

# **Merton Council Council**

**4 February 2015**

## **Supplementary agenda – responses to public and member questions**

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# Agenda Item 5

**Council 4 February 2015**

**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 Beth Morrison  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

**Question**

When will Merton 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**

The traffic modelling for the Rediscover Mitcham project is now substantially complete and TfL will shortly be concluding the model auditing process and commencing the design work for the new traffic signals. This work will feed into the business case that is due to be finalised with Transport for London by Summer 2015. A summary of the business case will be published upon completion of the Business Case.

In the meantime, works to improve Fair Green have now started and are due to be completed by September 2015. This will be followed by further phases on Majestic Way and at Three Kings Pond.

**2. From Gordon Lawson  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

**Question**

What was the daily volume of vehicles on Woodside and Alwyne Road prior to the introduction of their preventative measures?

**Reply**

The measures in these roads were introduced more than 10 years ago and the Council no longer has records of the traffic data recorded at the time. In any case the flow would have substantially changed since.

**3. From Andrew Gould  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

**Question**

What are you doing to control the number of foxes in the borough? I am concerned they appear prevalent and increasingly confident around adults and children as well as causing a lot of additional mess which has to be cleared.

## **Reply**

Foxes are an increasingly urban phenomenon and Merton deals with them in exactly the same way as all other London boroughs. Our website provides details regarding ways in which residents can deter foxes, this includes :

- If there is a fox living in a garden in your street some simple steps can help to encourage them to move on:
- Keep all domestic waste in a wheeled bin or closed containers, not plastic bags and use the council's brown bin food waste containers.
- Only put your waste out on the morning of collection by 6am.
- Do not leave food out for other animals. Be extremely careful where you put food to feed birds, this should be in suitable containers.
- Make sure there are no areas where foxes can shelter. This may be an overgrown or neglected area or a void beneath a building. Voids can be protected using heavy-duty mesh, making sure that it is securely fixed to any building and buried to a depth of 12" (30 cm) into the soil to prevent the fox burrowing under the mesh.

There is little that can be done to control the number of foxes since they are territorial and any efforts to reduce the population in one area would lead to relocation of other foxes into the area vacated.

#### **4. From Simon Joseph To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking**

##### **Question**

Following no waste food collection during Christmas week, I had no collection the following week, despite two telephone promises, with ultimately five bags and two weeks of rotting food outside. Why did this happen and what will prevent this health and safety issue from recurring? Apologies are not enough.

##### **Reply**

During Week beginning 29 December 2014 our Waste collection teams experienced unprecedented volumes of waste presented for collection. Where missed collections were reported as a result of the additional workload, we endeavoured to clear these within our 24 hour target. On the occasion that Dr Joseph has referred to, we were unable to collect until the following Monday.

Our waste section apologises for the inconvenience caused to Dr Joseph and we are taking steps to ensure this is not repeated.

**5. From Mr and Mrs Matthews  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking**

**Question**

Before introducing the costly wheelie bin scheme in Lavender Fields has the council followed up the residents survey to find out what is causing the 'dirty streets' is this confirmed as household waste and not just abandoned by pedestrians and passing vehicles?

**Reply**

Although a high percentage of residents said they were satisfied with how the council deals with litter, the results of the residents' survey identified that Lavender Ward was one of three wards where respondents mentioned people littering as one of their top concerns.

The amount of detritus on Merton's streets has fallen since 2009/10 when the then Tory council was revealed as having the filthiest streets in the country. The Council has previously worked with the Tidy Britain Group and their review of the Street Cleansing service identified that a high proportion of litter was generated due to the method of waste collection, black sacks and boxes.

Our research also shows that more fly tipping is being generated in Merton, in London and in fact nationally. This is a source of litter and we take enforcement action wherever we can gather evidence to do so. Furthermore, we are taking action to change the behaviour and culture of those who thoughtlessly drop litter in the streets. So far this financial year we have fined over 4000 members of the public who carelessly drop litter.

Wheeled bins are being piloted to test how effective they are at dealing with a part of this problem, they will not solve all of the issues but we are working hard to address the issue of those who litter our streets.

**6. From Derek Ross  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

**Question**

A developer has purchased a property on Denmark Road in the conservation area. He plans to remove the entire, small front garden and replace it with a hard standing for a car, against the wishes of other residents. Why is the council unable or disinterested in preventing this from happening?

**Reply**

The Council has received an application to remove a small cherry tree but there are no further applications at this time. The Council works within its statutory and

regulatory powers. In this particular case, if there are any demonstrable breaches of planning control identified, the council will investigate accordingly and take any appropriate enforceable action.

**7. From Anthony Fairclough  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

**Question**

Please could the Cabinet Member confirm whether there are any plans currently under consideration to introduce two-way traffic on Sir Cyril Black Way and Hartfield Road? Similarly, are there plans under consideration to stop traffic turning left from Hartfield Road onto Kingston Road?

**Reply**

Merton has successfully secured £200,000 from Transport for London (TfL) to help develop future plans for the public realm and road network in Wimbledon Town Centre, which includes the possibility of two way working in Sir Cyril Black Way and Hartfield Road. This funding will be used to develop and refine proposals for the town centre previously put forward in the Council's Mini Holland bid to TfL in early 2014. The intention is to develop practicable options to put out to consultations with residents and businesses. The funding will be made available from April 2015 and engagement and public consultation will be a fundamental element of the scheme development process.

The Council has been approached by Tramlink to consider banning the left turn from Hartfield Road into Kingston Road to mitigate delays on Kingston Road resulting from the impact of an increase in tram frequencies (50% increase in both directions). The Council is awaiting the results of traffic modelling from Tramlink before considering this proposal.

**8. From Dominic Moass  
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

**Question**

Please break down the allocation of social housing in Merton by nationality. What is the current priority criteria for social housing in Merton and any minimum residency period?

**Reply**

We do not record housing allocations by nationality and this is not a requirement of housing authorities. However in Merton we have agreed as a condition of our allocations policy that we will only allocate housing to people who have lived in the borough for a year or more as we think it is important to help local people to find an affordable place to live in the borough where we can. Unfortunately this government's shocking lack of investment in affordable house building, their recent

decision to allow big developers to get away with not contributing to affordable housing, and their plans to deplete housing associations' stock of affordable homes, makes this increasingly difficult.

