

MORDEN COMMUNITY FORUM

14 OCTOBER 2020

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors (in the Chair), Councillor Pauline Cowper

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held via Zoom, and chaired by Councillor Pauline Cowper. Two residents and seven councillors attended on Zoom with 44 additional views on YouTube. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained how the meeting would work.

2 UPDATE FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (Agenda Item 2)

Councillor Stephen Alambritis gave the annual report he provides to all of the community forums.

Sadly 205 people in Merton have died from COVID-19, and Stephen offered his condolences. Merton Council is working closely with care homes to support them including provision of PPE. Merton is still on lower end of infection scales at 40 cases per 100,000 but this is going up. We are working with all the leaders across London as it is important to work together, including a joint procurement project which sourced 50million pieces of PPE.

Merton is also researching in the issues behind inequality of BAME residents in relation to COVID. In Merton more than 7000 residents were shielded, all of whom were contacted and offered support. Merton redeployed staff to help with the crisis, for example the Bailiffs team were tasked with distributing food parcels.

The local community also came together to support residents and Stephen highlighted the work of the MVSC Hub at Vestry Hall, Merton Mutual Aid, Dons Local Action Group, Commonsides Trust, and foodbanks, as well as paying tribute to the many volunteers who contributed. Stephen also thanked Councillors and the MPs for their support.

Merton is joining Croydon to nominate Patrick Hutchinson for a bravery award following his rescuing of a rival protester in London.

Services are reopening with Garth Road no longer needing booking at weekends, but booking required Monday – Friday and all libraries have reopened. Merton was the

3rd quickest in London in getting government grants out to local businesses. Helped 2000+ SME businesses. Merton also waived rents as a landlord. Stephen was pleased that cultural funding has supported Wimbledon Bookfest which is an important event for Merton.

Merton has an [Emergency transport strategy](#) including 26 school streets. We have used and Experimental Management Order as we were asked by government to move quickly. Also 52 rough sleepers were helped into accommodation during lockdown, with 8 refusing the offer of help. We hope the Government will provide support to help find long term solutions. COVID has had a significant impact on Merton Council finances, with both extra spending on COVID-19, and a loss of income. Stephen called on government to support all local government.

Stephen gave an update on the Mitcham Bridge on Bishopford Road. Stephen said there had been a pause for the planning application to be considered. This will go to committee this month and we hope to let contact in November, and the new bridge then built by spring 2021.

Stephen welcomed the £500m investment in the Epsom and St Helier Trust but believe it should be used to keep services at St Helier. We have referred the proposals to downgrade St Helier Hospital to the Secretary of State for Health, and he has asked the independent reconfiguration panel to review the decision taken by the Clinical Commissioning Group.

AFC Wimbledon's new stadium is nearly finished, with the first match due to be played behind closed doors on 3 November. This will help regenerate Plough Lane area, including more than 800 new housing units.

Merton has a new Mayor, Councillor Sally Kenny has taken on this very important role. These are difficult times but Cllr Howard had shown it was possible to still raise significant funds.

Stephen said that he hoped the More Morden project would begin work in Spring 2021. We are working with TfL but COVID has impacted on the scheme with a depressed development market. We are currently working up options to begin in Spring 2021

New Mayor, Sally Kenny. Very important role, difficult times but Cllr Howard proved it was possible to raise significant funds during her term.

3 EMISSIONS BASED PARKING CHARGES CONSULTATION (Agenda Item 3)

Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration introduced the item and explained why Merton is consulting on changes to charges and why now. Introducing emissions based charging was always planned, but in the last consultation the proposed changes did not include emissions as the technology to deliver it was not available.

Covid-19 has meant that public transport not available so during the lockdown we saw a move nationally to encourage much more active travel. In outer London car use now at 150% of previous levels so this is an issue that still needs addressing. We have delayed this consultation due to lock down, as the proposal was originally agreed to go out to consultation in the spring.

The proposed approach builds on the previous consultation. We do not have control over vehicles passing through the borough so we know the proposals do not take into account movement of vehicles. However, it is important to take a proportionate approach to the tools we have.

