

# **Merton Council**

## **Council**

**9 September 2015**

### **Supplementary agenda**

- |    |  |         |
|----|--|---------|
| 6  | Public questions to cabinet members                                    | 1 - 18  |
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| 7  | Councillors' ordinary priority questions to cabinet members            | 19 - 28 |
|    | The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting  |         |
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|    | The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting. |         |

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# Agenda Item 6

**Council 9 September 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: Dr Simon Joseph MA BM FRCP FESC  
To the Cabinet Member for Environment Cleanliness and Parking**

**Question:**

Missed waste food collections recently have been left baking in the street in hot weather. Explanations were 'operational', then, generally, budget constraints, broken-down vehicles etc. No specific explanations, or for broken promises of collection 'within 24/48 hours'. What mechanisms ensure rapid collection, when missed, to prevent a public health hazard?  
(Ref Complaint: ER15S2010)

**Reply**

We apologise for the interruptions to the service recently, this has been caused by some unexpected vehicle breakdowns and reduced availability of HGV drivers.

Missed collection reports are logged onto the Council's Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) and the Council's waste department will normally respond within 24 hrs.

Where the service has experienced any operational difficulties the waste collection crews make radio contact with the office and alternative arrangements are made to collect the waste.

The council is investing in new technology to improve the process which will help us to better plan individual rounds and service recovery when vehicle breakdowns/accidents or staff availability cause an interruption to normal service.

**2) From: Guilliana Castle  
To the Cabinet Member for Environment Cleanliness and Parking**

**Question:**

How does Merton Council propose to deal with the horrendous and unhygienic litter problem in the borough?

**Reply**

We know that tackling the problem of people who drop litter on the streets is a priority for our residents and we spend more than £5m a year keeping the borough's streets clean. In total, more than 375km of roads each week are scheduled to be cleaned, and we empty 700 bins as well as cleaning town centres daily.

In order to meet our obligations to deal with litter we aim to maintain all residential streets to an acceptable standard of cleanliness. Streets are cleaned by a mixture of manually litter picking and sweeping the areas which need it.

There is an area response team to deal with other cleaning issues on the highway, such as fly tipping and removal of sweeper's bags.

We undertake weed control in Merton three times a year this involves spraying live weeds with non-residual chemicals. Roads are checked following the spray and

where there is evidence that the spray has not been effective the roads are re-sprayed.

Where we find or receive reports about littering or fly tipping we will attend to rectify.

Our enforcement team works 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 an environmental crime specialist who are concentrating on our Town Centres, helping to change the behaviour of those who litter our streets by imposing fixed penalty notices on those who drop litter.

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.

Satisfaction with street cleaning services is higher under the current administration compared with the previous Conservative administration, however we know we need to continue to focus in this area.

In addition to measuring resident satisfaction, four independent inspection surveys are carried out across the Borough in accordance with the NI 195 requirements. In 2014/15 the percentage of sites inspected that were found to be unsatisfactory with respect to litter was 9.36% compared to 14% in 2009/10. With respect to general detritus, 11.84% of sites were found to be unsatisfactory in 2014/15 compared to 32% in 2009/10 under the previous administration. Although we are seeing steady improvements in cleanliness and associated satisfaction with services we know there is more to be done to improve standards.

As part of a current wheelie bin trial in the Lavender Fields ward, we have we have regularly monitored the level of street litter. In this area the level of street cleansing has been greatly improved by c19% with an average of 10% of the area being below the acceptable standard, compared to an average of 29% below the acceptable level prior to the trial being implemented.

We have also invested in 5 new electric 'glutton' street sweeping machines that are improving standards and staff productivity in our main town centres. These machines have shown that they can cover greater ground in a shorter space of time, can access areas where alternative mechanical sweepers cannot and provide a better standard of cleaning.

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

**Question:**

To ask for a breakdown of the works required to fulfil the requirements of the listed building repair notice on the Burn Bullock, which of these works were completed by 3 August 2015, and an assessment of when the remaining works will be completed?

## Reply

Listed Building Consent was granted on 3rd March 2015 to cover the required works which involve repairs to:

- 1) The roof and rainwater goods,
- 2) Masonry, chimney and render repairs
- 3) Woodwork, glazing and
- 4) Both internal and external repairs.

There are 34 actions to be taken and a copy of the list is attached below for reference.

Works undertaken so far include repairing the flat roof, clearing rubbish from within the property, clearing and repairing the cellar, cleaning up and repairing a number of the external windows. It has been concluded that some of the works undertaken earlier this year are inconsistent with the required standard as the time there was insufficient supervision. Such works are to be re-checked under the supervision of a qualified contractor who has now submitted an application for an extension of in order to complete the works.

### Burn Bullock: Schedule of repairs for inclusion in Listed Building Repairs Notice

The Burn Bullock is now suffering from many years of persistent neglect. Basic repairs to stop water penetration have not been carried out as well as routine maintenance and now as a result, a substantial programme of repair and reinstatement is necessary. The grade II listed building is also now on the Heritage at Risk register.

The following works are considered to be necessary for the long term preservation of the Burn Bullock:

#### **1) Roof and rainwater goods**

1. All rainwater goods and valley gutters to be cleaned and repaired and reinstated where missing to ensure all water discharges directly into mains drainage channels or soakaways (as opposed to directly against the side of the building) – no. identified?
2. All tiled parts of roof to be repaired, with missing tiles replaced to ensure a completely watertight finish. Battens to be replaced where damaged or rotten
3. Using the principle of “conserve as found”, inspect and propose remedial works to defective roof timbers as necessary. Work to be approved by the Council before commencement.
4. Treat all timbers in roof as necessary against rot and infestation and ensure the roof space is well ventilated and free from animal and bird intrusion
5. All flat roofed sections to be repaired to ensure there is no water penetration
6. All ridge tiles to be repointed to ensure that they are sound and replaced where cracked or missing Lead roof on flat roofed section on south west elevation (over toilet block) to be replaced
7. Flat roof to cornice on north west elevation to be repaired to ensure protection of timber cornice below.
8. Roof and rainwater disposal to Doric Portico to be replaced to ensure protection of timber portico below.

#### **2). Masonry, Chimney and render repairs**

1. All chimney stacks to be investigated and full repairs to be carried out, including taking action to address the cracked brickwork.
2. Carefully remove cement flaunching surrounding chimney pots and replace with lime mortar.
3. Remove all cement pointing and replace with lime mortar.
4. All existing cement render to be removed and replaced using lime render.
5. Carry out full repairs to brick piers on south east elevation, removing cement mortar and taking the necessary preventative measures to stop further movement
6. Existing cement plinths need to be modified to ensure that underfloor ventilation is restored to the ground floor

### **3) Woodwork, glazing and external repairs**

1. All timber windows and doors to be refurbished, carefully removing and replacing sections of rotten timber, ensuring that all mechanisms are in good working order (ensuring that all historic ironmongery is retained and restored) and that all windows and doors are fully operable and lockable. All to be redecorated
2. All missing panes of glass to be replaced with specialist glass for restoration purposes
3. Timber cornice on North West elevation to be repaired with rotten timbers carefully removed and replaced where necessary and cornice redecorated
4. Timber portico on North West elevation to be repaired and redecorated following repairs to roof
5. Repair all stained glass windows using a specialist restoration contractor in conjunction with repairs to timber window frames
6. Where oak cills are present they should be stripped back and treated and not repainted

### **5) Internal repairs**

1. All rubbish to be removed from internal rooms to reduce the potential fire risk and avoid further accumulation of damp
2. Completely overhaul internal plumbing system ensuring that all plumbing is in good working order and that existing leaks are repaired and that there are no further water leaks likely to cause additional damage
3. Investigate the integrity of all floor and ceiling joists and floor boards, providing a condition report to the Council and carry out all works identified in the report

### **6) General standard of works**

1. All the above specified works are to be carried out in accordance with the following additional guidance:
2. Renders: All cement render should be carefully removed and replaced with lime render
3. Mortar: All cement mortar should be carefully removed and replaced with lime mortar
4. Glass: All replacement glass should be specialist glass for restoration purposes with a specification submitted to the Council for approval before work commences.
5. Paints: Oak cills and timbers that are to be left unpainted should be treated with an appropriate preservative. New paint should be specialist paint suitable for use on historic buildings and should be agreed with the Council before work commences

6. Ironmongery: All historic ironmongery should be retained and restored. Any new ironmongery should be historically accurate in term of design and materials
7. Rainwater goods: All new repairs or reinstatement of existing downpipes, gutters or hoppers should be carried out using cast iron. Existing cast iron rainwater goods should be refurbished in situ
8. Roof tiles: All replacement roof and ridge tiles should match the existing in terms of materials and appearance
9. Flat roofs: All areas of flat roof should be repaired, replaced or reinstated where missing on a like for like basis or using a lead substitute.

