

07a_Member Questions ST

From Councillor Billy Christie to the Cabinet member for Voluntary Sector, Partnerships and Community Safety

Following the recent horrific incident in Croydon of a gang-related fatal attack, can the Cabinet Member please remind us of ongoing measures to tackle the national knife crime crisis?

Reply

The Council and the Community Safety Partnership are working hard to ensure that Merton remains a safe borough. We have a knife crime plan which sets out a range of work covering prevention initiatives through to enforcement, we are working collaboratively to safeguard young people and young adults who become affected by knife crime and the community at large.

Merton has been innovative in its work with community groups undertaking knife sweeps in areas of concern to the community and training residents, businesses etc. prior to sweeps to educate them.

The borough remains the 4th safest in the Metropolitan area and we are committed to delivering work to maintain this position.

From Councillor James Holmes to the Cabinet Member for Voluntary Sector, Partnerships and Community Safety

Does the Cabinet Member support Wimbledon Police Station remaining open?

Reply

The decision on Wimbledon Police Station does not sit with the local authority or indeed the police. The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Sophie Linden, and MOPAC are leading on this work and will announce their decision in due course.

The council's position on this remains the same as during the consultation period. We would urge MOPAC to maintain two police stations within the borough but appreciate the financial challenges which the Metropolitan Police are under. We have good dialogue with the Borough Commander on this and she has discussed this situation with members in recent scrutiny panels. The decision does lie solely with MOPAC however.

From Councillor Nick Draper to the Cabinet member for Voluntary Sector, Partnerships and Community Safety

Anti-social behaviour is a barrier to creating and sustaining a more vibrant night time economy. Can the Cabinet member outline what measures exist to tackle this?

Reply

The Safer Merton service are leading on ASB and ASB enforcement but are a small team of two officers. The officers work in geographically defined areas and are working closely with police and others to tackle ASB related matters using powers available to them.

The team are using Community Protection Warnings, Community Protection Notices against problematic people, have closed premises under ASB legislation and have the power to use injunctions where necessary.

Merton was part of a two year scheme with the Home Office aimed at reducing alcohol related violence, where this scheme was focused on the NTE the work was successful in reducing incidents of violence but to create a healthy night time economy requires a lot of joint work.

From Councillor Paul Kohler to the Cabinet Member for Voluntary Sector, Partnerships and Community Safety

Please can the Cabinet Member provide detail of partnerships the council has built with third sector organisations on crime prevention – particularly relating to young people, but also more broadly, including any outcomes or metrics that we keep track of as part of that. This can include grant giving, any memorandums of understanding, other more informal partnerships or regular meetings?

Reply

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) in Merton is strong. Alongside statutory partners of Police, LFB and the council the quarterly meeting has attendees from CCG, public health, housing, third sector and community all present. The strongest CSPs are ones that looks, and address, both qualitative and quantitative matters as statistics alone do not always reflect the impacts of crime and ASB on the community as a whole

The CSP has, underneath it, a range of working groups which work on the delivery work against its priorities, such as burglary, violence, hate crime, vehicle crime etc. All of these working groups are made up of numerous partners which include third sector organisations.

A good example of clear third sector working comes via Merton's hate crime working group. As one of the strongest sub groups to the CSP the meeting is chaired by third sector and has third sector agencies attending who cover each strand of hate crime but there are many more examples.

Beyond the CSP, across the council a lot of organisations are engaged with us in relation to crime prevention work. This work includes groups going into schools, undertaking outreach and engagement. This work can be commissioned through the council but may also come via additional funding streams outside of the councils remit. These other means of funding are not always known to the council and bids are not always passed through the council prior to award. Over the recent past organisations

have been able to bid for funds from a range of partners including partners such as the GLA, MOPAC, the mayors Violence Reduction Unit, and the Home Office etc. In order to try and build an understanding of the networked provision we work with partners such as those listed above to have oversight on where grants are provided as we try and ensure that we are aware of what money is being invested within the borough

Our focus is on outcomes and as such the metrics used are those in the annual Action plan to reduce crime and the fear of crime. Our partnership work with voluntary sector partners breaks these down in to a broad range of actions and measurements relating to the specific areas of work.

Councillor Aidan Mundy to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Can the Cabinet member please reassure our much-valued EU citizen residents of the ongoing help and support they will receive during what will be a destabilising transition period between now and the end of December 2020?

Reply

We consider that everyone who lives in Merton is helping to make it a great place for families. We want to make sure that our European friends, neighbours and family members in Merton are getting the Settled Status their contribution to our community deserves. We do not want our community broken up, and are urging all residents who want to remain living here to apply as soon as possible for Settled Status.

The council has been promoting the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) since it opened to make sure that our EU residents can continue enjoying their right to live and work in the UK. Advice and guidance on the scheme, and contact details of organisations which provide advice have been published in My Merton and on a dedicated Brexit webpage <https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/brexit>

Leaflets and posters translated into all the EU languages have been distributed to advice providers in the borough. The council, via MVSC, has sent out bulletins to promote the EU Settlement Scheme to EU residents through the voluntary sector.

