

Merton Council Council

8 July 2015

Supplementary agenda

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COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 8 JULY 2015 ITEM 11 LABOUR AMENDMENT

Amend the motion as per the tracked changes below, with words underlined inserted and words struck through deleted:

Council notes that under the previous Conservative administration official government data showed that Merton was the dirtiest borough in London. Since 2010 however, the government's figures show that litter and detritus on Merton's streets has reduced significantly due to a more targeted approach.

~~This~~ However, this Council recognises that whilst satisfaction with street cleaning is consistently high, cleanliness of people littering the borough's streets is clearly a top concern for some residents ~~people across Merton~~, according to the latest Annual Residents' Survey. ~~Over~~ With council tax now receding as a concern due to the council's five year council tax freeze, over a third of residents now cite litter and dirt in the streets as their primary concern, which is a 10% increase over the last 2 years and the highest level for a decade where council tax and crime were consistently the biggest concerns.

This Council therefore welcomes the council's zero tolerance approach to litter and the Love Your Street campaign which is a comprehensive programme of initiatives and includes various clean up events arranged in the borough – both by the council and other community organisations and representatives - including as part of the recent Community Clear Up Day 2015, and pays tribute to the on going efforts of local campaigning groups, including Sustainable Merton and Merton Matters, which ~~who~~ – together with many other local residents – are working ~~to assist~~ in partnership with the council in addressing the problem of street cleanliness ~~people dropping litter~~ in the borough.

This Council is ~~however concerned~~ notes that:

- The council's zero tolerance approach to litter has included using specialist environmental enforcement officers to fine people who drop litter and cigarette butts in our town centres. Whilst in 2009/10 just 139 fixed penalty notices for littering were issued by the council this has risen to over 4,000 fixed penalty notices issued in 2014/15 to people who drop litter in our streets, with the service extended to parks and green spaces during the busy summer months;
- The council has invested in more productive and efficient street cleaning equipment including the new Glutton machines being operated across the borough and is introducing an improved approach to mechanical sweeping across the borough, particularly in cleansing hot spot areas;
- ~~Since October last year, there have been reductions made to the level of~~ The budget for a Sunday street cleaning service in Merton's town centres has not been reduced despite the significant cuts to the council's funding from central government;
- The overall number of street cleaners employed in Merton has reduced from 112 in 2010 to 103 today, as a result of the council adopting a more efficient way of working as part of the LEAN approach to making our services more

~~intelligence led. Yet, e~~Over the same period there has been a significant increase in the number of traffic wardens employed due to an increase in residents who want controlled parking zones on their streets which the council is under a duty to enforce where this is the will of the majority of residents;

- As a result of the need to find savings of £32m due to government cuts to our funding, a further 7 street cleaning staff are due to be cut in 2016-17 as part of the Business Plan 2015-19, but, with the decision to work with our neighbouring South London boroughs in order to engage an external firm to deliver these services on our behalf in the future, it is expected that the council will be able to save at least £1m whilst continuing to deliver the same standard of service to our residents;
- Dog waste bins are also set to be removed from pavements across the borough in 2016-17 and with significantly more despite the fact that fewer than half the residents asked in the latest Annual Residents' Survey were satisfied with the way in which Merton Council deals with dog fouling, we continue to improve this service by moving to a more efficient and effective "any bin will do" approach which has been supported by the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel;
- According to a recent Freedom of Information request, 21,700 people felt it necessary to contact the Council about street scene and waste issues last year, and we welcome this and have expanded the ways in which residents can contact us, including using our new smartphone app, LoveCleanStreets alone; and
- Concerns are consistently being raised with councillors as we rely on residents to be our eyes and ears to identify fly tips or where there is a build up of litter, and that the Council's stated policy to 'sweep every road once a week, twice if required' whilst 'town centres and main shopping parades should be swept daily Monday to Saturday' continues to be our policy, despite the significant increase in littering across the country as a whole which we need to respond to without any increase in funding and indeed with the opposite, a significant cut in our funding from central government. Nonetheless, whilst average levels of satisfaction with street cleaning for London have reduced, Merton's have increased.~~is visibly not being adhered to in practice, despite the increase in littering being experienced across the country.~~

