

RAYNES PARK COMMUNITY FORUM
20 SEPTEMBER 2022

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Matthew Willis (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held in Raynes Park Library and chaired by Councillor Matthew Willis with Tony Edwards from the Raynes Park Association (RPA). Around 30 residents and six councillors attended with 116 additional views on YouTube. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 2)

Flooding update:

- Merton has a live [Flooding Survey](#) which feeds into Merton's Section 19 reports. Please complete if you have been affected by flooding
- The Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) bid for Worple Rd raingarden was unsuccessful
- Recent thunderstorms and flooding – Raynes Park town centre remained reasonably dry in the event which has been a test for and shows a success of recent highway drainage works and sewer clearance between Merton and Thames Water.
- Travelodge/Durham Rd – private issue reported to management of the Travelodge to repair.
- Merton Council officers have met with Cllrs to discuss plans for Raynes Park town centre and would like to develop a community flood plan
- Merton assessing options to look at other raingarden locations in the town centre
- Integrated Survey for Flood Alleviation scheme

Tony Edwards said that the RPA was keen to work with Thames Water and Merton Council to identify locations for rain gardens.

Cllr Victoria Wilson said that a leak on Amity Grove has been reported. Cllr Wilson reminded residents that leaks, and flooding should be reported to Thames Water, issues with gullies report to Merton Council.

Cllr Chessie Flack introduced Peter Lam from Hale Architecture and Charlotte Williams from Quad, who are acting on behalf of Aviva in relation to site on 82-86 Bushey Road. In 2016 Aviva received planning for retail and the site was demolished but it did not proceed to construction. They are now bringing in a new application for light industrial use and they plan to apply by the of end September. The site is next to Pets at Home and forms an L-shape. To protect housing on north side they will create a barrier using the buildings with yards only facing into the site. They have high sustainability aims so will be including green roofs, new trees, wildflower meadows, use passive solar protection, low temperature hot water and rainwater harvesting on larger warehouses. Aviva also want to include a new public clock using the clock faces that were removed from the site and put into storage. There will not be a pedestrian footpath to Bodnant Gardens as there will not be a need for public access. The pre-application [consultation](#) ends next Thursday.

A resident asked what kind of companies would be likely to use the new development. Charlotte said that it would be mainly last mile distribution companies, and trade counters. A resident asked about road safety for local school pupils and Charlotte said they will be meeting with the school to discuss their safety concerns. A resident asked if Pets at Home would be staying at the site and Charlotte said they have just signed a new long-term lease with Aviva and there would be improvements to their part of the site as well.

A resident asked about the use of wood in the design and Peter explained that they would be using treated timber cladding that will be able to sustain the look for a long period of time. A resident asked about access to A3 for HGVs and Charlotte said this should be fine.

A resident said that the area is hostile to pedestrians and cycles, and no footpath will restrict access for those working at the site. Charlotte said security would be at front of site, so that is where access is and whilst most will drive there will be cycle parking and dropped curbs.

Cllr James Williscroft spoke about Merton and Sutton joint cemetery board. Cllrs from across parties and boroughs cooperate well. The toilets and wating rooms at Merton cemetery have had a deep clean and investment promised to improve them.

Cllr Caroline Charles said that at Northeast Surrey Crematoria a wall had been knocked down by a car and a new garden of remembrance was being built. The pews are also being refurbished.

Cllr Willis said they have submitted a funding application to South Western Railway (SWR) with the RPA for additional murals. This was for up to nine murals in the skew arch and would involve local schools and community groups. Work would not commence until April 2023 but a decision is expected by the end of the year.

There will be a Bat walk on Cannon Hill Lane 7.30pm on Friday 23 September.

3 POLICE UPDATE (Agenda Item 3)

Sgt Ben Hobbs was unable to attend.

4 RAILWAY EMBANKMENT (Agenda Item 4)

Elizabeth Lane from the RPA had provided an update to Cllr Willis. Elizabeth has been doing a lot of work on the embankment. She had met with Network Rail (NR) on 11 August to inspect the site, and NR need to send a team to clear rubbish and boulders before they will grant a license to the volunteers to access the site. Elizabeth has already submitted a significant amount of paperwork to help the project. SWR have also been discussing the option to adopt the green spaces on Platform 4.

A resident asked about lifts at Raynes Park station and step free access. Cllr Willis said that an Access for All application has been submitted to NR by Merton Council. The earliest we will hear is early 2023 and works will not be for several years.

5 GENERAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

Tony Edwards gave an update on local issues.

