

WIMBLEDON COMMUNITY FORUM
23 MARCH 2022

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor James Holmes (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held via Zoom and chaired by Councillor James Holmes. 8 residents and 8 councillors attended on Zoom with 118 additional views on YouTube. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained how the meeting would work.

2 UPDATE FROM THE MP FOR WIMBLEDON (Agenda Item 2)

Stephen Hammond MP gave an update on major issues.

Stephen said what has happened in Ukraine was an aggressive and barbaric invasion by the Russian state. The UK Government and international response has been relatively quick and robust. He was concerned this could be a long period of attrition and siege, so we need to consider delivering food and essential supplies. The Refugee schemes took longer than expected to get up and running and forms should be easier to fill in. Stephen said he has been told the forms will be improved. Stephen has a list of people who want to volunteer and sponsor refugees and hope others will come forward

A planning application for the St George's East building has been passed by the Planning Applications Committee. The application is for a higher building than was expected, so would not have been permissible under new local plan. Stephen has written to Mayor of London asking him to review the application and there are a number of petitions against it. He has not had a response from the Mayor of London as yet.

The AELTC application on Wimbledon Park Golf club is controversial in Merton and Wandsworth with major concerns from a lot of residents. Stephen has met with All England and residents to try and find solutions. Concerns include the prolonged closure of Church Road in the summer, an application on Metropolitan Open land, the number of courts being more than at Roehampton, the scale and size of the new show court, the siting of maintenance buildings and whilst the new park is welcomed there are issues about how open it will be and who will be responsible for it. Stephen expects the application to be heard in Wandsworth after May elections and in Merton

at either the June or July meeting. There is also a covenant held by Merton Council that prevents building on golf course land, but this is subject to some legal interpretation, so the Council is taking legal advice on this. The planning application is separate to the covenant but could be used stop the project from going ahead. Stephen has written to both the Mayor of London and the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State has written to both councils but will wait for the decisions to be made.

The [Boundary Commission for England](#) is consulting on revised boundaries for Wimbledon constituency. Stephen has made a representation to keep the existing ten wards in the constituency rather than some leave and new ones join.

Cllr McGrath said that the Conservative group had voted against the local plan. Stephen said that clearly the group had objections to elements of the plan but the length of time for the new plan to be finalised means that it is a hinderance on the St George's East case. Cllr Kohler asked about the status of the covenant on Wimbledon Park, Stephen said that the resident association has had advice that the covenant is enforceable but he has not seen any advice received by Merton Council

Stephen said he is contactable via [email](#).

3 LONDON ASSEMBLY UPDATE (Agenda Item 3)

Leonie Cooper, Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth gave an update on activities at the London Assembly.

As restrictions come to an end pan-London bodies are still keeping a watching brief on COVID-19 across boroughs, especially hospital numbers.

The Assembly has passed a motion to ask the Government to improve the route for refugees from Ukraine. Leonie has been impressed by the number volunteers who have come forward to host families.

The Mayor of London's budget has been agreed including an increase in the Mayor's precept of 8% or around 60p per week for a Band D council tax house. The budget includes a £90m climate emergency fund to unlock investment into decarbonisation schemes; £23m to the violence reduction unit; £14m to provide opportunities to young people; £5m to buy back right to buy properties; £7.5m to advice service.

Transport for London has had a series of very short-term funding agreements with Government due to the drop in fares income caused by the pandemic. Passenger numbers still at only 60% of pre-lockdown levels. A long-term agreement is critical for TfL and the nationwide supply chains.

The Assembly Plenary session in March looked at the cost-of-living crisis, London living wage, fuel poverty, and London's economic recovery. Central London recovery slower than elsewhere in the country as creative, cultural and tourism has been hit harder than many industries.

March 2021 saw the murder of Sarah Everard and the poor handling of the vigil that followed. There are clear issues of race, gender and homophobic discrimination within the Met. Unfortunate that Met Police Commissioner Cressida Dick resigned in the way she did as she was popular with officers but clearly more action was needed to help rebuild trust.

Leonie has received a lot of representations about both the AELTC planning application and the St George's East Building. Assembly Members do not have a direct role in the decision but will be meeting with Deputy Mayor to express the concerns of constituents which have been raised.

A resident asked about stopping the congestion charge at weekend. Leonie said that changing congestion charges is part of the agreement and negotiations between TfL and the Department for Transport as is the expansion of ULEZ.

A resident asked about the 8% increase in Mayor precept. Leonie said that grants from central government were underfunding London services, including around £200m for Met Police taking on national tasks.

A resident asked about the spending of £2b on the new Silvertown Tunnel which four of the local councils disagree with. Leonie said that the funding is coming from a private company who will recoup the funding from tolls. The tunnel has been agreed due to the comparatively small number of crossings in the east of London. The improved connectivity will reduce congestion and improve air quality, according to TfL modelling, and open up routes for electric buses. Similar approaches have worked elsewhere. Mayor has to look at issue for the benefits for the whole of London, as well as the impact on the four councils.

