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1. From Councillor Richard Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Education
To what does the Cabinet Member attribute the fall in GSCE results at three of our secondary schools? What does he intend to do about it?

Reply:

Firstly, I congratulate our young people on their GCSE results. We should not seek to disparage their achievements and should recognise the considerable improvement that has taken place across Merton's schools over recent years.

GCSE results for individual schools will vary year on year as a result of a variety of factors - not least because the previous attainment and general level of ability of the GCSE cohort in each school year will differ.

Every year, Merton's School Improvement Service works closely with schools in analysing the summer 2013 results in detail and providing support and challenge to our schools to help them to improve where particular issues are identified. This may involve, for example, work with a school to develop strategies to improve the quality of teaching or the provision of additional programmes of support for specific groups of students.

Overall, the performance of Merton schools has continued to improve this year. For example, provisional returns from all schools, including academies, show that 64% of students secured 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and mathematics - an improvement of 5% on last year, and up from 40% in 2007. We have also seen 5 A*-C GCSEs go up to 87%. These are our best ever GCSE results.

However, as an administration we are not complacent and will continue to work with schools to improve their GCSE performance. While our GCSE results are amongst the fastest improving in the county; it's important that the progress made in our schools is sustained.

2. From Councillor Logie Lohendran to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services
The number of children reported to the Kingston safeguarding team this year has trebled, with significant increases in the 15yrs to 17yrs age groups. The majority were treated for alcohol/substance misuse, overdose or self-harm. Some have suffered suspected physical abuse/sexual abuse. Can the Cabinet Member please let me know if there have been similar cases in Merton? If so, how many referrals have there been and in what categories?

Reply

Merton has not seen a dramatic rise in referrals in respect of young people aged between 15-17yrs. Young people in this age range are typically referred to our social care services due to factors such as

relationship breakdown with their parents, homelessness, being at risk of sexual exploitation or because of activity that has brought them to the attention of law enforcement agencies.

Having recognised some time ago the emerging issue of child sexual exploitation, the council and our partners have implemented a number of initiatives to respond to the needs of young people at risk of, or who have experienced, sexual exploitation. We have commissioned Barnados and Jigsaw 4 u to work alongside those young people identified as being at risk of sexual exploitation and we have also established a multi agency 'promote & protect' forum that meets monthly to consider how the needs of these young people can best be met - typically 4-5 new referrals are received each month.

Although numbers have not risen as in Kingston, young people referred to Merton in the 15-17 age group are relatively over represented in our new entrants into care. This is in part due to the fact that Merton, alongside other London authorities, are members of the Croydon Unaccompanied Minors Rota and as such we receive regular referrrals of young people in this age range who require accommodation by the Local Authority. In addition, the Southwark Judgement has meant that homeless young people aged 16-17 must be assessed by the LA to see if duties to accommodate exist.

3. From Councillor James Holmes to the Cabinet Member for Education
Given the increasing requirement to cater for 16-19 year olds in the years ahead, can the Cabinet Member confirm that a strategy is being put in place in Merton to provide as wide a range of provision and opportunities as possible and that these are focused on providing pathways into work?

Reply

All local schools and post 16 providers have been preparing for the raising of the participation age (RPA) over the last two years and have reviewed their curriculum offer for young people who are now required to participate in education or training beyond 16yrs of age.

Colleagues will be aware of the increased 6th form provision already put into place in our secondary schools. The longstanding 14-19 Partnership has been re-configured and is now the RPA Partnership. Members of this group include local schools, work based learning providers and the Chamber of Commerce. This group leads the strategy and oversees the work of a number of key groups - for example, the joint Merton and Sutton Apprenticeship Forum - to develop appropriate education and employment pathways for all young people. To further support RPA, an executive group of LA officers has been established and they oversee the extensive data set, student outcomes and the advice and guidance available for more vulnerable students. .

Additionally, a new Economic Well-Being Group has been established to enable closer links to be developed between stakeholders including local employers. One of its key employment initiatives this year has been the successful "Take One" campaign. This has involved the Chamber of Commerce liaising with local employers to offer a wider range of work based opportunities to young people. Through this work, 30 new apprenticeship opportunities have been identified and 11 have been taken up by young people aged between 16-18yrs old.

The Scrutiny Task Group established last year to look at Post 16 provision and pathways and the resulting action plan has also contributed to the overall strategic developments in this key area of work.

4. From Councillor Logie Lohendran to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

In recent cases of death caused to young children under the supervision of their parents (e.g. Baby P), the use of the slogan "Lesson Learnt" came up often. Then there has been a recent case where a child died of malnourishment by parental negligence in Coventry. Again the slogan used is "Lesson Learnt." Recently a report came out about a young boy who had committed suicide in Sutton. Another "Lesson Learnt?"

Can the Cabinet Member please let me know if Merton has been following these cases carefully? Can she possibly brief me on precisely what lessons have been learnt as a result of these tragic cases and what process is in place to make sure that the necessary lessons are indeed learnt by the council, particularly in light of the Tia Sharp case?

Reply:

In certain circumstances when a child dies or is seriously injured, the Local Safeguarding Children Board in the area the child resided is required to undertake a Serious Case Review (SCR). The purpose of an SCR is specifically to identify any lessons arising, how these will be acted upon and what is expected to change as a result of the learning. The overall aim is to improve the response of agencies to child protection concerns and, in turn, to reduce the numbers of children dying or being seriously harmed by factors such as abuse or neglect.

Merton Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) leads on initiating SCRs and ensuring that lessons from SCRs are learnt, disseminated and incorporated into strategic and operational safeguarding planning and practice. There has been one SCR undertaken involving a Merton child in recent years. However, all lessons from published SCRs nationally are carefully reviewed by the MSCB and its sub groups.

Lessons from the very high profile case of Baby P have already been implemented in Merton including:

- **Implementation of and training on the revised Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010, based on Lord Laming's review of child protection following Baby P, across the local children's workforce.**
- **A multi-agency safeguarding dataset has been established to enable review and monitoring of key performance indicators by the MSCB.**
- **MSCB training in 'false compliance' by parents, a key area of learning in the Baby P enquiry.**
- **Establishment of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to ensure timely, effective and appropriate response to all referrals.**
- **Ongoing audit and management oversight of child in need and child protection practices.**
- **Revised membership of the MSCB to include a councillor and lay members.**

In terms of the learning from other SCRs quoted by my colleague in his question, Merton has been carefully following the outcomes of the Sutton and Coventry SCRs and the issues arising (nb Coventry will not publish their SCR until 17th September. On publication, the SCR will be reviewed by the MSCB which will consider areas where safeguarding practice in Merton may need to develop and improve.)

