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Merton Council

Council

6 July 2022

Supplementary agenda

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5: Public Questions to Cabinet Members

1 From Kevin Clarke

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

What is the expected lifetime of Peel House Car Park and how will it be affected by Morden Regeneration?

Reply

Peel House car park is currently closed. The council is undertaking surveys of the premises and will use these results, due later this year, to inform how Peel House car park can be repaired or replaced. Separately to repairing the car park, Peel House car park is part of Morden regeneration's proposals as set out in Merton's new Local Plan.

2 From Tom Shirley

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

What is the council doing about the new Highway Code bring introduced?

Reply

The Highway Code applies to everyone who uses a road; its aim is to promote safe use of roads and a sustainable transport system. Government updated the Highway Code earlier in 2022 and a summary of the key points contained in that update can be found on the government's website, alongside the full highway code. We are encouraging all road users to make themselves familiar with the new Highway Code. We welcome the changes which clearly prioritise the safety and ease of movement of walkers and cyclists and echo our investments in school streets and other active travel measures. The Council's communications team have also publicised the changes via social media.

3 From Tony Burton

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

What are Merton Council's plans for each of the four sites on which Merantun Development Ltd received planning permission, including whether it intends to proceed with sale of the land and whether separate planning applications are expected to be submitted anew for each site?

Reply

There is no current intention to sell the land of these four sites. On the contrary we are investigating, as a matter of urgency, how we can use them to build much needed affordable housing. In December 2020 Merton's Planning Applications Committee resolved to grant permission for new homes across the four council-owned sites at Raleigh Gardens; Elm Road, Farm Road and The Canons. In December 2021 Merton's Cabinet considered a report on some of its property assets including these four sites and resolved to consider how to optimise the delivery of affordable housing on these sites.

4 Barry Smith

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

The announcement of 250 new electric vehicle charging points is welcome, but this still leaves Merton a long way short of the motor industry estimates of the number needed. What longer term targets has Merton set for EV charging points, and how will these be achieved?

Reply

We are very pleased to have been awarded £750,000 earlier this year to provide over 250 publicly accessible electric vehicle (EV) charging points following our successful bid to the Office of Zero Emission vehicles. The number of people with a registered electric vehicle has doubled to 1,104 vehicles according to the Department of Transport, and the funding will enable us to double the number of publicly accessible EV chargers to over 400. However, we recognise that demand is increasing all the time and we are taking a number of steps to continue to increase supply. Through our Climate Strategy and Action Plan we have committed developing a long term EV strategy and an energy masterplan to ensure there is enough National Grid infrastructure in Merton in the right locations to support increased capacity. We will continue to bid for funding for more electric vehicle charging points and require 100% of private car parking spaces connected with new homes to install from the start the network of cables and power supply necessary so

that at a future date an EV socket or equivalent can be added easily to allow vehicle owners to recharge their vehicle.

5 John Davis

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

On 4th August 2021 Mitcham Society attended a walkabout with Councillors to assess Mitcham Village improvements. It was agreed that high-rise new builds within a km radius would harm the village image. Since the election, these Councillors are not in office. Are these views shared by the new administration?

Reply

The Mayor of London's Plan and the council's local plan sets out the planning policies on building design, including building height. Mitcham town centre is not identified as a centre that is suitable for tall buildings (defined across London as a building over six storeys). More information can be found on Merton's website for the [new Local Plan](#).

6 Mary-Jane Jeanes

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate

Please could the Cabinet Member tell us how Greenspaces intends to strengthen Greenspaces security to prevent illegal incursions, as at LGW, Figges Marsh and Canons and tell us the clean-up costs. Vehicles like caravans damage the ecosystem and residents have found human excrement on The Canons' Nature Trail.

Reply

Over the last few years, we have been investing in infrastructure to limit the opportunity for people illegally gaining access to public land. This includes a range of hard landscape solutions, such as bollards and gates, as well as soft landscape and natural solutions that includes bunds, tree trunks and hedge planting. Since the more recent incursions on Vestry Green and Figges Marsh and most recently at The Canons, the Greenspaces team have been undertaking further investigations to design further solutions that will further aid in target-hardening weak points that have been exploited to gain unlawful access to these sites.

In the case of Vestry Green and The Canons, as we are mindful of the sensitivities of the local environment and its heritage, we will be exploring a soft landscape defence for the potential access points. The team is currently working on a solution to create

earthen perimeter bunds rather than fencing or bollard solutions in order not to detract from the conservation area and provide a great opportunity to enhance the biodiversity of the site through the seeding of the bunds with meadow flower mixes and a sustainably focused cutting regime. For the Vestry Green and The Canons sites, we will be using clay arisings from the borough's cemeteries to create the earthen bund which will be dressed with topsoil and seeded, but owing to the lead time to establish the bund means that we will need to utilise a temporary concrete block solution which we hold with service providers to secure these sites until such a time that the bunds can be created and seeded. It is important to note that 'spoil' utilised from our cemeteries will aid in its local use and minimise the future need to dispose of this material, which has a climate mitigating impact. At Figges Marsh, there is a sizeable area to secure that will take considerable investment to bund all the perimeters required, so we have been working a solution for the weakest perimeter next to the Streatham Road (A216). We have lots of competition for limited resources, but we are keenly aware that the defence of our sites from illegal incursion is a high priority based on the environmental impact of incursions or the loss of community assets while occupiers are on site.

In terms of the recent monetary costs associated with these events, the following items are;

Recent costs for Traveller Incursion Clean Ups

- Vestry Green = Litter Clean Up £124.00 + Environmental Health Clean Up £400.00
- Figges Marsh = Litter Clean Up £64.00 + Environmental Health Clean Up £400.00
- The Canons = Litter Clean Up £78.00 + Environmental Health Clean Up £400.00

7 Mr D Anastasiou

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

What has been done since the 31st of January 2022 meeting by the LBM's Mr Chris Lee, Director of Environment & Regeneration, Mr Paul McGarry, Head of Future Merton, and Councillor Hina Bokhari with residents of Grand Drive in relation to the heavy lorries using Grand Drive.

Reply

The council has installed a range of measures along Grand Drive including 20mph signage, traffic sensors to detect what vehicles are using Grand Drive and speed activated signage to encourage drivers to drive within the 20mph limit. The Council

has also engaged with London Councils who run the London Lorry Control Scheme (LLCS). LLCS have given Merton Council approval to install additional lorry-ban signage at Bushey Rd approaching Grand Drive. This is now subject to available funding in this year's highway budget. LLCS have also expressed an interest in using Merton's ANPR cameras to enforce lorry bans in partnership with London Councils. Funding has not yet been identified for additional ANPR cameras, but we are working with LLCS to determine how data can be shared between organisations to also LLCS to issue fines via LBM cameras.

8 Dr Pippa Maslin

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

Looking at the Council's website, the last update on the regeneration of Morden town centre is from February. Since then, I have heard that the vision is to be severely downgraded due to a lack of funding. Please could the Council provide an update?

Reply

The vision for the regeneration of Morden town centre has not been downgraded and is outlined in the council's new Local Plan (Morden chapter). The council's Local Plan is currently being examined by independent planning inspectors; the first stage of the public hearings took place from 14th-23rd June and the next stage will take place in October 2022. While the examination is underway, the council is continuing to work on progressing the regeneration of Morden.