Cllr Holden asked when Deputy Mayor might make a decision on St Georges House East and Leonie said she did not know yet but will update if she hears anything.

A resident asked if Leonie regretted not supporting campaign against siting Harris School in South Wimbledon due to pollution in the area. Leonie said she has pushed the Mayor hard on the issue of air quality to increase measures to gradually shift away from polluting cars. A new enlarged ULEZ has a much higher compliance rate, so it is right to extend this to the whole of London. Leonie will continue to campaign for improvements in air quality. It is not about individual locations, we need to tackle pollution everywhere, as WHO have said there is no safe level of pollution. Leonie

will also be pushing the Mayor to phase out diesel busses and replace them with electric ones.

Cllr Benbow asked why there are still no safety measures in place surrounding Harris School at High Path? Cllr Benbow said that two young schoolboys were involved in a nearby crash a few weeks ago, both had minor injuries. Leonie said this would need to be raised with Merton Council.

Residents can contact Leonie by [email](#).

4 HIGH STREETS TASK GROUP (Agenda Item 4)

Councillor Peter Southgate said that the Repurposing the High Street Task Group began in June 2020 and has taken a long time to complete. At the same time Your Merton and Merton 2030 funding has begun to take shape with recognition of the importance of our high streets. Cllr Southgate said that the final report went to [Cabinet on 21 March](#) and Cabinet has formed a working group to implement the recommendations.

The findings included linking high streets with nearby green spaces and create more greenery; the importance of arts/cultural events; funding for town centre managers to provide a link to businesses; online/digital offer to promote local high streets; and attract entrepreneurs who want to move to local spaces rather commute to central London. The Task Group also acknowledged that each high street has a different history and culture, and this can be used to link communities to these spaces.

Wimbledon is the most significant town centre with an infrastructure to support it including the BID which can act as a town centre manager. The plans for Romulus to open up Centre Court and provide small workspaces and not look to an anchor tenant to replace Debenhams. WimbleTech in the library acts as a incubator for small businesses and this could be harnessed. Wimbledon also has the most developed cultural offering. Wimbledon suffers from a lack of green space in the centre but there is scope to make visitors more aware of South Park Gardens. A trail could help link the town centre to these areas.

Officers will begin to develop plans for each of the high streets, but this will need to involve local organisations and civic groups. Cllr Southgate thanked everyone who had contributed to the review including Cllr Kohler.

A resident asked if the plan included other high streets. Peter said that yes five town centres were covered Morden, Mitcham, South Wimbledon, Wimbledon and Raynes Park.

A resident asked what reservations the Cabinet had with the report? Peter said that the Cabinet was supportive of the recommendations, and these will be developed by the officer group. The administrations broad priorities follow a similar direction of travel

A resident asked about financing for these plans. Peter said the Merton 2030 programme includes financing for town centres, including £300k for Morden, for a town centre manager in Mitcham and for an incubator.

A resident asked of there were plans for South Wimbledon and Peter said there were specific ideas for South Wimbledon in the report.

Cllr Holmes thanked Cllr Southgate and Cllr Williams for their service on the Council as they are not standing in the next election.

5 WARM AND WELL (Agenda Item 5)

Olivia McKay, Winter Warmth Engagement Officer for Wimbledon Guild, gave an update on the [Warm and Well Project](#). The project started in January 2019 and is a partnership between Merton Council, Age UK Merton and Thinking Works.

Thinking Works is a free service in operating across five south west London boroughs that provides home energy assessments and assess eligibility for additional utility support. Thinking Works also provide a starter pack to residents that can help improve water and energy efficiency. Wimbledon Guild provides also provides referrals to Thinking Works for fuel vouchers. To be eligible you must be a Merton resident, and either over 65, have a long-term health condition or on a low income.

Wimbledon Guild also provide a handy person service, a free service for older people or those with long term health conditions, to do those small jobs that do not need technical qualifications and excludes gardening or decorating.

The Warm and Well project also provides outreach to share information and can refer to other Guild services.

6 LOVE WIMBLEDON UPDATE (Agenda Item 6)

Craig Hurring, Chief Executive of Love Wimbledon had provided an update which was shared at the meeting.

Apologies I cannot be with you this evening, I would have loved to meet more of the local community tonight, but regrettably I have an unavoidable childcare clash. I will do my utmost to attend the next meeting in June.

I have been in post as the new Love Wimbledon Chief Executive for just over 2 months now, following Helen Clark Bell's decision to step down after 10 years in the role. The BID begins its third term on 1st April 2022, and much of my immediate work has been focused on renewing our vendor and supplier contracts for the new 5-year BID term and setting budgets for our immediate work in 2022/23. We're also experiencing some personnel changes, with 2 retirements this year following in the wake of Helen's departure, meaning the team will look different by the time we are back to full strength, and I am more fully established in my role.