The 'kiss and ride' north of station is on private land so does not have restricted parking enforced. Stephen Hammond MP has been chasing Workspace, the owners of the land, and will hopefully be able to meet with them soon.

Railway land being transferred to Merton Council from Network Rail on south side of station to expand the public space and create more room for pedestrians. NR is reviewing the final documents, but Future Merton has cleared the land ahead of it being transferred.

The 'Parklets' in Raynes Park are on temporary traffic orders until the end of the year, but public seem to support so likely to be kept.

Tree strategy update from Merton Council said that they planted 2562 trees last year and will plant another 500 this year. A draft strategy for Council trees should be coming out in September. Once the Merton Council tree strategy is complete the Council will then need to look at wider tree policies for non-Council trees.

6 PLANNING UPDATE (Agenda Item 6)

The Development Control team had provided an update that Kris Witherington shared.

LESSA site application is going to Planning Applications Committee on Thursday 22 September with an officer recommendation of approval subject to conditions. There are no other major planning applications being considered although we have been approached with pre-application enquiries, but these only involve informal discussions with potential developers at present and remain confidential. There are currently six enforcement cases open in the area including starting works at 2A Amity Grove before conditions have been agreed. Cabinet will be considering the new [Investing in Communities Fund](#), using Community Infrastructure Levy funding, on Thursday 22 September, and we expect this fund to open for applications on 3 October.

A resident asked about an enforcement issue on the Edna Road development with builders not accessing the site correctly. Cllr Willis offered to follow up on this.

A resident asked if the Investing Communities Fund was the same as the previous ward allocation finding. Cllr Eleanor Stringer said this was a replacement of the Neighbourhood Fund for larger projects, usually more than £20,000. The Cabinet will be looking at ward allocation funding over the next year. There is less funding currently due to lack of development during COVID, but the Council is looking for applications from across the borough.

A resident asked about Manuplastics and Cllr Willis said that they are in pre-application discussions, looking at self-storage rather than residential or retail.

A resident said that the area can be blighted by sites not being completed and there should be penalties for irresponsible landowners. Cllr Willis said it always worth raising with Cllrs to see if they could raise issues with the owner.

Cllr Willis said an application for the LESSA site was turned down by PAC in June and the scheme going to the meeting in September. Cllr John Oliver said the application now includes a multi-use pitch and contribution for sports facilities elsewhere. He also said another organisation has a plan for using the space for rugby and cricket.

A resident said the Tesco site is now being demolished and asked if there are any plans to start work. Cllr Willis said he will need to check up on this.

7 WARM AND WELL (Agenda Item 7)

Olivia McKay from [Wimbledon Guild](#) gave an update on the [Warm and Well](#) project. The project is a partnership with Thinking Works and Age UK Merton. It started in 2018 as a 6-month pilot to help reduce winter related deaths, injuries, and hospital admissions and is currently funded until next March. The project has also expanded to helping residents keep cool during heatwaves.

Olivia refers eligible residents to [Thinking Works](#), an energy efficiency specialist. They can provide advice and vouchers to help residents with their energy bills. To be eligible you must be a Merton resident and either over-65, have a long-term health condition, or be on a low income.

Olivia also refers residents to the free Handyperson service and to Age UK Merton and Citizens Advice, who offer advice on benefits and debt management. The Welfare department at the Guild also provides small grants for items like white goods and school uniforms. For any further information please email [Olivia](#).

8 CLIMATE ACTION UPDATE (Agenda Item 8)

Dominique Hill, Climate Change Project Officer, Merton Council, provided an update on the Climate Action Plan. In 2019 Merton Council declared a climate emergency with a target of achieving net zero for the Council by 2030 and borough by 2050. The Council is responsible for less than 2% of emissions. A [Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#) was agreed in 2020 and followed by two climate delivery plans.

There is a long way to go to meet targets and meeting them will require partnership working. There are other benefits to these actions including improving air quality, helping the local economy and jobs, as well as reducing fuel poverty.

[Climate Action Group](#) supports community action on climate in areas like buildings and energy, transport, green economy and greening Merton. Projects have included Merton Garden Streets, where residents and businesses have got involved in planting up their streets. So far 115 streets have signed up, with over 10,000 volunteer hours. Other projects include Energy Matters, promoting energy efficiency in schools, and the [Wheel](#) repair café, a chance for residents to bring goods that can be repaired. The Climate Action Group is looking for more volunteers and you can [email the team](#) if you want to get more involved.

