

# Agenda Item 5

Public Questions to Full Council 3 April

## 1. From: Tony Burton

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

To ask for details of all bids made to the Neighbourhood Fund under the 2018 ward pilot project, including naming the councillor making each bid, their ward, the value of bid(s), whether bid(s) were successful and whether all monies for the pilot were allocated or what amount was left unallocated.

### Reply

This is a large body of work and the answer will not fit into the space for councillor questions. However we commit to publishing this within the next month. The pilot has led to the Ward Allocation Scheme; from 01 April 2019 each ward in Merton has £15,000 per ward to be delivered on small scale public realm projects over the next three years led by Merton's ward councillors:

<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/documents/s26249/2019-01-14%20Cabinet%20Report%20Neighbourhood%20CIL%20Ward%20Allocation%20v7.pdf>

## 2. From: Sandra Vogel

To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Your web site says you spend £3820 to distribute 85,000 copies of My Merton. My home has not received the last two issues. How do you check delivery is made to all homes, how many homes miss out like mine, and how is it possible that non delivery happens?

### Reply

A delivery report is sent to Merton Council following completion of each distribution of My Merton. This contains information about any properties missed and the reasons why. The reasons for non-delivery are mainly due to access issues, for example the entry phone not answering in blocks of flats, blocked letterboxes or empty properties. Any complaints of non-delivery received by the council are sent to the distribution contractor, an investigation takes place and the outcomes are reported back to the council. On average each edition of My Merton is successfully delivered to 92% of homes in the borough. Any household not receiving their copy of My Merton should contact [communications@merton.gov.uk](mailto:communications@merton.gov.uk) or telephone 020 8545 3827.

## 3. From: Tom Killick

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

What does the Council estimate would be the cost of introducing 20mph speed limits on all residential roads in the borough in one go rather than piecemeal as is currently planned?

## Reply

The Council is introducing the borough wide 20mph speed limit in phases as this is normal practice when dealing with such a vast area. This is due to a number of factors and constraints but primarily due to the work involved – site assessment, statutory consultation, ordering and storing of all the required signs, consultation with external bodies such as TfL and neighbouring boroughs that will impact some areas but not all; contractor's availability and ability to erect all the necessary signs; officer's time etc.

Rolling it out in phases also allows the Council to deal with objections specific for the area. For example, objections from one area that would not relate to other areas but it would cause unnecessary delay to implementation.

The roll out started in November 2018 and it is envisaged that it would be completed by October 2019 subject to not receiving any objections from any given area.

### **4. From: Stephanie Upton-Prowse To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

I'd like to know what you're doing in the borough to promote No littering. We have an epidemic locally and the council needs to make it clear that it's not acceptable to litter. Are you going to put in more bins? What are your ideas to make Wimbledon Litter Free?

## Reply

We currently have Enforcement officers covering all town centres and known hot spot areas. These enforcement officers patrol and issue Fixed Penalty Notices to those that drop litter. We carry out engagement around the same areas raising awareness of the consequences of dropping litter. As part of this engagement we offer stubbi pouches which are small portable disposal ashtrays as quite a lot of our litter issues around the town centres are cigarette related. The ashtrays also double up as chewing gum pouches we advertises the no butt litter fixed penalty information on the back of the ashtray.. In addition our staff visit schools on a regular basis giving no littering messages to children.

We offer equipment for local residents to assist in our combat to keep the streets clean by involving themselves in a community clean up. For more information on community clean ups residents can contact Principal Engagement Officer John Ball on 020-545-3173 or at [john.ball@merton.gov.uk](mailto:john.ball@merton.gov.uk)

Litter Bins are normally placed if there is enough evidence that a bin is required, the bins are carefully placed in order not to encourage miss use of the bin and where the bin can be easily emptied. Unfortunately Bins often attract fly tipping and the quantity and location of bins is carefully considered so as to strike the right balance.

**5. From: Joyce Pountain  
To the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness**

With reference to the answer to question 6 in Feb 2019 Questions to Council, please outline the exceptional circumstances in which herbicides are used in parks and green spaces and what was the outcome of the investigation into Hammersmith & Fulham's use of steam foam?

**Reply**

Our contractor is using lawfully permitted weedkillers including glyphosate, Chikara, Crossbar and Greenor in the parks to control weeds where it is cost prohibitive to use other, manual methods.

