

From Cllr Mary Curtin to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Will the cabinet member give the current numbers in temporary accommodation and how it compares to other London boroughs?

Reply

As at the end of July 2017, Merton had 180 households living in temporary accommodation. This is the lowest in London, save the City of London, and reflects the Councils work on homelessness prevention. Below is a summary of performance for all London Boroughs for those in temporary accommodation published by the DCLG at the end of Q1 2017 which shows 54,283 in London; the figures in our neighbouring boroughs are as follows: Lambeth 1,992, Wandsworth 1,490, Sutton 534, Kingston 671, Richmond 259 and Croydon 2,449. These numbers change regularly as new households enter temporary accommodation and others are either rehoused or leave temporary accommodation.

London borough	All temporary housing types
Barking and Dagenham	1,844
Barnet	2,757
Bexley	1,017
Brent	2,915
Bromley	1,439
Camden	390
City of London	18
Croydon	2,449
Ealing	2,233
Enfield	3,244
Greenwich	520
Hackney	2,900
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,264
Haringey	3,147
Harrow	758

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Havering	738
Hillingdon	660
Hounslow	853
Islington	806
Kensington and Chelsea	1,849
Kingston upon Thames	671
Lambeth	1,992
Lewisham	1,864
Merton	186
Newham	4,457
Redbridge	2,308
Richmond upon Thames	259
Southwark	1,805
Sutton	534
Tower Hamlets	2,114
Waltham Forest	2,299
Wandsworth	1,490
Westminster	2,503
Total	54,283

Data source:

<http://opendatacommunities.org/slice?dataset=http%3A%2F%2Fopendatacommunities.org%2Fdata%2Fhomelessness%2Fhouseholds-accommodated%2Ftemporary-housing-types&http%3A%2F%2Fopendatacommunities.org%2Fdef%2Fontology%2Ftime%2FrefPeriod=http%3A%2F%2Freference.data.gov.uk%2Fid%2Fquarter%2F2017-Q1>

Supplementary

I would like to thank the Cabinet Member for his reply. Merton has clearly done great work to reduce numbers in temporary accommodation, but how does he see the impact of George Osborne's £7 billion of future welfare cuts impacting on Merton

families and would he join me in congratulating the Wimbledon Food Bank and other local organisations in the work they do to mitigate the impact of this nasty Tory Government?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Curtin for her supplementary question, and she's right about the damaging impact of Osborne's benefit cuts. We see this with the bedroom tax, one of the most pernicious taxes this government has introduced since coming into power. We see it as well in terms of the housing crisis. The issues in relation to welfare have led to more and more issues in relation to housing benefit. Housing benefit bills have risen as increasing costs. People are struggling day by day that's why they are relying more and more in terms of foodbanks. The Elim Church in South Wimbledon have done an absolutely fantastic job but it does show the absolute failure of the Conservative government who have been in power for 7 years. We've had 7 years of a stagnating economy, it's helped the people at the top, but has it helped the people at the bottom. It is, you might laugh, if you look at the statistics, I certainly Councillor Badenoch don't find them very funny. I think that shows to you Madam Mayor the attitude the conservatives have towards the poorest members of our society.

From Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Would the Cabinet Member please inform me how many times each of the new electric charging points around the borough have been used since they came on stream and the total revenue thus far raised?

Reply

The Council currently does not have up to date information of the number of times electric vehicles charges points have been used since they were commissioned, but will request this information from Source London (bluepoint) for circulation to members. All the charge points are privately owned and provided at zero cost to the council.

Supplementary

Thank you for your answer. I just wonder whether he'd like to tell us throw some light on when the next electric only parking bays which I gather are under development are going to be put in place and where this is happening, there is no information that is being provided thus far as I can tell by the ward councillors or residents.

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Simpson for his supplementary. As he is well aware a number have been rolled out throughout the Borough over the past few months, they have proven to be extremely popular; I think we welcome that considerably. Car clubs are important, but also as well in terms of electric car and zero emissions. We of course are looking for additional charging points, they are a growth area, if we

have any ones that we are looking at installing we will of course consult with the Councillors in their ward. I hope to see more and more of them across Merton as a whole, they are a good thing, but clearly they do take development in terms of time and to actually build up more people using them. So far, but there is a long long way to go and we have to as well recognise the huge air quality issues that we have in this city in terms of polluting vehicles.

From Cllr Kelly Braund to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

What is the likely financial impact on the council following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act?

