

Merton Council Council

23 November 2016

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From David Gaillard

To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

When will the Council deal with the perennial litter and leaves situation in Alexandra Road outside the whole length of Wimbledon Magistrates Court and the Network Rail fence void that has for years been a litter dumping ground? The continued lack of care is an affront to the local community.

Reply

Alexandra Road is scheduled to be cleaned weekly however during the leaf fall season the normal cleaning schedule is suspended so that resources can be targeted to deal with those roads heavy with leaf fall. Our Enforcement team have made contact with the Wimbledon Magistrates Court to deal with the litter within their grounds and will also make contact with Network Rail to clean their area. We will not rule out using enforcement action should it be required.

From Sofia Parente

To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

I wish to congratulate the Council for changing to healthy vending in Morden Park Pools. Can you confirm there will be healthier catering in the new pools?

What else are you doing to protect Merton young people and residents from high fat, sugar and salt foods and sugary drinks?

Reply

Could I firstly thank you for your support for the changes to the vending machines at Morden Park Pools. It's always good to get positive feedback from residents and I really appreciate you taking the time to respond to the changes.

Greenwich Leisure Limited have been working with the council and their supply chain to bring healthier offers through the leisure centres vending machines and we are pleased that the public are welcoming this improved service. The new Morden Leisure Centre will be operated by Greenwich Leisure Limited and therefore we are pleased to confirm that healthy catering will be part of the new leisure centre offer.

Childhood obesity is a key priority for the council and is one of the priority outcomes of the Health and Well-being Strategy. We have undertaken a Childhood Obesity Pan London Peer review on our local work and are now developing a 3 year Merton Child Healthy Weight action plan. Some of the actions planned for implementation relate to promoting healthy diets and physical environments that promote healthy diets, including:

- Work towards signing up to the new Local Government Declaration on Healthier Food and Sugar Reduction
- Promotion of and signing up businesses, community and voluntary organisations to the Healthier Catering Commitment

- Takeaway fast food project work focussing on reducing the portion sizes and improving the quality of chips, and reducing sales of sugary drinks, linking in with Change 4 Life messaging
- All school food catering to adhere to the School Food Plan
- Registering and achieving Healthy Schools London bronze, silver and gold awards

We will continue to review our plans and ensure they are relevant to new and emerging guidance and best practice.

**From Robert Pedzinski
To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking**

Why have you decided, without proper consultation of your council tax payers, to introduce bi-weekly rubbish, collections, wheelie-bins and reintroduce separation of recycling? Merton is moving backwards. Some residents do not have the space for this multitude of receptacles or they have irresponsible neighbours who will cause health risks.

Reply

It is not usual to consult on this type of service before the specification is formed as there are often so many different opinions from a wide variety of stakeholders that it makes it very difficult to put a specification that satisfies everyone. The specification itself has developed throughout the competitive dialogue with bidders and this has necessarily been a commercially sensitive process.

Cabinet approved the procurement strategy in November 2014, following a great deal of discussion at the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Clear objectives were set at the commencement of the project and these were to ensure the following outcomes:

- a) Value for money / cost effectiveness in light of the financial challenge
- b) High quality services that maintain good levels of resident satisfaction
- c) Environmental sustainability.
- d) Ensuring the community remain engaged and involved in management/maintenance and oversight of parks, cemeteries and open spaces etc.

The solution offered by the Preferred Bidder represents their optimal solution and following a robust evaluation clearly met the council's and South London Waste Partnership objectives.

**From Bridgett Walker
To the Cabinet Member for Education**

I frequently see students commuting to Rutlish school throw rubbish on the street and in resident's gardens. They do this seemingly without any concern or respect for the local residents. What would the council propose the leadership of Rutlish School do, to take responsibility and change this?

Reply

Rutlish is a well-managed school with good procedures for behaviour management and the council has every confidence in the school. The school leadership make great strides to teach its pupils to respect the local environment in assemblies and speaking to pupils at an individual level when they are made aware of any incidences. However, clearly the school cannot prevent every occurrence outside the school gates and if a resident is aware of any specific incident the Headteacher has advised that where a boy is identifiable they should contact the school police officer so that they can deal with it accordingly.

**From Julie Gould
To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Regeneration and Housing**

Is the Council going to install traffic calming measures in South Park Rd and Bridges Rd as requested in our Petition submitted in November 2014? Nearly every household in South Park Rd signed. We await an official response.

Reply

The Council takes road safety very seriously and we have an annual local safety programme. Rat running, perceived danger and excessive speed / volume of traffic are problems in a number of residential roads throughout the borough and regrettably due to insufficient funds and resource it is not possible to address them all.