We are aware that Idverde are using 'steamfoam' on some of their other contracts but at a higher contract fee .There is an additional cost for this method as it is more labour intensive and it can only reach areas accessible by a van & long hose.

**6. From: Nicola Thompson  
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

Does the council have an official response and reporting procedure to follow when it is alerted to an environmental incident? If so, could you please outline what it is? If there is no such procedure, please explain why?

**Reply**

The Council is a Category 1 responder in relation to emergency planning under the UK's civil contingencies procedures. This would be appropriate for the Council's approach to any significant incident requiring a multi-agency response.

In relation to less significant environmental incident, the Council's Environmental Health service would respond for any incident relative to its regulatory powers. The Council may create its own processes for dealing with specific types of incident but all processes would require to meet that set out in any statute used or guidance thereunder. Some pollution incidents, e.g. waste operations, complex flood risk activities and complex water discharges and groundwater activities, like large sewage treatment plants, are regulated by the Environment Agency.

**7. From: Phil Ling  
To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance**

How many schools in Merton took up the council's offer of solar panels for their roofs and on average how much were these schools projected to save in electricity bills?

## Reply

28 schools have received free solar panels from the installation scheme at a cost to the Council of £1.93 million since 2011, resulting in income of £110,000 per annum through the FIT.

2 Schools were unable to receive panels due to technical issues.

The average saving across the 28 schools is £3,374 per annum. However panel system sizes range from 10 kWp (roughly the size of 3 domestic installations) to 150 kWp (roughly the size of 50 domestic systems). For example, one secondary school has 3 large systems whereas another primary school only has panels on one small roof. The difference in sizing is due to the nature of the sites and the availability of suitable roofs.

As such the range of savings provided by the panels goes from £761 up to £11,139 per annum.

Furthermore, the business case for solar panels allowed for the creation of a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) allowing the council to charge (at below national grid rate) for the generated electricity used by schools on site. This means that each site has two annual savings figures to allow for a PPA to be used. The above figures are provided without PPA. Once a PPA is put in place the saving to the school will be reduced, with the council using the income to re-pay the initial investment and ensure the panels continue optimal production for their full lifespan.

Please be aware that there are several caveats to the saving figures provided;

- 1) Savings are based on a figure of 60% on-site usage for the majority of systems. Changes to this usage figure have been applied for large systems and for very small systems to provide a more realistic saving calculation
- 2) Savings are calculated using a nominal electricity rate of 12p per kWh, which is based on current corporate utility contract prices inclusive of non-commodity costs. As such annual saving figures may go up or down depending on the cost of the imported power that PV generation is offsetting.

## **8. From: Luke Taylor To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health**

What process does the council have to monitor air quality at school sites across the borough and how does this fit in to the council's air quality improvement plan?

## Reply

The Council's Air Quality Action Plan 2018 has a section dedicated to action around our schools. A copy of this can be found on the Council's web-site. The Council has committed to auditing air quality at schools in the most polluted areas and providing a

scheme of mitigation at each including introducing schools into the monitoring regime where these are in areas of poor air quality.

During audits, pollutant levels inside playgrounds and in school buildings have always been within the UK guidance levels. The main challenge in protecting children from poorer air quality relates to the way in which they travel to and from school and Merton's Air Quality Action Plan includes a commitment to school travel plans.

**9. From: Tamara Kohler  
To the Cabinet Member for Education**

What measures does the council have in place to assist schools with careers advice and building relationships with businesses for things like inspirational visits to schools, work experience and apprenticeships?

**Reply**

All Merton secondary schools are using the recognised Gatsby criteria to assess practice with regards to careers advice, information and guidance (information about the criteria can be found here <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/schools-colleges/understand-gatsby-benchmarks>). A representative from the London Enterprise Adviser Network has presented to heads of sixth form meeting. This organisation will support all schools, including how they can be linked to a business adviser who will support a range of activities in schools.

**10. From: Samantha MacArthur  
To the Cabinet Member for Education**

How many schools in Merton set deficit budgets in 2018-19 and how many are likely to set deficit budgets in 2019-20. How many of these are primary vs secondary?

**Reply**

In 2018/19 fourteen schools set deficit budgets. Schools are required to submit their final budgets to Merton by the first of June as year-end balances are included as part of budget setting. We will therefore not be able to confirm the number of schools in deficit for 2019/20 until then, but we would expect the number to be similar to 2018/19.