Reply

The Council supports the Homeless Reduction Act approach to tackling homelessness which focuses on prevention and early intervention. The Council, alongside other London Boroughs, is working with London Councils to ensure that it receives the correct level of funding so as to provide the best possible way of meeting our residents needs and has undertaken a survey on the potential financial impact which includes data on current caseload, prevention activity and potential changes on how we give advice following the implementation of the HRA.

Supplementary

Can I thank the Cabinet Member for his response about the financial impact on the Council of the Homeless Reduction Act. May I ask; is there an additional level of funding to cover the substantial costs of the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act which puts new duties on local authorities but does not appear to allocate any funding for it?

Reply

We have not as of yet been informed about how much additional funding we will receive; clearly the cost will run into millions for this authority. I think the principles of the Act are very good- homelessness prevention, we do a great job we've got a fantastic housing needs team under Steve Langley, but this does need to be properly funded. In an era where we have increasingly budgets which are being reduced, we do need to have any new requirements placed on us fully funded because these are important new requirements which are being placed upon us as an Authority and we do need to have the additional resources given to us to ensure that we undertake these extremely important duties and responsibilities.

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

Can the Cabinet Member provide figures for the number of missed a) residential and b) commercial waste collections for each complete month since the new contract with Veolia came into place on 1st April and how that compares to the number of

missed residential and commercial waste collections in the months immediately prior to the handover to Veolia?

Reply

It is very important to me and my officers to provide residents with a high quality recycling and waste collection service that is reliable and provides them with the opportunity to recycle as much waste as possible. Unfortunately sometimes things do go wrong and the Council takes every report of a missed bin seriously. Our teams work alongside our waste collection contractor to investigate waste collection issues in order to resolve them quickly for our residents. Officers work hard to keep the number of missed bins as low as possible.

The way in which missed bins are recorded differs depending on: the method used to define a missed bin; the ease at which a resident can report a missed bin; and the technology used by the collection crews to record a missed bin. Since the new collection contract and improvements to our website, we have changed the way we define a missed bin; made it easier for residents to report missed bin collections on-line; and greatly enhanced the recording systems through the use of in-cab, real-time technology. All of these innovations help our crews to miss fewer bins, identify when a bin has been missed, and react more quickly to reports of missed bins. However, as a result of these changes, the data we hold in relation to missed bins is not directly comparable with data prior to the start of the new contract.

Owing to these changes, we are still verifying the numbers of missed bins recorded in each month. The data needs to be cleansed to remove reports which do not reflect a failure on behalf of the contractor and therefore were not accurate reports of a missed collection. When this process is complete, we expect to be able to release the missed bin figures since the contract began.

The commercial waste service operates in a different manner and missed bins are not recorded by the Council. This service is delivered by Veolia directly to their customers and as such, reports of missed bins do not come to the Council.

Supplementary

Thank you to the Cabinet Member for his response. How long does the Cabinet Member believe it is reasonable for residents to wait for a scheduled bulky waste collection for it to be picked up? We have had cases in Hillside and across other Wimbledon wards where residents have arranged for a collection and then it has been left there for up to three or four weeks. They have also tried contacting the Council and have given up and we've had to get involved. Does he believe this period of waiting is acceptable and if not what is he going to do about it?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Holden for his supplementary question. All service standards contained in the contract that we signed through the South London Waste Partnership with Veolia which as a member of the Scrutiny Panel you would have been privy to, so you would have been able to see what we find as acceptable within

that document there. When Veolia do not deliver on their contract, we will enforce that, there are fines built into the contract. If there is a consistent impact on the service we will pursue them.

Cllr Joan Henry to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

How is the cabinet member planning to bridge the gap in terms of providing additional affordable housing in Merton?

Reply

Affordable homes are being built across Merton including more than 100 soon-to-be-completed affordable new houses and flats across two sites in Colliers Wood (Christchurch Road and Western Road); 20 new affordable homes across two sites in Burlington Road more than 30 affordable homes across Mitcham including at Preshaw Crescent and Commonsides East. As part of Clarion Housing Group's estate regeneration, the council will be able to access more than 60 homes which will help to further reduce the number of families in temporary accommodation. Officers continue, through their negotiations with developers and investors, to maximise the amount of affordable housing delivered in each scheme.