Due to limited available resource and funding and the demand for action that outweigh the available funding, it is necessary to prioritise by giving first consideration to those areas with recorded personal injury [PI] accidents and areas outside schools. I also understand that South Park Rd (between Trinity Road and Haydon's Rd) is already traffic calmed.

According to our latest speed data, 85 percent of traffic travelled at 23 mph or slower along Bridges Road; 27mph or slower along South Park Rd (between Trinity Road and Queens Rd) and 25mph or slower along South Park Rd (between Trinity Road and Haydon's Rd) However, it should be noted that enforcement of speed falls under the jurisdiction of the Police and the Council has no legal power to enforce speed / dangerous driving. Speeding concerns will be referred to the Police for their attention.

With the above said, the situation will be monitored and the Council will take the appropriate action when necessary subject to available funding and other priorities.

**From Helen Alexander-Allen
To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking**

Will the council make public, a cost-comparison between the proposed wheelie bin invasion, and the following alternative:

- a) Continued use of privately-owned dustbins,
- b) Supplying standard dustbins for containment of bagged waste & to increase capacity where necessary,
- c) Supplying dustbin-sized, wheel-free recycling bins,
- d) Wheelies only for blocks of flats?

Reply

There are currently no plans to undertake any additional procurement costs in looking at alternative solutions. Nor are there any plans to make public the commercially sensitive details that underpinned the decisions thus far.

We have been through a detailed competitive dialogue process which included a cost-comparison exercise as part of the lengthy procurement project and the competitive process has driven value for money and delivered significant future savings to the service. The optimum solution has been driven by the bidders.

**From Sara Sharp
To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Regeneration and Housing**

Can the Council please explain why it has not formally adopted its excellent existing Borough Character Studies as supplementary planning documents which could save the Council huge costs and time?

Reply

Firstly; thank you for your kind comment about the studies that have been undertaken so-far.

The Borough Character Study (BCS) is a rolling programme of assessing the characteristics of Merton's neighbourhoods; for the purposes of determining planning applications.

The Borough Character Study covers 36 neighbourhoods and is intended to be adopted as a single SPD (Supplementary Planning Document) to Merton's Local Plan.

We recognise that residents appreciate the value of the BCS in planning and this is why we have already made public, the draft assessments of the 22 neighbourhoods that we have completed.

These are regularly used by applicants, officers and have been useful in planning decisions. Despite not being formally adopted; they are a clear statement of the quality and character of an area.

As and when new neighbourhoods are assessed; the chapter is made available online at www.merton.gov.uk/bcs

If residents have any local information that you think may be helpful to the Council in the completion of the final drafts, please do get in touch.

The process of adopting an SPD, set out by government involves 6 weeks of public consultation; seeking views of the Borough Plan Advisory Committee and then onto Cabinet for a decision. To adopt one SPD can take up to 4 months and is time consuming for officers and the community who get involved.

It is not possible to adopt the document chapter-by-chapter; or in batches due to the consultation process involved. Our resources are best targeted at completing the remaining 14 neighbourhoods; of which Wimbledon Town is a particular priority for the team in 2016/17 due to the rise in planning applications.

From Andrew Boyce

To the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities

What is the purpose of Wimbledon Community Forum when:

1. The agenda is dictated by Council, not the community;
2. Officers and Councillors do not follow up points raised;
3. Despite three months' notice, you would rather promote your own self-interests rather than discuss those issues requested by attendees?

Reply

TO BE ANSWERED BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The best way of ensuring everyone in our community is listened to is by knocking on doors and talking to residents directly about their concerns on their own doorstep, which I do most weeks. However the Community Forums are an important way of the council supplementing our formal consultations on a variety of issues. The Community Forums are an opportunity for residents, businesses and local groups interested in their local area to come together and discuss issues of interest or concern. Nonetheless we acknowledge that they often appeal to those who are already most engaged in the community and cannot replace the hard work of speaking to people individually in their own communities, including those whose lives are too busy or stressful to attend long meetings.

Each forum is chaired by a local councillor and they set the agenda for the meeting with support from officers. Anyone is welcome to suggest an issue for discussion and at every meeting there is an open or soapbox item when attendees can raise a local issue they are concerned about. Setting the agendas involves balancing the different areas of interest with the availability of guest speakers and a number of

regular agenda items that reoccur because they have proved popular with attendees. These regular items include updates from local police teams, local planning issues and once a year an opportunity to question the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council. In Wimbledon there have been a number of issues that have been of great interest to the local community and have become regular items for discussion, in particular Crossrail 2 and the development of a Masterplan for Wimbledon Town Centre. Due to the popularity of these items they have on occasion taken priority over other issues but that does not mean that there will not be an opportunity to discuss those other matters another time. Where questions are raised at meetings that cannot be answered on the night officers will endeavour to include an answer in the Chairs report of the meeting or provide an update at a future meeting.