## 7) **Method**

A method statement for carrying out of the above works must be submitted to the Local Authority for approval prior to commencement.

During the course of the above works, regular access to the building for inspection of the works will be required by Council officers.

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**Flat roofs:** All areas of flat roof should be repaired, replaced or reinstated where missing on a like for like basis or using a lead substitute.

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During the course of the above works, regular access to the building for inspection of the works will be required by Council officers.

## 4) **From: Richard Hilton To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

### **Question:**

Could the Cabinet Member outline what if any due diligence is done to check the address declarations of those standing for election in Merton? Could he list the qualification criteria under which each elected Merton Councillor was entitled to stand?



## Reply

To stand for election as a councillor in a local government election, every candidate must complete a nomination paper, and a consent to nomination form. The Council carries out its duties in full by ensuring that all nomination papers are lawfully completed.

The nomination papers that Mr Hilton completed in order to stand as a candidate for the UK Independence Party contained all the relevant address qualifications for those standing for election. As he has forgotten, the qualifications are as follows:

- a) I am registered as a local government elector for the area of the London Borough named above in respect of (qualifying address in full).
- b) I have during the whole of the 12 months preceding that day or those days occupied as owner or tenant the following land or other premises in that area (description and address of land or premises).
- c) My principal or only place of work during those 12 months has been in that London Borough at (give address of place of work and, where appropriate, name of employer).
- d) I have during the whole of those 12 months resided in that area at (give address in full).

A candidate must meet one of the qualifications to validly stand, however a candidate who is qualified by more than one qualification may complete any of those that apply. All Merton councillors elected at the council elections held in May 2014 met one or more of the above qualifications.

In line with the law, all papers are available for public inspection until the day before the election, and are destroyed one year after the election. However, I am happy to reassure him that his own nomination papers were judged to have been lawfully completed. Unfortunately for him, of course, he was not subsequently elected, and indeed the electorate of Merton decided not to return any UKIP councillors.

There is no reason to believe that UKIP's failure to gain support was because of any shortcomings with the procedure for completing nomination papers, instead it was due to their unpopularity with the residents of Merton.

### **5) From: James Dey To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

#### **Question:**

Having asked for a breakdown of Council Tax summons costs claimed from each defendant, I received information that this funds 60% of the entire annual Council Tax recovery budget. Costs are supposed to be incurred, and are not penalties. How can Merton Council justify ripping off residents in this way?

#### **Reply**

We have a duty to collect Council Tax, and this includes taking reasonable recovery action when payments are not made. We try to minimise the cost of recovery as we do not wish those who do pay Council Tax to pay more for those who don't. The

summons costs have been considered by a Justice of the Peace at our local magistrates at Lavender Hill to be reasonable costs per item for those accounts where complaint to the Court has become necessary.

While it would be inappropriate to comment on individual cases, the best way of avoiding summons costs is to pay Council Tax as required, or to contact the Council as soon as you are aware you are getting into financial difficulties so that new payment arrangements can be made.

**6) From: Jane Plant  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

**Question:**

Merton Council plans to introduce pleached trees to Mitcham Fair Green. These seem totally inappropriate to the local context, and are notoriously expensive and demanding to maintain in the longer term. What assurances can Merton Council provide that it has appropriate funds for this plan in the long term?

**Reply**

We don't believe the pleached trees are inappropriate, they will be a landscape feature of the more urban, market square and will help frame the space as well as mitigate against wind which currently affects the Market Square. The design was developed in partnership with a Landscape Architect and has been part of the Rediscover Mitcham consultations.

Merton Council's Rediscover Mitcham project has set aside funds for, and is organising a maintenance regime for the Market Square pleached trees. This involves trimming twice a year and a watering regime by the contractor. Also structural soil will be used in the tree pits to assist with water retention and prevent over-compaction of the soil.

**7) From: John Y R Strover  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

**Question:**

Will Merton Council join Cricket Green and Longthornton Wards, the London Boroughs of Sutton, Kingston and Ealing, and the London Assembly in supporting the declaration of London as a National Park City (which requires no additional local authority expenditure)?

**Reply**

The contribution that parks make to the urban fabric and to the social and economic well-being of London is unquestionable. If such a project proved to be likely to significantly improve the extent or quality of green space, or make a real contribution to greening the city, then it would be worthy of Merton Council's support.

What is needed is a transformation of vision, prioritisation and funding for parks and open spaces in the capital. If the idea of a National Park City assisted in delivering that, it would unquestionably be a valuable development.

Having said that, London does not sit entirely comfortably within the existing portfolio of National Parks in the UK in that it would have no substantive powers and is very unlike established ideas of what a national park is or looks like. Furthermore, whereas there may be no demands for local authority funding at this juncture, there might be demands for such in the fullness of time. We would certainly be opposed to any such initiative if it frustrated efforts to repatriate the Lee Valley precept to Merton and our neighbouring boroughs for reinvestment within the Wandle Valley, for example.

In principle, therefore, the concept is one that the Council might be able to support, provided that the concerns stated are recognised and overcome.

**8) From: Giles Bailey  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

**Question:**

For years there has been persistent traffic congestion and poor air quality along Kingston Rd west of the Tramlink crossing. With the pending increase in Tramlink services, how will LB Merton expedite a traffic solution to this problem that prioritises safety, sustainable transport modes and air quality?

**Reply**

To address the increase in the number of trams and the potential impact on localised congestion on Kingston Rd, TfL have modelled a set of proposals that will minimise this impact. The proposals include modification to the signals; slight junction modification and re-positioning of Stop lines; banned movements (no right turn into Hartfield Rd from Kingston Rd (already banned except for buses in case of an emergency) and no left turn out of Hartfield Rd into Kingston Rd.

These proposals are subject to Council's consideration and consultation in due course.

**9) From: Adrian Cowdry  
To the Cabinet Member for The Leader**

**Question:**

Can the leader tell me when the public nuisance at 85 Kingsbridge Road, which was notified to you on the June 2015, will be stopped?

**Reply**

**ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND REGENERATION**

In 2014, the council's planning enforcement team investigated a complaint that an outbuilding at this address did not have planning consent. The outbuilding was subsequently found to fall within the owner's permitted development rights and the case was closed as there was no breach of planning control. The complaint about noise disturbance from early morning loading/unloading activities has been referred to the environmental health pollution team for investigation.

**Supplementary Question:**

Since June 2015 I have made many contacts with Merton councillors and officers over 85 Kingsbridge Road, over a secure garage that was built at the same time as the extension. Earlier this year there was a fight between several Polish fellows that was causing a nuisance. The fight ended in the police being called. The Polish men were under the influence of alcohol. The fight resulted in damage to the fence of 236 Lynmouth Avenue, and one of the cars parked in Salcombe Drive. The garage at the rear of 85 Kingsbridge Road was built separately from the property and is now being used as secure storage for the building company that made the extension. There are many builders accessing the garage seemingly with keys for the security gates which the residents of Lynmouth and Kingsbridge have paid for. The nuisance is such that the resident at 240 Lynmouth Avenue has had to at her own cost, replace tyres on her own car, indeed she is not the only one because of screws and nails from the builders' lack of attention when cleaning up after themselves. She's had to modify the access gate at the rear of the property at her own expense and I might add that witnesses have seen builders (intervention by mayor) urinating in the alley way, loading vehicles regularly before 7.30am, with equipment and supplies. How would the councillors and council officers like to be woken consistently before 7.30am by the builders loading their vehicles, or having their residential area turned into a building supplies depot? Our secure alley gates are now insecure because we do not know how many keys are being used by strangers. What immediate action can be taken?

