

1. From: Tom Killick

To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

Will the Council provide drinking water fountains in public places, thereby reducing waste and litter from single-use disposable plastics?

Reply

The Council provides and maintains a water tap with drinking water for public use on the recently refurbished Clock tower in Mitcham Fair Green. We will continue to explore opportunities to provide drinking water fountains or facilities in town centres and around transport stations working with partner agencies and the Mayor of London.

2. From: Laura Collins

To the Cabinet Member for Finance

Will the council ban single use plastics in its premises as Parliament has done?

Reply

Merton has been taking action to reduce plastic waste from the Civic Centre over recent years. For example Chilled water dispensers have been installed on every floor to discourage the use of single use plastic bottles, and recycling bins for plastics and other materials have also been provided throughout the building. Together with our onsite caterer, we are also assessing the feasibility of a scheme to promote the use of reusable coffee cups and decrease the sale of single use plastics.

3. From: Sonja Timpson

To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

When can the people of Merton expect to see Morley Park opening to the public, in accordance with the conditions of the planning consent awarded to the developers of the Atkinson Morley land?

Reply

There are negotiations ongoing around the handover of the land to the Council. It is important that the condition of the land is acceptable to the Council before that handover. Local residents have also raised a number of issues regarding the condition of the land which are currently being investigated. A key issue for the Council is the control and eradication of Japanese Knotweed which is delaying a conclusion of the matter.

**4. From: John Boyd
To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

Will the Council now ban the use of single-use plastics on its premises, in the same way as Parliament has done?

Reply

Merton has been taking action to reduce plastic waste from the Civic Centre over recent years. For example Chilled water dispensers have been installed on every floor to discourage the use of single use plastic bottles, and recycling bins for plastics and other materials have also been provided throughout the building. Together with our onsite caterer, we are also assessing the feasibility of a scheme to promote the use of reusable coffee cups and decrease the sale of single use plastics.

**5. From: Leonardo Monzon
To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

Why is there always broken glass on the pavement and road outside my house despite countless reports to Merton Council and formal complaints and assurances? Why do we have to ask the council to empty bins for them not to be left for weeks? When is Veolia contract being annulled?

Reply

Our contractor Veolia is responsible for ensuring that Town Centres and residential roads are swept to the required standard. The contractual standards for street cleaning reflect best practice from Defra's Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse. The contract is based on an output specification requiring the contractor maintain consistent standards across the entire borough. This is a move away from a frequency based approach where standards can fall between sweeps without any obligation on the contractor to resolve the issue.

To achieve this consistent standard of cleansing, Veolia use a number of different methods of cleaning the streets and alter the frequency depending on the footfall and littering of the area concerned. Street operatives conduct manual litter picking and broom sweeping alongside mechanical and electrical sweepers which provide an efficient and effective way to lift litter and detritus from Merton's streets.

Our contractor is responsible for the emptying of all litter bins and is required to empty these at a frequency that ensures that they are not overflowing.

There are no plans to annul this contract. In order to hold the contractor to account we have created a new Neighbourhood Client Team who undertake site inspections and work closely with the contractor's Area Managers to ensure that service standards are maintained and any rectifications are addressed in line with our

contractual agreements. They also undertake visits and walk-about with local ward Members who have concerns about littering in their area in order to address the issues in a proactive manner.

I would urge residents to report any streets, that they believe fall below the required standard, using the councils website.

**6. From: David Anderson
To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

Please can you confirm the number of street litter bins that have been removed from the borough in the last 12 months and what the rationale is for such removal?

Reply

The Council has not arranged for the removal of any litter bins from our streets over the last 12 months. In February of this year we installed an additional 4 litter bins on Streatham road bringing the total number of bins across the borough to 904. Any lost or stolen bin can be reported and our contractor will arrange for them to be replaced.

**7. From: Nicola de Brett
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

Please can a cycle advanced stop box be installed outside South Wimbledon station going south?

