementary

Thank you Mr Mayor. I do have a supplementary question. I'd like to ask the Cabinet Member, only four of the commitments really had substance and of those four they have all four have been broken. Is six out of ten really the best that residents can hope for from this council?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Ormrod for her supplementary. We certainly wouldn't agree that's six out of ten as many more that have actually been met in full. It was a Labour administration in 2014 that put the ten pledges in place because we believe that there needed to be a structure in terms of accountability, but also as well in terms of how the regeneration was actually implemented. We have seen obviously the first few buildings built on High Path and Ravensbury. We've also seen a number of buybacks as well. It is my belief that Clarion do need to deal with the repairs issue, there has been some progress but that progress needs to be sustained - a view as Cabinet Member we need to get on and get those estates rebuilt, thank you

From Councillor Nick Draper to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Can the Cabinet Member please inform us of any recent successful prosecutions of rogue landlords in the borough?

Reply

In September 2021 the Council successfully prosecuted a rogue landlord and his associated property agency for letting unsafe properties and operating in a completely unlicensed manner, securing fines and costs in excess of £33,000.

Lavender Hill Magistrates' Court heard the case against Pedro Reis Tenajas and London Corporate Relocation Ltd on Tuesday 21 September. Neither Mr Tenajas – who was fined £22,000 by Tower Hamlets in 2019 for issuing sham licenses – nor his co-defendant attended.

In their absence, the court heard from Merton's legal team how the defendants had failed to apply for the correct license to rent out 11 Braemar Avenue, Wimbledon Park as a house in multiple occupation (HMO).

Further charges were made that they had failed to legally act as landlords, had not provided information to the property's occupiers, and had now carried out the legally required safety measures for an HMO.

Magistrates found the case to be proven against Mr Tenajas and noted that the failings were extremely serious, and had potentially put lives at risk. They also said the company had been uncooperative and obstructive, and had provided no company accounts.

London Corporate Relocation was ordered to pay fines and costs amounting to £21,750 to be paid within 28 days, while Mr Tenajas was slapped with a total of £11,530 to pay in the same time span, with a collection order applied to him.

Supplementary

Me again, thank you very much. Thank you very much to the Cabinet Member for his response. Now, while I welcome that the offenders, particularly unlicensed HMO landlords are being brought to justice and paying fines, I do worry about the people who have to end up, sometimes with no apparent option other than live in the HMOs like this and I wonder if he can outline his concerns for those fellow residents. Thanks.

Reply

Can I firstly welcome Councillor Draper to his role as the tenants' champion? I know he'll be excellent in terms of that role. I think he's actually quite right in terms of what he

actually says about taking action against unlicensed HMOs. This council has had four successful prosecutions, one civil penalty notice, and we will not hesitate and to take further action against further rogue landlords. I'd also like to take this opportunity of thanking the Housing Environmental team under the leadership of Steve Langley who as some will be aware and will shortly be retiring from the council after 47 years' service and Steve does a sterling job in terms of his team giving advice to tenants across the borough because obviously it's important that we do support them when there is breaches from landlords. Thank you.

From Councillor Oonagh Moulton to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

What action is the cabinet member taking to enforce the contract with Veolia to ensure public litter bins are emptied?

Reply

Following the commissioning of the waste collection and street cleansing service to Veolia, we have established a new clienting team who are responsible for the day to day contract monitoring and compliance delivery of the contract at a borough level. The Neighbourhood Client Team undertake site inspections and work closely with the contractor's Area Managers to ensure that service standards are maintained and any rectifications are addressed in line with our contractual agreements.

In order to hold the contractor to account there are a series of 'Service Performance Indicators' (SPI) which are used to measure the level of performance against an agreed criteria and service standards. These include the rectification of overflowing litter bins in our Town Centres and residential areas. Over the last twelve month we have received 572 reports (average 48 per month) of overflowing litter bins of which an average of 84% were rectified within the required timeframe.

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

Supplementary

Thank you Mr Mayor and I thank the Cabinet Member for her response, but we regularly see a revolting mess outside Wimbledon Park station, Haydon's Road and bins near Wimbledon Park amongst others in my ward. Why does the council or Veolia not

proactively check these bins outside of town centres and why do you only act when it has been reported?

Reply

I thank her for her question and her supplementary. The short answer is that we do react obviously to reports because that's the service level indicators that Veolia react to, so they have 24 hours to respond and to get to an overflowing bin. The issue we're having with litter bins is fly tipping - people are putting household waste in these bins and filling them up far too quickly, quicker than we would ever expect them to and I can completely understand that it may feel cumbersome to continually report bins but we are developing, we are soon to launch a new reporting tool which will make this far easier for our residents and hopefully you'll get a better response because you'll be able to see when a job has been closed and I hope that will help improve the situation so we can all work together to keep the borough clean.

From Cllr Hina Bokhari to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

Could the Cabinet member detail what measures the council has taken to prevent fly tipping next to bins in West Barnes? And how many successful prosecutions and FPNs against fly tippers there have been, by ward during the period 2020-2021?