~~Furthermore, this Council believes- notes that the level of missed waste collections continues to stand at just 0.05%, but that nonetheless it is accepted that the refuse receptacles currently in use are not fit for purpose, with black sacks being torn apart by foxes and refuse in the recycling receptacles being blown about by the wind. The Tidy Britain Group's analysis of our street litter found that 50% is as a result of our black sack and box collection regimes. Council therefore warmly welcomes the wheeled bin pilot in parts of Lavender ward and looks forward to assessing the results, noting that preliminary results show a 20% improvement in street cleanliness~~are also a factor contributing to the problem, since not only do additional resources have to be deployed to rectify the service failures reported, but this uncollected waste further adds to the detritus on Merton's streets.

This Council therefore resolves to call on Cabinet to:

- a) Look in detail at the results of the pilot and Scrutiny's deliberations into the potential benefits and/or disbenefits of a wheeled bin service, bearing in mind the need for any changes to offer value for money and cleaner streets;
- b) Continue to strenuously enforce fixed penalty notices for the minority of people who litter our streets;
- a)c) Continue to sweep the borough's streets according to the agreed policy in line with the resources allocated as part of successive Business Plans agreed by full council~~Reverse its previous decision and reintroduce street sweeping immediately after refuse collections;~~
- b)d) Reverse its previous decision and reintroduce a full~~Continue with the same level of Sunday street cleaning service in Merton's town centres as has been part of the agreed budget for a number of years;~~
- e)e) Seek to identify replacement additional efficiency savings over the coming months in order to achieve the total £32m of cuts required across the council as a result of the reduction in our funding from central government and where possible and in line with the July principles to that would protect Merton's street cleaning service by achieving economies of scale by working with our neighbouring boroughs via the South London Waste Partnership environmental services procurement;~~from the further cuts planned for 2016-17 e.g. by encouraging greater use of the 'Love Clean Streets' smartphone App;~~
- d)f) Conduct a full~~Continue to regularly review of the training and monitoring systems in place for frontline street cleaning staff to ensure that the Council's stated policies and agreed service levels are actually~~continue to be delivered on the ground;
- e)g) Join a~~Continue to work as part of the borough-wide, cross party anti-litter campaign~~ Love your Street as proposed by the council and the Merton Matters campaign group in order to discourage people from littering our streets;
- f)h) Strenuously~~Continue to strenuously~~ enforce fixed penalty notices for the minority of people who litter our streets; and
- g)i) Ensure~~In line with the budget agreed, continue to ensure that road gutters/gullies, which residents frequently complain remain filled with litter and dead leaves, are cleared on a regular basis.~~

Motion now to read:

Council notes that under the previous Conservative administration official government data showed that Merton was the dirtiest borough in London. Since 2010 however, the government's figures show that litter and detritus on Merton's streets has reduced significantly due to a more targeted approach.

However, this Council recognises that whilst satisfaction with street cleaning is consistently high, people littering the borough's streets is clearly a top concern for some residents, according to the latest Annual Residents' Survey. With council tax now receding as a concern due to the council's five year council tax freeze, over a third of residents now cite litter and dirt in the streets as their primary concern, which is a 10% increase over the last 2 years and the highest level for a decade where council tax and crime were consistently the biggest concerns.

This Council therefore welcomes the council's zero tolerance approach to litter and the Love Your Street campaign which is a comprehensive programme of initiatives and includes various clean up events arranged in the borough – both by the council and other community organisations and representatives - including as part of the recent Community Clear Up Day 2015, and pays tribute to the on going efforts of local campaigning groups, including Sustainable Merton and Merton Matters, who – together with many other local residents – are working in partnership with the council in addressing the problem of people dropping litter in the borough.