9 David Watkins

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

The council are approving major developments in residential areas. How can private residents compete with major developers who ignore legislation such as the Party Wall Act(1996) and conditions imposed by the council on the planning award? The only recourse is a legal injunction for which we don't have the resources.

Reply

When matters are addressed by other legislation, such as the Party Wall Act, they should not be taken into account when making a planning decision. Rights around party walls are private civil matters.

However, a key requirement of planning conditions is they are enforceable, which is one of the tests that must be met when they are imposed. Planning conditions are

enforceable via different means, such as through a Breach of Condition Notice which can be served by the Council.

If residents are aware of breaches of planning permission, please report it to the council via the Report a planning breach e-form or other contact details on the council's website. The Party Wall Act is legislation designed to support neighbouring property owners in building to the boundaries of properties they both own.

10 Joanna Law

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

Is the Cabinet Member aware of the issues surrounding development at Florence Place and would they agree to meet with the residents group so that they can discuss their concerns surrounding the planning process and the impact of the development on their properties and lives?

Reply

Yes, the issues surrounding development at Florence Place have recently been reported to the Planning Enforcement team. Officers will meet the residents to have the discussion requested and I will join them. If we can arrange a suitable meeting time for everyone involved.

11 Richard Poole

To the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

How is the Council enforcing its advertising policy given there are advertising boards promoting chocolate, sugary drinks and burgers near our schools? Due to the obesity crisis in children, does the Council agree that the environment around schools should encourage behavioural change and put children's health above commercial gain?

Reply

Enforcing Advertising Policy

The Council has undertaken a number of measures to tackle childhood obesity, including work around advertising. For adverts that the council manages, food and drink brands, restaurants, takeaways and delivery services will only be able to place adverts which promote their healthier products in accordance with Merton Council Advertising Policy. The Policy seeks to reduce childhood obesity by restricting the

advertising of food and drink high in salt, sugar and fat (HFSS) targeted at children, encourage behaviour changes and reduce the health inequality gap in Merton.

Merton Council Advertising Policy has been informed by Transport for London (TfL) Advertising Policy: Approval Guidance Food and Non-Alcoholic Drink Advertising, 2019 and Merton's Public Health evidence such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment: Merton Story. The Policy applies to:

- a. Council owned outdoor advertising sites including LBM owned bus stops (JC Decaux)
- b. Advertisements at Council premises open to the public (e.g. libraries, leisure centres and schools)
- c. Advertisements in Council leased premises (subject to lease issues)

The Council meets with JCDecaux and reports any breaches to Merton's Advertising policy and the Council asks for a review against the existing advertising policy. It is also proposed that a snapshot audit of advertising around schools is undertaken in the Autumn.

The Council has no legal powers to enforce advertising restrictions on locations not currently part of the Council's JC Decaux contract e.g. billboards that already have advertising consent to locate on private land or owned by other providers like Global, ClearChannel.

Healthy environment around Schools

The Council is supportive of developing a healthy environment for Children and Young People in the borough. Since 2015, reducing childhood obesity in the borough has been a key priority of Merton's Health and Wellbeing Board and Strategy. The importance of healthy place is recognised within the refreshed Child Healthy Weight action plan and forms one of the three core themes underpinning the refreshed action plan (2022-2025).

The council's new Local Plan policies will require any new hot food takeaways that are seeking planning permission not to locate within 400m of the boundary of a primary or secondary school to encourage behaviour change towards healthier food choices. All new hot food takeaways that seek planning permission, regardless of location, will be required to undertake a Health Impact Assessment as part of considering whether planning permission should be granted.

Furthermore, Public Health and the Food Safety team are in the process of reviewing the provision of the Healthier Catering Commitment (HCC) in Merton, Richmond and Wandsworth and produce a robust options appraisal and recommendations for the future delivery of the HCC across the three boroughs.

12 David Harper

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

Why haven't I received a response to my application for Class E use of a shop in Merton Hall Road (application 22/P1372), in the appropriate timely manner?

Reply

The statutory consultation period for this application ended on 24th June 2022 and the Council is now in a position to determine the application. The Interim Head of Development Management will promptly pursue the completion of the officer report and the issuing of the decision notice.

Supplementary

Thank you Mayor, I'd like my supplementary question is can you give me a time and date by when the decision will be issued to the applicant?

Reply

Well this relates to a change of use of a shop in Merton Hall Road. The consultation period has just come to an end, so I cannot give a date now, but I am assured that the new and in my view excellent interim Head of Development Control will pursue the completion of the officer report and the issuing of the decision notice as soon as is practical.

13 Rob Cullen

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

What steps are being taken to reduce the workload for Planning Case Officers and ensure planning applications are dealt with efficiently?

Reply

A new Interim Head of Development Management and Building Control, Jon Berry, has started in post during June. During the week commencing 4th July a mix of internal and external candidates will be interviewed for 4 new Principal Planner positions to support the 2 current Area Managers at a senior level. It is anticipated that all posts will be filled promptly. The remainder of the Development Management staff structure will then be reviewed in the context of forecasted planning application numbers.

A Planning Enforcement Report and Action Plan has been prepared for presentation to the Corporate Management Team and the Full Council in the forthcoming months. A scoping exercise is underway for an audit of the service to be carried out by the South-West London Audit Partnership and a staffing restructure with costings has been drafted. This includes the Tree and Conservation services.

A separate project at the Corporate level has been commenced into a staffing restructure and resourcing of the Building Control function.

14 Deborah Perry

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

In respect of breach of condition 6 of planning application 21/P3487, what will the planning department do? Has there been maladministration or misfeasance in public office?

Reply

The Council has received both planning enforcement complaints and a discharge of condition application (referenced 22/P1840) relating to this condition. The information is being carefully considered by Officers and, as is confirmed under the answer to Question 10, Officers will meet with residents to discuss this.

Supplementary

My question is, when do officers propose meeting with residents of 8 Southpark, the response in the question received, refers to a meeting but it's not actually with the residents of 8 Southpark and the office who we have received a letter from is unfortunately known to us only as 'unallocated'.

Reply

I think this about concerns around breach of a condition, which seeks to regulate the developer to stop nuisances occurring around the construction site. It is said that officers will meet with residents to discuss this, I am going to expect that will happen, if the residents wish, I would be happy to attend such a meeting myself if available, but it is very important that so far as possible that conditions attached to planning permissions are given effect to. Thank you.

15 E Ferrari Osbourne

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

When will council honestly accept responsibility for the unwise decisions taken with regards to the traffic of HGVs in Grand Drive, and will offer compensation for the damages caused by such traffic to the buildings and the residents?

Reply

Grand Drive performs multiple functions. It is a B-class road (B279, connecting Merton and Sutton) it is classed as a Distributor Road which forms a key link to other London and local distributor roads, it is a bus route and a primary route for emergency vehicles. Like most other roads in the borough and in south London, it is also a residential road. Councillors and senior officers met residents in January 2022 to discuss concerns. Reclassifying the road is not a viable option as there are no reasonable alternatives for bus route, emergency service access and vehicle movements. The road is 20mph and the council has installed speed activated signage. There are also crossing points, signalised junction and mini roundabouts in place to mitigate speeding where possible. The Council is identifying ways in which LBM cameras can link with the London Lorry Control Scheme in order for fixed penalty notices to be issued to HGVs in the zone outside the approved hours.

