

MITCHAM COMMUNITY FORUM
21 FEBRUARY 2023

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Aidan Mundy (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held at Vestry Hall and via Zoom and chaired by Councillor Aidan Mundy. 35 residents and six councillors attended with three residents on Zoom and with 208 additional views on YouTube. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained how the meeting would work.

2 MITCHAM TOWN CENTRE (Agenda Item 2)

Paul McGarry, Head of Regeneration, gave an update on the Town Centre following the news that Morrisons would be closing in March. Losing a major brand would be a blow to any town centre, but the Council understands this was a commercial decision for Morrisons. The land is owned by Centrica and managed on their behalf by LaSalle. The Council has met with LaSalle, and they confirmed they are developing plans to redevelop the site. In the meantime, LaSalle are working to market the site for an interim user, including pop-ups and temporary usage until any redevelopment can begin. Any future news or plans will be shared with residents and councillors. The Council wants LaSalle to conduct pre-application engagement with residents and local businesses before they submit any planning application. It is likely to be six months before an application is submitted with a decision possibly by the end of year. Paul confirmed that the Council owns lease to car park on a long-term basis, with more than 25 years remaining.

Paul's team has spoken to other retailers in the town centre and has been told that Poundland, Boots and Lloyd are all staying, but they have not heard back from Superdrug yet. LaSalle is looking to improve the frontage of all the units it owns.

The Council is progressing other plans to help the town centre including recruitment of a Town Centre manager for Mitcham and commissioning market operator. The Town Centre Manager will create a link between businesses and council and help manage issues in the town centre. They will also work with the Location Board that brings together the Police and the Council to deal with anti-social behaviour. The market operator will be tasked with encouraging more stall holders and wider variety of products, as well as organising events for the market. Paul said that he wanted to

hold a workshop to capture ideas from community in Mitcham about the future of the town centre.

A resident said they were concerned that would be fewer people coming to the centre if Morrisons closed. Paul said he understood that concern so is working with landowner to find another retailer to use the space. Another resident said that Morrisons is an important hub for community not just for shopping so would like it to be replaced with a similar supermarket. Paul agreed that Morrisons was at the heart of the community and the landowner is marketing the site to other potential retailers including food.

A resident asked if Merton Council had spoken with other councils about other options. Paul said that where we don't own the building, we have no control of how it is marketed or who moves in but can market the council owned spaces to make Mitcham more vibrant. A resident asked if there had been any feedback from Morrisons on why they moved out and what could be done to encourage another retailer. Paul said Morrisons wrote to Merton to say it was mainly about national issues and market competition, and it was worth remembering that Morrisons did not own the site so it would be easier to dispose of than other stores.

A resident said it was important that any empty site to not become a hub for anti-social behaviour. Paul said that he is working with the landowner to make this does not happen. Successful retail is not just about shopping, as it is also about the experience so happy to work with landowner to identify opportunities to improve the attractiveness of the town centre.

A resident asked what will be developed on the site as they did not want to see high rise buildings. Paul said that the Local Plan specifies site can be retail, leisure, or culture with housing above, but we have no detail on what is being proposed as yet.

A resident said that as Transport for London is rationalising bus services, they are worried about 200 not going to town centre. Paul said there is no link between Morrisons closure and review of bus services. Transport for London would have to consult on any planned changes to bus routes and Paul was not aware of any plans for changes in Merton. A resident said that without Morrisons more buses will be needed to go to other shops. Paul said we can monitor the need for additional services and raise this with Transport for London. Cllr Mundy said Transport for London are reviewing their fleet so we can raise this.

A resident asked what companies owned buildings in town centre and Paul explained that in Mitcham most shops are privately owned, with just the Centrica site and one other major landowner. A resident said that the town centre had lots of similar shops, so asked if any restrictions can be placed to stop more of the same moving in. Paul

said we have had similar policies for betting shops, but national planning law makes it more difficult as most retailers all in same planning class now.

A resident asked if TSB bank would be remaining. Paul said it is still access bank representatives in Mitcham Library or go to Post Office. A resident asked if Merton Council can bring in investment from other retailers and Paul explained that the landowner is being proactive and open in discussions as well as having more knowledge of how to market to the sector than the Council. A resident asked how long the lease for next shop would be and Paul said that would be the landowner, but it could be only 12-18 months if development is going ahead. Pop-ups, like Secret Cinema, can use spaces for short times so could be a good option, but the Council is open to any suggestions.

