

From Councillor Eleanor Stringer to the Cabinet Member for Education/Regeneration, Housing and Transport

Would the cabinet member update council on improving road safety outside schools to encourage parents and their children to walk more and use cars less?

Reply

We offer schools a range of sustainable programmes such as cycle training for children and parents, while scooter training is provided for younger age groups. Kerbcraft, is a practical child pedestrian training programme offered to all primary schools, teaching children how to mitigate road risk when crossing roads to walk to school.

We also have some 'Kiss and Drop' and Walking Bus schemes whereby parents who have to drive, do not park but stop to drop children at a designated spot, and they are then walked to school by Walk Leaders. This helps reduce idling and congestion near schools.

Working with Transport for London Travel Trainers, we have provided a new travel training project for SEN Yr 6 pupils, showing them how to use public transport to travel to their new high schools. This has been very well received and in some cases, reduces the dependence on Council transport provision plus it also empowers pupils to adopt independent travel. We plan to work with more schools next year.

Another project promoting road safety and environmental choices is the junior and youth travel ambassador programmes, for both primary and high school children. We are also planning to work with the Council's contractors and other utility companies to provide information on the importance of a cleaner and greener environment. Parents can also join our walking groups as we provide regular weekly healthy walks in the boroughs parks and open spaces.

We also intend to trial temporary road closures outside of couple of our schools within this financial year to improve road safety outside schools. We are currently working on the final details taking on board lessons learnt from other boroughs who have already introduced similar features.

Merton's Environmental Health team are also piloting anti-idling campaigns outside schools to help reduce poisonous emissions.

Merton engages with almost all schools in our borough on School Travel Plans. These Plans show how schools are encouraging children and parents to reduce car usage by using more sustainable ways of travel such as public transport, cycling, scooting or walking. Schools can attain Bronze, Silver or Gold status and are keen to record how proactive they are.

The Council is also exploring a pilot 'School Superzone' which will look to create a healthier environment around a school. A part of the focus will be road safety.

From Councillor Hayley Ormrod to the Cabinet Member for Finance:

What are the Councils plans for accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation?

Reply

Merton as an employer already pays the London Living Wage ensuring that no staff are paid below that level.

To become an accredited employer Merton would also need to require (or be working toward) its contractors to pay at least the London Living Wage.

The Council has ensured that contracts recently awarded pay the London Living Wage, however we have not had any formal discussion about committing to become accredited with the Living Wage Foundation.

From Councillor Hina Bokhari to the Cabinet Member for Children Services

In light of the recent child poverty figures for West Barnes, which starkly illustrate the needs of many children in our ward and the surrounding areas. Will the Cabinet member produce a full impact assessment of the council's decision to introduce charges for the Raynes Park Little League and reconsider action to mitigate the charges as part of a wider plan to tackle growing inequality and health inequality across the borough?

Reply

The Council has no specific plans to undertake a full impact assessment on the introduction of charges for the Raynes Park Little League.

The charges in question have been accepted by the Little Leagues and are now implemented following a 12 month period of consultation and negotiation. The charges have been levied in order to cover the essential and basic costs of providing facilities, services and mitigating the environmental impacts of the several hundreds of children from all backgrounds who participate in Little League activities across the borough weekly during the season.

The charges in question are very reasonable and equate to £10 per child per season (or approximately 40p per session), a season that extends from October through to the spring months and represents a small fraction of charges levied within the borough by commercial providers of seasonal junior football sessions, commonly over £100.

From Councillor Owen Pritchard to the Cabinet member for Education

Recent national news highlighted a worrying rise in school exclusion rates. Can the Cabinet Member tell us how Merton's schools fare on this issue?

Reply

There are two types of exclusion: fixed term and permanent. Comparative data for exclusions against a national benchmark is now available for 2016/17. There is always considerable delay in the comparative benchmark data being released. The benchmark data is provided as a rate.