I've been keen to meet as many stakeholders as possible since being in post and have been introduced to a number of Love Wimbledon's important levy payers, key suppliers, Councillors, Merton Council representatives, Stephen Hammond MP and other bodies operating within the wider Wimbledon area. They have provided a warm welcome and together helped me to build a good understanding of the impact of Covid on Wimbledon Town Centre, and where there are opportunities for us all as we plan for recovery. This will be a major focus of the BID's work over the coming months, as we consider how to take our pandemic learnings into building a vision for what Wimbledon Town Centre offers residents, domestic visitors, international tourists, current businesses, and future businesses both in terms of our high street offering and evolving workplaces.

We've also been busy bringing activations back into the town centre, to coincide with a growth in footfall since restrictions were eased early in 2022. For Valentine's Day we installed a heart installation in the Piazza, which had real impact and was extremely well received, with partners, families and pet owners sharing their love with our wooden heart. We also relaunched our monthly market programme at the start of March, with Rock Choir kicking things off in style. We will be running a range of different market events throughout the year, including ones focusing on sustainability and Friday markets for more of a mixed residential and business audience.

It's been a busy time for Love Wimbledon too in terms of our work supporting keeping the town clean. Covid has had a real impact on waste collection in the early part of 2022, and we're working with Merton Council, Veolia, First Mile, and other waste contractors currently to deliver over 200 additional outcomes a month in terms of removing fly tipping, flyposting, and additional waste collection for our businesses. Our monthly Community Clean programmes have resulted in 80 interventions already this year to remove a spate of graffiti tagging and provided additional jet washing to clean up some key areas. We will also be arranging a deep clean of Hartfield Walk next month, ahead of some snagging work which we wanted to do once the area had been through the winter period, while celebrating its first anniversary.

Moving forward we have a busy programme of events planned that I will be able to discuss in more depth at the next Community Forum in June. This includes a number of installations across the town centre to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, including a design competition for local children and the return of some of Love Wimbledon's larger town centre activities, including Big Screen Tennis for the Wimbledon fortnight. From a green and sustainable perspective, we'll be launching a

cargo bike pilot programme for our businesses soon, with the support of Cross River Partnership and Merton Council and will be testing this with a range of different scenarios to establish how useful it will be to our businesses.

Once again, I'm sorry I couldn't join you tonight, and I am looking forward to working with you over the coming months. Please do get in touch if you'd like to meet, I am really keen to see as many people as possible over the coming months.

Cllr Holmes thanked Helen Clark-Bell for her contribution to the Forum.

7 COMMUNITY FORUM REVIEW (Agenda Item 7)

Kris Witherington, Engagement and Consultation Manager at Merton Council, gave a presentation on the review of the Community Forum meetings currently taking place. The presentation is attached to this report.

Merton Council is asking residents to provide feedback on their experience of the community forums, what they think works, and what they think could be improved. Kris has looked at what other types of engagement is taking place across London and ran through seven other models for engaging with residents.

Cllr Holmes said it was disappointing to see numbers of attendees decline during the pandemic, so this is an important opportunity to revitalise the forums.

A resident said it would be good to keep the forums accessible live online even if they go back to being held in the library, a hybrid model perhaps, and wider advertising is needed.

8 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 8)

At a previous meeting residents had asked about enforcement action being considered against Trust Ford after they had removed 11 trees. The Council has insisted that 11 trees are replaced with 11 semi-mature London Plane trees and that an additional 12 new Silver Birch Trees were planted along the River Wandle. The Council has also put 26 tree preservation orders on trees on the site. As a result no further enforcement action will be taken.

A resident asked about the Highways team applying tarmac over tree pits. Cllr Fairclough has raised this issue with the Highways team and their response was: *"I can advise that after consultation with those in green spaces and reviewing the documentation over keeping the footway safe to road users we have agreed to move to a clear 150mm gap between the tree and the edge of the Blacktop, we will also be introducing a trial of a 100mm gap along the exposed tree roots where these do not result in a risk of slip and trip in the main walked route. As I am sure you are aware*

the Code of Practice a Risk Based Approach has meant even more burden on the Highway Officer when agreeing to the right method of repair in these matters.”

A resident said that public realm designs are often not very functional, for example outside the station, and asked how the community can get involved in these decisions that affect us all. Cllr Holmes said the forum was one way, but the station forecourt is owned by South West Trains so is harder to influence than Council owned land.

Councillor Holmes thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 9)

Future meetings, all at 7.15pm:

Wednesday 15 June 2022 in the Arts Space at Wimbledon Library

Wednesday 21 September 2022 in the Arts Space at Wimbledon Library

Wednesday 30 November 2022 in the Arts Space at Wimbledon Library

Wednesday 22 March 2023 venue to be confirmed