This Council notes that:

- The council's zero tolerance approach to litter has included using specialist environmental enforcement officers to fine people who drop litter and cigarette butts in our town centres. Whilst in 2009/10 just 139 fixed penalty notices for littering were issued by the council this has risen to over 4,000 fixed penalty notices issued in 2014/15 to people who drop litter in our streets, with the service extended to parks and green spaces during the busy summer months;
- The council has invested in more productive and efficient street cleaning equipment including the new Glutton machines being operated across the borough and is introducing an improved approach to mechanical sweeping across the borough, particularly in cleansing hot spot areas;
- The budget for a Sunday street cleaning service in Merton's town centres has not been reduced despite the significant cuts to the council's funding from central government;
- The overall number of street cleaners employed in Merton has reduced from 112 in 2010 to 103 today, as a result of the council adopting a more efficient way of working as part of the LEAN approach to making our services more intelligence led. Over the same period there has been a significant increase in the number of traffic wardens employed due to an increase in residents who want controlled parking zones on their streets which the council is under a duty to enforce where this is the will of the majority of residents;
- As a result of the need to find savings of £32m due to government cuts to our funding, a further 7 street cleaning staff are due to be cut in 2016-17 as part of the Business Plan 2015-19, but, with the decision to work with our neighbouring South London boroughs in order to engage an external firm to deliver these services on our behalf in the future, it is expected that the council will be able to save at least £1m whilst continuing to deliver the same standard of service to our residents;
- Dog waste bins are also set to be removed from pavements in 2016-17 and with significantly more residents asked in the latest Annual Residents' Survey satisfied with the way in which Merton Council deals with dog fouling, we continue to improve this service by moving to a more efficient and effective "any bin will do" approach which has been supported by the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel;
- According to a recent Freedom of Information request, 21,700 people felt it necessary to contact the Council about street scene and waste issues last year, and we welcome this and have expanded the ways in which residents can contact us, including using our new smartphone app, LoveCleanStreets ; and

- Concerns are consistently being raised with councillors as we rely on residents to be our eyes and ears to identify fly tips or where there is a build up of litter, and the Council's stated policy to 'sweep every road once a week, twice if required' whilst 'town centres and main shopping parades should be swept daily Monday to Saturday' continues to be our policy, despite the significant increase in littering across the country as a whole which we need to respond to without any increase in funding and indeed with the opposite, a significant cut in our funding from central government. Nonetheless, whilst average levels of satisfaction with street cleaning for London have reduced, Merton's have increased..

Furthermore, this Council notes that the level of missed waste collections continues to stand at just 0.05%, but that nonetheless it is accepted that the refuse receptacles currently in use are not fit for purpose, with black sacks being torn apart by foxes and refuse in the recycling receptacles being blown about by the wind. The Tidy Britain Group's analysis of our street litter found that 50% is as a result of our black sack and box collection regimes. Council therefore warmly welcomes the wheeled bin pilot in parts of Lavender ward and looks forward to assessing the results, noting that preliminary results show a 20% improvement in street cleanliness.

This Council therefore resolves to call on Cabinet to:

- a) Look in detail at the results of the pilot and Scrutiny's deliberations into the potential benefits and/or disbenefits of a wheeled bin service, bearing in mind the need for any changes to offer value for money and cleaner streets;
- b) Continue to strenuously enforce fixed penalty notices for the minority of people who litter our streets;
- c) Continue to sweep the borough's streets according to the agreed policy in line with the resources allocated as part of successive Business Plans agreed by full council;
- d) Continue with the same level of Sunday street cleaning service in Merton's town centres as has been part of the agreed budget for a number of years;
- e) Seek to identify additional efficiency savings over the coming months in order to achieve the total £32m of cuts required across the council as a result of the reduction in our funding from central government and where possible and in line with the July principles to protect Merton's street cleaning service by achieving economies of scale by working with our neighbouring boroughs via the South London Waste Partnership environmental services procurement;;
- f) Continue to regularly review the training and monitoring systems in place for frontline street cleaning staff to ensure that the Council's stated policies and agreed service levels continue to be delivered on the ground;
- g) Continue to work as part of the borough-wide, cross party anti-litter campaign Love your Street as proposed by the council and the Merton Matters campaign group in order to discourage people from littering our streets;
- h) Continue to strenuously enforce fixed penalty notices for the minority of people who litter our streets; and
- i) In line with the budget agreed, continue to ensure that road gutters/gullies, which residents frequently complain remain filled with litter and dead leaves, are cleared on a regular basis.

COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 8 JULY 2015
ITEM 12
LABOUR AMENDMENT

Amend the motion as per the tracked changes below, with words underlined inserted and words struck through deleted:

This Council shares public concern about travellers illegally occupying public green spaces and other public and private areas in the Borough.