Reply

Where possible advance stop lines are provided at signalised junctions. Transport for London carried out a review of junctions a few years ago and at that time, did not recommend an advance stop line on all arms of South Wimbledon junction. However, Merton has secured a project slot with TfL to model the signals and South Wimbledon and the opportunity will be taken to consider the introduction of the advance stop lines at all the arms in the near future.

**8. From: Andrew Biden
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

Could the Council provide any update as to the status of the Darul Amaan Mosque on Merton High Street, considering it has been in its unsightly state for a number of years now?

Reply

Planning permission was granted on 26-4-2011 for the erection of a new part two, part three storey mosque, plus basement, dome and minaret involving demolition of existing single storey mosque. It is our understanding that this permission has been implemented as works started onsite, but did then not progress much further. In the interim, permission was granted for a temporary mosque at the

site and renewed again in March 2017. At this time, we do not have any direct information about when the Mosque may be built. Whilst the site would benefit visually from development, it is currently surrounded by a hoarding which is reasonable and appropriate for a redevelopment site.

**9. From: Nicola Thompson
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

In the local Labour Party election materials it stated that 20mph zones would be introduced in the borough. Please confirm where and when this will take place, and will there be a chance for resident input/requests for specific roads/areas?

Reply

The Council takes the safety of all road users very seriously and supports various initiatives such as a lower speed of 20mph. We have implemented 20mph speed limits and zones throughout the borough and have a rolling programme of introducing localised 20mph speed limits with associated physical improvements outside all its schools.

We have expanded neighbouring boroughs 20mph zones into Merton along appropriate roads (e.g. Wandsworth, Lambeth which are 20mph boroughs]. Although the Council does have an aspiration to introduce a 20mph speed limit throughout the borough, due to limited funding, such a programme will be rolled out over a number of years.

Currently we are within the statutory consultation period for introducing 20mph speed limit in Wimbledon Village.

**10. From: Joyce Pountain
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

Will the council provide a rail for pushing cycles, push-chairs and shopping trolleys over footway railway bridges? E.g. the bridge (nearest Wimbledon Town Centre) linking Alternate Grove with the path leading to Dundonald Road. This is a simple, inexpensive solution in line with the council's active travel and health policies.

Reply

There are plans to implement wheel channels in the borough although this is subject to Network Rail agreement as the identified bridges are owned and managed by Network Rail. Obtaining approval has proved somewhat challenging thus far. The Council will however continue to pursue this matter hopefully to a beneficial conclusion.

**11. From: Tony Burton
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

Will Merton Council consult on detailed plans for a Quietway along the River Wandle from Merton Abbey Mills through Bunce's Meadow, Morden Hall Park and Ravensbury Park prior to an in principle decision being made as to its merits and confirm whether funding has yet been secured?

Reply

Transport for London are currently looking in the feasibility of this route as a whole so at the moment we do not have authorisation to proceed with the Quietway until approval is granted. Any proposal would be subject to the normal stakeholder consultation. Funding will only be provided after TfL approve the route and the proposal.

**12. From: Philippa Zielfa Maslin
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

#changingplaces facilities were included in the original architect's plan for Morden Leisure Centre and now, shockingly, we are being told that there will not be any. Will Merton Council acknowledge the error of its ways and honour the original plan to ensure equality of access and opportunity?

Reply

I am pleased to be able to advise that a 'Changing Places' facility will be included within the new centre along with 6 Accessible WC's; 3 Accessible WC and shower rooms and 1 further accessible shower room within the building. There will be a lift between the two floors; IFI accredited equipment in the gym and a pool platform to assist disabled users into our two pools.

There will also be 10 disabled bays outside the front entrance to the building.

The council is proud to be building a new family friendly leisure centre which is accessible for all.

**13. From: Sandra Vogel
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

Has Merton Council had any pre-application discussions regarding future development at the White Hart in Cricket Green and will publish any advice that is provided immediately? If pre application discussion is had in the future on this property, will it publish that discussion?

