

Merton Council

Council

9 July 2014

Supplementary agenda

- | | | |
|-------|--|---------|
| 6. | Public questions to cabinet members | 1 - 6 |
| | The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting. | |
| 7. | Councillors' ordinary priority questions to cabinet members | 7 - 16 |
| | The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting | |
| 8 (a) | Strategic theme: Councillors' questions to cabinet members | 17 - 26 |
| | The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting. | |

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 6

Council 9 July 2014

Public questions

Procedure

The Mayor will call your name and ask if you have a supplementary question arising from the answer you have received.

If you do not have a supplementary question then simply respond thank you, no.

If you do have a supplementary question respond thank you, yes. You will be shown to a seat in the chamber where you will ask your supplementary question. Make sure you use the microphone.

Having put your question, please be seated whilst the Cabinet member responds.

Once the response has been given, please return to your seat in the public gallery.

The questions and answers and all supplementary questions and replies will be published on Merton's website after the meeting.

**1) From John O'Sullivan
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and
Regeneration
Question**

Please can you tell us when the illegal car sales from the Burn Bullock P/H car park, and the decay of the listed building will be stopped?

Many listed buildings, are lost to us by fire and vandalism, when left neglected.

Reply

The Council recently refused a planning application for retention of the car sales use at the Planning Application Committee in June 2014. At the same time Committee authorised the serving of an enforcement notice to cease the use. The legal team have been instructed to proceed with the service of the notice. It is likely a compliance time period of 56 days will be allowed. Further a second instruction for Legal Services to issue a Listed Building Repairs Notice is on hold awaiting an up-to-date structural report of the building. A listed buildings specialist surveyor carried out a structural and conditions survey of the Listed Building on 26th June and will be providing a report by 10th July. The structural survey is needed to enable the Council to determine the current structural stability of the building in order to correctly identify works to be carried out for its preservation.

Without the survey the requirements of the notice would remain cosmetic at best and there would be no way of knowing whether these works would properly contribute to the preservation of the building or mask some structural defects.

**2) From John Davis
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture
Question**

“Re The Canons, Madeira Road, Mitcham, and the granting of a 15 year lease of ground.

What provisions are being made in this lease for the new Multi Use Games Area adjacent to the Canons Leisure Centre to provide free use of the facilities for local people, and to properly mark the areas for multi-sports' use?”

Reply

The lease currently advertised in the local press is to allow the council to lease the Multi Use Games Area to the leisure centre operator in line with their current Leisure Contract terms.

The Multi Use Games Area will provide pre-arranged free use for local schools and their pupils as well as sports development activities, whereby participants will pay a fee to cover costs. Activities will also be provided within this part of the facility where multi-sports and recreational pursuits are part of a general offer e.g. 50 plus group.

The markings currently in place are primarily for football, but can also be used for small sided hockey and handball, whilst other sports and classes do not require specific markings.

**3) From Paul Carter
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking
Question**

Under what legal provisions can the Council take action to remove fly tipping on the land off the footpath which runs between 33 - 49 Langdale Ave., Mitcham and behind the shops on Upper Green East and when will it act?

Reply

This is private land. Environmental Enforcement Officers can take action under section 92 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, to serve notice on the land owner to remove the waste. If the landowner fails to remove the waste the council can remove the waste and recharge the land owner. We often come across land that has no registered owner therefore serving notice is not an option.

If Mr Carter is referring to the shops known as 4-38 Upper Green East, the council is exploring options to gate the alley way of these properties. Consultation has been sent out to all properties that back onto the alley way with a view in placing gates between 16-18 Upper Green East, and to place a palisade fence at the rear of 38 Upper Green East to shut off access to the land due to mainly fly tipping issue

Supplementary Question

The mattresses and furniture have been removed. It appears the owner now has taken responsibility for his tenant, one assumes, who has done the dumping. There is still a lot of other rubbish and can the council give an indication of how long it will take to clear this, as it is not only an eye sore, but a health risk? It seems that the council, in its duty of care, would take steps for its immediate removal. Am I correct in my assumption that I won't have to endure this for very much longer?

Reply

Can I thank Paul Carter, who I know very well. We have had other areas in Mitcham actually and put up notices where we're trying to solve the problems. We can't give fixed times on this. It is on private land and we can't keep moving the rubbish otherwise the fly-tippers will think they can tip anywhere and we'll just take it away. What I can tell you is that we have been working particularly hard on this with the land owners, they have been served notices and we are hoping to put gates up there. I can't give a time on this, but we are working extremely hard.

