

WIMBLEDON COMMUNITY FORUM
4 DECEMBER 2018

(7.15 pm - 9.15 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor James Holmes (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held at the Wimbledon Arts Space, and chaired by Councillor James Holmes. More than 30 residents attended, as well as eight other Merton Councillors. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, introducing the councillors present at the meeting.

2 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 2)

Free Parking: A resident said they felt Merton Council was sending out a mixed message by offering free parking in town centres in the run up to Christmas, whilst also encouraging residents to make fewer car journeys. Another resident said they felt the free parking would help retailers.

A resident asked if in the event of a cold snap the closed Virgin Active site on North Road could be used as a cold weather shelter.

Waste collection and street cleaning: Residents raised a number of concerns about the performance of Veolia in rubbish collection and street cleaning as well as the Council's management of that contract. Issues raised include cleaning streets, clearing leaf fall, clearing street gullies, over-flowing recycling bins, weed killing, bin collections, not collecting overflow waste, refuse from flats above shops, the complication and scheduling of the new collection system, and inadequacies in how the contract was being managed by Merton Council. A resident also said they felt citizens should take some responsibility by not dropping litter and looking after the land in front of their homes.

Councillor Holmes said these views reflect the experiences of many residents who have contacted councillors. Cllr Holmes said that councillors have been told that new contracts like these take time to bed-in so things should gradually improve. Cllr Brunt, the Cabinet Member for waste, has acknowledged there are problems and is taking these issues seriously. At the last meeting Cllr Alambritis said that payments to Veolia had been withheld. Cllr Kohler said that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel would be looking at the contract and understands that

Merton and Veolia are currently in dispute over fines. Cllr Gretton said that the Council should be enforcing fines.

A resident also asked about the trial in Wandle Park to remove bins to see if that would reduce litter. An update will be brought to a future meeting.

A resident said that a number of street lights on Haydons Road Bridge were currently out. Paul McGarry, Head of Future Merton, said he would raise this with colleagues and that any failing lights could be reported online at <https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/streets-and-pavements/street-lighting-faults>

3 FUTURE WIMBLEDON MASTERPLAN (Agenda Item 3)

Paul McGarry gave an update on the draft Wimbledon Master Plan that is out for public consultation until 6 January 2019. The presentation is available in appendix 2 and the full Master Plan document can be found at <https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/regeneration-urban-design/future-wimbledon>

There have been 270 responses to date, most from local residents. It was clear that local groups spreading the word and the use of social media had had a positive impact on encouraging people to respond. The main issues being raised so far were building heights and traffic.

Residents asked about publicity for the consultation. Paul thanked those that had helped promote the consultation, and explained that it was not possible to use Council Tax contacts due to Data Protection regulations. The team had already attended lots of local meetings and they are still happy to attend further meetings to discuss the document. Contact them via email at future.merton@merton.gov.uk

Residents also asked about a number of issues which are set out below along with the response from Paul:

Issue raised	Response
How would Crossrail 2 not proceeding impact on the plans?	Only a small section of the Masterplan, the area already safeguarded by Crossrail 2, would be dependent on the project going ahead.
What would the new buildings be used for?	Mixed use, offices, retail and commercial, mainly replacing existing buildings
What evidence is there for the demand for growth, especially office space?	The town centre is already close to capacity, with on 2% vacancies, and a number of employers would like to expand but cannot do so within the current buildings available

Issue raised	Response
Proposed building heights are excessive	This has been a common thread in the responses to the consultation so far so will need further consideration
The need for new public space	The plans create a public square outside of the station, four times the size of the current space
What will happen to the 'Fridge on the Bridge'?	Under plans for Crossrail 2 this building would due to come down
How specific are the plans at this stage?	The Masterplan will create a framework for future planning decisions so is not designed to be specific. The plan will set out to developers what would be considered acceptable.
Pollution is aggravated by tall buildings	Other Council policies would still apply including the Air Quality Action Plan, so developers would have to show how they would mitigate these impacts. Crossrail 2 creates an opportunity to create additional crossings over the railway which would reduce congestion and pollution.
Could consultation questions have been more specific?	Responses to the previous consultation said that more open questions should be used so we responded to that.
Wimbledon's sense of community could be lost through overdevelopment	Please use the consultation to tell us what good looks like, and what heights would be acceptable. Design quality will be a key issue, most of the buildings that go are 80s/90s build and not popular so a Wimbledon style will be incorporated into the new standards.
The London Plan requires evidence for new office space	We will share the evidence in our response to the consultation.
Is the Concert Hall included?	Yes, and we have been speaking with the group
Can the consultation be given additional publicity?	We will continue to publicise and encourage people to respond. Thanks to those who have shared the consultation.