A resident asked when will Town Centre manager and market operator begin work and Paul said they are going out for recruitment and procurement in next couple of weeks, so will move as fast as possible. Other areas have different structures: Morden has a business forum; Wimbledon has a Business Improvement District, and Wimbledon Village has a business association. Merton Chamber of Commerce is researching who is currently based in Mitcham.

A resident asked what Merton Council can do to attract businesses, and Paul explained that the Council is limited by not owning any land but can offer business rate discounts to new businesses. The demographics of the area are changing so it is important to understand how to market the local spending power.

Cllr Mundy summarised the discussion and the plan to hold a workshop with residents.

3 FUTURE WASTE COLLECTION AND STREET CLEANING SERVICES (Agenda Item 3)

Cllr Natasha Irons, Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change, gave a presentation on the future of waste collection, recycling and street cleaning services. The presentation is attached to this report.

Cllr Irons said there were several problems with the way the current contract worked. As a result, Cabinet decided in October to end the contract with Veolia in 2025. The Council then held a consultation with residents and received more than 2500 responses. The consultation showed that that satisfaction with waste collection dropped in 2019 but has improved since. Merton has the seventh highest recycling rate in London, so this element of the service is working well. In contrast satisfaction with Street cleaning has not recovered, and Merton issued Veolia with an improvement notice in 2022.

Resident's biggest concerns were street litter, fly-tipping and over-flowing street bins. There were also concerns about the arrangements for collection from flats, a residents felt that they were not being helped to recycle by the system. Residents were happy with Garth Road and the new booking system. Those residents who used the bulky and garden waste services were satisfied but there were concerns about the cost putting people off from using the service. Neighbourhood Recycling Centres can be fly-tipping hotspots. Residents felt there was a clear need to tackle fly-tipping, and satisfaction was especially low in South Wimbledon.

Cllr Irons said that the Council considered all the available options for service delivery, namely contracting, bringing in-house, setting up an arm's length company, and setting up a Joint Venture with providers. All of the options were tested against the same criteria and the evaluation concluded that contracting out waste, but bringing-in house street cleaning would offer the best solution.

For both services the Council will look to have a more prescriptive specification and work has begun to build those specifications with a view to going out to the market in April. In the meantime, the Council will also pilot a programme of bringing Garth Road to local communities in order to help residents recycle larger items.

A resident said that Merton Council used to have street cleaning mission statement, and that street cleaners currently pick up litter but don't sweep the road. Cllr Irons said she agreed with the mission statement approach and expects to have street sweeping following waste collections. By bringing street cleaning back in-house the Council have more control. Whilst mechanical sweepers can access most areas there is a need to get the standard back up in other areas.

A resident said they liked the Garth Road on the road idea and suggested the Council could use the Gasworks site. They also said the council usually responds quickly to reports of fly-tips. Cllr Irons said it is helpful for residents to report fly-tips and litter via Fix My Street as it allows officers to map reports.

A resident asked about problems on Portland Road and Cllr Irons she said she was aware of the problem which is a result of a dispute between Clarion and Merton Council deciding on who had responsibility for the land.

A resident asked if Merton would be keeping the existing street cleaning staff and Cllr Irons confirmed that all the existing staff would move to Merton under TUPE rules. Currently 53% of Veolia staff are former Merton Council staff.

A resident said that having reported an issue on Fix My Street the problem was closed when not resolved and Cllr Irons offered to take up specific issues outside of the meeting.

A resident asked if Merton could consider community skips as well as the mobile Garth Road. Cllr Irons said the Council wanted to trial the mobile Garth Road first as it helps us recycle some of the material and should be less open to abuse. Another resident said that fly-tipping involved significant money and hopes it will be reduced by better access to dumps.

A resident said they felt there were more problems in Mitcham than elsewhere in Merton and asked for strong enforcement. Cllr Irons said she wanted people to do the right thing and Merton has given out more Fixed Penalty Notices than any other borough in London and launched the Merton Wall of Shame. The fly-tipping issue is about changing the behaviour over the long-term and addressing the national epidemic.