4) From Andrew Boyce To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration Question:

Does Council have confidence in the advice provided by its planning department, including recommendations on whether to approve planning applications, and advice to members of the public on the statutory process for making representations to the Planning Inspectorate on a planning appeal?

Reply

In general terms, the Council has confidence in the advice provided by planning officers, but they are not infallible. I have no doubt that case officers seek to provide the best possible service they can and endeavour to assess applications and make recommendations accordingly, based on the adopted policies of the council. In respect of appeals, the service endeavours to give good advice to the public to enable them to make representations.

Supplementary Question

Thank you for the written response which answers my question in general terms. So let me deal with some of the specifics about the officer providing incorrect dates with regard to the dates for the planning appeals hearing, and on the date for the deadline for written representations to be sent to the planning inspectorate. This happened in the case of an application for an appeal for a council decision for the Park Hotel in Morden Road, South Wimbledon. Consider it good advice to the public?

Reply

I think clearly there was clearly an error over the information sent out over 34-40 Morden Road, the Park Hotel application, for which I tender my apologies on behalf of the council and we must do our utmost to make sure it won't happen again. I would add that when Mr Boyce did turn up at the appeal that you represented residents in Morden Road very well indeed and a very compelling representation, so well done.

**5) From Beth Morrison
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and
Regeneration
Question:**

Will the Council publish the full results of Transport for London's survey of the implications of the Rediscover Mitcham proposals for traffic flows through Mitcham Town Centre?

Reply

Yes, the Transport for London approval process for junction redesigns and signals (traffic lights) is complex and has several different stages with different departments. Merton officers are working with Transport for London to finalise the proposed changes to the road layout in Mitcham Town Centre. This includes a detailed assessment of the impact on traffic flows. The results will be reported to the Cabinet Member and published in due course.

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda item 7 – Councillors ordinary priority questions and answers

1. From Councillor Sally Kenny to the Leader of the Council

Can the Leader update me on the latest 5 year plan proposed by the local CCG for hospital services in South West London, including St Helier hospital?

Reply

The latest 5 year plan for health services in SW London outlines proposals to “change the way we deliver health services” including the “likely need to reconfigure maternity and neonatal services” and suggests A&Es units are downgraded by “the introduction of two levels of emergency departments (Major Emergency Centre and Emergency Centre)”. Clearly this means that St Helier hospital remains under threat.

Supplementary Question

Can I congratulate the Leader for speaking up for local residents by asking the chair of the body responsible for the debacle to step down, and can we have an update please any on further development?

Reply

I have since written to the Secretary for State, Jeremy Hunt, on the issue and they are in touch with the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign who run ‘Justice for Lewisham Hospital’ to work together. We are now a Labour majority council and will do our utmost as a Labour council to save St Helier Hospital and to save the A&E, maternity and other services there.

2. From Councillor Janice Howard to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

What was the final value of the completed improvement works delivered by Circle Housing Merton Priory in 2013-14? How does this compare to the £23million originally projected to be the value of the programme of planned CHMP improvement works for 2013/14?

Reply

I have requested the information you seek from Circle Housing Merton Priory and have had the following response:

“On 1st April 2013 Circle Housing Merton Priory (CHMP) entered in to a new partnership with United House Limited (UHL) to deliver the investment programme under a 10 year agreement. The drivers for the move from three contractor partners to one partner were to; reduce complexity, achieve a consistent standard across the borough, deliver efficiency and increase the economies of scale from a large scale

procurement. The mobilisation took longer than both parties intended and work started on site in July 2013, however the outgoing providers were finishing off their outstanding programmes to this point.

An estimated budget for 13/14 was set at £23m. During the year we identified a need for and completed an extensive number of pre-works validation surveys which identified that £5.3m of work had already been completed by CHMP and £5.2m was not required (as the original survey data pre transfer had been cloned). In addition 424 customers (elderly or households with a disabled member) declined works at this stage. We will check regularly if they change their mind or complete the works as the homes become empty in the future. The budget from the regeneration properties due to have works in 13/14 was also included in the £23m budget.

A total of £4.5m worth of work was completed and invoiced in year and a further £1.9m works were completed by 31 March and accrued. This was in alignment with the reforecast we shared in December 2013. A work programme of £6.2m has been carried forward from 13/14 to be completed in the financial year 14/15.