**From B Strickland
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

Why are Merton Council Adult Education Commissioning Team offering the Level 2 Child Dare course at the MAE campus of South Thames College for twice the fee as the same course as the Wandsworth campus of South Thames College? This does not encourage enrolments with MAE.

Reply

As part of the transfer of provision to South Thames College from the London Borough of Merton all course fees have remained at the previous year's prices including the Level 2 Child Day Care course. Upon review we cannot find a comparative course running at the Wandsworth campus but will liaise with South Thames College if there are any discrepancies.

Many learners who attend this course will not need to pay fee due to the concessionary arrangements in place. For example, if this is their first full Level 2 qualification or if they are unemployed. All of last year's concessionary rates also remain in place.

**From NT Hales
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

Why are Merton Council Adult Education Commissioning Team not following the Council's commissioning principles of developing skills and boosting employment prospects? They are not offering courses / apprenticeships in health and social care, business administration and beauty that are often the first job for a young person.

Reply

Cabinet agreed the strategic aims for the new commissioned service on 19 September 2016 and there is a strong emphasis on developing skills and boosting employment in keeping with the government skills agenda. As part of our commissioning aims the council has set out its expectations that the majority of our

investment will go to those most in need to improve life chances. A range of indicators have been set to measure the impact of these changes.

The skills agenda is being implemented throughout the commissioning of courses provided by both South Thames College and Groundwork London. Employability courses are offered by both providers, as well as vocational courses at South Thames College in Early Years, supporting teaching and learning, haircutting, barbering, counselling, digital marketing, starting a small business, bookkeeping and accounting, interpreting, British Sign Language, as well as IT courses. Courses will also be provided in community venues to try and attract take up from those most in need.

The integration of employability skills is being introduced in all courses along with the embedding of maths and English; fundamentals for improving our resident's skills and employment opportunities.

Merton Adult Education is primarily an education service for 19+ adults and commissioning to South Thames College's means that there are greater synergies between the adult learning offer and the further education offer already offered by the college, which includes apprenticeships.

A new apprenticeship contract is in the process of being finalised and we have already stated within the Cabinet paper that the provision will start from January 2017 to ensure that our offer is strategically aligned to the wider Merton offer.

**From R Hussain
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

Can Merton Council Adult Education Commissioning Team provide comparative figures for the average costs, without concessions and total enrolments in 2014/15, 2015/16 and to date in 2016/17 for adult education courses in computing, pottery, childcare, clothes making, health and social care, upholstery, beauty, drawing, work skills and yoga.

Reply

There is a wide range of factors to consider when looking at the fees and costs applied to Adult Learning courses. Some courses are able to be fully funded by the Skills Funding Agency, some co-funded, some are funded by a 24+ Advanced Learner Loan, or have an element of learner contribution depending on their personal circumstances. There are also considerations for the level of the course and the duration. All of these elements make providing comparative data and average costs difficult to present. However we can confirm that fees have not been increased by South Thames College. Fees were increased in 2015/16 (the last year of direct delivery) by 8%. Groundwork London are not providing courses that incur any fees to learners.

The table below shows the enrolments on the requested courses for 2014/15 and 2015/16. As we have just started the new academic year we are unable to supply

verified data for the first term of 2016/17 and this will be made available to the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel in January 2017.

Subject	Enrolments 14/15	Enrolments 15/16
Clothes making	91	77
Computing	174	79
Drawing	229	224
Pottery	291	288
Work skills	433	341
Upholstery	349	337
Childcare	30	26
Yoga	109	39
Beauty	30	10
H&SC apprenticeships	11	0
H&SC	20	2
TOTAL	1,767	1,423

**From Penny Walton
To the Cabinet Member for Education**

Please comment on how the safety and security of the Rutlish School site has improved since the daytime closure of John Innes pathway and also on the progress that the school has made on implementing the additional measures that were to be made to improve its security?

Reply

The school Headteacher and police officer have reported a significant improvement in the security of the school following daytime closure of John Innes pathway. The closure of the gates adjacent to the path has significantly reduced the casual trespassing onto the school site. As is implied in the question the additional security measures to the two main entrances to Rutlish School need to be undertaken to ensure the school is satisfactorily secure. The package of works is out to quotation and a planning application has been submitted for the works for the alternative path impacting on the frontage of the school. We expect to appoint a contractor by the end of this month so that materials can be ordered and work can start in January, with the works requiring planning permission completed in February, subject to timely agreement to planning permission.

From Councillor Abigail Jones to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Can the Cabinet Member give an update on day centre services in the borough?

