

Merton Council

Council

15 April 2015

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Council 15 April 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 Richard Hilton
To the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

Question

The official report into Child Sexual Exploitation and 'grooming gangs' in Oxfordshire suggests this could happen in any town or any borough in the country. The Prime Minister is considering making social workers, police and Councillors personally criminally liable if they are aware of abuse and do not report it. What steps has she taken in Merton in anticipation of this potential law change and does she agree with it?

Reply

As no doubt Mr Hilton is aware, as yet there have been no changes to the law on this issue, with his former Conservative MP colleagues in the House of Commons, and their Liberal Democrat partners, voting against a recent Labour proposal to amend the Modern Slavery Bill to include a specific criminal offence of child exploitation.

Unfortunately this seems to demonstrate that the government is not at all serious about bringing in stronger laws to protect our children and young people.

Nonetheless, the council with key partners takes the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation extremely seriously. With partners we have developed and established a robust strategic response to identifying, assessing and intervening to reduce the risks for these vulnerable young people. The national profile of this serious matter has led to heightened scrutiny by officers and members. Senior officers across the partnerships maintain an overview of the strategic plans and also the individual case management of young people who are victims and at risk of sexual exploitation. The council endeavours to ensure that wherever young people are at risk of sexual exploitation that they are identified and assessed and kept safe.

In the absence of any legal changes from government, the council with partners nonetheless endeavours to ensure that all our staff and those of our partners are aware of their personal responsibility to report suspected abuse of children and how to go about doing this.

**2) From Dominic Moass
To the Leader**

Question

A report out in March by IFS suggests immigration has had a significant impact on council services leading to large cuts, particularly in London. Does he agree?

Reply

Sadly the biggest impact on council services and the significant cuts we are facing has been the Conservative and Liberal Democrat government's decision to cut local government funding to the bone.

There have indeed been demographic changes in London including an increasing number of older people who, after a lifetime of hard work and paying their taxes, are entitled to expect the council's adult social care services to look after them in their old age. However, the government's decision to cut council funding means that all councils in the country will struggle to maintain these essential services to older people.

Most economic analysis shows that this is not caused by immigration. This is because people who move into the UK from abroad contribute more to public services through taxation and the economic benefits of their hard work than they take out, as they tend to be in work and healthy. Although some politicians have sought to exploit immigration as an issue, in Merton we are proud of the contribution that has been made to our council services, the local NHS and our other public services, and to businesses large and small, by people born outside of the UK.

**3) From John Brereton
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking**

Question

Streets are becoming increasingly filthy with piles of rubbish and litter. Why does Labour Merton Council seem to ignore the issue?

What is the rate of Street Sweeping by ward and how does Clive Rd in Colliers Wood compare with the average?

Reply

Mr Brereton might like to note that in fact there has been an improvement in residents' satisfaction levels with the street cleansing service since 2009 when government data showed that, under the previous Conservative administration, Merton was officially the dirtiest borough in London. Thankfully, under this Labour administration we are no longer the dirtiest borough in London and in fact satisfaction with our street cleaning services has remained consistently positive. This is despite satisfaction levels across London reducing.

However, we are never complacent and we know that people who litter our streets are a concern for our residents which is why we spend more than £5m a year keeping the borough's streets clean. In total we sweep more than 375km of roads each week, emptying 700 bins as well as cleaning town centres daily.

Our enforcement team work to deter people from dropping litter in Merton's streets, the enforcement officers are responsible for a range of other duties to keep the borough looking clean and tidy including the removal of graffiti and fly-posting, dealing with abandoned vehicles. We also work with specialist environmental enforcement officers who concentrate on our town centres.

We have set up the Love Your Street campaign to boost the positive work the council does with residents, community groups, businesses and schools to tackle litter in Merton.

Clive Road is scheduled to be cleaned on a weekly basis in line with all roads in Merton which are scheduled to be cleaned at least once a week.

**4) From Nicholas O’Gorman
To the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services**

Question

What steps does Merton Council take to ensure the qualifications and identities of employees in Children's Social Services are legitimate?

Have there been incidents in the last 10 years of staff being found to have a false identity or fake qualifications, and were such incidents reported to Authorities? Have any Merton social workers been struck off?

