

Merton Council
Council meeting
5 February 2014

Addendum

27. Councillors non-priority questions and answers

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21 From Councillor Richard Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities

What is the annual rate of theft from the person across each of the Borough's Town Centres? What is she doing about it?

Reply

Local crime figures are not broken down into town centre areas, they are only available for the borough as a whole or on a ward basis. Unfortunately, as town centres overlap ward boundaries these figures would not be useful in this case.

Safer Merton works closely with the Police and other partners to reduce this area of offending. One strand of this is through crime prevention activity. Personal safety messages and advice regularly goes out to the public via non-police communication channels including the My Merton magazine, Neighbourhood Watch newsletters, and the Safer Merton webpages (<http://www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communitysafety/safermertonpersonalsafety.htm>). Safer Merton staff have also distributed personal security items such as wallet and purse bells at public events and when speaking to particular groups such as the Speak Out Group run by the Learning Disabilities team.

Through discussions and problem solving activity at the monthly Local Multi Agency Problem Solving (LMAPS) meetings, on a variety of community safety topics which has included Theft, the Council has supported both the Autumn and Winter Nights campaigns - major Police led operations working to ensure the safety of Londoners and those working in and visiting the capital. The Council contribution to these campaigns was acknowledged by Acting Borough David Palmer in his weekly message dated 20/01/2014, "The success of our Winter Nights operation in December saw theft person reduced 46.3% compared to the previous year. We hope to keep this trend going....I would like to thank my officers for their fantastic efforts, but it would be remiss of me not to mention that we also receive significant support from the Local Authority and other partners in achieving these great results."

23 From Councillor Richard Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

What enforcement action has been taken against Rapid Ready Mix in Lower Morden since 2011?

What was the result of the Air Monitoring Survey?

Reply

Council officers are continuing to work to systematically address the concerns with the ultimate objective of ensuring a long term solution to the issues that have arisen to date. Set out below is a summary of the main actions taken by Council officers;

Officers have visited the Rapid Ready Mix (RRM) site on a number of occasions and initially found that there may have been a technical breach of condition imposed on the original planning permission granted in August 2013 (ref 11/P2523). A warning letter was immediately sent to RRM stating that any further breach would result in formal enforcement action being instigated. This procedure is in accordance with

recommended enforcement working practices. Further site visits (as detailed below) have not revealed any further breaches that would warrant formal enforcement action. In reaching this conclusion all reports from residents regarding alleged amenity disturbance emanating from RRM have been investigated and residents kept informed regarding the progress of these investigations. Planning officers will continue to carry out unannounced random site inspections of RRM whether or not any further complaints are received from residents. At this time there is insufficient evidence to justify formal prosecution. However, this will be reviewed immediately if any further breach is proven.

The current planning application (ref 13/P2910) to amend conditions regarding hours of operation imposed on planning approval 11/P2523 is still being assessed.

With regard to environmental health issues associated with operations carried out at RRM; the results from the air monitoring in the vicinity of the site are currently being analysed by Kings College. Initial results of the monitoring indicates that there are no problems with Air Quality in and around the site. The Environmental Health Service expects to receive a full report with their findings in the next 3 - 4 weeks.

27 From Councillor Suzanne Evans to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

The Cabinet Member has frequently railed against all manner of privatisation initiatives in the Council Chamber, so why is he planning to privatise our Pest Control Service and make members of staff redundant?

Reply

The premise of the question is wrong. I have not 'frequently railed against all manner privatisation initiatives in the Council Chamber.' Indeed I have no recollection of any such Council initiatives being discussed in terms of controversy during this Council term. In light of the current financial pressures, the Council is currently undertaking a whole scale review of operating models for all business units. It is anticipated that such reviews will lead to significant transformation in how the council arranges for the provision of future services. As part of this transformation programme, we need to consider all options for service provision and alternative delivery models, including market testing. Without examining such options we would not be able to guarantee that the service provided offers council tax payers best value for money.

The Pest Control Service is a non-statutory service that competes with the private sector in the open market. It is currently running at a deficit. It would be remiss of the council not to consider alternative delivery models.