UHL are onsite across the borough on a range of projects.”

My understanding of the above and how it reconciles with CHMP’s original budget is as follows:

£4.5m - Works completed in 2013/14 and invoiced
£1.9m - Works completed in March 2013/14 and not invoiced
£6.2m - Works carried forward to 2014/15
£5.3m - Projected works that had already been completed
£5.2m - Projected works not required due to inaccurate survey data
£23.1m - TOTAL

Supplementary Question

If Circle Housing don’t complete 6.2 million carried forward to 2014/15, does the Cabinet Member believe there should be compensation and can the cabinet member assure me that the terms of the transfer contract be reviewed to understand remedies for non-performance?

Reply

I have a monthly update with Circle and I will put that issue to them.

3. From Councillor Joan Henry to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Could I congratulate the Cabinet Member on her recent appointment and ask her what her priorities are for adult social care and health in her new role?

Reply

Thank you for your good wishes. I am very honoured to take up this role and I look forward to working with members, officers, partner organisations and residents on taking forward our work in this area.

My priorities for adult social care and health (in no particular order) are:

- To chair the Health and Wellbeing Board in a way that supports working in partnership, while also holding local organisations to account
- To take forward the work on a new health facility in Mitcham
- To work with NHS partners on plans for quality and sustainability, on the basis that the council has a clear position on the need to retain accident and emergency, maternity and related services at St Helier Hospital
- To ensure oversight of the integration of health and social care services, to the benefit of local residents, and in line with the Better Care Fund
- To ensure the delivery of safe and effective social care services at a time of continued financial challenge and in line with the July Principles agreed on a cross party basis during the last Labour administration 2010-2014
- To continue our excellent partnership working with voluntary sector

Supplementary Question

The Cabinet Member in her new role attended the launch of the Council's new dementia hub in Mitcham's connecting service. Can she describe the services that will be on offer for residents at this new facility?

Reply

It gives me the opportunity to tell you all about the great services offered at the dementia hub. The dementia hub in Mitcham is the first of its kind in the country. Not only for those with dementia, but also for the carers and support groups. It offers for those with dementia a memory clinic and a support group called 'Life after Diagnosis.' There is also a carers' support group. Other services include in general, relaxation therapy, dentist and a sensory garden planted with herbs and vegetables. The hub offers a wealth of support and information for dementia sufferers.

4. From Councillor David Williams to the Leader of the Council

Would the Leader please list the meetings and correspondence he has had since 22nd May 2014 to save St Helier Hospital?

Reply

- Met with the Chair of the CCG to ask him to step down from his post as Chair
- Press released my call for the Chair of the Merton CCG to step down
- Agreed an article on the Save St Helier campaign to be included in current edition of My Merton
- Instructed officers to reinstate the save St Helier banners on the front of the building
- Wrote to Jeremy Hunt MP, Secretary of State for Health, to ask that the chair of the CCG be removed from his post

Supplementary Question

As the five actions amount to telling Howard Freeman to get lost three times and twice authorising dubious use of council tax payers' money to justified a political campaign, how does the Leader propose that the council scrutinises his success or otherwise in achieving his objectives?

Reply

I do have to remind Cllr Williams, former Leader of the Council, of one thing, and I will start doing that by reading from a lyric of a song, 'Gather around people wherever you roam, and admit that the waters around you will have grown' that's Bob Dylan, 1964. 50 years later, Cllr Williams, 'the times they are a changing'. We will do what we have to do to save St. Helier.

5. From Councillor Ross Garrod to the Leader of the Council

Would the Leader comment on the current partnership work between Merton and the London Fire service?

Reply

We have a strong record of partnership working with the Fire Authority and indeed just recently our public health team undertook joint work with the authority on training fire fighters to advise residents on giving up smoking. It was featured by London Councils as a good public health case study – see <http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/policylobbying/healthadultservices/publichealth/casestudies.htm> for more details.

Supplementary Question

Would the Leader join me in condemning the Mayor of London's plans to pack the London Fire Authority with political placement and reduce the number of elected members from London Council? Furthermore, will he write to the Secretary of State opposing the current government consultation on these changes which have been taken in response to the fierce opposition against the dangerous cuts to fire services he has imposed on Londoners?

Reply

It always gives me great pleasure to join people in condemning the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, so I will do that, and it also gives me great pleasure to write to Eric Pickles on the lines he suggests although I don't know what the point of Eric Pickles is.