Reply

he council carries out robust recruitment procedures including:

- employment references covering at least five years,
- sight of original certificates of qualifications, and registration with appropriate professional body
- original evidence of identity and right to work in the UK. This includes a passport and proof of National Insurance number.
- If born outside UK - sight of original visa and/or work permit DBS check.

We have not had any incidents of staff being found to have a false identity or fake qualifications, and hence none struck off as a result.

**5) From Mark Egerton
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

Question

Can the Leader confirm when the data gathering for local traffic flow for the proposed Plough Lane Football stadium development was carried out and if done during the off-peak summer months does he agree this could give an artificially low assessment of traffic flow impact to the surrounding area and an artificially high assessment of available on street parking?

Reply

Traffic count data associated with the proposed redevelopment of the Greyhound Stadium site was originally collected in July 2012, prior to the school holiday period. This consisted of Automatic Traffic Count (ATC) data (collected over 7 days) and classified turning counts (collected on one weekday and a Saturday).

To address any concerns with the validity of the data further ATC surveys were undertaken in February 2015 at the same locations as 2012.

The overall trend of the traffic flow data remains the same in both 2012 and 2015.

We do not believe that this provides an artificially low assessment of traffic flow.

**6) From Tony Burton
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

Question

To ask the Council when it will act on its commitment to compulsory purchase of the Burn Bullock site and to list the criteria on which it will base this decision?

Reply

The Council are in the process of taking enforcement action against the site owners of the Burn Bullock. Approvals have been granted for Listed Building consent for works to be carried out and the owner has another 4 months to conclude these works and officers have been pressing the site owner for their schedule of works.

The Council is also following up on development proposals that could revitalise the Burn Bullock. The Council will wish to fully exhaust all proactive and enabling options to secure the improvement and redevelopment of the site. Compulsory Purchase is a last resort, which we will only consider once all reasonable endeavours to redevelop the site have been exhausted.

**7) From Sandra Vogel
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

Question

Mitcham Carnival is Mitcham's premier event of the year. Is there going to be a parade this year and if not why?

Please provide all the parade's associated costs including payments to the police.

Reply

The police withdrew their traffic management support of this event in line with a review of their own risk and health and safety policies. This action resulted in a requirement for the event organiser to obtain and implement a Road Traffic Order and manage the operation of that on the day. The financial and administrative implications of this were simply not manageable.

Associated costs of the parade when it was running were for officer and organising committee time. No payments were made to the police.

8) From Melanie Nunzet

To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Question

Will the Council provide a map to at least 1:2500 scale identifying land owned by the Mitcham Common Conservators, any adjoining land owned by Merton Council and the Metropolitan Open Land covering Mitcham Common?

Reply

The Mitcham Common Conservators have recently obtained permission from the Land Registry and Ordnance Survey to convert the Land Registry's plan showing the boundaries of the Common into a format which can be viewed by the public. This should be available at the Conservators' June meeting and will clarify the land ownership of Mitcham Common and its environs.

All of Mitcham Common is designated as Metropolitan Open Land.

9) From Ben Saunders

To the Cabinet Member for Finance

Question

Will the council reverse the announced £32m-a-year cuts if a Labour government is elected, and if so, to what extent?

Reply

Due to the Conservative and Liberal Democrat government's continued mismanagement of the country's finances, including doubling the size of the national debt and their inability to cut the deficit as they promised they would, any new government will face a difficult financial situation. However I am confident that a Labour government will take a sensible approach to the economy, paying down the debt in a structured way that reduces the impact on local services and allows fully funded investment in key areas of concern to residents.

After the global economic crisis of the late 2000s, Britain's economy was growing when the current Government took control. Sadly, their savage cuts stifled economic growth and the economy flatlined for too long. A Labour government will have to sort out that mess.

10) From Darren Stillwell

To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration

Question

To ask for a response as to whether the maintenance of Mitcham Common will be included in the proposals for contracting out parks and green space maintenance across Merton?

Reply

Mitcham Common is managed by the Mitcham Common Conservators and although Merton Council acts as their agent, it is for the Conservators to determine whether they wish to have the Common included in any future grounds maintenance contract. The Conservators have discussed the matter but have not yet taken a decision.

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Councillor Priority Questions to Cabinet Members

1. From Cllr Marsie Skeete to the Cabinet Member for Education:

Can the Cabinet Member update me on progress in expanding Dundonald school so more local children in Wimbledon get the chance to go to this excellent local school?

