

From **Councillor Abigail Jones** to the **Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

Can the Cabinet Member please update Council on the development of the Wimbledon Plan?

Reply

The Council published the results of the Future Wimbledon workshops in September 2017 which set out the comments, maps, ideas and priorities from the local community and these have helped shape the content of the draft masterplan.

The draft masterplan is being finalised at the moment and will be available for consultation from late February 2018.

The draft plan sets out a vision for the future development of Wimbledon town centre and illustrates how the borough's existing planning policies will be applied to pre-application advice and planning applications between 2018-2020. The masterplan will act as interim planning guidance whilst Merton's new Local Plan is prepared. Any new planning policies or site allocations for Wimbledon will be progressed through the new local plan process.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Deputy Mayor. Many residents have contacted me about Crossrail 2 and the concerns they have about the impact on Wimbledon Town Centre. Can the Cabinet Member inform the Council about why further proposals have been delayed, how long have residents been kept in the dark and what impact are those delays having?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Jones in terms of its supplementary. It is regrettable that the consultation on Crossrail 2 has been delayed, originally we had hoped it would take place in the Autumn of 2016 but we are still to see it and I understand it may be another year before it takes place. It clearly has had an impact in terms of the Town Centre as we have been quite clear as an Authority, we support Crossrail 2 but not at any cost but we also recognise as well the considerable benefit Crossrail 2 will have to that Town Centre in terms of attracting businesses and creating jobs. We welcome that there has been more constructive talks of late between the Secretary of State Chris Grayling and Sadiq Khan but we understand that there will be an independent review that is taking place this year and I understand he will report back in the Autumn. We do hope Crossrail 2 does happen; Wimbledon is a great place and it would be even more enhanced by having better transport but also dealing with the huge capacity issues that do exist on current rail lines into Waterloo, but also the Northern Line in South Wimbledon and the District Line.

From **Councillor Janice Howard** to the **Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking:**

Can the council confirm that all the Christmas trees were collected by their own deadline of 21st January?

Reply

The Christmas tree collections were completed on schedule with all roads visited by the collection crews over a two week period from 8th January. Residents were advised to present their Christmas tree for collection no later than the 8th January. In total over 95tonnes of Christmas trees were collected over the two week period. Residents are able to report any missed collections or newly presented trees via our contact centre who will arrange for this information to be allocated to the contractor for collection.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Deputy Mayor. I thank the Cabinet Member for his answer., however there are Christmas trees in Wimbledon Park and across Wimbledon that still haven't been collected despite being put out before the allocated time, blocking pavements for pushchairs, elderly and disabled residents. Why hasn't the Cabinet Member ensured that tree collections are completed on time really, and is this just another example of the bad management of the Veolia contract by this Labour administration and what compensation will you be seeking from the Contractor as a result?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Howard for her supplementary question. Within the supplementary Councillor Howard said that these trees were distributed onto the pavements, onto the roads; that's not the correct presentation – they needed to be inside the front garden not on the pavements because that would have blocked access. As an authority we've collected 95 tonnes of Christmas trees; 95 tonnes is the equivalent to the same weight of a Blue Whale. That's a lot of Christmas trees. And yes, whilst I admit there are some Christmas trees that are discarded irresponsibly on grass verges that's not how they should have been presented they should have been presented in the front garden from the 8th January through to the the period and where they haven't been collected from the front garden, Veolia have been told about this and they are endeavouring to collect the Christmas trees on the list and I would be happy to have that email forwarded to me and we can talk about this outside of the Council meeting because if it is presented correctly and the service isn't up to what it should be I want to know and I want to assist your residents in getting their tree collected.

From **Councillor Laxmi Attawar** to the **Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

What work has been undertaken by the council in encouraging modular housing developments?

Reply

Modular housing is one of the ways the government is encouraging the diversification of the housing market, to increase the number of new homes. Merton has led the way with the innovative partnership with YMCA to create Y-Cube in Mitcham, providing 36 affordable, energy efficient homes, which opened in 2015. We

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are also in discussions with modular housing companies and registered providers about looking at options for its provision modular homes on suitable sites.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his answer and given the level of concern that we have raised about families living in temporary accommodation especially at Connect House in Mitcham, how will modular housing help to address housing needs in the Borough?