Colleagues will understand that no two cases of harm to children are exactly the same. However, themes from these SCRs include the need to ensure that multi-agency arrangements are in place to support the earliest possible identification of and intervention with children who may be at risk; that all schools understand their roles in safeguarding children and regularly evidence effective safeguarding practice to their local LSCBs; and that staff in direct contact with children at risk receive the highest quality supervision by managers who have received specific training in supervising such work. In Merton, actions have already been undertaken to address these themes.

Merton's relatively recent SCR of Tia Sharp is currently being reviewed and actioned by the MSCB. Although the review found that this child's death could not have been foreseen by any agency, some key learning points have been identified including the need for schools and children's services practitioners to be more alert to patterns of school attendance and that the impact of parental substance misuse within familiesneeds to be more carefully assessed in terms of potential harm to children.

5. From Councillor Simon Withey to the Cabinet Member for Education
Following the publication of last month's GCSE results, can the Cabinet Member provide full E-Bacc results for each secondary school in Merton for both this year and last year?

Reply:

The data that the borough collects from schools at this stage is provisional and shared only on a confidential basis. The full results will be in the public domain when they are published in the national performance tables for schools and colleges in late January 2014.

However, I am pleased to be able to report that on the provisional data collected so far, every school in Merton has improved its performance in terms of E-Bacc results. This is, in part, due to the overall improvement in standards, demonstrated by the 5% improvement in the percentage of students securing 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and mathematics, and partly as a result of schools changing their curriculum to reflect the new measure of GCSE performance.

Overall Merton E-Bacc performance improved from 14% of students securing the E-Bacc in 2012 to 30% in 2013.

6. From Councillor Linda Scott to the Cabinet Member for Health and Older People

Are any of our home care workers employed on zero-hours contracts, either directly or through third-party suppliers?

Reply

There are several different definitions of zero hours contracts. On the narrow definition that includes the type of contract that has caused concern in the media over recent months, Merton does not offer any casual contracts that prevent an employee from working elsewhere or that prohibit an employee from turning down casual work if it is offered. On the broader definition that includes all casual employees, Merton does engage some casual workers from time to time, for example when staff are on holiday or when there is peak seasonal service demand to ensure continuous support and care for our clients and customers. In those circumstances we use a pool of people who are prepared to work on an 'as and when' basis to provide cover for typically front-line roles. For example, during the holiday period of August 2013, 21 casual employees were engaged to provide social care services. Agency workers are employed on contracts of employment via Manpower and the Council does not have access to those contracts of employment as these workers are Manpower employees.

7. From Councillor Linda Scott to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

How many households in Merton have been affected by the so-called 'bedroom tax?' How many have been re-housed? How many wish to be re-housed but have been unable to move because of a lack of available properties?

Reply

Currently there are 834 households affected by the bedroom tax; 675 have been deemed to be underoccupying by one bedroom and 159 by two bedrooms. It does not follow that all of these households will seek or indeed be able to find rehousing in the current housing crisis and many will have to make up the shortfall in their housing benefit entitlement themselves. Others will seek alternative solutions which may include an application for discretionary housing benefit, others may be in a position to rent out a room or seek a suitable mutual exchange partner. Officers have not seen an increased request for rehousing from tenants affected by the bedroom tax but are continuing to monitor the situation closely with housing partners and the benefits service.

8. From Councillor Richard Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

How many migrants have been given social housing in Merton in the past decade?

Reply

Records are not kept on the birth origin of applicants for social housing. All applicants for accommodation are required to undergo a test on eligibility. Under the Housing Acts 1996 certain groups of persons are excluded from receiving assistance either as homeless or from receiving an allocation of a social housing tenancy if they are subject to immigration control. The term subject to immigration control means anyone who requires a visa to come to the UK. It mainly applies to non European Economic Nationals, but EEA nationals who are not exercising a right to reside in the UK are also subject to immigration control (although they are legally present in the UK.)

9. From Councillor Richard Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

How much of a problem is the phenomenon known as ‘beds in sheds’ in Merton? Do we have any estimates as to how many people might be housed in this way in the borough? Has Merton applied for government money offered to help locate and tackle rogue landlords who exploit vulnerable tenants?

Reply

Currently this is not a major problem for Merton. The Environmental Health (Housing Team) have only been involved in a small number of cases, 3 in 2012/13 and 3 to date in 2013/14. The DCLG, the Home Office and the UK Border Agency have provided funding to 4 boroughs with the worst problems being Ealing, Hillingdon, Newham and Redbridge.

Officers are continuing to monitor the situation and should the evidence support funding opportunities this will be considered

10. From Councillor Suzanne Evans to the Cabinet Member for Education

The Cabinet Member recently promised a 'review' of the teaching of crystal healing in our adult education colleges following an advertisement placed on the Council Website for someone to teach the same. However, all that seems to have happened is that the wording of the advert has been changed. Is crystal healing to be taught at Adult Education colleges in the borough or not? A 'yes' or 'no' answer will suffice.

REPLY

No

11. From Councillor Maurice Groves to the Cabinet Member for Education

Would the Cabinet Member join me in paying tribute to the great work being carried out to train apprentices in Mitcham by one of the largest employers in Merton, the HSS Group? Does he agree that it is initiatives like this that will propel our economy forward after the mismanagement of the national economy in the first decade of this century, and that they should be recognised?

Reply

It is agreed that apprenticeships provide an excellent vocational foundation for young people seeking a new career pathway. The opportunity to gain employment is invaluable and I welcome the work of the HSS group in taking on and training apprenticeships. But unlike Cllr Groves, I will not be using our young people's future to make cheap and inaccurate political points.

12. From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

What was the average rent in the homes that were transferred to Merton Priory Homes at the time of the transfer and what is it today?

The average rent for general needs properties at the time of transfer was *£78.80*. [general needs properties only, exclusive of service charges]. This is broken down by bedroom size in the table below.

	Social
1 BED	£66.00
2 BED	£79.45
3 BED	£90.16
4 BED	£100.24
5 BED	£107.18

The current average rent is *£106.15* [general needs properties only [social and affordable rents], exclusive of service charges]. This is broken down by bedroom size in the table below.