The rules governing the allocation of housing association homes in the borough are set out in the Housing Register and Nominations Policy which is a public document which the public can access via the internet.

**9. From Tony Burton  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

**Question**

The Heritage and Design Working Group agreed a number of additions to the local list last year. When will the council adopt these additions and update the local list?

**Reply**

The Council have agreed to proceed with the proposed additions to the Local List and have prepared reports for the Council's internal processes. We will be completing this work during February and hope to formalise the listings in March. 2015.

**10. From Richard Hilton  
To the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Safety and Equalities**

**Question**

Following the recent and horrific attacks in Paris, what action is the Council taking in conjunction with Merton MPS (police) both in schools and within the wider community to safeguard local residents and combat extremism?

**Reply**

Merton is a place where people from different backgrounds have lived and worked together harmoniously for many years. We continue to work in partnership to maintain good community relations and enjoy the benefits of being a cohesive borough.

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

Additionally there are a number of activities that the council is committed to on an on-going basis that contribute to promoting community cohesion. These include:

- being a signatory of the Armed Forces Community Covenant,
- commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day



- celebrating Black History Month, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender (LGBT)History Month
- supporting the Celebrating Age Festival

These events are an opportunity for people of different back grounds to come together to celebrate and get a better understanding of others.

The council also facilitates the Inter Faith Forum, LGBT Forum and Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minorities. Thus good relationships have been established with community representatives who may be called upon when a community impact assessment is required. These forums also give the wider community an opportunity to inform policy and practise and feed into the community tension monitoring process.

**11. From Nick O’Gorman  
To the Cabinet Member for Education**

**Question**

What plans if any does the council have for a new secondary school? Has a site been identified and will the Council support a new Grammar School?

**Reply**

The administration is clear that a new secondary school is required to meet the rising demand for places that will flow from the borough’s already expanded primary school sector. It also considers that facilitating a secondary school established by a high quality education provider with a proven track record, funded by central government, is the most effective and affordable way to do this within the current context. The council’s administration has, therefore, encouraged the Harris Federation to submit a bid through the government’s Free School programme and we are optimistic that it will be successful when the next round of schools are announced for ‘pre-opening’ before the end of March.

The application process is that the Department for Education first considers ‘pre-opening’ approval and, subsequently, works with the approved provider and local authority to identify potential sites. The position on a site will, therefore, not be clear until later in the year. However, the council will use its best endeavours to assist this process to ensure the school can open.

The new school will not be a Grammar School. Even if it were legal to do so, the current administration would not support such a school as we wish to ensure local schools are open to pupils of all backgrounds and abilities. Harris Wimbledon would provide stretching targets and expectations of high achievement for all pupils, including implementation of the Harris Federation’s established gifted and talented programme.

**12. From Sandra Vogel  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

**Question**

Identically worded reports to Planning Committees on 13/11/2014, 11/12/2014 and 15/01 2015 said an enforcement notice gave the Burn Bullock owner two weeks to remove cars from the pub's rear car park. The cars are still there. When was the deadline and when will the council take action?

**Reply**

This was an oversight and the report should have been updated. We have been informed that the individual selling the cars has been on hospital admission for some time and that is why the cars have not been removed from the car park. The option left to the Council is to prosecute the landlords and or/ occupier for non-compliance as they are in control of the land to be able to carry out the required works. Prosecution will now be pursued subject legal advice confirming that such action would satisfy the public interest requirement.

**13. From John Davis  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

**Question**

What was the financial value - in total, and broken-down by individual open spaces - to Merton Council of the volunteer contribution made by Friends and other community groups in the assisted maintenance of green spaces for the 2013/14 and 2012/13 financial years?

**Reply**

The Council does not record volunteer input information as, with some 34 recognised friends groups with a total membership measured in thousands, this would be a major task to coordinate.

Volunteers make valuable contributions in a number of ways to the management of parks and open spaces, some through means that we are aware of, such as gate locking and one-off practical events, but our friends groups work independently of the Council and do not necessarily require the assistance of, or notify Council officers of all of their activities and inputs. Some indeed, simply contribute on their daily visits to their local park by collecting litter, for example; watering young trees in high summer; managing information boards, removing fly-posters and the like.

Whereas there is no compulsion to do so, it would be possible for friends groups to collect and supply this information themselves. However, only one group currently does so to the best of our knowledge and that has occurred principally because this is a condition of a grant. That group is the Friends of South Park Gardens and in the

calendar year 2013 this group contributed 732 hours to the management of the park. Assuming a rate of £7.14 per hour, this equates to a value of £5,226. Extrapolating this across the borough, the annual contribution of friends and community groups is perhaps in the region of £50,000, but this figure cannot be substantiated based upon actual data and is an estimate only.

**14. From Andrew Boyce  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking**

**Question**

Why was it considered necessary for the Council to ignore its statutory obligations and not undertake any street cleansing activity on the High Path and Station Road in South Wimbledon between 23 December - 5 January, causing the Council's own litter bins to be overflowing in excess of ten days?

**Reply**

Street cleansing is scheduled to take place each working week. Due to the Christmas and New Year period street cleansing was not scheduled in High Path and Station Road for that period of four working days. However, a response team visited the area and was available to respond to any issues that needed to be addressed. On checking the Council's system no reports relating to street cleaning were received during the period mentioned.

Both roads were cleaned and checked on the scheduled day Monday 5 January 2015, and have been added for checking on a weekly basis to ensure the required standard of cleaning is maintained.

**Andrew Boyce**

Why didn't the response team go to visit the overflowing bin in question, or indeed why did the council need the public to remind it of its own statutory obligations, the incident not being an isolated incident in South Wimbledon? I ask Councillor Saunders to set out her own understanding of the council's statutory obligations for street cleansing and whether allowing a bin to overflow for ten days is in line with those statutory obligations?

**Councillor Saunders:**

I do understand the statutory obligations and when we're not meeting them. I believe we were meeting the statutory obligations, but that there were issues in your neck of the woods over the Christmas period. We are looking at how we can improve the services round there. At Christmas we were juggling resources and staff at that time. I am discussing what can be done with officers to ensure we can improve that area.