Should the outcome of the process result in a recommendation to outsource the service all current members of staff employed within Pest Control will have certain protection under the TUPE Regulations.

31 From Councillor Suzanne Evans to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

How much does it cost to install each type of road hump?

Reply

It is important to note that the figures provided below are an average cost per feature.

- Speed tables – this depends on a number of factors such as width of the carriage way; size of the speed table; construction material of the speed table; extent of the drainage; extent of footway realignment & kerb work; traffic management etc. Cost could be in excess of £12k
- Road humps – this depends on the width of the carriage way but on average one road hump could cost approximately £1148.12
- Sinusoidal road humps - this depends on the width of the carriage way but on average one road hump could cost approximately £2369
- Cushions – a single cushion cost approximately £271.75 cushions are constructed 2 or 3 abreast

33 From Councillor Iain Dysart to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Given this winter's perpetual flooding, please could he advise how Merton and its partners have worked to assist affected residents and what arrangements are being instigated/considered to mitigate its effects?

Reply

Merton has not experienced the levels of flooding recently witnessed in other parts of the country. However considerable work is being done by the Council and its partners as part of its duties under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to mitigate its effect. These include the following:

- Development of the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) for Merton in 2011 as part of the Drain London initiative
- Development of the Surface Water Management Plan in 2011 as part of the Drain London initiative
- Feasibility studies in high risks areas to identify measures that could protect properties at risks from flooding and attract funding for implementation from the Environment Agency (EA). The measures identified to-date does not provide sufficient protection and benefits to meet the EA funding criteria.
- 4500 high risks gullies cleared in 2012/13 and again in 2013/14. This has resulted in a marked improvement in surface water flooding experienced in the Raynes Park area following heavy rain. No reports of severe flooding were received from areas in the borough with previous flooding history.
- Lead at sub regional level on the development of a Local Flood Risk Management strategy that will clearly set out how Merton will manage flooding in partnership with other Flood Risk Management authorities. The strategy will undergo a Public Consultation stage later this year.
- The establishment of an internal Flood Risk Management Group with responsibility for managing flood risks from all sources across the borough. The Group includes representatives from future Merton, Greenspaces, Leisure & Culture, Merton Priory Homes, Legal Services, Children School and

Families. This group meets quarterly to report on progress, discuss problems, identify responsibilities and agree actions.

- The development of an asset register identifying all known flood related assets such as water courses, culverts, thrash screen etc. and their owners together with the development of a maintenance regime.
- Development of a set of criteria for investigating flood incidents.

34 From Councillor Iain Dysart to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Does he support West Barnes residents who would like to see easier access to local stations e.g by way of lifts/ramps, to help the less able-bodied, those with small children/buggies etc?

Reply

Yes, the council is fully supportive of measures to improve accessibility at rail stations and actively lobbies train operating companies to improve facilities as opportunities arise including through various rail forums attended by officers, franchise consultations and Department of Transport funded improvement programmes. This approach is further supported by the council's development policies which promote improved access at transport interchanges across the borough.

37 From Councillor Gilli Lewis Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

I understand that the council has a duty under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to co-ordinate flood risk management within the borough and that Merton is required by law to have a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy in place to set out how this will be achieved. We have seen recently the terrible impact of flooding in parts of the country. Can the Cabinet Member explain why the consultation on a local flood risk management strategy for Merton is only taking place now when it's been a requirement for some time?

Reply

The duties under the 2010 Act are new for all local authorities and the Council is fully compliant with the tasks and timetable that is expected of Local Authorities and is in fact leading at a sub regional level the response for a number of Councils. With regards to the specific development of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy it was agreed that Merton would lead on this project on behalf of Kingston, Sutton, Croydon, Wandsworth and Richmond. This work is underway and the draft strategy will be subject to public consultation later this year.