	Social	Affordable
1 BED	£ 89.11	£ 105.30
2 BED	£105.17	£133.73
3 BED	£117.87	£172.36
4 BED	£129.60	£216.69
5 BED	£138.05	--

13. From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture
How many of the homes transferred to Merton Priory Homes are on social versus affordable rent, and what is the average level of these broken down by type of property?

Reply

There are currently *298* affordable rent properties and *5702* social rent properties [general needs only, voids excluded].

	SOCIAL	AFFORDABLE
1 BED	1626	180
2 BED	1993	77
3 BED	1986	39
4 BED	96	1
5 BED	1	0
TOTAL	5702	297

14. From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture
For each of High Path, Eastfields and Ravensbury estates, what is the current density [(habitable rooms per hectare) and (habitable dwellings per hectare)] versus the proposed density post regeneration?

Reply

The council does not hold this information as no specific proposals have yet been put forward for consultation by MPH. The Cllr should approach MPH once they have developed their regeneration proposals.

15. From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture
For each of High Path, Eastfields and Ravensbury estates, what is the current average size of dwelling (in square metres) versus the proposed average size post regeneration?

Reply

The council does not hold this information as no specific proposals have yet been put forward for consultation by MPH. The Cllr should approach MPH once they have developed their regeneration proposals.

16. From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture
What has Merton Priory Homes' revenue been each year since the housing stock transfer? Please provide details for each year of:

- revenue from rent of homes
- revenue from service charges
- revenue from rent of other properties e.g. garages
- other revenue

Reply

MPH Revenue Breakdown - 2010/11 to 2012/13

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Rental Income	**27,307,171.10**	**29,367,534.96**	**31,417,776.47**
Rental Income Garages	**722,219.90**	**743,172.75**	**778,425.37**
Service Charge Income	**5,544,564.90**	**5,898,198.67**	**5,674,401.85**
Other Income	**228,932.85**	**230,653.04**	**225,912.95**
	33,802,888.75	**36,239,559.42**	**38,096,516.64**

17. From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

What do the terms of stock transfer establish for regeneration activities?

Reply

The main purpose of the Stock Transfer Agreement is to give effect to the transfer of the councils housing stock, related assets and to develop and deliver joint housing objectives and wider regeneration objectives in Merton with due regard to the councils housing and regeneration strategies. Schedule 16 - Development and Disposals Clawback and Schedule 23 – Partnership Agreement, of the stock transfer agreement sets a framework for partnership working with the Council, MPH and Circle Anglia on future regeneration and neighbourhood renewal projects.

18. From Councillor Richard Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Finance

How much money have bailiffs been charged to recover on behalf of Merton Council so far this municipal year? How much have they actually recovered and what have their fees been to both Council and debtor? Is the Cabinet Member confident that all bailiffs hired by the London Borough of Merton are acting within the law?

Reply

The majority of cases are passed to the in-house bailiff team. Since 1st April 2013 the in-house bailiff team have been passed 7,919 cases totalling approximately £4.8m. In addition to this a further 684 council tax and business rates cases have been passed to two private bailiff companies who collect debts where the debtor no longer lives in Merton or the surrounding area.

We monitor performance relating to bailiff cases paid in full against returned files and in recent years we have exceeded 50% paid in full. Across London we have undertaken some benchmarking and this indicates our in-house bailiff team outperforms private bailiff companies, which collect between 15% and 30%.

Since 1st April 2013 the in-house bailiff team have collected £913k debt and £226k fees, which are charged to the debtor.

The two private bailiff companies have collected £50,000 in debt since 1st April 2013. It should be noted that some of the debt collected since the 1st April 2013 will relate to cases passed to the in-house bailiff team and private companies prior to that date. The Council are not charged any fees by the bailiff companies.

I am satisfied that all bailiffs used by the Council act within the law. All bailiffs have to re-apply to the County Court every two years for their bailiff certificate which allows them to act as a bailiff. The in-house bailiffs are monitored closely to ensure they adhere to our code of conduct, any complaints against them are investigated and reviewed and the bailiff manager often shadows them while collecting debts to ensure they are acting within the law and our procedures.

19. From Councillor Rod Scott to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Implementation

How many council staff are currently off work on fully pay for a period of 3 months or more?

Reply

As at the end of August 2013 there were a total of 13 employees on full sick pay who had been off work for more than three months.

20. From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Following recent coverage in the press, there seems to be confusion over the extent of the council's use of zero hour contracts.

Can he clarify how many zero hour contracts Merton has had in place in each of the last 3 years? How many staff members are currently on zero hour contracts? How much has been paid to Merton Council staff under zero-hour contracts in each of the last 3 years?

Reply

There are several different definitions of zero hours contracts. On the narrow definition that includes the type of contract that has caused concern in the media over recent months, Merton does not offer any casual contracts that prevent an employee from working elsewhere or that prohibit an employee from turning down casual work if it is offered. On the broader definition that includes all casual employees, the number of casual employees is highly variable and seasonal, as you would expect given the nature of the work. We estimate the average number of staff working on a casual basis is between 300-350 per annum. 324 staff have been paid a total of £359k (before tax and national insurance or other deductions) so far this financial year for work on a casual basis. However, some of these will be sessional workers who may be engaged on a contracted hours/session basis, but for whom these hours are not recorded on the HR/payroll system and are instead kept at local management level. The amount paid over the previous two years would have to be extracted from the legacy HR and payroll system, and cannot be obtained in time, but again no casual staff were employed on the narrow definition described above.

21. From Councillor Ray Tindle to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities

On 22nd May 2013, Drummer Private Lee Rigby was murdered on the streets of Woolwich by two young men.

It has been suggested that this was a terrorist act against British serving forces; it could have so easily been outside the Territorial Army Barracks here in Lower Morden.

The two men charged with his murder waited at the scene of the crime and took the opportunity to speak to the onlookers and national press about "an

eye for an eye, blood on the streets". They appeared to want their horrendous crime to fuel segregation and conflict between Christian and Muslim communities. This was subsequently followed up by mob of right wing extremists throwing stones at the local police station that evening and sometime later an arson attack on a mosque. Thankfully, since these terrible incidents, little else appears to have occurred.

Can the Cabinet Member please outline what the council is doing on an ongoing basis to maintain good relations between all of our diverse community?

Reply

Merton Council is proud of our local Armed Forces. On 10 September 2013 the Council signed an Armed Forces Community Covenant with representatives from all branches of the Armed Forces and veteran support organisations. The Covenant sets out the support that the council and the wider Merton Partnership will provide for Armed Forces personnel and veterans living in the borough. The Covenant also gives the Armed Forces an opportunity to engage with the wider community and an example of this is the Stonecot Territorial Army's participation in the Mitcham Carnival.

