

PUBLIC QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL ON 13 JULY 2016

From: Tom Bolger
To the Cabinet Member for Finance

What information does the Cabinet Member for Finance intend to include in the proposed consultation on the level of Council Tax to enable residents of the London Borough of Merton to respond on the basis of informed deliberation and what is the proposed timetable for the consultation?

Reply

The detailed plans for the consultation are still being considered by senior officers and members of the Cabinet. It is likely that the consultation will take place during September and October to fit in with the timetable for the overall budget making process, whilst giving residents sufficient time to have their say.

From: Sofia Parente
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

In Summer I take my children to paddling pools and parks without drinking water points. Can you please install water points in Merton parks? Can you make sure ice-cream vans are not allowed to park near parks? Instead, can't you license vans or cafes selling healthy foods and drinks?

Reply

We don't generally don't provide water drinking points in our parks and have no future plans to invest in such at the present time. The costs in terms of vandalism, abuse and water quality issues have proven prohibitive and as a consequence drinking fountains have progressively been decommissioned over a number of years as they have reached the end of their economic lifetime. I'm sad to say that many neighbouring boroughs have done and are doing the same. The only exception to this policy occurs at South Parks Gardens, where a heritage grant paid for the restoration of the historical drinking fountain there.

Under these prevailing circumstances, I would suggest that users who may require access to water should either bring water with them from home, or purchase bottled water from a local retail outlet.

Regrettably, it is not always possible to control the activities of all ice-cream vans owing to their mobile nature, but we do have formal arrangements with some reputable ice cream vendors and these are generally welcomed by parks users during the high summer period. We are always happy to consider proposals from other refreshment providers, but the short time-length and unpredictability of the summer season and relatively low footfall at some paddling pool venues rather limits the opportunities.

From: Sara Sharp
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Given the plethora of planning applications across Wimbledon, how can residents/retailers be sure that the Council's planning officers are considering applications in a strategic way?

Reply

All planning applications and associated information is available for viewing on the Council's web site to ensure the process is transparent to all those parties who are interested.

www.merton.gov.uk/planning

The council's strategic planning policies are set out in our adopted Local Plan.

Core Strategy [2011]: Policies CS.6, CS.7 and CS.12 are relevant to the strategic development of Wimbledon town centre, as well detailed planning policies in our Sites & Policies Plan [2014].

www.merton.gov.uk/localplan

In addition, officers in both the Development Control and Future Merton teams have regular meetings to discuss and coordinate the larger applications or those with most potential impact, to ensure the strategic future of the Borough is safeguarded.

From: Chris Edge
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Will the Council take urgent steps to protect Raynes Park from further floods by:

- Checking that sewers have not collapsed.
- Adding additional drains under the railway tunnel
- Ensure roads, footways and crossovers are constructed with more consideration of gravity.
- Obtain additional vehicles to clean the drains regularly?

Reply

- **Checking that sewers have not collapsed.**

Both foul and surface water sewers are the responsibility of Thames Water. Across the borough, the majority of highway gullies discharge into the Thames Water sewer network. Our Highway Safety Inspectors undertake visual checks on our adopted highways and footways. Sometimes, it is possible to spot defects such as soft spots or voids which may indicate a collapsed sewer or mains burst underground. Any defects are reported to Thames Water for remedial action and repair. We are not permitted or responsible to CCTV

survey the sewer network as the sewers are not our assets to maintain or repair.

Merton Council is responsible for:

- The drainage of surface water from the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and Local Distributor Roads, including Local Access roads (such as the A298, A236 and residential streets excluding private roads).
- Maintaining the road drains on minor roads, including kerbs, road gullies, ditches and the pipe network which connects to the Thames Water sewers.
- Developing and implementing an emergency plan, contingency plan and business continuity plan.
- Ensuring flood risk is considered in the Local Plan.
- Making decisions on planning applications which may be at risk of flooding or increase flooding elsewhere.
- Agreeing any works to ordinary watercourses (i.e. streams, ditches) which may affect the flow or storage of water.
- Maintaining Council owned assets, such as drainage ditches, gullies, trash

Thames Water is responsible for:

- The drainage of surface water from development via sewers adopted by Thames Water.
- Maintaining public sewers owned by Thames Water into which much of the highway drainage connects.
- Maintaining and improving its water mains and other pipes to reduce the risk of leaking or burst pipes.
- Reporting its performance each year to Ofwat (The Water Services Regulation Authority), including in respect of internal sewer flooding of properties.