Reply

I am pleased to confirm that tomorrow (16 April) the council will be offering an additional 30 reception year places at Dundonald Primary School, and this will be repeated year-on-year as the school expands from 210 to 420 school places.

To provide the additional buildings including re-configuration of Dundonald Recreation ground space, we have now completed the first phase of works to relocate the children's public playground and multi sports (tennis courts) area, Both will be further extended by a third at the end of the project when the existing dilapidated recreation ground pavilion will be demolished. The next, main phase, is due to start shortly, and has been contracted to budget. This is to provide the extended school facilities and replacement pavilion facility.

2. From Councillor Michael Bull to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:

Can the Cabinet Member commit to the resurfacing of the Apostles roads by 2018

Reply

There are approximately 1200 roads in the borough. A prioritisation model, which includes factors such as engineer's assessment, condition survey data, past reactive maintenance expenditure, traffic generators etc. is used to develop the yearly carriageway and footway programme. The model ranks the roads in priority order as shown below. Current funding levels permit only an average of 25 carriageway and 10 to 15 footway schemes per year.

Road Name	Carriageway Ranking Highest number = best condition	Footway Ranking Highest number = best condition
Bronson Road	960 (Resurfaced in December 2014)	436
Chestnut Road	351	740
Sydney Road	585	570
Dorien Road	112 (Resurfaced in May 2011)	554

Dupont Road	129	529
Edna Road	24 (Likely to be resurfaced in 2015/16)	207
Carlton Park Avenue	701	227
Vernon Avenue	120	211
Prince George's Avenue	243	426
Aston Road	304	340
Clifton Road	270	715
Gore Road	97 (likely to be resurfaced in 2018/19)	403

We have over 1200 roads in Merton, and we have to prioritise our investment. We now do this on a four year rolling programme which is updated annually using new highway condition information. This we use to ensure we can allocate resources more effectively and give residents advance notice of planned works.

In the Apostles roads, the following streets are included in our four year investment programme:

- Edna Road (2015-16)
- Gore Road (2018-19)

In addition to this; the following roads in the area have already benefited from resurfacing:

- Dorien Road – Completed May 2011
- Bronson Road Completed December 2014

This is also in addition to the significant investment in the town centre as a result of our commitment to the Raynes Park enhancement plan.

If there any specific issues that Cllr Bull thinks have been overlooked in the Apostles roads, we can address his concerns via the Highways team.

3. From Cllr Abigail Jones to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:

Now that the planning application has been agreed could he update me on the timeline for the delivery of a brand new library at Colliers Wood?

Reply

We are delighted that the residents of Colliers Wood will benefit from a new and improved library facility. The new library will increase customer floor space and ensure that a range of activities can take place to cater for different needs whilst ensuring a sustainable library for the future. We expect construction of the new library to begin towards the end of the summer with the new library opening mid-year 2017. During the development period temporary facilities will be open in the local area. We are currently finalising our plans for temporary library facilities and will be speaking to residents groups shortly.

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

How is the council addressing the waste collection issues for flats in order to improve recycling outcomes?

Reply

We regularly work with individual blocks of flats and their resident associations to see how we can help improve recycling opportunities and participation.

In order to increase recycling and reduce disposal cost the food waste service was expanded borough wide under the current administration, including being rolled out to incorporate collections from flats.

Through a range of communication initiatives and community events, residents have also been encouraged to sign up to our Mega Recycling scheme. This can be done either online or by post. Those registering are entered into a prize draw, with a top prize of £250 cash and 10 prizes of £100 every month, for individual households. There are also separate prizes for blocks of flats and larger estates.

In October 2014 prizes were given to the estates that sign up the greatest proportion of residents. In order to not disadvantage smaller developments separate prize draws are in place. In total £18,000 prize money was awarded to flats. These prizes are used to fund local environmental improvement schemes on the estates.

The scheme has been heavily promoted through printed media, including posters, leaflets, JC Decaux advertisement hoardings and press releases.

The project is currently working closely with resident group at Watermeads and High Path to increase recycling facility on these developments.

5. From Cllr Katy Neep to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services:

Can the Cabinet Member outline our performance in relation to ensuring our looked after children have the best chance to settle in a loving adopted family?

