

Council 14 September
Non priority questions

Ordinary

From Councillor Daniel Holden To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Can the Cabinet Member tell me:

- a) Of those people parking in the council run car parks across the borough, what is the proportion of i) Merton residents; and ii) non-Merton residents?
- b) Why won't the council make it easier for residents to park in council run car parks by reducing charges to encourage them to do more shopping here in their own borough thereby supporting local businesses?

Reply

- a) The only way to determine the proportion of non residents using council run car parks in comparison to residents would be by recording the vehicle registrations of car park users and requesting details of the place of registration for each vehicle. While Parking Services are able to request details of a vehicles keeper from the DVLA, this is only in relation to PCNs. We are not permitted to do this for any other reason.
- b) The hours of operation of the Car Parks in the town centre locations are generally as follows;

Morden Monday to Friday 5am – 6pm, Saturday 5am – 1pm

Mitcham Monday to Saturday 8am – 6pm

Raynes Park Monday to Sunday 8am – 6pm

Wimbledon Monday to Saturday 8am – 11pm, Sunday 8am – 6pm

In Morden, short stay parking is available every day in Peel House lower at a cost of £0.80 for up to 2 hours parking. On Saturdays, Parking is free in all car parks from 1pm onwards, and all day Sunday in all Morden Town Centre Car Parks.

In Mitcham, short stay parking is available in all car parks for between £0.80 - £1.40 for up to 2 hours parking, with free parking available in St Marks Car Park between 2pm and 4pm daily. Parking is free in all car parks on Sundays.

In Raynes Park, the Council only operate Coombe Lane Car Park, and the cost of parking is £0.60 for up to 2 hours parking.

In Wimbledon, Short stay parking is available at a cost of between £2 - £3 for up to 2 hours, and with the exception of Hartfield Road car park, a flat fee of £3 is payable after 6pm allowing the ticket holder to stay for up to 5 hours. On Sundays, a flat fee of £2.50 is charged in all car parks.

As an authority, we have to aim to balance the needs of residents seeking to use local shopping facilities against those of commuters seeking to use long stay parking facilities for transport links, and it is our belief that the short stay charges already in place are more than reasonable for each of the town centre car park locations and meet the needs of our residents.

**From Councillor David Williams
To the Leader of the Council**

Would the Leader please list the meetings and correspondence he has had since the last ordinary meeting of the Council on 13th July 2016 to save St Helier Hospital?

Reply

Since the last meeting of the council I have continued to champion the cause of St. Helier hospital as follows:

- Along with the Cabinet Member, met with the Chair and Chief Operating Officer of the CCG regarding the STP in order to make clear the council's position in relation to the STP and in particular its impact on St Helier hospital
- I ensured there was an agenda item at the South London Partnership meeting in September regarding the STP where I made clear to our neighbouring borough leaders the council's position on St Helier and explained any reconfiguration of acute services was likely to be detrimental to St Helier hospital and would therefore be opposed by Merton Council.
- I input into the Cabinet members response to the draft STP where he emphasised the importance of retaining accident and emergency and related services at St Helier hospital.

**From Councillor David Dean
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

Wandsworth Council has recently taken action formally to protect its pubs from redevelopment by removing "permitted development rights" from 120 pubs in the borough and adopting new local planning guidance that "specifically recognises the historic, architectural and community value of Wandsworth's pubs". Does Merton's administration plan to follow suit by using Article 4 directions to protect the borough's pubs?

Reply

Over two years ago Merton adopted local planning policies to protect pubs in Merton on the basis of their value to the communities they serve. While we are always keen to explore innovative ways to use our resources to support what is best about Merton, we have found that practical on-the-ground actions that our residents can see and enjoy are more effective. Some examples are working with the Charles Holden pub on the Colliers Wood summer party this weekend, and supporting historic pubs with grants to improve their appearance and that of their surroundings.

**From Councillor Oonagh Moulton
To the Leader of the Council**

Cllr Garrod failed spectacularly to answer this at the call in meeting on 2 August 2016 so, for the sake of transparency, can the Leader please confirm when the administration made the decision to break their manifesto pledge and scrap the weekly rubbish collection in Merton?