16 Gioia Joshi

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

What is the council doing to ensure compliance with planning conditions at 162- 164 Hartfield Road? Numerous evidence has been sent to Merton Council by the public showing near daily breaches of conditions at the site and so far no action seems to have been taken by Merton.

Reply

There is a live enforcement case open with regard to this complaint. The construction and working hours have been recorded by Officers against the times conditioned on the planning permission and set out in the construction management plan. The findings are under consideration in terms of the next steps to be taken and residents will be updated promptly.

17 A Perry

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

If prior approval granted by the planning department for additional flats includes plans to create a bike store that is not in the demise of the freeholder, how would a linked planning condition that states the said bike store must be in place before occupation ever be discharged?

Reply

Land ownership is a private civil matter that is not a material planning consideration when determining development proposals. However, if the apartments are occupied without the bike store being in place the Council can use a range of enforcement tools to pursue this condition. As stated under the answer to Condition 9 an example would be a Breach of Condition Notice.

18 Marilia Santos

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

How in depth are the planning applications looked at and if the conditions of a planning application are not being followed by the developer/ applicant, what are the penalties that can be applied to them?

Reply

Officers do monitor developments but if third parties consider a condition is being breached this should be reported to the Planning Enforcement team who will thoroughly investigate every case. There is a full toolkit of actions available and a Breach of Condition Notice is an example of a means to address this

19 Chris Broadbent

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

Given that planning permission for development application 17/P2440 has now expired, and multiple reasons were demonstrated by local residents as to why this application shouldn't go ahead, can the council give some assurance that any further application for this development will be considered properly?

Reply

The planning application 17/P2440 was refused permission by Merton Council. The applicant appealed this refusal to the Planning Inspectorate who allowed the appeal. Any future application would be the subject of a public consultation exercise and a through assessment in the Officer Report. Should the proposal be of significant public interest the application would be referred to the Planning Committee for final determination. Third parties would have the opportunity to address Elected Members at the meeting prior to a decision being made. However, please also refer to the following answer under Question 20 as the consent is not considered to have expired.

20 Bridget Bolton

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

Has Planning Permission for 17/P2440 expired and the developer had this confirmed to them? As neighbouring residents, we can see that apart from site clearance, no work has started, but have heard it is due to start next week, which we believe is in contravention of the permission.

Reply

The planning application 17/P2440 was refused permission by Merton Council. The applicant appealed this refusal to the Planning Inspectorate who allowed the appeal, thus permitting the development to go ahead. There has been a planning enforcement investigation around this site. The digging and demolition are considered to amount to material operations. These are identified as development under sections 55 and 56 of the Town and Country Planning Act. As this work has taken place prior to the June 2022 expiry date for the permission it remains extant and the scheme can be implemented on that basis.

6: Councillor Ordinary Priority Questions to Cabinet Members

From Councillor Usaama Kaweesa to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Can the Cabinet Member please outline Ofsted's key judgements on Merton's Children's Services which means they are now confirmed amongst the best in the country?

Reply

The Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) is an in depth look across our early help and statutory children's social care services and makes judgements in 3 overarching areas,

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families

The experience and progress of children who need help and protection

The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers

and these three judgments contribute to a further judgment for overall effectiveness.

In the inspection carried out between 28 February to 4 March 2022 Merton's children services received the following judgments

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families –

Outstanding

Inspectors noted "Leaders have strengthened and built on the impressive work at the time of the previous inspection. As a result, children and their families continue to benefit from highly aspirational, committed senior managers and political leaders who place them firmly at the centre of their decision-making and who have a collective determination to provide high-quality services. This unrelenting focus has ensured that progress has been sustained and services continually improved, despite the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19"

The experience and progress of children who need help and protection – **Good**

Inspectors noted: "Children and their families benefit from responsive well-coordinated universal and targeted early help services, helping to reduce harm. A recently updated coherent multi-agency strategy underpins the delivery of these services"

The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers – **Outstanding**

Inspectors noted: Children in care and young people leaving care in Merton receive outstanding care and support. Teams of highly committed, ambitious and determined professionals work extremely well together to help children to remain safe and achieve in life. The local authority is dedicated to pursuing timely permanence for all children if they cannot live safely with their birth families.

Leading to the judgment of the overall effectiveness of Merton's children's service being **Outstanding**

This is an improvement on the overall rating of **Good** that the authority received in its last full inspection in 2017 and now rates the LA in the top children service in the country.

Supplementary

Firstly, thank you Madame Mayor for the opportunity to ask a supplementary question. But before I ask my question, I would just like to thank the Cabinet Member for her response and to congratulate her on her position. My question is, can she please reassure me that she will continue the work of her predecessor in striving to cement the best practices that have been established in Merton's Children Services.

Reply

Thank you for your question and yes, I will endeavour to make sure that I cement this work that has gone on before me. We are a great borough, the result of OFSTED is very good. And we will continue to work in that vein. Thank you.

From Councillor Anthony Fairclough to the Leader of the Council

Could the Leader of the Council describe what he found when carrying out recently publicised site visits of Clarion properties?

Reply

Since taking over as Leader of Merton Council, I have been and continue to have weekly visits to housing estates run by Clarion and by other housing associations. One of my priorities is to improve and provide more good quality housing across the borough, and my series of visits is to see first-hand the quality of existing properties run by registered providers. Following these visits, I raise the concerns I have directly with those providers. I also highlight issues raised by individual residents as well as compliments when they are satisfied with the service they are being provided.

Supplementary

Madame Mayor, thank you very much and thank you to the Leader of the Council for his rather brief reply. In the press releases he put out following those visits, he used words like 'shocked' remarked on the length of time that some of these issues had been spoken about, talked about repairs that the council owed responsibility for and ultimately about rebuilding the trust with tenants. So my question to him is on rebuilding the trust, does he share my feelings of shame that our residents have spent years and years living in conditions like this and given that at the very least we

have known about these for a year since the ITV news reports, will he take the opportunity to apologise to the affected residents for the support that this administration has provided since then. Thank you Madame Mayor.

Reply

Thank you, Madame Mayor, and I'd like to thank Cllr Fairclough for his supplementary and I note his interest in my activities as Leader of the Council. What I will say is that this is a new administration, with a new leader and a new sense of purpose and direction. I have been out on a weekly basis, meeting with residents in affected estates, having conversations with them, raising their cases with Clarion and other housing associations when they occur. I will continue that programme of visits and I will be raising it at the highest levels within Clarion and other housing associations. I have already met with senior officers at Clarion including the group CEO of Clarion where I have made it perfectly clear, my position and the position of this administration is that the repair record of Clarion does need to be improved for our residents. We are an administration firmly on the side of our residents. Thank you.

From Councillor Dan Johnston to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate

Following the announcement of a further £2million fund put towards Climate Change actions, can the Cabinet member please bring us up to speed on the delivery to date of the Climate Change Action Plan?

Reply

Merton Council adopted the [Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#) in late 2020 and has since published an annual report called "Climate Delivery Plan" each year to ensure that we remain on track to reach our 2030 council target and the 2050 borough wide target to achieve net zero.

