

Agenda Item 6

Council 9 September 2015

Public questions

Procedure

The Mayor will call your name and ask if you have a supplementary question arising from the answer you have received.

If you do not have a supplementary question then simply respond thank you, no. If you do have a supplementary question respond thank you, yes. You will be shown to a seat in the chamber where you will ask your supplementary question. Make sure you use the microphone.

Having put your question, please be seated whilst the Cabinet member responds. Once the response has been given, please return to your seat in the public gallery. The questions and answers and all supplementary questions and replies will be published on Merton's website after the meeting.

**1) From: Dr Simon Joseph MA BM FRCP FESC
To the Cabinet Member for Environment Cleanliness and Parking**

Question:

Missed waste food collections recently have been left baking in the street in hot weather. Explanations were 'operational', then, generally, budget constraints, broken-down vehicles etc. No specific explanations, or for broken promises of collection 'within 24/48 hours'. What mechanisms ensure rapid collection, when missed, to prevent a public health hazard?
(Ref Complaint: ER15S2010)

Reply

We apologise for the interruptions to the service recently, this has been caused by some unexpected vehicle breakdowns and reduced availability of HGV drivers.

Missed collection reports are logged onto the Council's Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) and the Council's waste department will normally respond within 24 hrs.

Where the service has experienced any operational difficulties the waste collection crews make radio contact with the office and alternative arrangements are made to collect the waste.

The council is investing in new technology to improve the process which will help us to better plan individual rounds and service recovery when vehicle breakdowns/accidents or staff availability cause an interruption to normal service.

**2) From: Guilliana Castle
To the Cabinet Member for Environment Cleanliness and Parking**

Question:

How does Merton Council propose to deal with the horrendous and unhygienic litter problem in the borough?

Reply

We know that tackling the problem of people who drop litter on the streets is a priority for our residents and we spend more than £5m a year keeping the borough's streets clean. In total, more than 375km of roads each week are scheduled to be cleaned, and we empty 700 bins as well as cleaning town centres daily.

In order to meet our obligations to deal with litter we aim to maintain all residential streets to an acceptable standard of cleanliness. Streets are cleaned by a mixture of manually litter picking and sweeping the areas which need it.

There is an area response team to deal with other cleaning issues on the highway, such as fly tipping and removal of sweeper's bags.

We undertake weed control in Merton three times a year this involves spraying live weeds with non-residual chemicals. Roads are checked following the spray and

where there is evidence that the spray has not been effective the roads are re-sprayed.

Where we find or receive reports about littering or fly tipping we will attend to rectify.

Our enforcement team works to deter people from dropping litter in Merton's streets, the enforcement officers are responsible for a range of other duties to keep the borough looking clean and tidy including the removal of graffiti and fly-posting, dealing with abandoned vehicles. We also work with an environmental crime specialist who are concentrating on our Town Centres, helping to change the behaviour of those who litter our streets by imposing fixed penalty notices on those who drop litter.

We have set up the Love Your Street campaign to boost the positive work the council does with residents, community groups, businesses and schools to tackle litter in Merton.

Satisfaction with street cleaning services is higher under the current administration compared with the previous Conservative administration, however we know we need to continue to focus in this area.

In addition to measuring resident satisfaction, four independent inspection surveys are carried out across the Borough in accordance with the NI 195 requirements. In 2014/15 the percentage of sites inspected that were found to be unsatisfactory with respect to litter was 9.36% compared to 14% in 2009/10. With respect to general detritus, 11.84% of sites were found to be unsatisfactory in 2014/15 compared to 32% in 2009/10 under the previous administration. Although we are seeing steady improvements in cleanliness and associated satisfaction with services we know there is more to be done to improve standards.

As part of a current wheelie bin trial in the Lavender Fields ward, we have we have regularly monitored the level of street litter. In this area the level of street cleansing has been greatly improved by c19% with an average of 10% of the area being below the acceptable standard, compared to an average of 29% below the acceptable level prior to the trial being implemented.

