

WIMBLEDON COMMUNITY FORUM
14 JULY 2020

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor James Holmes (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held via Zoom, and chaired by Councillor James Holmes. 20 residents 9 councillors attended on Zoom with 77 additional views on [YouTube](#). The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained how the meeting would work

2 UPDATE FROM MERTON COUNCIL (Agenda Item 2)

Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Leader of Merton Council gave an update on how Merton was dealing with COVID-19. Sadly 197 residents passed from COVID-19, and the leader expressed his condolences to their friends and family. It is clear that COVID-19 is having a disproportionate impact on BAME residents. The Public Health team is working on how we can address these inequalities.

The council has been supporting 7019 residents who have been shielding, with each of them directly contacted. Council staff were redeployed to support tacking pandemic, for example the Bailiffs Service has been distributing food and other essential supplies. Support from Foodbanks in Merton has also been essential.

PPE stock is in place in Merton and has been provided to care homes, we have worked across London boroughs to jointly procure 50million items. We have also accommodated 52 rough sleepers, 6 refused to be housed. We are currently working to retain the 52 in accommodation.

Reopening services

Schools have had to decide on how to meet government guidelines to accommodate some year groups and will need to develop plans for September.

Wimbledon, Colliers Wood and Mitcham libraries have reopened with a restricted service.

Garth Road Recycling and Reuse centre has opened with a booking system. All Parks facilities now all reopened.

High streets are beginning to get back to business. Support has been made available including grants to small businesses, with Merton the 3rd quickest in London to

distribute the funds. Additional discretionary grants are now being assessed along with the Chamber of Commerce and MVSC.

We have agreed an Emergency Transport Strategy to support social distancing and encourage active travel. This includes 28 new school streets funded by Government.

Local government has been urged to do what is required and Merton has done so, Government has provided some funding but Merton is still facing a £20m gap and there are similar issues in all councils.

Cllr Alambritis expressed thanks to Merton Mutual Aid, Wimbledon Guild for supporting residents, Wimbledon Foundation for providing funding and to Stephen Hammond MP, and Wimbledon Councillors for their support.

Non-COVID issues

Cabinet has passed a Climate Emergency strategy, which will go to full Council in September. Thanked Pippa Maslin for her presentation to Cabinet on behalf of the Working Group. Delivering the plan will need additional support from Government to meet its targets. There is a £88m cost to make the Council carbon neutral by 2030 whilst for a borough as a whole the cost could be £3bn.

The annual council has been postponed until September and hopefully it will involve physical attendance for the benefit of the new Mayor, Cllr Sally Kenny, but it could be virtual. Cllr Alambritis paid tribute to Cllr Janice Howard for her work during a not normal year. Subject to the council make-up from 2022 there could be an opportunity for both to perhaps serve again.

There has been an issue with unlicensed musical events taking place in Merton and we have been working with Met Police to stop these dangerous events.

AFC Wimbledon have moved their offices into Plough Lane, and the pitch has been installed, with the team moving in properly during 2020/21. The Safety advisory group is working with the club and TfL to plan for first matches.

In response to questions Cllr Alambritis said he would need to check on the development of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods including Haydon Park Road. Cllr Alambritis would hope to see cycle training reintroduced over the summer. There is £1.3m available in discretionary grants and these would be made to local businesses and charities. A resident asked about increasing council tax on high end properties, Cllr Alambritis said that rules for Council Tax are set by central government so we will be guided by their permitted level of increases.

3 WIMBLEDON TOWN CENTRE UPDATE (Agenda Item 3)

Helen Clark Bell, Chief Executive of Love Wimbledon, said it had been a difficult time for Wimbledon, and it was hard to see such a vibrant town in lockdown. Love Wimbledon has been working hard behind the scenes.

At close down there were lots of businesses who had stock to give away, Love Wimbledon linked them with local community groups to distribute. Tesco and Wilko also made regular donations. Volunteers from local business communities supported the community with kitchens being repurposed to cook hot meals for NHS staff and those in need. This showed important community connectivity.

Changing rules and regulations have been very complicated for businesses. Love Wimbledon has worked with Chamber of Commerce to be point of contact and organised webinars to help local businesses to access help. Around 50 businesses stayed open, and Love Wimbledon helped them to managed social distancing and work with the police to manage security issues and reassurance.

A number of businesses have been identified that are falling through the net, and not getting support. Raise the Bar campaign is calling for £50k rateable value cap to be increased in London. Reach Out and Connect Webinars in conjunction with Merton Council have been providing advice on how to reopen safely. Merton's Regulatory Services have provided encouragement and support to businesses.

Love Wimbledon has tried to keep residents informed about local businesses and connections with the local community. Many of these stories are featured on their [website](#).

To help reopening Love Wimbledon has been providing deep cleaning, jet washing, and hanging baskets/planters haven provided by All England Lawn Tennis Club. In addition lamppost banners and foot operated hand sanitisers have been installed. There is a national and local Love Local campaign as businesses really need support. The markets on the piazza have restarted but are smaller than usual, the next one on is on 1/2 August.