Reply

The following planning history is relevant to the question. There has been a pre-application meeting, however, a formal response has not been produced to date. In

any event, pre-application meetings and advice are offered in confidence, often due to the commercial sensitivity of the sites.

- 17/P1515 - PRE APPLICATION ADVICE FOR THE DEMOLITION OF BUILDING REAR OF WHITE HART INN AND THE ERECTION OF A FOUR STOREY RESIDENTIAL BLOCK TO PROVIDE 22 X FLATS WITH ASSOCIATED PARKING. (Site known as 350 London Road Mitcham). No report issued to date
- 18/P2216 - PART CHANGE OF USE OF EXISTING BUILDING, MINOR DEMOLITION OF REAR EXTENSION, ERECTION OF A NEW 3-4 STOREY BUILDING TO PROVIDE A TOTAL OF 20 X DWELLINGS (CLASS C3) AND RETENTION OF GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL UNIT (CLASS C4) AT THE WHITE HART, 350 LONDON ROAD, TOGETHER WITH LANDSCAPING, PARKING, SERVICING AND OTHER ASSOCIATED WORKS. Invalid planning application – correct fee and drainage strategy requested.
- 18/P2217 - LISTED BUILDING CONSENT FOR THE PART CHANGE OF USE OF EXISTING BUILDING, MINOR DEMOLITION OF REAR EXTENSION, ERECTION OF A NEW 3-4 STOREY BUILDING TO PROVIDE A TOTAL OF 20 X DWELLINGS (CLASS C3) AND RETENTION OF GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL UNIT (CLASS C4) AT THE WHITE HART, 350 LONDON ROAD, TOGETHER WITH LANDSCAPING, PARKING, SERVICING AND OTHER ASSOCIATED WORKS. Invalid application – drainage strategy requested.

**14.From: Somayeh Aghnianejad
To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

Who from Merton will be attending the London Business 1000 (year 2) results presentation?

Reply

Sara Williams, Economy Manager in Future Merton, Environment & Regeneration will be attending. It is important that we regularly refresh our understanding of the views of business in London.

**15.From: Jennifer Cadwallader
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

I would like to ask how and why Merton council think it's fair to continually issue parking tickets on roads where the marking are barely visible and under-kept. How can they keep taking residents money and think these actions are acceptable?

Reply

The Council regularly inspects, and has a rolling programme of maintenance works, that our contractors use to refresh Bay and yellow line restrictions where a need exists. This programme is informed by our own staff who identify works that need to be refreshed and following feedback from members of the public. It is not the council's policy to enforce areas where the markings are not visible, and monies raised from parking charges, are reinvested back into the parking infrastructure throughout the Borough.

**16. From: Emily Robertson
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

What proportion of fire doors in Merton's social housing stock have been tested to ensure they fulfil the half hour fire resistance criteria?

Reply

As the Council is a non stock owning housing authority, it is not a Landlord of the social housing stock in Merton. Accordingly this is not information we hold and registered providers (housing associations) would need to be contacted individually to obtain this information.

**17. From: Richard Hackforth-Jones
To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

What is Merton doing to make its website easier to use for residents?

Reply

The Council has been undertaking a significant change in the technology used to provide its website, online forms, and back-office processes, as well as a major update of our website content. The website is an ever evolving piece of work and we are continuously striving to improve our offering. As we come to the end of the implementation stage of this work we will be using data to evaluate which parts of the website are working well, and which parts are in most in need of improvement. We welcome feedback from website users, and will continue to use this to give us a qualitative view of performance and to help us make further improvements.

**18. From: Klaartje Dresselaers
To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

What provision is Merton putting in place to support residents who are citizens of EU member states during Brexit?

Reply

On 21 June 2018 the Home Office released the latest details around the EU settlement scheme that will come into effect later this year. The council recently attended an event organised by London Councils for local authorities to be aware of the settlement scheme and the implications for EU nationals residing in London boroughs.