We have also invested in 5 new electric 'glutton' street sweeping machines that are improving standards and staff productivity in our main town centres. These machines have shown that they can cover greater ground in a shorter space of time, can access areas where alternative mechanical sweepers cannot and provide a better standard of cleaning.

**3) From: Tony Burton
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

Question:

To ask for a breakdown of the works required to fulfil the requirements of the listed building repair notice on the Burn Bullock, which of these works were completed by 3 August 2015, and an assessment of when the remaining works will be completed?

Reply

Listed Building Consent was granted on 3rd March 2015 to cover the required works which involve repairs to:

- 1) The roof and rainwater goods,
- 2) Masonry, chimney and render repairs
- 3) Woodwork, glazing and
- 4) Both internal and external repairs.

There are 34 actions to be taken and a copy of the list is attached below for reference.

Works undertaken so far include repairing the flat roof, clearing rubbish from within the property, clearing and repairing the cellar, cleaning up and repairing a number of the external windows. It has been concluded that some of the works undertaken earlier this year are inconsistent with the required standard as the time there was insufficient supervision. Such works are to be re-checked under the supervision of a qualified contractor who has now submitted an application for an extension of in order to complete the works.

Burn Bullock: Schedule of repairs for inclusion in Listed Building Repairs Notice

The Burn Bullock is now suffering from many years of persistent neglect. Basic repairs to stop water penetration have not been carried out as well as routine maintenance and now as a result, a substantial programme of repair and reinstatement is necessary. The grade II listed building is also now on the Heritage at Risk register.

The following works are considered to be necessary for the long term preservation of the Burn Bullock:

1) Roof and rainwater goods

1. All rainwater goods and valley gutters to be cleaned and repaired and reinstated where missing to ensure all water discharges directly into mains drainage channels or soakaways (as opposed to directly against the side of the building) – no. identified?
2. All tiled parts of roof to be repaired, with missing tiles replaced to ensure a completely watertight finish. Battens to be replaced where damaged or rotten
3. Using the principle of “conserve as found”, inspect and propose remedial works to defective roof timbers as necessary. Work to be approved by the Council before commencement.
4. Treat all timbers in roof as necessary against rot and infestation and ensure the roof space is well ventilated and free from animal and bird intrusion
5. All flat roofed sections to be repaired to ensure there is no water penetration
6. All ridge tiles to be repointed to ensure that they are sound and replaced where cracked or missing Lead roof on flat roofed section on south west elevation (over toilet block) to be replaced
7. Flat roof to cornice on north west elevation to be repaired to ensure protection of timber cornice below.
8. Roof and rainwater disposal to Doric Portico to be replaced to ensure protection of timber portico below.

2). Masonry, Chimney and render repairs

1. All chimney stacks to be investigated and full repairs to be carried out, including taking action to address the cracked brickwork.
2. Carefully remove cement flaunching surrounding chimney pots and replace with lime mortar.
3. Remove all cement pointing and replace with lime mortar.
4. All existing cement render to be removed and replaced using lime render.
5. Carry out full repairs to brick piers on south east elevation, removing cement mortar and taking the necessary preventative measures to stop further movement
6. Existing cement plinths need to be modified to ensure that underfloor ventilation is restored to the ground floor

3) Woodwork, glazing and external repairs

1. All timber windows and doors to be refurbished, carefully removing and replacing sections of rotten timber, ensuring that all mechanisms are in good working order (ensuring that all historic ironmongery is retained and restored) and that all windows and doors are fully operable and lockable. All to be redecorated
2. All missing panes of glass to be replaced with specialist glass for restoration purposes
3. Timber cornice on North West elevation to be repaired with rotten timbers carefully removed and replaced where necessary and cornice redecorated
4. Timber portico on North West elevation to be repaired and redecorated following repairs to roof
5. Repair all stained glass windows using a specialist restoration contractor in conjunction with repairs to timber window frames
6. Where oak cills are present they should be stripped back and treated and not repainted