Supplementary

I would like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response. What impact will the Mayor's new Housing Strategy have on affordable housing in Merton?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Henry for her supplementary question. What I will say in relation to affordable housing in Merton this has been moved forward since Sadiq Khan took office last year, after 8 wasted years under Boris Johnson. This was a Mayor that under his watch out of new homes approved in London in his final year as Mayor, just 13% were affordable, shows the huge crisis that did exist. We have seen here in Morden the Mayor's commitment to the Housing Zone, we've also seen when the Mayor visited his commitment to provide the level of affordable housing that is needed. We face a huge housing crisis in the City and the Mayor sees this as one of his top priorities. For far too long these issues have been getting worse, the days of inaction are over we have a mayor now that is determined to provide that level of affordable housing but also to provide the new homes that London so desperately needs. So I welcome the Mayor's housing strategy and I look forward to working with him during his time as Mayor. We think it's good for this Borough and we think it's good for the growth of this Borough and long may it continue, but let us be under no illusions, we do face a huge housing crisis in this City and I believe it should be the top priority for all of us collectively to ensure that we get building in London but we also start to address the housing crisis which has got progressively worse and worse in the past 8 years. Thank you.

From Councillor Stephen Crowe to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

How many people came to help with the latest round of litter picks in Merton?

Reply

We are grateful to the many residents who help to keep our borough clean either by using our bins, taking their litter home with them or by litter picking their local area.

Our biggest litter picking event is the annual Big Clean in March. This year, 205 took part in the weekend clean up across the Borough. We are also very proud and grateful to the 60 regular volunteers who are out during the week litter picking; I am sure there are many more who go out unbeknown to us and I am grateful for their efforts too.

During the summer, we have also had approximately 60 children taking part in litter picks through the Junior Citizen scheme and 20 kids from Pollards Hill Youth Centre took part in a litter pick in August.

We continue to encourage and support community litter picks. We can provide advice on carrying out the exercise safely as well as providing litter pickers, hi-viz jackets and collecting the waste after the event if we are informed where it is. If groups are interested in organising a litter pick, please email environmental.development@merton.gov.uk or call 0208 545 3173

Supplementary

I would like to thank the Cabinet Member for answering my initial question. Involving residents in litter picking clearly has its place and we would encourage more residents to get involved; however, does the cabinet member agree that there is now a widely held view that this Council does not see itself as having a duty to prioritise the delivery of clean streets as a basic service?

Reply

Thank you Councillor Crowe for your supplementary question. I'd like to thank him and his colleagues and colleagues on both sides of the chamber for the Big Tidy Up where we had record numbers of residents, community groups and businesses come together to help litter pick our parks, our streets and our Town Centres, but I don't agree with the premise of his question. We take our duties very seriously in this authority and we will continue to do so whether the service is provided in-house or by a contractor. I think that commitment is demonstrated by the introduction of the Neighbourhood Officers who are monitoring their patches up and down this Borough to see where the streets are falling below the standard and holding the contractor to account and ensuring that those streets are clean and the Service Level Agreements are adhered to.

From Cllr Philip Jones to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Can the cabinet member update council on the regeneration of High Path, Ravensbury and Eastfields estates?

Reply

In July 2017 the independent planning inspector chaired public hearings to examine the council's Estates Local Plan for the regeneration of Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury. The inspector will now decide on any amendments he would like to make to the council's Estates Local Plan and consult with residents on these. Meanwhile Merton's Planning Applications Committee have resolved to approve Clarion Housing Group's plans for Phase 1 developments in High Path and Ravensbury. Clarion Housing Group intend to submit more detailed applications for each estate during 2018.

Supplementary

I'm going to express my thanks to the Cabinet Member for the answer that I've received and ask him to outline the work that has begun with local residents to ensure that their needs are kept at the heart of the regeneration.

Reply

Thank you Councillor Jones for his supplementary and I'd also like to welcome him back to the Chamber. I think residents have to be at the heart and obviously we've had the pledges but it's also as well working closely with residents to ensure that they are fully engaged, consulted upon the plans and that their views are listened to. There has been a residents offer to the residents in terms of the housing estate, High Path, Eastfields and his own ward Ravensbury; its important that there is a like for like replacement that is built into the agreement, but also the look and feel of the area - the streets the buildings the outside space but also as well in terms of the design and the amenities which are needed to support the new housing and improving these areas. Over the next 6 months it will be a very busy time, we are likely we will see the estates plan coming forward to this Council shortly and then we will move on to the Planning applications from Clarion. These will be major applications for this Council and it is important that residents are engaged along the way that we do talk to residents that we do work with Clarion in terms of that engagement and obviously that residents are really assured. I think these are exciting times we are living in but we need to as well ensure that it is not just us, that the residents are paramount in terms of any regeneration schemes going forward and that we work closely with them.