Council thanks officers, the police and the courts on their recent work to move on travellers illegally camping on some of our parks and open spaces.

However, it is frequently the case that travellers evicted by the Council from one site then simply move on to occupy another site in the vicinity and current legislation means that the council's hands are often tied, unable to move people on without undertaking time consuming and costly welfare checks and legal processes. This has been going on for many months in and around Merton, usually at the expense of public funds where it is public land being occupied, although there have also been encroachments on private land where the landowner is responsible and the legal requirements for removal are less exacting.

The process of undertaking travellers' needs assessments and applying for court orders, as required by law, and injunctions is not only costly and time consuming for the authorities concerned but also causes a good deal of inconvenience and anxiety to the local residents, although this is not something that can be avoided given the current legal framework.

Council congratulates officers on the speed and efficiency with which they have returned affected parks to cleanliness, but notes that ~~§~~subsequent cleaning up and cost effective and appropriate securing of the sites after the travellers' eviction is only achieved by spending further tax payers' money and must be weighed up against the many other services the council is required to provide from an ever reducing funding pot.

The council has a statutory duty to assess the welfare needs of Travellers in its area, and in particular the welfare needs of Traveller children and young people. Evictions cannot be progressed until this process has been undertaken and any welfare needs assessed. However council notes that officers are carrying out a review of the welfare assessment procedure to identify whether there are ways of speeding up this process whilst continuing to abide by the legal requirements.

In addition, by their very nature, our parks and open spaces need to remain open and accessible to residents. Whilst the council uses a number of methods to seek to prevent illegal encampments on our parks and open spaces, this is difficult to achieve without stopping residents from accessing their local parks. The council therefore seeks to achieve a balance between actively discouraging illegal encampments and maintaining access for residents, in the knowledge that it is not possible to completely secure parks from those who are determined to set up illegal

encampments without affecting residents' rights of access to their local parks and open spaces.

Council notes the strong partnership approach to illegal encampments on our parks and open spaces between the council and the police service in Merton. This has helped speed up the eviction process and we are dependent on the police service's ability to continue to support us in this way, with reductions in police resources a potential threat to this partnership working.

This Council therefore resolves that it should:

- Continue to tTake a proactive approach to secure public parks in the borough by working closely with Friends groups, councillors and local residents on cost effective, practical and innovative solutions that help prevent illegal encampments whilst maintaining access for residents where possible;
- ~~Adopt~~ Continue to adopt a stronger stance in order permanently to prevent travellers from illegally occupying public parks and other public spaces in the future, bearing in mind the legal duties placed on the council to assess the welfare needs of Travellers and in particular Traveller children and young people;
- Continue to tTake full advantage of the summary recently published by the Government of the powers that public bodies, such as Merton, have to help them deal with unauthorised traveller encampments, bearing in mind that none of these powers are new, the appropriate powers are already in use by the council, and no new powers have been proposed by the government;
- With ward Councillors well placed to communicate directly with their residents at short notice, ~~C~~consider measures to improve communication with local residents when unauthorised encampments do occur, building on the clear and regular communications some of our Councillors have distributed to residents where such issues have arisen in their wards; and
- ~~Put into practice the~~Seek agreement with the police on changes to the protocol where efficiencies in the current system are identified through ~~outcomes of~~ the review of the welfare assessment procedure being carried out by officers ~~to which is seeking to~~ identify ways of speeding up the process whilst continuing to abide by all the legal requirements.

Motion now to read:

This Council shares public concern about travellers illegally occupying public green spaces and other public and private areas in the Borough.

Council thanks officers, the police and the courts on their recent work to move on travellers illegally camping on some of our parks and open spaces.

However, it is frequently the case that travellers evicted by the Council from one site then simply move on to occupy another site in the vicinity and current legislation means that the council's hands are often tied, unable to move people on without undertaking time consuming and costly welfare checks and legal processes. This has been going on for many months in and around Merton, usually at the expense of

public funds where it is public land being occupied, although there have also been encroachments on private land where the landowner is responsible and the legal requirements for removal are less exacting.

The process of undertaking travellers' needs assessments and applying for court orders, as required by law, is not only costly and time consuming for the authorities concerned but also causes a good deal of inconvenience and anxiety to the local residents, although this is not something that can be avoided given the current legal framework.