The Council is developing a Climate Action Engagement Strategy to look at how best to engage residents and will be developing a survey for residents to take part.

Coming up to mark Car Free Day on Thursday 22 September there will be Dr Bike sessions in Morden and Wimbledon; a Cycle cinema at Canons House in Mitcham on Friday at 7.30pm, and a Repair Café at Canons on Saturday. The best way to keep in touch with that is happening is to sign-up to the [e-newsletter](#). You can also pledge to

take action and share your story online using the hashtag #MertonClimateAction to encourage others to do the same. You can find lots of pledge ideas by looking up Merton climate pledges

A resident asked about involving Clarion in improving the energy efficiency of homes. Dominique replied that Clarion are keen to be involved so it is worth raising this with them.

A resident asked about the connection with the tree strategy and Dominique said that they work closely with the Green Spaces team.

A resident asked about insulation in existing housing. Dominique said that retrofitting properties is very important. The new Local Plan has been improved to make sure new properties do not add to the problem, but existing homes will need to move over to heat pumps rather than gas and these require well insulated properties. The Council is promoting the Mayor's [Warmer Homes Programme](#) and is working with social housing landlords. Lots of pots coming from national govt and will link to these in our websites. The team is looking to recruit specialist retrofit officers to plan this work.

A resident asked about involving private landlords and Dominique said we will need to incorporate these as it is a complicated area. The Mayor of London also looking at this and there are national standards for energy efficiency of homes.

A resident asked about the Solar Together scheme and problems with some of the suppliers. Dominique said this is a Mayor of London scheme, and they are reviewing this currently, they are also looking how to include businesses. There was an issue in phase 4 of the scheme due to high demand exceeding the supplier's capacity but Dominique is happy to pass on any concerns.

9 COUNCIL UPDATE (Agenda Item 9)

Cllr Eleanor Stringer, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Civic Pride, provided an update on behalf of Leader of the Council.

It has been a tough six weeks with the gas explosion at Galpins Road involving a huge effort to rehouse and support residents. As the Cost of Living crisis gets worse, the Council has been hosting events in libraries and [making support available](#). The Council was also responsible for the local response to the death of Her Majesty the Queen.

Since the elections in May 2022 Merton has a new Leader and Cabinet. The administration has three main priorities:

- Rebuilding pride in Merton
- A sustainable future
- Making Merton the borough of sport

To help rebuild pride in Merton there is lots of really good work taking place despite issues that do still need to be addressed. The council wants to make it easy for residents to volunteer so they have a stake in the borough, to improve our town centres, to support business, and recognises that street cleaning not good enough.

To help create a sustainable future we want to encourage sustainable travel, improve safety to encourage active travel, address the housing shortage and affordability including building 400 homes on Merton Council land.

Merton already has a huge sporting heritage through Wimbledon tennis, AFC Wimbledon, Mitcham Cricket Club but we also want to drive investment in being active and healthy.

Cllr Stringer said she recently went on a tour with Chris Larkman and seen the work going on in Raynes Park. It is great that so many volunteers coming forward. Flooding still a key issue and Cllr Stringer said she was glad it is being addressed. Policing and community safety are still a big issue and has been raising this with Safer Neighbourhood Teams

A resident asked about Raynes Park Bowls club having to share with West Wimbledon after damage by badgers and vandalising of the pavilion. Cllr Stinger was not aware of this but was happy to look into what was happening.

A resident asked about incentives for retail in town centres. Cllr Stinger said that planning policy allows us to restrict the types of use on some land, but national laws make it harder to protect retail space. She is looking at what levers we have to protect high streets and shopping parades, following up on the work of the Scrutiny Task Group. We have launched the [Merton local app](#) to help residents find local businesses. We are also looking at night-time economy and if more places can stay open after 6pm, making town centres a destination.

A resident said that parking charges need to be balanced to the needs for the high street. Cllr Stringer said that we could look at re-design of roads in Raynes Park in consultation with residents.

A resident asked about social enterprise companies. Cllr Stringer said that there were lots of charities and voluntary groups that are Community Interest Companies (CICs). We also work with local businesses to look at their Social Responsibility.

A resident said that with the Cost-of-Living crisis there were lots of households slightly above threshold for support who will need help. Cllr Stringer replied that the

Council is thinking about how we will support different families. Some plans going to cabinet on Thursday but have held money back to see what comes from central government. It will be tough for many households.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 10)

Cllr Willis thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

The next meeting is Wednesday 7 December 2022, at 7.15pm in Raynes Park Library