5) Internal repairs

1. All rubbish to be removed from internal rooms to reduce the potential fire risk and avoid further accumulation of damp
2. Completely overhaul internal plumbing system ensuring that all plumbing is in good working order and that existing leaks are repaired and that there are no further water leaks likely to cause additional damage
3. Investigate the integrity of all floor and ceiling joists and floor boards, providing a condition report to the Council and carry out all works identified in the report

6) General standard of works

1. All the above specified works are to be carried out in accordance with the following additional guidance:
2. Renders: All cement render should be carefully removed and replaced with lime render
3. Mortar: All cement mortar should be carefully removed and replaced with lime mortar
4. Glass: All replacement glass should be specialist glass for restoration purposes with a specification submitted to the Council for approval before work commences.
5. Paints: Oak cills and timbers that are to be left unpainted should be treated with an appropriate preservative. New paint should be specialist paint suitable for use on historic buildings and should be agreed with the Council before work commences

6. Ironmongery: All historic ironmongery should be retained and restored. Any new ironmongery should be historically accurate in term of design and materials
7. Rainwater goods: All new repairs or reinstatement of existing downpipes, gutters or hoppers should be carried out using cast iron. Existing cast iron rainwater goods should be refurbished in situ
8. Roof tiles: All replacement roof and ridge tiles should match the existing in terms of materials and appearance
9. Flat roofs: All areas of flat roof should be repaired, replaced or reinstated where missing on a like for like basis or using a lead substitute.

7) **Method**

A method statement for carrying out of the above works must be submitted to the Local Authority for approval prior to commencement.

During the course of the above works, regular access to the building for inspection of the works will be required by Council officers.

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4) **From: Richard Hilton To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

Question:

Could the Cabinet Member outline what if any due diligence is done to check the address declarations of those standing for election in Merton? Could he list the qualification criteria under which each elected Merton Councillor was entitled to stand?

Reply

To stand for election as a councillor in a local government election, every candidate must complete a nomination paper, and a consent to nomination form. The Council carries out its duties in full by ensuring that all nomination papers are lawfully completed.

The nomination papers that Mr Hilton completed in order to stand as a candidate for the UK Independence Party contained all the relevant address qualifications for those standing for election. As he has forgotten, the qualifications are as follows:

- a) I am registered as a local government elector for the area of the London Borough named above in respect of (qualifying address in full).
- b) I have during the whole of the 12 months preceding that day or those days occupied as owner or tenant the following land or other premises in that area (description and address of land or premises).
- c) My principal or only place of work during those 12 months has been in that London Borough at (give address of place of work and, where appropriate, name of employer).
- d) I have during the whole of those 12 months resided in that area at (give address in full).

A candidate must meet one of the qualifications to validly stand, however a candidate who is qualified by more than one qualification may complete any of those that apply. All Merton councillors elected at the council elections held in May 2014 met one or more of the above qualifications.

In line with the law, all papers are available for public inspection until the day before the election, and are destroyed one year after the election. However, I am happy to reassure him that his own nomination papers were judged to have been lawfully completed. Unfortunately for him, of course, he was not subsequently elected, and indeed the electorate of Merton decided not to return any UKIP councillors.

There is no reason to believe that UKIP's failure to gain support was because of any shortcomings with the procedure for completing nomination papers, instead it was due to their unpopularity with the residents of Merton.

5) From: James Dey To the Cabinet Member for Finance

Question:

Having asked for a breakdown of Council Tax summons costs claimed from each defendant, I received information that this funds 60% of the entire annual Council Tax recovery budget. Costs are supposed to be incurred, and are not penalties. How can Merton Council justify ripping off residents in this way?

Reply

We have a duty to collect Council Tax, and this includes taking reasonable recovery action when payments are not made. We try to minimise the cost of recovery as we do not wish those who do pay Council Tax to pay more for those who don't. The

summons costs have been considered by a Justice of the Peace at our local magistrates at Lavender Hill to be reasonable costs per item for those accounts where complaint to the Court has become necessary.

While it would be inappropriate to comment on individual cases, the best way of avoiding summons costs is to pay Council Tax as required, or to contact the Council as soon as you are aware you are getting into financial difficulties so that new payment arrangements can be made.