A resident asked if Merton would be increasing number of street sweepers and Cllr Irons said the specification is currently being developed. Another resident said that litter often comes from recycling boxes, so can they be replaced with another wheelie bin. Cllr Irons said she was not sure there is a public appetite for another wheelie bin but can test the market for other possible solutions. The Council has also provided nets to cover the recycling boxes.

A resident wanted to know how the other political parties had been involved and Cllr Iron explained that the proposal had been to pre-decision Scrutiny on 13 February by a cross-party committee and she will return with the final specification.

A resident asked how much it would cost to buy the equipment needed and Cllr Irons said that the Council owns all the current equipment, but the trucks are coming to end of their lives so looking the Council will be looking at options to replace them, including electric vehicles.

A resident said they did not think it was right to force people to use wheelie bins and Cllr Irons replied that their use has helped drive up recycling rates and containerisation is becoming national policy.

A resident asked about the impact of the bulky waste charge and Cllr Irons said that charge is mid-ranking in London, and it covers the cost the cost of the service. If the mobile Garth Road works, then it will reduce the need for the bulky waste service. A resident asked if free bulky waste collection will reduce fly-tipping and Cllr Irons replied that Councils, including Merton, have not seen a reduction in fly-tipping as a result of free bulky waste.

A resident asked if the Council would continue to use the Energy Recovery Facility and Cllr Irons replied that the Council will be continuing its use and it has a much

longer agreement. Merton will continue to share disposal and haulage operations with South London Waste Partnership.

A resident said they sometimes see fly-tipping by householders using street as a charity shop, where items are left out for anyone else to collect. Cllr Irons said that the approach to dealing with fly-tippers is complex and we need everyone's help. A resident said that they felt a reactive process does not discourage fly-tipping. Cllr Irons said that if the Council does not collect fly-tips then it will attract more. The Council has a Task Group looking at fly-tipping, including improving communications, for example the [Wall of Shame](#). The Council has invested in mobile CCTV that we can use in hot spots. The Council is also looking at options for improving education in schools, but it needs a national campaign and government environment bill to tackle systemic issues.

4 FUTURE ENGAGEMENT IN MERTON (Agenda Item 4)

Kris Witherington, Engagement and Consultation Manager at Merton Council, gave a presentation on proposals to improve resident engagement across Merton. The presentation is attached to this report.

Kris said that the changes were focused on the work of the corporate engagement team rather than work done by many services with specific audiences and service users. The team had learnt a lot from changing approaches during COVID and from the feedback from residents on the Community Forums in 2022. They had identified three areas where improvements needed to be made and how this would be resourced through increased capacity.

The first area was face-to-face engagement, including the Community Forums. Kris said the current approach was not working as well as it should be, and instead the plan is to hold two events in each area per year. One would be a large-scale question-time event involving local services leaders, including the Leader of the Council, and the second would be more of a workshop format for residents to work together rather than a presentation and question approach. The Engagement team would also support local arrangements, working with local groups and councillors ensuring that solutions are right for each area rather than a one-size fits all approach.

The second area to improve is engagement with Civic Society, meaning resident groups, both formal organisations and informal arrangements like WhatsApp groups. The Engagement will look to map what work is taking place, offer a point of contact, provide an e-newsletter and host an annual event that brings these groups together.

The third area was the way residents can engage with the council digitally. Currently the Council has an online consultation hub and design tool for online survey but there

are new tools available like mapping, discussion boards and an online resident's panel.

These changes will be sorted by recruiting a new Events Officer post to manage the meetings, a Community Development Officer to work with the Civic Society and a Engagement Officer to work on digital engagement and support departmental consultations.

A resident asked about the idea of a panel and how this would be representative. Kris explained that Panels are usually randomly recruited and then weighted based on the demographics of the borough.

Cllr Mundy asked how people heard about the meeting, and residents said it was through a mix of word-of-mouth and contact from Merton Council. A resident asked about using non-digital communications and Cllr Mundy says this is complex and it is important to spread the word.

Cllr Mundy asked for residents to register their interest if they would like to be involved in local arrangements for a community forum. Residents who were unable to sign up on the night can do so by completing [the form](#).

5 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 5)

A number of residents wanted to speak about the planning application for the Mitcham Gasworks. Cllr Mundy said best way is to take part in the consultation but happy to hear from residents to help inform in the developer. Cllr Mundy, who is also Chair of the Planning Committee, and other and other Councillors cannot prejudge the application.