The Council has also been very pro-active since 2010 and undertaken the following in its effort to responsibly manage all sources of flood risks in the borough:

- Development of the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) for Merton in 2011 as part of the Drain London initiative
- Development of the Surface Water Management Plan in 2011 as part of the Drain London initiative

- Feasibility studies in high risks areas to identify measures that could protect properties at risks from flooding and attract funding for implementation from the Environment Agency (EA). The measures identified to-date do not provide sufficient protection and benefits to meet the EA funding criteria.
- 4500 high risks gullies cleared in 2012/13 and again in 2013/14. This has resulted in a marked improvement in surface water flooding experienced in the Raynes Park area following heavy rain. No reports of severe flooding were received from areas in the borough with previous flooding history.
- Lead of the development of a Local Flood Risk Management strategy that will clearly set out how Merton will manage flooding in partnership with other Flood Risk Management authorities. The strategy will undergo a Public Consultation stage later this year.
- The establishment of an internal Flood Risk Management Group with responsibility for managing flood risks from all sources across the borough. The Group includes representatives from future Merton, Greenspaces, Leisure & Culture, Merton Priory Homes, Legal Services, Children School and Families. This group meets quarterly to report on progress, discuss problems, identify responsibilities and agree actions.
- The development of an asset register identifying all known flood related assets such as water courses, culverts, thrash screen etc. and their owners together with the development of a maintenance regime.

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

Does the Cabinet Member welcome the Association of Chief Police Officers' plans to rewrite their guidance on the enforcement of 20mph speed limits, to ensure that they are policed in the same way as other speed limits rather than being largely "self-enforcing" as has been the case previously?

Reply

The Council has always held the view that Speed Enforcement should be a joint initiative between the Council and the Police. The Council would welcome consultation with the Police in the development of this guidance to ensure a coherent and affordable speed enforcement policy that can be adopted by all concerned. Thus far, the Met Police have refused to enforce 20 mph speed limits and the Council currently has no powers to do so.

The Council is reviewing the effect of various 20mph zones and limits in different Local Authorities and expects to report to Scrutiny later this month.

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

Following its passage through the House of Lords, the Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill is likely to be passed shortly, thereby giving powers to the police and local government to evict tenants convicted of rioting. This is possibly in response to the August 2011 riots in the UK, which will have particular interest for Merton Council and for residents of Colliers Wood.

I am sure no one wishes to see a family's worldly possessions on the pavement for an act of stupidity or criminal intent by a junior family member.

However, maintaining order within society does sometimes rely on people knowing the consequences of their actions.

Is it not therefore the responsibility of the council to inform people about this Bill once it has gained Royal Assent and the possible consequences if any Merton residents were to be found guilty of the offence of rioting? If that is the case, how is the administration going to raise awareness among school children, young people and their parents?

Reply

The legislation gives the power to evict tenants to the housing provider, who provides their home, as we (the Council) do not have any housing stock we will not have this power. Therefore it is the responsibility of the housing provider to inform tenants of their right to do this and this will need to be added into their tenancy agreements. With this in mind there are currently no planned awareness raising sessions. However we work closely with our local housing providers to ensure that this power is used only when necessary, proportionate and reasonable.

We shall look to see whether this general message can be included in future council communications but we expect it to be a message principally for Housing providers to carry for their tenants and prospective tenants.

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

What was recycling rate in May 2010 compared to today? How is garden waste measured in the recycling rate now compared to 2010?

Reply

The recycling rate in 2010 was 34.7% and is currently 39%. Garden waste is measured in the recycling rate in the same way now as it was in 2010.

49 From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Leader of the Council

In response to a question at the 11 September 2013 Council Meeting (copied below in italics), the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration stated that the car park at the former Wimbledon Community Association site was not going ahead due to excess parking capacity at the council's car park at St George's Road. At the Wimbledon Community Forum Meeting of 11 December 2013, the Leader of the Council stated that the car park was in fact going ahead. Please could the Leader of the Council clarify the status of the plans for the site? If the car park is going ahead, what is the anticipated annual gross and net revenue?

From Councillor Diane Neil Mills to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration (ST)

What is the cost of (a) the acquisition of the Wimbledon Community Association building (b) demolition of the building and (c) provision of car parking facility in its place? What is the expected parking revenue to be generated at this site and is this new revenue or displacement from other parking in Wimbledon? What budget has been used to provide the capital and operating costs of this initiative?