**6) From: Jane Plant
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

Question:

Merton Council plans to introduce pleached trees to Mitcham Fair Green. These seem totally inappropriate to the local context, and are notoriously expensive and demanding to maintain in the longer term. What assurances can Merton Council provide that it has appropriate funds for this plan in the long term?

Reply

We don't believe the pleached trees are inappropriate, they will be a landscape feature of the more urban, market square and will help frame the space as well as mitigate against wind which currently affects the Market Square. The design was developed in partnership with a Landscape Architect and has been part of the Rediscover Mitcham consultations.

Merton Council's Rediscover Mitcham project has set aside funds for, and is organising a maintenance regime for the Market Square pleached trees. This involves trimming twice a year and a watering regime by the contractor. Also structural soil will be used in the tree pits to assist with water retention and prevent over-compaction of the soil.

**7) From: John Y R Strover
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

Question:

Will Merton Council join Cricket Green and Longthornton Wards, the London Boroughs of Sutton, Kingston and Ealing, and the London Assembly in supporting the declaration of London as a National Park City (which requires no additional local authority expenditure)?

Reply

The contribution that parks make to the urban fabric and to the social and economic well-being of London is unquestionable. If such a project proved to be likely to significantly improve the extent or quality of green space, or make a real contribution to greening the city, then it would be worthy of Merton Council's support.

What is needed is a transformation of vision, prioritisation and funding for parks and open spaces in the capital. If the idea of a National Park City assisted in delivering that, it would unquestionably be a valuable development.

Having said that, London does not sit entirely comfortably within the existing portfolio of National Parks in the UK in that it would have no substantive powers and is very unlike established ideas of what a national park is or looks like. Furthermore, whereas there may be no demands for local authority funding at this juncture, there might be demands for such in the fullness of time. We would certainly be opposed to any such initiative if it frustrated efforts to repatriate the Lee Valley precept to Merton and our neighbouring boroughs for reinvestment within the Wandle Valley, for example.

In principle, therefore, the concept is one that the Council might be able to support, provided that the concerns stated are recognised and overcome.

**8) From: Giles Bailey
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

Question:

For years there has been persistent traffic congestion and poor air quality along Kingston Rd west of the Tramlink crossing. With the pending increase in Tramlink services, how will LB Merton expedite a traffic solution to this problem that prioritises safety, sustainable transport modes and air quality?

Reply

To address the increase in the number of trams and the potential impact on localised congestion on Kingston Rd, TfL have modelled a set of proposals that will minimise this impact. The proposals include modification to the signals; slight junction modification and re-positioning of Stop lines; banned movements (no right turn into Hartfield Rd from Kingston Rd (already banned except for buses in case of an emergency) and no left turn out of Hartfield Rd into Kingston Rd.

These proposals are subject to Council's consideration and consultation in due course.

**9) From: Adrian Cowdry
To the Cabinet Member for The Leader**

Question:

Can the leader tell me when the public nuisance at 85 Kingsbridge Road, which was notified to you on the June 2015, will be stopped?

Reply

ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND REGENERATION

In 2014, the council's planning enforcement team investigated a complaint that an outbuilding at this address did not have planning consent. The outbuilding was subsequently found to fall within the owner's permitted development rights and the case was closed as there was no breach of planning control. The complaint about noise disturbance from early morning loading/unloading activities has been referred to the environmental health pollution team for investigation.