**15. From Jane Plant  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

**Question**

How many hectares of public open space, including cemeteries, allotments, highways verges and land transferred when Circle Housing took control of housing stock, are maintained by Greenspaces, what is spent annually doing so and how does this compare with the spend per hectare of the three other SLWP boroughs”?

**Reply**

The total area of open space managed by the Merton Greenspaces team, including highways verges, cemeteries, churchyards and allotments is 650.72 hectares.

This figure includes landholdings that are managed by the Greenspaces team, but not owned and funded by Merton Council.

Merton Council’s annual expenditure on the provision of local parks and green spaces in 2014/15 is £5,255,000.

The equivalent figure for Sutton Council is, we understand, £5,283,800.

The equivalent expenditure per hectare is:

London Borough of Merton:	£11,538
London Borough of Sutton:	£12,048

We do not have comparable and up-to-date information for these services within the Royal Borough of Kingston or the London Borough of Croydon at the present time. These two boroughs are not party to the current parks and green spaces service procurement exercise that both Merton and Sutton are actively engaged in.

It should be noted that not all local authorities deliver exactly the same services within the remit of their parks and open spaces service and so are not reliably comparable.

**Jane Plant:**

**Will the comparison that I asked for of the cost per hectare be made available for Sutton, Kingston and Croydon boroughs so that we can see the good value that Green Spaces currently provides?**

**Councillor Judge:**

**We have made available the information with respect of Sutton and our initial proposal is for joint tendering with Sutton. I don’t think we have the information in respect of Kingston or Croydon, at the moment. There is no doubt that, per hectare, our Green Spaces team provide very good value for money. However, like other boroughs we are facing horrendous cuts which are driving local governments**

effectively to dissolution over the next few years and so we are put in the positions, despite being effective, despite being efficient, of making difficult cuts across a range of services, so this is the situation we face. If we have any information in respect of other boroughs, we will be very happy to supply it.

**16. From Bob Grahame  
To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health**

**Question**

What is the current PFI debt of our local St Helier Hospital, and does the council agree that PFI deals have put additional financial pressure on NHS services within Merton.

**Reply**

I have been informed that there is no PFI debt at Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals Trust, and local NHS advice is that there are no significant PFI funded schemes in Merton.

In the past PFI has been used throughout the UK to ensure public services can improve our communities when the alternative was for capital investment in our public services to deteriorate.

**17. From Naomi Martin  
To the Leader of the Council**

**Question**

Does LBM have a Social Value statement and can the Council give an indication of how it intends to make use of the Public Services (Social Value) Act, effective from January 2013, to benefit local people, the economy and environment.

**Reply**

Social value is not a new concept to LBM and is something we take seriously. We are in the process of producing a council wide policy, together with associated procurement guidelines and training. We anticipate that the policy will be adopted and published by mid 2015.

**Naomi Martin:**

I ask for reassurance that in producing the council wide policy that is referred to in the answer, that the council will actively seek very valid contribution from local social enterprises and charities.

**Councillor Alambritis**

I assure we will do all we can to engage with social enterprises with the proviso that we do need to bow to value for money, we do need to have an eye to the European regulations on procurement but apart from that I will be urging my officers to look at the Public Services Social Value Act 2012 to see whether we can engage on the lines suggested by Naomi.

## Councillor Priority Ordinary Questions to Cabinet Members

### 1) From Councillor Imran Uddin to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Could the Cabinet Member outline how the budget gap has grown to £32m?

#### Reply

Since the council's business plan was agreed by full council in March 2014, the anticipated budget gap has increased by over £10m. 90% of this increase is as a result of estimated further cuts in our funding from central government, as the table below outlines:

#### SUMMARY OF CHANGES

##### Council 5 March 2014 to Cabinet 20 October 2014

	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000	2018/19 £'000
<b>Council 5 March 2014</b>	0	7,350	15,246	21,440
Inflation - Pay	30	75	120	165
Inflation - Prices	62	126	191	255
Pooled budgets - inflation	30	60	90	120
Replacement Savings	340	100	100	100
Income	669	1,339	2,008	2,676
Other	0	(2)	(4)	(8)
Capital financing costs	(444)	(1,159)	(1,981)	(2,346)
Settlement Funding Assessment	74	2,814	8,468	9,863
Council Tax Yield	(194)	(195)	(196)	(197)
Collection Fund	421	0	0	0
Use of Reserves	(255)	255	0	0
<b>Cabinet 20 October 2014</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>10,763</b>	<b>24,041</b>	<b>32,068</b>

#### Supplementary

I am sure the cabinet member shares my frustration that government has slashed money for local services even further than expected and I would like to ask him how difficult this further funding cut from Central Government will make it for Merton, in ensuring that those residents most in need get the help that they need.

## **Reply**

As explained, 90% of the increase in the savings we have to make come from the cuts in funding from Central Government and we have to save £30m per year in terms of the medium term financial strategy. Just to give members an idea of the scale of that, it is equivalent to an increase in council tax of 40%. It will not be easy to find those savings and I daresay that we may even fall out, but this is a business-like council with a business-like Leader and we will do our best to continue to provide good value public services for all our residents, including those most in need.

## **2) From Councillor Linda Taylor to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:**

What will the council do to ensure that adequate investment is made in infrastructure projects to address the increased pressure on parking/health care/school places and the risk of flooding that the current AFC Wimbledon/ Galliard Homes proposal for the Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium site would bring were it to be approved?

## **Reply**

The Council's planning policies seek to ensure that development is supported by necessary infrastructure. Planning permission for the AFC Wimbledon /Galliard Homes proposal would need to satisfy the council's policies that the infrastructure necessary to support this proposal can be provided. Since 2012, the council has been working with infrastructure providers, including Wandsworth Council (particularly on school places and transport), Thames Water, Transport for London, the Environment Agency and others to help identify infrastructure needs relating to the site. Now that a specific planning application has been submitted, the council continues to work with these providers and the applicants to assess the proposal. In addition, if planning permission were to be granted, the developer would pay the Community Infrastructure Levy once building work started which will also help to support infrastructure locally. Local communities will be able to propose directly how some of this funding should be used to support their local area.