[Merton's Climate delivery plan year 2](#) was approved by Cabinet and published online in February 2022.

- It monitors the Council's progress in delivering its part of Merton's Climate Strategy & Action Plan, and sets out how the Council intends to progress action in the coming year (January to December 2022). It uses a set of indicators to track progress against the baseline, provides an overview of progress against the priorities identified in the previous delivery plan, and identifies priorities for the coming year; highlighting delivery risks (see section 2)
- It assesses wider factors which give an indication of the likelihood of meeting Merton's net-zero carbon targets (see section 3)

- It provides an explanation of the indicators and emissions referred to in sections 2 and 3 (see Annex 2).
- It sets out key considerations that were made when forming delivery actions (see Annex 3).
- It provides a detailed review of progress against more than 60 different actions identified in the Year 1 Delivery Plan and identifies all priority actions for 2022 (see Annex 4 – 35 pages) These actions are organised around the following workstreams:
 - Sustainable consumption and low carbon economy
 - Retrofit of the building stock in Merton
 - Future new build and regeneration
 - Transport infrastructure and modal shift
 - Greening Merton
 - Merton Council Estate and fleet management
 - LBM procurements and investments
 - Communication and outreach

The additional £2million awarded at Cabinet in June 2022 will be allocated in consideration of the latest Climate Delivery Plan to work towards meeting our targets.

Merton Council's website (www.merton.gov.uk/climatechange) contains a wealth of information on the delivery of Merton's climate actions

- Link to [Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan 2020](#)
- Link to [Merton's Climate Delivery Plan 2021](#)
- Link to [Merton's Climate Delivery Plan 2022](#)

Supplementary

Thank you, Madame Mayor, and I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for her response. We are living through a climate emergency, something which requires urgency from our politics and something which our national, currently crumbling Conservative government is failing to deliver on. But her in Labour run Merton Council we are rising to the challenge of putting a further £2million towards climate action. Can the Cabinet Member tell me when she will be meeting with officers to discuss putting this funding into action?

Reply

Thank you Madame Mayor and I'd like to thank him for his supplementary. Tuesday, I'm meeting on Tuesday to discuss what we are going to do with this money. This money is very much needed and very urgently needed. As you know from our year 2 programme on our climate delivery plan, we have got a number of workstreams that

have been pulled out as our priorities and one of the things that I've been working on with Cllr Judge is around retrofitting. We know that 81% of our emissions in this borough come from our buildings, from heating and from trying to keep them warm and energy going into them. But we also know that we have a cost of living crisis, we know that our residents can't afford to heat their homes, so retrofitting and making sure people are safe and warm is something that not only saves the planet but also saves money people that they desperately need right now. So this money is very welcome and retrofitting and how we can save money for people is a massive priority for me.

From Councillor Nick McLean to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services

Does the Cabinet Member recognise the threat that the ULEZ poses to hard pressed Merton households, and will they join me in calling for the Mayor of London to drop his plans for a new tax on Merton residents?

Reply

Merton Council will be submitting a response to the Mayor of London's ULEZ consultation which sets out the Council's concerns about the impact of the scheme on low income residents. The Council is fully aware of the impact that the economic climate and cost of living crisis is having on our residents and businesses, which is a consideration in all of our policy making decisions.

The Council also has a duty to consider the impact on our residents of air pollution, which is the most significant environmental risk to health in the UK. The data shows that the majority of pollution in the borough is from traffic, so we cannot disregard measures that accelerate a transition to cleaner vehicles. The health risks of air pollution particularly fall on the most vulnerable in our borough, including children, the elderly and those with underlying health conditions. Data indicates that lower income groups in outer London, including in Merton, are also much less likely to own a vehicle (TfL Travel in London report 12). Therefore, whilst lower income groups are more likely to suffer the negative impacts of air pollution they are already much less likely to own a car and therefore to be directly affected by the proposals.

However, the Council is mindful that the ULEZ proposals will still disproportionately impact some of the borough's hard pressed families and lower income groups, particularly those in areas of the borough with poor public transport accessibility that are more dependent on a vehicle. It is therefore particularly disappointing that the Conservative government have so far refused to properly reimburse TfL for the costs of COVID, undermining the public transport infrastructure in the capital and thereby exacerbating the reliance on motor vehicles in outer London and the subsequent damage this does to local air quality and the health of our residents. We would

therefore encourage the few remaining Merton Conservative councillors to request that government ministers return to the negotiating table with TfL and agree to a sustainable funding package for future years.

In addition, if the scheme is to be introduced, the Council will push for robust measures to mitigate the impact of it, including scrapping schemes and other support measures.

Supplementary

Thank you Madame Mayor, and I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for their response. Can the Cabinet Member tell me how many times council officers have discussed the economic impact of the ULEZ on Merton residents with TfL.

Reply

Thank you, Madame Mayor, and thank you Cllr McLean for your follow-up. You might be unsurprised to hear that I don't have the exact number of times that conversation has been had between TfL and council officers, but I can assure him that it's a topic that our officers are focussing on, he might be interested though that the greatest impact on our residents and their ability to access transport throughout London and the borough is being affected by the Government's refusal to step up to the negotiating table and agree a sustainable settlement for TfL following the calamitous costs of Covid. So he might better spend his time, rather than wondering how many conversations each of our officers have had, getting in contact with any contacts he has, in the national government, if anyone is left in it at this point and asking them to agree a reasonable funding settlement for TfL.

From Councillor Paul Kohler to the Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage

Would the Cabinet Member please list the schools (and total number of participants) in Merton that have taken part in the Merton School Sports Partnership's **Junior Golf Programme** this academic year and any other Merton schools that have been included in the programme since its inception in 2014?

Reply

The Merton Schools Sports Partnership collaborates with Wimbledon Park Golf Club to deliver golfing activities for Merton children and young people. This is only one type of sport the partnership collaborates with. They also support PE subject leaders across all schools (network meetings and training); they provide coaches for direct delivery of PE/sport to pupils in schools; they coordinate the 'Schools' Sports Mark' in Merton; they coordinate Merton's entries to the London Youth Games; they organise inter school competitions in a range of sport; they created a PE scheme of work for

the delivery of PE lessons in primary schools, and have input for Tag Rugby, Football, Gymnastics, Netball. Despite its name, and the close partnership working with the Council, the Sports Partnership is not a Council organisation. They have however kindly given us the following information about their work in this area. Since the tri-golf competition programme began in 2014, Wimbledon Park Golf Club has hosted 33 Merton Primary Schools during these events, with over 1000 children having the opportunity to compete.

Supplementary

Can I thank the Cabinet Member for her response, although it was a bit vague, so I've made my own enquiries, it wasn't that difficult to find out. She'll be interested to know that last winter the Junior Golf Programme in Merton worked with 13 of our primary schools, including 1000 children from the east and the west of the borough. She might also be interested to know that the programme is now under threat with the imminent closure of Wimbledon Park Golf Club. The All England Club are currently refusing to give just under 2% of the Golf Club land to continue the programme next year. What I am asking the Cabinet Member, will she write to the All England Club and if she can, meet with them to persuade them to give over just 2%, or less than 2% of the land to continue this extremely important programme to our children in all sides of the borough. Thank you.