Council congratulates officers on the speed and efficiency with which they have returned affected parks to cleanliness, but notes that subsequent cleaning up and cost effective and appropriate securing of the sites after the travellers' eviction is only achieved by spending further tax payers' money and must be weighed up against the many other services the council is required to provide from an ever reducing funding pot.

The council has a statutory duty to assess the welfare needs of Travellers in its area, and in particular the welfare needs of Traveller children and young people. Evictions cannot be progressed until this process has been undertaken and any welfare needs assessed. However council notes that officers are carrying out a review of the welfare assessment procedure to identify whether there are ways of speeding up this process whilst continuing to abide by the legal requirements.

In addition, by their very nature, our parks and open spaces need to remain open and accessible to residents. Whilst the council uses a number of methods to seek to prevent illegal encampments on our parks and open spaces, this is difficult to achieve without stopping residents from accessing their local parks. The council therefore seeks to achieve a balance between actively discouraging illegal encampments and maintaining access for residents, in the knowledge that it is not possible to completely secure parks from those who are determined to set up illegal encampments without affecting residents' rights of access to their local parks and open spaces.

Council notes the strong partnership approach to illegal encampments on our parks and open spaces between the council and the police service in Merton. This has helped speed up the eviction process and we are dependent on the police service's ability to continue to support us in this way, with reductions in police resources a potential threat to this partnership working.

This Council therefore resolves that it should:

- Continue to take a proactive approach to secure public parks in the borough by working closely with Friends groups, councillors and local residents on cost effective, practical and innovative solutions that help prevent illegal encampments whilst maintaining access for residents where possible;
- Continue to adopt a strong stance in order permanently to prevent travellers from illegally occupying public parks and other public spaces in the future, bearing in mind the legal duties placed on the council to assess the welfare needs of Travellers and in particular Traveller children and young people;

- Continue to take full advantage of the summary recently published by the Government of the powers that public bodies, such as Merton, have to help them deal with unauthorised traveller encampments, bearing in mind that none of these powers are new, the appropriate powers are already in use by the council, and no new powers have been proposed by the government;
- With ward Councillors well placed to communicate directly with their residents at short notice, consider measures to improve communication with local residents when unauthorised encampments do occur, building on the clear and regular communications some of our Councillors have distributed to residents where such issues have arisen in their wards; and
- Seek agreement with the police on changes to the protocol where efficiencies in the current system are identified through the review of the welfare assessment procedure being carried out by officers which is seeking to identify ways of speeding up the process whilst continuing to abide by all the legal requirements.

COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 8 JULY 2015
ITEM 13
LABOUR AMENDMENT

Amend the motion as per the tracked changes below, with words underlined inserted and words struck through deleted:

Council notes that Merton's housing stock was transferred to a Housing Association under the previous Conservative administration. Circle Housing Merton Priory (CHMP) are independent of the council and they have full ownership of 9,000 former council homes.

On taking over the properties, Circle made a series of promises to residents in terms of the service they would offer as a landlord.

Unlike the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the Council does not have any regulatory powers over CHMP. Under the terms of the stock transfer agreement, CHMP is formally accountable to the council solely in the specific area of whether they deliver on the promises in the offer document at the time of the transfer and whether they keep to their side of the transfer agreement.

Nonetheless, this council believes it has a moral duty to do all it in its power to stand up for CHMP tenants, leaseholders and freeholders, notwithstanding the limited powers the council has in this regard. This is why in September last year the council succeeded in ensuring CHMP signed up to the 10 Commitments. These commitments include: "Circle Housing Merton Priory will continue to maintain the homes of residents across the three neighbourhoods throughout the planning process until regeneration starts, including ensuring a high quality responsive repairs service."

Council believes that stronger controls on Housing Associations are needed and that government should give local authorities robust powers to intervene where local Housing Associations are not performing or where they do not offer value for money for residents.

This Council notes with concern that it is now more than 9 months since an independent investigation was commissioned into the whistle blowing allegations of corruption and mismanagement within Circle Housing Merton Priory's (CHMP) repairs and maintenance service which looked at a sample of 25 properties.