Reply

I'd like to thank to thank Councillor Attawar for his supplementary, Modular Housing would help address housing need because it is housing that can be put up quickly and rapidly. We have a huge crisis here in this City we've got 54,000 people living in Temporary Accomodation; that's 54,000 too many, we've got 200 households in Merton and even though that's a small proportion of that total, we want to have more places available so that people can actually live in this Borough and stay in this Borough. Because of rising demand and because of lack of housing many people unfortunately can't live in Merton so we want to provide more housing and Modular Housing is a way of utilising some small sites in the Borough to provide the much needed houses that people in this Borough so desperately need. Thank you.

From Councillor David Dean to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking:

Can the Cabinet Member tell me what the council is doing to tackle the outbreak of rats around Wimbledon town centre?

Reply

Merton Council have, since December 2017 arranged for the installation of humane rat traps and burrow baiting in the shrubbery around Wimbledon Town Centre; particularly at Gladstone Road which has attracted most complaints. We have also worked with Love Wimbledon BID who have undertaken a lot of engagement with local business to ensure that food waste is properly sealed and disposed of to minimise the food-source available to rodents.

Supplementary

Thank you Deputy Madam Mayor, thank you very much for allowing me to speak this time. May I say I am honoured because this is the first time ever that my question has been answered. That doesn't mean I don't have a supplementary Madam Mayor, but it is a sensible response which means that I can speak sensibly back which is where we need to be. The question is, one of the reasons that we do have rats within Wimbledon Town Centre is food waste and most of the food waste comes from the Night Time Economy. I'm rarely out that time of night but when I am I am surprised how much is dropped and that is when the rats take hold. A number of bins have been taken out of Gladstone Road and Hartfield Road; my question is; will you consider putting them back for the residents? So there you are a sensible answer to my question and a sensible question back to the Cabinet Member.

Reply

Thank you to Councillor Dean for his supplementary; happy to consider that if he sends me an email with locations, I'll take that to officers.

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

Following recent publication of the London Plan which doubled our housing target, how will the council set about meeting this revised figure?

Reply

The Council will be responding to the Mayor of London's London Plan consultation to ensure that the final adopted London Plan 2019 housing target for Merton is suitably ambitious but deliverable. Merton's current housing target is 410 homes per year and we have met this every year for the last 10 years. The new draft housing target is 1,328 homes per year. The council will explore sites and planning policies to deliver new homes as part of Merton's new Local Plan 2020.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Deputy Mayor, I'm grateful to the Cabinet Member for his positive response to my question. I'd like to ask him, what thoughts he has on how we can ensure that we meet the increased number of houses and make the best utilisation of the sites we have in the Borough whilst at the same time ensuring that genuinely affordable housing is provided?

Reply

Can I take this opportunity of thanking Councillor Jones for his supplementary and on a personal note pay tribute to him, as this may be the last time he asks a question at an ordinary Council meeting, given his 47 years since he was first elected having been a member of every Labour administration that has been successfully elected here in Merton. In terms of his supplementary it is ambitious target to provide 410 homes but through the call for sites which we have had recently that we have had recently, developers, land owners, public bodies have actually bought sites forward and I think we do need to provide the housing in this Borough and we do need to provide more of it given the rise in demand but when we do provide housing we have to ensure that there is genuinely affordable housing provided, sometimes when we say affordable it may be outside the reach of ordinary people and I do have concerns about some of the shared ownership schemes, so it is important that that housing is accessible to people of all incomes but also as well in terms of the tenures as well both social rent, London living rent and also homes for shared ownership. So it is ambitious but it is important that this Council puts housing as one of its top priorities because it is something many residents in this Borough are crying out for more to be provided. Thank you.

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

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What is the council doing to ensure the bins are collected on time?

Reply

Whilst a small number of missed collections will inevitably occur with any waste collection service owing to the volume of collections and the many circumstances that can arise across the borough, our officers work hard to keep the number of missed bins as low as possible.

