

From Cllr Agatha Akyigyina to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness

Could the Cabinet Member please give up the latest update on recycling targets and actual figures since the introduction of the new waste collection service?

Reply

Over the first 5 month of the new service we have seen a significant reduction (-11%) in the overall volume of general waste being collected. This equates to a monthly reduction of 400 tonnes to landfill. The main contributor to this success is the increase in food waste participation which has seen an increase of 64% or 176 tonnes per month and continues to increase.

The Garden waste service remains popular with our residents and our customer base continues to grow. We currently have 9,100 customers compared to 7,500 last year. Over the last 5 months, following the introduction of the new service, we have collected an average of an additional 59 tonnes per month (36%) compared to the same period last year.

The net impact of these changes has resulted in a current recycling rate of 40% . Taking into account the full year impact of the service change we are confident that next year we will achieve our stretch target of 45% recycling performance and position us in the top quartile of all London boroughs.

From Councillor David Dean to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

At the last full council, Cllr Draper stated that street trees were a problem because of their high cost of purchase and maintenance. At the Raynes Park Community Forum on 26th March, Cllr Brunt said that he just found out that the leaves fall off trees, and a “balanced debate” is required to see if street trees are welcome.

Bearing in mind the Labour so-called “action plan” said more trees should be planted, will Labour confirm if the cabinet want more or less street trees to improve air quality?

Reply

Unfortunately, most of the wording in the question is inaccurate reporting or untrue. Nevertheless, trees improve the liveability of towns and cities and reduce costs in a number of ways including reducing storm water runoff, improving air quality, storing carbon, providing shade, and reducing urban heat-island effects. They also enhance bio-diversity by providing food, habitat and landscape connectivity for urban fauna. Merton has a very high number of trees across the borough, not just on streets but in parks, recreation grounds, and public and privately owned property.

Despite identifying potential problems such as leaf litter, tree debris and possible infrastructure damage, residents’ attitudes to street trees remain positive. The aesthetic and practical attributes of street trees such as beautification, shade

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provision, increased property values, added privacy and noise reduction are rated highly by most city residents.

Traffic emissions and other fine particulate air pollution can cause serious health effects, including premature mortality, pulmonary inflammation, and altered cardiac functions. However, trees can be particularly effective at capturing airborne pollutants in urban areas if they are located in appropriate positions. These do not need to be on the street, and some of the pollutants removed by trees include ozone, nitrogen oxides, sulphur oxides, sulphur dioxides, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide (CO₂). It has been estimated that large healthy trees can remove between 60 and 70 times more air pollution than smaller trees. Street trees are an effective tool in reducing air pollution and creating healthier urban environments, if they are located suitably.

For the reasons outlined above the administration supports the planting of trees in the borough, both on and off street, and will consider the appropriateness of locations, the benefits that they will bring and balance against the costs of implementation and maintenance.

From Cllr Sally Kenny to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

Where is the Council up to with its roll out of 20mph zones and what is the plan up to the end of 2020?

Reply

Merton is committed to road safety and we have a number of initiatives that promotes road safety. One initiative is the introduction of a borough wide 20mph speed limit. To improve the general road safety environment and in line with the Mayor of London's transport priorities which has been adopted within the Borough's Local Implementation Plan, we are now introducing a borough wide 20mph speed limit.

The objective is to change behaviour – that is to say to encourage drivers to travel at a consistent lower speed not just throughout the borough but from borough to borough. The borough limit will work alongside neighbouring borough's 20mph speed limits. This is expected to bring about a culture change so that it is socially unacceptable to drive over 20mph in London.

The Council has started its programme for rolling out a borough wide 20mph speed limit and we have provisionally secured funding through our Local Implementation Plan for next financial year which will be utilised to continue the roll out of the borough wide 20mph speed limit. Given the limited available funding this financial year, the Council has started from the borough boundaries where neighbouring boroughs have already introduced a lower speed limit.

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We have started the roll-out in the East of the borough where a number of streets linking to Lambeth and Croydon were 20mph as part of the neighbouring borough roll-outs. In 2018, we extended 20mph limits from Wandsworth into Wimbledon village. The borough-wide roll-out will be implemented from East to West, subject to formal consultation and sign off. We plan to complete the borough-wide 20mph project over the next 12 months by Spring 2020.