Following pressure from residents, the Wimbledon Guardian and from local Councillors who called for an independent audit, This Council welcomes CHMP's admission that their repairs contractor, Keepmoat Property Services, has been overcharging for works and their announcement that they are now undertaking a wider investigation to assess the scale of overcharging and to identify ways of improving the system to stop contractors from overcharging.

However, despite the severity of the allegations and the number of people potentially affected, the full-initial audit report of 25 properties is still yet to be released to residents and councillors and no firm timetable for publication has been forthcoming.

There has been no update on when the full audit is expected to be completed and when it will be published.

Furthermore, ~~†~~This Council is disappointed with CHMP's continued inability to manage repairs and strongly believes that it is important to identify a way forward as Merton residents have had to put up with inadequate repairs for too long.

This Council takes seriously its ~~various~~ legal responsibilities, under the terms of the stock transfer agreement, to formally hold CHMP to account in the specific area of whether they deliver on the promises in the offer document at the time of the transfer and whether they keep to their side of the transfer agreement. However the council believes it also has a moral ~~and~~ duties to hold CHMP to account on behalf of all tenants, leaseholders and freeholders and therefore has:

- Introduced regular liaison meetings with the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture, the Director of Community and Housing, CHMP Managing Director, Circle Regional Director of Property Services and the council's Housing Relationship manager;
- Ensured that CHMP attended the June meeting of the council's Sustainable Communities Scrutiny panel for an update from CHMP on the stock transfer commitments and repairs;
- Required CHMP to produce a separate quarterly performance report to be available to the Sustainable Communities panel;
- Ensured, as part of their regeneration proposals, that CHMP signed up to a set of 10 Commitments which included continuing to offer a high quality responsive repairs service during the regeneration process.

However despite the above, the council has been clear with CHMP that their repairs service continues to underperform and let residents down. Council therefore:

- a) Calls on CHMP to take urgent steps to ensure the repair service is radically overhauled so that residents get the service they deserve and already pay for;
- b) Notes the Leader has invited Sir Robin Young and Senior Officers of Circle Merton Priory to a meeting to review how they are performing against the 10 Commitments, in particular in relation to ensuring a high quality responsive repairs service, and calls on them to address the urgent and historic cases that remain unresolved;
- b)c) Urges CHMP's senior officers to continue to attend the attend the next Sustainable Communities scrutiny panel as requested by the Chair to answer questions from councillors and residents on the issue of repairs;
- e)d) Demands the immediate publication by CHMP of the initial independent audit report on alleged fraud and repeated overcharging of residents by its repairs contractor, Keepmoat Property Services, and a timetable for the completion and publication of the full investigation;
- d)e) Requests that any other such investigations conducted in the future in relation to CHMP or any of its contractors, including by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), are published in a timely fashion to ensure full transparency and accountability; and

- f) Will continue to utilise the limited Calls on the Cabinet as a matter of urgency to set out clearly how best to use the legal powers available to the Council under the terms of the housing stock transfer agreement, and reiterates its commitment to safeguard the needs of residents on Merton's housing estates and hold CHMP to account on the quality of its repairs and maintenance service, particularly in light of the HCA Regulatory Notice served on Circle Anglia Limited in February 2015, and to continue to hold CHMP to account in relation to the promises they made to residents as part of the transfer agreement and the 10 Commitments they signed as part of the regeneration proposals, and asks Cabinet to look at the limited legal powers available to us as a local authority if CHMP fail to make changes and demonstrate real impact; and
- e)g) Calls on the government to ensure that local authorities have stronger powers to intervene in cases where Housing Associations are demonstrably not delivering for local residents.

Motion now to read:

Council notes that Merton's housing stock was transferred to a Housing Association under the previous Conservative administration. Circle Housing Merton Priory (CHMP) are independent of the council and they have full ownership of 9,000 former council homes.

On taking over the properties, Circle made a series of promises to residents in terms of the service they would offer as a landlord.

Unlike the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the Council does not have any regulatory powers over CHMP. Under the terms of the stock transfer agreement, CHMP is formally accountable to the council solely in the specific area of whether they deliver on the promises in the offer document at the time of the transfer and whether they keep to their side of the transfer agreement.