## **Supplementary**

I note in the response that he says, in relation to the community infrastructure levy, that some of the funding should be used for the local area. My question is, will he make a commitment with regard to the proportion of the contribution that will be made available to be spent in the immediate area around the stadium should this proposal go ahead, and if not, I would like to know why not.

## **Reply**

15% of the CIL is going to be spent at the discretion of local councillors, so I won't make a commitment at this stage because it is going to be dependent on local



councillors talking to local residents' associations about what they want to see in their local area. I think it would be excellent if you, with the other Wimbledon councillors, were to consider with local residents what improvements you would like to see and then see what the costings are and whether they can be generated from the CIL from any successful application on that site, or other sites in the area.

**3) From Councillor Mary Curtin to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health**

Would the cabinet member join me in welcoming FISH to Lower Morden?

**Reply**

Yes, I am pleased that FISH have been able to offer a service in Lower Morden. I value what FISH do so any enhancement of their activity is to be welcomed. This is without any extra funding from the council, and shows that FISH along with other voluntary organisations are looking at how to sustain their services with potentially reduced public funding due to government funding cuts. I want to continue to explore with these organisations how we can do this, because the contribution of volunteers and voluntary organisations is so important.

**Supplementary**

Is the cabinet member aware of FILM (Friends of Lower Morden), and will she come to the introductory session in April which will launch our services to the over fifties in Lower Morden?

**Reply**

Yes, I am aware of FILM, which I think is a very clever name. I will come to the launch. I would like to congratulate you and the other trustees and express my appreciation to your staff and volunteers.

**4) From Councillor David Dean to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking:**

Can the Cabinet Member please tell me:

If the administration's unpopular wheelie bin pilot uses £48,000 of un-ring fenced funds, why couldn't the spare money be used to support the Adult Social Care budget?

Where is the written proof that Central Government gave Merton the other £67,000 specifically for this kind of waste pilot scheme?

## **Reply**

a) The £48000 has been allocated from an underspend in this year's Capital Programme for Traffic and Highways on bridges and structures. This will be noted as an adjustment in the Capital Programme. This money could not have been used for day to day Adult social care costs

b) The Authority was awarded £650,000 from the DCLG to incentivise and promote recycling. This is tied into a commitment to maintain a weekly collection. The implementation of the pilot scheme supports this objective and its use is entirely consistent with the purpose for which the fund was allocated

## **Supplementary**

Why is it that in question one, the cabinet member says we need £2.3m extra to spend in capital, yet we have £48,000 which has no home, which we spend on wheelie bins?

## **Reply**

You will have heard the financial responses at Scrutiny last night. You don't like wheelie bins. Let us go ahead with this pilot. This was discussed last night. I welcome you to be part of the pilot scheme.

## **5) From Councillor Katy Neep to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

Could the Cabinet Member update us on the council's vision for regeneration along the South Wimbledon/Colliers Wood corridor?

## **Reply**

The Council's vision for the wider Colliers Wood and South Wimbledon area is set out in our adopted Core Planning Strategy (2011) and highlights the area as one of our regeneration priorities. The area is one of the Mayor's areas for intensification and capable of accommodating growth in terms of jobs and housing.

Circle Housing Merton Priory are already advanced in the preparation of a masterplan to guide the potential regeneration of High Path estate. The Council has also undertaken its own consultations to understand residents views and ensure that any plans for the future fit with our Core Strategy and the views of residents.

- Merton High Street has already seen significant investment in the public realm and quality of the streetscape. Our investment includes:
- Creation of additional parking and servicing bays
- Environmental enhancements to the street entry points

- Provision of new cycle lane infrastructure
- Additional street tree planting
- Creation of a new public space at Wandle bridge (Sainsbury's M&S)
- Further works planned this year as part of Connecting Colliers Wood including enhancements to Wandle Bank, Wandle Park and Baltic Close.
- Resurfacing of Morden Road

The Council's economic development team have also been promoting the Merton Business Support Service and our Shopfront grants to businesses in the locality.

The council recognises the need for a strategic masterplan to guide development in the area and we have been working with the GLA to scope out the preparation of an area planning framework. This is tied to the outcome of the regeneration proposals at High Path as a major catalyst but we have also committed to working with Colliers Wood residents association to work on the preparation of a framework over the next 2 years.

We are also working on designs for improvements to South Wimbledon junction; which will be consulted on later in 2015.

### **Supplementary**

I was delighted to see that work has begun on the Colliers Wood tower. Would the cabinet member join me in congratulating officers, local ward members, Siobhain McDonagh and the Cabinet for all the work that they've done on getting this development moving, after much delay from the owner?

### **Reply**

It is noteworthy that after decades of dereliction we are getting movement on this building. We are looking at a resolution that will see redevelopment of the site - a far more attractive building. We are currently improving the public realm in Colliers Wood and it will be one of the most attractive places to live and work.

Congratulations do go to officers, local ward members, the MP for Mitcham and Morden and the Cabinet for this progress.

### **6) From Councillor Oonagh Moulton to the Leader of the Council :**

Has this Labour-run council abandoned its own 'July principles'?

### **Reply**

### **THIS QUESTION WILL BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE**

I'm surprised the Councillor is interested in our ground-breaking July principles, agreed by full council in July 2011 with the backing of Labour, the Merton Park

Independent Residents and the Liberal Democrats, given that her party, the Conservative group, did not vote for them. The council and the administration remain committed to these principles as a responsible way of dealing with the difficult decisions her colleagues in the Conservative-led government have forced onto local councils and onto our residents.

We are disappointed that the Conservatives have repeatedly refused to support these July principles, which have been the basis of our approach to making savings as a result of Government cuts, and have meant that we make smaller savings in the Community and Housing, and Children, Schools and Families Departments than elsewhere as a proportionate of their expenditure.

With the Conservative-led government slashing funding for local council services it is important that the council has an agreed approach to how we endeavour to continue to provide services to those most in need of our help at a time when central government seem intent, as the government's own Office for Budget Responsibility has confirmed, on taking the level of investment in public services back to the 1930s.

