

From Councillor Abigail Jones to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Can the Cabinet Member give an update on day centre services in the borough?

Reply

Merton provides four in-house day centres; High Path, the JMC, which both cater for people with a learning disability, All Saints, which provides services for people with a learning disability and people with physical disabilities, and Eastway, which supports older people.

Our learning disability services have seen changes in the past two years, with some staffing reductions leading to a focus on the services providing safe and secure day time respite. Numbers attending the services have remained constant, which has led to some community activities being reduced. In the past few months we have worked closely with MVSC to recruit volunteers to work in our services, and now have eleven volunteers across the centres. Staff work hard to provide arrange of stimulating activities in the centres, and many are also involved with collecting people from home to help reduce transport costs.

The Healthier Communities and Older People's Scrutiny panel are currently looking at these services, and will report in February.

At Eastway the staff team is supporting a group of people who have much more complex support needs than we have worked with in the past but the team has responded well to this challenge and continues to provide a good service. All Saints continues to provide a valued day time service to people with a physical disability.

Supplementary

Given that the Government has given the go-ahead for a new secondary school in South Wimbledon, can he confirm that the High Path Day Centre will be relocated to an equivalent local site?

Reply

Day centres play a very important role in the borough and are a hugely valued service for a number of residents. We have committed from the outset to deliver an equivalent centre as good as the current one. A building has been identified in Leyton Road which is approximately ten minutes away from the current centre and we are in the early stages of developing proposals for that. We had an initial meeting with users and carers on Tuesday morning. We will ensure it is ready in time for the move from High Path and we are absolutely committed to delivering it.

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

Given that the council has an on-going responsibility to represent all Circle Housing tenants, leaseholders and freeholders, can the Cabinet Member tell me what the council is doing to publicise and contribute to the current consultation on the proposed changes to Circle Housing Merton Priory and the collapse of the Circle group structure?

Reply

As cabinet member I have expressed concerns about the proposed changes to Circle Merton as it's important that tenants, leaseholders and freeholders voice is heard loud and clearly in any new governance arrangements. We remain in continuing dialogue with Circle over the implications of these changes as it's essential that local accountability remains a key part of any new structure. The consultation ends in December, following which the next meeting of the Council on 1 February will be asked to take a view, as a shareholder, on these changes, including the measures designed to ensure ongoing local engagement and accountability.

Supplementary

The premise of the stock transfer in 2010 was that there was going to be accountability for residents and for the council, with a governance and budget overseen by a locally appointed board. The residents have understandably expressed concerns about the proposed replacement of the board with a community panel with no decision making powers. I am glad that the Cabinet Member has recognised that this is his responsibility but could he tell me how he will instruct the Council, as shareholder, to vote when the final decisions is made in the Spring, given that the current proposal does not provide sufficient accountability as originally envisaged.

Reply

Before any sign-off, it's important that accountability remains in place, and we'll discuss that later this evening the Estates Plan. It's important that residents' voices are actually heard in any new structure, it's essential that it continues to remain part of it. I don't know if she's aware of the Housing Bill that's currently going through Parliament, which takes away the Council's right to be represented on bodies like this. As she has condemned these proposals I think it's essential that the Council does have input but as well that residents do too. We are in continuing negotiations in terms of these arrangements and please rest assured that we have not agreed to the changes and we have asked that they come back with further proposals, about which I hope to update Council at its next meeting.

From Councillor Pauline Cowper to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Can he update me on the consultation process for Crossrail 2?

Reply

The latest Crossrail2 consultation, originally scheduled for this month, has been postponed until at least the second quarter of 2017. A summary of the +20,000 views that Crossrail2 received at the most recent consultation (January 2016) are available on Crossrail2's website <http://crossrail2.co.uk/consultation/>

Merton Council is continuing to work closely with Crossrail2 to secure the best outcome for the borough with minimal impact from construction. In the meantime the council will go ahead with developing its own masterplan for Wimbledon town centre with residents which will start in advance of Crossrail2's consultation. This will help

identify the most beneficial ways of planning for how Crossrail2 would best fit in with Wimbledon town centre and we will actively work with residents and businesses on developing the masterplan.

