

# **Merton Council**

## **Council**

**4 February 2015**

### **Supplementary agenda**

20 Non Priority Questions to Cabinet Members and Responses

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## **NON- PRIORITY QUESTIONS**

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

Why was Notification of a Decision taken by the Chief Executive Phase 4 of the PV Installation Programme announced on 31 December and paper copies delivered by special courier to councillors that evening? Given that January 1st is a Bank Holiday, does the seven day notice apply on such a day? What was the cost in employing couriers specifically to deliver paper copies to councillors on 31 December?

#### **Reply**

The decision was taken by the Chief Executive on 31 December and published on the same day. The call-in deadline for key decisions is noon on the third working day after publication of the decision – noon on 6 January in this instance. As 1 January was a public holiday but there was no scheduled courier run until 8 January, therefore the notification of the decision had to be sent by special courier on 31 December. Each full delivery to councillors costs £225. The administration has explored opportunities to save money on courier deliveries by publishing decisions electronically in future, but unfortunately proposals to reduce courier expenditure have faced resistance from Members and have not been progressed. Under proposals being considered, instead of printing and delivering decisions, an email alert would be sent to all councillors (as at present) to let them know the decision had been published.

### **2) From Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking:**

What was the total tonnage of rubbish collected this year (2014-15) in Merton in a) the week before Christmas b) the week of Christmas; and c) the week after Christmas?

#### **Reply**

In total over the three weeks we collected 4,227 tonnes of waste. Please note that this excludes any waste directly delivered by our residents to our House hold Re-Use and recycling Centre in Garth rd.

- A) The week before Christmas – 1,506 tonnes
- B) The week of Christmas – 956 Tonnes (4 working days due to two bank holidays)
- C) The week after Christmas – 1,765 Tonnes

**3) From Councillor Stephen Crowe to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:**

Does Merton council have any plans to assess road usage and traffic flow, and, where it is deemed safe, to consider turning off its traffic lights between midnight and 6am, as they do in parts of Europe and North America to cut vehicle emissions and journey delays and save motorists both money and fuel?

**Reply**

Traffic signals in London are managed, operated and maintained by Transport for London (TfL). TfL has an active programme of removing Traffic Signals (with the consent of boroughs) where they are no longer required and where it is safe to do so. There is however no proposal currently to turn off Traffic signals after midnight due to safety concerns for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists. In addition, modern traffic signals are "intelligent" and responsive to traffic flow and will give priority to approaching vehicles if there is no traffic on the other arms of a junction.

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

Is the council's street cleaning schedule back to normal after the autumn tree leaves fall season?

**Reply**

Following the leaf fall season the service is back to its usual schedule and the vast majority of fallen leaves have been collected.

**5) From Councillor David Williams to the Leader of the Council:**

Would the Leader please list the meetings and correspondence he has had since the last meeting of the Council on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014 to save St Helier Hospital?

**Reply**

Since the last meeting I have noted the resignation of the Chair of the local CCG, subsequent to my calling for him to step down in recognition of the fact that the plans the CCG brought forward under his stewardship were comprehensively rejected by local residents at the ballot box. I plan to meet the new Chair of the CCG to make clear the depth of support from both the council and local residents for our local hospital. Since the last meeting I have been satisfied that there has been no further plans announced to close the accident and emergency or related services at St Helier hospital, no doubt due to the hugely successful grassroots and council backed campaign we ran against these proposals when they were brought forward.

**6) From Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:**

Is the Cabinet Member confident that strategies have been put in place to protect and enhance the lives of residents in Merton with physical and/or learning disabilities to ensure that they are not disadvantaged following proposed budget cuts by the council in this coming year and the subsequent three years?

