

# **Merton Council Council**

**7 February 2024**

## **Supplementary agenda 5 – Public Questions to Council and Replies**

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| 5 | Public questions to cabinet members<br><br>The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting. | 1 - 8 |
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**From Suzy Levy**

**To the Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage**

Is it possible to extend the court usage of the beach volleyball courts in Wimbledon Park by installing low-pollution LED lights? This would double the amount of playing time available during weeknights throughout the year and support both beach volleyball and the beach tennis community?

**Reply**

Sporting facilities play a major role in contributing towards our Borough of Sport ambitions. If we can maximise the usage of an existing facility by installing appropriate floodlights, whilst taking into consideration some of the concerns locally, then this would be an ideal solution that would enable many more people to have the opportunity to become more active. Discussions have taken place with the Beach Volleyball club, and we will continue to work with them on this project.

**From Jonathan Foster**

**To the Cabinet Member for Transport**

Hartfield Road car park in Wimbledon has recently gone to a cashless App system of payment. What mitigations have been put in place to prevent the elderly or vulnerable from being unfairly ticketed before they can download the Ringo app?"

**Reply**

When upgrading our car parks, we seek to ensure that the options to pay by card or cash are preserved for those motorists who prefer or need to use these means of payment.

However, we have installed two modern pay and display machines in the car park that accept coin and card payments. One of these machines is located in the centre of the car park, and the other is close to the exit. In addition, users of the car park can call the automated telephone line for RingGo on 020 3046 0060 to purchase their ticket if using the app is not suitable.

Many motorists now prefer the convenience of cashless payments, and our data now shows that around 97% of parking customers have registered online to use RingGo. Comprehensive guidance on how to register on RingGo and pay for parking can be found on the Council's website:

[Pay by mobile phone for parking | Merton Council](#)

**From Raj Chauhan**

**To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development**

I have been a resident in Morden for the last 25 years but have not seen any improvements in the town and surrounding areas. Does the council have plans and if so when?

**Reply**

The regeneration of Morden town centre remains a key priority for Merton Council, with a vision to transform it into a vibrant and sustainable destination with new homes and a thriving local economy.

Town centre regeneration is a complex process, and the Council is one of multiple landowners in Morden. While working on long-term regeneration plans in the council's Local Plan, we have been making immediate improvements to assets under the council's control, particularly at the civic centre. We have:

- Successfully bid to the South London Knowledge Exchange to invest in the former HSBC bank premises on London Road, which will become a co-working space with cafe and entertainment facilities;
- Introduced more services into the civic centre site, including Wimbledon Guild and the Credit Union to enhance the services available to residents; and
- Ensured that council services continue to support Morden's shops and businesses during the working week by bringing the South London Legal Partnership staff into the civic centre.

The council has recently appointed the consultancy, Sustrans, to engage with town centre businesses and residents during 2024 to develop a meanwhile use strategy for Morden town centre. Residents' and businesses' responses will be used to identify activities and physical works to be delivered in Morden town centre while the regeneration plans are being developed.

The adoption of the draft Local Plan, which is now in its final stages, will guide future development proposals for regeneration.

Officers are currently exploring delivery methods and options for the long-term regeneration, but projects of this scale take significant time to develop and deliver and it is difficult to determine exact timescales at this current stage – that's why in the meantime we are developing our meanwhile use approach which will allow us to make improvements for the community in Morden in the short term too.

**From Vincent Coleman**

**To the Cabinet Member for Transport**

When will the white lines to govern the follow of traffic be repainted on Durnsford Road? As a result cars are treating single lanes as double, and driving into oncoming traffic” Also could cameras be installed to inform this?

**Reply**

Thank you for raising the issues on Durnsford Road. As you will know it is a busy principal road and also the main access to Weir Road industrial estate. As part of our ongoing investment to make sure that all roads in Merton are visibly and effectively marked, we had identified that with the volume of traffic on this road, the line markings can wear away quicker than other parts of the borough. As a result we have already engaged the council’s highways contractor to re-mark Durnsford Road and I can confirm that this will be carried out in the next three weeks.

I can also confirm that vehicle activated signs are in already operating along Durnsford Road to help improve road safety in addition to planned work to re-mark the road.

**From Chris Larkman**

**To the Cabinet Member for Transport**

At Raynes Park, land transferred from Network Rail to LBM on the north of the ‘Skew Arch’ has remained unfinished for a couple of years and continues to be an eyesore. Can the Council please let us know when this work is likely to be completed?

**Reply**

We apologise for the time that this final part has taken. The works are due to be completed by mid-March 2024. The reason for the delay is that we are awaiting a programme date from UK Power Networks to make safe four electrical cables that were found during the excavation for the new fence posts; this is currently anticipated to be at the end of February 2024. Subject to UK Power Networks making the electrical cables safe it will take the fencing company three days to complete their works, which will significantly improve the area north of the Skew Arch.

**From Daniel Hammocks**

**To the Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage**

Is the Borough of Sport campaign the key focus of the council and is this sentiment shared across all local authority departments?

**Reply**

Our ambition to become London's Borough of Sport is one of three corporate priorities within our Council Plan *Building a Better Merton Together*, alongside nurturing civic pride and building a sustainable future. These priorities are underpinned by our continued commitment to protect the services people in Merton rely on, and to support people through the cost-of-living crisis.

Part of the Borough of Sport blueprint governance structure was establishing an internal Operations Group, which meets frequently and has senior representation from all Directorates. A great working relationship has already been developed between the Sport and Leisure team and Public Health, Children, Schools and Families, Parks and Green Spaces, Planning and many other relationships are forming which will only grow over the course of time.