There is cross-party support in Merton for Crossrail2, but we have been clear that it does not come at any cost. The proposals published last year were unacceptable in terms of its impact on business and retail in the town centre. Our cross-party position is available at www.merton.gov.uk/crossrail2

Supplementary

Can the Cabinet Member update me on the consultation process for Crossrail2. Will he ensure that TfL don't backtrack on their agreement to consult with residents and will he particularly ensure that the address the concerns arising from the first consultation?

Reply

It is quite right that residents are actively engaged in the process. I think one of the failings of the first consultation was the lack of resident involvement until the late stage. We have been quite clear in our dealings with Crossrail2 that this does need to take place, and as a Council we have also been clear that we support Crossrail2 but not at any cost. Clearly, if it does happen, and that's a big "if", it will have a major impact on Wimbledon Town Centre. As we go forward it's important that we collectively, in all parts of the chamber, work together to ensure that the centre of Wimbledon is protected, recognising the important role it plays in terms of being the retail centre of the borough, the number of businesses but also its residents as well and I look forward to having that continuing dialogue as we go forward. If further proposals for Crossrail2 are released next year, there will be extensive dialogue as was planned if proposals had been published in November, which has been delayed to Spring next year.

From Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

How many of Merton's residents (in numerical terms and as a percentage) do not currently recycle on a regular basis?

Reply

Current information indicates that only 20.4% of households do NOT participate in the kerbside recycling service. This equates to 16,827 properties based on a total of 82,490 households.

In addition to the dry recycling, 48% of residents do NOT participate in the kerbside food waste service which equates to 39,595 households.

We expect the new waste collection service will help increase recycling in the borough.

Supplementary

I would like to ask the Cabinet Member, given the flat lining of recycling rates in the borough, when is the Council going to improve recycling rates, as per its stated aim and what is the Cabinet Member actually going to do to get persistent non-recyclers to recycle more, and correctly, if a new, more complex system comes in?

Reply

Overall in terms of recycling, the long term plan is Phase C, where we'll be expecting an increase in recycling delivered by the contractors. In the short term we are having an education process. You'll have seen in 'My Merton' there are articles about improving on recycling, and what can be recycled. We are also going into schools to educate students about how and what to recycle.

From Councillor John Dehaney to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Could he outline his approach to people who fly tip in our borough?

Reply

Merton council have a zero tolerance towards anyone that fly tips in the borough. We come down heavily on all perpetrators who irresponsibly dump their waste. Our enforcement team will investigate with a view to gaining any evidence of the person/s who may have dumped the waste, we are able to issue £400 fixed penalty notices due to new legislation that was introduced in May this year and this is aimed for the smaller fly tips along with taking people to court for prosecution of the more larger fly tips. We have recently carried out an awareness campaign in the borough working with a number of agencies to combat this type of behaviour, we have:

- Placed an Advert in My Merton for residents to be aware of who they give their waste to, for disposal
- J C Deaux advertising our campaign poster re Fly tipping
- Posters on the side of our cage vehicles who collect the fly tipped waste.
- We have issued 12 fixed penalties notices of £400 for fly tipping since the change of legislation in May 2016, (3,835 Fixed Penalties of £80 have been issued for littering offences since April 2016 to present date),
- ANPR (Auto number plate recognition) exercise with the police stopping all vehicles carrying waste and asking for their waste carrier licences along with all proof of where their waste on board is to be dumped
- Working alongside RPs (Registered Providers) e.g. Merton Priory Homes
- Communicating with residents re the presentation of household waste for collection
- Publicising offenders who have been caught fly tipping in the local guardian

Supplementary

Can I congratulate the Cabinet Member on taking a zero tolerance approach to fly-tipping in the borough. Does he think that the new £400 fine will deter people from dumping rubbish on our streets?