In terms of benefits, it is considered that with a change in behaviour, there will be less aggressive driver behaviour; less likelihood of accidents; improved perception of safety; safer highway environment / experience for all vulnerable road users. Studies show that compared to 30mph, not only are the number of accidents reduced in 20mph roads, but also their severity. For instance, a pedestrian sustaining a fatal injury from a collision decreases from approximately 55% at an impact speed of 30mph to 17% at an impact speed on 20mph. There are also health benefits, as lower speeds help improve physical and mental health. As roads become safer so people are more inclined to walk and cycle more, providing regular exercise and enabling healthier lifestyles. Air and noise pollution are also reduced at 20mph and these measures support sustainable transport options and encourage modal shift.

From Councillor Thomas Barlow to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

What was the total cost of the tickets, flights, hotels, and travel expenses to send the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport and two officers to the MIPIM conference in Cannes?

Reply

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MIPIM (Marché International des Professionnels de L'immobilier) is the world's largest international trade show for the development and property investment industry. Attendance provides Local Authorities an opportunity to meet the most influential players from all sectors of the international property industry and enables delegate's access to the greatest number of development projects and sources of capital worldwide. Given the challenges facing our borough as a result of the impact of Brexit and the need for significant additional housing, it was felt important to attend in order to promote the borough at this prestigious event.

The event is recognised as the leading real estate exhibition and networking platform to forge deals, build relationships and networks to attract inward investment. Officers also attended seminars at the event including topics such as over-station redevelopment, the future of high streets, London developer's briefings as well as a series of 1:1 meetings with private sector developers, housing associations, investors, pension funds and professional counterparts from other London authorities. As Merton will soon be seeking an investment partner to deliver Morden Regeneration, it is right that Merton has a presence on this stage and actively promotes the borough.

Merton Council attended MIPIM as part of the London stand delegation, which also included representatives from numerous other London councils, including neighbours from LB Wandsworth, including the Leader of the Council there. The event costs were managed on behalf of the Council by 3FoxInternational. This offered a discounted rate on the conference tickets of £1360 each. The council's costs were offset through commercial sponsorship obtained by 3FoxInternational. £6000 worth of sponsorship was achieved.

Cost Breakdown:

MIPIM event ticket (£1360 each) x 4	£5440.00
Flights (£294.54 each) x 4	£1178.35
Accommodation in Nice (£101.41 per person per night) x 4 rooms	£1217.00
Travel Expenses	
Train (am): Nice > Cannes (£7.20 pp x 4 people) x 3 journeys	
£86.40	
Taxi (pm): Cannes > Nice (£90 for 4 people x 3 journeys)	£270.00
Total Cost (before sponsorship)	
£8191.75	
(£2047.93 per person)	

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Sponsorship achieved

£6000.00

Total cost to LBM after sponsorship

£2191.75

(£547.93 per person)

From Cllr Simon McGrath to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

How many council employees have a parking permit issued by LB Merton?

Reply

As at week commencing 18th March 2019 = 882

From Councillor Najeeb Latif to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport:

It has taken the council 16 months to bulldoze the former Virgin Active Battle Close gym; at the July council meeting this council voted to 'continually review options for short term use'. Why did the Cabinet Member fail so badly to be business-like and find a temporary operator, how many discussions did he have, and how many bids did he receive to take on the site on, and what was the total cost in terms of security and loss of business rates to Merton taxpayers?

Reply from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

The options for short term use were limited by the need to find a use that would both minimise disturbance to local residents and be viable for a short timescale so that the council's long term ambition for residential development was not frustrated. Negotiations have been delegated to officers. Only one offer was received but this was not sustainable unless the council could confirm a minimum period for this use of three years. This the council could not do as it would frustrate our long term ambition for the site and reduce the site's value to local taxpayers. The total cost of security since the council purchased the lease to Virgin is £257,818.67, and the Business Rates £241,110 for which there was a 100% retention scheme, the council retaining 64% and the GLA 36%. Both liabilities will end following demolition which is underway currently. It is not yet possible to say with accuracy what the net benefit to

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Merton taxpayers will be, as the site has yet to achieve planning permission, but it is likely to far outweigh those liabilities.

From Cllr Rebecca Lanning to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

Can the Cabinet member please update on plans for the regeneration of Morden Town Centre?

Reply

The Council continues to work with Transport for London and the GLA in securing funding to enable us to bring the regeneration of Morden town centre forward for delivery. We hope to be announcing the launch of a procurement process for a third party development partner this year.