Merton as a Lead Local Flood Authority to formally 'investigate significant' flooding under section 19 of the Flood & Water Management Act. The criteria for significant is set out on page 35 of our Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and is when the threshold of two or more residential properties are flooded internally. This threshold is set out in page 35 of our adopted Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and includes thresholds for commercial property also. Please see this link to the strategy:

http://www.merton.gov.uk/merton_lfrms_final_version_august_2014_v3.pdf

- **Adding additional drains under the railway tunnel:**

Raynes Park Bridge is a flooding hotspot as the road dips down under the bridge and creates a natural bowl for water, taking flow from Coombe Lane, Pepys Road and Kingston Road. New pumps and more road gullies were

installed at the underbridge, following the July 2007 extreme flooding. The pump in the Raynes Park bridge drains perform well under normal circumstances and has improved the situation. Residents will have seen in the media, and with various other railway under bridges including Wallington and New Malden suffering with even deeper flooding.

We experienced an exceptional amount of rainfall in an incredibly short period of time on the 23rd June and in most locations the drains and sewers simply aren't designed to take that much water in that short space of time. More road gullies would not have accommodated this rainfall, we are limited by the size of the receiving Thames Water sewer in Kingston Road which was exceeded.

Several areas of Raynes Park, including the town centre are shown to be at high risk of surface water flooding on the Environment Agency's surface water flood risk maps. This is due to the low lying nature and elevation of the area. A large proportion of surface water flow is received from the higher ground in and around Cottenham Park and Copse Hill.

- **Ensure roads, footways and crossovers are constructed with more consideration of gravity.**

As part of resurfacing we seek to use porous material where possible and design to levels, ensuring fall to gullies. On footways we design to a min of 1:40 crossfall into the carriageway, i.e. away from properties. It should be recognized that to a degree, we are fixed to existing road and footway levels and it is not always possible to adjust height due to existing constraints and the general streetscape.

Specific rules apply for householders wanting to pave over their front gardens. You will not need planning permission if a new or replacement driveway of any size uses permeable (or porous) surfacing which allows water to drain through, such as gravel, permeable concrete block paving or porous asphalt, or if the rainwater is directed to a lawn or border to drain naturally. Planning permission is required for non-porous surfaces.

- **Obtain additional vehicles to clean the drains regularly?**

Merton Council has undertaken cleansing of gullies in identified 'higher risk' areas on an annual basis, where appropriate funding has made available – the higher risk areas are based on those roads that were reported as (i) flooding during the July 2007 surface water flooding event, (ii) identified as being at risk according to Environment Agency surface water modelling or (iii) to have previous recorded or reported drainage problems. Raynes Park is covered by the high risk gully cleansing programme, including Coombe Lane, Kingston Road, Pepys Road and Worple Road. In addition, Merton also undertakes reactive gully cleansing to specific locations or addresses throughout the year following reports by residents or businesses. Raynes Park town centre and various other roads including the apostles had a further proactive clean a few days prior to the flood event on the 23rd June.

On the 23rd June and 24th June, we were able to mobilise an additional emergency tanker which attended to several of the worst hit Raynes Park roads.

This winter 2015/2016, we have increased our total number of 'high risk' road gullies to be cleansed across the borough to 5450, from 4795 gullies in 2014/15 and 4450 in 2013/14. In a recent public consultation on our Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, residents and businesses responded to say that gully cleansing is considered to be 'the' No.1 priority action that the Council should undertake to reduce flood risk and this action has been taken.

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