Reply

Thank you, Madame Mayor. Thank you very much for your supplementary question. I just want to say that I think what you are talking about is a planning issue, but I have an important to meet with Dean Jeeves who has contacted you as well. So I have an appointment in my diary to meet with him. I am also meeting with executives at Wimbledon Tennis and what Dean Jeeves does in the borough is fantastic, and I support his work. WE have an ambition to make Merton the home of sports and we will work hard towards that aim. Thank you very much. From Councillor Gill Manly to the Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage
Can the Cabinet Member please update us on how she has worked to make sure people across the borough can enjoy the Wimbledon fortnight?

Reply

This year for the first time, the council has been able to get a large screen from the AELTC so that it can show the tennis in the East of the borough. From Monday 4th July the screen will be in Canons Park showing tennis from 13.00 to 21.00. This will be a free event. In addition, deckchairs have been provided by the All England and there is ample picnic space in the park.

On Saturday 2nd July - the Middle Saturday Opened Up' a free community tennis event at the public tennis courts in Wimbledon Park, will take place.

The event, which will take place on the middle Saturday of The Championships, returns for a third year since the first edition in 2019, having previously taken place on the middle Sunday. The event uses tennis to bring the local community in Merton and Wandsworth together. It was created to support our vision of 'tennis opened up' and demonstrates the vital role park courts play as community assets in providing accessible opportunities to play and widening the impact of the physical and mental health benefits that being active through tennis can bring.

In addition, officers have provided the annual support to and have worked with AELTC as they utilise Wimbledon Park and greenspaces to support The Championships. This includes the return of The Queue in the park and the park & ride that operates from Morden Park.

Supplementary

Thank you Madame Mayor and I'd also like to congratulate the Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage on her recent appointment and as a neophyte I'd also like to thank you all for granting me this moment in time to speak for the first time at full Council. I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for her response and I'm delighted that our residents in Mitcham, the East of the borough are also able to enjoy a Wimbledon big screen at the Canons no less. It does mean I can go and have cups of tea across the green now on Friday afternoon and enjoy the rather large tennis balls that will be flying around in the air. In any event, I understand that we have also played a large part in welcoming some important guests to Wimbledon this year and can she tell me a bit about tickets for Ukrainian refugees and host families?

Reply

Thank you very much Madame Mayor and thank you for your supplementary question. So, Wimbledon Tennis were gracious enough to give Ukrainian and their host families tickets for the middle Sunday. So thanks to Cllr Stringer and Cllr Slawek as well, so we all worked together to achieve that, as that was very good. And can I also, as the leader said, this big screen, I was there yesterday and today, many families are having lunch and watching the tennis as well. So please feel free to pop round and have a look. Thank you very much.

From Councillor Andrew Howard to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

The Leader of the Council recently said that “in Merton sport is in our DNA.” Does the Cabinet Member regret the decision made by the previous Labour administration and the Liberal Democrats to vote for the Local Plan which allocates the LESSA sports ground for development?

Reply

The LESSA site has been unused and inaccessible to the public for more than twenty years. We support bringing this site back into active use for the benefit of Merton’s communities. Merton’s Local Plan proposes its site allocation as “Sporting or community use of the entire site will have to be proven as undeliverable before any other uses can be considered.

Supplementary

Madame Mayor thank you. I’d like to thank the Cabinet Member for her response. Will she agree to meet with me and a delegation of local sporting associations to keep the LESSA in sporting use for local residents.

Reply

I should be very glad to meet with Cllr Howard and local sporting associations. This is a site that has not been used for sport for 20 years and it’s a site which I don’t think has ever had public access of any kind. It’s really important, that we look at the practicalities that we have a sport development that is sustainable including financially sustainable, but it’s important as well that we are willing to look at appropriate enabling development to allow that to happen. So, yes I shall be glad when we can set up a meeting at a time convenient to all.

From Councillor Matthew Willis to the Cabinet Member for Transport

What does the new administration propose to do to achieve step-free access at Raynes Park station?

Reply

Council Officers are working with Network Rail and South Western Railway to support the submission of a joint bid for step-free access at Raynes Park Station under the current funding round of the Department of Transport ‘Access for All’ scheme. We will consider submitting a bid for Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy in due course when match funding is required from the council.

Supplementary

Thank you, Madame Mayor. I thank the Cabinet Member for his answer, the content of which we know as the new councillors for Raynes Park met with Network Rail and SWR at Raynes Park last Thursday. Yes, there is an access for all application going in, but this relied on Network Rail quickly drafting the plans. On the 2nd March this year, the ruling party voted against our amendment, amendment 2, to the council budget, this called for Council to consider commissioning funds for a shovel ready scheme and for funding to be ready for the bid. Having existing plans for accessibility improvements is an important way to improve the likelihood of securing that funding. The Cabinet Member's answer says that they will consider SCIL bid and then says 'in due course'. New administration, new leader, new purpose, will he commit to writing in support of the bid this month and confirm the Council will indeed match fund with a minimum spend?

Reply

Thank you, I'd like thank Cllr Matthew Willis for his supplementary question and for his interest in step free access. I don't know if he is aware, I used to be a Disability Rights Commissioner and a Commissioner on the Equality and Human Rights Commission. I shall take those skills and that experience and those contacts to do the best I can to achieve step free access for all our stations. I want all our stations to be step free and as many as the number of spurious and dubious leaflets that the Liberal Democrats issued about step-free access. This is not a sixth form debating society, this is a local authority that will get things done on step free access. Thank you very much.

From Councillor Billy Hayes to the Cabinet Member for Finance

As the Cost of Living crisis continues, can the Cabinet Member outline work by the council to ensure those most in need are receiving information about support available to them?

Reply

The Cost of Living crisis, brought about by over a decade of Conservative and Liberal Democrat austerity policies and a lacklustre response to the economic shockwaves caused by Covid, are having a very serious impact on the lives of local residents. The council is taking significant steps to ease the burden on local families by providing support directly, and ensuring that residents are aware of all other forms of support available to them.

Every resident eligible for the council tax energy rebate has either received the payment directly or has been contacted individually. Residents that pay their council

tax by direct debit received their £150 automatically in April. All other eligible residents have been emailed, texted or written to twice to advise of the claim process. Just over 58,000 residents are eligible and 45,000 have been paid, with work ongoing to reach those who have not yet successfully claimed.

Residents that have been helped with the household support grants have been individually written to by the Leader of the Council advising of the support available. Grants of up to £125 have been issued to 8,300 residents in receipt of council tax support.

The council is organising three cost of living events on separate Saturdays in Mitcham, Morden and Wimbledon during July. The e-Merton newsletter has promoted these to 30,000 residents, targeted letters from the Leader have been sent to 12,000 residents and social media targeting residents and organisations will further reach.

A dedicated hub has been created to provide information, support and advice on help available by the council and external organisations. It also promotes events to help residents.

The Labour administration in Merton will continue to do everything in our power to help residents facing the effects of the cost of living crisis.

Supplementary

Thanks for the response, first of all. I thank the Cabinet Member for his response. But does he think the experience of the Con-Dem years, remember them, not that long ago, when they were all buddying up? Does he think that those years of austerity have led to the problems that we have got in this borough.

