

WIMBLEDON COMMUNITY FORUM  
20 SEPTEMBER 2023

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Paul Kohler (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held at the Arts Space, Wimbledon Library and chaired by Councillor Paul Kohler. 28 residents, five councillors and Stephen Hammond MP were present. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained how the meeting would work.

The Chair explained that the Council had changed the way Community Forum's worked. There would only now be two meetings a year organised by the Council: there would also be two which local councillors would organise. The Chair reminded those present that the Forum had the right to put forward motions to the Council.

2 POLICING UPDATE (Agenda Item 2)

The Chair welcomed two Police Officers, Tony Watts and Rob Miller who were standing in at short notice for the local inspector who had been unable to attend.

The officers said that there had been a change in Town Centre Policing and there would be more officers in uniform with a visible presence. There would be patrols between 3pm and 6pm when the children were coming out of school. There had been extra resources for this and to upgrade the CCTV cameras.

In answer to questions from Residents, officers said that they had no definitive news on Wimbledon Police Station though they were optimistic about its future and that they did deal with speeding and bikes being ridden on pavements when resources permitted. They also will take action on bicycle thefts when they can and have run particular operations to tackle that crime.

3 PUBLIC TOILET PROVISION (Agenda Item 3)

Cllr Stephen Mercer (Merton Park) spoke on the report he and former Cllr Peter Southgate had written on the provision of public toilets in the Borough.

As part of the information gathering for the Report, residents had been asked to complete a survey and they had received around 1,000 responses. There was general concern about the provision of toilets although some parts of the Borough were worse than others – 98% of residents did not know where there was a public toilet in Mitcham. The situation in Wimbledon was better with many more knowing about the toilets in Centre Court and Elys.

Lack of toilet provision is a particular problem for those who are elderly, with certain disabilities, women and those with children.

Morden Station was one of only 3 termini on the Underground without a public toilet and there was no tube station with a toilet from Kennington to Morden.

The Report recommended that adequate provision of toilets for public use should be recognised as an essential aspect of Merton's public health policy, the fulfilment of which is a matter of civic pride, and the Community Toilet Scheme should be relaunched and adequately funded.

Cllr Mercer explained that such a Scheme could be provided at a cost of around 1p per week per resident and a significant improvement in toilet provision could be achieved.

In answer to questions Cllr Mercer said that there was no Statutory Duty for councils to provide public toilets, that Apps were available to assist people in finding the nearest toilet, that S 106 Planning agreements could be used to require public toilet in new building and finance them elsewhere and that cleaning and maintenance were key parts of toilet provision.

Cllr Mercer said that the Report had been submitted to Merton's Cabinet on the 18 September and they had two months to respond.

#### 4 CLIMATE ACTION PLAN (Agenda Item 4)

The Chair welcomed the Speaker and said that for technical reasons we were unable to show her slides: these would be added to the minutes of the meeting.

Amy Mallett, Climate Engagement Officer gave an update on the work the Council was carrying out on climate change. She said that a climate emergency had been unanimously agreed by all councillors in 2019 and a Climate Action Plan in 2020. It was subject to regular Scrutiny by Council Committees.

Amy said the work which was being undertaken included:

- Work to de carbonise Council owned buildings and its fleet of vehicles.

- A Tree Strategy for 2023-2029 which sets out the way Merton will manage and enhance trees in the borough, including a goal to increase the borough's tree canopy by 10% by 2050.
- An EV Charging Strategy
- Work with 17 other Boroughs to put an evidence base together which (if adopted), would ensure that new developments in the borough are compatible with our net zero targets, therefore avoiding the need for retrofit.

### Community Planting days

Two funds had been set up and would shortly be open for bids. One was of £500k over the next 3 years and was open to community organisations and the other was of £750k and was open for Councillors to make recommendations for projects in their wards.

Amy urged residents to complete the Climate Pulse survey which was on the [Consultations](#) section of the Council website.

In answer to questions from residents Cllr Mercer said that the Council was working on a loan scheme to help residents make their home more energy efficient , that there would be a trial of ways in which resident could run charging cables across pavement in a way which did not affect pedestrian safety that we had provably now got as much solar power on schools roofs as possible and need to look at other building and that the Council would be producing a retrofit Strategy for the Borough which may include recommended suppliers.

In answer to a question about a tree in Kingswood Rd Amy asked the resident to write to her and she would take it up with Green Spaces.

### 5 WIMBLEDON PARK UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

The Chair welcomed the Speakers and said that for technical reasons we were unable to show their slides: these would be added to the minutes of the meeting.

The Speakers were Christopher Coombe and Sophia Browning from the Wimbledon Society and the Wimbledon Park Residents Association to speak on the latest position on the AELTEC application to build on Wimbledon Park  
Ms Browning reminded the meeting of the extent of what was being proposed: a new 8,000 seater stadium, 38 open courts, 10km of roads and a number of maintenance depots, player facilities and other structures. This would cause very significant loss of trees, damage to the two protected habitats, and the extensive and varied bird and other wildlife populations and the removal of virtually all the topsoil on the site. In order to carry out this work there would be a very large number of HGV movements every day for 8 years with increased air pollution and disruption.

Mr Coombe talked about the legal position. There has been a recent legal case “Day vs Shropshire” in which the Supreme Court had made a ruling about a property held in trust by Shropshire Council which seemed to bear on the situation in this case. Legal advice has been taken by the AELTEC, Merton Council and the residents groups opposing the application.

He said that he thought an application from AELTEC in line with their original intentions – to replace the 18 grass courts at Roehampton on which the qualifying rounds were currently held, would have been greeted more favourably by residents but the AELTEC proposals had gone far beyond that.

The AELTEC had made some claims about the Golf Club having always been ‘private’ but the history of the site showed that was not correct and Merton residents were given privileged access to the course.

The Application has originally been made in 2021 but had been the subject of frequent delays. There had been an extraordinary level of public opposition including 12,800 people signing a petition and 2,000 objections to the Planning Application: it was also opposed by the MPs for Putney and Wimbledon.

Mr Coombe said that the best way at the moment from residents to oppose the development was to write to their councillors and to members of the Planning Committee.

The Chair asked Stephen Hammond if he would like to say anything on this and he reinforced the message about getting into contact with councillors.

In answer to questions from residents Mr Coombe said that it was not clear when the Planning Committee would consider the application: it had been scheduled to go to the meeting last week but that had not happened. The Chair of the Committee had said that the application would be heard at a regular meeting along with other applications which seemed extraordinary.

## 6 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 6)

### Road Names

Peter Walker said he wished to follow up on the discussion at previous meetings on roads named after those associated with the slave trade. Merton Council had carried out a survey which had produced a high response from 883 people with a majority agreeing that there should be information in each street about its history. He said Cllr Stringer was planning to put a QR code by each street sign which would lead to information on the history of the people the streets were named after, but he did not feel this was satisfactory.

The Chair agreed he would write to Cllr Stringer about this.

Love Wimbledon

Sally Warren from Love Wimbledon said that they had invested in increasing the number of plants in the Town Centre and in Ivy Planter and Screen to hide empty and run down shops. The banners which had not been on display in 2022 were now back up to make Wimbledon more inviting.

After a successful summer they were now running 'Sustainable September' with a range of activities for adults and children.

The Bookfest would now be entirely in the Town Centre based at Wimbledon High School for Girls and the Arts Space.

Centre Court would open up more of the space at the back of the building in November and it would have a new brand

## 7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 7)

7.15pm Tuesday 19 March 2024

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