

06: Non ST Questions

From Councillor Peter McCabe to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

Could the Cabinet Member provide the Council with an update on the progress of Bishopsford Road Bridge?

Reply

We have been working hard on reopening Bishopsford Road Bridge to all traffic and we are on track to take a decision on the quickest and safest way to get the road reopened at Cabinet on 24th February. Our current programme for all options that we will start on site removing the broken parts of the bridge in March-April with the main phases of construction taking place from April onwards. This programme has been circulated to more than 3,000 homes in the latest newsletter and is available online <https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/roadworks/bishopsford-bridge>

From Councillor Nigel Benbow to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

In 2018 the road works in South Wimbledon led to six weeks of chaos and congestion for local residents and were ultimately abandoned; what lessons did the Cabinet Member learn then, and how have they been applied in 2020?

Reply

From the essential roadworks that were undertaken in 2018, we have concluded that a full road closure for the 2020 gas works is the best option for traffic management and the delivery of complex, essential utility works. Extended working hours are preferable, to a point but we are also mindful of the noise and vibration impact on immediate neighbours and previous complaints associated with emergency utility works at night. We have approved works between 8am-6pm and not 24 hour working to offer residents some respite from noise. It was beneficial to ensure that Southern Gas Networks (SGN) had a dedicated Stakeholder Engagement Officer available to attend site as and when needed, along with managing and responding to all queries and complaints from our residents and businesses.

SGN, at the Council's request, completed early communication with stakeholders, and delivered leaflets to the surrounding residents in October/November 2019 and advanced warning/early warning signs were installed in the first week of January 2020.

While the works in 2018 were postponed due to a number of reasons including an unrecorded water culvert being found under the road and the discovery of other unmarked utility apparatus. It did allow Merton and SGN to discover these in 2018 and plan the build around them in these current works. This has also ensured that SGN would have the correct processes and equipment in place to excavate around other utility provider's assets and protect them during their works.

06: Non ST Questions

We are aware that utility works cause temporary disruption to residents and unfortunately these works are necessary to ensure residents and businesses have uninterrupted access to utilities.

Residents and businesses can be kept updated on works via:

SGN's website: <https://www.sgn.co.uk/our-gas-works/major-planned-projects/merton-merton-road>

SGN's information leaflet is online at:

https://portal.one.network/downloads/cm/merton-merton-high-street-elgin-flyer-v1_2a3b602acc.pdf

Keep updated with Merton's roadwork bulletin at: <https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/roadworks/current-roadworks-and-traffic-disruptions>

From Councillor Agatha Akyigyina to the Cabinet member for Adult Social Care, Health and the Environment

Nationally, flytipping incidents have risen by 40% since 2012. Can the Cabinet member please tell us how the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices is being used as a deterrent in Merton?

Reply

The cleanliness of our borough is an issue that affects everyone who visits, lives, works or studies in Merton. The standard has dropped below what we would expect to see; and addressing this is a key priority for me.

In line with the National trend, we have been responding to a sustained increase in the volume of fly-tipped waste incidents across the borough. The regularity of waste deposited is becoming a common form of anti-social behaviour, which is damaging to both the environment the overall image of our Public Realm. On average we are clearing in excess of 1,000 fly-tipped incidents per month.

Enforcement and the issuing of Fix Penalty Notices (FPN) alone is not sufficient to combat this national issue. As such we have launched our Fly-tipping strategy which is underpinned by 3 main areas of focus;

- Early intervention – education, communication and engagement
- Preventing reoccurrence – operational service and target hardening
- Targeted enforcement – FPNs, prosecutions & vehicle stops

As part of the overt work which we have already carried out I am pleased to advise that in the last quarter (Quarter 3) of this year, our Enforcement team have caught 62 vehicles on camera depositing waste (Fly-tipping). To date, the team have issued 22 £400 fixed penalty notices. We also have a number of cases where alleged fly-tippers

06: Non ST Questions

have been requested to attend an interview under caution as the matter warrants a formal prosecution through the Courts rather than a FPN.

I am confident that with the right balance between education and engagement supported by targeted enforcement we will see a change in behaviour and a reduction in the volume of fly-tipping incidents.

In addition, the following table provides the Ward based summary of the FPNs issued by the enforcement team in 2019 to tackle fly-tipping incidents.

WARDS	2019 fines issued
Abbey	15
Cannon Hill	4
Colliers Wood	25
Cricket Green	17
Dundonald	0
Figges Marsh	116
Graveney	32
Hillside	2
Lavender Fields	6
Longthornton	50
Lower Morden	0
Merton Park	26
Pollards Hill	24
Ravensbury	40
Raynes Park	13
St Helier	11
Trinity	1
West Barnes	1
Wimbledon Park	5
Wimbledon Village	0

From Cllr Nick McLean to the Leader of the Council

Now that the United Kingdom has left the European Union, does the Leader of the Council agree that no matter how you voted in the 2016 referendum, it is now time to look ahead with confidence, come together and move forward as one?

Reply

I agree with Councillor McLean, the Conservative Leader of the Opposition, about the need to come together, but I urge this to be done not with the crowing, Hard Brexit mentality of the ERG, but rather in a spirit of conciliation, respecting the concerns of everyone including those who feel a great attachment to Europe, have friends or family who are from or live in Europe, or who simply want to visit or trade with Europe without additional barriers being put in their way.