Cllr Martin Whelton said that the Masterplan was a chance to plan for the next 20 years. Wimbledon is already a successful town centre with more than 600 companies including 25 national headquarters and whilst the delay to Crossrail 2 is unhelpful it is important to plan for future growth and set out a vision. We are not attempting to copy Croydon with 45 or 50 storey buildings but town centres need to be proactive to maintain their status. We welcome comments and are willing to meet with any groups. The final plan will go to a meeting of the Full Council for approval.

The Local Plan draft, covering the whole borough is also being consulted on and comments are invited on that plan as well.

4 LONDON ASSEMBLY UPDATE (Agenda Item 4)

Leonie Cooper, Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth provided an update on her work. The Assembly scrutinises the Mayor of London, Transport for London and the Metropolitan Police. Leonie is Deputy Chair of the Environment Committee and sits on the Housing, Fire Resilience and Emergency Planning, and Budget and Performance committees. As government funding to the Mayor has reduced there needs to be scrutiny of the Mayors decisions including:

- Spending to reduce pollution including getting rid of dirty buses
- Working with boroughs and other providers to increase housing provision
- Looking at fire safety in light of events at Grenfell
- The final examination in public of the new London Plan will take place from mid-January to May, including 95 matters to address by the inspectorate.

Asked about the 93 bus Leonie said these have all been switched to hybrid, low emission buses and as a result of making Putney High Street a low emission bus zone has seen incidents of high pollution have dropped by 95%. The roll out of cleaner buses is not linked to franchises but is based on prioritising where pollution is worst. Leonie agreed to find out if there is a timetable for any areas in Merton.

A resident asked about the delay to Crossrail. Leonie said the Assembly is still investigating and seeking answers but it was clear that money had been taken out of the budget in error and that the problem has been with electrical testing in the central zone. The Transport Committee will be summoning relevant documents and the Mayor to appear before them on 21 December.

5 MORLEY PARK (Agenda Item 5)

Councillor Nick Draper provided an update on Morley Park following the motion submitted to Council on behalf of the Community Forum. The negotiation with Berkeley Homes has been hard and complicated following the development of the Atkinson Morley site. There are two parts to the park, the playing fields designed for use by Ursuline School and the remainder an open space for use by the whole community.

The major problem has been Japanese Knotweed on the site which has been treated but not eradicated and therefore the Council has to protect itself against future liability, including spread to the surrounding gardens. Getting the commitment from Berkeley Homes to eradicate the knotweed has involved lawyers from both sides and the Council prefers to wait of the park to be fit for use before it is handed over. Merton lawyers were concerned that Berkeley Homes would use their complex

corporate structure to wriggle out of any commitments. The recommendation is that Berkeley Homes will retain ownership of the land for twenty years, and leased to Merton for nothing, with the liability for the knotweed left with Berkeley Homes headquarters.

Once this agreement is reached, hopefully by Christmas, then a process of snagging will begin involving Councillors, officers, Ursuline and local community groups. Once Berkeley Homes have resolved any issues that have been highlighted then it can be opened to the community.

Asked about public access Cllr Draper said the Pavilion will be in the hands of Ursuline, and the playing fields will be closed to the public during school hours. The space around the playing fields will be accessible.

Residents asked if the signing of the Certificate of Completion by Merton Council on 2017 had made it more difficult to negotiate with Berkeley Homes. Cllr Draper said he did not know about the signing so would find out. He was not prepared to see the land transferred and opened until the issue of the knotweed had been dealt with. Cllr Draper also said that once the 20 years was up the land would transfer to the Council.

6 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 6)

Councillor Holmes thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

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