### **Supplementary**

I am surprised the Leader didn't answer my question himself, perhaps he would like to answer this one instead? Why is it that the Labour administration is making cuts to areas that their own national party said it wouldn't make? Would he clarify this discrepancy for the audience present?

### **Reply**

I am astonished that the Tories are so keen on the July Principles because they have always opposed them. They should remember why we had the July Principles, it is because of the scale of cuts from their government that we need to prioritise. The July Principles will ensure they are made fairly. Just imagine how much worse it would be if the Tories had their way and there were no July Principles. They say we are all in this together, but all we see from them is cuts and more cuts, tax cuts for millionaires and service cuts for people who need them most.

### **7) From Councillor Joan Henry to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health**

Could the Cabinet Member give us some more information on the four national awards Merton has recently been nominated for?

### **Reply**

The Local Government Chronicle awards have shortlisted Merton Council in four categories for our work around dementia, hoarding and preventing homelessness. Merton's Dementia Hub has been shortlisted in two categories, Commissioning Pioneer and Business Transformation. The first of its kind in London and one of the

first in the UK, Merton has commissioned the Alzheimer's Society to manage the hub as neither a traditional care home nor a respite/day centre, but a unique community based service for people with dementia, their family and carers, at any stage in their journey, providing access to different health and social care professionals all under one roof.

Merton's Hoarding Protocol is also the first of its kind in the country and has been shortlisted in the Innovation category, which Merton also won last year for its Merton Managed Accounts, a pre-paid card service which gives adult social care service users more control over their personal budgets. Developed in collaboration with local partners including Circle Housing Merton Priory, the hoarding protocol is unique in that it looks at practical actions to work with people who hoard, by assessing their needs and finding solutions through a multi-agency approach. Since its introduction in 2013, 25 customers have been supported, meaning they can now enjoy a better quality of life in their own home, as well as reducing the cost to the public purse.

Merton's work around preventing homelessness has also been shortlisted in the Business Transformation category. With 220 private sector households affected by the benefit cap, a sustainable solution to stop people becoming homeless needed to be found. With no access to housing support services and the threat of possible eviction, many were alone and unsure what to do. With an excellent track record as the London borough with the lowest number of people in temporary accommodation, Merton teamed up with the DWP to develop a unique, proactive and holistic approach to support these households, resulting in over £1million savings.

### **Supplementary**

I congratulate the cabinet member for the award for the dementia hub. Could she clarify how members can get involved in the ground breaking-project?

### **Reply**

I have already sent emails to everyone regarding a tour at the dementia hub. You are all very welcome to come and see the beautiful place and get familiar with it and the services, so you can tell people in your wards what is there. This year the first tour will be Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2.30 – 4pm and another one at the end of Feb and two further tours in March.

### **8) From Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking:**

Would the Cabinet Member please confirm how she intends to handle the preparations for the Christmas waste and recycling collections this year?

### **Reply**

We are reviewing the arrangements at present and no definite plans have yet been established. Every festive period the refuse collection arrangements are different to

the rest of the year to ensure our staff have much deserved time of with their loved ones. We do not intend to change that approach in 2015/16. In the lead up to Christmas & New Year 2014/15 the Council publicised the changed collection days in My Merton as well as in the local free newspaper. Information was also circulated using social media and published on Merton's website. Many Councillors also publicised the changes. The amount of waste collected in the last festive period was unprecedentedly high and this created additional workload for our staff. As a result we will be reviewing how to deal with any additional workload in future years.

### **Supplementary**

When you formalise your plans for Christmas, please could you let us know so we can inform our residents. Also, the putting adverts in newspapers that most people don't receive any more was a failure and can you let us know how the ad hoc arrangements in making additional collections cost, compared to the savings made by not communicating properly.

### **Reply**

I can't give the costings, but I can give you that later. I accept that what we did last Christmas was not what we had done before and when people's collection dates were moved forward, rather than one day later, it caused problems. We are starting to look at how we address this now. Perhaps we were naïve to think that putting it in the Guardian and My Merton would be good enough. We know it was an issue that we don't want to have happen again next year, so we are looking at it as a priority.

### **9) From Councillor Abigail Jones to the Cabinet Member for Finance**

Could the Cabinet Member update me on progress towards setting a balanced budget for the council?

### **Reply**

Cabinet and Scrutiny have received regular reports since October on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the progress on setting a balanced budget for the Council. The first report in October to Cabinet updated the MTFS with changes to some assumptions on inflation, government grant reductions, council tax yield and adding a further year. The capital programme was reviewed, with slippage, new schemes and deleted schemes. New savings targets were also set for departments, with weightings of 0.75, 1.0, 1.5 and 1.5 for Children's Schools & Families, Community & Housing, Environment & Regeneration & Corporate Services respectfully. There were also some revisions to previously agreed savings. All of these, along with the revised capital programme were presented to Scrutiny in November. A further report was taken to Cabinet in November with further revisions to previously agreed savings and then new savings were brought forward to December Cabinet, along with draft Equality Assessments. These were then

presented to scrutiny in January, along with the changes from November. There has been a further Cabinet report in January with an update on the financial settlement and Council Tax base. Whilst savings of £16.591m have been identified, there is still a gap of £15.377m up to 2018/19. However, current proposals, if accepted, would balance the budget for 2015/16 and 2016/17, but leave further savings to be found in 2017/18 and 2018/19. This is even after the use of earmarked reserves and capital receipts.

We would rather that the Government were not putting us in this position, but we will take a responsible view on this, and maintain a business-like approach and deliver a record fifth Council Tax freeze, despite the pressure of lost funds. This business-like approach is one of the reasons why residents continue to rate the council highly through the residents' survey results which show that the number of people who say that the Council is efficient and well run is at a record high.

### **Supplementary**

Can the cabinet member advise councillors what representations he has received regarding the 10% council tax cut that was promised by the Conservatives and what impact this will have had on the council's budget?

### **Reply**

It's not really my responsibility to help the Conservatives with their alternative budget, however I have received no representations from them about the £8m extra a year they would need to cut from council services to meet this reckless cut. However, what we plan to do is to have a council tax freeze for a record 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. In our view, an additional £8m a year cut would mean closing children's centre, libraries, swimming pools and even day centres. If you can come up with the services cuts you need, you will be closing day centres, it is not what the people voted for.

