

Merton Council Council

13 September 2017

Supplementary agenda

16 Councillor Non-Priority Questions and Answers

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Councillor non priority questions

From Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities:

Can the Cabinet Member update me on how the two new South West London recovery cafes are progressing and what impact they have had on anti-social behaviour in the borough?

Reply

The Sunshine Recovery Café has been operational since April 2017 serving five boroughs of Merton, Wandsworth, Sutton, Kingston and Richmond. The cafe has been gradually increasing the footfall of clients since its opening as a non-clinical alternative for people experiencing a mental health crisis. One of the primary purposes and performance indicators for the cafe is to reduce the numbers of presentations to A & E. Staffing consists of a Manager and 4 salaried staff along with volunteers and peer mentors.

The café operates between 5pm and 11pm on weekdays and from 12 noon until 11pm on weekends and bank holidays. Current average uptake is approximately 25 people at any time. The café has not had any reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in the vicinity during opening since it began operations nor have staff had any necessity to call police although police officers regularly signpost individuals to the café.

There have been no complaints to LBM in regards to ASB emanating from this property and there have been several elected members whom have visited the café. The offer for all members to attend the café remains open and can be arranged by contacting Mike Pierce whom is one of the managers for the service - Michael.Pierce@cdars.org.uk It is to be noted that there is only one café within Merton, the second is in Wandsworth and is run by Hestia.

From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Can the Cabinet Member clarify whether or not Labour councillors and the MP for Mitcham and Morden intend to encourage their supporters to respond to the current consultation on St Helier hospital?

Reply

I can assure Cllr Grocott that Labour Councillors and the MP for Mitcham and Morden Siobhain McDonagh most certainly have encouraged our supporters to respond to the current consultation on St Helier hospital. In fact we also encourage those who are not our supporters to respond as this is an issue for the whole community and should surely be beyond party politics.

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From Councillor David Williams to the Leader of the Council:

Would the Leader please list the meetings and correspondence he has had since the last ordinary meeting of the Council on 12th July 2017 to save St Helier Hospital?

Reply

- Organised and attended a public meeting at the Civic Centre on 12 September to discuss the St Helier & Epsom “engagement”
- Organised and attended a public meeting at Morden Baptist church on 12 September to discuss the St Helier & Epsom “engagement”
- Wrote to the Chair of Epsom & St Helier NHS Trust setting out my concerns in relation to the current “engagement” process
- Wrote to the Chair of Merton CCG setting out my concerns in relation to the current “engagement” process and seeking assurances regarding the statutory consultation process
- Attended numerous meetings with other stakeholders in relation to the “engagement”

From Councillor Linda Taylor to the Cabinet Member for Finance:

Now that AFC Wimbledon has chosen the contactor to build its new football stadium at Plough Lane, can the Cabinet Member confirm whether or not Merton Council will have any kind of financial stake in the building of the stadium, including when it comes to ownership of the land?

Reply

We are pleased that AFC Wimbledon and Galliard Homes are working together to finalise the planning legal agreement and to undertake other works which will help finalise planning permission progress their development. We have been disappointed with delays in the process but these have been outwith the control of the council.

The planning application provides for AFC Wimbledon to build a football stadium and the council has no financial stake in the building of the stadium or the contract between AFC Wimbledon and any contractor they may have chosen.

From Councillor Michael Bull to the Cabinet Member for Finance:

Please can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the P3 and P4 sites in central Wimbledon, including the Council’s intentions with regard to both?

Reply

P3: Hartfield Road Car park

The Hartfield Road Car Park in central Wimbledon has long been considered as a development opportunity to maintain the economic vibrancy of Wimbledon and

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contribute to our economic development objectives. It remains a development proposal site in our Local Plan for a mix of town centre uses.

The Council, as freeholder of the P3 site is subject to a covenant on the site which prohibits the loss of the car park associated with Morrisons; until 2019/20.

Over the next year, the council will be assessing options for the site which will also be guided by the council's Future Wimbledon masterplan. We must also be mindful of Crossrail 2. We have not yet heard from the government regarding their commitment to Crossrail 2 or the impact of whatever station option is chosen. This could have an impact on parking provision in Wimbledon; therefore it is sensible at this time not to rush towards developing the site prior to the covenant date.

P4: The Broadway car park

The proposed sale of the site did not progress to completion. The selected bidder was not willing to proceed on the basis of their submitted offer, citing changes in the market following Brexit. The land continues to be operated as a pay and display car park. The council will monitor the economic situation and review options for the site before making a decision to bring the site back to market. We are clearly disappointed that the outcome of the 2016 referendum, and the government's failure to get on top of the consequences, has led to the deal falling through and the loss of income to the council, but we hope that future opportunities may arise should the government approach change.