Planning is also well underway on Merton's commemorations for the centenary of World War One with activities planned that will provide an opportunity to bring together all communities to remember the sacrifices made.

The annual survey of residents indicates that people in Merton feel that it is a good place to live and that different communities and cultures get along with each other extremely well.

The Merton Partnership Community Tension Monitoring group meets regularly to assess potential community tensions in the borough and where necessary puts actions in place to mitigate any issues identified. The group brings together partners such as the Police, Council and the main Registered Providers in the borough.

The Council also facilitates the Inter Faith Forum, LGBT Forum and Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minorities. These forums also give the wider community an opportunity to inform policy and practice and feed into the community tension monitoring process.

The Council's Community Cohesion Strategy sets out a number of ways that the council seeks to foster good relations across the borough's diverse communities. The Council supports a number of community events including the Celebrating Age Festival, Armed Forces Day, Holocaust Memorial Day, Black History Month, and LGBT History Month. These events are an opportunity for people of different back grounds to come together and promote tolerance and understanding.

22. From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Plymouth Council has banned payday loan websites from advertising on billboards and bus shelters. How many payday loan companies has Merton council allowed to advertise on its property in each of the last 3 years?

Reply

The council currently has an agreement with an outdoor media company for one billboard site and a separate agreement with another outdoor media company for advertising on the boroughs bus shelters.

While the agreement for the billboard includes a clause prohibiting tobacco companies to advertise, it is not known whether payday loans have placed advertising on the billboard over the timeframe you've asked for. Following recent concerns about payday loans and their questionable value in helping people in real financial need, we are seeking the agreement of the outdoor companies who we have agreements with, not to place any advertising of this genre on land owned by the council.

23. From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities

Across the whole country in 2012 the equivalent of 87 trials each day were delayed. How many trials have been delayed or cancelled at Wimbledon Magistrates Court in each of the last 3 years?

Reply

Responsibility for Wimbledon Magistrates Court lies with the Ministry of Justice.

24. From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Finance

How much has Merton spent on employment tribunals in each of the last 6 years? How many cases in each of those years does this expenditure relate to?

Reply

The following information shows the number of Employment Tribunal claims recorded by the calendar year in which the Claim was issued.

The figures for the payments relate to the cases commenced in any particular year, not to the year in which the payments were actually made. The figures are comprised of awards of compensation, sums paid in settlement and any payments made in respect of costs.

Year of Claim	Number of Claims	Total cost - £
2007	12	12,781.72
2008	11	31,060.00
2009	12	26,100.00
2010	11	500.00
2011*	8	6,183.00
2012	8	18,000.00
2013 to date	8	19,192.00

*** The 2011 figures do not included the "CfBT Connexions" class action against Merton Council and 5 other London Boroughs. In that action there were 10 claims against Merton Council all of which were won with no compensation or costs ordered and no settlements paid.**

25. By Cllr Iain Dysart to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Given the Council's welcome, albeit cynically timed, conversion to the adoption of the London Living Wage, can he confirm that all in-house and agency staff are now in receipt of this?

Reply

All in-house employees eligible for the London Living Wage were paid it via the August 2013 payroll. Agency staff are entitled to parity rates and are duly paid the parity rate through the Council's current agency provider, Manpower. It is disappointing – and ironic – that he regards the introduction of the London Living Wage as cynical, but I can assure him I have benchmarked Merton's approach to that of other Councils, and he may be interested to learn that no Lib Dem Council administration has introduced the London Living Wage, and it has not been introduced by Central Government, of which the Lib Dems have full membership, either. For a member of a party that has not introduced the London Living Wage to accuse a Council that has introduced it of cynicism is unfortunate, and might be described as cynical. However, I am prepared to help him by writing jointly with him to the Leaders of the Lib Dem authorities concerned urging them to introduce the London Living Wage, and I will ensure their replies are published in future Council papers.

26. From Councillor Suzanne Evans to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration

Please supply me with a full and detailed breakdown of how all fines raised from moving traffic offences, parking, bus lane and other traffic offences have been spent.

Reply

The revenue generated from the issue of PCN's of all types in the year 2012 2013 was £4,883,347.

These monies are used to cover the cost of providing this service which are:

Enforcement Costs £1,482,501(salaries, transport and accommodation costs)
Back Office Costs £419,070 salaries
Ad Hoc costs £205,060 for services from the following: DVLA, IT licenses, London Councils, Traffic Enforcement Centre, Parking and Traffic Appeals Service and Court and Tribunal service.
The Council uses the remaining surplus to contribute to the costs of concessionary fares [Freedom Pass] . The Council cost of Concessionary fares currently stands at £8.8million per annum

27. From Councillor Rod Scott to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration

What has been the total cost since their introduction in 2011 of the electronic vehicle charging points we have in Merton (including instillation costs)? How many times have they been used?

Reply

The council does not have any publicly available electric vehicle charge points at the present time, but will be exploring opportunities over the coming year. There are a number of charging points in the new residential developments at Rowan Park and Brenley installed by the developer.

28. From Councillor Chris Edge to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration

How much revenue has been generated from the Hartfield Lane bus lane since it was introduced in 2011. What was the council's initial expected yearly income generation on this site?

Reply

Revenue: £636,333.65
Initial expected yearly income: 220K

29. From Councillor Suzanne Evans to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration

How many penalty charge notices have been given to motorists based on evidence gathered from CCTV cameras alone (excluding mobile CCTV vans)? How much revenue does this equate to for the council?

Reply

The vast majority of this relates to bus lane PCNs, but 3 moving traffic locations are also enforced with fixed cameras.

	PCNs	Revenue
2012/13	25,773	£1,668,481.53
2013/14 (to date)	8,816	£433,507.65

30. From Councillor Suzanne Evans to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration

What percentage of parking fines issued within the borough were challenged by their owners? How many were overturned on appeal?

Reply

In 2012/13 we issued 85,715 PCNs of which 16,565 were challenged (19%).

3,282 of the PCNs that were challenged were cancelled which represents 3.8% of the total PCN's issued.

31. From Councillor Suzanne Evans to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that there are no plans to reduce the numbers of or funding for lollipop men and women who safeguard our children on their way to and from school in the borough?

Reply

The Council has no plans to reduce the number of school crossing patrols in the borough.

