

COLLIERS WOOD AND NE MITCHAM COMMUNITY FORUM
11 OCTOBER 2022

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Linda Kirby (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held at Colliers Wood Library and chaired by Councillor Linda Kirby. Ten residents and three councillors attended with 52 additional views on YouTube. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained how the meeting would work.

2 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 2)

A resident raised a concern about a storm in February that brought down fencing at a house on Acre Road that is owned by Clarion Housing. Both the tenant and their neighbours have not been able to get a response from Clarion.

A resident raised concerns about Grenfell Road being in poor condition with bin collection issues. Cllr Kirby said there was a long history of problems on this road. Cllr Kirby said residents could contact her for an update. The Waste Team had provided an update:

- We have undertaken a full waste container audit and delivered a range of new wheeled bins to various properties that required further secured storage on their property.
- We have increased the frequency of waste collections in this street to twice per week along with increasing the frequency of sweeping to twice weekly following on after the waste collection service.
- Our Client team continue to undertake daily site inspections and document their findings including photographs of any issues that need rectifying.
- We are working with the local ward councillors to discuss alternative waste storage arrangements for this road following on from which we would like to engage directly with the residents of Grenfell Road to better understand their priorities. This is to ensure that residents are fully engaged and help to design delivery options and agree any alternative options prior to the implementation of a new service delivery method. This could include the installation of new purpose build communal storage containers along the roadside.

A resident raised concern about the unmanned Library opening hours as they feel unsafe in some areas of the library when it is not staffed. The resident said they understands it helps keeps the library open longer but very concerned about safety of users. Cllr Cooper-Marbiah said there was coverage with CCTV but happy to bring up the particular issues with library staff.

A resident said that the Veolia contract for street cleaning has been improved and then got worse again. They said street cleaning not robust enough and hoped the new contract will see improvement. They said the contract for collection flats would be weekly or as required but this hasn't happened.

A resident said that some electric streetlights damaged and not repaired. These can be reported on the [Council website](#).

A resident said that Wandsworth Council is building council housing, whereas Merton's decision to transfer its stock was a mistake and the Clarion regeneration is resulting in higher housing costs. The resident wanted to know if Merton Council will be more joined up building affordable housing. Cllr Kirby said Cllr Garrod will set out some plans

Harry Cowd, Chair of the Board of Trustees of Merton Vision said that the organisation has been in discussion with NHS about developing Clarendon House into new GP surgery and headquarters. Harry as been told that all NHS developments now on hold due to price increases. If the project goes head Merton Vision would move temporarily to the Wilson but that is also problematic and will delay the plans for developing the Wilson into a care hub for Mitcham. Harry asked if Merton Council can help move this up the agenda. Merton Vision is still supporting clients remotely but does not have a base for in-person services. Cllr Macauley said we need clarification from the Government. Cllr Kirby said services in Mitcham in dire need of investment and the MP, Siobhan McDonagh had met with NHS and still seeking clarification.

3 LONDON ASSEMBLY UPDATE (Agenda Item 3)

Leonie Cooper, Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth, provided an update on the work of the London Assembly. The Assembly consists of 25 members, and Leonie was elected in 2016 and 2020 to represent Merton and Wandsworth. The Assembly's role is to hold the Mayor of London to account in the areas where he has responsibility. The Assembly has plenary sessions twice a month with a focus on a key area, such as police, transport, or London 2012 legacy and then at the Mayors Question Time each month each Assembly Member has five mins to ask a question on any topic.

Leonie is lead Labour party lead for Environment and now Chairs the Oversight Committee that focuses on staffing and business of the whole Greater London Authority (GLA). Committees can undertake investigations and make recommendations. The Oversight Committee will be looking at pension funds for the Metropolitan Police, GLA, Transport for London and London Fire Brigade to see how investments are being managed. The Committee will also look at Green Bonds, with Mayor putting in £90m to lever in additional private funds to help achieve Net Zero.

Other big issues include Metropolitan Police with Sir Mark Rowley taking over as the new Commissioner and will be facing Assembly Members tomorrow to talk about the strategy for the Met including staffing, estates, and internal culture of officers. There is a lot to be done to regain public trust.

London Fire Brigade HMI report also found there was a need to change culture and other changes are being made in response to the Grenfell disaster including new equipment and policies.

Transport for London has been in an ongoing fight between City Hall and Department for Transport. TfL funding has been entirely from fares income since 2018 so COVID had a huge impact on income levels. Central government has funded other travel bodies without conditions but for TfL there have been a lot of difficult conditions to qualify for funding. TfL has recently consulted on extending the Ultra-Low Emission Zone to cover the whole of London and reducing bus services in central London and we are waiting for results to be published.

Next plenary is on the Cost-of-Living crisis and Leonie will be asking about improving energy efficiency.

A resident said buses during school travel time being very busy especially 57 and 200, and this was causing problems getting on. Leonie said she is happy to raise this with Deputy Mayor Seb Dance. The central London bus cuts do not directly impact Merton but we are unlikely to see increase in number of services. A resident asked if buses could cover part of route during peak time and Leonie said that this depends on turning the buses and capacity.

A resident said they did not know there was no government funding for TfL and Leonie said the previous Mayor, Boris Johnson, did a deal to offer up the TfL operating budget as austerity cuts to government before leaving office. This also means that public transport users subsidise road maintenance in TfL roads. £500m is paid in Vehicle Excise Levy by Londoners but none of that comes to London.

A resident asked who pays for the Freedom pass and Leonie explained that Boroughs pay for over 65s and disabled passes whilst the Mayor pays for 60-65 year

old passes and this element is under pressure from Department for Transport deal. About £8m a year is paid by Merton Council into the scheme.