The council is currently undertaking research and gathering best practice in order to develop the offer of support to be made available to local EU nationals. We acknowledge that there is a role for local authorities in supporting the most vulnerable EU residents within their communities, such as adults and children in care, the elderly and those with limited English language skills or digital access.

In the interim, the council continues to fund a comprehensive information and advice service in the borough through Citizens Advice, Law Centres and Merton Centre for Independent Living where residents can seek advice.

19. From: Barry Smith To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness

What is Merton currently doing and planning to do in the future to reduce the incidence of fly tipping?

Reply

We are very proactive in identifying fly tippers by:

- Investigating fly tips for evidence
- Where evidence is found we will issue either a fixed penalty of £400 or prepare a case for prosecution
- All fly tips on council owed land/property are reported to our contractor for removal
- we carry out engagement activities , notifying residents of their day of collections as often it's the waste black bags that can be a real issue.
- We advertise our Fly Tipping campaign on J C Deaux boards in the borough, along with articles on fly tipping in "My Merton"
- Officers attend joint patrols with our contractor Veolia identify hot spots and taking action when necessary
- We rely on good intelligence information on anyone seen fly tipping.
- We collate a list of vehicles that have been known to be involved in fly tipping.
- We carry out joint action on ANPR (Automated Number Plate Recognition) stops with the police to stop vehicles who are carrying waste. This is to identify the driver and to check for a waste carrier licence, failing to provide all relevant information we do issue a fixed penalty notice and can take further action which can result in obtaining a warrant for the vehicle to seize, which may be destroyed.

- We recently carried out a covert camera operation; 25 people were identified as fly tipping ,22 cases have since been prepared for prosecution and are awaiting hearing dates,
- 3 cases were issued with a fixed penalty fine of £400
- It is Council Policy to name and shame people once they have been prosecuted
- Last year we also issued over 7000 Fixed penalty notices for littering , a greater number than all but 2 other local authorities

**20.From: Tamara Kohler
To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health**

What provision does Merton have for mental health support for its staff?

Reply

Merton Council takes its responsibility towards the health and wellbeing of employees seriously, and has a number of policies in place to support both the physical and mental health and wellbeing of those who work at the council.

Specifically regarding mental health and wellbeing, policies include:

- There are a number of wellbeing initiatives that staff are able to participate in
- The Council has commissioned an independent provider which delivers a confidential service to our staff including counselling, advice relating to emotional well-being, managing stress, anxiety and depression
- Access to discounted gym membership
- Professional advice is sought from Occupational Health
- Events to raise awareness about mental health
- Dementia awareness provided to Council staff as dementia can affect mental health
- The Council is seeking to be a 'Disability Confident Employer'
- The council will soon be offering training to all managers in Mental Health First Aid

**21.From: Emma Maddison
To the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

Given the number of children able to ride bicycles independently from a young age having had balance bikes, what steps is Merton taking to provide road safety awareness training for Key Stage 1 aged children?

Reply

Merton provides an ongoing programme of road safety projects and training for Key Stage 1 children. We offer Scooter Training, road safety presentations on how to stay safe on the road, Kerbcraft, a practical child pedestrian training programme and promote Transport for London's Children's Traffic Club. In 2016-2017 we worked

with 27 schools, Brownie and Beaver groups on road safety programmes and training, and trained more than 1,700 school-aged children across Key Stages 1 and 2. We also do transitional work with children in their last year of primary school (year 6) to help them prepare for walking and cycling safely on their own before secondary school.

22. From: Geoff Cooper
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport

What proportion of fire doors in Merton's social housing stock have been tested to ensure they fulfil the half hour fire resistance criteria?

Reply

As the Council is a non stock owning housing authority, it is not a Landlord of the social housing stock in Merton. Accordingly this is not information we hold and registered providers (housing associations) would need to be contacted individually to obtain this information.

23. From: Sam Pickford
To the Cabinet Member for Finance

The Merton local government pension scheme represents a significant cost to Merton taxpayers. What is the explanation for why no updates been made available to taxpayers on the status of the scheme since 2015?