From Councillor Peter Southgate to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

The case for London to be recognised as the world's first National Park City is compelling, but requires the support of a majority of the capital's 654 electoral wards. At the beginning of August the campaign was still 85 wards short of a majority, and only eight wards in Merton had pledged their support. Will the Cabinet member encourage councillors representing the remaining 12 wards to consider signing up to the campaign?

Reply

The Council certainly proposes to encourage those wards within Merton that have not already signed-up to this initiative to do so, but whilst the objectives of the campaign are laudable, the Council recognises that the National Park City aspiration remains a challenging one, irrespective of the numbers of wards across the Metropolis that pledge their support.

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Non-priority questions under the strategic theme (Sustainable Communities):

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

Maidstone Council has recently cancelled its contract with Kingdom's environmental services after a Panorama report exposed some officers bragging about their bonuses after wrongly fining residents. The Panorama report highlighted cases in Hertfordshire, London, and Kent, where it is claimed people were incorrectly fined by the private company. In light of these revelations, has Merton undertaken a full review of Kingdom's operating practices here and what was the outcome of this?

Reply

Keeping the borough clean is a priority of this administration and the residents of Merton. In response to that, we have invested in anti-litter campaigns over a number of years and invested in litter bins with ash trays and many gum and butt bins across our town centres. We are hopeful that through on-going provision of suitable bins, continued education and enforcement, the numbers of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) issued will reduce. Our intention is to prevent litter in the first place and satisfy the demands of our residents

Kingdom has a number of different operating models depending on the requirements of local authorities; it is a decision for each local authority which model it decides to adopt and whether it adopts a scheme which incentivises enforcement officers to issue FPNs.

As part of the procurement process for Environmental Enforcement at Merton and the subsequent award of contract to Kingdom Security in 2016 we ensured that the business model did not allow for the payment of performance bonuses linked to the number of FPNs issued.

Under our agreement with Kingdom, they receive a fixed percentage for each FPN correctly issued, however, the money that Kingdom receives covers all enforcement costs including salary costs and the substantial infrastructure supporting the operation. In terms of salary, all staff are paid above the London Living wage as their salary with full PAYE employee rights.

Following the concerns raised in the BBC Panorama programme made by Snapper TV production we did seek clarity from the directors of Kingdom Security in regards to our contractual arrangements. We are satisfied with their operating practises in Merton and can confirm that no bonuses are paid to staff based on the volume of tickets issued.

It is important to note that a FPN is an invitation to effectively discharge your liability to prosecution. This means that while this is not an admission of guilt, you agree that an offence has been committed and that by paying the sum of money specified no further action will be undertaken by the council. This method of dealing with offences not only saves the time involved in prosecuting cases at court, but the cost

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associated with a Fixed Penalty Notice is likely to be substantially lower than any fine that can be imposed by the courts. For example, the maximum penalty which can be imposed by the courts for littering is £2,500. The fine for a FPN is set by guidelines under the relevant act, we have to adhere to the fine set.

Under our contractual agreement , the decision to prosecute any alleged offenders is made by the local authority in its capacity as the prosecuting authority. It is not a decision that Kingdom Security can make.

From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking:

What are the criteria for determining when and where the 'Big Belly' bins are installed around Merton? Some residents are understandably confused about this as it doesn't necessarily appear to be consistent. For example, there is a 'Big Belly' bin along Wimbledon Chase but I was advised by council officers that it was not appropriate to site one outside Wimbledon Chase station.

Reply

In order to support our residents to dispose of their litter responsibly we use a range of bins across the borough. We aim to be flexible in our approach in order to assist residents and therefore each bin is sited depending on local circumstances and need. The installation of all our litter bins is reviewed on a case by case bases by members of the waste services team. Therefore, we do not employ a strict criteria to the siting of Big Belly bins.

There are many ways to tackle areas that are subject to littering or have high footfall. We can install additional bins, empty the bins more frequently or install bigger bins. The advantage of Big Belly Bins is that they compact the waste increasing the capacity they can contain and have built in technology which notifies our contractors by email once they are full and require emptying. This ideally suits areas such as our parks and green spaces where, due to seasonal demand the frequency of collection can vary significantly. As they are solar powered some locations are not suitable due to issues of shade from bridges, trees, etc. We currently have 31 bins in our Parks and a further 5 located in litter hotspots. Whilst useful in the right position, they are more costly than normal bins and therefore it is important we consider their installation very carefully in order to ensure value for money.

In addition these bins do not provide a recycling option which needs to be considered when we are ensuring there is adequate provision in a neighbourhood.

From Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing:

How many residents have fallen foul of the badly designed Hartfield Road bus lane when trying to turn left into Beulah Road over the past 12 months and how does this compare to previous years since its installation?

Reply

Bus lanes are essential to keeping our buses moving in town centres along with speeding up journey times. The bus lane is properly designed and in compliant with all relevant highway and traffic regulation along with being clearly signposted. The number of PCNs issued in 2016/17 at this location is 4,656.

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

What arrangements has the Council made to ensure that tree leaves are cleared promptly this year?