32. From Councillor Chris Edge to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

Can the Cabinet Member assure me that restaurants in the borough are able to serve rare meat to diners on request without risking the wrath of environmental health inspectors and that this will remain the case regardless of guidance from the Food Standards Agency?

Reply

It is fine for whole cuts of red meat such as joints of beef/lamb and steaks to be served rare as long as the outer surface is thoroughly seared to destroy potential surface contamination such as E.coli 0157. As long as nothing is done to introduce contamination into the

inner sections of the meat e.g. stuffing with pate etc then the food should be safe to eat. Poultry and pork must still be thoroughly cooked all the way through due to potential harmful pathogens being present within the actual meat itself rather than the surface contamination experienced with beef.

With minced meat products such as burgers, sausages, kebabs there is potential for contamination with E.coli bacteria throughout the whole product and so thorough cooking is essential to guarantee a safe product. The FSA advice to consumers is still 'Always make sure you cook chicken, pork, burgers, sausages and kebabs until they're steaming hot all the way through. None of the meat should still be pink and any juices should run clear'. For example, for the safe cooking of burgers, officers advise that they should remain at 70°C for 2 minutes or equivalent. Use of other time/temperature combinations will not be ruled out where businesses are in a position to consistently demonstrate that they can ensure that the final product is safe, and that the process is under effective control through a risk assessment approach. Thus officers would require any business wanting to serve undercooked minced meat products or undercooked poultry items to justify it within their 'Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point' system.

33. From Councillor Suzanne Evans to the Cabinet Member for Health and Older People

Will Merton follow the example set by Enfield Council and bring in a by-law enabling fines to be levied against anyone caught spitting in the street without reasonable excuse?

Reply

Spitting in the street is a disgusting practice and for some local residents it is a real nuisance. We have taken advice from experts on the public health implications of spitting and have been informed that although it is an objectionable act there is little or no health risk to the wider public. However, we still wish to discourage such an activity and are aware of the moves taken by Enfield Council in their attempt to tackle this issue. It is early days for Enfield and we will be watching developments and their impact in order to assess the most, practical, effective and affordable way of dealing with this matter.

34. From Councillor Rod Scott to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration

In what way does the Council support 'Love Wimbledon,' financially or otherwise, and do Council officers and/or Cabinet members consult Love Wimbledon on their plans to regenerate the area it covers?

Reply

Prior to the BID ballot the Council supported the LoveWimbledon BID proposal and timetable proposed. The Council provided financial support by incurring the cost of £12,500 to purchase the one-off software to carry out the collection of the BID levy.

There are six Council properties within the BID boundary that are eligible to pay the annual BID levy (which is a % of their business rates) and so the council pays £3,473.

Following a successful ballot, the Head of Sustainable Communities sits on the LoveWimbledon board and will action any requests by the BID for Council intervention.

The refreshed Economic Development Strategy (2012) also states that the Council will actively support proposals for any future BID's.

LoveWimbledon are always included in any consultation to regenerate Wimbledon.

35. From Councillor Richard Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration

Can the Cabinet Member please outline his position on plans to build an incinerator in Beddington Lane on the borders of Sutton, Merton and Croydon?

Reply

As chair and vice chair of the South London Partnership at different times during the contracting process (I am still a Merton representative on the Partnership), I have had a leadership role in the proposal to build an energy recovery facility (ERF) at the site in Beddington Lane. The continued use of landfill at Beddington Lane is not environmentally sustainable, giving rise to the leeching of pollutants into local water courses and the continuing release into the atmosphere of a very powerful climate change gas (methane) as well as the continuing degradation of the landfill site. The Partnership took a technology neutral stance during the contracting process, with the exception that we would not accept a traditional incinerator. Any technology adopted had to meet stringent conditions of pollution control and use the most up to date technology. We pursued an exacting contracting process the find the best technology and contractor. In the event the only market ready technology capable of replacing landfill was an energy from waste facility. The contract that we have agreed has the best outcomes for the environment that can be achieved and offers a safe modern facility, that is a vast improvement on the situation to date.

This ERF facility once complete, will deliver substantial carbon savings. England's National Waste Strategy and our own South London Waste Partnership's Joint Waste Strategy both support the adherence to the

waste hierarchy. This means landfill should only be regarded as the last resort for our waste.

Energy recovery is cleaner and more environmentally sustainable so it should be used in preference to landfill wherever possible. With the ever increasing cost of landfill, the use of the facility through diversion from landfill, will see a saving in landfill tax across the partnership of £16m in 2014 and over £200 million over the life of the contract.

A further benefit to be gained from the ERF at Beddington Lane will be the use of waste material as an energy source. The facility will also provide enough electricity to power the equivalent of around 45,000 homes.

36. From Councillor Suzanne Evans to the Leader of the Council

Can the Leader please explain the council's relationship with Tamworth Recreation Grounds and Allotments in Mitcham, a registered charity of which Merton Council is listed as the sole trustee? Who is in charge of making decisions in relation to the charity's wellbeing and development of the site and where can the minutes of such decisions and meetings be found?

Reply

The London Borough of Merton is the sole trustee of the Tamworth Recreation Ground and Allotments (registered with Charity Number 270408). There are no other trustees and there is no management board of trustees and therefore no formal meetings or minutes. The Environment and Regeneration Department is responsible for the on-going management of Tamworth Recreation Ground. Day to day management is delegated to officers of the council and responsibility for decision making and oversight rests with the Councillors and is subject to Charity Commission approval where appropriate.

37. From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

What was the basis for removal of the Raleigh Gardens car park from the Sites and Policies Plan but retention of the P4 car park?

Reply

It should be noted that it was the Cabinet of which Cllr Neil Mills was a member that put the P4 site on the disposals list. In the event that was undoubtedly the correct decision. The land at P4 was bought by the Council to be built on and the car park was only ever a temporary use and not a visually attractive one at that.

At their meeting of 26 June 2013, Merton's Borough Plan Advisory Committee voted to remove Raleigh Gardens car park from Merton's Sites and Policies Plan. The Committee did not decide to remove the P4

car park. The recent parking survey demonstrated significant surplus places in Wimbledon car parks at even the busiest times. In July 2013, Cabinet and council endorsed the Borough Plan Advisory Committee's recommendations.

38. From Councillor Henry Nelless to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Please can the Cabinet Member tell me how many requests received from residents for council-owned trees to be pruned back have been refused in each of the last 3 years?