We are particularly concerned about vulnerable EU residents. To reach out to those vulnerable groups funding has been provided to Citizens Advice Merton and Lambeth (CAML) to deliver specialist EU Settlement Scheme advice services. The Association for Polish Family has also received funding from the council to support Eastern European residents to apply to the scheme, in addition to offering a free ID scanning service. South West London Law Centre (SWLLC) are another local organization which are providing legal advice on the scheme when cases are proving to be more complex. These organisations have now delivered advice to thousands of EU residents.

Caroline Holland, the council's Brexit Lead, has written to all the EU residents who are on the electoral register to encourage them to apply to the scheme well before

the deadline. A scanning service is available at the Registry Office. On Brexit Day itself the Leader of the Council took part in an advice surgery with our advice providers in Morden Library on the EUSS.

We are working closely with our children in care and reaching out to care leavers to ensure they do not lose their right to remain in the UK. The Council is engaging with schools, other community groups, and local businesses to reach out to EU residents who still haven't secured their rights under the EU Settlement scheme. We are also encouraging EU citizens who work for the council to apply to the EUSS and advice is also available to them from Citizens Advice.

From Councillor Omar Bush to the Cabinet Member for Voluntary Sector, Partnerships and Community Safety:

Since Sadiq Kahn became Mayor of London knife crime has increased by over 50%, what steps has the Cabinet Member taken to prevent knife crime in Merton?

Reply

The Council and the Community Safety Partnership are working hard to ensure that Merton remains a safe borough. We have a knife crime plan which sets out a range of work covering prevention initiatives through to enforcement, we are working collaboratively to safeguard young people and young adults who become affected by knife crime and the community at large

Merton has been innovative in its work with community groups undertaking knife sweeps in areas of concern to the community and training residents, businesses etc. prior to sweeps to educate them

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We are concerned about the increase but 50% relates to a lower starting level, however this doesn't diminish the risk and need to respond. It is worth noting however that knife crime incidents, as reported to police, do not break down where a knife is used to commit a crime. Knife crime incidents include where knives are intimidated, seen and used. For all of knife incidents in Merton roughly 25% see a knife produced but we are committed to working with all partners to safeguard the residents of the borough.

From Councillor Joan Henry to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Can the Cabinet Member please explain how the newly recommissioned Risk and Resilience Service help to improve the safety of our young residents?

Reply

The Integrated Young People's Risk and Resilience Service incorporates prevention of and interventions for substance misuse, missing (home or care), exploitation, poor

sexual health and also street-based youth work for young people aged 24 and under. The new arrangements have enabled us to target young people with swift interventions and provide more holistic prevention packages for young people who have a range of needs. As part of the recommissioning we have expanded the coverage of exploitation from child sexual exploitation to include child criminal exploitation as well. The procurement process embedded the council's long standing commitment to young to encourage their participation in service delivery and design. We therefore involved a small group of 3 young people from across Merton, including service users, who were recruited and trained as 'Young Commissioners'. Their input helped us to secure the most suitable service provider. The newly recommissioned service therefore helps to improve the safety of our young residents by holistically addressing a number of key issues that they face, and by doing so in a way that has been assessed by young people as best meeting their needs.

From Councillor Jenifer Gould to the Cabinet Member for Voluntary Sector, Partnerships and Community Safety

To reduce reliance on cars parents say they need to feel their children are safe on their school journeys if walking or cycling. Given the climate change is at the top of the agenda, can the Cabinet Member say what improvements they are planning on roads and cycle paths, with street lighting, and lighting dark alley ways to bus stops so that children can feel safe on their journeys to and from schools?

Reply

The Council attempts to work with all schools on an annual basis. This work includes establishing and maintaining school travel plans and road safety education. Apart from soft measures, the Council also considers any concerns schools may have about safety and access. In addition to these programmes. The Council has secured additional funding to improve Public Rights Way and as a result we are concentrating on those that are used by school pupils. The improvements will include surfacing, drainage and lighting.

Councillor Mary Curtin to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

Can the Cabinet member please update on the roll out of 20mph across the borough, and how it has been impacting on road safety?

Reply

The council has been introducing 20mph speed limit throughout the borough in phases. The statutory consultation for the last phase started on 30th January 2020. It is envisaged that all the works will be completed by April 2020.

The objective is to change driver behaviour – that is to say encourage drivers to travel at a consistent lower speed not just throughout the borough but from borough to borough. Merton's limit will work alongside neighbouring borough's 20mph speed limits. This is expected to bring about a cultural change so that it is socially unacceptable to drive over 20mph in London. This is part of delivering the Mayor of London and Transport for London's 'Vision Zero' objectives of reducing serious road injuries to zero.

It will take time for some drivers to fully appreciate the speed limit and change their behaviour. As currently speed and other driving offences can only be enforced by the police, they have records of the number of speed related offenses which is yet to be shared with individual Councils; London boroughs have been advised by the police that they do enforce 20mph speed limit and residents are also encouraged to access Community RoadWatch that is operated by TfL and the police. Community Roadwatch is a road safety initiative which aims to reduce speeding in residential areas, and gives local residents the opportunity to work side by side with their local police teams, and use speed detection equipment to identify speeding vehicles in their communities. Members of the public can contact Roadsafe London directly. This portal is an information and intelligence gathering tool that can inform police activity. The following link shows the address for the Roadsafe London website - <http://content.met.police.uk/Site/roadsafelondon>

The impact will be assessed by considering reports received from road users, police and accident records.

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. There are many studies that can be found on TfL's website.