**Reply**

I am confident that we are approaching a very difficult financial situation caused by this Tory-led government in a strategic and planned way, taking account of what works best both locally and nationally. Given the further £32m that the council has to save due to unprecedented cuts from central government, and the fact that adult social care is the council's biggest area of controllable spend, it is not possible to exempt adult social care from playing its part in finding these savings. However cabinet have agreed that children's services and adult social care should have less of a share of the cuts than other areas. As her colleagues in government must be aware, it is impossible to make savings on this scale without some disadvantage to our customers, but we will strive to minimise this impact and I call on her to do what she can to persuade her colleagues in government to stop cutting local council's funding and to recognise the damage they are doing to local public services across the entire country.

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

Why, in her previous response to me about street cleaning back in November, did she choose to skirt over her decision to end the payment of overtime for street cleaning on Sundays? When was she planning to tell residents about this further deterioration in their service? And can we all now expect to have to wade through town centres strewn with rubbish each Sunday because they haven't been cleaned from the night before?

**Reply**

There is no change to the budget for town centre street cleaning and we continue to undertake cleaning in the evening and at night on both Saturdays and Sundays. The cleanliness of the town centres is being monitored on a regular basis to ensure they are being maintained to acceptable standards. A response crew is utilised to deal with issues that are reported as well as undertaking scheduled work such as litter bin emptying and fly tip clearance.

**8) From Councillor David Williams to the Cabinet Member for Finance:**

What has been the cost to the Council (including rent and capital expenditure) of maintaining the Stouthall Environmental Education Centre since it was closed on 31 July 1998? What is the budget for 2015/16 including rent?

### **Reply**

Unfortunately data is not available as far back as 1998 as the council is not required to hold detailed records for that long a period. Between 2000/1 and Period 10 of 2014/15 net revenue expenditure totalled £817,141. Since 2007/8 capital expenditure has amounted to £525,234.

The revenue budget for 2015/16 including rent is £55,490, there is no capital budget and after nearly twenty years of marketing this very hard to let property the Council has successfully identified a potential tenant and look forward to a reduction in expenditure in future years which has been already built into the MTFs.

### **9) From Councillor Hamish Badenoch to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:**

In light of the Council's responsibility to scrutinise the performance of Circle Housing Merton Priory on behalf of Merton's residents, does the Cabinet Member agree that CHMP should stop delaying and with immediate effect publish the findings of the independent audit into alleged corruption and mismanagement within its repairs and maintenance service? Can he clarify to the Council whether or not he has yet seen a copy of the report himself?

### **Reply**

The Council has neither the responsibility nor the authority to formally monitor the operational performance of Circle Housing Merton Priory: this is a matter for their local Board, the Board of the Circle Group, and the regulator. I have not seen a copy of the independent audit, and its circulation is a matter for their Board. That said, I have with officers been paying close attention to certain key areas of their performance and have been wanting to see some clear evidence of improvement where needed, as we know these areas are of concern to local residents.

### **10) From Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:**

Can the Cabinet Member outline for all Members:

- a) what kind of activities currently take place in the High Path and All Saints day centres and is she confident that these will be able to be carried out by volunteers going forward?
- b) what does she plan to do with the clients if the appropriate volunteers do not come forward?

- c) what measures does she plan to take to deal with the issues of the carers when their loved ones are not receiving the support they deserve and the carers are not getting the vital respite they desperately need?

## Reply

- a) High Path and All Saints currently provide a range of activities for people including; computer skills, cookery, exercise classes, photography, music, dance, aromatherapy, WI Games, art, and some literacy and numeracy. There are also a number of community trips taking place, dependent on customer interest and weather conditions.

A number of volunteers currently support core staff to carry out sessions, and we are aiming to grow this number. Going forward we are confident that each customer will continue to have access to a range of activities in a safe and secure setting. Volunteers will enhance the choice but we will have enough core staff to not have to rely on them.

- b) As in a), we are devising programmes which will provide activities for customers provided by our core permanent staff. Volunteers will enhance the number of options available.
- c) We have listened to carers in our recent consultation process and will work with families to ensure that for those whose main priority is regular day time respite we will continue to provide this. To achieve this we will need to work as described, with potentially fewer options particularly in community activities.