Our teams work alongside our waste collection contractor to investigate waste collection issues in order to resolve them quickly for our residents. Our team, together with Veolia, liaise with managing agents and with residents to resolve issues. They do this by phone, email and face to face at site visits. The aim is to identify any underlying reasons why collections have been disrupted, and to resolve them. The data on missed collections continues to show an improvement thanks to this work. We also use the data to identify properties that have reported repeat missed collections so we can resolve them before they occur again.

Where missed collections have reoccurred at individual properties, Veolia can add that property to the assured collection service. This requires the crew to manually log the collection as completed into the integrated 'In Cab' devices. Where an 'Assured Collection' cannot be made the crew are required to document why the collection was not undertaken. This assists in monitoring the performance of the crews and ensuring problems do not continue.

Where the contractor exceeds the contractual threshold of missed collections, financial deductions are applied to the monthly invoices. This incentivises them to resolve issues and avoid missed collections.

To avoid problems with collections, we request residents place their bins out for collection by 6am on collection day. They can report missed collections and check their scheduled collection day on the Merton website:

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/collection-days-and-times>

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Deputy Mayor. So thank you to the Cabinet Member for his answer; I wanted to ask him that over Christmas and New Year, at a time when many residents expect the service to be at its peak and operating well, why were wheeled bins from blocks of flats in particular from right across Merton missed repeatedly over a period of about four weeks? Was it something to do with the fact that Veolia weren't putting in staff over this period and was the Cabinet Member aware of this and what will he do to make sure this is not a problem this year at Christmas?

Reply

Thank you Councillor Holden for your supplementary question. There were a few changes in the way that Veolia operated communal waste collection, we are working with them to ensure that going forward this is minimised and doesn't happen again.

From **Councillor Stan Anderson** to the **Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

How is the council working with key partners including TfL on the regeneration of Morden, and what are the next steps in the process?

Reply

The council is has been having positive discussions with major land owners within Morden town centre, which includes TfL, and are working very closely with all the different specialist teams within TfL.

Consultants have provided advice on the delivery of the regeneration of Morden town centre, which included positive responses from potential development partners. Their findings were presented to local ward councillors and a report was presented to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel and to Cabinet on 15 January 2018.

The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel recognised the scale, impact and opportunities of the planned Morden Regeneration Project and recommended to Cabinet that Merton Council should maintain sufficient control of the project. Cabinet approved the report's recommendations and authorised officers to proceed with negotiations with TfL, to formulate an appropriate joint venture structure.

The council and TfL have completed a memorandum of understanding and project managers have been appointed to assist the council and TfL with the next steps; to prepare for the joint procurement of a development partner in September/October 2018.

After the appointment of the development partner, we will work up detailed plans in collaboration with residents, businesses, ward councillors and the development partners.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor I do have a supplementary. I thank the Cabinet Member for his written response. I welcome the discussion that has taken place between Merton and Transport for London. How can regeneration assist in improving public realm in Morden Town Centre and making it more accessible to pedestrian and public transport users?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Anderson for his supplementary. I think he's actually quite right in terms of making Morden a more accessible Town Centre; when you arrive in Morden you are greeted by a wall of buses and it's not very inviting to actually stay here. We also look at the huge traffic gyratory system we have around the Civic Centre, again it's not particularly pedestrian or cycling friendly. So it is important that we obviously work closely with the Mayor because the Morden regeneration will be a huge transformation of that Town Centre but it also involves improving accessibility

to public transport here as well but also ensuring as well that the public rail improvements are actually made that makes it a more inviting destination but also as well that people are attracted to stay here rather than getting the first bus out of Morden.

From Councillor Abdul Latif to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking:

Has the council performed a public health/environmental health impact assessment of its proposed new waste collection service?

Reply

There is no statutory requirement for a public health / environmental impact assessment. The collection service is similar to those used by many authorities across London and the country who use a combination of wheeled bins, alternate weekly collections with a weekly food waste service. The service is designed to be cleaner and safer than the current black bag service, which litters Merton's streets and attracts vermin, which tear open the bags. The service will also bring environmental benefits such as fewer vehicle movements, and the associated air quality benefits, and higher recycling rates.

An equalities impact assessment has been completed which has highlighted the need to undertake a review of existing waste policies to ensure that they support residents and address any concerns with the implementation of a wheeled bin collection service.