Reply

I am delighted to let the Councillor know that since 2010 we have improved our performance significantly. We have quite small numbers of Looked After Children (LAC) in Merton and we are grateful for this but our performance prior to 2010 was still not good enough. I am pleased to report that since then we have doubled the number of children adopted and reduced the average time for a child entering care and moving in with an adoptive family by almost half. This is a great achievement and is testament to the hard work of our staff in children schools and families. I also want to pay tribute to the invaluable work of our foster carers and of course to those families who welcome an adopted child into their lives.

The Councillor may be interested to know that adoption matching is undertaken at the earliest opportunity in Merton and our practice is good in this area. At this time all but one of our children who have a definite plan for adoption are matched or placed with adoptive carers.

LB Merton ensures a specific focus on achieving permanence for our looked after children. For all children who become looked after a Permanence and Care Planning Meeting (PCPM) is convened in the first 4-6 weeks of placement to ensure that we are considering permanence/adoption planning from the earliest opportunity – contingency planning that includes consideration of adoption is in place for all children aged 0-6 years. There is good liaison between the adoption team and social work team which means that matching of children with carers is taking place at the earliest opportunity. All children are allocated to a family finder who will use a number of resources to identify positive matches for our children (this includes our local Consortium, the National Adoption Database and the Adoption Link Service). Once a positive match/matches are identified a selection meeting will be held to formally consider and evidence how the potential adopter is able to meet the needs of the child. The match will then be formally agreed at our Adoption and Fostering Panel. In all cases a post adoption support plan will be put in place to ensure that the adoptive parent is aware of support to be provided/how to access support in the future.

6. From Councillor Adam Bush to the Cabinet Member for Finance:

Can the Cabinet Member please tell me:

1. How many senior officers are currently in temporary posts or acting/interim posts?
2. Which level 1, 2, 3 or 4 manager posts are currently filled in this way i.e. with temporary/acting/interim staff and the comparable daily rate at which each one is being remunerated?

3. What the total additional cost is to the Council of temporary and agency staff filling these posts rather than permanent staff members?

Reply

As Councillors can ask one question I will treat Cllr Bush's first question as a priority question, with the subsequent questions being dealt with as non priority questions in the usual manner.

20 senior officers are currently in temporary posts or acting up posts.

7. From Cllr Tobin Byers to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:

Could he update us on plans for the regeneration of Morden town centre so that it becomes a thriving centre for residents and businesses alike?

Reply

The Council's future Merton team are making great progress in preparing plans for Morden and we're gearing up towards a programme of community engagement to commence this summer – to redefine our shared vision for Morden.

We have embedded the regeneration of Morden Town Centre with our planning policies for Morden through the LDF Core Strategy (2011) Sites & Policies Plan (2014) and Morden Station Planning Brief (2014). We've been working with major land owners and TFL to develop credible plans and we've improved the Civic Centre building; reaffirming the Council's commitment to its presence in Morden.

Whilst the administration stand by the more Morden vision, as Cabinet Member for regeneration and environmental sustainability; I have been working closely with the Council's regeneration team to ensure that our vision for Morden is refreshed and relevant to London's growth agenda and that there is a clear, coordinated plan of investment for Morden over the next 4 years.

Morden is changing. Its residents are younger, the population more diverse and the number of people working in Morden has increased. Passenger numbers at Morden Station are now at 20,000 per day. The area has a lot of disposable income that should benefit the town centre; but we recognise that Morden is not an attractive town centre to enjoy. Morden has the potential to be better. We know that the town centre offer is not what residents and visitors expect and the look and feel of Morden's High Street is extremely dated.

Regeneration is complex, and requires a long term commitment. We stand by the vision for Morden and have been investing time and resource to ensure that plans are right for Morden, that they are funded and above all, that our vision is achievable, deliverable and credible.

In summary, the Council are working on the following key work streams:

MASTERPLANNING

£600,000 LBM investment in 2015/16 to 'Unlock Morden's Potential' This funding will go towards community engagement programmes, developing our vision, preparing a masterplan for the town centre and procuring a development partner for the town centre to commence the regeneration.