Reply

During procurement and mobilisation of the street cleaning contract we have ensured that Veolia are fully aware of the additional street sweeping demand during the autumn period. We have provided them with the previous data and locations regarding areas that are particularly affected by leaf fall and we are reviewing this year's leafing programme with Veolia. Additional resources will be used to keep the streets and pavements clear. The usual manual beat sweeping will be supported by the use of blowers which will move the leaf fall from between parked cars and pavements ahead of large mechanical sweepers which will sweep up the leaves. In some locations the leaves will be bagged and then collected by crews in a caged vehicle.

Our Neighbourhood Client officers will be monitoring this service and regularly inspecting scheduled areas to ensure that the service is operating to the required standard. We expect them to start their leaf fall sweeping in October through to December but this will be kept under review depending on the weather and the rates of leaf fall. During this time, all roads will continue to be cleansed according to their need and cleansing schedule.

From Councillor Adam Bush to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking:

Has the Council now cleared all of the footpath weeds across the borough following the failure of the spraying operation this summer?

Reply

The first seasonal weed spray took place in May . Unfortunately this spray did not have the intended effect of killing the weeds. At our request, our street cleaning contractor has undertaken an additional spray at no extra cost to the Council. This has now been completed and we are monitoring the level of decay which we anticipate to take approximately two weeks from the time of the spraying, which was completed across the borough at the end of August. In some circumstances rain or

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wind can reduce the effectiveness of the spraying; therefore the team will monitor its effectiveness across the borough. Die-back is already evident in many wards. The contractor is now carrying out manual weeding around trees, which are not sprayed, and is removing the dead weeds along with any litter as part of a scheduled street cleaning programme. We expect all weeding to be completed by the end of September. A further spray is currently scheduled for mid-October onwards.

From Councillor Brian Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing:

Please can the Cabinet Member update me on the regeneration of Morden town centre and the latest timescales to which the Council is working?

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Reply

Morden Town Centre regeneration is a key priority for the council and our regeneration team. A lot of preparatory work is underway in the background including:

Housing Zone:

Morden has been designated one of the Mayor's Housing Zones to speed up the delivery housing across London. This status gives the development industry comfort that Morden is a serious proposition and a place to invest.

The Housing Zone status also provides up to £42m loan financing available to developers to enable the delivery of new homes, shops and workspaces in Morden.

In August 2017, the FutureMerton team were successful in bidding for £40k Housing Zone revenue to support the staff resources and due diligence work currently underway. This funding ensures that the Morden project is staffed and lessens the burden on the Council's general fund for this project.

Development partner:

To deliver Morden, the Council and TfL are working in partnership (as the major land-owners) and in 2018, will be seeking a development partner to develop the masterplan for Morden and to bring forward development proposals.

We have commissioned GL Hearn to advise us on the best form of Joint Venture Partnership and governance between LBM-TfL to deliver our regeneration objectives. Our work with GL Hearn will also include soft-market testing and we will report back to Cabinet and Scrutiny later this year with a view to running the procurement process during 2018.

Public Realm & Streetscape:

We have been working with TfL surface transport team to undertake traffic modelling and concept designs for the traffic flow, highway layout and new bus standing facilities in Morden. The project will be reported to TfL's Healthy Streets board in

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October to seek approval for the next stage of detailed design and feasibility. Our objectives are to transform Morden's streetscape in accordance with the Mayor's Healthy Streets priorities and to create a new public space at Morden Station. We are also seeking to future-proof bus provision to 2040 by creating new bus standing capacity in the town centre. We await the outcome of the TfL Board. If successful, the public realm project could take 3-4 years to design and develop. We currently anticipate a 2019 start.

Housing Infrastructure Fund Bid:

We are currently preparing a bid to DCLG for upfront infrastructure funding for Morden. If successful, our bid will de-risk the project for development partners by speeding up the planning, property and bus infrastructure projects. Decisions expected spring 2018.

Physical Improvements

Whilst the major research work is underway regarding the wider development we have also recently completed the transformation of Morden Court Parade to its art deco heyday. This project involved working with 65 different property owners and included re-rendering installation of new balconies, feature signage and a co-ordinated design approach to shop signage. The project has received positive feedback from residents. We would also like to thank the businesses and land owners who were instrumental in helping us deliver the project.

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

There is clearly considerable concern locally about the threatened closure of Ridgeway Stables in Wimbledon Village. Can the Cabinet Member tell me what the Council is doing actively to support the stables at this very challenging time and to exert pressure on the landlord of the premises?

Reply

The Ridgeway Stables provide a valuable facility for the residents of Merton and the Council, through our Active Kids holiday scheme, refer a great number of children to the stables every year to experience the joy of horse-riding. The future of the stables is a matter for the management of the Ridgeway Stables to consider. I very much hope that the stables continue to operate and residents can continue to enjoy the services they offer.