Merton Council will continue to offer an assisted collection service for those residents who are not physically or mentally able to present their bins for collections. This will ensure that elderly or disabled residents that meet the agreed criteria will not be expected to manoeuvre the bin ready for collection.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Deputy Mayor. I also thank the Cabinet Member for his response. In recent months, I have had reports of maggots entering into residential properties from domestic refuse. They are understandably angry and expressed their concerns about public health. In view of the proposal for fortnightly collection of domestic waste and repeatedly missed collection of waste and the problem of nappies already voiced earlier by Mr John Tippett-Cooper during Public Questions, can the Cabinet Member advise how he will prevent such infestation of maggots in residential properties?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Latif for his supplementary question. The simple answer is in two words; wheeled bins. They containerise waste so you don't have maggots crawling into peoples' properties out of the bins.

From **Councillor Geraldine Stanford** to the **Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

Following the recent completion of the Rediscover Mitcham project, will the Cabinet Member please give details of the improvements and benefits which have resulted from the works?

Reply

Merton Council and TFL have invested a significant amount of resources in Mitcham, from resident and business engagement, planning, funding and construction of the Rediscover Mitcham project.

The intention is to increase footfall in the centre, bringing 9 bus routes back through London Road, stopping outside the shops and cafes. We have increased and improved the open space, creating a square for a market and events and a bigger green space with feature lighting and seating areas. The café, Tag Aleez, has been improved with rebranding, new awnings and internal and external repairs and is now a vibrant location for residents to visit and linger. There have been other business premises improvements made to many of the shops which has included internal alterations and improvements and new fronts and signage to enhance the High street.

The project also involved restoration of Mitcham's glorious clocktower, a new suite of festive lighting, a dedicated location for Mitcham's Christmas trees, a programme of public art works and restoration of Three Kings Pond. The Fair Green has been re-shaped closer to its original layout and the perimeter lanes have been re-established allowing for short-term parking in the centre.

The overall intention is to make Mitcham a place where residents want to visit and shop and for businesses to want to locate as part of our overall inward investment plans.

The removal of the pedestrian zone with the introduction of the perimeter street with a limited time to park, has brought more direct access and convenience for shoppers, especially those with accessibility difficulties. This has also contributed in the business trade. All the surrounding signalised junctions have been modified with the introduction of shorter crossing points for pedestrians giving quicker and more direct routes. Cyclist facilities have been added to provide safer protection and desirable, segregated journey routes for cyclists. Vehicle traffic flows and queues have been reduced on most approaches and movements through the town centre by complete redesign of these junctions and their signals. Bus journey times are more reliable with the dedicated bus route.

The project completed in January 2018. It's too early to fully understand the impact of the project but anecdotal feedback to far is that people and businesses are happy with the quality of the public realm and business in London Road has picked up.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Deputy Mayor and thank you to the Cabinet Member for his response. Could I take this opportunity of thanking officers for the successful

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completion of the rediscover Mitcham project, ahead of schedule, might I add and particularly James Geeson who has led the project who I have harassed on a daily basis to make sure that everything has gone to plan, so special thanks to him. Can the Cabinet Member tell me how the improvements in the Town Centre will attract more business to the Town Centre?

Reply

Thank you and can I also take this opportunity of thanking Councillor Stanford and all of her Mitcham colleagues for their patience whilst the works have been ongoing in Mitcham. Obviously we are glad they are now completed. But going forward I think it is clear that we do need to attract more businesses and I think the public realm improvements are starting to have some impact, although we recognise we are in early stages because we want that to be key to bringing more investment, more jobs to the Town Centre, but also as well attracting businesses and having that mix, both retail and entertainment and cultural as well in Mitcham. Mitcham has a lot going for it, I've been proud to be a Mitcham Councillor for the last 16 years but we know that these develop one step further and I have no doubt that this regeneration will act as a catalyst to make those further improvements to ensure that Mitcham does grow and that Mitcham does prosper going forward. There's a lot been done but there's also a lot more to do and as Cabinet Member who will be pushing for more businesses to invest in the Town Centre. Thank you.

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