PUBLIC REALM

One of the biggest challenges in Morden town centre is London Road; one of TFL's major arterial roads. The Bus Station at Morden is also an unwelcoming environment to visitors and users of Morden. Overall, the design and quality of streets and public spaces in Morden is well under-par and We have spent the past 18 months preparing the evidence base an research that will support a £9m package of works by LBM and TFL to overhaul Morden's public realm. We're proposing to reduce the dominance of traffic, remove the gyratory, create new public spaces and achieve a step-change in the quality of Morden's High Street. There's a lot of testing still to do and we'll consult on options before the Major Scheme Bid is submitted to TFL in August 2015. If approved, we hope to deliver the improvements in 2017/18.

DEVELOPMENTS

£42m funding bid to the Mayor of London's Housing Zone Programme. This project could provide a significant injection of funding to speed up the regeneration of Morden, focusing on housing growth and mixed-use development on the Morden Station site as well as the Council's own commercial land-holdings in the town centre. This funding will not come directly to the Council; but be made available to developers to fast-track delivery of the regeneration proposals. Feedback on this bid in summer 2015 will strongly influence our developer selection options.

Morden Station Development

From 2012-2013; we've worked with TFL to agree a development brief that will guide the redevelopment of the Morden Station site. Morden Station is the catalyst to reinvigorate the town centre and our plans will provide new retail, restaurants, public spaces and much needed housing for the town centre. We're now working with TFL to identify a development partner for Morden Station. TFL have confirmed (noted in the Financial Times) that they are procuring development partners for a range of sites in London; of which Morden is one. Formal announcements are expected in Autumn 2015, with detailed proposals and planning applications anticipated late 2016.

www.merton.gov.uk/moreMorden

Morden Park Leisure Centre

The future of Morden Park Pool has been a concern for local residents and users in recent years. We have continued to carry out minor repairs to keep this facility operating for a few more years than we originally anticipated, but now recognise it needs to be replaced.

We will be drawing up plans and proposals for a new family friendly leisure facility that all can use. We will keep you up to date with our progress via the web and local

media. We would encourage you to have your say and to look forward to brand new leisure facilities in 2018.

www.leisureformorden.com/

Tramlink Extension

In July and August 2014, Merton and Sutton Councils asked residents businesses and others what they thought of a proposed new Tramlink which would run between the existing tram stop at Morden Road via Morden town centre, St Helier Avenue and on to Sutton town centre.

Over 10,000 responses were received and the majority of respondents were in favour. The consultation reports were given to Transport for London to encourage the Mayor of London's support for the scheme.

The Mayor of London may decide to support further feasibility work to explore the potential for a Morden-Sutton Tramlink in more detail from 2015-16 onwards. If this happens, there would be further consultation on the details of the scheme once the feasibility work was completed.

www.merton.gov.uk/trams

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

What meetings or correspondence has the Cabinet Member had with the Car Club Coalition?

Reply

I am delighted to report that, as part of our involvement in London Councils, a working group has been established with individual boroughs and car club operators to look at how parking provision for car club vehicles can be simplified. London Councils' transport and environment committee, which Merton is represented on, has endorsed a new car club strategy for the capital, drawn up by the Car Club Coalition. Now that the strategy has been adopted I very much look forward to looking at more detailed borough level work in implementing the overall strategy in Merton.

9. From Cllr Joan Henry to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services:

Can the Cabinet Member outline the work we have done with other councils to tackle child exploitation?

Reply

The council has been involved in a recent 4 borough peer review of our work around Child Sexual Exploitation with the London Boroughs of Kingston, Richmond and Sutton. Our peer reviews were submitted to London Councils and have formed part of a London wide response to Child Sexual Exploitation. This has contributed to London wide proposals for improving cross borough working and sharing of

information and data. We regularly work with other local authorities where there are children placed by other local authorities in our area at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation, perhaps because they are running away or other vulnerabilities. Our local commissioned service to support young runaways provides support to young people from other local authorities who may be looked after in Merton. With partners and especially the Police we have used cross borough intelligence to improve the management of risk of young people. We remain committed to deepening our cross borough working with our neighbouring boroughs and this work will be undertaken on a strategic and operational level.

Councillor Priority Strategic Theme Questions to Cabinet Members

S1. From Cllr Ross Garrod to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Can the Cabinet Member outline how we can continue to support older people with disabilities, despite the reductions to our funding from central government?