Reply

Merton provides four in-house day centres; High Path, the JMC, which both cater for people with a learning disability, All Saints, which provides services for people with a learning disability and people with physical disabilities, and Eastway, which supports older people.

Our learning disability services have seen changes in the past two years, with some staffing reductions leading to a focus on the services providing safe and secure day time respite. Numbers attending the services have remained constant, which has led to some community activities being reduced. In the past few months we have worked closely with MVSC to recruit volunteers to work in our services, and now have eleven volunteers across the centres. Staff work hard to provide arrange of stimulating activities in the centres, and many are also involved with collecting people from home to help reduce transport costs.

The Healthier Communities and Older People's Scrutiny panel are currently looking at these services, and will report in February.

At Eastway the staff team is supporting a group of people who have much more complex support needs than we have worked with in the past but the team has responded well to this challenge and continues to provide a good service. All Saints continues to provide a valued day time service to people with a physical disability.

From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Given that the council has an on-going responsibility to represent all Circle Housing tenants, leaseholders and freeholders, can the Cabinet Member tell me what the council is doing to publicise and contribute to the current consultation on the proposed changes to Circle Housing Merton Priory and the collapse of the Circle group structure?

Reply

As cabinet member I have expressed concerns about the proposed changes to Circle Merton as it's important that tenants, leaseholders and freeholders voice is heard loud and clearly in any new governance arrangements. We remain in continuing dialogue with Circle over the implications of these changes as it's essential that local accountability remains a key part of any new structure. The consultation ends in December, following which the next meeting of the Council on 1 February will be asked to take a view, as a shareholder, on these changes, including the measures designed to ensure ongoing local engagement and accountability.

From Councillor Pauline Cowper to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Can he update me on the consultation process for Crossrail 2?

Reply

The latest Crossrail2 consultation, originally scheduled for this month, has been postponed until at least the second quarter of 2017. A summary of the +20,000 views that Crossrail2 received at the most recent consultation (January 2016) are available on Crossrail2's website <http://crossrail2.co.uk/consultation/>

Merton Council is continuing to work closely with Crossrail2 to secure the best outcome for the borough with minimal impact from construction. In the meantime the council will go ahead with developing its own masterplan for Wimbledon town centre with residents which will start in advance of Crossrail2's consultation. This will help identify the most beneficial ways of planning for how Crossrail2 would best fit in with Wimbledon town centre and we will actively work with residents and businesses on developing the masterplan.

There is cross-party support in Merton for Crossrail2, but we have we have been clear that it does not come at any cost. The proposals published last year were unacceptable in terms of its impact on business and retail in the town centre. Our cross-party position is available at www.merton.gov.uk/crossrail2

From Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

How many of Merton's residents (in numerical terms and as a percentage) do not currently recycle on a regular basis?

Reply

Current information indicates that only 20.4% of households do NOT participate in the kerbside recycling service. This equates to 16,827 properties based on a total of 82,490 households.

In addition to the dry recycling, 48% of residents do NOT participate in the kerbside food waste service which equates to 39,595 households.

We expect the new waste collection service will help increase recycling in the borough.

From Councillor John Dehaney to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Could he outline his approach to people who fly tip in our borough?

Reply

Merton council have a zero tolerance towards anyone that fly tips in the borough. We come down heavily on all perpetrators who irresponsibly dump their waste. Our enforcement team will investigate with a view to gaining any evidence of the person/s who may have dumped the waste, we are able to issue £400 fixed penalty notices due to new legislation that was introduced in May this year and this is aimed for the smaller fly tips along with taking people to court for prosecution of the more

larger fly tips. We have recently carried out an awareness campaign in the borough working with a number of agencies to combat this type of behaviour, we have:

- Placed an Advert in My Merton for residents to be aware of who they give their waste to, for disposal
- J C Deaux advertising our campaign poster re Fly tipping
- Posters on the side of our cage vehicles who collect the fly tipped waste.
- We have issued 12 fixed penalties notices of £400 for fly tipping since the change of legislation in May 2016, (3,835 Fixed Penalties of £80 have been issued for littering offences since April 2016 to present date),
- ANPR (Auto number plate recognition) exercise with the police stopping all vehicles carrying waste and asking for their waste carrier licences along with all proof of where their waste on board is to be dumped
- Working alongside RPs (Registered Providers) e.g. Merton Priory Homes
- Communicating with residents re the presentation of household waste for collection
- Publicising offenders who have been caught fly tipping in the local guardian

From Councillor Michael Bull to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Detailed arrangements for larger families and households in the borough do not seem to have been factored into the 'one size fits all' bins being proposed by the administration. In the summer months would the council consider doing weekly collections from families to avoid decaying and foul smells from overflowing bins on public health grounds?