**Reply**

The answer states that the noise problems he has referred to are being investigated ie early morning loading and unloading. The series of incidents he has described sound most unpleasant and unsavoury for residents. It would appear that the outbuilding has permitted development rights and the question that arises in my mind is whether the use of the outbuilding for commercial activity is actually a proper use within the planning permission. We will refer this back to planning enforcement officers, to see if this has been taken into account, because if there is a garage which is a residential garage being used commercially, this might well be inappropriate and something which planning can enforce against. I will put this forward.

**10) From: John Davis  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration****Question:**

With hoardings being removed from Mitcham Fair Green regeneration site, I note several mature trees have been removed which the planning permission said would be retained.

Why has Merton Council allowed this, and, using CAVAT calculations for trees lost, what mitigating action is being taken to provide equivalent value trees?

**Reply**

There has only been one tree removed that was intended to be retained. Unfortunately it was removed as it was damaged in a storm, was in bad health and had roots which would have been damaged by the foundations for the granite walls

and clock-tower foundations. This was the amelenchier tree and is being replaced with the same variety.

In the Fair Green, a total 14 trees have been removed (including the amelenchier) to be replaced by 27 new trees. These are:

15 mature or semi mature lime trees,  
1 liquidamber,  
1 amelenchier and

10 pleached trees for the Market Square

So in summary, 14 trees removed to be replaced by 27 new trees as mitigation.

It is important to remember that Fair Green is an urban greenspace and not an open natural landscape. It has to evolve and respond to changing town centre uses as well as being a feature of the pleasant attribute to Mitcham itself.

**11) From: E. P. Carter**

**To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking**

**Question:**

Regarding the last 30 reported fly-tips in Mitcham would you please let me know their precise locations? Are/were they on council or private land, the methods employed to report them and how long between reporting and clearing?

**Reply**

A separate list is below showing the exact locations of the last 30 fly tips reported as requested. All thirty fly tips were on Council Land. 24 were reported via the Councils Call Centre and 6 were reported on line. 12 were collected on the same day, 15 were collected with 24 hours and 3 were collected within 48 hours.

Location	Ward	Council land	Private	Reported Via	Date Reported	Date Cleared	Hours Taken
Willow Lane	Cricket Green	yes	no	SA	19.08.2015	20.08.2015	24
Elmhurst Avenue	Graveney	yes	no	CRM	20.08.2015	20.08.2015	0
61 Edenvale, CR4 2DP	Graveney	yes	no	CRM	20.08.2015	21.08.2015	24
59 Oakwood Avenue, CR4 3DQ	Lavender Fields	yes	no	CRM	21.08.2015	21.08.2015	0
73 Commonsides East, CR4 2QB	Pollards Hill	yes	no	CRM	21.08.2015	21.08.2015	0
63 Heaton Road, CR4 2BW	Graveney	yes	no	CRM	21.08.2015	21.08.2015	0
79 Deer Park Gardens, CR4 4DZ	Ravensbury	yes	no	CRM	21.08.2015	22.08.2015	24
100 Meopham Road, CR4 1BJ	Longthornton	yes	no	SA	23.08.2015	24.08.2015	24
73 Park Avenue, CR4 2ER	Graveney	yes	no	SA	24.08.2015	25.08.2015	24
Love Lane	Cricket Green	yes	no	SA	24.08.2015	25.08.2015	24
3 Brookfields Avenue, CR4 4BP	Ravensbury	yes	no	CRM	24.08.2015	25.08.2015	24
76 Brookfields Avenue, CR4 4BT	Ravensbury	yes	no	SA	25.08.2015	26.08.2015	24

43 Oakmead Place, CR4 3RU	Lavender Fields	yes	no	CRM	25.08.2015	26.08.2015	24
56 De'arn Gardens, CR4 3AY	Cricket Green	yes	no	CRM	25.08.2015	26.08.2015	24
130 Bennetts Close, CR4 1NS	Longthornton	yes	no	CRM	26.08.2015	27.08.2015	24
11 Bourne Drive, CR4 3QZ	Cricket Green	yes	no	CRM	26.08.2015	26.08.2015	0
4 Franklin Crescent, CR4 1NH	Pollards Hill	yes	no	CRM	26.08.2015	26.08.2015	0
110 Deer Park Gardens	Ravensbury	yes	no	SA	27.08.2015	27.08.2015	0
40 Worcester Close, CR4 1 SP	Figges Marsh	yes	no	CRM	27.08.2015	27.08.2015	0
81 Fleming Mead, CR4 3LZ	Lavender Fields	yes	no	CRM	27.08.2015	27.08.2015	0
7 Garendon Road, SM4 6LN	St Helier	yes	no	CRM	27.08.2015	28.08.2015	24
123 Victoria Road, CR4 3JD	Lavender Fields	yes	no	CRM	27.08.2015	29.08.2015	48
55 Veals Mead Road, CR4 3SB	Lavender Fields	yes	no	CRM	28.08.2015	29.08.2015	24
47A Lewis Road, CR4 3DF	Lavender Fields	yes	no	CRM	28.08.2015	29.08.2015	24
504 London Road, CR4 4BA	Figges Marsh	yes	no	CRM	28.08.2015	29.08.2015	24
28 Lowry Crescent, CR4 3QS	Lavender Fields	yes	no	CRM	28.08.2015	28.08.2015	0
14 Oakmead Place, CR4 3RU	Lavender Fields	yes	no	CRM	28.08.2015	28.08.2015	0
68 Framfield Road	Figges Marsh	yes	no	CRM	28.08.2015	30.08.2015	48
15 Westmorland Way,	Pollards Hill	yes	no	CRM	28.08.2015	30.08.2015	48
2 Ramones Terrace, 10A Yorkshire Road	Pollards Hill	yes	no	CRM	28.08.2015	28.08.2015	0

**12) From: Stephen Morris  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking**

**Question:**

Can the council demand that Lake Road in Wimbledon is properly swept and grass verges cleaned every week? And its condition regularly checked? It is a busy thoroughfare including two schools and yet street cleaning is chaotic, irregular and incomplete.

**Reply**

Lake Road like all residential roads is scheduled to be cleaned on a weekly basis. The street cleaning service monitor cleanliness standards of roads on a regular basis to ensure they are maintained to an acceptable standard of cleanliness. Where we find or receive reports about littering or fly tipping we will attend to rectify.

**Question:**

Please provide a detailed breakdown of all spending on the Rediscover Mitcham / Fair Green regeneration including detailing the source of funds/grants and specific ways money has been spent or is allocated. Please include all aspects of the programme: completed, in progress and planned.

**Reply**

Rediscover Mitcham is a collaborative project funded from various pots of funding which includes.

- TFL LIP (Local Implementation Plan) Capital & Revenue
- TFL Major Schemes Capital
- LBM Town Centre Capital
- S106 Developer Contributions
- Heritage Lottery Fund

A detailed breakdown runs to over 170 individual budget lines which is not appropriate to recite at a full Council meeting. It also requires more time to provide the information than the public questions procedures allow for. We recommend submitting a Freedom of Information Request to the futureMerton team for the detailed breakdown as requested.