Reply

In terms of our approach to fly-tipping, Councillor Dehaney is correct, it is zero tolerance. In October alone, we issued seven fines of £400 to people who litter and fly-tip on our streets. We will continue to take that approach where and when we can. It isn't the only avenue available to us, as mentioned in my previous question, we will also be educating residents of all ages about their responsibility. We have

also awarded the contract to Kingdom outside major town centres and residential roads who are also fining residents. I think that holistic approach will be beneficial to the cleanliness of the borough.

From Councillor Michael Bull to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Detailed arrangements for larger families and households in the borough do not seem to have been factored into the 'one size fits all' bins being proposed by the administration. In the summer months would the council consider doing weekly collections from families to avoid decaying and foul smells from overflowing bins on public health grounds?

Reply

There are currently no plans to increase the level of frequency during the summer months. It is important to note that the smelly food waste will continue to be collected weekly from all households and so should not need to be disposed of in the residual waste bin. This method of collection proposed is the optimal method for improving recycling and reducing cost.

The proposed service is not a "one size fits all" service. Our preferred bidder acknowledges that they may need to provide larger or additional bins for larger families of 6 or more people or for families with two or more small children in nappies.

Supplementary

I understand that it is a statutory requirement for the Director of Public Health to provide a professional assessment of Merton's proposal to end the weekly rubbish collection and roll out multiple wheelie bins. When will this assessment be published and why has this not already happened to inform the decision making process?

Reply

The changes that are happening in the borough are not unusual. Wheelie bins are used by two-thirds of the local authorities across Britain already. In terms of alternate weekly collections, even Conservative Bromley have introduced alternate weekly collections and separate dual recycling boxes. So perhaps you'll be able to liaise with colleagues in Bromley to discuss how it's affected them.

From Councillor Dennis Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Can he update us on the merger between Circle Housing and Affinity Sutton?

Reply

Circle report that information has been provided to, and consultation on merger has taken place with, all Circle and Affinity Sutton residents. The consultation was carried out in accordance with HCA guidelines.

The HCA have approved the merger in principle and Circle continue to discuss final stages with lenders. At this stage, a date for final merger is not known but is likely to be before year end.

The new Group will be called Clarion and the commercial arm, which will focus on development, growth and social value will be called Latimer.

Supplementary

How does the Cabinet Member feel that this merger will help Circle improve their services to tenants and residents? I have been to The Grange so often to talk to their officers about complaints that I think they're about to start charging me rent.

Reply

Councillor Pearce, along with many other councillors, has been rightly vocal about the unsatisfactory nature of Circle Housing's repairs service and responsiveness. I am glad there has been some improvements of late and I hope that now we are in a merged group, we will see further improvements take place. Affinity Sutton have got a good track record. I believe this new merged group will be a stronger group and will be more responsive to residents' needs in Merton. Let me reassure Council that we will continue to keep a close watch in terms of service repairs and delivery. There have been improvements but there is a lot more to do and rest assured that I will be continuing to be on their case and make sure that this does happen.

From Councillor John Sargeant to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

The opening of Crown House Creative in Morden Town Centre, utilising vacant retail space and providing a temporary venue for the arts, music and social events of many kinds is a very welcome innovation. Beyond its press release on the subject, what publicity has Merton council issued to promote the venue? What further publicity is planned and what opportunities does the member foresee the venue providing in the coming months?

Reply

Following the successful launch on October 26th, the Crown House Creative will provide a monthly bulletin, sent to all staff via the Intranet. This bulletin will also be promoted via the Merton Council website, the official Merton Council social media platforms, and forwarded to the local newspaper. The bulletin will also be sent to all Third Sector (voluntary) providers in the borough and local businesses (via the Merton Chamber of Commerce), as we seek to maximise the usage of the space, inviting local stakeholders to utilise the space to deliver activities.