Reply

I understand from a number of those present that Cllr Garrod gave a comprehensive outline of the financial challenges the government has caused for boroughs such as Merton with their 40% cut to council funding since 2010 and Merton's innovative approach to finding savings so that we can maintain services to residents. As part of this he explained in detail how we are looking at agreeing a joint contract with our neighbouring boroughs which will offer a more efficient and less costly service where we expect to make savings in the region of £2m every year for the potential 24 year life of the contract. The service proposals as put forward by the Preferred Bidder for the Lot 1 contract covering waste collection and street cleansing as well as other environmental services preserves the ongoing provision for the collection of food waste and recycling on a weekly basis, with paper and card recycling collected one week and bottles, tins and plastics the following week. Each home will therefore receive two collections one week (food and recycling) and three collections the next week (food, recycling, residual). We are very optimistic that recycling rates will increase as a result and we are confident that we will also see cleaner streets as less litter and debris is created by split black sacks. The administration welcomed the opportunity for pre-decision scrutiny in advance of any decision being made. The decision to agree a preferred bidder was made by Cabinet at its meeting of 4 July 2016. The proposals were called in by Cllr Moulton's Group and were considered by the Scrutiny Commission on 2 August 2016 where the panel agreed to allow the proposals to progress to the next stage. The final decision will be made in December.

**From Councillor Abdul Latif
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

I understand that works to implement the Clapham Common to Wimbledon Cycle Quietway are expected to start in January 2017. As well as following the Wandle Trail, the route is due to include a number of residential roads in Trinity ward. Can the Cabinet Member tell me what consultation is planned with the residents of Garfield, Cowper and South Park Roads on the detailed design for the Quietway?

Reply

There are no plans to introduce any physical measures on Garfield, Cowper or South Park Road. Currently the only proposal is to introduce a minimum number of signs. Therefore a consultation is not required.

From Councillor Janice Howard
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

The width restriction bollard outside Wimbledon Park tube station is still missing, despite being reported on numerous occasions since June 2015. Large vehicles are driving on the wrong side of the road to take advantage of the wider road space which is an accident waiting to happen. Can the Cabinet Member tell me why there has been a hold up of 16 months and counting, and when the replacement is likely to be fitted? The bridge was not designed for heavy goods vehicles and damage could already have been done to the TfL bridge over the District line.

Reply

As with any width restriction, the Council does its best to replace missing / damaged bollards. However, in certain locations it is difficult and expansive to keep up with the on-going maintenance. Officers have been working with manufacturers in attempt to create a type of post that can be removed by emergency services but not so easily removed by motorists. It is envisaged that the posts will be in situ by first week in October at the very latest.

From Councillor Brian Lewis-Lavender
To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Could the Cabinet Member please tell me how many reported accidents there have been at the Garth Road reuse and recycling centre since the installation of the new skips and the high, metal stairs that residents now have to try and negotiate in order to place their waste in them? How does this compare to the same period in previous years prior to this change?

Reply

All of the gantry units and steps are built to BS high specification and complies with current legislation.

Throughout the UK a number of HRRC / HWRC contracts use gantry and step units and they are deemed safe to use to the public and members of staff

Since Veolia commenced with the contract on 1st October 2015 the staff at Garth Road have reported 5 x Accidents.

Of the five accidents recorded at Garth Road since October 2015 only one was related to the use of the Gantry unit and steps and when reviewed it was accepted the cause of the accident was not due to the design of the gantry unit and steps.

Over the last few years prior to Veolia taking on the operational management of the Garth Rd site there was an average of 3 accidents as a result of residents slipping on the steps up to the compactors and into the open skips.

**From Councillor Daniel Holden
To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking**

Recent studies have shown that traffic fumes are clearly linked to breathing problems developed by both children and adults.

Neighbouring Wandsworth Council has started fining drivers who leave their engines running unnecessarily whilst stationary. Does Merton have any plans to consult on introducing similar measures and, if so, what is the proposed timescale?