Reply

The cost of the acquisition of WCA interest was £816,666.66. The Capital Programme 2013/17 contained provision for the acquisition. This budget was slipped into 2013/14 as part of the June Financial Report to Cabinet.

The cost of demolition was approximately £50,000.

In order to minimise revenue running costs and obviate the need to secure the building against squatters a sum of £50,000 was transferred from revenue reserves to fund the demolition costs of the building. The proposal to use the site as a car park is not being pursued as further investigation showed that it was not feasible and that there is excess capacity in the council owned St George's car park opposite the site. Therefore there will not be revenue or displacement implications.

Reply

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

At the Wimbledon Community Forum Meeting of 11 December 2013, it was stated that planning permission for a temporary car park at the former Wimbledon Community Association site was granted under delegated authority. Given that the council is the owner of this site, under Merton Council's Constitution (Scheme of Delegation), is it not the case that this application should have been determined by the Planning Applications Committee?

Reply

The Council does own this site; the process of the Council applying for planning permission is therefore dealt with under delegated powers unless the proposals are deemed to be not of a minor nature. Given that there were no objections at all to the application, the building was vacant and that the users had relocated to other premises; the use of the site as a car park was a temporary one until an alternative use comes forward, it was deemed to be of a minor nature and therefore could be determined under delegated powers.

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

How, when and by what process does the council intend to dispose of the car park adjacent to the New Wimbledon Theatre?

Reply

The Council, at present, does not have a timetable for the disposal of the P4 Car Park site. It was first placed on the disposal list under the last Conservative administration. Its potential use is established in the Council's Sites & Policies DPD and a draft planning brief has been prepared to guide any redevelopment of the site.

The Council has a number of process options available in terms of disposal and we have not yet agreed a way forward.

53 From Councillor Margaret Brierly to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

What discussions have taken place in 2014 with TfL and the Mayor's Cycling Advisor about a Mini Holland cycling route in Merton and how much funding can we expect if successful?

Reply

Merton's Bid for the Mayor's Mini Holland fund was submitted to the Mayor's Cycling Commissioner, Andrew Gilligan on 13th December 2013. Full details of our bid are available to view at www.merton.gov.uk/cycling/miniholland Representatives from our Mini Holland project team were invited to present our bid to Andrew Gilligan and the Mayor's Design Advisory Group (MDAG) on 20th January 2014.

Like other bidding boroughs, following MDAG, we have until 7th February to provide some technical points of clarification regarding our bid. Merton's bid contained a number of cycling measures, which if successful would represent a £32m investment in Merton over five years. A decision from the Mayor is expected in March 2014.

54 From Councillor Henry Nelles to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

At present, the only Conservation Area in Abbey Ward is Pelham Road. What would be the expected impact on property values if additional Conservation Areas were introduced in Abbey Ward? (Please define the areas that would support designation as Conservation Areas and give evidence and/or assumptions behind impact on valuations as Conservation Areas.)

Reply

Conservation areas are designated on the grounds of their value to the local built environment that requires protection. For this purpose, the property rights of owners of buildings in conservation are restricted for the greater good of the area.

There is a perception that the social benefit achieved through conservation area designation may eventually benefit land owners in conservation areas due the overall increase in the quality and stability of the built and natural environment and the removal of uncertainty regarding future changes in the character of the area. Conservation areas also possess the additional, potential benefit of creating a

unique sense of place-based identity, which in Merton encourages a sense of community cohesion.

The Council does not track land values in relation to conservation area designations, nor does it designate conservation areas to influence market conditions in relation to property. The Council does not make assumptions on the impact on valuations with regard to conservation areas. Our criteria for assessing conservation areas are in line with English Heritage guidance and are solely focused on the quality and distinctiveness of a place.

Changes in property values in London are driven by demand, regardless of conservation area status. Neighbourhoods, such as Abbey, which have good public transport accessibility, good housing stock, attractive streets, good local schools and local amenities are inevitably more in-demand as a desirable location, with the potential to fuel property price increases in a rising market.