**11. From: Emily Robertson  
To the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

How many requests for statutory assessment have been made in Merton in the past five years and what percentage of these requests have resulted in Merton issuing an EHCP?

**Reply**

- Number of referrals 2015 – 2019 (present day): 1200
- Number of EHCPs issued 2015 – 2019 (present day): 967
- Percentage: 81%

**12. From: Pippa Maslin**  
**To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health**

On 6th February I asked the council to declare a Climate Emergency and review its current carbon reduction plans in order to become carbon neutral by 2030 and thereby help to limit global warming to 1.5°C. The answer received was encouraging but non-committal. Has there been any progress?

**Reply**

From innovations such as the Merton Rule in 2003 to maximising solar panel coverage across most of Merton Council's primary schools, four secondary schools, leisure centres and other council buildings, Merton Council has long been a leader in taking action to reduce carbon and tackle climate change. We are very supportive of the principle of what declaring a climate emergency seeks to achieve, and have been closely following what other Councils which have declared an emergency have done. However, it is our view that to succeed in limiting global warming, declaring a climate emergency must be backed up by a comprehensive strategy and deliverable action plan that will demonstrate how carbon reductions will be achieved, otherwise it remains simply a declaration without any real action. We are presently considering our next Climate Change Strategy, which will be discussed by Cabinet in the coming months. This will include some detail on the proposed next steps to continue to reduce carbon in the borough backed up by actions we can take to deliver on our promise. As part of this work we will consider whether we can commit to becoming carbon neutral by 2030, and will use that Cabinet paper to declare a climate emergency if we believe this is feasible. We would welcome the involvement of the community at this stage in establishing a working group to help deliver the strategy.

**13. From: Shipra Gupta**  
**To the Cabinet Member for Education**

How many schools in Merton will be receiving less funding in the 2019-20 financial year due to funding formula changes? How many of these are primary vs secondary?

**Reply**

Merton's funding formula was set in such a way that no school would receive less funding per pupil in 2019/20 than what was received in 2018/19. This is a "per pupil"

safeguard and would mean that if the number of pupils in a school reduced, the overall funding could reduce.

**14. From: Kevin Clarke  
To the Cabinet Member for Education**

Ricards Lodge and Rutlish recently implemented a shared sibling policy in recognition of their close links. Given the schools are not on a shared site does the education dept. have other plans to reduce the effects of sexual discrimination in admission policies?

**Reply**

Ricards Lodge and Rutlish are separate single sex schools with admissions policies primarily based on siblings and then distance from the school. Due to their locations some 1.5 miles apart, it is accurate that girls to the north of Wimbledon will get a better chance of getting a place at the Ricards Lodge, and boys to the south of Wimbledon will get a better chance of getting into Rutlish. While there may be more choice of school depending on your residency and sex of child, this is not sexual discrimination. The council did review the position with the schools relatively recently and due to the close working between the schools e.g. a shared sixth form it was agreed, as stated by Mr Clarke, to have a shared siblings policy so that families can be together in the schools. However, it was agreed that the schools did not wish to stop prioritising places for their traditional catchment e.g. Rutlish providing places for Morden boys. There are therefore no further plans.

The current school admissions round for 2019 entry shows that, with the addition of the new Harris Academy Wimbledon School and current preference patterns, all families in Wimbledon have an accessible Good or Outstanding school.

**15. From: Klaartje Dresselaers  
To the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

What are the Mean and median processing times for EHCP applications in each of last 5 years?

**Reply**

Mean:

- 2015 – 25 Weeks
  - 2016 – 27 Weeks
  - 2017 – 24 Weeks
  - 2018 – 20 Weeks
- 2019 - 0 EHCP's referred in 2019 finalised to date

Median

- 2015 – 22
- 2016 – 25
- 2017 – 23
- 2018 – 19
- 2019 - 0 EHCP's referred in 2019 finalised to date

**16. From: Barry Smith  
To the Cabinet Member for Education**

Why has the number of Children Missing Education in Merton increased for the third year running?

**Reply**

Children are legally counted as children missing education (CME) when they are off roll of a school. The number of children missing education off roll has been at the same level for the last 3 years (128, 129, 125) against an overall increasing school population (3% rise across the 3 years) In summary: The overall number of CME has not increased despite the rise in the number of pupils.

The number of children identified as vulnerable to missing school has increased over the last 3 years (123, 131, 175) however these children are still on roll which shows improved targeting and identification of children to support them to prevent them becoming CME off roll.