The following programme takes place throughout November and December:

African Street Style Fashion Shoot (took place Sat 12th Nov)

Beat Motel – DJ collective who use artistic spaces (Thursday 17th Nov)

Self-Organise – Exhibition of works, talks, debates and workshops, highlighting the current and critical discourse on community, space and participation. The exhibition will explore how modes of self-organisation and communitarianism operate within public space, collectives and communities. (From Thurs 24th November)

Objects – Installation from student of University of Strasbourg (From Friday 25th November)

Light Up Morden – An evening of entertainment, to compliment the Christmas lights in Morden (Thurs 1st Dec)

Small Business Saturday – Saturday 3rd December

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BFI Screening: Saturday 3rd December

BFI Screening: Saturday 10th December

We are also working with local businesses, providing free public surgeries re Dental care, and improving health and well-being, through Yoga and Shiatsu classes throughout November and December.

Supplementary (from Councillor Peter Southgate)

I wonder if the Cabinet Member could tell me what plans there are perhaps to scale up publicity for the Crown House Creative. Are you sure that “Morden’s most exciting arts opportunity” does not become its best kept secret? Further, can he promise us that the Council will retain the use of Crown House Creative to allow it to become more widely appreciated by the public and local organisations as a venue of choice.

Reply

Answering the second point first, I’d love to be able to do that, I’d really love to promise to use a council asset. Unfortunately, finances being what they are, if a better offer for that building is made, then we will take up that offer.

In terms of what we do in the meantime, I thank you for your kind words and I want to see what we can do to make it more popular. Like any venue it depends entirely on the goodwill of the public, what people think when they go into the building. I think everyone here will join me in congratulating the futureMerton team in achieving a very great thing out of very little at all. I would like to take this opportunity to ask you to join me in thanking officers for showing that kind of care and interest in making our borough as good as it can be.

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

Given the clear strength of feeling among many residents around the borough, why does the Cabinet Member like multiple wheelie bins so much more than standard dustbins and is this why the council won’t even create a discreet bin store at its own civic centre?

Reply

Prior to undertaking the procurement for a new waste collection service there was no preference put forward by the council for or against wheelie bins. In effect the procurement was solution-neutral.

The proposed bidder’s solution represents their optimal solution and was not designed by the council. This has been determined by the market and waste management experts. This has been a competitive process and a robust evaluation was undertaken prior to appointing the preferred bidder status to Veolia.

Wheelie bins have a distinct advantage over standard dustbins in that they can be wheeled and mechanically lifted onto the back of the waste trucks in the collection / disposal process. This has been proven to reduce injuries and sickness amongst waste staff.

The Civic centre uses Eurobins for storage which can be stored outside without the need for a bin store.

Supplementary

Can the Cabinet Member tell me what the cost to the Council will be in terms of wasted man hours and disposal costs of removing all the existing bins if the wheelie bins replace them. Given the spiralling capital costs, how can he justify this huge expenditure to Merton's taxpayers?

Reply

I find it quite rich to say the "spiralling costs" considering we heard last year that it was supposedly going to cost £7m, then we heard it would be £5m, and as you'll hear later tonight, it isn't actually that high at all. In terms of the other information he has requested, I will consult with officers and try to get that to him.

From Councillor Greg Udeh to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Could he outline his response to residents who request a controlled parking zone in their area to deal with the issue of commuter parking?

Reply

For a CPZ to be considered a petition must be collated and presented to the Council to show support for such a change. An informal consultation with residents then takes place and, if there is majority support to proceed, the next step is a statutory consultation.

My cabinet role is primarily in then enforcing controlled parking zones once they have been agreed and implemented. We take a firm but fair approach, using our parking charter which is available online, and our main aims are to make our roads safe and to ensure residents who have paid for a parking permit are not impeded from parking on their street by motorists parking without a permit.

Supplementary

I understand the Cabinet Member is looking at introducing a new emissions levy for diesel cars. How will this work and is there a London wide need for such initiatives?

Reply

I am unapologetic about this policy, I think it is important and we need to do it in the interests of the health of our residents and I would like to thank him for raising such an important issue. I understand that the London Labour Mayor, Sadiq Khan also sees this as a high priority and I hope that a much needed London wide plan can be implemented.