Cllr Macauley asked about what was being done to tackle violence against women and girls. She said women in Lavender ward were worried about safety walking home from Colliers Wood tube station late at night and asked what can be done to get more police onto the beat. Leonie said when Safer Neighbourhood Teams were introduced by Mayor Livingstone there were three PCSOs, two PCs and one Sargent, but the austerity reduction in numbers mean this has been reduced. Since 2016 Mayor Khan has put more money into the Met and the Government commitment in 2019 or recruiting 20,000 new officers means an extra 6000 should come to London. We have still not had these officers so numbers are still not at the level needed. Even the Home Office acknowledges there is a £200m shortfall on the grant for the Met. The Mayor has [Violence against Women and Girls strategy](#) but the Met still stretched thin, and still has to focus on a range of other issues. Leonie meets with Cmdr Elizabeth Chappell, Borough Commander for Merton, Kingston, Richmond, and Wandsworth and asks her about vacancies every time.

A resident asked when the session on Green bonds will start and Leonie said in November.

4 CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN (Agenda Item 4)

Dominique Hill, Climate Change 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. There are [repair café and upcycling events](#) taking place at Canon's House in November and December. 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.

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.

Mayor of London's [Warmer Homes scheme](#) provides funding for low income, low energy efficiency households. This closes in March 2023 and is the currently only funding scheme available.

A resident asked about the Library of Things and Dominique said this was based at [Morden Library](#). Another resident asked if it was possible to donate tools to the Library and Dominique said she would need to check.

A resident asked about the impact of paving over front gardens for parking and said that it needs education to encourage residents to plant in their front gardens. Cllr Kirby said too many cars for on street parking to be free and any paving over should involve a porous surface.

Cllr Macauley said that Hawthorn Avenue looks lovely after involvement in the Garden Streets.

A resident said that Clarion needs to let planting to develop before being cut down. They also said that the council should lobby for reduced paperwork for extensive solar panels and that the Church of England is looking at green issues locally. They also said that there should be a green sign-off on planning applications.

A resident asked about non-electronic communications and Dominique said that the team does a lot of in-person events and in My Merton Magazine.

5 COUNCIL UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

Councillor Ross Garrod gave an update on Council issues. Cllr Garrod had just come from a public meeting for the residents in Galpin Road. Cllr Garrod said he grew up in Merton, lives in borough and his family still lives here. It is an honour to be leader of Merton Council and he is proud to come from Merton with its fantastic parks, schools, outstanding Children's services. The overarching aim for the new administration is to reinstate pride in Merton, with everyone having a stake in making Merton a place we are all proud of. The Council has three main priorities:

Civic Pride

- Residents to have a stake, volunteer, rewarding communities for local action

- Supporting high streets and town centres.

Building Sustainable Future

- Encourage sustainable transport, move to Electric Vehicles, e-bikes, and active travel
- Tackle climate emergency
- Build new affordable homes, with a target of 400 new genuinely affordable homes on Council land by 2026
- Shift in emphasis in planning through new Local Plan to get good quality green and energy efficient development

Sporting borough

- New Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage
- Make Merton best borough of sport
- Investment grass root sport and healthy lifestyles
- [Social prescribing](#) helps NHS link to local activities
- Supporting the [Walk and Talk](#) service to bring people together to tour the borough
- Working on blueprint for weekly free activities for 4–16-year-olds and those over 65

Actions so far have included

- £2m added to climate emergency fund
- Supporting residents through the cost-of-living crisis including £2m fund being used to help people hit the hardest. We already have one of the most generous Council Tax support schemes. We have held four [cost of Living events](#) including one in Colliers Wood, with another one in Pollards Hill at end of October. We will be recruiting two additional benefits advisors based in libraries, providing support for the Community Fridge and vouchers for school meals during holidays. We will also be working with Thinking Works to do energy audits in people's homes
- Cabinet agreed to end Veolia contract Street cleaning and waste collection in 2025
- [Merton Local App](#) to promote local businesses already downloaded 4000 times and features more than 400 local businesses
- Weekly walk around estates to see conditions and speak with residents
- New scheme for Housing Multiple Occupation landlords means they will require planning permission to divide up existing family homes. We will also be introducing a landlord licensing scheme
- We have recruited ten additional enforcement officers
- We had an outdoor screen at the Canons for the Wimbledon tennis and Women's Euro final to create a community feel

- We have extended the existing Public Space Protection Order for Anti-Social Behaviour related to alcohol in five wards. We will be consulting on extending borough wide
- We have announced two new Civic Pride funds, one for the [Voluntary and Community Sector](#) and for [Neighbourhood projects](#)

A resident said that Colliers Wood Library is important existing community hub but feels unsafe when not staffed. Cllr Garrod said that since introduction of the card scheme we have seen an increase in footfall but happy to look at the safety concerns. Cllr Garrod explained that the screen at the Canons had been sponsored by the All-England Club and will build in future years.

A resident said that the High Path regeneration results in loss of sports facilities and children's play space and that the said that the planning application LESSA would reduce available space for sport. Cllr Garrod said this is private land and Planning Applications Committee has to look at planning law to make decisions.

A resident asked about homelessness in Morden and Cllr Garrod said that officers monitor and work with homeless to provide support. Underground staff also supporting those in Morden.

A resident asked about the cost-of-living support and Cllr Garrod said there was a comprehensive package of support with details on the [website](#).

A resident asked if the landlord licensing scheme will involve a fee and Cllr Garrod said that there will be a fee and the scheme will give tenants security that they are renting from monitored and quality landlord.

A resident asked about Britannia Point and Cllr Garrod said that the Council had stepped in and engaged with landlord to make the area safe. We have issued notice of dangerous structure and the landlord's initial submission was not acceptable, so a new plan was submitted last week which we will assess to make sure it is safe for residents.

Councillor Kirby thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.