Reply

Local government pensions are an essential part of the package we are required to and happy to offer hard-working staff delivering local services for local people. All local councils across the country are in the same position.

Merton produces a wide range of information on our Pension Fund for the public to access. This information can be found on LBM's internet site. To illustrate:

The Pensions Fund Annual Report can be located on the 'Pensions Fund' section of the web site. This contains Annual reports from 2012/13 to 2016/17.

The Pensions Fund Annual Accounts can be found on the 'Finance' section of the web site (under 'Statement of Accounts') as part of LBM's annual published accounts. Here we have placed our annual accounts dating back to 2010/11 and the draft accounts for 2017/18.

Additionally, information on the administration of the Pensions fund (administered by Wandsworth Council) can be found by following the link on our 'Pensions Fund' page on LBM's web site.

**24. From: John Braithwaite
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

How many empty homes are there in the borough, how has this number changed over each of the last five years and what is the council doing to reduce this number?

Reply

There are many reasons why a property becomes empty and this includes it being uninhabitable, unoccupied, repossessions and, second homes. The Council does not have a dedicated resource to deal with those dwellings which are considered to be long terms empty homes with a view to bringing them back into use. However the council does and will respond on a reactive basis to complaints of empty homes with a view to helping owners return their homes into use.

Officers looked into a similar matter in January 2018 and our Council Tax colleagues confirmed the following. These figures are unlikely to have changed significantly since this time. At this stage unable to provide the data over a five year period but using council tax data records show there were the following empty and unfurnished properties.

901 homes empty for six months or more, of these 272 of them have been empty for over two years and 22 over 10 years

It's important to point out that this source can not be relied upon exclusively as in the majority of instances there is no incentive for the council tax payer to advise if the properties are occupied.

**25. From: Alban Thurston
To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

When will Merton commit to 100% divestment of London's highest share of fossil fuels, worth £54 million, from its pensions investments? In January 2018 Divest Merton submitted an evidenced draft Climate Risk policy. In March after 18 months' correspondence, the full pensions committee met us off-record. When will trustees commit?

Reply

Officers and Members have met with Mr Thurston on two separate occasions recently to discuss the concerns of 'Divest Merton'. During those meetings, it was explained that the new investment strategy adopted by the Pensions Fund Advisory Committee in March 2017, the implementation of which is well advanced, will ensure the Merton is better able to reduce the fund's carbon footprint, with investments being made in companies that actively seek to reduce climate change. In addition, we outlined to Mr Thurston that our Responsible Investment Statement (located in the 'Pension Fund' section of our web site) clearly details the fund's approach on Environment Social and Governance (ESG) factors within our investment analysis

and decision-making including the active use of ownership rights to protect and enhance shareholder value over the long term – primarily through voting and engagement.

The objective of responsible investment is to decrease investor risk and improve risk-adjusted returns. Responsible investment principles are at the foundation of the Fund's approach to stewardship and underpin the Fund's fulfilment of its fiduciary duty to scheme beneficiaries.

The Fund requires its investment managers to integrate all material financial factors, including corporate governance, environmental, social, and ethical considerations, into the decision-making process for all Fund investments. It expects its managers to follow good practice and use their influence as major institutional investors and long-term stewards of capital to promote good practice in the investee companies and markets to which the Fund is exposed.

We also engage with Companies through a collaborative voice to air any concerns we may have via our membership of the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum (LAPFF) and the Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association (PLSA).

We have to act within the law to ensure our pensioners are looked after, and the law demands any pension fund's investment managers seek to maximise returns for staff. However, Merton Council itself has a proud track record of investing in sustainability. Our "Merton Rule" requiring new developments to generate renewable energy on site has been copied across the country and is now part of national planning guidance, and in the past five years alone we have invested over £4.6m in energy efficiency.

**26. From: Paymon Khamooshi
To the Cabinet Member for Community Safety Engagement and Equalities**

What is the council's strategy on diversity and what is it doing to improve diversity across the borough?