Reply

The report in our council papers tonight gives an overview of how the council seeks to meet the needs of older people in our very challenging funding environment. I would draw Cllr Garrod's attention to certain key themes:

- Our consistent application of our value based use of resources framework, now used widely across England
- Our innovative prevention strategy, including Celebrating Age, our Ageing Well programme in partnership with the voluntary sector, our winning of Compact awards in this area, and the dementia Hub
- Our use of technology especially that provided by MASCOT to enable people to be safe in their own homes
- Our work with the provider market to ensure that we get good value for money while at the same time ensuring that local people can gain access to quality services
- Our use of self directed support, so that older people who choose to do so can use a direct payment to shape their own care, and with support mechanisms in place such as pre-paid cards and Merton Managed Accounts
- Our continued focus on safeguarding, including the pioneering multi-agency hoarding protocol where local people have been supported to live at home in a safer environment
- Our excellent work with our health partners, including our very good performance in enabling people to leave hospital when they are ready, and our establishing of 3 integrated locality teams.

It will be very difficult to give as much support as we would like to older people with disabilities with so much less funding, but I believe that we have the right strategic framework in place to make every pound count.

S2. From Councillor Charlie Chirico to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:

What housing schemes for over 55s in Merton is the Council planning to support/endorse over the next 12 months?

Reply

Funding for new affordable homes comes from the GLA and as a non stock owning housing authority the Council cannot bid directly to the GLA for funding. Instead it works with registered providers to develop new homes. During this bidding round our developing partners have chosen not to bid for developing supported specialist housing for older people as it does not meet their current priorities.

Nonetheless, Merton has a total of 35 older peoples sheltered housing schemes run by housing associations, in addition to three extra care schemes. This specialist accommodation comprises nearly 800 units in total and is well spread throughout the borough and when vacancies occur residents can be considered for these units , subject of course to the individual policies of partner housing associations.

We also consider the needs of older people living in Merton who choose to remain living in their homes and we provide support which includes technological and health and social care regimes and our aids and adaptations service, which allows people to stay in their homes longer. With 800 specialist units available and a significant proportion of older people preferring to remain in their own homes, we take the view that there is not necessarily clear evidence to develop additional sheltered accommodation for our residents at this time, even if the funding was available. Nonetheless we continually review both the need and the funding landscape for any opportunities that may present themselves in this regard.

S3. From Cllr Brenda Fraser to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Can the Cabinet Member outline whether she believes the funding to implement the new Care Act duties for Merton will be adequate to our needs?

Reply

It is very difficult to know whether the funding for 15/16 will be adequate, since there are a range of new duties for which demand and costs are uncertain. Bodies such as the Local Government Association and London Councils have expressed concern that the funding won't be enough. This is a national issue. All councils in England have agreed to collect and submit data on the costs of implementation so that this can be tracked. For the funding reforms from 2016 onwards the Department of Health has just finished consultation, and councils are about to model potential costs using a model developed by DH in partnership with councils.

S4. From Councillor Brian Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Would the Council support a project to enable Public Health to research the health profile of all older people in the Borough?

Reply

Public Health already researches the health profile of older people in Merton. The JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) is a Merton document that contains key information on our population profile to inform commissioning decisions. It also has a separate section on older adults where a set of age-related conditions are considered in more detail. The JSNA is a live document with a programme of continuous updates as new research is undertaken.

This includes a recently completed in-depth falls needs assessment, with another two health needs assessments currently underway that directly apply to our older populations, on dementia and neurological conditions. Previous work includes a detailed adult mental health needs assessment, where data was considered among other things, by working age and older adults. Summaries of this work will be included upon completion in the online JSNA www.merton.gov.uk/health-social-care/publichealth/jsna.htm

S5. From Cllr Sally Kenny to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Will the Cabinet Member join me in welcoming the new chair of the CCG to the job and will she ensure he is aware of the huge importance older people in Merton attach to the services on offer at St Helier hospital, including accident and emergency.

Reply

I welcome Dr Andrew Murray to the role of chair of the CCG. I am due to meet with him shortly and will ensure that the value that local people and this council place on St Helier Hospital is made abundantly clear to him, particularly in the light of the shocking relations this week about secret plans to close the hospital.

S6. From Councillor Jill West to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking:

Would the Cabinet Member tell me what arrangements the Council has put in place for older people regarding the pilot of wheeled bins in Mitcham?