In summary, the spend on Rediscover Mitcham is:

	Spend to date	Remaining budget	
Transport for London	£ 1,408,242.97	£ 2,318,887.00	
Merton Capital	£ 748,837.84	£ 754,412.48	
Section 106 Developers	£ 12,214.98	£ 494,738.00	
Heritage Lottery Fund	£ 15,780.00	£ 23,232.00	
	£ 2,173,914.43	£ 4,113,992.00	
		<b>Total budget</b>	<b>£ 4,232,911.00</b>

For the £4.113m remaining budget, this is allocated to:

<b>Projected future spend</b>	
Phase 1 completion	€ 780.000.00
Phase 1B Majestic Way	€ 350.000.00
Three Kings Pond	€ 50.000.00
Phases 2 - 6	€ 2.933.996.60
	€ =.113.996.60

**14) From: Andrew Boyce  
To the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities**

**Question:**

Given we live in the 21st century, why does the Council's communications team refuse to respond to residents' concerns raised about Council services on social media sites such as Twitter, when this is standard practice in the likes of Lambeth, Ealing and other Labour run Councils in London?

**Reply**

ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE

Social media can help with communication between residents and the public, and we are happy to use it to have a dialogue with residents and to proactively advise residents about issues that matter to them.

We look at the approach of other Councils with interest. However, social media is not always the most appropriate or most effective media to access services or to respond to enquiries. We therefore provide a number of alternative means of contacting the council, including mail and telephone, email and website, alongside new services like the Love Clean Streets app.

In order to provide an improved service to allow residents to have their enquiries dealt with quickly and effectively, within the next few months we will be launching a brand new website. We hope that the design of the website will allow our residents and customers to interact with the Council more fully.

**Supplementary Question:**

The council have been tweeted on a range of issues such as litter, flytipping, street lighting, the temporary, or apparent, closure of Wandle Park, noise pollution and the refugee crisis. Will the cabinet member confirm that the communications team will be instructed to respond publicly to future tweets of this nature, rather than simply ignore them as it does at present?

**Reply**



This is essentially a repeat of question already responded to. Unfortunately the experience we have had is that Twitter is not always the best mechanism for dealing with a complaint from the public and we have introduced initiatives such as 'Love Clean Streets' which reports problems of litter and flytipping, giving location, which then gets passed to communication and the people who are going to clean it up. Unfortunately Twitter doesn't provide a location, so we do ask the residents to use 'Love Clean Streets' for issues like this.

**15) From: Barbara Mansfield  
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

**Question:**

As the third anniversary of Rediscover Mitcham approaches, could the residents of Mitcham have a breakdown of monies spent and plans for the future?

**Reply**

See response to Q13.

In respect of future plans, the Council is seeking an appropriate development that will enhance the street scene, add to the vitality of the town centre and make a contribution to the evening economy, acting as a draw to bring people into the area.

**Supplementary Question**

I'm sorry the answer to both 13 and 15 are not good enough for the residents of Mitcham. Why does the council appear so inefficient and why have the works taken so long in Fair Green. Will there be the same delays in to Holburn Way and Sibthorpe Park bringing Mitcham to a standstill.

**Reply**

I don't think the works have been inefficient, in fact we have engaged in the most extensive consultation in Mitcham town centre of any regeneration scheme probably in the history of the borough. It is very important with these things not to rush to some conclusion. We must get these things right. As it happens, we are juggling with a major crossroads, traffic historically has used the crossroads at Mitcham in very heavy order. We've got public transport systems to negotiate and we are dealing with a landscape design for Mitcham town centre which will probably be one of the finest in outer London when it's completed. With possibly some of the best materials used in the streets today that you will see in any town centre anywhere. It is very important to get it right, and that requires detailed effort and work and that's what the council is doing.

**16) From: Jacqueline Heys Robinson  
To the Leader**

**Question:**

What is the outcome of Stephen Alambritis' 'beady eye' regarding C.H.M.P's repairs while championing regeneration to improve quality of life? What is meant by 'it's more cost effective in the longer term to replace homes' than conduct repairs? What are the figures and how arrived at?

## **Reply**

I continue to be aware of the problems with CHMP repairs and maintenance service. My priority remains to ensure that tenants and residents get the services that they expect. Whilst the Council's relationship with CHMP is very important to us I continue to hold CHMP to account to ensure that tenants receive the right services at the right time. I have personally had a number of conversations with senior executives at CHMP and they are left in no doubt just how seriously I view the situation. I will continue to monitor the situation closely together with officers.

The outcome of the longer term proposals on regeneration are still under consideration by CHMP Board.

## **Supplementary Question:**

I am a representative member of High Park Community Association. Is the council aware that while Circle Housing Merton Priory are apparently concentrating their efforts on dealing with repair and maintenance issues on the estates earmarked for regeneration, that other CHMP properties, some completed though not located on the three estates intended for regeneration, have delayed and overlooked repair and maintenance issues with serious consequences to health and welfare.

## **Reply**

I inform her that I take her comments very, very seriously, any concerns she has have been raised at the highest level. In fact today I was in central London to meet the chairman of CHMP, Sir Robin Young, and raised the very concerns that she has raised. We will continue to review and to go by the ten commitments we both signed. I take on board what she says but we as a council will continue to represent and protect our residents.

## **17) From: Christopher Holt, Chairman, Ravensbury Residents Association To the Leader**

Many Ravensbury residents have been shocked by proposals set out by CHMP in their quest for redevelopment. For many, the CHMP plans amount to the destruction of the unique character of the area through intensive redevelopment and out-of-character building heights.

How will Merton Council protect Ravensbury?"

## **Reply**

The Council will as Planning Authority ensure that any application for redevelopment at Ravensbury Estate meets the policy standards set by the Council and those set by the Mayor of London. In addition, and in advance of any application we would consult with residents to agree a Development Plan Document that would add to existing policies and seek to ensure that we develop sustainable neighbourhoods and communities with good design quality built in.

The Council is drafting its planning policy position (known as a Development Plan Document) which will set out design parameters and define the local context and characteristics to be considered for any future planning applications in relation to the CHMP estate regeneration project. We are planning to consult residents across the three CHMP estates on the draft development plan and policies, subject to cabinet approval in October 2015.

### **Supplementary Question:**

With reference to agenda item 13 of the Labour amendment- Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> July p 29 of the supplementary agenda, how can LBM state that they believe they have a moral duty to stand up for Circle Housing Merton Priory residents when those living in the homes affected by the proposed no longer hear or see their ward councillors or their MP to do anything of substance to represent their views in opposition to the plans laid out by Circle Housing Merton Priory Homes.

### **Reply**

I entirely refute the allegation that the councillors of Ravensbury ward and the local MP, Siobhain McDonagh, have not been talking to, liaising with, consulting with all the residents of Ravensbury, indeed, as Leader of the Council with the residents of Eastfields and the residents of High Path.

**18) From: Cypren Edmunds** Chair/Treasurer: High Path Community Association, Chair: Circle Housing Customer Engagement (Repairs and Maintenance) Panel **to the Leader**

Could Mr Alambritis inform us where he leaves his "beady eye" on CHMP in view of the recent Internal audit, (10th Aug), as it appears to have gone missing throughout all of the consultation process between CHMP and the residents. Was he quoted out of context?

### **Reply**

Through the 10 commitments I persuaded CHMP to sign up to and the regular monitoring meetings we undertake with them, we continue to hold CHMP to account on their service to residents. I have met with CHMP on a number of occasions and urged them to release the findings of their audit which they have now done, and I look forward to them learning the lessons from this. In terms of the consultation, the council will be carrying out its own consultation on our approach to the estate plans. We are planning to consult residents across the three CHMP estates on the draft development plan and policies, subject to cabinet approval in October 2015.

### **Supplementary Question:**

If indeed the council believes they have, as mentioned in agenda item 13 from July council referring to the amended concerns of the motion, a moral duty to do all in its power to stand up for the CHMP residents then why has the council not used the many types of enforcement actions they hold through Environmental Health to deal with CHMP's admitted failures with repairs and maintenance.

## **Reply**

We as a council, like previous administrations, use enforcement whenever appropriate to ensure the interests of residents, be they tenants, leaseholders of the estate, that their interests are fully protected.