Reply

Our Neighbourhood Client Team undertake regular street inspections on a daily basis and ensure that all wards are inspected each week. To date this year, I am pleased to report that regarding street cleansing and litter services, our client team have undertaken more than 6,100 street inspections. Findings from these inspections have shown that West Barnes is maintained to a high standard and has one of the lowest levels of fly tipping incidents reported across the borough. In 2020/21 the service received on average 26 requests per month, less than one per day with a total of 313 for the year. This compares to a total borough average of 43 per day which equates to a total 15,857 incidents in the corresponding year

In 2020/21 the level of proactive environmental enforcement for fly tipping was greatly impacted due to COVID and the implementation of Government Guidance which prevented our officers from searching through black sacks for evidence. Our focus shifted during the pandemic to scheduling street inspections and ensuring appropriate

crews were equipped with the required PPE / equipment to ensure the safe removal of fly tipping incidents.

Over the last 12 months between October 2020 and Sept 2021 we have issued a total of 248 Fix penalty Notices (FPNS) for Fly tipping.

Supplementary

Thank you very much for your lengthy answer to say that there have been no successful prosecutions in West Barnes for fly tipping. I was interested just to hear about the fly-tipping strategy because we have been as a group constantly raising concerns over fly-tipping and the lack of proper waste disposal arrangements for people living above shops. In fact we had a walk around with some of your previous colleagues as well in West Barnes highlighting that in the very first weeks of our election. Now can the Cabinet Member explain why places like West Barnes High Street, Motspur Park Station and other areas in West Barnes do continue to be thrown with rubbish caused by people leaving refuse and bulky waste but specifically next to overflowing bins?

Reply

So I'd like to thank her for her question and her supplementary. I think she did answer her own question. It's caused by people fly tipping and leaving out, leaving their waste at the wrong times and I visited West Barnes with some i think Conservative colleagues this week. I haven't had a walk around with you yet but I'd be more than happy to. So when I was there with them we saw a number of issues that we're working on. So like I talked about earlier, the permanent signage for shops with flats above shops and tackling things like that. The issue of reporting bins again I really do hope that this reporting tool will help make that a lot easier for our residents and for councillors.

From Councillor Najeeb Latif to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency:

Does the cabinet member believe that the planning department is as efficient as it could be?

Reply

In line with most planning authorities, Merton has been experiencing a significant rise in both planning applications across the board, and related enforcement cases. We are doing our best to tackle these in a consistent manner whilst maintaining quality of

decision. We do have a larger backlog of enforcement cases than we would like, but have recently appointed a new Enforcement Team Leader who will be joining us soon and tackling these. With regard to planning performance, our statistics show that despite the increase in workload, and the ongoing issues caused by the pandemic, we are managing to maintain an acceptable level of performance. As of end September, our year to date achievement on Planning statistics was above target:

	YTD Achieved	YTD Target
% Major Applications Processed within 13 weeks	86.68%	80%
% Minor Applications determined within 8 weeks	76.68%	71%
% Other Applications determined within 8 weeks	83.65%	82%
% Appeals Lost	17.5%	35%

The above figures fail to reflect the productivity and efficiency levels of the service since we have proportionately fewer planning officers than most other London Boroughs and our Planning officers carry a larger caseload resulting in greater efficiency.

We recognise that our enforcement statistics need to be improving, but as mentioned, we are soon to having a new Team Leader in post, and we will be focussing on improving this important area of work.

	YTD Achieved	YTD Target
No of planning enforcement cases closed	127	264
Backlog of planning enforcement cases	561	490

Supplementary

Thank you Mr Mayor and I also thank the Cabinet Member for his response. What plans are there to increase staffing levels in order to improve efficiency? Thank you.

Reply

I thank him for his supplementary. There does need to be additional staff but recruiting staff is incredibly difficult in terms of planning and enforcement not just here in Merton but across London, so we are doing our best. We are putting additional resource to get more staff, but it is not an easy task. But we do recognise that there does need to be more staff in place in order for us to clear the backlog. Thank you.

From Councillor Dennis Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Public Safety and Tackling Crime

How is the cabinet Member dealing with the alarming rise in reports of Anti Social behaviour?

Reply

Safer Merton continue to respond to the complaints of ASB reported to the council. In order to respond to the increase in demand the council has agreed funding to recruit two additional ASB Officers until March 2022 which will increase the resource from two ASB officers to four in order to meet the rising demand.

Supplementary

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank my Cabinet Member for her answer. I'm very glad to hear about the increase in temporary officers for anti-social behaviour. Can the Cabinet Member assure us that a similar level of concern is being directed towards the rise in violence against women?

Reply

Thank you Councillor Pierce. Yes I can assure you that we would take, make, the same level of concern because this is a very important issue to all of us and we the team has already managed to get some money and employed an extra officer to support Zoe who deals with violence - domestic violence. So yes, it's very close to all our hearts, so I can tell you, yes.

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