Supplementary Question:

Since June 2015 I have made many contacts with Merton councillors and officers over 85 Kingsbridge Road, over a secure garage that was built at the same time as the extension. Earlier this year there was a fight between several Polish fellows that was causing a nuisance. The fight ended in the police being called. The Polish men were under the influence of alcohol. The fight resulted in damage to the fence of 236 Lynmouth Avenue, and one of the cars parked in Salcombe Drive. The garage at the rear of 85 Kingsbridge Road was built separately from the property and is now being used as secure storage for the building company that made the extension. There are many builders accessing the garage seemingly with keys for the security gates which the residents of Lynmouth and Kingsbridge have paid for. The nuisance is such that the resident at 240 Lynmouth Avenue has had to at her own cost, replace tyres on her own car, indeed she is not the only one because of screws and nails from the builders' lack of attention when cleaning up after themselves. She's had to modify the access gate at the rear of the property at her own expense and I might add that witnesses have seen builders (intervention by mayor) urinating in the alley way, loading vehicles regularly before 7.30am, with equipment and supplies. How would the councillors and council officers like to be woken consistently before 7.30am by the builders loading their vehicles, or having their residential area turned into a building supplies depot? Our secure alley gates are now insecure because we do not know how many keys are being used by strangers. What immediate action can be taken?

Reply

The answer states that the noise problems he has referred to are being investigated ie early morning loading and unloading. The series of incidents he has described sound most unpleasant and unsavoury for residents. It would appear that the outbuilding has permitted development rights and the question that arises in my mind is whether the use of the outbuilding for commercial activity is actually a proper use within the planning permission. We will refer this back to planning enforcement officers, to see if this has been taken into account, because if there is a garage which is a residential garage being used commercially, this might well be inappropriate and something which planning can enforce against. I will put this forward.

**10) From: John Davis
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration****Question:**

With hoardings being removed from Mitcham Fair Green regeneration site, I note several mature trees have been removed which the planning permission said would be retained.

Why has Merton Council allowed this, and, using CAVAT calculations for trees lost, what mitigating action is being taken to provide equivalent value trees?

Reply

There has only been one tree removed that was intended to be retained. Unfortunately it was removed as it was damaged in a storm, was in bad health and had roots which would have been damaged by the foundations for the granite walls

and clock-tower foundations. This was the amelenchier tree and is being replaced with the same variety.

In the Fair Green, a total 14 trees have been removed (including the amelenchier) to be replaced by 27 new trees. These are:

15 mature or semi mature lime trees,
1 liquidamber,
1 amelenchier and

10 pleached trees for the Market Square

So in summary, 14 trees removed to be replaced by 27 new trees as mitigation.

It is important to remember that Fair Green is an urban greenspace and not an open natural landscape. It has to evolve and respond to changing town centre uses as well as being a feature of the pleasant attribute to Mitcham itself.

11) From: E. P. Carter

To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking

Question:

Regarding the last 30 reported fly-tips in Mitcham would you please let me know their precise locations? Are/were they on council or private land, the methods employed to report them and how long between reporting and clearing?

Reply

A separate list is below showing the exact locations of the last 30 fly tips reported as requested. All thirty fly tips were on Council Land. 24 were reported via the Councils Call Centre and 6 were reported on line. 12 were collected on the same day, 15 were collected with 24 hours and 3 were collected within 48 hours.

Location	Ward	Council land	Private	Reported Via	Date Reported	Date Cleared	Hours Taken
Willow Lane	Cricket Green	yes	no	SA	19.08.2015	20.08.2015	24
Elmhurst Avenue	Graveney	yes	no	CRM	20.08.2015	20.08.2015	0
61 Edenvale, CR4 2DP	Graveney	yes	no	CRM	20.08.2015	21.08.2015	24
59 Oakwood Avenue, CR4 3DQ	Lavender Fields	yes	no	CRM	21.08.2015	21.08.2015	0
73 Commonsides East, CR4 2QB	Pollards Hill	yes	no	CRM	21.08.2015	21.08.2015	0
63 Heaton Road, CR4 2BW	Graveney	yes	no	CRM	21.08.2015	21.08.2015	0
79 Deer Park Gardens, CR4 4DZ	Ravensbury	yes	no	CRM	21.08.2015	22.08.2015	24
100 Meopham Road, CR4 1BJ	Longthornton	yes	no	SA	23.08.2015	24.08.2015	24
73 Park Avenue, CR4 2ER	Graveney	yes	no	SA	24.08.2015	25.08.2015	24
Love Lane	Cricket Green	yes	no	SA	24.08.2015	25.08.2015	24
3 Brookfields Avenue, CR4 4BP	Ravensbury	yes	no	CRM	24.08.2015	25.08.2015	24
76 Brookfields Avenue, CR4 4BT	Ravensbury	yes	no	SA	25.08.2015	26.08.2015	24