Reply

The council does not keep records of requests for tree pruning on the public highway that have been declined. However the Council has developed a cyclical pruning / pollarding regime which is undertaken annually, biennially and triennially based on condition inspections and tree species. Ad-hoc requests for tree pruning are inspected and assessed by Council officers and residents advised of any proposed actions.

39. From Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

Can the Cabinet Member explain why the paddling pool at Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields in West Barnes was closed last month on one of the hottest days of the year? Have there been any other closures throughout the summer period at this paddling pool, or at others across the borough?

Reply

The fact that the paddling pool at Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields was not opened on one of the hottest days during the summer was an unfortunate coincidence. This was due to the seasonal worker being absent due to illness and the agency being unable to meet our demands for alternate staff in the available time.

There were no other pool closures at this venue during the 6 week paddling pool season other than for reasons of inclement weather. The total paddling pool performance out-turn data for the summer of 2013 is summarised in the table below.

On one occasion, at Wimbledon Park, the splash pool was not opened due to a technical problem that adversely affected the water quality. On four other occasions a pool was not opened due to the absence of trained staff cover*.
(* Our paddling pool operatives are short-term seasonal workers supplied through a local employment agency).

Paddling pool location	Maximum number of operational days	Actual number of operational days	Days lost due to adverse weather	Days lost due to personnel or technical issues	% of maximum operational days excluding adverse weather
Wimbledon Park	100	96	3	1	99%
Colliers Wood Rec.	37	33	3	1	97%
Joseph Hood Rec	37	34	3	0	100%
King George's PF	37	33	3	1	97%
Morden Park	37	34	3	0	100%
Rowan Rec	37	33	3	1	97%
Sir Joseph Hood MPF	37	33	3	1	97%
Tamworth Rec	37	33	3	0	100%
Total	359	329	24	5	98.5%

40. From Councillor David Williams to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Does the Cabinet Member share with me a specific concern relating to the sorry history of planning applications in respect of 21 Malcolm Road, SW19 where, ultimately, only the house frontage that matched its two neighbouring properties in a conservation area remained and that frontage has been allowed to collapse? Will he confirm why the Council will not take enforcement action?

Does the Cabinet Member also share my more general concern that developers see Merton as a 'soft touch' when it comes to planning enforcement and that it is time to take affirmative action against developers who flout regulatory rulings with careless disregard for the consequences of their action (or inaction) to preserve the integrity of the planning process, especially in Conservation Areas?

Reply

I am advised that it is clear that the first floor of the front façade was demolished without permission. Planning enforcement officers immediately sought to gather evidence on the reason for this and found no evidence to dispute the owner's assertion that there was a danger to public safety. Legal advice was taken within 5 days of the demolition as part of these enquiries and this confirmed the risk of an unsuccessful prosecution faced with this evidence.

I am also advised that given that this is in effect a technical offence and the property can be replaced [subject to a further planning application] with a similar façade replicating that previously existing, any court would also take this into consideration in reaching a decision on the appropriateness of enforcement.

Further, I am advised that we await a fresh application from the owner and will look to ensure that this is appropriate given the Conservation Area setting.

41. From Councillor Logie Lohendran to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

The GLA is providing a large amount of funding to improve a number of high streets in Merton. At present the high street in Cannon Hill ward is looking very tired and in need of enhancement. Can the Cabinet Member let me know if there are any funds available to improve this high street? If not, will the council be bidding for any funding in the near future?

Reply

It is not clear from the question what High Street the Councillor is referring to as there are no designated High Streets in Cannon Hill Ward. There are some parades along Martin Way, parts of Bushey Road and Cannon Hill Common. The GLA provided opportunities to bid for Outer London funding and the Council were successful with their bid for Mitcham town centre. The Mayor also agreed to support Colliers Wood Town Centre with funding through the Mayor's Regeneration Fund. The GLA have not announced any future bid opportunities and should this become available, any bids submitted to the GLA will need to meet the criteria set out by the GLA.

The council does have it's own business support services which local businesses can apply for support regardless of the location. Business services include loan funds and shop front improvement grants.

42. From Councillor David Dean to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

What tonnage of waste will the Beddington Lane incinerator be able to process per annum? What is the municipal tonnage that the South London Waste Partnership will send to the incinerator for processing per annum? What is the rest of the capacity for and how will it be used?

Reply

The energy from waste facility (ERF) facility once completed and fully operational, would have the capacity to process up to 275,000 tonnes of waste per year. It may have increased capacity but this is dependent on the calorific value of the input waste, the higher the calorific value the less capacity available.

Whilst there is no agreed level quota of waste that could be sent to the Energy Recovery Facility, (ERF), at Beddington Lane, current estimates based on analysis, indicates that potentially up to 200,000 tonnes across the partnership, could be sent to the facility, by 2014. The Partnership has negotiated a declining minimum tonnage guarantee, which is an innovative approach to ensure the partner boroughs remain committed to increasing recycling.

The ERF has been planned to have capacity over and above the requirement of the partnership. The facility remains a commercial operation and therefore, any spare capacity at the site is likely to be used by others such as commercial waste operators.

43. From Councillor David Dean to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

What percentage of waste that will be burnt by the Beddington Lane incinerator will be recyclable?

Reply

The Council as part of the South London Waste Partnership aims to maximise recycling. Together we review recyclate markets continuously with a view to extending the range of materials that can be accepted as part of its kerbside collection schemes. That is why we have recently begun the recycling of aluminium foil and mixed plastics including e.g yoghurt pots. There is no policy to send recyclate to the proposed ERF when it becomes operational. Inevitably, some of the waste that will be sent to the facility will contain recyclable materials, as there is no collection regime that captures 100% of recyclate from the residual waste stream, and Merton does not yet collect all types of materials that could technically be recycled.

44. From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities

I see that Enfield is proposing to bring in a by-law to ban spitting on the streets. Is this something that Merton is considering?

Reply

Spitting in the street is a disgusting practice and for some local residents it is a real nuisance. We have taken advice from experts on the public health implications of spitting and have been informed that although it is an objectionable act there is little or no health risk to the wider public. However, we still wish to discourage such an activity and are aware of the moves taken by Enfield Council in their attempt to tackle this issue. It is early days for Enfield and we will be watching developments and their impact in order to assess the most, practical, effective and affordable way of dealing with this matter.

45. From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Do ice cream vans obtain licences from Merton Council? Is there a restriction as to how long they can play tunes?