Ben Stephens, Head of Parking Services gave a presentation on the details of the proposals and the presentation is attached to this report. Ben explained that more than half of London boroughs either have or are introducing some form of emissions based charging. It is proposed that a supplementary charge based on the approach in the London ULEZ scheme will replace the current diesel levy. The consultation will remain open until 23 October 2020.

FOLLOWING THE MEETING: the consultation was extended to 26 October.

Cllr Holden asked how many people in Morden will be impacted and how this compares to other areas. Ben said that this proposals affects all controlled parking zones, on-street parking and off-street parking. The majority of CPZs are in Wimbledon, with many also in Morden, Colliers Wood and Raynes Park. There are fewer controlled zones in Mitcham.

The busiest on street and off street parking is in town centres.

Cllr Foley asked how many of 57% who responded in favour of emissions charging were car owners and how many responses were there. Ben said there were nearly 3000 responds to consultation, but will need to check the figures.

FOLLOWING the meeting these figures were checked. 2746 people responded to the question on whether they agreed Merton Council should prioritise lower polluting vehicles by offering a lower parking charge over highly polluting vehicles. Of these 532 (19%) strongly agreed and 1037 (38%) agreed. 2558 said they owned a car, and 18% of car owners strongly, and 37% agreed. Non-car owners were more likely to strongly agree (39%) with 32% also agreeing.

Cllr Southgate asked that as TfL has extended bus lanes extended to 24/7 will Merton do the same. Chris Lee said we have no plans will keep this under review as it will depend on congestion levels

Cllr Draper asked if we could include a wider range of examples explaining the impact and also asked if there would be special cases. Chris said we can add examples to website. We have completed Equalities Impact Assessment and will use this to inform decision. We already have a carer's permit which will not be increased. We do not have a policy around low pay. Business permits may increase depending on the emissions of the vehicle but would be significantly reduced if they move to an electric vehicle.

A resident asked if existing scratchcards be still be excepted, and Ben confirmed Merton would honour any already sold.

A resident asked if any additional income would be spent on improving roads. Chris said that it is prescribed by law that any parking income has to be spent on transport. A number of areas could be invested in with any additional income to improve infrastructure.

Cllr Crowe said that emission taxes should be fairly applied but this discriminates against CPZ areas, would it be possible to put all areas into a CPZ and then only charge the emissions element. Chris said that current CPZ arrangements are currently based on residents petitioning for them, so whilst this idea would have a logic, would break this policy. We would welcome ideas to be submitted as part of consultation.

4 COVID-19 UPDATE (Agenda Item 4)

Barry Causer, Head of Strategic Commissioning, Public Health gave a presentation on the current situation with COVID, and the presentation is attached to this report.

The key message is that there is a new national three tier system introduced and the level in London, and therefore Merton is medium, the lowest level. Positive cases are increasing across London and in Merton especially for 18-29 year olds and 30-65 year olds. If this trend continues we are likely to see the alert level in London escalate. There is now additional testing capacity in London but tests should only be requested if you are symptomatic, are taking part in a government pilot project or if asked to by the NHS before having surgery or another procedure.

Community action is vital, in order to prevent outbreaks and reducing the health harms. In particular residents are asked to:

- Prevent transmission through the rule of 6, regular handwashing and using face-coverings.

- Get tested if symptomatic
- Respond and follow the advice of NHSTest and Trace
- Be aware of potential fraud
- NHS is open
- Get COVID fit to reduce the risk of complications e.g. stop smoking
- Manage long-term conditions
- Get support for mental health
- Get your flu jabs

COVID-19 Community Champions have been set up in Merton. Anyone who lives or works in Merton and is able to share key messages and information. 50 volunteers so far, with drop in sessions on Wednesdays. You can register [online](#).

5 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 5)

There was an update on an item discussed at the last meeting.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has announced their final proposals for new ward boundaries. These are available on their website. <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/>. The proposals will now be put before parliament and should be in place for the 2022 local elections.

Councillor Cowper thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting. The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 24 February 2021

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