43 Oakmead Place, CR4 3RU	Lavender Fields	yes	no	CRM	25.08.2015	26.08.2015	24
56 De'arn Gardens, CR4 3AY	Cricket Green	yes	no	CRM	25.08.2015	26.08.2015	24
130 Bennetts Close, CR4 1NS	Longthornton	yes	no	CRM	26.08.2015	27.08.2015	24
11 Bourne Drive, CR4 3QZ	Cricket Green	yes	no	CRM	26.08.2015	26.08.2015	0
4 Franklin Crescent, CR4 1NH	Pollards Hill	yes	no	CRM	26.08.2015	26.08.2015	0
110 Deer Park Gardens	Ravensbury	yes	no	SA	27.08.2015	27.08.2015	0
40 Worcester Close, CR4 1 SP	Figges Marsh	yes	no	CRM	27.08.2015	27.08.2015	0
81 Fleming Mead, CR4 3LZ	Lavender Fields	yes	no	CRM	27.08.2015	27.08.2015	0
7 Garendon Road, SM4 6LN	St Helier	yes	no	CRM	27.08.2015	28.08.2015	24
123 Victoria Road, CR4 3JD	Lavender Fields	yes	no	CRM	27.08.2015	29.08.2015	48
55 Veals Mead Road, CR4 3SB	Lavender Fields	yes	no	CRM	28.08.2015	29.08.2015	24
47A Lewis Road, CR4 3DF	Lavender Fields	yes	no	CRM	28.08.2015	29.08.2015	24
504 London Road, CR4 4BA	Figges Marsh	yes	no	CRM	28.08.2015	29.08.2015	24
28 Lowry Crescent, CR4 3QS	Lavender Fields	yes	no	CRM	28.08.2015	28.08.2015	0
14 Oakmead Place, CR4 3RU	Lavender Fields	yes	no	CRM	28.08.2015	28.08.2015	0
68 Framfield Road	Figges Marsh	yes	no	CRM	28.08.2015	30.08.2015	48
15 Westmorland Way,	Pollards Hill	yes	no	CRM	28.08.2015	30.08.2015	48
2 Ramones Terrace, 10A Yorkshire Road	Pollards Hill	yes	no	CRM	28.08.2015	28.08.2015	0

**12) From: Stephen Morris
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking**

Question:

Can the council demand that Lake Road in Wimbledon is properly swept and grass verges cleaned every week? And its condition regularly checked? It is a busy thoroughfare including two schools and yet street cleaning is chaotic, irregular and incomplete.

Reply

Lake Road like all residential roads is scheduled to be cleaned on a weekly basis. The street cleaning service monitor cleanliness standards of roads on a regular basis to ensure they are maintained to an acceptable standard of cleanliness. Where we find or receive reports about littering or fly tipping we will attend to rectify.

Question:

Please provide a detailed breakdown of all spending on the Rediscover Mitcham / Fair Green regeneration including detailing the source of funds/grants and specific ways money has been spent or is allocated. Please include all aspects of the programme: completed, in progress and planned.

Reply

Rediscover Mitcham is a collaborative project funded from various pots of funding which includes.

- TFL LIP (Local Implementation Plan) Capital & Revenue
- TFL Major Schemes Capital
- LBM Town Centre Capital
- S106 Developer Contributions
- Heritage Lottery Fund

A detailed breakdown runs to over 170 individual budget lines which is not appropriate to recite at a full Council meeting. It also requires more time to provide the information than the public questions procedures allow for. We recommend submitting a Freedom of Information Request to the futureMerton team for the detailed breakdown as requested.