Reply

The Council recognises that some residents have difficulty in presenting waste whether it is in a black bag or a wheeled bin and we have arrangements in place to support them through assisted collections.

Elderly and disabled residents who are unable to easily manoeuvre the wheelie bin will be eligible for an assisted collection. In these circumstances wheelie bins will be provided but the resident will not be required to present their bins on the kerbside for collection. The bins will be collected and returned to an agreed location.

In locations where space is restricted and the storage of the bins will restrict the disabled access the service will continue to provide a full collection service from black sacks and recycling boxes.

As part of the pilot scheme the service is monitoring the number of assisted collections required as a result of implementing wheelie bins. In line with current procedures each request for an assisted collection is reviewed and if applicable a site visit will be undertaken.

S7. From Cllr Mary Curtin to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Can she detail the services we are offering to dementia sufferers and their carers at our new award winning dementia hub.

Reply

The dementia hub has been highly commended for the innovative approach to providing care and support to dementia sufferers and their carers. Moving away from an outdated day centre style facility which is not necessarily the most helpful approach for this client group, the new facility aims to put the needs of service users and their carers at the heart of provision, building independence and peer support through a variety of different services both in the centre and in the community including:

- New weekly patient assessments in a more welcoming community facility as an alternative to acute settings
- Falls prevention group workshops
- Weekly memory triage clinic
- Weekly neuro psychology clinic
- IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) sessions which offer interventions for treating people with depression and anxiety disorders
- Gardening Club
- Record Club
- “Dementia cafés” which are peer support groups where service users meet as a small group to offer support over a cup of tea
- Chiropody
- Optician
- Dentist
- Hairdressing
- Massage and reflexology
- Carers groups during the day time and evening
- Group for people with early onset dementia
- Life After Diagnosis workshops for people with dementia
- Life After Diagnosis workshops for carers
- Singing for the Brain

Much of the work of the centre involves engaging people out in the community with “dementia cafes” at other community sites and home visits to service users and their carers. Two members of staff are Dementia Champions and provide Dementia Friends sessions at the Hub as well as various settings in the community. There is also a Connecting Communities Project Offer based at the Hub whose role is to engage with BAME communities.

This new approach to working with dementia sufferers and their carers has already been recognised as groundbreaking in its determination to listen to the needs of dementia services and their carers in developing services that deliver what they want.

S8. From Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Would the Council agree that the Government has the interests of older people high on its agenda and welcome the fact that funds have been provided to protect universal benefits for Merton's pensioners, including the Freedom Pass?

Reply

As Cllr Lewis-Lavender should be aware, the Freedom Pass is mainly paid for by the council and cost us c£9m last year, with a similar amount budgeted for next year. Sadly it in fact appears that her colleagues in this Conservative led-government do not care about older people in Merton based on the evidence of the huge cuts they have made to council services which will inevitably impact on older people, given the largest portion of council spending is in this area. It is truly unfortunate that Cllr Lewis-Lavender, who I know personally does care about older people, is not aware of the terrible impact her government is having on older people in Merton.

S9. From Cllr Pauline Cowper to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Can she update me on the performance of our award winning MASCOT service?

Reply

MASCOT continues to develop well, supporting older and vulnerable residents, as well as providing out of hours support to other parts of the Council. We now have 1496 Merton residents as customers receiving a monitor and response service, as well as contracts with a number of Housing Associations monitoring sheltered housing schemes. In the past three months MASCOT staff have made 432 responsive visits, including 320 cases where a customer has fallen. We have avoided an ambulance being called on 138 occasions.

Through the winter MASCOT utilised some extra health service funding to carry out the Winter Homes Healthy People Scheme, whereby staff visit older and vulnerable customers and ensured that all aspects of their heating systems worked properly as well as fitting monitors so staff are alerted should the temperature drop.

Another new development has been a service to support timely hospital discharges. This micro-environment service entails moving furniture to create space for a hospital bed if required, and installation of key safes as well as the usual alarm and monitors. MASCOT has also re-launched the handyman service with an increased emphasis on checking domestic appliances as well as Telecare equipment. From 1st April MASCOT is included in the Fairer Contributions Policy, making it easier for social services customers to have Telecare as part of their package of care.

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