## **ITEM 7 COUNCILLORS' ORDINARY PRIORITY QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND THE RESPONSES**

### **1) Cllr Abigail Jones to the Cabinet Member for Education**

Can he update us on the plans to commission adult education services.

#### **Reply**

Cabinet will receive a report on the 14th September updating them on the progress made so far with the commissioning of adult education. The report will detail the soft-market testing exercise we carried out to engage with potential providers, changes in approach reacting to cuts in the Government's Skills Funding Agency (SFA) funding, updates on how we are complying with the councils commissioning principles, work done with learners and other stakeholders to design the service specifications and recommend the formal beginning of the procurement process.

If approved the procurement will proceed in the autumn with the aim of launching the new commissioned service in September 2016.

#### **Supplementary Question**

Does the Cabinet Member agree the government's recent in- year funding cut to adult education in Merton backs up the council's decision to commission adult education services?

#### **Reply**

Yes it does back that up, given that it was a cut of £118,540 midway through our financial year. That's on top of £400,000 cuts over the past four years. It's quite clear that the adult education service as it stood was not sustainable. We need a service which offers both a nurturing and supportive environment for learning needs, which is why we have 13 commissioning principles for achieving value for money, to protect learning and allow flexibility in the provision of the service.

### **2) Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:**

For the last 8 years the major park in my ward - Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields - has been proud to accept the prestigious award of a Green Flag. This year they have lost this mark of excellence. Will the Cabinet Member accept that under his leadership more attention should have been paid to the maintenance of our local park and that he has failed to deliver support to the Friends of the Park and ultimately adequate provision for leisure and pleasure to the residents of West Barnes?

#### **Reply**

The fact that Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field did not achieve the Green Flag Award standard was disappointing. However, in our view the park's condition was no

less good than it has been in previous year's when the Award has been granted. The major difference this year was that the park was assessed by two new judges who were unfamiliar with the site and their critical points were of a minor nature.

In our view the maintenance of the site has not declined to any significant extent and the standards in the park, overall, remain high.

The Greens Flag judges recognised that the Council was, at the time of the judging exercise, on the cusp of making some important improvements to the park, specifically the main entrance area and was imminently to install the park's very first green gym. Ultimately these significant additional investments did not contribute to the park's points score as they had not been completed at that time.

The former project is currently underway and the latter project was completed in June of this year and was warmly welcomed and appreciated by the Friends and park users at the time.

We trust this position will be better reflected when the Park is reassessed next year.

### **Supplementary Question**

Can the cabinet member please tell me why the Friends of the park weren't warned of the impending visit by Green Flag inspectors and with regard to the necessary maintenance work at the entrance not being carried out on time? Can he explain why the replacement gates were not ordered at the appropriate time and why, once ordered, they turned out to be the wrong gates and why were they not fitted in time for the inspection?

### **Reply**

I can't answer right now, but will investigate and make enquiries about these issues. I know that Councillor Lewis-Lavender shares my love of parks and I was glad I was there at the very outset of the improvements to Joseph Hood park. I remember going on an inspection with Councillor Kirby perhaps ten years ago, when there was a tree growing up through the tennis courts. So we began this path to improvement, and we are pretty confident that the Green Flag award will be restored.

### **3) From Cllr Jeff Hanna to the Leader of the Council**

Can the leader update me on our use of shared services to save the council tax payer money?

### **Reply**

Merton has always stressed the importance of shared services both as an economy and efficiency measure but also to deal with skill shortages. The main services under shared arrangements are shown in the table below:

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Arrangement</b>
<b>Children &amp; young people</b>	
Adoption recruitment	Merton, Richmond, Kingston and Sutton
School governor support	Merton and Sutton
School admissions service	Merton and Sutton
Travellers education service	Merton and Sutton
Out of hours children's social care duty service	4 boroughs. Hosted by Sutton
<b>Adult social care</b>	
Shared Social Care Emergency Duty System	Merton, Richmond Kingston and Sutton
<b>HR</b>	
Main Service	Merton and Sutton
Payroll and HR IT	Merton, Richmond, Kingston and Sutton
<b>Governance</b>	
Legal	Merton, Richmond, Kingston and Sutton
Internal audit	From 1 <sup>st</sup> October Merton Richmond and Wandsworth
South West London Fraud Partnership	Merton, Sutton, Richmond and Kingston
<b>Finance</b>	
Pensions IT system and Pensions service	Merton, Wandsworth and Camden
Bailiffs service	Merton and Sutton
<b>Environment</b>	
Transportation	Merton and Sutton for elements of service
Regulatory services (i.e. Environmental Health/Trading Standards and Licensing)	Merton and Richmond
<b>South London Waste Partnership</b>  Disposal – joint contracts. Environmental services Phase C (target 2017)a joint procurement of  Waste Collection and recycling, Commercial waste, Street Cleaning, Winter Maintenance, Vehicle Maintenance' Green spaces	Merton, Sutton, Richmond and Croydon

### Supplementary Question

Does the Leader agree with me that despite the often ground-breaking work we do in Merton, by sharing services with other councils to save tax payers' money, that there

is no 'silver bullet' and that the government's relentless attack on local services will mean yet more difficult savings to come.

### **Reply**

Yes, I agree with him and others are also in agreement with me about no 'silver bullet' about the cuts. Here's what another council leader is on record as saying, 'I have asked the government to address the ten billion extra cost pressures all councils will face.' The author? One newly ennobled peer, new chair of the LGA, conservative leader of South Holland District Council.

### **4) Councillor Michael Bull to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:**

Further to the debate on this important matter at July's Full Council meeting, can the Cabinet Member tell me what discussions he has had with Circle Housing Merton Priory about their repairs and maintenance service following the eventual publication last month of a 4 page summary report on the Keepmoat whistleblowing allegations?

### **Reply**

One of my key priorities is to ensure that Circle Housing Merton Priory (CHMP) tenants receive good quality repairs to their homes in a timely manner. Following the release of the report on whistleblowing allegations CHMP I met with the Executive Director (Governance) at Circle Housing and with the Managing Director of Circle Housing Merton Priory. I expressed my disappointment that controls put in place by CHMP and Keepmoat had not been fully implemented, leading to CHMP being overcharged by £173,000. I noted with some relief that CHMP have been fully reimbursed by Keepmoat. CHMP have assured me that procedures to check costs and quality of works are now properly in place. Alongside Housing Officers I am continuing to monitor CHMP's repairs performance on a monthly basis.

### **Supplementary Question**

Will the cabinet member confirm whether he or the leader have yet had sight of the full, independent report on the extremely worrying whistleblowing accusations. If he is not, will he join in me in calling for its immediate publication by Circle Housing Merton Priory, so residents can understand for themselves the full extent and manner of the over charging that has taken place.

### **Reply**

No, I haven't seen the report yet. I do want to see the report, not just me but our group. I don't know whether it would be to the advantage of the people of Merton to see it, but don't see why not. When he speaks about it being very worrying, about the report - when it eventually came out it showed over £170,000 had been overcharged to Circle, that I believe has been repaid. I believe the reason the report was held back was that Circle wanted to make sure everything was repaid by the time it came out.



**5) Councillor Stan Anderson to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Waste**

Can she update me on the new “any bin will do” policy in relation to disposing of dog mess?

**Reply**

Dog waste no longer needs to be collected and disposed of separately from the domestic waste which is sent to landfill. In light of these changes and like many other councils we are in the process of removing the dedicated dog waste bins and installing additional general waste bins where our residents and visitors are now able to dispose of their dog waste along with their general litter. This initiative will lead to efficiencies in the service and reduce our collection costs as well as making it easier for dog owners to dispose of dog waste

**Supplementary Question**

I congratulate her on her allowing dog owners to use any waste bin in the borough to clean up after their dogs. Is there anything further we can do to stop people who do not clean up after their dogs?