Reply

Under the London Local Authorities Act 1990 (as amended) ice cream vans are regarded as itinerant traders. The legislation was written in such a way as to preserve the original ice cream rounds conducted in residential areas. Ice cream traders are legally allowed 15 minutes of stationary trading after which they must relocate. They are not allowed to return to the same location on the same day but may return the next. If they remain stationary for more than 15 minutes they are deemed to be 'street traders' and fall under the above regulations and can be restricted in the playing of music as part of their licence conditions.

Guidance issued under the Act makes clear that:

Ice cream operators should only sound chimes:

- **For less than 4 seconds at a time**
- **No more than once every 3 mins**
- **Approaching a selling point**
-

Chimes should not be used:

- **When the vehicle is stationary**
- **When in sight of another ice-cream van which is trading**
- **Within 50m of schools (during school hours),hospitals, and places**
- **of worship (on Sundays and any other recognised days of worship).**
- **More often than once every 2 hours in the same street**
- **Louder than 80 db(a) at 7.5m**
- **As loudly in quiet areas or narrow streets as elsewhere**

46. From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Can the Cabinet Member clarify the scheme of 3 June 2008 with relation to Tamworth Recreation Ground and Allotments? Are all Councillors deemed to be Trustees of this registered charity and if so, what are our responsibilities?

Reply

The scheme of 3 June 2008 was granted by the Charity Commission to extend the objects of the 1923 Indenture that gifted the land to the Council. The 1923 Indenture allowed certain areas of the land to be put to certain uses. The Council wished to use part of the land for educational purposes, something that the 1923 Indenture did not allow, hence the scheme.

The London Borough of Merton is the sole trustee of the Tamworth Recreation Ground and Allotments (registered with Charity Number 270408). There are no other trustees and there is no management board of trustees.

The responsibilities of Members are as set out in the Council constitution and in relation to the Trust specifically will be clarified if and when any decisions of the Council are required and will be set out in the reports set before Members.

47. From Councillor Maurice Groves to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Can the Cabinet Member please let me know why the Morden Town Centre Business Forum has been dropped?

Reply

The breakfast forums were an opportunity for businesses to meet with the Council to be provided with updates on regeneration activity. In the first part of 2013 there was little in the way of additional detail that could be presented as the Council was awaiting TfL updates. Morden Planning Brief for a major location in the town centre was being generated and this will go out to consultation on 30th September to 8th November 2013. Following consultation it may be felt more appropriate to re-introduce the business forums.

48. From Councillor Maurice Groves to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Please can I have an update on the regeneration of Morden Town Centre?

Reply

The Council has been working with TfL's Property and Planning teams to determine viable redevelopment options for the Morden Station site, which was agreed in the moreMorden consultations as the key site to kickstart regeneration of Morden town centre.

The Morden Station site has also undergone four rounds of consultation to designate a mix of town centre uses as part of Merton's Sites and Policies DPD.

The Council have concluded development viability analysis of potential development scenarios for the site, which has informed the content of a draft planning brief. The development capacity and viability work was undertaken by consultants GVA and Landholt+Brown earlier this year.

Local ward members were invited to a briefing on these findings on 10th July 2013.

The draft planning brief for Morden Station was approved for public consultation by the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration on 2nd September 2013.

A six week consultation on the planning brief will run 30th September - 8th November 2013.

Details will be available online at www.merton.gov.uk/Morden and publicised through the usual media channels.

49. From Councillor Maurice Groves to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

When can residents Lavender Fields and Colliers Wood wards finally expect to see the long awaited extension of the S1 bus service to their areas? Transport for London is clearly all ready to go on this so why isn't he?

Reply

TfL only formally approved the S1 route changes on 31st July. The council is currently progressing the design and public consultation for the supporting traffic management and bus facilities as a priority. Subject to continued support it will seek to put measures in place as soon as possible in the New Year.

50. From Councillor David Dean to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

What part of Merton is the council considering as a mini-Holland cycling project? How much is the Conservative Mayor offering?

Reply

Merton has submitted a well worked up expression of interest that has been shortlisted as one of TfL's preferred bidders for mini-Holland funding and will be developing these preliminary ideas into a more detail proposal for submission at the end of November. The bid will be subject to engagement and consultation over the coming months.This further work will determine what precisely will be proposed for different parts of the Borough. The Expression of Interest indicates that improvements will take place across the Borough with a particular focus on Wimbledon as our main town centre and on Colliers Wood because of its demographics. I am acutely conscious that less cycling takes place in the east of the borough and one aim of the bid will be to increase cycling amongst the 'hard to cycle' parts of the community such as older people, women, children and members of ethnic communities. The bid will seek to address this issue. At this stage the council has been granted development funding: if successful, funding for a significant programme of work would be available from the Mayor's overall fund of £100million.

51. From Councillor David Dean to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Transport is one of the vital drivers of a better life for people. One of the weaknesses of much of Mitcham is transport access with a lack of tubes, trains and trams. Given the pressing need to connect Pollards Hill with

Mitcham Eastfields, the Fair Green and Morden tube, would it be better to link the proposed new tram from Sutton-Morden-Mitcham-Pollards Hill (with transfer at Morden Hall Road) than to miss the opportunity for a decent transport system in one of the most deprived parts of the borough?

Reply

TfL explored a number of route options for the tram in Merton, including an option via Mitcham. The resulting study showed that the Sutton to Wimbledon via Morden route option demonstrated the best business case overall and was consequently short listed for more detailed feasibility work. The council is aware of the connectivity shortcoming in the Mitcham and Pollards Hill area and will take every opportunity to promote improved connections as opportunities arise.

52. From Councillor Janice Howard to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

How much money in total has the Hartfield Road Bus Lane brought in for the council since this administration decided to reinstate it?

Reply

Revenue : £636,333.65

53. From Councillor Janice Howard to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Can the Cabinet Member tell me whether the additional road and transport investment being ploughed into Abbey has more to do with his own electoral fortunes than it does the wishes of the residents?

Reply

This administration focuses resources on areas of opportunity and/or need. We have carried out extensive works in Raynes Park and Wimbledon town centres. We are also planning very large scale works in Colliers Wood and Mitcham. We consult extensively with local residents before all major schemes. If Councillor Howard does not feel investment is needed in South Wimbledon then she should make this clear.

54. From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Did the extreme heat in July cause any issues to Merton's roads or tennis courts as has happened in other places?

Reply

There have been no reports of additional carriageway defects as a result of the recent hot weather, nor have there been any reported problems or issues at our tennis courts.

55. From Councillor Miles Windsor to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Why has the council only held one Public Transport Liaison Committee meeting since December 2011? Does this reflect the administration's attitude towards transport in Merton?