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## **Councillor Priority Strategic Theme Questions to Cabinet Members**

### **1) From Councillor Tobin Byers to the Leader of the Council**

Could the Leader outline how we have worked in partnership with the Merton Chamber of Commerce and Love Wimbledon as part of the Merton Partnership's strategic vision to improve our town centres.

#### **Reply**

The Council has been incredibly active in working with partners to ensure that our town centres remain successful and attractive to visitors, employers and investors.

We work with the Chamber of Commerce in running town centre business forums and supporting business through our Merton Business Support Service. The forums are focused on each of our 5 town centres as well as our three main industrial areas (South Wimbledon, Weir Road and Willow Lane) tackling issues such as parking, street cleaning and broadband connectivity.

We have recently held stakeholder focus groups relating to our Inward Investment and Retention strategy, which seeks to strengthen the employment offer in our town centres and industrial areas.

Also through the Merton Partnership; we have seen improvements in access to work through the Employment & Skills strategy and Economic wellbeing sub-group. We have secured employment opportunities for over 150 young people in our first year of activity.

We have worked very closely this year with LoveWimbledon is running the FutureWimbledon ideas competition. From this we have an exciting range of visions for Wimbledon from both professionals and the local community. We are establishing a 2 year programme of work to bring these visions to reality through the preparation of a masterplan, programme of cultural activities and as part of our inward investment work to promote Wimbledon as a place to invest for office HQs. We are also jointly championing Crossrail 2 and have commissioned work to establish the economic uplift of Crossrail 2

Our strong business partnerships with MCC and the borough's BIDs have contributed to Merton Council being voted 'Best Small Business Friendly Borough' by London Councils and the Federation of Small Businesses.

#### **Supplementary**

Can I congratulate the Leader and the Merton Partnership on the work that it does, and could he update us on the more recent successes for Wimbledon Town Centre?

#### **Reply**

There is excellent news for Wimbledon town centre, only last week we heard that Close Brothers in Tolworth are moving to Wimbledon, they are a Footsie 250 company. They have decided to base themselves in a Labour controlled area, with 600 staff, 60000sq ft, this bodes well for Wimbledon town centre. We will redouble our efforts for Mitcham, Colliers Wood, Raynes Park and Morden town centres.

## **2) From Councillor Adam Bush to the Cabinet Member for Finance:**

Given that the proposed £200,000 reduction to council day care services for disabled residents is due to the administration's failure to implement its own previously agreed savings, would the Cabinet Member agree that vulnerable people and the voluntary sector are paying the price for this administration's incompetence at delivering savings?

### **Reply**

This is not due to a failure to achieve a savings target, but due to prudent planning ahead. It is normal practice every year to review savings planned for subsequent years, re-assess our level of confidence in achieving them, and if necessary find alternative replacement savings. Changes may be required if external factors impact on a saving's deliverability, and this is especially relevant in the area of adult social care where contracts with suppliers can go up as well as down, or last minute Government policy changes can necessitate revisions.

Where such replacement savings are needed, we seek to minimise the impact they have. We also consult with the relevant Scrutiny bodies, and this saving was considered by Merton's Healthier Communities and Older People Scrutiny panel on 12 November and 14 January, and by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 25 November and 29 January. As the Council needs to find savings of £32m a year by 2019, and no alternative savings were agreed to replace this £800,000 saving over the period of the medium term financial strategy, Cabinet will need to consider on 16 February how to balance the Council's budget while providing value for money services despite cuts to the Council's funding from Central Government.

### **Supplementary**

Rather than criticising the government, why is he not following Labour run Hammersmith and Fulham by choosing to fund adult social care budgets by cutting the council marketing budget instead?

### **Reply**

When the government is cutting our budget by 40% and we have to make savings of £32m a year, we are having to make some very difficult decisions. What we have been doing has been appropriate for the savings we have got to make. As soon as it became apparent that we were not going to be able to reduce what we pay for care

packages, we came to Scrutiny with alternatives. It's been to Scrutiny in November and January. Obviously it's not something that everybody wants to do, but this is an example of us working closely with other councillors to do things in an appropriate way. While I wish we could live up to the standards of another Labour council, clearly much better than a conservative one, I still think that what we have done has been the right thing.

### **3) From Councillor Russell Makin to the Leader of the Council**

Can the Leader outline the work we do via the Merton Partnership with the Fire Service?

#### **Reply**

The Fire Service is a statutory partner for the Safer Merton Partnership and attend the Safer and Stronger Strategy Group and Executive Board meetings and sub groups. They are actively involved in the setting of partnership priorities and action plans. They attend local multiagency problem solving meetings and the fire misuse group meetings around Halloween and bonfire night. Their home safety checks greatly assist in reducing domestic fires and following training these visits assist fire officers to identify possible domestic abuse and vulnerable residents to signpost to support services.

#### **Supplementary**

Given the new fire station has moved from my ward to his ward, can he give any information, through his dealing with the partnership, what is promised for the old fire station site?

#### **Reply**

I am delighted about the move to my ward in terms of the fire station. It is an excellent ward in which to base yourself. The fire station opens next week. I know that I will be there. There will be discussions about the site being vacant. At the end of the day the owners will have a big say, but the heritage group are talking about ideas for a restaurant/café and the Partnership will engage and the Partnership has a presence in the Borough Commander. At the end of the day it is for the owners to decide what to do, but we will engage with residents and the heritage group as well.

### **4) From Councillor Najeeb Latif to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:**

As the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development, Regeneration and support of the Business community, can the Cabinet Member outline what plans, if any, the administration has to ensure Merton is taking full advantage of the greater

discretion now enjoyed by local authorities' in relation to business rates? What reassurance on this can he give to business ratepayers and residents both in Wimbledon Village and across the borough?

### **Reply**

From April 13 we introduced a new local discount for new and expanding businesses – the aim of the policy is to

- Support the attraction of new businesses ( and the associated investment and jobs) into the borough, particularly into the East and other part of the borough undergoing regeneration
- Help reduce the number of empty premises and thereby reverse the physical and economic decline of areas associated with high levels of vacant premises
- Help increase Council income generated from business rate in the medium and long term
- 

Businesses can receive between 20-100% discount on their rates for the first year and a further reduction in the second year.