**Reply**

I am sure there are lots of things we could do about dog owners and their dogs' fouling. What we do need is more education. I am glad we have taken this initiative, following many other local authorities. It is encouraging people that when their dogs do poo, they pick it up and put it in the bins. We have invested in more and better bins in our parks, where we have a focus. We have also put in enforcement officers who will go into some of the parks and issue £80 fines, but we don't want to issue fines, that's the last thing we want to do, but at the end of the day it's about educating people. So we have been publicising this, so if you do see people walking their dogs and picking up using the appropriate bag, please advise about that they can use any bin

**6) Councillor Peter Southgate to the Leader of the Council**

With the proposed introduction of 24 hour operation on the northern line on Friday and Saturday nights, the lack of public toilet facilities at Morden station will become a more acute problem.

Could the Leader outline the steps he has taken to pressure London Underground to re-open the public toilets at Morden station?

**Reply**

I recognise the longstanding issue regarding the provision of public toilets at Morden Station. I have met with TFL regarding the 24hr tube project and I have stated the case for toilets at Morden. TFL have also identified that Morden is one of the few terminus stations without toilet facilities.

The issue is now with TFL to identify funding and space within Morden Station for public toilets. Ironically, the roll-out of the Mayor's programme of ticket office closures may provide the physical space within the ticket hall, but still requires funding.

We have also put public toilet provision as an output of the Morden regeneration plans which are progressing with TFL and the GLA and we will be asking residents, businesses and commuters their opinions on toilet provision in Morden station as part of our public consultation this year.

In the meantime, we also promote our Community Toilet scheme which has 3 facilities in Morden Town Centre

<http://www.merton.gov.uk/search.htm?q=community+toilets>

Public toilets are also clearly marked on Merton's wayfinding maps in Morden town centre and also on TFL's locality maps in Morden Station and all bus shelters

### **Supplementary Question**

I'm pleased to note the efforts already made to take this issue to TfL. I'm grateful too for the reminder about our community tolerance scheme. I wonder if he shares my disappointment that when councillors were briefed on the new 24 hour service (Fri/Sat nights) the operations director for that service told us he was not aware that the provision of toilets was an issue at all. We disabused him of that, but will he redouble his efforts to ensure that all key players in the initiation of this service are aware of just how critical this is.

### **Reply**

I personally had a conversation with Sir Peter Hendy, former commissioner/chairman of TfL. I know he's moved on, I will seek to have a conversation with his successor. Morden tube station is a terminus and is one of the few stations without toilet facilities and we will engage with anyone on this issue. There are some ground breaking toilet schemes in central London, where for 20p you can have a wee, so that might be the way forward.

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

Can the Cabinet Member please tell us what actual numerical evidence the Council has on the types of built form, material, typology and style of development that local people prefer in Merton?

### **Reply**

The Council, like others, doesn't collect or hold numerical evidence on local preferences other than that contained and reflected in our core strategy and associated policies as well as the conservation guidance in the Borough character studies and Conservation Area documents.

Merton supports high quality design and public realm that complements or sets the character of local neighbourhoods. The Council has a number of mechanisms in place through our planning policy suite to ensure the delivery of housing and to improve design quality.

In assessing all development, we have our LBM design policies, Mayoral design standards, professional planning and design officers an independent Design Review Panel and of course, Planning Committee. All of whom have a role in creating great places. Often, a lot of buildings that are criticised in Merton are ones where PAC have refused, but permission has been granted on appeal.

We also have 28 Conservation areas and our Borough Character study, which defines, at a neighbourhood level, the character and quality of a place which we expect developers and architects to respond to in presenting proposals to the Council.

Understanding residents views on major development is important, and we do this at the project level in more meaningful dialogue as we prepare masterplans for schemes such as Mitcham Town Centre and Colliers Wood town centre public realm, and what we are soon to embark on for Morden Town Centre.

To assist councillors, officers, landowners, residents and others in delivering high quality design through the development process that safeguards the best of the borough's character and secures positive improvements elsewhere, the council is preparing Merton's Borough Character Study: [www.merton.gov.uk/bcs.htm](http://www.merton.gov.uk/bcs.htm)

Two thirds of the borough's +30 neighbourhoods have had an in-depth analysis of the area including its history, general characteristics, built form, architectural interest, public realm and movement, trees, landscape features and economic vitality. Once the whole borough has been completed everybody will be invited to have their say on the guides. In addition, the council is preparing design guidance for the whole borough through a new Design SPD and has extensive conservation area guidance for those historic areas: [www.merton.gov.uk/designandconservation](http://www.merton.gov.uk/designandconservation)

### **Supplementary Question**

He has admitted the council does not have any evidence of what local people want to see in terms of development so could I please ask the cabinet member to ask the officers to undertake a survey of what local people want to see in Merton.

### **Reply**

We had extensive consultation of local residents when we put together our current suite of planning policies which include those that relate to design, so that consultation process was taking into account public concerns. But we are having a borough wide character study which is being carried out in practically every location of the borough. Two thirds of the neighbourhoods have already been completed. Once completed they will be put out for consultation and then I hope we will get quite a few responses of local views of what character is lacking, what is there but needs sustaining and assisting and what character is excellent and needs preserving.

**8) Councillor Laxmi Attawar to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

Can he update me on the improvements to Colliers Wood?

**Reply**

Funded by the successful bid to the Mayor's Regeneration Fund and using Council and Transport for London funding, contractors are currently working in Colliers Wood, providing a range of public realm enhancements including new riverside railings, new energy efficient lighting and substantial improvements to the paving and junctions at the heart of the town centre.

Over the next six months, the contractors will move to Baltic Close, opposite the underground station and the gateway to the Wandle Park to provide new paving, lighting, oak benches, sustainable urban drainage and tree planting. The council concluded the adoption of Baltic Close in August and this month we will be consulting residents on the traffic management and car parking solutions for the area.

Members will also note the significant progress in converting the Brown and Root Tower into residential accommodation which will further enhance the area.

**Supplementary Question**

Can you tell us more about the planned new entrance to Wandle Park and how it will enhance Colliers Wood?

**Reply**

Its going to be an excellent new entrance to welcome people to Wandle Park, it is going to be a home zone and it will contain elements of local heritage (which is very substantial of Colliers Wood). It will be an inviting place to walk in, cycle in, a place for enjoyment.

**9) Councillor Brian Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:**

Is the Cabinet Member aware of the petition that is being raised both by the Friends of Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields and separately by local people in West Barnes as well as a third online petition with over 2000 signatures asking for the retention of a paddling pool in our local park due to the enormous pleasure it gives to many children living in our area?

**Reply – ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND REGENERATION**

Thank you for bringing this to our attention. The Council has yet to receive any petition in respect of the future of the paddling pool at Sir Joseph Hood Memorial

Playing Field and whilst the Council is certainly reviewing the future of water play provisions in the borough in the light of continuing budget pressures and in the context of the relatively large sums that it invests on an annual basis in supporting 8 separate water play facilities across the borough, no firm decisions have yet been made on any future investments or closures.

Council officers are currently working with local groups and individuals on opportunities to secure and extend the opportunities for water play in the borough through a variety of alternative funding mechanisms, in fact, and welcomes the opportunity to work with local stakeholders to achieve that.

### **Supplementary Question**

When you claim that the paddling pool is closing in Joseph Hood Memorial playing fields, would the cabinet member agree to match funds, or at least revise significant contribution to any funds raised by Friends of the Park to replace the existing pool with an interactive one like the one recently installed at Tamworth Recreation ground. So that this very valued resource does not totally disappear.

### **Reply**

Of course we will work very closely with community groups, no decisions have been made on closures of paddling pools, this has got to be subject to budget discussions. As the written answer indicates, our first point of call is to try and secure opportunities for new funding, different resources for water features which do exist some of which are excellent and are very much enjoyed.

### **10) Councillor Tobin Byers to the Leader of the Council**

Could the Leader update me on plans to bring Crossrail 2 to the borough and how this will affect local residents and businesses?

