

Committee: Council

Date: 18 September 2019

Subject: Petitions

Lead officer: Paul Evans, Assistant Director, Corporate Governance.

Lead member: Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Alambritis.

Contact officer: Democratic Services, democratic.services@merton.gov.uk

Recommendation:

1. That Council receive petitions (if any) in accordance with Part 4A, paragraph 18.1 of the Council's Constitution.
 2. That Council notes the responses provided to the petitions submitted at the meeting held on 10 July 2019.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report invites Council to receive petitions in accordance with Part 4A, paragraph 18.1 of the Council's Constitution.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. At the meeting held on 10 July 2019, the petitions listed below were submitted and the responses are set out below. Any petitions received by Council are referred to respective departments with responsible officers asked to advise the presenting member in each case of the way in which the petition is to be progressed.
- 2.2. A petition was submitted by Councillor Tobin Byers on the declaration of a climate emergency.

Officer Response

- 2.3 "We agree with the new evidence and the wave of public feeling that we need to act more rapidly. We are delighted to announce that, on 10th July, Merton Council declared a Climate Emergency with cross-party support. The Council has set ambitious carbon reduction targets to decarbonise the borough of Merton by 2050, and to decarbonise Merton Council's own buildings and services by 2030. Over the coming months, Merton Council will be developing a Climate Action Plan to set out, at a high level, what actions will be required from National and Regional Government, Merton Council, and local residents and businesses in order to achieve these targets. We will be forming a Climate Emergency Working Group comprised of community and business leaders to inform the Climate Action Plan.

We encourage members of the Merton community to engage in the Climate Action Plan process by applying to be part of the Climate Emergency Working Group by 9th August and by contacting Merton Council's Climate Change officers with any relevant proposals. We will also be launching an online questionnaire in September and attending all Community Forums to ensure as many people as

possible have an opportunity to contribute their ideas. We invite you to visit our Climate Emergency web [page](#) for more information and links to the application form for the working group.”

- 2.4 A petition was submitted by Councillor Edward Gretton on the banning of barbeques in Wimbledon Park.

Officer Response

- 2.5 “The issue of BBQs at Wimbledon Park (and more widely) has been monitored and considered by the Council during the past several years. Without overtly promoting Wimbledon Park as a venue for BBQs, there has unquestionably been an increase in this park’s usage for this purpose but the demands are very much less in other parts of the borough, including those where there is no enforcement of any BBQ restrictions. Overall, the Council does not consider that there is a significant BBQ “problem” in Merton.

The Council believes that its recent approach is pragmatic and sensible. Whilst BBQs are not trouble-free, most especially in relation to waste and littering, this needs to be balanced against the leisure-time and social benefits that BBQs bring at a time when recreational pursuits and trends are evolving, in part driven by changes in the cultural and demographic landscape of the borough and by factors in the economy within London which mean that there are an ever-increasing number of residents who do not enjoy their own private gardens in which to enjoy an outdoor BBQ with friends and family at home. It may be no coincidence that the demand for BBQs is much more marked in the more heavily urbanised parts of the borough, around Wimbledon Park for example, than it is in its more suburban neighbourhoods.

The local authority has always considered Wimbledon Park to be its premier open space. The park features a range of facilities and services, some of which are of regional importance and understandably, therefore, it enjoys a high annual footfall. It is evidently not a park that is designed to serve local needs alone. It attracts visitors from many parts of London and from around the globe too and not only at times of the Wimbledon Championships.

As a whole, Merton enjoys many fine parks, gardens and Commons that cater for all manner of recreational pursuits and interests. These open spaces are appreciated by tourists and local people alike and generally enjoyed in an environment of tolerance and mutual respect. The local authority welcomes this and the social and economic benefits that visitors bring.

The Council’s policy position on BBQs was considered by members during the second half of last year and the outcome was that the Council does not plan to adopt a policy that comprises a permanent, year-round ban on BBQs in any of its own parks and open spaces at this time. This is consistent with the view of the current Cabinet Member for Commerce, Leisure & Culture.

The Council will, however, continue to review the issue of BBQs in its parks and when, on balance, it is sensible to do so it may enforce a temporary ban on BBQs as it did during the peak of the summer heatwave of 2018. It will also listen to and

consider the advice and recommendations of the London Fire Brigade as it did last year.”

- 2.6 Members are invited to present petitions at this meeting, and a response will be provided to the next ordinary Council meeting in April 2019.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. None for the purposes of this report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. None for the purpose of this report.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. None for the purpose of this report.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. None for the purpose of this report.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. None for the purpose of this report.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. None for the purpose of this report.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None for the purpose of this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11 APPENDICES

- 11.1. None

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. None.

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