In summary, the spend on Rediscover Mitcham is:

	Spend to date	Remaining budget	
Transport for London	£ 1,408,242.97	£ 2,328,887.00	
Merton Capital	£ 748,837.84	£ 754,412.48	
Section 106 Developers	£ 12,214.98	£ 494,738.00	
Heritage Lottery Fund	£ 18,788.00	£ 29,232.00	
	£ 2,173,914.43	£ 4,113,992.00	
		Total budget	£ 4,232,911.00

For the £4.113m remaining budget, this is allocated to:

Projected future spend	
Phase 1 completion	€ 780.000.00
Phase 1B Majestic Way	€ 350.000.00
Three Kings Pond	€ 50.000.00
Phases 2 - 6	€ 2.933.996.60
	€ =.113.996.60

**14) From: Andrew Boyce
To the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities**

Question:

Given we live in the 21st century, why does the Council's communications team refuse to respond to residents' concerns raised about Council services on social media sites such as Twitter, when this is standard practice in the likes of Lambeth, Ealing and other Labour run Councils in London?

Reply

ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE

Social media can help with communication between residents and the public, and we are happy to use it to have a dialogue with residents and to proactively advise residents about issues that matter to them.

We look at the approach of other Councils with interest. However, social media is not always the most appropriate or most effective media to access services or to respond to enquiries. We therefore provide a number of alternative means of contacting the council, including mail and telephone, email and website, alongside new services like the Love Clean Streets app.

In order to provide an improved service to allow residents to have their enquiries dealt with quickly and effectively, within the next few months we will be launching a brand new website. We hope that the design of the website will allow our residents and customers to interact with the Council more fully.

Supplementary Question:

The council have been tweeted on a range of issues such as litter, flytipping, street lighting, the temporary, or apparent, closure of Wandle Park, noise pollution and the refugee crisis. Will the cabinet member confirm that the communications team will be instructed to respond publicly to future tweets of this nature, rather than simply ignore them as it does at present?

Reply

This is essentially a repeat of question already responded to. Unfortunately the experience we have had is that Twitter is not always the best mechanism for dealing with a complaint from the public and we have introduced initiatives such as 'Love Clean Streets' which reports problems of litter and flytipping, giving location, which then gets passed to communication and the people who are going to clean it up. Unfortunately Twitter doesn't provide a location, so we do ask the residents to use 'Love Clean Streets' for issues like this.

**15) From: Barbara Mansfield
To the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration**

Question:

As the third anniversary of Rediscover Mitcham approaches, could the residents of Mitcham have a breakdown of monies spent and plans for the future?

Reply

See response to Q13.

In respect of future plans, the Council is seeking an appropriate development that will enhance the street scene, add to the vitality of the town centre and make a contribution to the evening economy, acting as a draw to bring people into the area.

Supplementary Question

I'm sorry the answer to both 13 and 15 are not good enough for the residents of Mitcham. Why does the council appear so inefficient and why have the works taken so long in Fair Green. Will there be the same delays in to Holburn Way and Sibthorpe Park bringing Mitcham to a standstill.

Reply

I don't think the works have been inefficient, in fact we have engaged in the most extensive consultation in Mitcham town centre of any regeneration scheme probably in the history of the borough. It is very important with these things not to rush to some conclusion. We must get these things right. As it happens, we are juggling with a major crossroads, traffic historically has used the crossroads at Mitcham in very heavy order. We've got public transport systems to negotiate and we are dealing with a landscape design for Mitcham town centre which will probably be one of the finest in outer London when it's completed. With possibly some of the best materials used in the streets today that you will see in any town centre anywhere. It is very important to get it right, and that requires detailed effort and work and that's what the council is doing.

**16) From: Jacqueline Heys Robinson
To the Leader**

Question:

What is the outcome of Stephen Alambritis' 'beady eye' regarding C.H.M.P's repairs while championing regeneration to improve quality of life? What is meant by 'it's more cost effective in the longer term to replace homes' than conduct repairs? What are the figures and how arrived at?