### **Reply**

Crossrail 2 is still in its infancy with TFL & Network Rail currently leading this project and assessing the route options, identifying engineering challenges and building a business case for Treasury approval.

We know what the opportunity for Merton will be in terms of enhanced transport accessibility and journey times. We also know that the opportunity for economic growth is compelling in Wimbledon - aligned with our Inward Investment Strategy and there are important lessons to learn from Crossrail 1 to ensure we get the best deal for Merton.

We need to fully understand the construction impacts on businesses and residents as it's an issue we know is of great importance to our citizens and businesses. The future Merton team are leading on Crossrail 2 and are in regular dialogue with TFL to seek information on these key issues.

The Council is being pro-active in how we prepare for Crossrail 2 which includes the Future Wimbledon Ideas Competition.

We are also arranging a stakeholder group of land owners and are working with LoveWimbledon BID and Stephen Hammond MP to ensure views on the project are aired early on, and that there is a proper forum for detailed dialogue when needed.

We have also stated our commitment to preparing a masterplan to guide investment decisions and control the quality of the built environment in the event of Crossrail 2 being confirmed. The timing of the masterplan is provisionally 2016 but it may flex to align with any government approvals and progress on Crossrail2.

We wish to see a positive impact from Crossrail2 in the borough and will work to maximise the economic impact as well as mitigate the construction impact as well as working pro-actively to deliver the best outcomes for the Wimbledon station area and the borough as a whole.

### **Supplementary Question**

Is the Leader aware of the Crossrail 2 group commission and has he any plans to ensure that the interests of Wimbledon residents and local businesses are foremost in their thoughts?

### **Reply**

I can say that I am fully aware and up to speed with the announcement made by the mayor and chairman about the Growth Commission for Crossrail 2 and the appointed chairman of that group Sir Merrick Cockell ( former chair Local Government Association and former chairman of London Councils) and I have already had a discussion with Sir Merrick Cockell about Crossrail 2 and its impact and opportunities and some of our concerns how to proceed for the benefit of Wimbledon. I have also had a discussion with Stephen Hammond, Member of Parliament for Wimbledon.

## ITEM 8A COUNCILLORS' STRATEGIC THEME (CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE) QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND THE RESPONSES

### **1) Cllr Marsie Skeete to the Cabinet Member for Education**

Would the Cabinet Member join me in congratulating our A level and GCSE students on their excellent results?

#### **Reply**

Merton schools continue to perform strongly and this year has seen one of our best performances at GCSE, building on some of the fastest improving results in London over the last five years. I would like to congratulate all our young people who have achieved some great results. My thanks also go to their families and teachers who have supported them through their education. Our results are still provisional and we know there have been national issues in connection with the marking of some subjects, with appeals in progress and being considered. We are unable, therefore, to provide the borough average at this stage.

Merton's sixth forms have seen their best-ever A-Level results with provisional figures showing an increase in pupils achieving the top grades this year as well as an improvement in every grade band. I am delighted that so many of our young people are now going on to top universities. I would like to congratulate all of our A-Level students on their results and also their parents and teachers.

As a council we are committed to supporting our young people to achieve their full potential and we are determined that our schools continue to give them the best possible start in life.

#### **Supplementary Question**

I would like to extend my congratulations to the young people who have taken their GCSEs and A levels. Can the cabinet member outline how these results compare to the previous years?

#### **Reply**

I would like to thank Councillor Skeete for the work she does on the CYP panel. We've had another strong set of results, our second best ever. For the third year in a row we've had above 60% A - C GCSE, five years ago that was just under 50%. We've also seen Raynes Park achieve their best ever GCSE results so I would like to congratulate all our young people. It was great to meet so many successful young people at the Top Achievers' event last night. I would also like to thank their families and teachers who have supported them through their education. We should be very proud of the efforts of our young people at GCSE and A level for our best ever results which show continuing improvement in education and long may it continue, thank you.

### **2) From Councillor Linda Taylor to the Cabinet Member for Education:**

Can the Cabinet Member for Education please advise the council whether the Plough Lane stadium site was ever considered for a new secondary school that is so desperately needed in this part of the borough?

## **Reply**

The council's cabinet has made no final decision on its preferred site for a new secondary school, and the final decision rests with the Education Funding Agency.

The council commissioned a site search report which we have previously published. This considered all sites for a new secondary school for their viability, and this included the Plough Lane stadium site.

However, it should be recognised that there is a live planning application for a football stadium, housing and other uses. This will be considered by the council's Development Control team officers and then Planning Applications Committee on its merits in compliance with the legal requirements for planning applications. It is also recognised that there is some contamination and flood risk on the site and the only financially viable development is one with a substantial high value return.

## **Supplementary Question**

I didn't really understand the response from the cabinet member, it sounded like the site had been rejected as a suitable place for a school. I ask him to expand in more detail, for the benefit of Wimbledon Park residents, if this was the case?

## **Reply**

The Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium was actually considered as the site for a new school in the Capita Symonds report back in 2013. It was rejected as it was not financially viable, not affordable and would prevent the return of AFC Wimbledon to the borough. We need to ensure we have value for money schemes and we have to think about the borough as a whole. If we built a school at the greyhound stadium, most of the places would go to Wandsworth residents and not Merton residents. We have a big issue to address with school expansion, but Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium is not the answer.

### **3) Cllr Brenda Fraser to the Cabinet Member for Education**

Could he update us on our primary school expansion strategy?

## **Reply**

Our primary school expansion programme continues to run successfully, with further completions of major projects over the summer period for children and teachers to enjoy for the start of term in September. Brand new extension buildings at Hillcross, Merton Abbey and Pelham were all completed to schedule for the start of term, and the adaptation of the former Jamia building for Singlegate Primary School is now being enjoyed by children. The expansion of Dundonald Primary School is also running to schedule, with the adaptation completed for the start of term to enable an extra reception year class to be provided, with the major extension on schedule to be completed for next September.

We were able to offer a school place for all children in permanent classrooms for the start of term.



### **Supplementary Question**

I congratulate the cabinet member on his success to date in ensuring that Merton children get a place at a good, local primary school. Can he outline how he intends to replicate this success as they move forward to secondary schools.

### **Reply**

We are already planning ahead for secondary school expansion. Our criteria is of having a proven track record of success that's why we were delighted that Harris was approved. Planning in advance we know we have a big increase in 2018 which is why we are planning now in terms of the new secondary school. We are also ensuring it is value for money in these financially challenged times. We know finances are crucial and it has to meet those criteria along with schools being good and outstanding being for expansion.

### **4) Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Education:**

How many primary school aged children in Raynes Park, Hillside and Village wards have been offered school places in Mitcham this year?

### **Reply**

I have checked the position with School Admissions and I confirm that just 1 child residing in the Raynes Park/Wimbledon area will attend a school in the Mitcham area for this year's primary school reception entry. Thanks to our extensive primary school expansion programme, there have been primary school reception places available in the general Raynes Park/Wimbledon area for all Raynes Park/Wimbledon residents, and there are a still a small number of vacancies.

### **Supplementary Question**

I wish the cabinet member had answered the question, how many places were offered, rather than how many places were taken up, as they could be different things. Please let me know after the meeting by email.

### **Reply**

I will ensure that information is provided to Councillor Holden.

### **5) Cllr Ross Garrod to the Cabinet Member for Education**

With a recent report that children in the UK are some of the unhappiest of countries surveyed, can the cabinet member update me on how the council works with local schools to tackle the issue of bullying?

### **Reply**

The recent survey is very concerning and is a challenge to us all about how we help our children cope and negotiate the challenges they face. Schools teach children about these challenges and how to cope and they also commission a range of services that support children and parents when the challenges occur. The local

authority works in partnership with our schools in a range of ways to support both the curriculum and support offer.