**17. From: Emma Maddison  
To the Cabinet Members for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

How does the council monitor and evaluate the quality and value for money of work carried out to schools that is managed and procured by the council? What feedback does the council ask schools for in relation to this work and what's the average timeframe for resolving issues that arise?

**Reply**

The council manages building works with technical staff either in the Corporate Facilities Management team or, for major projects, outside design consultants. To ensure best value, works are procured according to the council's standing orders that ensures the market is properly tested for value for money and for major projects a design team regularly monitors the projects with a professional Quantity Surveyor to monitor value for money. Prior to the procurement of a major project a strategic review is undertaken to agree the most appropriate procurement approach for the market at that time.

For major projects school are regularly involved throughout the design and construction phases of a project so feedback is an iterative process. We do not

record the average timeframe for resolving an issue, and it will vary according to the complexity of the issue and the contractor involved.

**18. From: John Braithwaite  
To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance**

What have the revenue implications been for the council of putting solar panels on school roofs? Has the council made money from this, if so then how much?

**Reply**

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**19. From: Hugo Forshaw  
To the Cabinet Member for Education**

What does the council do to monitor and encourage the provision of age appropriate LGBT+ inclusive sex and relationships education in schools across the borough? Have any schools experienced resistance to such classes, and if so how is the council engaging with local communities on this issue?

**Reply**

As a Stonewall Education Champion, Merton Local Authority encourages schools to use age appropriate resources to provide Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) sessions which are inclusive of same sex relationships. A small 'Equalities' group of senior leaders in Primary and Secondary schools meet to discuss issues including inclusive RSE curriculum resources. Student groups at Ricards have provided sessions for local primary school pupils through this network. The equalities adviser provides CPD for primary and secondary schools, showcasing appropriate resources and strategies. School Leaders have received advice on working with parents on these issues from various speakers including Andrew Moffatt, (No Outsiders), Stonewall and Equaliteach. Schools who have experienced resistance to their inclusive approach to RSE have sought advice from colleagues and experts in the field.

**20. From: Jack Rawden  
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Housing and Transport**

With the traffic on Gap road worse than ever, and the prospect of 600 new flats and a predicted increase of traffic to the area. Isn't it time to start considering parking restrictions on Gap road to ease traffic and make the lives of its residents bearable?

**Reply**

We only introduce a CPZ in roads where there is majority support from the residents. When the CPZ was introduced in the area in 2003, Gap Rd residents opted against the CPZ and therefore it was not introduced and other than a few compliant since then, there has not been any demand for intervention other than yellow lines to prevent obstructive parking.

The Council will consider consulting on a CPZ upon receiving a petition from Gap Rd residents demonstrating their support for a CPZ. However, if the residents do not want a CPZ but feel that there is a need for more yellow line restrictions, the Council would be happy to investigate and take the appropriate action.

**21. From: Vincent Bolt  
To the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

What are the number and % of EHCP applications conceded by council on appeal for each of last 5 years?

**Reply**

In the time available to me, I was able to review data from the last 2 years, however further time is required to analyse information held elsewhere. We have not had any EHC needs assessment applications (I.e. No to assess) lodged with the First Tier Tribunal and therefore the council has not conceded requests for an assessment as part of a registered appeal. I will follow up with detail when records further back have been gone through.

**22. From: Chris Stanton  
To the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

Will the Council be reinstalling bins in Wandle Park following their 'trial' removal? If reinstallation is on the cards, when will this happen and how many bins will there be?

**Reply**

Yes, there will be some bins reinstalled in specific places, where it has been deemed most suitable, given the litter in those locations. These bins should be reinstated within the next few weeks.

**23. From: Jil Hall  
To the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

How many EHCP applications have been made in each of the previous 5 years?

**Reply**

- 2015 – 180
- 2016 – 214
- 2017 – 316
- 2018 – 387
- 2019 (to date) – 103

**24. From: Viv Vella  
To the Cabinet Member for Education**

What support do schools get from the council to manage projects partly or wholly funded by the council and how much of school leaderships teams' time is spent managing such projects?

**Reply**

## Public Questions to Full Council 3 April

I am presuming this question refers to building projects. Building projects funded by the council are generally managed by the council rather than the school. School leadership teams will still be involved as projects need to meet the needs of the school, but the technical elements are undertaken by the council and/or appointed technical design consultants. No record is kept of the specific time spent by the school leadership teams.