Reply

Thank you Madame Mayor. Thank you Cllr Hayes for your question. It may not surprise you to realise that I absolutely believe that the lasting damage done by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in shepherding in austerity policies 12 years ago has contributed to the terrible impact of the cost of living crisis today. Having said that, I'm proud of our administration's response to the cost of living crisis including the new £2 million fund that we've recently launched to help assist residents. We are, as the Leader has said, carrying out three cost of living events on Saturdays in July, with the first one this coming Saturday at Morden Library, downstairs. We have been very efficient and speedy in making the £150 council tax rebate to all residents that we are able. And we are assisting those that we don't have the details for to apply for it now. And we have a dedicated hub to help residents on our website. So I would absolutely urge the government to take the

same kind of robust approach to tackling the cost of living crisis that this administration is doing here in Merton.

7b: Strategic Theme: Councillor Questions

From Councillor Michael Butcher to the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning

As children's mental health continues to suffer, can the Cabinet member tell us about the work of the Trailblazer teams in Merton's schools in tackling these issues?

Reply

All schools in Merton have access to a Mental Health in schools team. These teams were previously known as Trailblazer teams. Each schools' team supports a cluster of schools, which are headed up by one lead school. The schools work together with the team to prioritise the work of therapists to support the needs of the children in the cluster.

The teams offer a range of support, including: one to one counselling, group work, parenting support, online parenting sessions, case discussion and supervision, and training and support for school staff on mental health. One cluster is also offering drama therapy, and another is developing play therapy.

The work of the teams is designed to focus on children with low mood or lower level anxiety. It is a preventative service which sits within Merton's 'i-Thrive' model of support for children with mental health difficulties, which also includes the 'Off the Record' self referral service; support from the Mental Health Single Point of Access (SPA); and support from CAMHS.

Supplementary

Thank you, Madame Mayor. I would like to congratulate the Cabinet Member on her appointment to the role and thank her for her response. Could she tell me a bit about the work she is doing on Adult Learning.

Reply

Thank you, Madame Mayor and thank you Cllr Butcher for your supplementary question. I can't take credit for what's gone before me, but I would like to boast at this moment for Merton Adult Learning being awarded a Quality Mark for their digital work, one of only three London Boroughs to achieve this accreditation in this round, which is an excellent achievement by officers here. The team with the Adult Learning are working very hard to extend adult learning particularly to the east of the borough and are working with providers to find more venues, including shop fronts that aren't in use to ensure that courses are on offer for those in the east of the borough as well as the west, including providing funding for those who are struggling

with the cost of transport. So a lot is being done to spread education at any age for any reason, whether it's for a career, a hobby or an interest in all parts of the borough, particularly the east. Thank you.

From Cllr Jenifer Gould to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

Could the Cabinet Member detail what steps are being taken to address the obesity epidemic for Merton's children?

Reply

Obesity is a complex problem and there is no single solution, with evidence indicating that a comprehensive programme focusing on the physical, food and cultural environment is most likely to be successful, and cost effective.

Childhood obesity in the borough has been a key priority of Merton's Health and Wellbeing Board since 2015 and the multi-agency Child Healthy Weight action plan has been refreshed covering actions across three main themes. There is also the opportunity to increase physical activity through the new commitment to Merton as a borough of sport/activity, with a focus on inclusion across the life-course.

Specific current work through the Merton Child Healthy Weight Action Plan includes:

Making child healthy weight everyone's business:

- 50 schools in Merton have registered for the Healthy Schools London programme, and 83 early years settings are registered for Healthy Early Years London Programme.
- 29 primary schools in Merton participate in the Daily/Active Mile
- 12 organisations in Merton are signed up to Sugar Smart, an initiative aiming to help organisations reduce sugar consumption.
- A new school meals' contract is being awarded with public health, which includes nutritional outcomes, and a move to more plant based menus.
- We are rolling out training for frontline staff on having conversations about healthy weight and being able to signpost to support, starting with support to the Holidays and Activity programme.
- A refreshed communication and engagement plan for child healthy weight is being refreshed.

Supporting children, young people and their families:

- Community Health Services which includes Health Visiting, have achieved and maintained the Unicef Baby Feeding Friendly Initiative. Breastfeeding support is provided and a specialist clinic is also available for mothers

- School Nurses deliver the 'Familystart' programme, a weight support service for children and their families to achieve healthy lifestyle and reduce their weight
- Investment in Merton's Food Poverty Action Plan has ensured the continuation of Merton's Community Fridge Network and coordination of local efforts to reduce food poverty, through Sustainable Merton.
- Local Healthy Start Voucher scheme booklet has been developed to increase families access to vouchers for free fruit, vegetables, milk and vitamins
- Children and Young People's Social Prescribing pilot to be developed and implemented for those classified as obese or with low level emotional health.

Healthy place - shaping the places we live, learn, work and play and influencing choices on the food we eat:

- Merton's Climate Strategy and action plan contributes to tackling child healthy weight, committing to active travel and greening the borough.
- Merton's Local Plan adopted mechanisms to manage new takeaway restaurants within 400 metres of schools.
- Water fountains have been installed in Mitcham, Colliers Wood, Morden and Raynes Park and Wimbledon.
- A Transport for London (TFL) style advertising policy aiming to tackle unhealthy advertising and promote wellbeing implemented in Merton.
- A School Superzone pilot will be testing out ways to make the environment around schools more healthy and 10 schools have been funded to make improvements, such as developing a school garden or open space.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for the reply. Adverts for burgers, chocolate bars, sugary drinks were recent adverts reported near my local primary school. We have an obesity epidemic, we continue to see breaches of Merton's advertising policy around schools in relation to healthy eating. What are the mechanisms in place to enforce this policy to help prevent the necessity for the proposed snapshot audit of advertising around schools and meeting with Decaux to raise breaches of policy.

Reply

I think there are limits to what we can do. I think this is a problem that should concern us all. And I look forward to working with you and your colleagues, because my approach to working with health and obesity which leads to all sorts of illnesses that cost all of us as taxpayers a lot of money is that if anyone's got any ideas or suggestions, please let me hear them and I'll always be willing to see what the possibilities are and what the implications are in terms of costs of what we can achieve legally.

From Councillor Laxmi Attawar to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

With the health inequalities between the east and the west of Merton well-documented, can the Cabinet Member outline the importance of the work the Dementia Hub in Mitcham is doing in terms of outreach across the borough?

Reply

Merton's community dementia services are run by the Alzheimer's Society and based at the Dementia Hub in Mitcham. Following consultation the service model has recently been revised (October 2022) to deliver a community based service, with services available at the Dementia Hub but also offered across the Borough, nearer to people's communities and their homes. For example a Dementia Support Worker may meet a client at the Dementia Hub, at a person's home (if this was needed), over digital platforms such as Zoom (if appropriate such as for a carer who worked) or at a 'pop up' session hosted by another community or voluntary sector organisation in a different part of the borough.

The service has named officers attached to each Primary Care Network (PCN) in the borough further ensuring reach in East Merton. The service is also in discussion with a community organisation in Pollards Hill to establish a sustained presence within Pollards Hill and one that responds to the needs of the local community. Alzheimer's Society are also in discussion with offices leading on 'Health on the High Street' to increase awareness across the Borough. Finally national research highlights that ethnic minority communities may lack access to dementia services. Locally the Alzheimer's Society are in discussion with a Tamil community group to ensure engagement and awareness around dementia, dementia diagnosis and the support that the community dementia service can offer.