06: Non ST Questions

Furthermore, while we hope that a deal is delivered that ensures at least as good an outcome as currently enjoyed, and an extra £350 million per week for the NHS, it is important that any failure is not blamed on those who do not support Brexit or did not vote for it. Councillor McLean's question gives the impression of being intended to lay the blame for possible future failure on those who support a strong relationship with the EU, rather than hard Brexiters, and I hope he will correct this.

From Councillor Dave Ward to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and Transport

Electric car charging points are a vital element in encouraging more environmentally-friendly travel. Can the Cabinet Member please tell Council of any plans to increase the number of these points?

Reply

We currently have 130 publicly accessible electric charging points in the borough. We intend to introduce a further 4 over the next 2 months. Officers in partnership with Blue Point will continue to investigate and implement further suitable sites.

The Council is also investigating the provisions of lamp column charging points.

Additionally, the Council uses every opportunity to impose electric charging provisions on new developments.

From Councillor Carl Quilliam to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

In light of the recent devastating crash of a truck into a resident's property on Claremont Avenue, will the Cabinet member consider supporting traffic calming measures for some of the roads close to Shannon corner and the A3 and meet with West Barnes councillors to discuss what this could look like?

Reply

Claremont Ave and much of the surrounding roads are already subject to traffic calming – many with road humps that are the most effective traffic calming features that can be applied to the public highway.

The Council has an annual programme investigating all recorded personal injury accidents throughout the borough. Damage only accidents are not recorded and therefore are not investigated. Accidents are addressed by analysing the contributory factors and in response to this particular incident and if the Council has no record of it and the Police have not reported it as a personal injury accident; it is, therefore, not possible to offer a constructive comment. Unfortunately many accidents are due to driver error / distraction and yet the perception is that it is invariably speed which is not the cause in these cases

06: Non ST Questions

Although there are currently no plans to take any action in this area, Officers would be happy to meet Ward Councillors to discuss any local traffic or highway issues.

From Councillor Edward Gretton to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Please can the Cabinet Member for Finance kindly confirm the status of the new additional Council Tax scheme proposed by the Liberal Democrat group in 2019?

Reply

The Cabinet have carefully considered this proposal and have decided not to pursue it at this stage. This has also been reviewed recently by Scrutiny who came to the same conclusion.

From Councillor Owen Pritchard to the Cabinet Member for Schools and Adult Education

Can the Cabinet Member please update Council on Merton's secondary school numbers?

Reply

For this school year, the Council has 1885 pupils in year 7 – this is 316 more than two years ago and the highest number of children in over a generation. Through the timely delivery of the new Harris Academy Wimbledon secondary school and the earlier expansion of Harris Academy Merton, we were able to ensure that all children were able to receive a school place at a local school that wanted one, though with very few spare places and so without impacting adversely on the finances of existing Good and Outstanding schools.

Demand is expected to remain at relatively similar levels for the next 3 years. We expect to ensure that there will be a secondary school place for everyone that needs it again for this September without further expansion and we expect to do so again for 2021. However, the position will continue to be closely monitored. To ensure they obtain a preference offer of a school place, parents are advised to ensure they read and follow the "Guide to applying for a secondary school place" which is on the Council's website.

From Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

Will the Cabinet Member tell us when he will reopen Bishopsford Road Bridge in Mitcham?

Reply

We have been working hard on reopening Bishopsford Road Bridge to all traffic and we are on track to take a decision on the quickest and safest way to get the road

reopened at Cabinet on 24th February. Our current programme for all options that we will start on site removing the broken parts of the bridge in March-April with the main phases of construction taking place from April onwards. This programme has been circulated to more than 3,000 homes in the latest newsletter and is available online <https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/roadworks/bishopsford-bridge>

From Councillor David Dean to the Cabinet Member to the Regeneration, Housing and Transport

Does the Cabinet Member support Stephen Hammond MP in calling for step free access to be included in the Wimbledon Chase station redevelopment?

Reply

The Council supports step free at all train stations and will support all associated campaigns. The Council will be seeking S106 contributions towards this.

From Councillor Rebecca Lanning to the Cabinet Member for Schools and Adult Education

Following the GOOD Ofsted inspection of Adult Education in Merton, can the Cabinet Member outline how this is being built on to ensure continued success?

Reply

Cabinet reinforced its commitment to providing high quality adult education for the borough at its meeting on Monday 3 February 2020 by agreeing the new strategic objectives for the service.

The London Borough of Merton is committed to providing high quality and sustainable adult learning in order to improve the social, economic, health and wellbeing of our residents. We will deliver this through a strategic investment approach: commissioning provision to the best providers in the field and using an evidence based approach to inform commissioning decisions. We aim to reduce inequalities across the borough by focussing investment on those most socially and / or economically disadvantaged whilst providing a broad range of learning opportunities to develop all of our resident's skills.

Since the transfer to a commissioning model of service it has successfully implemented its improvement action plans and has gone from a struggling provider to a successful service that is bringing in more learners and focusing its curriculum on improving the skills of residents. The commissioning model also ensures that the service is financially sustainable and able to adapt its provision to changing borough priorities.