Nonetheless, this council believes it has a moral duty to do all it in its power to stand up for CHMP tenants, leaseholders and freeholders, notwithstanding the limited powers the council has in this regard. This is why in September last year the council succeeded in ensuring CHMP signed up to the 10 Commitments. These commitments include: "Circle Housing Merton Priory will continue to maintain the homes of residents across the three neighbourhoods throughout the planning process until regeneration starts, including ensuring a high quality responsive repairs service."

Council believes that stronger controls on Housing Associations are needed and that government should give local authorities robust powers to intervene where local Housing Associations are not performing or where they do not offer value for money for residents.

This Council notes with concern that it is now more than 9 months since an independent investigation was commissioned into the whistle blowing allegations of

corruption and mismanagement within Circle Housing Merton Priory's (CHMP) repairs and maintenance service which looked at a sample of 25 properties.

Following pressure from residents, the Wimbledon Guardian and from local Councillors who called for an independent audit, Council welcomes CHMP's admission that their repairs contractor, Keepmoat Property Services, has been overcharging for works and their announcement that they are now undertaking a wider investigation to assess the scale of overcharging and to identify ways of improving the system to stop contractors from overcharging.

However, despite the severity of the allegations and the number of people potentially affected, the initial audit report of 25 properties is still yet to be released to residents and councillors and no firm timetable for publication has been forthcoming. There has been no update on when the full audit is expected to be completed and when it will be published.

This Council is disappointed with CHMP's continued inability to manage repairs and strongly believes that it is important to identify a way forward as Merton residents have had to put up with inadequate repairs for too long.

This Council takes seriously its legal responsibility, under the terms of the stock transfer agreement, to formally hold CHMP to account in the specific area of whether they deliver on the promises in the offer document at the time of the transfer and whether they keep to their side of the transfer agreement. However the council believes it also has a moral duty to hold CHMP to account on behalf of all tenants, leaseholders and freeholders and therefore has:

- Introduced regular liaison meetings with the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture, the Director of Community and Housing, CHMP Managing Director, Circle Regional Director of Property Services and the council's Housing Relationship manager;
- Ensured that CHMP attended the June meeting of the council's Sustainable Communities Scrutiny panel for an update from CHMP on the stock transfer commitments and repairs;
- Required CHMP to produce a separate quarterly performance report to be available to the Sustainable Communities panel;
- Ensured, as part of their regeneration proposals, that CHMP signed up to a set of 10 Commitments which included continuing to offer a high quality responsive repairs service during the regeneration process.

However despite the above, the council has been clear with CHMP that their repairs service continues to underperform and let residents down. Council therefore:

- (a) Calls on CHMP to take urgent steps to ensure the repair service is radically overhauled so that residents get the service they deserve and already pay for;
- (b) Notes the Leader has invited Sir Robin Young and Senior Officers of Circle Merton Priory to a meeting to review how they are performing against the 10 Commitments, in particular in relation to ensuring a high quality responsive repairs service, and calls on them to address the urgent and historic cases that remain unresolved;

- (c) Urges CHMP's senior officers to continue to attend the Sustainable Communities scrutiny panel as requested by the Chair to answer questions from councillors and residents on the issue of repairs;
- (d) Demands the immediate publication by CHMP of the initial independent audit report on alleged fraud and repeated overcharging of residents by its repairs contractor, Keepmoat Property Services, and a timetable for the completion and publication of the full investigation;
- (e) Requests that any other such investigations conducted in the future in relation to CHMP or any of its contractors, including by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), are published in a timely fashion to ensure full transparency and accountability; and
- (f) Will continue to utilise the limited legal powers available to the Council under the terms of the housing stock transfer agreement, and reiterates its commitment to safeguard the needs of residents on Merton's housing estates and hold CHMP to account on the quality of its repairs and maintenance service, particularly in light of the HCA Regulatory Notice served on Circle Anglia Limited in February 2015, and to continue to hold CHMP to account in relation to the promises they made to residents as part of the transfer agreement and the 10 Commitments they signed as part of the regeneration proposals, and asks Cabinet to look at the limited legal powers available to us as a local authority if CHMP fail to make changes and demonstrate real impact; and
- (g) Calls on the government to ensure that local authorities have stronger powers to intervene in cases where Housing Associations are demonstrably not delivering for local residents.