Reply

There are currently no plans to increase the level of frequency during the summer months. It is important to note that the smelly food waste will continue to be collected weekly from all households and so should not need to be disposed of in the residual waste bin. This method of collection proposed is the optimal method for improving recycling and reducing cost.

The proposed service is not a "one size fits all" service. Our preferred bidder acknowledges that they may need to provide larger or additional bins for larger families of 6 or more people or for families with two or more small children in nappies.

From Councillor Dennis Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Can he update us on the merger between Circle Housing and Affinity Sutton?

Reply

Circle report that information has been provided to, and consultation on merger has taken place with, all Circle and Affinity Sutton residents. The consultation was carried out in accordance with HCA guidelines.

The HCA have approved the merger in principle and Circle continue to discuss final stages with lenders. At this stage, a date for final merger is not known but is likely to be before year end.

The new Group will be called Clarion and the commercial arm, which will focus on development, growth and social value will be called Latimer.

From Councillor John Sargeant to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

The opening of Crown House Creative in Morden Town Centre, utilising vacant retail space and providing a temporary venue for the arts, music and social events of many kinds is a very welcome innovation. Beyond its press release on the subject, what publicity has Merton council issued to promote the venue? What further publicity is planned and what opportunities does the member foresee the venue providing in the coming months?

Reply

Following the successful launch on October 26th, the Crown House Creative will provide a monthly bulletin, sent to all staff via the Intranet. This bulletin will also be promoted via the Merton Council website, the official Merton Council social media platforms, and forwarded to the local newspaper. The bulletin will also be sent to all Third Sector (voluntary) providers in the borough and local businesses (via the Merton Chamber of Commerce), as we seek to maximise the usage of the space, inviting local stakeholders to utilise the space to deliver activities.

The following programme takes place throughout November and December:

African Street Style Fashion Shoot (took place Sat 12th Nov)

Beat Motel – DJ collective who use artistic spaces (Thursday 17th Nov)

Self-Organise – Exhibition of works, talks, debates and workshops, highlighting the current and critical discourse on community, space and participation. The exhibition will explore how modes of self-organisation and communitarianism operate within public space, collectives and communities. (From Thurs 24th November)

Objects – Installation from student of University of Strasbourg (From Friday 25th November)

Light Up Morden – An evening of entertainment, to compliment the Christmas lights in Morden (Thurs 1st Dec)

Small Business Saturday – Saturday 3rd December

BFI Screening: Saturday 3rd December

BFI Screening: Saturday 10th December

We are also working with local businesses, providing free public surgeries re Dental care, and improving health and well-being, through Yoga and Shiatsu classes throughout November and December.

From Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Given the clear strength of feeling among many residents around the borough, why does the Cabinet Member like multiple wheelie bins so much more than standard dustbins and is this why the council won't even create a discreet bin store at its own civic centre?

Reply

Prior to undertaking the procurement for a new waste collection service there was no preference put forward by the council for or against wheelie bins. In effect the procurement was solution-neutral .

The proposed bidder's solution represents their optimal solution and was not designed by the council. This has been determined by the market and waste management experts. This has been a competitive process and a robust evaluation was undertaken prior to appointing the preferred bidder status to Veolia.

Wheelie bins have a distinct advantage over standard dustbins in that they can be wheeled and mechanically lifted onto the back of the waste trucks in the collection / disposal process. This has been proven to reduce injuries and sickness amongst waste staff.

The Civic centre uses Eurobins for storage which can be stored outside without the need for a bin store.

From Councillor Greg Udeh to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Could he outline his response to residents who request a controlled parking zone in their area to deal with the issue of commuter parking?

Reply

For a CPZ to be considered a petition must be collated and presented to the Council to show support for such a change. An informal consultation with residents then takes place and, if there is majority support to proceed, the next step is a statutory consultation.

My cabinet role is primarily in then enforcing controlled parking zones once they have been agreed and implemented. We take a firm but fair approach, using our parking charter which is available online, and our main aims are to make our roads safe and to ensure residents who have paid for a parking permit are not impeded from parking on their street by motorists parking without a permit.

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07a_Councillor strategic theme priority questions

From Councillor Imran Uddin to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Could he update us on progress towards agreeing a balanced budget for 2017/18?

Reply

The council has a statutory duty to set a balanced budget for the following year. Proposals will be brought to Cabinet over the next few months in accordance with our Business Planning timetable, outlining measures to achieve this.

From Councillor Hamish Badenoch to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Can the Cabinet Member update me on the council's plans for engaging with residents and their concerns via Twitter?