Residents expressed a number of views on the planning application that included:

- It is not an appropriate site for tower blocks and the application is too tall. This will overshadow the Common.
- There should be a maximum of five stories
- Properties are too small and will be too high density. The plan exceeds the capacity for the site set out in the Local Plan.
- The design is poor and square blocks are unattractive
- The design is out of character for Mitcham
- There are too many single aspect homes in the plans
- Developers pictures are misleading
- Massive problems with infrastructure like traffic, parking issues on Bond Road and the impact on schools, hospitals and GPs
- There is a similar issue with plans in Streatham Vale
- Thames Water report said the developer wouldn't be able to provide water supply

- No parking provision is not thought through
- Flooding issues on London Road and Cricket Green Road would be made worse.
- Scheme like this wouldn't be accepted in Wimbledon

In addition, a resident said they wrote to Merton Council last August and got a response from Cllr Judge.

A resident asked who will be housed on site and Cllr Mundy said that usually Merton Council would have an arrangement with a Registered Provider to place people from the Council waiting list. A resident said they had been on the housing list for 26 years.

A resident asked what is classed as affordable housing and Cllr Mundy said that national rules set out definitions for affordable rent and ownership including shared ownership to be included but it depends on a viability assessment. Cllr Mundy also explained that any conditions placed on schemes are enforced by Council and that due to the size of the development the plans could be considered by the Mayor of London.

A resident asked about submitting the petition they had collected, and Cllr Mundy said this could be sent to the Planning Officer to be considered as part of the application.

A resident asked what Merton Council's response to the expansion of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone was. A statement can be found on the [Council website](#).

A resident said that the Barclays building was now eyesore and wanted an update. This would be provided at a future meeting.

A resident asked about lighting in the car park by Morrisons and Cllr Johnston said the first floor lighting fixed.

Cllr Mundy said the government was holding a consultation on the [Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill](#) reforms to national planning policy until 2 March.

Councillor Mundy agreed to write, as Chair of the Mitcham forum and Planning Committee Chair, to the applicant to highlight the exchange. He thanked residents for attending and closed the meeting.

6 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 6)

To be confirmed

Waste Collections & Clean Streets

Mitcham Community Forum 21 February 2023

Cllr Natasha Irons

Cabinet Member, Environment, Open Spaces & Climate Action



Minute Item 3

What have the issues been?

- Original contract specification
- Finance (contract built for savings, not quality)
- Contract structure – performance & monitoring

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- Flexibility & responsiveness
- Fly-tipping & street cleanliness
- Negative impact on council reputation

Resident engagement

To inform the new service specification, we ran an engagement programme with residents, lasting six weeks from mid-October 2022 and generating 2,500 responses.



1,900 service user responses to our online survey



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100-plus printed responses



407 representative telephone surveys



5 x High Street pop-up events, plus 2 focus groups (East & West)

Overall resident experience

Service	% satisfied - 2017	% satisfied - 2019	% satisfied - 2021	% satisfied - 2022
Collections	69%	48%	62%	63%
Recycling	71%	56%	56%	63%
Street-cleaning	53%	44%	45%	30%

When we asked those residents who have had a poor experience of collections what their concerns were, the top three issues were:

- missed collections (49%)
- frequency of collections (49%)
- putting their bins back properly (49%)

When we asked about street-cleaning, the top three issues were:

- fly-tipping (62%)
- street litter (69%)
- overflowing bins (69%)

Blocks of flats

Key takeaways:

1. Residents living in flats have been a significant part of both Member's casework and this was taken into account in the survey with specific questions and as part of our focus groups
- 2 The most common feedback from this group was the need for more, or larger, collection containers
3. This group is also much less likely to say that LBM helps them to recycle more

Other service feedback

Garth Rd recycling centre	Bulky & garden waste collections	Neighbourhood Recycling Centres
Generally high satisfaction – 77% of users	Satisfaction among residents is generally high across both services	62% of residents never use them
48% of residents support the booking system; 36% don't like it	Those who don't use the service are more concerned with the cost of garden waste collections than bulky (need-based)	Of those who do, 39% are satisfied with them, while almost 70% said they need to be emptied more often

Conclusions

- **Customer experience across collections has recovered from 2019 and continues to rise**
- **Satisfaction with street-cleaning remains significantly lower with most resident groups**
- **Fly-tipping is the most significant issue, and the one which residents are more likely to need to report or contact us about**
- **Residents want to recycle a wider range of materials – but want more communication about this**
- **South Wimbledon is the least-satisfied area overall, but residents in the East of the borough feel problems are more serious**
- **We need to address resident issues around collections from flats**

Assessing the different service options

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The options

We have evaluated four options for the future of both service waste collections & street-cleaning.