Future Merton work closely with businesses to help them co-ordinate and develop their business and receive help through the local discount scheme.

Retail relief is being increased to £1,500 from 1 April 2015 for qualifying businesses and we will automatically grant this relief without the need for written applications.

Further information, and to apply, can be found at [merton.gov.uk/business/businessrates/businessratesrelief/localdiscount.htm](http://merton.gov.uk/business/businessrates/businessratesrelief/localdiscount.htm)

### **Supplementary**

As well as business rates, Village residents have also raised a concern about mansion tax to me. Given their policy on a mansion tax, bearing in mind their own Labour MPs are against it, can the cabinet member tell us with a straight yes or no answer, are you in favour or against the mansion tax?

### **Reply**

Am I in favour of Labour's policy that puts £2.5bn into the NHS every year, part of which is to be raised on a proper tax on residential assets worth more than £2m? I would say yes, because only Labour will protect the NHS and provide appropriate levels of funding and what we've seen under this government is a gradual run down of the NHS, so now we have an emergency situation where many Accident and Emergency departments are declaring major incidents. Labour will not allow this to continue and we will provide appropriate funding.

## **5) From Councillor Marsie Skeete to the Leader of the Council**

Will he outline some of the work we undertake in partnership with MVSC?

### **Reply**

The London Borough of Merton has a longstanding partnership relationship with MVSC.

The Merton Compact is recognised nationally as an excellent example of a local compact and has won 13 awards. MVSC was one of the key signatory organisations which signed up to the Compact in 2004 and has worked very closely with Merton Council and other partner agencies to promote a 'Compact way of working' in Merton. MVSC is represented on Merton's longstanding Compact Board. In 2014 Merton celebrated 10 years of Compact working in the borough and MVSC was a key partner involved in running the Compact 10 years on awards and ceremony, to further raise the profile of Compact working in Merton.

MVSC is a key member of the Merton Partnership. The Chief Executive of MVSC sits on the Merton Partnership Executive Board, as a senior representative for Merton's voluntary and community sector. MVSC also administers the INVOLVE Community Engagement Network (CEN), which elects representatives to sit on the various bodies within the Merton Partnership structure.

In November 2011, the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board were awarded Performance Reward Grant Funding, to set up a Community Health and Wellbeing Fund in east Merton. The fund was administered by MVSC, and is now at the end of a successful third year.

MVSC manages the Voluntary Sector Development Fund on behalf of Merton Council. This £12,000 annual fund aims to develop and improve the way groups deliver services to Merton residents. 21 applications were received for round three of the Fund at the end of 2014.

Merton Council works closely with MVSC to promote volunteering in Merton. The Merton Partnership Volunteering Awards takes place annually in the borough. In 2014, MVSC administered these awards on behalf of Merton Council. MVSC, working with the Council and other key partners has also the run the Shout About Your Volunteering (SAYV) project every year during National Volunteers' Week in June. The project aims to highlight the contributions Merton residents make through volunteering, and in doing so inspire others to volunteer. Approximately 40,000 people in Merton engage in 'formal' volunteering with many more volunteering informally. The overall value of volunteers to Merton is £100m.

### **Supplementary**

Will the Leader join me in thanking Ian Beaver for the work he has done as interim chief executive of MVSC and in welcoming the new CE Mr Khadiru Mahdi.

## **Reply**

It was very sad that we lost Chris Frost. We are hugely indebted to Ian Beaver for the work he has done in holding together MVSC and last week we welcomed Mr Mahdi who comes from Tower Hamlets with huge experience in the voluntary sector and I know he will be an excellent CE and the volunteering side of MVSC will continue. 40,000 volunteers at MVSC providing the equivalent of £100m to the borough. LBM is proud and I need to thank the administration before us for continuing that volunteering element as well and I do think we need to go from strength to strength on volunteering and the new CE will do an excellent job.

## **6) From Councillor James Holmes to the Cabinet Member for Education:**

Can the Cabinet Member please outline in detail what savings would be made through the closure of the Whatley Avenue Centre?

## **Reply**

The running costs of the Whatley Avenue Centre in 2013/14 (full year outturn) were as follows:

Premises costs: £139,999

Depreciation: £91,536

These costs don't include any of the elements of running a service within the building.

The current consultation about the future of the Adult Education in Merton is not about the site but instead about the delivery model for adult education in Merton. If the service is not changed and an alternative model not found then even a 10% cut in SFA grant could see the council liable for approximately £300,000 per year additional un-budgeted expenditure. This is funding that would need to be taken from other services.

## **Supplementary**

If the Whatley Avenue Centre does close, is it his view there will be a Harris School there?

## **Reply**

We are considering future options for the site. Harris have indicated their wish to use the site. We are concentrating first on the future of MAE.

## 7) From Councillor John Dehaney to the Leader of the Council

Can he outline how we have worked through the Merton Partnership with its volunteering strategy to keep all of our libraries open?

### Reply

Working with our colleagues at Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC) our Library & Heritage Service has established a pioneering volunteering model. In the last year it has seen over 530 volunteers contribute at least 37,000 hours of voluntary time to our libraries, the most significant levels in London. This contribution has not only assisted with keeping all of our libraries open but has also enabled us to extend opening hours at all of our sites whilst delivering ongoing efficiencies.

The model developed has been promoted as a best practice example by Volunteering England and our Library & Heritage Service and MVSC staff have developed best practice guidance in volunteering for other London boroughs. All of this has assisted with a continual increase in usage of our libraries and record satisfaction levels.

### Supplementary

I do understand we are the envy of other boroughs in using our volunteer strategy in supporting services. Could he confirm how we are helping the spread of best practice?

### Reply

We are spreading best practice by staying where we are in the civic centre and having a queue of local authorities coming to us. Their heads of libraries ask about our template and how we use the volunteers and the excellent work of Councillor Draper to get extended powers, improve our libraries, keeping every library open and those boroughs include Harrow and Lambeth, great Labour boroughs, but also include Barnet, a conservative borough. We will continue to do what we can to improve our libraries and provide best practice by extending the queue of councillors coming to see how we do it.

