

Merton Council Council

12 July 2023

Supplementary Agenda 3

5 Public questions to cabinet members

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The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting.

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From Malcolm Green

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

On 1st February 2023 he stated that he hoped to install traffic sensors in East Hillside in March: is he aware that members of the East Hillside Traffic Management Campaign are disappointed that sensors have not yet been installed, and will he now give a date for their installation?

Reply

We understand resident's disappointment on this matter, and we thank you for your patience. The project has been more involved than first anticipated. Since agreeing to move existing traffic sensors to East Hillside in 2022, which turned out not to be feasible, officers have secured additional funding via Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which had to go through a bidding process in late 2022 for this financial year's budgets. The funding is in place. Officers have also had to engage suppliers and enter into a new contract with the sensor providers which is also now in place. Locations for the data collection are now agreed and I am pleased to be able to share that the infrastructure works are planned to take place over the coming months (summer).

From David Caillard

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

When is the Council going to address the significant increase in volume of skip juggernauts speeding along Alexandra Road, and illegally using East Hillside as a cut through to the A3?

Reply

Alexandra Road is a London Distributor Road and therefore skip lorries and such like vehicles are permitted to use Alexandra Road. However, speeding is not acceptable in any event. Monitoring and enforcement of vehicle speed on the highway is the responsibility of the Police and so I would advise residents that witness speeding to report it to <https://www.met.police.uk/notices/met/community-roadwatch/>

For locations with speed related issues, TfL in partnership with the Metropolitan Police undertake many speed management initiatives, e.g. Community Road Watch. Community Roadwatch is a road safety initiative which aims to reduce speeding in residential areas and gives the local community the opportunity to work side by side with their local police teams and use speed detection equipment to identify speeding vehicles in their communities.

Concerns from members of the public on speeding, can be sent to Roadsafe London. This portal is an information and intelligence gathering tool that can inform police activity.

The link shows the address for the Roadsafe London website
<https://www.met.police.uk/notices/met/community-roadwatch/>

Any other road traffic offences/incidents can be reported on this link;
<https://www.met.police.uk/ro/report/rti/rti-beta-2.1/report-a-road-traffic-incident/>

From Alexandra Mac

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

Since covid 2020, cars/delivery drivers have been parking on the now non existent double yellow lines on Aberconway Road, Morden. Any idea when the double yellow lines will be painted back on. The obstruction makes using the car park a hassle from people who clearly don't want to pay.

Reply

Unfortunately, the service road in question is not owned or maintained by the Council, therefore we are unable to maintain the yellow lines or take any enforcement action.

However, we have been in touch with the land owner about the issue, asking how the Council can assist them. We have not yet received a response but we will update you when we do.

From David Cunningham

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

I complained about building material being left on the street on double yellow lines and was told by the council that there was little they could do to stop this. I've found other councils use FPNs to deal with this problem. Is there any reason why Merton can't do this?

Reply

Currently Merton does not have the ability to issue FPN's for skips, scaffolding or materials. Highway obstructions are dealt with by the Highways Act 1980 which requires a monitoring period where the items often are removed, and so no further

action can be taken. The council is exploring a system to implement FPN's for these types of obstructions which will require additional staff resources, a new IT system and handheld devices to enable officers on the street to issue FPNs which currently only exists for Parking Services.

From Sandra Vogel

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

Please can you make the Current and Planned roadworks list (<https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/roadworks/current-roadworks-and-traffic-disruptions>) more useful by doing two things:

1. Make it clear which entries are newly added each time the list is updated (bold text, a "new" marker or some other method).
2. Provide a second list organised by start date.

Reply

Thank you for your feedback. The design of the weekly bulletin is in such a way to meet the corporate standard for the website which enables accessibility features for those with disabilities to use the reader function on webpage and the PDF document circulated in the email bulletin. It would not be possible at this time to change the website's format to be editable / searchable by category or date.

Most residents, when looking for roadworks information tend to focus on the roads affected, therefore the information is currently organized alphabetically by street/road name.

From Baljeet Nijjhar

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

Ukrainians cannot move on from hosts into the Private Rental Sector because they are low-waged, need benefits and lack UK-based guarantors. DLUHC recently released a £600,000 Ukraine Homelessness Prevention Grant to Merton. Will the Cabinet Member reconsider using this to create a guarantor scheme so Ukrainians can find suitable housing?

Reply

The Council recognizes that there are considerable difficulties for all homeless applicants in accessing private sector accommodation due to current market

conditions. Recently published research by London Councils show that there has been a 41% reduction in London Properties available for private renting since the Covid-19 pandemic, amid warnings that turbulence and supply constraints in the private rental market is worsening near-record levels of homelessness across the capital.