To keep up to date you can sign up for the [Monthly e-newsletter](#), or follow Love Wimbledon on social media.

4 COVID-19 IMPACT IN MERTON (Agenda Item 4)

Dr Dagmar Zeuner, Director of Public Health, Merton Council gave a presentation on the impact of the COVID-19 on the health of residents in Merton. The presentation is attached to this report.

To date there have been 939 positive tests in Merton, 25th of the 32 boroughs in London per 100,000. There have been 201 deaths, with a significant number of

additional deaths in March and April, many non-COVID. The additional non-COVID deaths may be due to some under reporting in care homes and other places and indirect deaths due to not accessing healthcare when they needed it. Number of deaths is now in line with the same time period in 2019.

COVID-19 has not been evenly distributed with a higher death rate in East of borough than the west and higher incidence for BAME residents and those in high risk occupations.

Outbreak control

There is now low infection rates in London but we need to prepare for new clusters. Local authorities are working with the NHS and the national contact tracing scheme to track patterns. Merton Council is also making contact with high risk settings and working with them. Testing is essential to this so very important residents understand where to [get a test](#) if they show symptoms or have in been in contact with someone who has COVID-19. We are also preparing for the autumn/winter as there will be additional risks associated with flu and cold season.

There are community actions that can help prevent the spread:

- Handwashing, face-coverings, social distancing, testing.
- Be aware of potential fraud
- Use GP and other services
- Get COVID-19 fit – stop smoking, lose weight, get fitter
- Manage long-term conditions
- Flu jabs
- Support for mental health

In response to a question about the use of face masks Dr Zeuner said that the evidence is not clear-cut on their effectiveness which is why there has been so much discussion. On balance even the limited impact is better than nothing and outweighs any potential harms. Important to lead to by example so all Merton Council staff have been given face coverings. We expect it to become more socially normalised and exceptional not to wear.

A resident asked about long term support for those with COVID-19 and Dr Zeuner said this is an important issue. Generally COVID-19 is a mild disease for many but for some it can cause horrible effects. Spending weeks in ICU will require rehabilitation. In South West London the NHS is coordinating support services to those residents. More is being learnt and research continues. Employers will also need to be understanding and recovery can take some time.

A resident asked if COVID-19 means changes need to be made to housing policy. Dr Zeuner said we need to be wary of bending everything to COVID as there are other benefits or issues to consider. We do need to rethink but consider the balance.

Human beings are wired to have social contact so need to balance that with social distancing. Lots of research still taking place.

Asked if flu vaccination programmes will be safe Dr Zeuner said that health services are open so make sure that if you are eligible then please don't skip. Please encourage friends and neighbours. There will be a massive effort in the NHS, and you can get vaccine from GPs, pharmacies, and even some supermarkets.

In response to a question about diabetes Dr Zeuner said this already a priority for the Health and Well Being Board. We want to prevent Type 2, and reverse some cases through healthy living. We also need to change our environment to help make lifestyles healthier, which fits with climate emergency agenda. Services also need to support those who have diabetes.

5 WIMBLEDON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING GROUP (Agenda Item 5)

Lynne Gordon and Deborah Crosby gave a presentation on the work of the Wimbledon Neighbourhood Planning Group (WNPG). The presentation is attached to the report.

Change in Wimbledon was fairly rapid, and it has been identified as an area of opportunity in London Plan. We also need consider impact of climate emergency and impact of online retail on the High Street. Neighbourhood Planning is about empowering the local community and working out what local people want in their area. Neighbourhood Planning allows the community to set policies on building type, design, public safety, sustainability, green spaces, and heritage. By bringing together different interest groups we can support growth and make sure best of Wimbledon is retained.

The Neighbourhood Planning Group had its inaugural meeting on 25 January and it is now working towards being designated as a Neighbourhood Forum. To achieve this, it needs to agree the boundary of the area, build a network of community and organisational representatives. The area proposed is a larger Wimbledon area from the Wandle to the Common, from Merton Park to Wimbledon Park. The WNPG is having conversations with community groups in this area about if they want to be included. We need the community to become WNPG members, which is free to do so, and can be done [online](#).

A resident asked how we ensure a broad base of views and the plan is not hijacked by vested interests, in response Lynne and Deborah said they are looking at existing ground work done by Future Wimbledon, will also then spend time researching to find out what matters most to people. They will be ensuring representation across the area from businesses, groups, and a range of communities. They are early on this journey but as soon as possible will be reaching out and having a recruitment drive

with a communications plan being developed. In response to a question about the Local Plan Lynne and Deborah said that the Neighbourhood plan will look to fill in the gaps in the Local Plan and the Wimbledon Supplementary Planning Document covers a much smaller area and has fewer issues.

6 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 6)

Councillor Holmes thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Date of next meeting:

Future meetings are all at 7.15pm and will take place in the Arts Space at Wimbledon Library subject to COVID-19 regulations.

- Wednesday 23 September 2020
- Tuesday 1 December 2020
- Thursday 25 March 2020