2016-17	Merton	National	
Permanent Exclusion	0.21	0.20	Secondary
	0.01	0.03	Primary
	0.00	0.07	Special
Fixed Term Exclusion	7.99	9.40	Secondary
	0.92	1.37	Primary
	17.15	13.03	Special

Fixed term exclusions in Merton primary and secondary schools are below the national average. In special schools, this is still above national. Special school data can be skewed for LAs who have a special school for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs as Merton does. Work is being undertaken to try and improve the special school rate and early indications are that this has improved in 17/18.

Permanent Exclusion is below the national rate in Merton primary and special schools and in line with national for secondary schools. The trend over the past 3 years in Merton has been flat however we know from the unvalidated data for Merton schools that permanent exclusions have fallen significantly in 2017/ 2018 against a previous rising national trend.

From Councillor Najeeb Latif to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Can the Cabinet Member comment on the success of the administrations vaccination promotion?

Reply

Since April 2013, NHS England have been responsible for commissioning of all national immunisation programmes from local providers in line with agreed service specifications and hence are accountable for ensuring that the population are protected from vaccine preventable diseases. Local Authorities (through the Director of Public Health) have an oversight function to ensure plans are in place to protect their population, however do not commission any of these services.

The good news is that the annual childhood immunisations uptake has improved across all immunisations comparing 2013/14 (benchmark year) to 2017/18 with 2016/17 showing Merton having some of its highest immunisations rates. The 2016/17 rates are higher or similar to the London average. London has however historically lower vaccination rates than England.

To clarify the Merton and the London position on childhood immunisations, a large data issue has been identified across the whole of London recently. Due to a major change in the Child Health Information Systems (CHIS) that record the childhood immunisations data for London, migrating into 4 CHIS hubs, this has affected the accuracy of the reported data across London for 2017/18. NHS Digital who publishes the data have therefore put a caveat and asked that the data is treated with caution saying 'Local Authority (LA) COVER data in London has been provided by four newly-established CHIS hubs and as such reflect a system in transition. Changes in

Local Authority coverage in the London region should be interpreted with caution.’ Quarter 1 data has now been published for 2018/19 which shows some good uptake across some immunisations, however it still shows MMR 2nd dose and the pre-school booster (Dtap/IPV Booster) for children aged 5 as being similar to the 2017/18 annual rates seen. We are working with NHS England, Merton CCG and partners to look at the approach around these particularly with the aim of putting any additional actions in place to improve the accuracy of the data as well as increasing take up.

Actions supporting improving childhood immunisations include:

- The Local Authority working with NHS England commissioners, Merton CCG and providers of immunisations through the Merton Immunisations Steering group which meets regularly with an action plan that is refreshed annually and data monitored quarterly.
- Childhood Immunisations is one of the 5 key outcomes under the Best Start in Life theme for the Health and Well-being Strategy (2015 – 2018). This keeps a focus on improving immunisations locally.
- Public Health promotion of childhood immunisations across the borough e.g. articles in My Merton (which is a publication that goes into every single home in Merton), Young Merton Together, Social media etc. Promotion of children’s flu vaccinations through leaflets in all Libraries and Children’s Centres
- Health Visiting services commissioned by LA are systematically (through universal health reviews) as well as opportunistically asking about the child’s immunisations, promoting immunisations take up as well as signposting parents to their GP for their child to be immunised.

From Councillor Pauline Cowper to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

Can the Cabinet member explain the programme of engagement for young people in the borough on The Canons project?

Reply

The programme is currently delivering:

- A set of 25 lessons around themes on The Canons and the history of Mitcham.
- A three year programme of photography skills called Canons in View for children in the Mitcham Cluster.
- Hands-on activities for primary aged children working with lavender, plants and calico printing.
- The Summer Garden Party for all ages.
- Playground workshops delivered by Studio Hardie, for children and parents in Mitcham.

Future projects are in the planning stages and include:

- A reminiscence project for intergenerational work between young people and the older generation.