The Council is committed to making best use of the recently announced £600,000 top up to the homeless prevention grant and to help Ukrainian households who are threatened with homelessness find longer term accommodation. Homelessness is complex and different for every household and each case needs to be assessed on its individual merits. Where necessary and appropriate the Council will consider increased incentives for households from Ukraine and this may include a deposit guarantee that will cover unpaid rent or damage up to a certain amount. However, it is important to recognize that all homeless families in Merton are facing the same challenges and the grant conditions do set out that it can also be used for other people at risk of homelessness in line with local pressures.

From Catherine Schumann

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

I have appealed my PCN (MT75810732) because I was not notified of the due date, although the information given stated that I would be reminded 14 days and the 7 days before renewal. I would like to ask why this notification was not issued at all?

Reply

The terms and conditions, which all permit holders are required to confirm that they have read and understood, do advise permit holders that, while we will endeavour to send reminders to permit holders 14 days and 7 days prior to the permit expiring, it remains the motorist's responsibility to ensure that their permit is renewed in good time to avoid receiving Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs).

It was identified that as a result of system issues at the Council, a small group of permit holders with permits expiring between 27 and 30 May 2023, did not receive either their 14 day or 7 day reminder. We apologise for the impact of this issue. While we have received more calls than usual recently relating to this issue, the vast majority of permit holders impacted by this issue renewed their permits despite not receiving any reminders.

From Mary-Jane Jeanes

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Greenspaces and Climate

How and when will the council amend the welcomed Tree Strategy Part 1 to include dates for actions, including when Part 2 will be prepared, as without such dates there is no guarantee that any of the proposals in the Tree Strategy Part 1 will be delivered.

Reply

The Arboriculture Team intends to implement the action plan that forms part of the Tree Strategy, adopted on 20th June 2023, with explicit timelines for each action which will be agreed before the commencement of 2023-24 tree works program in September 2023. This revision will be a recurring yearly activity, where tasks will be prioritised based on the resources available and priorities identified through our annual monitoring programme. The development and creation of the Phase 2 element of the ambition to have an overarching strategy is currently being discussed and scoped amongst officers and shall commence within this year.

The strategy specifies actions relating to our four key policies: Tree Research (TR), Tree Maintenance and Management (TMM), Tree Protection (TP), and Enhancement and Optimisation (EO). These actions, detailed in Appendix 3 of the strategy, span various stages including Implementation, Operational, and Developmental.

Our Tree Officers are tasked with formulating these actions, gauging outcomes, and leading stakeholder conversations throughout the process. This approach will ensure the successful execution of the proposals detailed within the Tree Strategy.

From Adele Lewis Jenkins

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Greenspaces and Climate

In response to residents' complaints, I understand that if a street tree damaged by the footpath contractor dies, a compensation method for replacement has been agreed, but how will the loss of the potential amenity value of a tree that survives but fails to mature, be compensated for?

Reply

An early warning under the term service contract that we have with our highway term maintenance contractor would be issued. This will stay on the early warning register until the contract expires. Trees within the borough are inspected as a minimum once every 3 years and during these inspections, using the London Tree Officers Association Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) system/matrix (which includes reducing its life expectancy) a CAVAT value (a cash figure) is calculated.

From Andrea Milde

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Greenspaces and Climate

In the past two years, what financial penalties have been levied on the council's footpath repair contractor for the damage to trunks and roots of street trees, as such damage will inevitably result in a loss of amenity and tree years in the future?

Reply

Three Early Warnings have been issued against the term service contract that we have with the contractor. These three early warnings come to the sum of £11,383. This sum is calculated using the London Tree Officers Association Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) system/matrix following the last inspection that was recorded pre-damage and the inspection undertaken post-damaged. Therefore, if the trees that form part of these early warnings issued are required to be removed or die during the life of the existing contract, the highway term maintenance contractor would have to pay the associated cost (this also includes planting of a new tree, first 3 years of maintenance and construction of a tree pit).

From Pippa Maslin

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

Will the 400 new homes that are to be built on council-owned land over the next four years be managed by the council or a housing association. If the latter, which housing association?

Reply

The Council is currently developing the delivery programme for 400 new affordable homes which will also include options for ongoing management and maintenance. The first 93 homes will be progressing this financial year and it is the Council's intention that the new homes are managed by the Council, either directly or through a third-party contract, who could be a registered provider. Any such contract will be subject to normal procurement rules.

From Tony Burton

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Greenspaces and Climate

Given newly planted trees need at least 50 litres of water per week will Merton Council work with Friends groups to assess the infrastructure of taps and other

watering infrastructure for parks, green spaces and verges across the borough and prepare a strategy to prioritise improvements and future investment decisions?

Reply

The council currently has tree watering built into tree maintenance plan for all newly planted trees in Merton and each tree will receive periodic maintenance and watering visits for 3 years to establishment.