The location of a property inside a conservation area potentially creates tensions between the advantages of living in an attractive and distinctive area and the disadvantages of additional planning control imposed to maintain the character of the area. As highlighted in a recent report by London School of Economics for English Heritage; the perceived impact on values within conservation areas are more about residents' attitudes and perceptions of the place, as it is about the quality of the built environment. The results are to be found at www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/research/social-and-economic-research/value-conservation-areas/ The main findings in respect of value is that houses in conservation areas sell for a premium of 23% on average. A premium of around 9% exists even after adjusting for other factors that affect house prices such as location and type of property. This adjusted premium was lower for conservation areas deemed to be 'at risk', being approximately 5%. On average, property prices inside conservation areas have grown at a rate that exceeded comparable properties elsewhere by 0.2% pa. The premium for living towards the centre is approximately double that at the edge controlling for other factors, suggesting that people value being surrounded by a greater density of heritage. There is also a premium, (albeit less) for properties outside conservation areas being more closely located to a conservation area. The premium is found to decline from the boundary of the areas and becomes 0 at around 500-700m distance.

With regard to Abbey Ward, the Council's Borough Character Study is underway and when complete, will make recommendations about which 'areas of established high quality' (such as the 'Australian Roads' in Abbey) may be suitable to become future conservation areas.

55 From Councillor Henry Nelles to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Would the administration welcome increases in property prices due to Conservation Area designation?

Reply

Similar to our response to Q54; The Council does not track land values in relation to conservation area designations, nor does it designate conservation areas to

influence market conditions in relation to property. The Council does not make assumptions on the impact on valuations with regard to conservation areas. Our criteria for assessing conservation areas are in line with English Heritage guidance and are solely focused on the quality and distinctiveness of a place.

Increases in property prices are a double-edged sword for our borough's residents. It's clearly beneficial to those of our residents who already own their home; but increases in property prices are also a negative in terms of younger people and families who are struggling to obtain mortgages and take their first step on the property ladder.

56 From Councillor Henry Nelles to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

What areas across Merton is the administration examining for designation as new Conservation Areas? Why are these areas being prioritised?

Reply

At the present time, the Council's urban design team are assessing the built quality of the whole borough (not just conservation areas), through the Borough Character Study. Where our planning policies state that proposals should 'respect / enhance local character', the Character Study provides a baseline assessment of that character to shape planning proposals and inform planning decisions.

The Borough Character Study that is currently being drafted is broken down into 36 neighbourhoods. Each neighbourhood is assessed using a number of different criteria to assess its character including its built form, open space and other physical characteristics. As a result, areas within the neighbourhood are identified which are categorised as either; an area of established high quality, an area with scope to reinforce the existing character or an area requiring enhancement to reinforce its identity. Through the process of drafting the Borough Character Study, a comparative borough wide assessment of all areas is taking place.

Many of the areas identified as areas of 'established high quality' are already designated as conservation areas, however, when the study is completed, those areas that are within this category but not presently covered by a conservation area designation will be investigated further to determine their suitability for designation as a conservation area(s). 21 of 36 neighbourhoods have been assessed so far; The Borough Character Study is scheduled for completion by the end of 2014 where it is intended to be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

As a ward councillor, I have specifically raised the possibility of houses in the 'Australians', or 'Old Merton Park', being designated a conservation area with Council officers on the basis that the houses in these roads include many fine architectural and design features: representing a heritage worth preserving and protecting from inappropriate development. The process to consider its suitability will commence once we have finalised the Borough Character Study.

Further information is available at www.merton.gov.uk/designandconservation/bcs

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

How is the council planning to use the grant it received recently from the Mayor of London to tackle air pollution in the borough?

Reply

Environmental Health obtained a grant of £120,000 for a project to reduce air pollution from one the borough's largest industrial estates in Willow Lane through the introduction of green walls, dust suppressants on the roads, other dust management schemes for businesses in the estate and the rollout of 'Smarter Driving Training' for business fleets within the estate.