6. From Councillor Stephen Crowe to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Can the Cabinet Member outline this new Labour administration's policy on traffic management in the borough?

Reply

The Council's main transport related priority is to reduce the number of road traffic casualties on our roads, in particular vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. We are also working hard to reduce dependency of the motorcar and encourage a shift to more sustainable modes of transport. To this end we have ambitious modal shift targets in the council's Local Implementation Plan (LIP).

Residents are also concerned at excessive and inappropriate speed in their roads. We are currently reviewing the effectiveness of all our 20mph zones and limits in the borough and also gathering intelligence on the effectiveness of borough wide 20mph zones/limits in London and nationally to inform future decisions on speed management and agree a policy approach later this year. Lorry control also remains a concern and we are developing measures to prevent large vehicles from unnecessarily using residential roads and also protect surrounding roads from the displacement effects.

We are continuing our work in introducing Home Zones 'Lite' schemes (the type of measures recently introduced on the residential road networks adjoining the A298 corridor (Kingston Road and Merton High Street) consisting of junction entry treatments, street trees and planters to highlight to drivers that they are entering a residential area and should therefore adjust their driving behaviour.

We will continue to consider the introduction of Controlled Parking Zones to meet the parking needs of residents where demand exists and the proposals are supported by residents.

Work is currently underway to review parking provisions at designated and secondary shopping parades across the borough to assist businesses with their parking / loading needs.

The Council is also required to meet the transport strategic objectives of the Mayor's Transport Strategy which is to:

- Mitigate for the negative impact of transport on climate change;
- Reduce road traffic casualties;
- Encourage active transport (walking and cycling);
- Reduce the impact of traffic congestion levels;
- Contribute to the improvement of all public transport and community transport services;
- Improve the general transport infrastructure, including arrangements for parking and loading;
- Improve accessibility and social inclusion in the transport network

Funding is made available through the annual LIP allocation to develop suitable measures aimed at delivering the above priorities.

Supplementary Question

Last month the new Labour administration abolished the Street Management Advisory Group without any discussion with the opposition. How does the cabinet member explain that decision to residents who valued the democratic forum that this committee provided for open and public debate on the contentious traffic issue, in front of an impartial panel of councillors?

Reply

I did not find SMAC advice, frequently very expert or actually adding much to the debate. Instead I have made a decision to concentrate consultation on ward councillors for any scheme that is proposed. So ward councillors must be consulted before any SMAC decisions are made. If necessary for significant decisions, we will hold public meetings in the area to which residents will be invited.

7. From Councillor Fidelis Gadzama to the Cabinet Member for Education

What steps has the cabinet member undertaken to provide school places to all Merton primary school children?

Reply

For September 2014, excluding the proposed Park Community Free School, the council has provided 690 additional reception year school places compared to September 2007. 510 of these extra places have been established since September 2010.

We have continued a significant investment programme in which 600 additional places (20 forms of entry – eventually 4,200 places across all year groups) are in good quality permanent buildings either completed since 2010 or currently under construction. We also have a contractor ready for the expansion of Dundonald Primary School to provide a further 210 places.

To ensure there were sufficient places for this September year we provided 90 temporary reception places, so I am confident that all residents that require a reception place for September will be able to receive one, even though it may not be at a preference school. We will review the position for next year in the autumn, when the implications of the new Park Community Free School should be clearer.

Supplementary Question

I congratulate the Cabinet Member for the work under taken to ensure that all children have received a school place this year. Can he give some details on how he intends to cater for increasing demand over the next four years?

Reply

I would like to thank Cllr Gadzama for his supplementary question and welcome him to the council. It is great to have a gold medallist on the council. In relation to his question we will be providing an additional 2000 school places for the next 4 years, which is a manifesto pledge we are busy implementing. We also know there has been a significant demand this year, hence why we are providing a further form of entry as a bulge year at Joseph Hood located on Cannon Hill, and West Wimbledon. This administration is in the midst of an £80 million regeneration programme, an ambitious capital programme to provide expanding good schools and much needed school places.

8. From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Education

What is Merton council's policy on allowing the parents of summer-born children to defer their child's start in reception until they turn five?

Reply

Merton's policy is published on the council website as part of our "Admission Arrangements 2015/16".