## 8) From Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Finance:

How many self-employed consultants have currently been engaged by the council for a period of a) 1 year or more; b) 2 years or more; and c) 3 years or more? Please provide a breakdown of which teams these are in.

### Reply

There are no consultants in Corporate Services, Environment and Regeneration or Community and Housing who have been engaged by the council for more than a year. Just one department, Children, Schools and Families, has any consultants engaged for this period, due to the nature of the work this department undertakes.

**Corporate Services:**

1 year or more – 0  
2 years or more – 0  
3 years or more – 0

**Communities & Housing:**

1 year or more – 0  
2 years or more – 0  
3 years or more – 0

**Environment & Regeneration:**

1 year or more – 0  
2 years or more – 0  
3 years or more – 0

**Children Schools & Families:**

1 year or more – 0  
2 years or more – 3  
3 years or more – 1

The individuals provide consultancy to schools on very specialist areas of the curriculum and matters related to health and safety of children in science and on trips. They are paid in the region of 5k per annum to do so. One is also commissioned to be the council's curriculum advisor on children home educated children the contract value for 2014/15 is c£14k.

**Supplementary**

Broadening out my question and not expecting an answer straight away, how many agency staff do we employ, not just consultants? Would you agree with me that the cost of agency staff is considerably higher than would normally be for permanent staff? In the light of last year's whistle blowing, are the administration acting on the recommendations in the employment of agency staff?

**Reply**

I don't have immediately to hand the answer. I would say that in terms of consultants we have done a lot of work to make this number appropriate. I note that back in the conservative administration there was one particular year when you spent nearly £2m on consultants. That figure has fallen considerably since then. There are particular issues with agency workers in areas such as social work and legal services where I believe where it's not always easy to recruit people at the going rate so sometimes you have to go to an agency, to ensure there is sufficient cover to provide safety for children in particular. That is something that has been



addressed through the general purposes committee under the sterling work of Councillor McCabe. It is something I hope we can work on a cross party basis to improve that particular situation.

## **9) From Councillor Stan Anderson to the Leader of the Council**

Could he outline the work the Merton Partnership is undertaking on the health and wellbeing strategy?

### **Reply**

The Health and wellbeing strategy is a statutory requirement of the health and Wellbeing Board, a sub-board of the Merton Partnership. The strategy attempts to align with the Merton Community Plan. The first strategy was produced in 2013 and we are now refreshing this, building on an agreement from the 2013 Merton Partnership conference to address the health inequalities in Merton. This conference agreed that all Merton residents should have access to a good life, made up of the following themes with some examples of underpinning areas to contribute to the theme:

#### **Theme 1 Best start in life – early years and achieving a strong educational base for children and young people**

- Childhood immunisations
- Promoting the emotional wellbeing and resilience of our children and young people.
- Promoting healthy lifestyles and choices.

#### **Theme 2: Good health – preventing illness, ensuring early detection of illness and accessing good quality healthcare.**

- Embed prevention into local public policy and make health everyone's business to ensure that influences on health make a positive impact
- Promote and support healthy settings such as workplaces and schools that enable individuals to make healthy choices
- Make every contact count, embedding prevention of ill health into the day to day role of frontline staff
- Enable and increase the number of adults making healthy life choices, including taking up clinical prevention services.
- Develop health services that meet the needs of residents of East Merton.
- Reduce Accident and Emergency attendances and emergency admissions for long-term conditions, such as diabetes and deliver care in the most appropriate location.
- Raise awareness of dementia prevention and enable those with dementia and their carers to have access to good quality, early diagnosis and support.

### **Theme 3 Good life skills, lifelong learning and good work.**

- Continue to reduce the number of JSA claimants and residents who are economically inactive.
- Encourage skills provision in growth sectors.
- Support local employers through business engagement activities to identify their business needs that will lead to local employment/ apprenticeship/ traineeship opportunities. (the Economic Wellbeing Group works closely with Merton Chamber of Commerce to understand what our local businesses want from their employees).
- Provide opportunities for more people to make a positive contribution to their own wellbeing through access to adult learning and development of skills.

### **Theme 4 Community participation and feeling safe**

(Safer Merton is also developing additional outcomes on this theme)

- Consider both higher crime and higher fear of crime data in the deployment of local Metropolitan police resources to areas of the borough in order to increase police visibility in these areas.
- Increase involvement of older people through volunteering
- Increase activity of community groups in leveraging funds into Merton for work around health and wellbeing.
- Build capacity across community groups to enable them to partner the public sector on health and wellbeing work.

### **Theme 5 A good natural and built environment**

- Embed positive health and wellbeing outcomes within major developments by making positive health impacts a condition of granting planning permission in Merton.
- Help tackle fuel poverty by promoting and managing collective energy switching programmes for Merton's residents.
- Increase the number of street trees and trees in parks.
- Provide opportunities for local communities to grow food to help encourage a healthy diet, community co-operation and local enterprise.
- Achieve the affordable housing targets set in our Local Plan.

The themes address the most significant influences on health, including education and income which are the largest influences. The health and Wellbeing Board has asked that the outcomes are focused on a few key areas that reduce health inequalities and are in need of improvement.

The task and finish group set up to develop this 3-year strategy brings together officers from across the Council who contribute to the other three sub-boards of the Merton partnership; i.e., Children's Trust Board, Safer, Stronger Merton and Sustainable Merton. A community consultation is planned for Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> February at Vestry Hall.

This work will be drawn together for approval by the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Merton Partnership, we expect in the spring of 2015

### **Supplementary**

I know the Leader publicly called for the chair of the CCG to step down and I see this has now happened. What are his hopes for the new chair and of ensuring the future of St Helier Hospital?

### **Reply**

I was informed of the resignation of Dr Howard Freeman and the appointment from 1.4.15 of Dr Andrew Murray to take the chair of Merton CCG. I've had a discussion with our CE, Ged Curran, and there will be an early meeting between myself and Dr Murray. In this meeting I will emphasise and hope that he will join with me in being a supporter of major hospitals, of A&Es and of maternity units and that they should stay en bloc and in situ, and whether the new chair of the CCG will from 1.4.15 join me in supporting St Helier Hospital and improvements in its services to residents and especially it's A&E and its maternity unit.

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