The Service was also successful with its joint bids with surrounding boroughs for the following projects:

1. £40,000 for a School Campaign across South London Boroughs to carry out further work on school travel plans, car anti-idling schemes and air quality engagement and awareness through education / public awareness initiatives with the schools.
2. £70,000 for production of a Construction Logistics Plan for the South London Boroughs to be implemented on redevelopment sites within the borough, which has a number of direct benefits including reducing road congestion around construction sites, increased road safety, and fewer vehicle movements with reduced air pollution.

58 From Councillor Debbie Shears to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

When will Merton's small businesses be able to benefit from the Mayor of London's multimillion pound 'super-connected' high speed broadband voucher scheme?

Reply

FutureMerton have been working with the GLA since October 2013 in preparing for the rollout of the full London wide scheme. This is due to become available to businesses in Merton in the early spring of this year. Businesses are already able to register their interest and we have been advising businesses on our industrial estates and via LoveWimbledon Business Improvement District to do this.

We are currently preparing artwork and working with our communications team to prepare a full communications package. The details will be on our website as soon as the GLA advise us we can proceed. Here is the Mayor's link for the full details of the scheme:

<http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/business-economy/for-business/business-support/businesses-get-up-to-3000-for-high-speed-broadband?source=vanityurl>

59 From Councillor John Bowcott to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Why is no growth in building control fees being planned when the construction industry is recording its highest growth since 2009 and everywhere one looks, loft or

basement conversions are being undertaken? Do current fees cover the cost of the service?

Reply

The Building Control service works within strict legal parameters which govern the amount of income it is allowed to generate compared to costs. The service is not allowed to make a surplus. Any increase in workload as a result of an upsurge in building works usually results in additional resources being required to process that work. If excess profits are projected then the fees will need to be adjusted downwards accordingly rather than transferring that to a growth in overall building control fees income. The service is also facing increased competition from Approved Inspectors who are aggressive in seeking to increase their share of the market, although plans are in place to ensure the Council's service is the preferred option when residents are choosing who to inspect their building works. At this time the fees do cover the cost of the service.

28 From Councillor Suzanne Evans to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Finance

What is the current mileage allowance paid to Councillors and staff who submit expenses claims?

Reply

NJC for Local Government Car Allowances

Casual users	451-999cc	1000cc and over
Per mile first 8,500	46.9p	52.2p
Per mile after 8,500	13.7p	14.4p

60 From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

At a cost of £6.5million for 68.4 staff the average staff cost in Corporate Governance is £95,000. Does the Cabinet member think that the staff in the Corporate Governance division is overpaid on the basis of these figures, considering that the average salary for the Council as a whole is only £26,500?

Reply

The information presented to scrutiny is draft and not all of the cross checking between the budget book pages and the service plans have been completed. This was referred to at the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission on the 30 January 2014.

For Corporate Governance, there has been an increase in the number of staff with the transfer of legal services from the boroughs of Sutton and Kingston. This brings the total Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) to 135.3, and therefore equates to an average cost of a post, including Employer's National Insurance and Pensions Contributions of £48,290. This compares to an average cost of a post across the Council of approximately £41,000.

61 From Councillor Ray Tindle to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

How much time do officers spend on preparing Equality Analysis reports? Are these reports produced before savings are sent to Scrutiny? Have any proposals ever been given an Outcome 4?

Reply

The Equality Analysis process was streamlined in 2011 to make the template less time consuming to complete and to mainstream the process into day-to-day business. Records are not kept of the time taken to produce an Equality Analysis, however much of the information required is readily available and would normally be considered when assessing customer needs or undertaking analysis of our customer profile.

Savings proposals presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission are accompanied by equality analysis information to enable Members to be sighted on the potential impact of the proposals on particular groups.

There is no evidence to suggest that a proposal has ever been given an Outcome 4. If an Equality Analysis resulted in an evaluation of Outcome 4 it would mean that the proposal would be unlawful if it were to be implemented. In this case, the proposal would have to be amended to address any negative implications and thus result in an evaluation of Outcome 3, 2 or 1.