Merton's general policy for admission is in line with national guidance for children to start full-time schooling in the September prior to their fifth birthday. However, parents may request to defer their child's entry until statutory school age which is the term following their fifth birthday. In the case of a summer born child this will either be by taking a Year 1 place or requesting admission outside the normal age group. Our policy for this is as follows:

"1.3 Admission of Children Outside Their Normal Age Group

Parents wishing to apply for places outside the child's normal year group will have their application considered by each admissions authority they are

applying for based on the circumstances of each case. Applicants should include relevant supporting professional evidence for consideration, based on the individual needs of their child.

Parents are encouraged to seek advice from the Local Authority in these circumstances before applications are submitted.”

Supplementary Question

I've seen government guidance on the subject, that was issued in July 2013 has finally been implemented by this administration, even though it did need Stephen Hammond and myself to push for it. What process does the administration use to consider government guidance that has been issued, and how much time is allowed to incorporate the guidance into their operating procedures?

Reply

In terms of government guidance you have to consider a number of issues, which do need to be thought through more before implementation. I think, in relation to the guidance that she refers to, there were some inconsistencies between other previous government guidance as well. As an authority, this is clearly a very serious issue. There are different circumstances, which are considered on its own merits. But we as an authority do admit government guidance, but it does have to be consistent government guidance and so, therefore, in terms of its actual implementation these have to be considered with a whole range of factors as well.

9. From Councillor Mary Curtin to the Leader of the Council

Can the Leader supply a list of all those Merton residents who have received Honours in the past ten years?

Reply

In the time available and given the gratifyingly long list, I have only been able to go back to June 2010. I have included all those with a link to Merton:

Joyce Andrews, MBE

Jenny Archer, MBE

Dr Richard Barker, OBE

James Bennet, MBE

Robert Bieber, MBE

James Cochrane, CBE

Barry Cox, CBE

Professor David Delpy, CBE

Marion Friend, MBE
Chris Frost, MBE
Honor Godfrey, OBE
DCI Caroline Goode, Queen's Police Medal for Distinguished Service
Prof Judith Freedman, CBE
Dr Howard Freeman, MBE
Philip Froomberg, British Empire Medal
Keith Grimshaw, MBE
Andrew Gairdner, MBE
Rosemary Hickson, British Empire Medal
Sophie Hosking, MBE
Michael Hourahine, OBE
Judith Ish-Horowicz, MBE
Stephen Jack, OBE
Fiona Jeffery, OBE
Dr Kanwaljit Kaur-Singh, MBE
Dr Kenton Lewis, MBE
Cllr Edith Macauley JP, MBE
Karl Mackie, CBE
Selina Master, MBE
Sylvia Morris, Dame
Indira Patel, Dame
Martin Rumsey, MBE
Peter Steiner, British Empire Medal
Paul Strank, MBE
Christopher Townsend, OBE

Supplementary Question

This is a very distinguished list and we should take great pride in all their good work. Does the Leader share my astonishment that in the past decade the only one of these that has been praised by the Conservatives in a motion to council, is the chair of our local health service, who most residents hold responsible for the disastrous issues surrounding St. Helier. Why have they praised him and not anyone else?

Reply

I do not know why they placed the motion mentioning only one honourable mention for one Merton recipient. For the others just an incidental, brief, casual mention. As Councillor Mary Curtin knows this issue will be rebalanced later by an amendment to their ill-judged motion.

Agenda item 8a – Councillors strategic theme priority questions and answers

1. From Councillor Tobin Byers to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking

Could the Cabinet Member update us the action she is taking to combat the problem of people dropping litter in our streets.

Reply

Merton continues to run litter awareness road shows throughout the year. In addition to our education and engagement programmes, Merton has adopted a zero tolerance approach to environmental crime such as fly-tipping, graffiti and littering by dealing with it promptly and effectively. Merton has recently started a pilot of enhanced enforcement, through the use of enviro-crime enforcement specialists who patrol our town centres and approach individuals that deposit litter on the highway. In adopting the zero tolerance approach, Merton, as with a number of other councils, will issue a Fixed Penalty Charge without further warning. We are a clean borough and we want to send out a clear message that anyone caught littering will be fined.

Supplementary Question

As she will be aware in 2009 under the Conservative administration a survey showed that Merton had the filthiest streets in the whole of the country. Thankfully we have improved the situation since then, but can she tell me more about what she can do to move to a zero tolerance approach to littering in the borough?