Reply

Anti-Idling legislation has been in place for a number of years and is adoptable legislation to tackle specific areas where vehicle idling problematic areas. This year the Pollution Team will be redrafting its Air Quality Action Plan to cover the next 5 years, this will incorporate anti idling as one of many measures to tackle poor air quality. It is anticipated that consultation should start around November/December 2016.

**From Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

How does the Cabinet Member explain to the former members of Morden bowls club – many of whom are older residents – why they have been unable to play on their local bowling green this summer given that the Council is still spending money on maintaining and mowing it on a regular basis despite claiming to have closed it as a “cost cutting measure”?

Reply

Assuming that this question refers to the bowling green at Morden Recreation Ground, the green is not being maintained to a frequency and standard suitable for bowls. It is being cut on an occasional basis only – and not intensively as bowls would require - in order to keep the area looking relatively tidy in the context of the wider park that is otherwise an attractive open space.

This bowling green was identified for closure back in the spring of 2015, a decision that was taken with the support of the incumbent club at that time. The club had reportedly fallen to some 5 or 6 bowling members only at that time and the club was struggling to fulfil a programme of bowls fixtures due to a lack of numbers.

Strategic Theme

**From Councillor Michael Bull
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

Can the Cabinet Member update me on the council’s progress in setting up a Housing Development Company, particularly given that this was apparently the reason why the sale of P4 couldn’t be delayed by 2 weeks?

Reply

The sale of P4 was considered by Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 2nd June 2016 which upheld a 2013 Cabinet decision to dispose of the P4 site. The Council's proposals to set up a development company were not the reason for proceeding with the sale of P4. The minutes of the Scrutiny meeting are online, setting out the call in considerations and responses

<http://democracy.merton.gov.uk/documents/b8450/P4%20call-in%20supplementary%20agenda%20officers%20report%20and%20appendices%20Thursday%2002-Jun-2016%2019.15%20Sustai.pdf?T=9>

The Council has made good progress in establishing a property development company. Work is now concluding on the business case, financial model, governance arrangement, legal and financial agreements and have been verified by independent consultants Price Waterhouse Coopers.

Cabinet and Council will be considering these details in November 2016.

From Councillor Daniel Holden

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Given the heavy rain episodes and subsequent flooding earlier this year, what lessons have been learnt about the need for more adequate and regular clearing of drains and gullies and what changes is the Cabinet Member planning to Merton's local flood risk management plan as a result?

Reply

Over the past three years, Merton has increased its gully cleansing regime across the borough. We undertake a reactive service to reports of blocked gullies at particular locations from residents or businesses. In addition we undertake a high risk gully cleansing schedule of planned works each winter. This winter 2015/2016, we 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. The results of the public consultation on our Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, showed that residents and businesses responded, saying 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.

Merton Council has undertaken cleansing of gullies in identified 'higher risk' areas on an annual basis, where appropriate funding has been 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. Silt levels within the gullies are recorded prior to cleansing, which helps to inform future cleansing schedules.

During the heavy rainfall events we experienced in June this year, we were able to mobilise an additional emergency tanker which attended to several of the worst hit roads and locations across the borough. The extreme rainfall in many locations exceeded the capacity of the drainage network and historic sewer system, which resulted in flooding. Investigations into the areas which suffered significant flooding this summer are being undertaken and where defects are found, this will be placed onto the planned programme of drainage remedial works on a priority basis. Emergency response procedures and plan are also being discussed with neighbouring boroughs across South West London and the Environment Agency, who were also affected by the summer storms.

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 screens.

**From Councillor Suzanne Grocott
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

Can the Cabinet Member please explain the recent delays in uploading onto the council website the weekly lists of planning applications received and planning decisions made?

I understand that summer is a difficult time when officers are on holiday but there must surely be procedures in place to cover leave. Who determines what is or is not important enough to be deprioritised as a result of staff shortages and the subsequent impact on residents?

Reply

We are currently in the process of recruiting staff and other officers are being trained to use the web system to upload the documents and following the training of officers back up systems will be in place to improve resilience. In the interim, the list of applications received is being sent direct to interested parties by email. In addition, all planning applications are placed on the website for public viewing in any event and can be viewed on the Planning Explorer.

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