From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Can the Cabinet Member tell me how many new wheeled bins the Council estimates it will need in order to introduce its new waste collection arrangements across the borough as from October 2018 and will he provide the relevant workings?

Reply

Under the current proposal for changes in waste collection, households will continue to receive weekly collections, with two collections (food and recycling) one week and three collections (food, recycling and general waste) on alternate weeks. Each household will be provided with one wheelie bin for non-recyclable household waste along with a wheelie bin for paper and card; they will continue to use their existing recycling box for plastics, glass and cans.

Based on 2 wheelie bins per property we estimate that this will equate to c127,384 wheelie bins. The numbers are based on ONS Address Base Premium data set Epoch which indicates 63,692 kerbside properties in Merton. However, there will be a small proportion of properties which are not suitable for wheeled bins. We have not yet conducted the exercise to identify these properties and therefore do not know the final number of bins required. This is a piece of work that will be carried out by the joint Project Team consisting of LB of Merton and Veolia staff.

It is recognised that the approach to waste collection cannot necessarily be a “one size fits all” approach and that different container types and sizes will need to be appropriate for the property type. However, in order for collection processes to be as lean and efficient as possible standardisation will be required and any variation from the standard process would require justifiable reasons. Acceptable criteria to vary from the “norm” should be agreed in advance of any service being rolled out.

For properties, such as terraced housing where there are no front gardens in which to present the wheelie bin the Blue and Purple recycling sack collection will be retained with the revised frequency of collection.

Maisonettes will need to be reviewed on a case by case basis as many maisonettes have side access and front gardens suitable to store the wheelie bins. Where this is not the case then different arrangements will need to be agreed.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his answer, but I understand that Veolia may be looking to reduce the number of staff manning the refuse vehicles that operate in Merton. Does the Cabinet Member from the Labour administration regret that as a result of the contract they've signed with Veolia that a number of former Merton employees are now going to lose their jobs, many who are Merton residents?

Reply

Thank you Councillor Grocott for your supplementary question. I am always disappointed when people lose their jobs, whether they are part of this Council or whether they work in other industries as well, but as an administration that is business-like we have to balance the needs of our residents against the demands that they face and I thought that the approach that we will be working with Veolia is to keep the dialogue open and to discuss all avenues and opportunities and I will happily speak with her after the meeting about our approach and what we are going to do going forward.

From Cllr Agatha Akyigyina to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Would the cabinet member update council on the ongoing work in Mitcham and the introduction of the new bus lane?

Reply

The Rediscover Mitcham project is nearing the closing stages of the construction works. We appreciate the patience and understanding of our local business and residents as the works have progressed.

Works completed so far include the restoration of Three Kings Pond, Restoration of Mitcham's iconic clock tower, creation of the new Clock Tower Gardens and Market Square, re-paving of Majestic Way, London Road and the streets surrounding the Fair Green. We have also supported business with advice, new shopfronts and our business rate discount scheme.

The new bus street is now fully operational with reports of good journey times through Mitcham town centre. This will be further improved when the new traffic signals at Western Road are commissioned in November 2017 allowing all the surrounding signalised junctions to be linked. We have completed half of the works on Holborn Way, creating segregated cycle lanes and reducing the dominance of the road.

The last part of construction, Phase 5, at the signalised junction with Western Road and Holborn Way / Raleigh Gardens and works are well currently underway. It is expected to be completed by mid-December 2017. Minor touches and tidying up will continue until full completion in Jan 2018.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response. Can I congratulate the Cabinet Member on the work done in Mitcham and can I ask when the lights on the trees will be switched on because the residents want to know.

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Akyigyina for her supplementary but also as well in terms of her work as a Mitcham Councillor as we go through the various phases of the work in Mitcham Town Centre. In terms of the lights they have had a huge impact in Mitcham since they were switched on last year. Temporarily they had to be switched off during the regeneration works but she will be delighted to know that they will be going on again shortly; we hope to have them on by the end of October. I think anyone who has been to Mitcham and seen the lights you will know the huge visual impact they have had in terms of lighting up the Town Centre. I'd also like to say as well is that we hope to have all the works completed in Mitcham by the early part of next year; it's looking a lot better, the bus lane is bringing people right into the heart of the Town Centre as well and I know the feedback from local residents has been

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positive, so I know there has been a lot of pain whilst the works have been going on but I believe there will be considerable gain on its completion and the look and feel of the Town Centre will be a credit to the Borough and I do welcome the work that has been undertaken in our Town Centre.

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