Reply

There are 101 things we could do, currently though there is a lot of education and publicity going on, we are doing what we can with that, especially with schools. However, what we have done is adopt a pilot scheme giving out fines for littering. Now, ultimately we don't want to give out fines to people for littering, but we wanted it to be an education effect. The more of those fines are given then the more people will become compliant in not littering and then the fewer fines will be required. So that's our situation at the moment, but it only a pilot scheme at the moment.

2. From Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking

What has the additional private littering enforcement brought in by the Labour administration shortly before the election cost so far? How much income has it raised?

Reply

As part of an enhanced enforcement programme to tackle the problem identified by residents of people dropping litter on our streets, Merton is piloting working with specialist litter and waste enforcement officers in Mitcham, Morden and Wimbledon town centres. There has been “start-up” costs associated with the pilot, which are approximately £12k. So far officers have levied fines of £6,525 on people dropping litter which I believe will act as a deterrent and will make it clear that we have a zero tolerance approach to littering.

Supplementary Question

What does the administration intend to do with the income you raise from the extra enforcement and are you planning to roll out these private enforcement officers beyond our town centres into the boroughs to our litter strewn residential streets? Finally, having levied £6000 fines, which is great, how many have actually been paid?

Reply

There are a lot of questions in there, and I’m not sure I can remember all of them. I did say it was a pilot scheme and it has just started. We have to look at this, we have to look at policy and cost implications, whether funding comes in that could fund more officers, we need to look at this, and we are looking at it over the next couple of weeks. How it has played out in the last few weeks it’s been operating. It is a new project, it is a pilot, we don’t know at this moment in time as to what the implications will be but certainly I hear at the moment it is working well, and if we can roll that out to other parts of the borough then I’d be quite happy to do that.

3. From Councillor Katy Neep to the Leader of the Council

Can the Leader update me on progress in relation to the proposals to redevelop the High Path Estate in my ward?

Reply

Cabinet resolved on 30th June 2014 to recommend that 9th June Council (today) note the significant opportunity this project represents to improve housing conditions for tenants, leaseholders and freeholders and the potential contribution to addressing wider housing provision pressures in Merton and London and to agree to proceed with the exploration of estates regeneration schemes for High Path, Eastfields and Ravensbury estates, via the preparation in partnership with Circle Housing Merton Priority (CHMP) of a statutory Estates Regeneration Local Plan. This Plan will set out the strategic planning framework to guide any estates regeneration proposals for High Path, Eastfields and Ravensbury estates.

Cabinet also resolved to recommend that Council, suspend the obligation in the Stock Transfer Agreement dated 22nd March 2010 to carry out Qualifying

Works as defined in the Transfer Agreement, at High Path, Eastfields and Ravensbury estates for a period of 18 months from 9th July 2014 to enable this regeneration exploration. The timetable proposed for the preparation of the proposed Local Plan is as follows:

- Autumn 2014 / Winter 2014 - First Consultation Stage - Issues and Options
- Winter 2014/Spring 2015 - Second Consultation Stage – Preferred Options
- Winter / Spring 2015 - Third Consultation stage – Preferred Option
- Summer / Autumn 2015 – Submission Stage sign-off by Council
- Summer / Autumn 2015 – Pre-Submission Publication
- Autumn / Winter 2015 – Submission to the Secretary of State who appoints an independent planning inspector to examine the Local Plan
- Autumn / Winter – 2015 – Examination of Local Plan, including public hearings (timetable set by the planning inspector)
- Winter 2015 / Spring 2016 – Subject to passing the independent examination, Council can adopt Estates Regeneration Local Plan

Supplementary Question

I understand that the Leader has asked Circle for a series of commitments to residents before they start on the redevelopment. Could he outline the commitments to residents that he has got from Circle and in particular, could he confirm whether he has managed to get them to commit to sorting out their repairs service, which has been under-performing for a number of months?

Reply

I can confirm that I have been in discussion with Circle Housing Merton Priory with a view to working on, and we are working on, ten commitments that they will sign to, that I will sign to and will be for our residents. I can confirm that I will talk about these in greater detail when we come to the substantive debate, but I can confirm to Cllr Neep that one of those commitments will be to make sure that Circle Housing continues to maintain residences on these estates and to our planning processes until the redevelopment starts, including ensuring a high quality repairs service.

4. From Councillor Abdul Latif to the Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Environmental Regeneration

Will the Cabinet Member confirm the sum available from the Mayor of London to promote safe cycling in and around Wimbledon i.e. the sum to be made available subsequent to Merton's failed bid for the Mini Holland initiative?