Reply

I continue to be aware of the problems with CHMP repairs and maintenance service. My priority remains to ensure that tenants and residents get the services that they expect. Whilst the Council's relationship with CHMP is very important to us I continue to hold CHMP to account to ensure that tenants receive the right services at the right time. I have personally had a number of conversations with senior executives at CHMP and they are left in no doubt just how seriously I view the situation. I will continue to monitor the situation closely together with officers.

The outcome of the longer term proposals on regeneration are still under consideration by CHMP Board.

Supplementary Question:

I am a representative member of High Park Community Association. Is the council aware that while Circle Housing Merton Priory are apparently concentrating their efforts on dealing with repair and maintenance issues on the estates earmarked for regeneration, that other CHMP properties, some completed though not located on the three estates intended for regeneration, have delayed and overlooked repair and maintenance issues with serious consequences to health and welfare.

Reply

I inform her that I take her comments very, very seriously, any concerns she has have been raised at the highest level. In fact today I was in central London to meet the chairman of CHMP, Sir Robin Young, and raised the very concerns that she has raised. We will continue to review and to go by the ten commitments we both signed. I take on board what she says but we as a council will continue to represent and protect our residents.

17) From: Christopher Holt, Chairman, Ravensbury Residents Association To the Leader

Many Ravensbury residents have been shocked by proposals set out by CHMP in their quest for redevelopment. For many, the CHMP plans amount to the destruction of the unique character of the area through intensive redevelopment and out-of-character building heights.

How will Merton Council protect Ravensbury?"

Reply

The Council will as Planning Authority ensure that any application for redevelopment at Ravensbury Estate meets the policy standards set by the Council and those set by the Mayor of London. In addition, and in advance of any application we would consult with residents to agree a Development Plan Document that would add to existing policies and seek to ensure that we develop sustainable neighbourhoods and communities with good design quality built in.

The Council is drafting its planning policy position (known as a Development Plan Document) which will set out design parameters and define the local context and characteristics to be considered for any future planning applications in relation to the CHMP estate regeneration project. We are planning to consult residents across the three CHMP estates on the draft development plan and policies, subject to cabinet approval in October 2015.

Supplementary Question:

With reference to agenda item 13 of the Labour amendment- Wednesday, 8th July p 29 of the supplementary agenda, how can LBM state that they believe they have a moral duty to stand up for Circle Housing Merton Priory residents when those living in the homes affected by the proposed no longer hear or see their ward councillors or their MP to do anything of substance to represent their views in opposition to the plans laid out by Circle Housing Merton Priory Homes.

Reply

I entirely refute the allegation that the councillors of Ravensbury ward and the local MP, Siobhain McDonagh, have not been talking to, liaising with, consulting with all the residents of Ravensbury, indeed, as Leader of the Council with the residents of Eastfields and the residents of High Path.

18) From: Cypren Edmunds Chair/Treasurer: High Path Community Association, Chair: Circle Housing Customer Engagement (Repairs and Maintenance) Panel **to the Leader**

Could Mr Alambritis inform us where he leaves his "beady eye" on CHMP in view of the recent Internal audit, (10th Aug), as it appears to have gone missing throughout all of the consultation process between CHMP and the residents. Was he quoted out of context?

Reply

Through the 10 commitments I persuaded CHMP to sign up to and the regular monitoring meetings we undertake with them, we continue to hold CHMP to account on their service to residents. I have met with CHMP on a number of occasions and urged them to release the findings of their audit which they have now done, and I look forward to them learning the lessons from this. In terms of the consultation, the council will be carrying out its own consultation on our approach to the estate plans. We are planning to consult residents across the three CHMP estates on the draft development plan and policies, subject to cabinet approval in October 2015.

Supplementary Question:

If indeed the council believes they have, as mentioned in agenda item 13 from July council referring to the amended concerns of the motion, a moral duty to do all in its power to stand up for the CHMP residents then why has the council not used the many types of enforcement actions they hold through Environmental Health to deal with CHMP's admitted failures with repairs and maintenance.

Reply

We as a council, like previous administrations, use enforcement whenever appropriate to ensure the interests of residents, be they tenants, leaseholders of the estate, that their interests are fully protected.