

Mitcham Community Forum 15 October 2013 Chair's Report

The meeting was held at Vestry Hall, and chaired by Councillor Ian Munn. 25 residents attended, as well as eight other Councillors, and officers of the council and its partners. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Healthwatch Merton

Adele Williams, Information and Outreach Worker for Healthwatch Merton outlined the role of the new service and how residents could get involved. Healthwatch Merton is the new independent consumer champion for health and social care services. Healthwatch is made up of a national body – Healthwatch England, and local bodies for each council area. Healthwatch Merton's role is to listen to the voices of health and social care users, gather evidence and use these to influence commissioners and decision makers.

Healthwatch will be undertaking a series of outreach activities to raise awareness and get residents involved in setting priorities. There would also be a number of roles for volunteers to get involved with.

Healthwatch will not be providing health services or dealing with complaints. There is a new complaints advocacy service, run by VoiceAbility, which can help those making a complaint about an NHS service. Please see <http://nhscomplaintsadvocacy.org/> or call 0300330 5454.

For more information about Healthwatch Merton, or to sign up for their newsletter, please see <http://www.healthwatchmerton.co.uk/> or call 020 8685 2282.

Cabinet Update

Councillor Martin Whelton, Cabinet Member for Education, provided an update on the Council's financial situation, before taking questions from residents. The presentation can be found on the Council's website:

<http://www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communityforums/mitchamcommunityforum.htm>

In response to questions from residents Councillor Whelton said that the challenge of providing more school places has been caused by an increase in the birth rate across south London, not just people moving into the borough. There are no free schools currently in the borough but one is looking for a site in the Motspur Park and Raynes Park area. Closing the Rowan school site made sense at the time with falling school roles and the capital receipts had been used to invest in other sites. Councillor Whelton confirmed that schools had not been restricted in their contributions to the Rediscover Mitcham consultation. In response to a question about traffic enforcement cameras

Councillor Whelton said that any income derived from fines was ring fenced and could only be used on transport spending.

Rediscover Mitcham / OneMitcham update

Ashley Heller from the Future Merton team, Merton Council, presented an update on the proposals for improving Mitcham Town Centre as part of the 'Rediscover Mitcham' project. Ross Mitchell also updated residents on the OneMitcham programme. The presentation can be found at:

<http://www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communityforums/mitchamcommunityforum.htm>

Ashley said that although the scheme had approval it was still subject to a number of other decision processes. This included a Scrutiny 'call-in' on 6 November, and then planning and traffic management approvals. Subject to passing these processes phase 1 of the works would start in January. Traffic modelling for phase 2 of the project would continue into the New Year.

Ross said that OneMitcham would be supporting local businesses now, during the disruption caused by the works and to make the most of the opportunities created by the regeneration work. A stand offering business support was in Mitcham every Tuesday and Thursday. Halloween events including a walking restaurant and ghost tour have been planned and Christmas events will also take place.

In response to questions Ross said that 'goose feet' bench had been repaired today and that street drinking needed to be looked at across the town centre and this should not prevent benches being put in for all to use. As part of the regeneration plans CCTV positioning had been reviewed to improve the view in key areas.

In response to a question about residents parking Ashley said that the council would not be reviewing cross over policies and that all controlled parking was based on demand from local residents. They would be working with parking colleagues to promote use of the multi-storey car park.

In response to questions about the market canopy Ashley said that the need for a fixed canopy with services had been identified in discussions with traders. An amended version of the plans, which were 0.5m shorter in height and 3m shorter in length, had been submitted for planning permission. Comments on these plans needed to be received by 1 November.

Ashley responded to questions about the bus street by saying that this would require detailed traffic modelling, agreement from Transport for London and Traffic Management Orders before it could go ahead. In the meantime a temporary solution may be needed for the surface. If it does go ahead there will be a raised table bringing the road to the same level as the pavement at some points but approximately 50mm curbs along the rest of the road.

Attendees agreed with comments that OneMitcham offered an opportunity to create community ownership and use local talents to become sustainable once existing funding has finished.

Soapbox

In response to questions previously received from local councillors Jonathan Lewis, Team Leader in Development Control, outlined **recent changes to the planning regime**. Since May 2013 rules on extensions had been relaxed. The size possible had been doubled, and planning permission replaced with a 'pre-approval' system. The new system means that extensions will only be reviewed by planning officers if objections are received from neighbours. It is essential that neighbours who are unhappy with proposals make their objections known. The deadline for the planning process has also been reduced from 8 weeks to 6 weeks with assumed approval in the cases where a deadline is missed. These changes only affect extensions to the rear of properties, garden developments remain unchanged.

Since May, 130 applications for larger extensions have been received, 25 in the Mitcham area. This is one of the highest levels in England along with Richmond.

In addition to the changes to extensions it is now possible to convert office space to residential use without planning approval by using the pre-approval system. Several offices are being considered including Justin Plaza in Mitcham. More information on the changes to planning laws can be found at: <http://www.merton.gov.uk/environment/planning/prior-approval.htm>

A resident raised the issue of the **Cricketers Pub**:

The latest information is that the owners are doing their own feasibility assessment on the proposal and therefore the planning application is delayed until they confirm they wish to proceed with it. An Amenity Land Notice (s215) was issued on 27th August 2013 to require the owners to remove all advertisement banners, fly posting and graffiti from the land, cut back overgrown bushes and vegetation and remove weeds from the front and rear of the building and land, and tidy up the building and land. The notice takes effect in 28 days unless there is an appeal to the Magistrate Court. The Notice took effect on 27th September 2013 as there was no appeal and the owners have 36 days (up to 2/11/13) to comply from this date. This is being pursued as the case officer has not noted any improvement to the site since the Notice came into effect. However, no further action can be taken until the compliance period has expired. It has also been brought to our attention that cars are now being sold from the premises. This is to be investigated as the new activity would constitute a change of use that will require planning permission.

Enforcement of the **Controlled Drinking Zone** was raised by a resident:

Inspector Buchan had provided a response that since the CDZ was introduced across the Borough on 1st July 2013, Mitcham Sector alone has

seized in excess of 300 containers of alcohol. The police are well aware that some are pouring alcohol into more discrete containers in an attempt to fool us. We do and will continue to seize alcohol or anything we believe to be alcohol on any and every occasion. Insp Buchan went for a walk with Siobhain McDonagh MP one evening about 4 weeks ago but didn't find anybody drinking. Inspector Buchan said that if they are present when someone is drinking or if member of the public contacts them then they will act on it.

A question was also raised about **litter in Mitcham Town Centre:**

The Town centre is scheduled to be cleaned daily throughout the week Monday to Sunday between 06.00 and 22.00 in addition to this there is a night time response team that attends at times between the hours of 20.00 and 04.00. The dual litter/recycling bins are emptied at least three times a day.

A resident suggested re-introducing **Pitch and Putt facilities at Canons:**

The council is constantly reviewing the facilities available in our parks but there are not any plans for new golf facilities at the moment.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 25 March 2014, 7.15pm, at Vestry Hall.