Reply

The council's Mini Hollands submission is a borough-wide bid to improve cycling in Merton. In a public meeting at City Hall, the Mayor's Cycling Commissioner said that shortlisted Boroughs like Merton would receive between £10 and £20m, though as yet this has not been confirmed in writing. I am meeting with the Cycling Commissioner next week and hope to obtain greater clarity then.

Supplementary Question

Will the Cabinet Member give a timetable for when the associated engineering works will be completed, and does the Cabinet Member plan to include safer and quieter cycling routes along the side streets and filtered permeability routes for cyclists and pedestrians? Will he commit to keeping residents and councillors in Trinity ward and other town centre wards fully informed?

Reply

We don't have any certainty around the timetable for the Merton as yet. Andrew Gilligan said at a meeting held in City Hall at a public meeting that we should be receiving between with £10 – 20 million. I certainly hope that will be the case. Rumours suggest that other boroughs had received significantly less. Nonetheless, I am still hopeful we are going to get £10 – 20 million and the whole programme includes town centres, major routes, local and neighbourhood routes to enable children to cycle to school, local residents to cycle to shopping parades. We want a full range of cycling innovations as our ambition is to raise cycling in the borough by many fold and to bring far more people into cycling in the forthcoming years. You also asked about keeping ward councillor informed, yes we will be consulting with councillors and that is how we hope to handle this. On all these questions there should be substantial consistent consultation with ward councillors and, through them, with residents over the next four years.

5. From Councillor Pauline Cowper to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Could the Cabinet Member comment on the impact the new green gyms are having in our parks?

Reply

There are a total of seven green gyms in the borough located at:

- Donnelly Green
- Figge's Marsh
- King George's Playing Fields
- Morden Park
- Mostyn Gardens
- Oakleigh Way Recreation Ground

- Pollards Hill Recreation Ground

These facilities are designed to be accessible and cater for a wide range of age groups and abilities and enable park users to enjoy the pleasant surroundings of our green spaces whilst improving their fitness and health at the same time.

The local community has been involved in the design of several of our green gyms providing an opportunity for each to satisfy local needs.

We have received very positive feedback from users about our green gyms and, whilst we have no hard data on user numbers, it is clear that most have proven to be incredibly popular based upon the field observations of the Greenspaces team.

Supplementary Question

Are there any plans to extend the green gym scheme, for example, to include our local park, Joseph Hood recreation ground?

Reply

There are no plans to extend the green gyms. But what a good idea, thank you very much for raising it and I would be pleased to work with you and the other Cannon Hill councillors to deliver the scheme to the suggested recreation ground.

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

What were Merton's overall recycling rates in each of the last 4 years?

Reply

Under the previous Conservative administration Merton had a 33% recycling rate and I am pleased to report that this has increased to almost 40% under Labour.

However more recently recycling has plateaued nationally, with some councils even seeing levels of recycling falling, in part due to factors related to the recession. Merton has maintained levels of recycling despite these national pressures and we have recently won significant investment to increase our recycling further with our innovative Mega Recycle campaign which incentivises residents to recycle more.

Merton's recycling performance since 2009/10 is listed below.

13/14 - 38.9%

12/13 - 38.9%

11/12 - 37.3%

10/11 – 36.4%

09/10 – 33.6%

Supplementary Question

In the written response you went back 5 years rather than the requested 4 years and as you did 5 years why not 10 years? Anyway by 2020 recycling needs to be 50%. I want to know what the objective was for this year and a clear plan on how they're going to get to 50%, So what was the precise percentage required for this year?

Reply

I think at the moment we are looking to try to achieve around 40% or thereabouts. We had 24% ten years ago, approaching the 25% that Westminster has today, ten years later. I think our record is actually pretty good and we work in close co-operation with our partners, in the South London Waste Partnership. For instance, over the last four years we've introduced other things like tin foil, mixed plastic recycling and the kitchen waste recycling. We've introduced a free bulky waste collection services and we've introduced recycling on the streets. We've actually done a great deal. We maintain we are going to meet the objectives.

7. From Councillor Imran Uddin to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking

Would the Cabinet Member join me in congratulating our Trading Standards team who recently succeeded in gaining a £6.1m confiscation order against internet investment fraudsters.

Reply

Yes, and whilst we are so far uncertain how much of this order will be available to the Council this is a tremendous achievement and an example of excellent partnership work with the justice agencies to tackle crime and particularly those who prey on vulnerable citizens.