All Councillors are being offered a Dementia Friends awareness session and a briefing on what Community Dementia Services do by the Alzheimer's Society as part of Councillor training.

Supplementary

Thank you Madame Mayor, yes I do have a supplementary. I'd like to welcome the Cabinet Member to his new role. Will he join me in expressing our ongoing support for retaining all services at St Heliers Hospital?

Reply

I think it is a well known fact that for most of my 36 years in this chamber, I have campaigned to retain services at St Helier Hospital and I will continue to do so. And as I have said on numerous occasions in the past, I think the first responsibility of any councillor is to stick up for local residents and anything that damages the health and the health chances of local residents is something that we should all oppose and I look forward, as I said just now, to working together with colleagues to ensure that this hospital remains an asset for our local community.

From Cllr Hina Bokhari to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

Merton's collective performance on screening for breast, cervical, and bowel cancers are acknowledged as poor (60% vs Havering at 76% on Breast screening, for example). What is the Cabinet Member doing to find out how other Councils are achieving better performance?

Reply

Cancer Screening services are commissioned by NHS England who are responsible for the performance of the provider of cancer screening services. The Council has no direct commissioning relationship with providers and is not responsible for their performance, however we do have an oversight role and the Healthier Communities an Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered screening at their June 2022 meeting. The meeting had a focus on breast cancer screening, also covering recovery from the Serious Incident declared by NHS England and service improvement measures.

There are a number of factors and issues that impact on London's performance with regard to cancer screening. These can range from population mobility, deprivation and service awareness amongst some ethnic minority communities. Services may also be impacted by access to appointments and a lack of qualified sample takers e.g. for cervical cancer screening.

Public Health officers have recently met with the NHS commissioner lead for bowel cancer screening and will be attending as a Local Authority representative at quarterly performance meetings in August 2022 to greater understand performance of the provider around bowel cancer screening and understanding in greater detail activity to improve performance. Looking forward the Council will use our networks to raise awareness around bowel cancer screening and promote provider initiatives locally.

Officers are also engaged with the community engagement officer at the Bowel Cancer Screening Centre at St Georges Hospital and we plan a number of

engagement activities with the community and voluntary sector to raise awareness around bowel cancer screening. Earlier this month the network of Community Champions, a key part of the pandemic response in Merton, had a presentation on bowel cancer screening which was very well received.

Public Health officers are meeting in August with other South West London Council and NHS colleagues to talk through cancer screening and ways to improve performance. We will raise the issue around high performing boroughs, such as Havering for breast cancer screening, to find out what they have done to improve cancer screening in their local authority.

Public Health Team officers have also been promoting the 'Help Us, Help you, Cancer - Earlier Diagnosis Campaign' (asking anyone who has concern over a symptom to contact their GP practice) to local community and voluntary sector partners.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for their answer. There wasn't a clear definite answer in that because of the fact that you still have some finding out to do why Merton has such low cancer screening performances. I appreciate that this is a London wide issue, but Merton itself has very poor performances in terms of screening which is worrying and I hope that when you do finally meet the London Councils in August that we can get a full report back of why that is the case and what will happen in the future to ensure that there is a better performance. And in that spirit I also hope you will look in to Jo's Trust, a cancer cervical smear campaign group looking to screening vans at The Wilson Hospital as a screening hub perhaps even, and particularly focus on screening for those with mental health issues and learning difficulties. Thank you.

Reply

Thank you and I think it is important to recognise that cancer screening services are the responsibility of NHS England and although we have got this new structure, and it's very new because it only started on the 1st July, and it requires us to work in partnership. If that meant that I was in charge of local health then this is something that I would address straight away. In the last couple of months I lost a colleague who worked with us who died as a result of breast cancer and I think it's something that has to be taken very seriously. So what we can do in partnership is raise the issue with the people that do commission the service and insist that we are the best in London rather than down at the bottom of the pile.

From Cllr Max Austin to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

What has the council identified as the most urgent social determinants of health in Merton?

Reply

One of the most important social determinant and pervasive root cause of ill health and inequality in health is poverty, driving earlier onset and poorer health outcomes across a wide range of physical and mental conditions, and disabilities and leading to reduced overall and healthy life expectancy. The current cost of living crisis is making poverty probably the most urgent social determinant of health, not only in Merton but London and the rest of the country. Closely linked to the importance of decent wages/income /benefits are access to good jobs, housing and food, all essential social determinants of health. Globally, the climate crisis is one of the most important determinants / threats to health and equity now and for future generations, requiring urgent and sustained action to prevent irreversible changes to the planet with detrimental impact on population health.

Supplementary

Thank you, Madame Mayor, and I thank Cabinet Minister, the Cabinet Member sorry, for his response. Does the Council agree that healthcare is a very small part of what drives health inequalities as set out by the Marmot Principles and I believe it's as small as 20% of health inequalities are driven by access to health care and have they considered formally working with Professor Sir Michael Marmot and the Institute for Health Equity or a similar external body of experts as other authorities including the GLA, and indeed the Labour Mayor of Manchester have and are doing to research and identify which interventions are most appropriate and urgent specifically here in Merton.

Reply

I thank you for your supplementary and I really do understand some of these determinates. And, though when it comes to poverty which leads to poorer health outcomes, poor housing, all of those things have a massive impact on health in the future and I lived in, and I touched on this earlier on, very bad housing as a child, and it was the day we moved to our council flat in Lambeth having shared a bedroom with my parents in a house that had no hot water and no bath – a tin bath hanging in the back yard, we thought we had died and gone to heaven. And it's such a shame that there are so many children growing up in poor housing these days, with little prospect of social housing and the difference that that makes to life chances is extraordinary. Because for the first time I had a bedroom where I could do my homework, I wasn't living in a cold house and it actually made a huge impact on the

rest of my life and the lives of my children, so I really do get that and we have spoken to Professor Marmot in relation to St Helier hospital and I think one of the things that he said that there are so few things that you can actually impact but there is something that you can do about a hospital and you decide where to put it and why would you put it, why would you take it from one of the most deprived areas and put it into one of the most affluent areas of Surrey where there is no health inequality, well it's practically in Surrey, it's just inside Sutton, but it's about as far away from the residents that I represent and the people living on the St Helier estate as you could possibly get in Sutton, so I do get it.

From Councillor Caroline Charles to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

As figures reveal that a quarter of over-65s and even more over-85s are living with frailty, what is the Council doing to address this, in particular its link to isolation and loneliness?

Reply

Frailty and being concerned over falling can impact a person's ability and confidence around 'day to day' activities such as going to the shops or meeting friends. It can lead to increased loneliness and isolation as someone feels less confident or is less able to get out and about. Regular physical activity with a focus on strength and balance can help address both frailty and the risk of falls. Physical activity can also reduce the risk of long-term conditions and create opportunities for social connection with others.