Reply

Twitter is often an inadequate means for communicating with the public. Access to Twitter is not equal, and some users are particularly fixated, and this can lead to problems ranging from misinformation to personal abuse to presidents-elect abusing their powers to call for failed politicians to become ambassadors. There will be circumstances when it will be appropriate for the council, through its communications team, or even through individual councillors, to communicate on Twitter. However residents have a wide range of other channels to communicate with the council about their concerns more effectively, and we encourage them to use the most appropriate one in each case.

From Councillor Marsie Skeete to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Could she update us on the funding pressures she foresees in her department over the period of the MTFS?

Reply

Colleagues will be aware of the pressures on council budgets generally. In respect of children's services, I am being kept well informed of specific pressures in the department's budget both in the current year and also in the context of the MTFS. In 2016-17, these include predicted overspends on staffing; placement costs for looked after children, SEN Transport and costs associated with our response to unaccompanied asylum seeking young people.

The main pressure on staffing budgets results from the need to employ more expensive agency staff to fill key social worker vacancies. As a result of the implementation of specific recruitment and retention strategies, officers have made significant progress in employing more permanent social work staff – in the current year our agency rate for this group of staff stands at 20%, its lowest for many years. To September 2016, we had spent £178,000 less on agency social workers compared to the same period in the last financial year. However, because of the nature of the employment market for social work staff it is likely that budget pressures will continue to occur during the term of the MTFS.

As at end September 2016, LAC placement budgets are projected to overspend by £1.46 million in 2016-17. Placement costs vary significantly depending on the needs of children coming into care and the types of placements required to meet those

needs. Officers in the department's Access to Resources service routinely seek best value for the council when seeking placements for children. At a strategic level we continue to recruit more affordable in house foster carers in order to minimise use of more expensive independent sector providers. The council makes use of regional and sub-regional placement 'framework' agreements and consortia arrangements designed to drive down costs. Officers are also currently engaged in developing strategies to reduce the need to use more expensive residential placements. Although I anticipate limited growth will be provided in the MTFs for placement costs, this area will continue to face budget pressures going forward.

SEN Transport costs have increased in recent years, largely because of demographic reasons. In the current year officers have undertaken specific work to reduce pressures on this budget. Through more robust implementation of eligibility criteria, encouraging the use of Personal Budgets and obtaining lower costs for taxi journeys, we are spending some £188k less on these costs than in the same period last year. Additional developments are planned for next year – including the transfer of taxi procurement to CSF department – in order to further reduce pressure on this budget.

In 2016-17, spending on UASCs is increasing. While the council receives some central government grant aid it falls short of actual spend and our work with this group has become, effectively, an underfunded 'burden'. Due to international factors, numbers of UASC are likely to continue to grow nationally and across London particularly. Merton's Director of Children's Services is playing a lead role in the London-wide response to the most recent increase in UASCs and in the lobbying of government in respect of cost pressures arising. Officers are monitoring the implications on the council's budgets carefully and will continue to do so in the medium term.

From Councillor David Williams to the Cabinet Member for Finance

With reference to the Financial Monitoring Report for September 2016 - showing a projected year end overspend by service departments of £9.979million - and the recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to Cabinet regarding the draft Business Plan 2017-21 (in respect of meeting the Council's statutory duties in relation to adult social care), what assurance can he give the Council that the latest projected Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) can be balanced in the next three years without an increase in Council Tax in 2017/18 or 2018/19?

Reply

Members will need to consider all options in relation to the statutory requirements for adults and indeed children's social care to balance the budget. We will need to consider the impact of the Autumn Statement today on our MTFs and await details of other information in order to be able to update it sufficiently. No options can be ruled in or ruled out until proposals are presented to cabinet for Council later in the year in accordance with the Business Planning timetable. It is quite clear that the government wants our Just About Managing residents to pay for its failure to tackle the social care challenge by introducing a so-called "levy" and by allowing its NHS to threaten to withdraw funding to councils that don't increase council tax. In contrast, residents can be assured we will be on their side and will be demanding our share of the £350m a week promised by members of the government for our

07a_Councillor strategic theme priority questions

health services, which was strangely absent from the Autumn Statement earlier today.

From Councillor Russell Makin to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Could he update us on our approach to sharing our services with other boroughs to save money in a time of government cuts?

Reply

Merton has been at the forefront of sharing services. In particular we have shared legal services, regulatory services, debt recovery services, internal audit, pensions administration. We are currently close to finalising the award of 2 tenders as part of a shared arrangement with three other neighbouring boroughs for our refuse collection, street cleansing and parks maintenance.

From Councillor Najeeb Latif to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Can the Cabinet Member tell me:

- a) When the council will commence its consultation on how the Neighbourhood Proportion of the CIL contributions should be spent?
- b) What criteria it will use to determine where and how this money is spent?