62 From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Given the recent reductions in RPI, should the inflation percentage included in the Budget assumptions be reduced to 1%?

Reply

No. RPI is still very volatile and actually increased last month from 2.6% to 2.7%. Having the inflation rate at 1.5% acts as a cash limit and therefore as a real expenditure cut. Setting this budget below inflation for several years has meant that the period for which it can be continued will soon require review. Reducing the internal inflation rate would therefore simply increase pressure on services and may lead to significant service reductions or unnecessary emergency management action.

73 From Councillor James Holmes to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

What did Merton Council assume for central government capital support grants for school expansions at the time the capital costs were entered in the council's budget versus actual grants received for each of the years 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14 (forecast)?

Reply

The table below shows funding received specifically for primary school expansions, referred to as Basic Need, including additional funding allocations related to this. The Additional Basic Need was a non-ringfenced additional amount, the Targeted Basic Need is ringfenced for specific projects.

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Estimated Basic Need as Forecast in Budget / Business Plan	0	6087	6976	7150
Additional Basic Need allocation announced during the year			7259	
Targeted Basic Need allocation announced during the year				4754
Total Received / Receivable	0	6087	14235	11904
Grant Applied / Expected to be applied		6087	14235	10569

The £1,335k difference between the grant expected to be received and forecast spend on school expansions in 2013/14 is made up of £750k on specific schemes from Targeted Basic Need and £585k of general underspend. All of this can be explained by the delays in tendering schemes and it is anticipated that all schemes will be on site and spending so there is no risk to funding. The £750k needs to be spent on the specific schemes by the end of August 2014 or it will be lost unless the Department for Education offers an extension.

24 From Councillor Richard Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Education

We know there is a requirement for 750 additional secondary school places by 2018, what progress has been made in identifying a site for a new school?

Reply

Our approach to meeting the additional demand for secondary school places has, essentially, three elements. The first is to ensure that all current schools fill surplus places where they exist. We will also need both to expand existing secondary schools where feasible and also seek sites for new provision. High level studies

have been completed to determine the feasibility of expanding Merton’s existing state funded secondary schools and, following these studies, officers are currently seeking support from school headteachers and governing bodies for the principle of expansion.

A site search for additional school sites has also been commissioned from Capita Symonds. They were requested to look at all areas of the borough except Longthornton and Pollards Hill wards where it was clear that expansion of Harris Merton and St. Mark’s Academy, both of which have already expressed interest in expanding, would be able to provide for any increase in demand. The first priority for the site search has been the Colliers Wood/North Mitcham area as this is an area of high growth in demand without a secondary school currently in the vicinity. The study has identified a small number of potential options, though all have a range of complications. Over the next nine months more detailed work will be undertaken to determine the feasibility and practicality of sites identified in the study.

25 From Councillor Suzanne Evans to the Cabinet Member Education

What are the truancy rates for each of our primary and secondary schools?

Reply

There is no single definition of truancy and the department does not keep such data. However, persistent absence from school is measured both by the department and reported in national data collections. The most recent data for persistent absence from Merton’s schools in the 2012-13 academic year is provided below.

School	Number of Children meeting PA threshold	Percentage of the School meeting PA threshold
	PA 46+ Sessions (15%)	PA 46+ Sessions (15%)
Abbotsbury Primary School	29	7.1%
All Saints CE Primary School	11	4.2%
Aragon Primary School	21	4.1%
Beecholme Primary School	7	3.2%
Benedict Primary School	19	5.6%
Bishop Gilpin CE Primary School	6	1.4%
Bond Primary School	22	5.5%
Cranmer Primary School	15	2.9%
Dundonald Primary School	3	1.2%
Garden Primary School	28	6.2%
Garfield Primary School	9	2.3%
Gorringer Park Primary School	27	5.7%
Haslemere Primary School	17	4.1%
Hatfeild Primary School	18	4.4%
Hillcross Primary School	23	4.9%