1. Contracted/commissioned service

Commission one or both of the services out to a third-party provider, in a similar way to our current arrangements.

2. Local Authority Trading Company

Establish an arms-length, LBM-owned company to deliver the service/s on the Council's behalf.

3. Direct Service Delivery

Deliver the services fully in-house by LBM staff, with ownership of all equipment & fleet.

4. Joint Venture

Establish a commercial partnership between two or more providers that each deliver specific aspects of the services, depending on specialist skills & expertise.

How we assessed them

A detailed options analysis has taken place against four possible options for both street-cleaning services and waste collection services.

Financial viability

Flexibility & responsiveness to resident needs

Service function - deliverability

Implementation – deliverability

Best Value (analysis of efficiency, effectiveness & cost)

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Contracted out

Each options carries different benefits and challenges, which have been considered and weighted for each of the two service areas.

Contract the service out (cheaper but less control)	
Benefits	Challenges
Technical expertise from longstanding professionals within the sector	Fixed performance for contract duration
Business resilience – the responsibility for service resilience is with the contractor	Little flexibility to respond to resident needs or local changes
Certainty around the cost of the service over a longer period	Performance improvements & monitoring need to sit with the council
Lowest service delivery cost overall to LBM	

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Direct service delivery

Each options carries different benefits and challenges, which have been considered and weighted for each of the two service areas.

Direct service delivery (more expensive but better flexibility)	
Benefits	Challenges
LBM has complete control over service delivery	Higher cost overall (4% to 5% higher than a contracted service)
Flexibility to make immediate improvements and changes in a short timeframe	Set-up – creating a new service, vehicles & equipment,
Staffing culture – staff directly employed by LBM with pride in their role	
Direct, visible accountability for residents	

Final evaluation scores

A detailed options analysis document is available – this summary shows the final scores against the assessment criteria.

Waste collections	Score	Ranking
Contracted-out service	91.90	1
Local Authority Trading Company	89.00	3
Direct service delivery	91.05	2
Joint Venture	89.00	3
Street-cleaning		
Contracted-out service	91.11	2
Local Authority Trading Company	89.00	3
Direct service delivery	91.19	1
Joint Venture	89.00	3

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Service specification

Bringing street-cleaning in-house on it's own isn't enough to achieve our civic pride ambitions – we are seeking to increase the 2016 service specification .