The Council has worked collaboratively with the NHS locally and taken a multi-agency approach in developing a project to reduce frailty. This had led to the Council commissioning 'Get up and Go' a physical activity programme run by Everyone Health for residents in East Merton and Morden. The programme focuses on strength and balance and will include activities such as Nordic Walking, seated exercise classes, Tai Chi and Dance. The programme that has just started will run initially until August 2023. There is also a social element to activities, such as tea and coffee afterwards. The programme also includes wider activities such as new age Kurling. It also contains a 'train the trainer' and 'small grants' element to get local community and voluntary sector groups involved in running local activities.

The Council commissions 'Merton Moves' a programme run by Wimbledon Guild who offer 'one to one' coaching to older people to get involved in a physical activity. The service works with someone and provides encouragement to join a physical activity class or group that they are interested in, encouraging greater social connectivity.

The Council also commissions a Befriending Service with Age UK Merton and Wimbledon Guild for older people over 65 who are isolated. The service matches a volunteer with a client based on shared interests. Physical activity (whilst not a key part of the befriending offer) is encouraged, such as going for a walk with a befriender.

The Council's Carers Strategy and through the work of Merton's Dementia Action Alliance also considers isolation and loneliness affecting older carers in Merton.

Overview and Scrutiny have also held a Task and Finish Group on the issue of loneliness and isolation.

Try 22 in 2022, is a new campaign to raise awareness of the range of opportunities to be more active, including active travel, sport and fun activities and games in Merton. There are five resources with ideas for adults, adults, babies and toddlers, children and young people and pregnant women to get more active and there is a specific resource for older people. Further details can be access at www.merton.gov.uk/mertoncan

Supplementary

Thank you Madame Mayor. I'd like to welcome the Cabinet Member to his new role. Does he agree with me that loneliness and frailty are a growing health concern in the Borough?

Reply

I'd like to thank my ward colleague for that question and also congratulate her on her maiden speech. I think the report covers this aspect that frailty and isolation are the major causes of, one o of the major causes of ill health. And if you consider the amount of hospitalisations that come as a result of falls, it becomes clear just money we can spend by keeping people active and encouraging them and supporting them to remain independent for as long as they possibly can, so you are absolutely right. We are doing a lot, but we need to continue and do more.

From Cllr Simon McGrath to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

At the Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel on June 20th 2022 a report on Breast Cancer Screening Rates was confidential and not available to the public. Why?

Reply

Whilst the majority of this presentation was published and made available to the public, Council officers were advised by the NHS that three slides contained sensitive information and unvalidated data and therefore could not be published. However, the NHS were keen to share the emerging findings with Councillors and therefore held a discussion with them in a private session to allow members to discuss all the data submitted.

Supplementary

Thank you very much Madame Mayor. I wonder if the Cabinet Member agrees with me that it's wrong in principle that information on breast cancer screening rates should be kept away from members of the public and if he will agree to write to the appropriate part of the NHS asking if we can make this document public?

Reply

Madame Mayor I do agree with Cllr McGrath. Things should be made public, we should be open and transparent in our dealings with all our partners. But where we are working in partnership, and we have been advised that things have not been checked, then I think we should respect that, but we will be making sure that they are made aware of the need to put this on the website as soon as it has been cleared.

From Cllr Susie Hicks to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

If the Cabinet Member agrees that the Council has a role to play in promoting ways in which local employers can help efforts to improve the health of our residents, does she agree to signing up to the Menopause Workplace Pledge?

Reply

As an employer of a diverse workforce, Merton Council offers assistance and support for any member of staff requiring support. All Merton staff are made aware of our Occupational Health provider and our Employee Assistance programme through a wide range of internal channels. Merton also provide a range of employee wellbeing resources, policies, procedures and guidance and training and we have Wellbeing Champions located throughout the Council that staff have access to.

We have recently reviewed work around assisting employees that may require support due to the menopause. There is a dedicated page on the hub, Menopause (sharepoint.com) which was written with public health colleagues and includes various support and training options, which will be developed into a future eLearning module. We have a dedicated area on the new learning management system (due to be launched in the coming months) for all matters related to health and wellbeing. The above link and other learning and support materials will be included. I am happy to investigate signing up to the Menopause Workplace Pledge and identify the implications for the Council.

Supplementary

Thank you Madame Mayor, I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his answer and say I am delighted to see the level of support available to employees of the council, however I am dismayed that he doesn't see the council having a role in promoting ways in which local employers can help efforts to improve the health of our residents, particularly given the wealth of information which is available to council staff. In investigating signing up to the well regarded Menopause Workplace Pledge, would he also investigate ways to open up the information available to council staff fortunate enough to have access to the Merton intranet, to those staff indirectly, who don't like teachers working in our schools, or even the wider public if that can be done. Thank you.

Reply

Thank you for your supplementary, this is an important issue, I think as an employer Merton has a commitment to make reasonable adjustments for all its staff, a strong commitment to equalities, and that runs right through everything we do. I'm always reluctant to commit to taking on something until I've had the opportunity to see what the implications are, be they financial or otherwise and my genuine proposal is that we should look at this and if we take it on, then why wouldn't we encourage other employers to do the same and if there are groups of staff that are not being reached then I think we should find ways to get that information out to them also.

From Councillor James Williscroft to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

Can the Cabinet Member please tell us about the social value elements of recently agreed contracts for supported living services for adults with a learning disability?

Reply

The Council has a Social Value Charter that covers four main areas of social value: economy, social, environmental and innovation. The Charter provides a 'menu of options' covering a broad range of value adding activities and commitments. Bidders are asked to select from this menu and to define the quantity of each activity that they are committing to deliver. For example, a number of apprenticeships to be offered, or a number of hours of employee volunteering in local communities or similar. The quantities each have an allocated cash value which is used to calculate the overall equivalent financial value of each bidder's social value commitment.

With regards to the contracts referenced by my colleague in his question, while the award recommendation was agreed by Cabinet on the 27th of June, there are a number of legal processes that it is necessary to complete before the contract award to the recommended bidder can be confirmed. For this reason and for reasons of commercial confidentiality I am not able to divulge the exact nature of the equivalent financial value of the recommended bidder's submission but I am pleased to be able to confirm that this was a significant amount. In general terms, the recommended bidder's social value commitment included six main commitments across the life of the contract:

- The recruitment of a number of young people who are identified as Not in Employment, Education or Training;
- The recruitment of a number of people who are long term unemployed
- Staff volunteering in local communities over the life of the contract
- Supporting a number of paid work experience placements per year for adults with learning disabilities
- Offering training opportunities for staff across the life of the contract
- Supporting environmental programmes with local groups/schools plus attendance at school recruitment fairs throughout the life of the contract

Once the contract is awarded officers involved in monitoring contract delivery and quality will ensure that all of the social value commitments made by the winning bidder are honoured

Supplementary

Can the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care please tell us about the social value elements of recently agreed contracts for supported living services for adults with a learning disability.

Reply

The answer is clear, as far as I'm concerned. But when I discussed this contract, which had been the subject of a tendering process, with the responsible officers, I was very pleased to find that I didn't have to twist arms or force them to do the right thing, that's already part of the culture within adult social care and I think as other contracts come up for renewal, that will be an element of them because we can add value and that's what we want to do. I'm also pleased that there was a requirement to pay the London Living Wage in this contract for the staff because I think, we were talking earlier about what determines health, one of the things if you can lift people out of poverty then they will be more healthy and they will be able to provide better and healthier environments for their children and their families. Thank you.

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