- Projects across film, animation, and visual arts as part of the delivery of the interpretation plan.
- Workshops on traditional building skills.
- An archaeological dig with provision for all ages
- Community Wall with designs submitted by young people
- Further possibilities include a festival, performances, and a community-led gardening project

From Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Education:

What timeframe does the council think is acceptable to consider education, health and care (EHC) plan cases from schools?

Reply

We have a target within the SENDIS service of 100% of EHC Needs Assessment requests, whether received from schools, professionals or parents being heard at SEND Panel within 2 weeks from receipt. We are currently achieving 96.3%.

From Councillor Billy Christie to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

Can the Cabinet Member tell me what opportunities are offered at the new Morden leisure centre for children and young families?

Reply

The leisure centre has been designed around the needs and wishes of the community, it has an increased water area with the secondary pool being a large 15mx13m, this means that more learners can be accommodated.

The floor of the secondary pool is moveable so learners can be in very shallow water but the pool can get deeper as learners progress

The secondary pool can be completely isolated from any other area which means that any groups can use this area without being visible to other users

The main pool is 25m x 13m and starts at 1m deep so there is a natural progression from the secondary pool and plenty of room for families to swim together. The GLL schedule has a daily swim for under 5s and adults, parent and baby sessions and family swim times

The diving option extends from 1m to 3m to 5m boards, so both children and adults can progress with ease

There is a pool pod so people with mobility issues can access the pool in a dignified and easy way. In addition to the usual changing rooms, there are family changing rooms and a specialist changing room equipped for people with disabilities.

The gym is three times bigger than the previous one and instructors will be able to give both adults and teenagers instruction, which will give them confidence to use the gym equipment. There are also teenage sessions planned

The new spacious fitness studio offers a variety of classes and doubles up as a community space for local groups and organisations. There is plenty of room for children's parties

The café situated in the entrance foyer gives a comfortable place to relax with healthy food options available. It is situated so that non-members can use it perhaps after a healthy walk in the park.

From Councillor Edward Gretton to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services:

Siobhan McDonnagh MP has said in an article in The Times on 15th November that Merton Council is often unaware of vulnerable children arriving at Connect House, is Merton Council unaware of the number of vulnerable children

Reply

Children's Services have liaised closely with colleagues and partners around this issue. We have sought to identify a mechanism that would allow us to identify vulnerable children. The current pan London safeguarding procedures require any local authority moving a child into another to notify the receiving authority if the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan, Child in Need plan or they are being assessed to ascertain their needs or because of a child protection concern. There is no other obligation for a local authority has to provide information if they are placing. Unfortunately, this means that Children's services are as a consequence not informed or made aware of any child who has vulnerability below these thresholds placed in Connect House.

I am due to visit Connect House with a specialist health visitor in the coming weeks

From Councillor Laxmi Attawar top the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Can the Cabinet Member please explain how Merton will be taking part in the Mayor of London's new Healthy Early Years scheme that he recently launched in Mitcham?

Reply

In Merton, the Early Years' Service, in partnership with Public Health colleagues and the Wandle Early Years Hub, is coordinating and championing the Health Early Years London (HEYL) programme across the early years sector. The HEYL scheme complements the Early Years Foundation Stage framework to look at children's health and wellbeing. To date we have attended the HEYL conferences, promoted the programme through our communications across the sector and identified a Merton programme coordinator.

There are various stages within the programme. Settings that sign up via the HEYL website receive support and advice from the local programme coordinator and to date 23 Merton Early Years settings have achieved First steps and 7 Merton settings are working towards Bronze. Settings that have signed up include private nurseries, childminders and Children's Centres. As part of the quality assurance and sign off process we will be working in partnership with Wandsworth Council through the shared Wandle Early Years Hub, working together to agree local arrangements to agree the applicants successful achievement of the HEYL Awards. The Early Years' service will continue to promote HEYL throughout the duration of the programme