Councillor non-priority questions – Children, Schools and Families

Hollymount Primary School	8	2.5%
Holy Trinity CE Primary School	3	0.8%
Joseph Hood Primary School	10	3.8%
Liberty Primary School	33	6.9%
Links Primary School	25	5.8%
Lonesome Primary School	20	5.1%
Malmesbury Primary School	32	7.6%
Merton Abbey Primary School	13	4.8%
Merton Park Primary School	1	0.5%
Morden Primary School	7	3.3%
Pelham Primary School	6	2.5%
Poplar Primary School	14	3.1%
Sacred Heart RC Primary School	13	3.1%
Singlegate Primary School	12	4.3%
SS Peter & Paul RC Primary School	12	2.9%
St John Fisher RC Primary School	11	2.6%
St Mark's Primary School	7	3.3%
St Mary's RC Primary School	1	0.4%
St Matthew's CE Primary School	6	3.0%
St Teresa's RC Primary School	10	2.4%
St Thomas of Canterbury RC Primary School	22	3.9%
Stanford Primary School	27	6.4%
The Priory CE Primary School	12	2.9%
The Sherwood Primary School	27	6.4%
West Wimbledon Primary School	8	1.8%
William Morris Primary School	17	6.5%
Wimbledon Chase Primary School	6	1.0%
Wimbledon Park Primary School	6	1.3%
Raynes Park High School	119	11.3%
Ricards Lodge High School	56	4.6%
Rutlish School	67	5.7%
St Mark's CE Academy	98	12.3%
Ursuline RC School	32	3.1%
Wimbledon RC College	59	5.8%
Cricket Green Special School	13	8.0%
Melrose Special School	11	26.8%
Perseid School	13	15.3%
The Smart Centre	32	32.7%

Nb: The above figures do not include absence for the 2 Harris Federation schools.

26 From Councillor Suzanne Evans to the Cabinet Member for Education

Recent media reports suggest 10 children a day have been expelled or suspended from school because of incidents involving weapons. Has this ever happened in Merton?

Reply

Children can receive a fixed term exclusion or permanent exclusion for offences against a school's behaviour policy. There are national rules on how exclusions are coded and there is no code specifically for incidents involving weapons. However of eight permanent exclusions from Merton schools in the last academic year, one related to the carrying of a weapon. All Merton schools take the issue of weapons in school very seriously and exclusions, including permanent exclusions, are used by schools in these circumstances to send a very clear message to all pupils.

32 From Councillor Gregory Udeh to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

It's a sad fact of life that slavery still exists. From the people picking cotton for our clothes, to the domestic workers trapped by their employers, to the young children forced to get married, around 30 million people are living in conditions of modern slavery right now.

Can the Cabinet Member brief us on the situation here in Merton; and what is being done to fight modern slavery, if our borough has become a haven for the perpetrators of this crime against humanity?

Reply

I share my fellow councillor's disgust and condemnation of slavery, be it of adults or children. I am not aware of any such cases here in Merton although we do occasionally have concerns that a young person may have been trafficked. In such cases we work closely with our Police colleagues so that they can investigate appropriately. Our role is to ensure a place of safety and support for the young person.

35 From Councillor Iain Dysart to the Cabinet Member for Education

In summer 2012, the issue of the Council being able to provide ward-based information on numbers of children securing first choice of school preference was raised, which I pursued that autumn. Please could he advise me what progress is being made?

Reply

School places are not, and do not need to be, planned for on the basis of ward boundaries. The school admissions system used by Merton does not record ward information and, therefore, quick interrogation of wards from which applications are made is not possible. A lengthy manual examination of all applications would be required to provide this information. As cabinet member I have asked that we look at ways of how this data can be provided on a ward basis but we unable to a present as it would have to be done manually.

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

With the reported increase in the number of young children being sectioned due to Anti-Social Behaviour / Mental Health issues in England, can the Cabinet Member please tell me whether this applies specifically to Merton? If it does, how many young children have been sectioned and in what age ranges?

Reply

We have no knowledge of Merton young people being "sectioned" due to "anti social behaviour". We have very small numbers of children sectioned by professionals following a mental health assessment.

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