Reply

The council seeks to hold one public session of the PTLC annually. Where possible these meetings are timed to follow with important public transport announcements to encourage public interest which is generally very poor. The Council will continue to hold the meeting.

56. From Councillor Margaret Brierly to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Implementation

What was the total number of Penalty Charge Notices issued by Merton in a) 2010-11, b) 2011-12 and c) 2012-13?

Reply

a) 2010-11 - 58,405
b) 2011-12 - 67,788
c) 2012-13 - 85,715

57. From Councillor Maurice Groves to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

I am advised by residents in Mitcham town centre that 82% of the town centre businesses do not want the changed Fair Green bus lane. With considerable funds already being allocated by the Mayor of London to improve the Tramlink connections, including 4 new trams, a 50% increase in capacity with 12 trams per hour instead of 8 and 800m of twin tracking between Mitcham Junction flyover and Beddington Lane, does he not think the money the council is proposing to use for the bus lane would be better spent on street cleaning in the town centre?

Reply

In fact there have been three consultations in the last 10 years related to the reintroduction of the bus lane with no indication of this level of opposition. Those who have allegedly carried out a survey have not seen fit to publish any evidence in relation to it. So at the moment, I am treating it on a par with their other claims. Cllr Stanford, on the other hand has actually collected a petition of 34 businesses in support of the bus street proposal from the closed part of London Road, Majestic Way and shops facing the Fair Green, which has been submitted to to the Council. Most recently, the results from the two recent consultations for Rediscover Mitcham have borne a result in which 70% of the local businesses which responded supported the proposal.

While the increases in tram services are welcome, it is relevant to note that the tram stops in Mitcham are a significant distance from the town centre and that the direct regeneration benefits to the town centre are

not clear. It is further the case that the funding package brought together for the current Mitcham town centre proposal is based on the premise that a significant improvement scheme is to be implemented. While street cleaning is important, it will not in itself attract funding from Transport for London, and nor can Section 106 contributions be spent on regular maintenance in this way. As such it is not the case that the funding for Rediscover Mitcham would otherwise be available if the council decided not to proceed with the scheme.

58. By Cllr Iain Dysart to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration

Whilst accepting that the concept and use of "de-cluttering" may assist in enhancing the appearance of the Borough, will he agree that railings initially installed for the safety of road users including cyclists and pedestrians e.g. at busy junctions such as Grand Drive/Bushey Road in Raynes Park should not be removed?

Reply

In line with National and Regional policies to eliminate street clutter and bring about a transformation in the quality of our streets, the Council has agreed a de-cluttering programme, which includes guardrail removal. We believe that guardrails contribute to visual clutter, are unattractive and can create a caged environment for pedestrians. They can also encourage higher vehicle speeds.

There are many roads, including busy routes to schools, in the borough and across London where no guardrails exist and yet these roads are used safely. While we recognise that the safety of younger children lies with their parents we are also keen to encourage our residents, particularly the young, to use the road safely and responsibly. This is why we have a programme of Road Safety education in schools targeted at educating school aged children to encourage them to become independent road users, have an increased sense of responsibility and be equipped with the necessary skills to use the road safely. After all, each and every single road user has a duty of care to themselves and others and to use the road responsibly.

Many towns throughout the UK have successfully decluttered their streets. In a similar vein, we have removed and continue to remove guardrails from across Merton where it is safe to do so, to enhance the local environment. Removing unnecessary clutter from the streets also improves both pedestrians' and motorists' visibility and can improve the environment for wheelchair users while reducing the maintenance burden on the public purse.

59. By Cllr Iain Dysart to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Regeneration

Following the widespread consternation from residents of roads affected by the Prudential London Bike Ride, please could he explain what consultation

took place (and when) with residents and businesses, and what he believes should be learned for 10th August's 2014 repeat, whether or not he remains in post?

Reply

I am sorry the Cllr Dysart does not support the advent of the Prudential RideLondon-Surrey 100 and London-Surrey Classic through Merton. Bike Ride in MertonRideLondon and TfL were actively engaged in information and advice sharing through various communication modes in the six months prior to the Ride London events coming through Merton. The main activities are set out below and this was supplemented by their website and help lines as well as press releases:

Date	Action	Purpose	Who
Jan 2013	RideLondon met with Leader of the Council, Leader of the Opposition, local ward Councillors and key Cabinet Members	To advise council of proposals, inviting comments and opportunity to raise any issues.	RideLondon
Jan 2013	Merton set up a special web page promoting the event	To ensure local people have key information, contacts to the organisers website to the most up to date information	Merton Council
Feb 2013	RideLondon wrote to targeted venues, clubs affected on route	To advise groups of dates, outline proposals and consult on any issues which need resolving.	RideLondon
April 2013	Leaflet 1 distributed by TfL to all residents and businesses within the area most directly affected by the event	To advise of the proposals for the event	RideLondon
April 2013	Spring issue – My Merton	Article about Ride London coming to Merton to advise all residents about the event	Merton Council
April 2013	Press coverage in local Guardian as a result of press release sent out by local council	To advise all residents about the event	Merton Council

June 2013	**Summer issue – My Merton**	**Article about Ride London coming to Merton to advise all residents about the event**	**Merton Council**
13 Jun 2013	**Raynes Park Community Forum**	**Ride London and Merton Council presented to community forum about proposals and opportunity for residents/businesses to flag any issues**	**RideLondon and Merton Council**
27 Jun 2013	**Raynes Park Business Breakfast**	**Ride London and Merton Council presentation about proposals and opportunity for businesses to flag any issues**	**RideLondon and Merton Council**
July 2013	**Leaflet 2 distributed to all residents and businesses in the areas most directly affected by the event**	**To advise of the proposals and to provide key contacts for any issues which need resolving**	**RideLondon and Merton Council**
12 July 2013	**Drop in Session – Centre Court shopping Centre**	**To advise residents of proposals and consult on any issues which need resolving**	**RideLondon**
July 2013	**Borough wide advertising campaign – 'Cyclists are coming'**	**Informing people that the event is taking place**	**RideLondon**

Learning from the 2013 event we are already talking to community groups and organisations with Ride London as to their concerns and we are revisiting the local area vehicle access points as well as travel arrangements in the West Wimbledon area. At the same time we are talking to local businesses and communities who used this event to have celebrations and business opportunities, to determine whether or not they can grow their activities should Merton be in a place to welcome the event through the borough on 10th August 2014.