In light of recent Amber and Red weather warnings the support of Merton Tree Wardens and Park Friends will continue to be important as the council will continue to plant more trees in strategic highways and parks locations in line with its Tree Strategy aims laid out in EO3 Planning for tree planting and establishment.

The council are also looking into the use of TreeGatorBags (Treegator Original is a slow-release watering bag that is perfect for newly planted or established trees from 1" to 8 in girth, with branches beginning at least 25 inches from the ground or higher. It concentrates the watering of trees to one specific area - slowly releasing water which penetrates the ground and promotes deep root growth). As well as ensuring that best arboricultural practice is adopted in line with all tree planting and tree pit preparation.

From D J Markham

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

What is the justification for the enforced exemption of Woodside from Merton Council's 2016 Footway Parking Policy, given not only that Woodside is a residential street in a CPZ, but also that this exemption facilitates its heavy use as a shortcut by out-of-borough traffic?

Reply

The CPZ was introduced in 1997 and at the time footway parking was considered necessary to meet residents' parking demand. One of the key deciding factors at the time was the fact that only permit holder residents would be parking within the designated parking spaces and it was a requirement to make every effort to meet demand. Given the narrowness of the carriageway width, to remove footway parking would mean that parking would need to be removed from the entire length of the road.

There is no evidence that facilitating residential parking encourages rat running. Given that parking (by residents) on both sides of the road narrows the carriageway,

it discourages speeding and any congestion is likely to discourage rat running. There is no evidence to suggest that those using this road are from outside the borough.

The 2016 footway parking was set up by Parking services in response to enforcement difficulties they face when enforcing footway parking by residents – more specifically outside CPZs.

From Kate Haseler-Young

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

In the interest of clarity and to inform ongoing discussions about traffic management in the area, could the Chairman please confirm the status of Abbey Road as a public highway maintained by the London Borough of Merton?

Reply

Abbey Rd is an adopted public highway maintained by the Council. It is subject to 20mph; it is traffic calmed and has a width restriction. Given the petition recently received, it is currently on the Pending list.

From Elliott Jenkin

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

Could the Council share the results of past 20-year formal and informal consultations on Abbey Road traffic, including breakdown of resident responses from affected roads (Abbey, Mill, Dane, Croft, Meadow) identifiable from other responses and reasons why proposals including one-way streets and restricted access to Abbey Road were not implemented?

Reply

Schemes are often abandoned if, after an informal consultation, the majority of the residents oppose a scheme. Given the time that has lapsed, the Council no longer holds the information. In any event, to reconsider changes to this grid, it would be necessary to undertake up to date traffic surveys, develop fresh proposals and undertake the required consultation.

From Dickie Wilkinson

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

Could the leader please explain what happened to the 300k set aside for small scale improvements to Morden Town Centre approved by Morden Regeneration Steering Group, what happened to the person appointed to help deliver the projects, where are the new bins promised to replace dirty bins outside Morden Station?

Reply

The £300,000 CIL funding is safeguarded for small-scale improvements to Morden Town Centre and the project is ongoing. Rather than appointing a new member of staff to help deliver the projects, Future Merton allocated the project to an existing urban design officer as a better value option.

A brief has been developed to procure a suitably qualified consultant to consult on, design, make and implement a meanwhile public realm strategy to improve Morden Town Centre. This will deliver socially focused interventions such as seating, planting and other structures. This project will cost circa £150,000 to deliver. The timeline for this project, subject to the methodology of the successful bidder, is to start the project in September 2023, to engage and design during Winter 2023, to design and make the small scale structures in Spring 2024 and to implement the project in Morden in Summer 2024.

The remaining £150,000 will deliver smaller and more ad-hoc projects as well to support any additional engagement and programming requirements for the temporary public realm project. Circa £60,000 has been notionally allocated to procure a consultant to deliver a 'meanwhile space' feasibility study that seeks to identify vacant spaces and council assets that can be transformed into projects that can help diversify Morden's offer with new uses. This 'meanwhile space' feasibility study can then be used as evidence to apply for relevant grant funding to deliver further improvements.

New litter bins for Morden town centre will be progressed via the waste services team through the Council's capital programme.

From Stephanie Biden

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Greenspaces and Climate

Why is the recycling centre at Garth Road no longer accepting paint? Please can this service be reinstated?

Reply

The recycling centre at Garth Road has not been accepting wet paint since the Hazardous Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2005 were implemented as it is

classified as hazardous waste. If residents arrive at the site with paint, they are advised as to the appropriate disposal route via the City of London Corporation who provide a specialist collection service.

The council's web site provides clear information as to how to arrange for the collection of wet paint and other hazardous waste materials which can be accessed via the link as follows: [Dispose of hazardous waste | Merton Council](#)

Empty paint tins or tins with dried paint can be disposed of at the Garth Road recycling facility.