Reply

The council's [Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy](#) 2017-21 sets out the council's priorities for equality and diversity and the specific actions to achieve these priorities. The strategy's overarching aim is to promote equality and community cohesion in Merton by addressing issues of concern and narrowing the gap in outcomes between residents in the East and West of the borough. The strategy sets out 6 Equality Objectives:

1. To ensure key plans and strategies narrow the gap between different communities in the borough
2. Improve equality of access to services for disadvantaged groups
3. Ensure regeneration plans increase the opportunity for all Merton's residents to fulfil their educational and economic potential, participate in the renewal of the borough and create a health promoting environment.

4. Promoting a safe, healthy and cohesive borough where communities get on well together
5. Encourage recruitment from all sections of the community, actively promote staff development and career progression opportunities and embed equalities across the organisation
6. Fulfil our statutory duties and ensure protected groups are effectively engaged when we change our services.

The accompanying action plan sets out the actions the council will take to meet its equality priorities both corporately and departmentally. The actions and performance measures are linked to service plans to ensure effective implementation of the strategy. Good progress is being made in the implementation of the strategy including:

- An increase in library usage by 11-16 year olds from a CR4 postcode.
- A 20% increase of learners enrolled on employability or family learning courses coming from deprived wards in the East of the borough.
- The Local Welfare Support Scheme has provided support to approximately 250 residents, also between April 2017 and December 2017 the Welfare Benefits Advisor secured over £270,000 in benefits for Merton residents.
- A range of community engagement events including Holocaust Memorial Day, LGBT History Month, Faith Week etc.
- Our schools continue to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged groups. Provisional outcomes at Key Stage 2 for 2016-17 show that 66% of pupils attained the expected standard (a 9% increase on the previous year).
- At Key Stage 4 Merton has the highest Average Progress 8 score in the country.
- During the last financial year the provision of housing advice and assistance has successfully met the target to prevent homelessness in 450 cases.
- A review of polling places was undertaken in November 2017 and March 2018 to make sure that all polling stations were accessible ahead of the council elections in May 2018.
- A Work Experience Scheme 2018 has been launched with 32 placements being made available to Merton Schools.

27. From: John Tippett-Cooper

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport

What percentage of newly built social housing is Merton on track to achieve this year, both in total and developed by its own property development company, and does this meet Merton's own targets?

Reply

The Council does not currently build affordable housing and works in partnership with registered providers (housing associations) to deliver new build housing supply.

Current predictions are that 80 affordable new homes are planned for 2018/19. This figure may change as schemes may stall for a variety of reasons or new schemes may be approved.

In addition the council is currently undertaking site visits and will report on the number of new homes built in Merton (social and market housing) in the Authority Monitoring report at the end of the year.

https://www2.merton.gov.uk/environment/planning/planningpolicy/localplan/annual_monitoring_report.htm Merantun Developments has not submitted any planning applications to Merton Council at present. Merantun Developments will be policy compliant with regards to affordable housing provision. Merantun Development's financial viability reports will be published in the public domain as part of the planning process for openness and transparency.

**28. From: Luke Taylor
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

What has been the net change in the number of households in the social housing waiting list in each of the last five years and what is Merton doing to ensure a net decrease in the length of the waiting list this year and in future years?

Reply

The housing register (often referred to as the waiting list) is an indicator of housing need in the borough and does not accurately reflect rehousing activity. Each Council will have its own system of rehousing priorities and as such borough statistics cannot be considered on a "like for like" basis.

Numbers of households on the housing register do not reflect that one council rehousing activity is greater than another just because the numbers on the waiting list are low, this could be achieved by having an access policy that may restrict entry onto the list thus producing lowers numbers of households waiting for accommodation.

Detailed below are the numbers on the waiting list over the last five years. The figures reflect year end statistics

2013/14. There were 7625 households on the waiting list

2014/15. There were 8229 households on the waiting list

2015/16. There were 8938 households on the waiting list

2016/17. There were 9851 households on the waiting list

2017/18. There were 9802 households on the waiting list