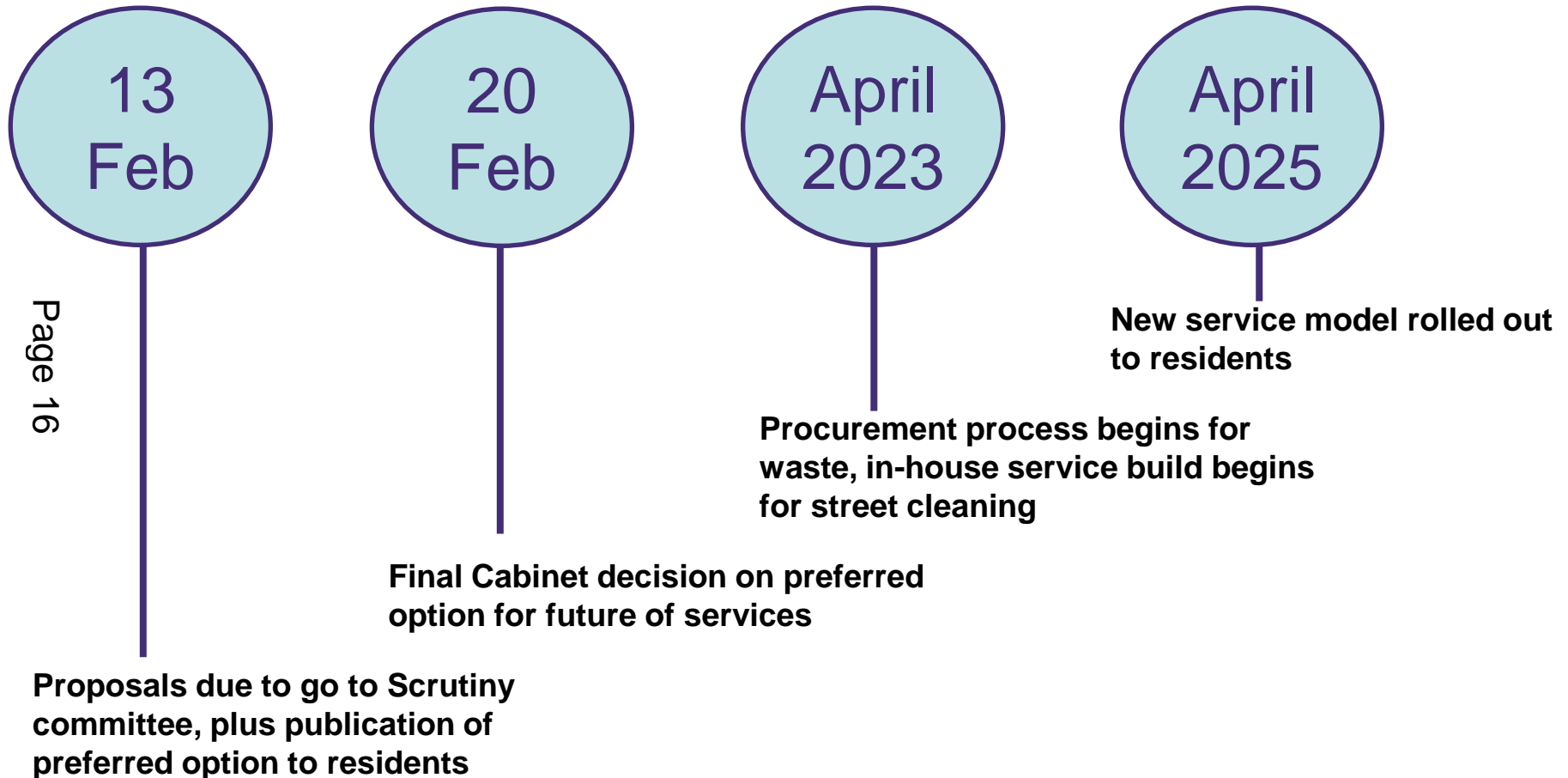
- The current contract specifies that streets must be cleaned to minimum agreed required levels, as set out in the contract.
- This has resulted in street-cleaning operations being 5 days a week and daytimes only – creating some problems with weekends and mornings, contributing to resident experiences on fly-tips and street bins.
- We will be seeking to introduce a specified, more frequent schedule of leaning that ensures roads and town centres are consistently clean, and offers higher assurance to residents.

Service specification

As an example, we will be seeking to increase the specification of the new service to include both the original requirement, plus the below.

- **Residential Roads** – weekly
- **Town Centres** – daily
- **Transport interchanges** – daily
- **Secondary & tertiary town centres** – twice weekly
- Cleaning to take place **post-recycling & waste collection days** in residential roads
- **Weekends** to be resourced cleaned as normal working days

Timeline



Any questions?

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Thank you



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Future Engagement in Merton

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Mitcham Community Forum 21 February 2023

**Kris Witherington, Engagement
and Consultation Manager**



Minute Item 4

Reasons for change

- Lessons from lockdown / Your Merton
- Review of community forums
- Analysis of approaches in other boroughs
- How We Work with Communities Programme

What are we proposing?

- Changes to face-to-face engagement
- Engaging with Civic Society
- Upgrading our digital offer
- Increasing our capacity

Face-to-face

- Community Forums too big and too small
 - Higher profile events
- Support for more local activity
- Different arrangements in different areas to reflect local needs

Civic Society

- Building trust and communications
- Mapping coverage and reach
- Designated contact
- E-newsletter
- Annual meeting

Digital offer

- Hub / survey tool
- Mapping / dialogue functions
- Residents panel

Increase in capacity

- Events Manager
- Community Development Officer
- FTE Engagement officer

Decision making process

- Overview and Scrutiny 25 January
- Community Forum meetings in Feb-April
- Recruitment and procurement begins
- Cabinet in June
- New structure in place for the autumn

Any Questions?

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