**From John Davis**

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

When will two documents promised at the 15 November Council Meeting be provided? One: list of replacement trees in parks and street promised to the questioner. Two: list of the 10,000 trees Merton says have been planted, with site location, species and success rate to Tree Warden Group Merton?

**Reply**

The boroughs commitment to 10,000 trees to be planted in Merton 2022-23 as outlined on the borough's website [10,000 New Trees For Merton | Merton Council Newsroom](#), was linked to a number of Internal and External Funded tree planting initiatives that Merton Council committed to linked to the development of the boroughs tree strategy.

Please be aware that the below list of trees includes a mixture of both Standard Trees and Tree Whips which have been itemised below.

<b>Project</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Planting Year</b>	<b>Standard Trees</b>	<b>Tree Whips</b>
New Street Tree Planting	Council Capital	2022-23	110	
New Park Tree Planting	Council Capital	2022-23	110	
Interfaith Week Memorial Tree Planting	Council Revenue	2022-23	9	
Wimbledon Hill Road Highways Improvement Scheme	Council Capital	2022-23	9	
London Road Community Orchard	Neighbourhood CIL	2022-23	12	
Friends of Wimbledon Park Revelstoke Road perimeter planting	External Funding Woodland Trust	2022-23		1800
Friends of Abbey Recreation Ground Merton Green Walk	External Funding	2022-23		450
Urban Tree Challenge Round	External Funded Forestry Commission	2022-23		1380

2 (Morden Park and Pollards Hill)				
Urban Tree Challenge Round 3	External Funded Forestry Commission	2022-23	210	
Trees for Streets Dave Lofthouse Memorial Woodland Cranmer Green	Partnership Agreement Merton Council and Trees for Cities	2022-23	16	7600
Queens Green Canopy	Council Parks Tree Capital	2023-24	20	
<b>Total</b>			<b>496</b>	<b>11,726</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>				<b>12,222</b>

Linked to the 2022-23 tree re-inspection cycle undertaken by the Council's arboriculture team many of the above whip planting areas planted during 2022-23 including Cranmer Green, Morden Park, Wimbledon Park and Abbey Recreation Ground were assessed by boroughs tree inspectors but were covered as Woodland Groups rather than individual species.

I apologise for the delay, this is a significant piece of work and so, unfortunately, we have not been able to provide the information as quickly as we would have liked to. The standard trees listed above have been up-loaded to the councils Ezytreev database including the fields requested and we will extrapolate the data and share the associated Standard Tree plantings listed in Parks and Highways with the Tree Wardens by the end of March 2024 in line with the Ezytreev reinspection data will be fully complete by this period.



**From Dick Bower**

**To the Leader of the Council**

Has Cllr Garrod received a written reply, containing substantive proposals, to his letter to the AELTC asking how they propose to address the legal covenant, which they freely agreed to, that ensures Wimbledon Park remains open to the public for leisure purposes in perpetuity?

**Reply**

I can confirm that I received a reply from the AELTC on 14 November. This letter stated that “while resolution to grant was provided on 26 October on behalf of Merton there are further stages to complete and the section 106 agreement has not yet been entered into. As such, we remain fully focused on these elements at the present time. If planning permission is granted and the section 106 agreement completed, we would then welcome a meeting to discuss the restrictive covenants.”

We now await the outcome of the decision from the Greater London Authority, following the Deputy Mayor of London’s decision to call in the planning application.

**From David Morgan**

**To the Cabinet Member for Transport**

I am concerned about the recent fires in electric buses in Merton and Wandsworth. I support the introduction of these cleaner vehicles but will the council be pressing TFL and the bus companies for assurances about their safety both on the road and in charging at their garage.

**Reply**

We understand resident’s concerns and the distress caused by the scenes of the bus fire in Merton and the reports of other incidents involving electric buses across London. We also recognise the crucial role that Electric Vehicles, including electric buses, have in improving local air quality.

The Metropolitan Police declared a critical incident after a double-decker bus caught fire during the morning rush hour on Wimbledon Hill Road. A safety cordon was established around the incident while fire and rescue services dealt with the incident. The bus in Wimbledon was quickly evacuated and the London Fire Brigade and Metropolitan Police confirmed that there were no reported injuries. Merton Council is grateful to our partners for their response to the incident.

We know that safety is the top priority for public transport and precautionary safety tests are underway to assess the electric bus fleet on TfL's network. We have received assurances that the Mayor of London and Transport for London are working with the bus operator and bus manufacturer to urgently investigate the cause.

**From Sandra Vogel**

**To the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services**

To whom can an official complaint be made if an officer frequently fails to respond to emails from a resident and how are such complaints handled?

**Reply**

Most of the Council's services have specific contact details, including email addresses, which can be accessed from the home page of our website ([Home | Merton Council](#)). We would always encourage residents to use these contact details in preference to emailing individual officers directly.

However, under the London Borough of Merton's Customer Charter, when officers are contacted directly by email they are expected to respond within 15 working days. Therefore, failure to respond to an email within this time would constitute a service failure – and I apologise if this has been your experience.

Some council processes take longer than 15 working days, but where this is the case residents should be informed of the timeline through an acknowledgement or 'out of office' notification.

Complaints about officers' failure to respond to correspondence can be submitted via a webform which is available on the Council's website - [Complaints : Make a complaint | Merton Council](#) or by contacting the Complaints Team at [complaints@merton.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@merton.gov.uk) or by telephone 020 8545 3573.

Through the formal complaint process the service or team manager will ensure the correspondence is responded to and will investigate and resolve any issues that have resulted in correspondence not being answered.

Formal complaints should be acknowledged within three working days and responded to in 20 working days.