Reply

- a) we are due to commence the Neighbourhood CIL Fund consultation on or around the 28th of November this year. We plan for it to run until the 19th of January next year.
- b) The government has rules setting out how the neighbourhood CIL must be applied locally. The Council will confirm assessment criteria for the allocation of the money in accordance with the government's rules following the conclusion of the consultation which will be published. Please refer to www.merton.gov.uk/cil for consultation and details.

From Councillor Mary Curtin to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Could he comment on the pressures on this year's budget and the financial challenge we make in relation to overspending services?

Reply

The problems mainly arise from Adult Services from increases complexity of care and increase in provider prices. This is common across many authorities with this responsibility. An action plan is in place working on mitigation measures and alternative options for dealing with the issues.

From Councillor Hamish Badenoch to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Can the Cabinet Member please update the Council on details of progress made as part of the Phase C 'fine tuning' process for the waste services contract?

Reply

We are making good progress and ensuring the contract documents are clear and understood by all and that assumptions made as part of the final tender process are being firmed up.

We are still on target to conclude within agreed timescale leading to contract award in Mid December.

From Councillor Agatha Akyigyina to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Can he update us on our collection rates in relation to Business Rates?

Reply

As at the end of October we have collected 65.49% of the business rates charged for 2016/17. The total net debt collectable for the year is £89.2 million and so far we have collected £58.4 million. In addition we have collected £1.9 million of outstanding debt relating to previous years business rates.

COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2016 ITEM 7c – LABOUR AMENDMENT

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

This Council notes that the best way to find out what local people want is on the door step and at the ballot box and further notes it has agreed to abide by the principles set out in the Community Engagement Strategy and that, according to the Council's website, "all our consultation and community engagement activities should meet the highest standards of inclusion and involvement".

This Council notes some of Merton Council's recent consultations, which include but are not limited to:

- Despite the acknowledged difficulty of consulting on commercially confidential contract negotiations, a pilot with residents on proposed changes to Merton's waste collection system, which trialled a wheeled bin option in Lavender Fields in 2015, and which gave the council an opportunity to learn the views of residents, including that 89% of residents were satisfied with wheeled bins and 81% thought their streets were cleaner as a result, with these views feeding into the optimum solution proposed by the preferred contractor across South West London. In addition Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel undertook pre-decision scrutiny of the proposed contract and the Overview and Scrutiny Commission heard the call-in and agreed that Cabinet could proceed to the next stage in progressing contracts estimated to save £2m every year for the potential 24 year life of the contract after having listened to the views of residents.
- Again, despite the acknowledged difficulties of consulting on commercially confidential contract negotiations across four boroughs, engagement with Friends of Parks groups on the proposals and arrangements for the new maintenance contract for the borough's parks and open spaces.
- Perceived Confusion around the recent council tax consultation, **any decision on which** is of course a "political" issue and will be considered by Cabinet on 12 December **in the context of six years of government cuts and the Conservative government's refusal to address the national crisis in adult social care.**
- The consultation with residents undertaken by Harris Foundation prior to their being granted approval by government to open a new secondary school in Wimbledon, and, now that the commercially sensitive necessary site purchases have been completed, the work to be undertaken with High Path Community Resource Centre users and carers on shaping the plans for the replacement centre at Leyton Road which will be on a like for like basis with no loss of services.

This Council recognises the difficulties in trying to please all of the people all of the time especially when there are strongly held views on all sides, but recognises that council officers do their very best to deliver transparent Consultations and calls on the Leader of the Council to:

- a) ensure that the Council meets its commitments under the Community Engagement Strategy in the formulation of policy; and
- b) Bring a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on Merton's approach to consultation so that the Commission can consider whether it would wish to make any recommendations.

Motion now to read:

This Council notes that the best way to find out what local people want is on the door step and at the ballot box and further notes it has agreed to abide by the principles set out in the Community Engagement Strategy and that, according to the Council's website, "all our consultation and community engagement activities should meet the highest standards of inclusion and involvement".

This Council notes some of Merton Council's recent consultations, which include but are not limited to:

- Despite the acknowledged difficulty of consulting on commercially confidential contract negotiations, a pilot with residents on proposed changes to Merton's waste collection system, which trialled a wheeled bin option in Lavender Fields in 2015, and which gave the council an opportunity to learn the views of residents, including that 89% of residents were satisfied with wheeled bins and 81% thought their streets were cleaner as a result, with these views feeding into the optimum solution proposed by the preferred contractor across South West London. In addition Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel undertook pre-decision scrutiny of the proposed contract and the Overview and Scrutiny Commission heard the call-in and agreed that Cabinet could proceed to the next stage in progressing contracts estimated to save £2m every year for the potential 24 year life of the contract after having listened to the views of residents.
- Again, despite the acknowledged difficulties of consulting on commercially confidential contract negotiations across four boroughs, engagement with Friends of Parks groups on the proposals and arrangements for the new maintenance contract for the borough's parks and open spaces.
- Perceived Confusion around the recent council tax consultation, any decision on which is of course a "political" issue and will be considered by Cabinet on 12 December in the context of six years of government cuts and the Conservative government's refusal to address the national crisis in adult social care.
- The consultation with residents undertaken by Harris Foundation prior to their being granted approval by government to open a new secondary school in Wimbledon, and, now that the commercially sensitive necessary site purchases have been completed, the work to be undertaken with High Path Community Resource Centre users and carers on shaping the plans for the replacement centre at Leyton Road which will be on a like for like basis with no loss of services.

This Council recognises the difficulties in trying to please all of the people all of the time especially when there are strongly held views on all sides, but recognises that

council officers do their very best to deliver transparent Consultations and calls on the Leader of the Council to:

- c) ensure that the Council meets its commitments under the Community Engagement Strategy in the formulation of policy; and
- d) Bring a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on Merton's approach to consultation so that the Commission can consider whether it would wish to make any recommendations.

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AMENDMENT TO RECOMMENDATIONS AGENDA ITEM 14 COUNCIL MEETING 23 NOVEMBER 2016

Councillor Najeeb Latif will move and Councillor John Bowcott will second that the words underlined in the amended recommendations below be inserted.

Agenda Item 14 – Estates Local Plan – Submission to the Secretary of State

Recommendations:

That, in line with Cabinet's recommendations on 14 November 2016, Council resolves:

- A. To publish the Estates Local Plan and associated sustainability appraisal for comments followed by submission to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
- B. To delegate authority to the Director of Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing to approve any amendments to the Estates Local Plan and sustainability appraisal that may arise from 24 November 2016 until the receipt of the Planning Inspector's final report, to approve consultation documents or officer's responses to comments received at the pre-submission consultation and during the examination process.
- C. To note the continued progress in the delivery of the borough's regeneration by this decision which moves forward the renewal of three of the borough's estates as a comprehensive programme to build new homes and enhance the housing available to residents
- D. To note the progress of financial negotiations regarding the Stock Transfer Agreement and associated documents with Circle Merton Priory Homes or any successor organisation
- E. To delegate variations to the Stock Transfer Agreement to the Directors of Environment & Regeneration, Community & Housing and Corporate Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member, and
- F. To note that there will be a further report to councillors in March 2017 confirming the anticipated viability of the overall project prior to the final submission to the Secretary of State.
- G. As resolved by the Borough Plan Advisory Committee and Cabinet, that the council has had regard to the Self Build Register when developing the Estates Local Plan and that the council should not allocate specific sites for self build and custom housebuilding in the Estates Local Plan in order to prioritise rehousing residents who are already living on the three estates in new homes built to modern standards and to progress a viable regeneration project.
- H. To ensure that it is clear that estates regeneration is only supported where all three estates go forward to benefit from full regeneration, and not otherwise, as resolved by the Borough Plan Advisory Committee.

The amended recommendations would then read:

Recommendations:

That, in line with Cabinet's recommendations on 14 November 2016, Council resolves:

- A. To publish the Estates Local Plan and associated sustainability appraisal for comments followed by submission to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
- B. To delegate authority to the Director of Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing to approve any amendments to the Estates Local Plan and sustainability appraisal that may arise from 24 November 2016 until the receipt of the Planning Inspector's final report, to approve consultation documents or officer's responses to comments received at the pre-submission consultation and during the examination process.
- C. To note the continued progress in the delivery of the borough's regeneration by this decision which moves forward the renewal of three of the borough's estates as a comprehensive programme to build new homes and enhance the housing available to residents
- D. To note the progress of financial negotiations regarding the Stock Transfer Agreement and associated documents with Circle Merton Priory Homes or any successor organisation
- E. To delegate variations to the Stock Transfer Agreement to the Directors of Environment & Regeneration, Community & Housing and Corporate Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member, and
- F. To note that there will be a further report to councillors in March 2017 confirming the anticipated viability of the overall project prior to the final submission to the Secretary of State.
- G. As resolved by the Borough Plan Advisory Committee and Cabinet, that the council has had regard to the Self Build Register when developing the Estates Local Plan and that the council should not allocate specific sites for self build and custom housebuilding in the Estates Local Plan in order to prioritise rehousing residents who are already living on the three estates in new homes built to modern standards and to progress a viable regeneration project.
- H. To ensure that it is clear that estates regeneration is only supported where all three estates go forward to benefit from full regeneration, and not otherwise, as resolved by the Borough Plan Advisory Committee.