Supplementary Question

Clearly the information provided shows a good improvement in the enforcement regime we have here in Merton, and staff should be congratulated on that. Can the cabinet member provide some further details on the increased effectiveness and efficiency of Trading Standards and on the general regulatory regime that we have brought about as a result of the joint initiative with the London Borough of Richmond please?

Reply

It is interesting that we are not being webcast because John Hillarby who leads the team also says this team never gets a mention and with the webcast being down they are not able to see themselves getting a mention. They are doing brilliant work, fantastic work. We are now doing joint regulatory services with Richmond. We are the host borough for that and for the joint regulatory standards committee. We are going to share the expertise from both Boroughs, see what each other are doing and learn from one another. A lot of people are watching this because it is the first time that there have been shared regulatory services in local authorities.

8. From Councillor Linda Taylor to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking

We are to understand from the Council that Merton is regarded as a clean borough. What is the justification for this?

Reply

The following table provides official government performance figures with respect to street cleanliness for the past five years. It shows the percentage of locations failing to meet the required standard in each year (i.e. lower is better).

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Litter	14.74%	6.02%	5.91%	7.97%	6.49%
Detritus	31%	9.47%	6.97%	11.8%	6.92

As is clear for these official government figures, in 2009/2010 when the previous Conservative administration was in power Merton was the dirtiest borough in the country with 31% of the borough covered by detritus. However under the current administration there has been a step change in the cleanliness of the borough, as is evidenced by the government data.

Under the current administration Merton council has worked hard to keep the borough clean by:

- adopting a “zero tolerance” approach to littering
- targeting “known” hotspots for litter and fly-tipping
- providing bins for smoking and gum related litter
- increasing the number of litter bins in all of our town centres
- introducing new “smart” bins
- increasing our enforcement capacity
- running publicity/awareness campaigns to educate and advise residents and visitors to the borough to dispose of their litter and waste responsibly
- launching the “big Merton Spring Clean” to enable borough-wide cleaning events

- making it easier for residents to report litter and fly tipping through the free Love Clean Streets smartphone app

It is heartening that the government's official figures recognise how much the cleanliness of the borough has improved under the current administration.

Supplementary Question

I appreciated the detailed response which looks good on paper but I'm not sure how it will translate into practice. I'd like to know that only at my insistence that a full 3.5 tonne bag of flytipping was removed from the top of Haydons Road on 20 June. Yet by the following evening more flytipped rubbish had been dumped in that spot. I would like to know what she will do in terms of enforcement to improve the dire record in this ward.

Reply

I think this question has partly been answered earlier over our increased littering enforcement, and we are seeing how that works. On the issue of flytipping, it might be worth you as the Ward Councillor, talking to your residents about our free bulky waste collection service, as they may not know about it.

I'm not going to pretend everything is perfect, but we have introduced some positive initiatives into the Borough, not only in the last six months I've been cabinet member but in the last four years when my predecessor was in post. So, there's a lot going on. I'm happy to come to any of your wards to see what's going on. There are particular hot spots, by all means do invite me. I hope to get to every ward through the summer, and I am happy for you to show me where your hot spots are.

9. From Councillor Abigail Jones to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking

Can the Cabinet Member update us on our efforts to persuade residents to recycle more?

Reply

Along with the long running "Love Food, Hate Waste" campaign, Merton successfully bid for funding for a recycling incentivisation programme. Known as Merton's Mega Recycle, the campaign aims to raise awareness and encourage increased recycling by individuals, households, and schools across the borough. One of the key aspects of the Mega recycle, will be the opportunity for participants to win cash prizes if through a monthly prize draw.

A further aspect of the programme, includes a team of "door stoppers" visiting households across the borough, canvassing to encourage residents to recycle, and arrange for new or replacement recycling containers to be

delivered. The campaign is programmed to run for 18 months with the aim to improve our already good recycling rates

Supplementary Question

In my ward, Abbey, many of my residents live in flats. Can the cabinet member comment on how we are encouraging people in flats to recycle?

Reply

Yes, there is the mega recycle business going on at the moment across the borough and we are going round knocking on doors to encourage people to recycle – and we are giving out bags and encouraging them to leave them out for recycling. There are cash incentives, for schools as well, and blocks of flats and estates to improve their recycling.

Councillors who have many blocks of flats in your wards, such as yourself, I would encourage you all to speak to your residents about this, get them look at the website, find out more about it and do encourage people, as we need to encourage people to recycle.

This page is intentionally left blank