We have a Multi Agency Anti Bullying Strategy 14 – 16. This was refreshed using focus groups of children across a range of our schools. Anti Bullying week resources are sent out to all schools. We facilitated an outside organisation to train schools and parents about the bullying of Children with SEN and Disabilities this year – this project was very well received. With all of our secondary schools we continue to commission the safer schools Police officers. These officers, based in schools, undertake the role of supporting individuals and their parents to deal with a range of issues including bullying and e safety. Training is provided to schools on dealing with derogatory language - particularly Homophobic and Racist language. We test out our approach by being part of the Stonewall Champions scheme. This involves Stonewall considering our policy and practice and rating the authority. We have improved our rating and now rank 14th out of 47 local authorities. Schools also commission a range of organisations to support children and families which includes bullying issues – Targeted Mental Health in Schools workers are available in 21 schools and 16 schools buy in Jigsaw4 U or have Emotional Literacy Support Assistants. Together these workers provide a mental health support service in response to the needs of our children. The local authority also runs networks for teachers to share problems and resources – the SEAL network (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) and the Child Sexual Exploitation School Champions Group consider proactive curriculum ideas and materials to promote healthy relationships.

### **Supplementary Question**

Given the importance of tackling bullying and discrimination in schools, may I congratulate him on the Stonewall education equality index – I now believe we are the best performing borough in London in promoting equality in schools and tackling discrimination. How does he think we achieve this?

### **Reply**

We see it crucial that children learn and accept diversity from a young age. We also make sure our schools have the resources to support equalities and diversity. It is great that we have actually this achievement of Top Performing Borough in London. It shows that we put equality at the heart of everything we do and we will continue to ensure we remain at the top.

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

What can the Cabinet Member tell the residents of Merton about the closed Labour Party meeting on secondary schools that took place at the Civic Centre on Saturday 25th July 2015?

### **Reply**

I can confirm that as Cabinet Member for Education I held a briefing session for Labour Group members and other interested Labour members in July which outlined the Labour administration's successful programme of primary school expansions and looked at the challenge of replicating this success in the secondary sector where the demand will soon rise as those primary school children move through their

education. in spite of the Government's failure to adequately fund local authorities in London for the extra growth in pupil numbers I am confident we can rise to this challenge and look forward to bringing forward cabinet reports in the coming months on how we ensure all our young people can continue to attend a local school.

### **Supplementary Question**

Given that tax payers' money was spent and given that the Labour party meeting was held on council premises can the cabinet member tell us why the Labour party members are getting briefings that the public are not on the very important issue of secondary schools.

### **Reply**

From time to time we do have consultations with our members about issues related to local government. This meeting was fully in compliance with those rules. If you believe it wasn't, I suggest you make your complaints. I think it is crucial that we engage with people so they know about the secondary school places issue, and that they are fully informed about the challenges we face in terms of providing those additional school places.

### **7) Cllr Katy Neep to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

Can she update us on how we are addressing the issue of teenage pregnancy?

### **Reply**

Merton has sustained a long running and successful strategic, evidenced based approach to reducing teenage pregnancy with the current strategic integrated substance misuse and teenage pregnancy strategy running to 2017. The strategy is delivered through annual action plans and supported through a historically strong local partnership. This strategic approach has been instrumental in reducing local under 18 conception rates which have consistently fallen since the strategy began with a total rate reduction of 57% since 1998, surpassing the 50% strategic reduction target (current rate stands at 22.1/1000). The very latest quarterly data indicates that rates are continuing to fall with a 17.8% reduction in Q2 (2014) from the same quarter in the previous year. Teenage pregnancy is addressed in Merton through:

- Provision of young people's sexual health clinics increasing access to Long Acting Reversible Methods of Contraception and clear pathways to sexual health treatment and termination services.
- Targeted one to one sexual health provision for vulnerable young people.
- Free condoms and emergency contraception for young people.
- Supporting the delivery of effective sex and relationships education.
- Sexual health promotion activities in schools and non-school settings.
- Workforce training and development for front-line staff.
- SW London Gettingit on health website and social media campaigns.
- Supporting teenage parents through the Family Nurse Partnership and Children's Centres.

### **Supplementary Question**

I would like to congratulate our cabinet member on her achievement and could she outline more about how we support our young mums?

### **Reply**

I am very pleased to give good news around our teen pregnancy achievement. We are very pleased with the work of our family nurse partnership which provides intensive support for mums under age 19, throughout their pregnancy and for the first two years of the baby's life. Family nurse partners can work with up to 30 young mums and their partners. The programme supports effective parenting and is making a real difference to some of the most vulnerable young mums and their babies.

### **8) Councillor David Dean to the Cabinet Member for Education:**

How will closing down the Merton Adult Education Centre at Whatley Avenue and reducing the number of courses help the impoverished in our borough to learn the skills necessary for them to get the best jobs in London?

### **Reply**

The commissioning of the adult education service will not have an impact on the number of courses offered. The number of courses offered is set by a funding formula set by the Government's Skills Funding Agency and the council is committed to continue honouring these funding criteria within the new commissioned service.

By commissioning adult education rather than being a direct provider the local authority is reducing the financial risk to the council of operating this service and ensuring that we do not need to subsidise this funding.

Any reduction in courses, and knock on impact on residents skills, will be directly related to grant cuts from the Skills Funding Agency. For information there have been in year cuts from the Government's Skills Funding Agency of over £200,000 this year alone.

### **Supplementary Question**

I would like to thank the cabinet member for his answer, but he hasn't given me one. You see, I don't want to spend all night going through this, but one person said if you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything. The last time you stood up you gave a different answer. You said you didn't want to educate affluent people in Wimbledon. Paragraph one says there will be no cuts while paragraph 3 says there is. I don't understand. I did get an adult education to learn things but I've never understood what the cabinet member has to say. Are you cutting the number of course and are you closing MAE because it's in an affluent area. Two questions.

### **Reply**

MAE does need to be on a sustainable, long term footing. It's suffered government cuts of over half a million pounds over the last few years and I haven't heard any condemnation from any people opposite including Councillor Dean. The flexibility will exist from moving towards a commissioning model. This current service is not sustainable, we need to make those changes but also to ensure we can provide what's best in MAE under new providers but also to ensure we have a range of courses across the borough in the west as well as the east given that 70% of the courses are in the west. This service needs change, it has to change, we've taken difficult decisions to make that change.

## **9) Cllr Agatha Akyigyina to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

I know the Cabinet Member shares our aspiration to keep our looked after young people close to home, what is our local performance like in this respect?

### **Reply**

We have a strong commitment to placing our looked after children close to their local community wherever possible.

When a child comes into care we make great efforts to place them as locally as possible. 70% of our children are placed within 20 miles of which 35% (55 children) are placed in Merton, and a further 26% (40 children) are living in our neighbouring Boroughs. This enables us to access them readily and for them to maintain some continuity in their lives.

There are, however, occasions when it is appropriate for children to be placed at a distance: they may be in a specialist children's home; hospital or secure unit; on remand or need relocation to exit gangs. We always endeavour to match the placement with our young person's needs although this is often challenging with a very tight supply of placements across London and the south east.

We ensure a high level of scrutiny for all children and young people placed outside of the Borough with placement sign off at DCS level. The placement sign off involves analysis on why the placement out of Borough is required for that child or young person.

Children placed at a significant distance are likely to fall into the following categories:

- Have specific needs that result in a highly specialist placement being required that is not available locally
- Are placed for adoption/in permanent placements
- A decision has been made to place the child/young person outside of London due to specific concerns (e.g. gang affiliation, CSE).

### **Supplementary Question**

I congratulate the cabinet member on her performance to date in keeping our looked after children close to home. Could she tell us if this has been helped by recruiting our own foster carers?

### **Reply**

Last year we recruited 15 new sets of foster carers and a further ten this year so far which is quite a success story and an ongoing situation and we keep applying hoping people will come forward. While we need to maintain the recruitment of a wide range of foster carers 60% of the carers we recruited last year were for our target group of carers of teenagers and sibling groups. As of March this year 58% of children were placed with Merton foster carers either in or close to Merton compared with 50 last year.