

COLLIERS WOOD AND NE MITCHAM COMMUNITY FORUM
1 OCTOBER 2020

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor John Dehaney (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held via Zoom, and chaired by Councillor John Dehaney. Two residents and four councillors attended on Zoom with 53 additional views on YouTube. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained how the meeting would work.

2 LONDON ASSEMBLY UPDATE (Agenda Item 2)

Leonie Cooper, Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth gave an update on her work. Leonie said she is happy to attend local meetings on Zoom and can be contacted by [email](#).

City Hall is usually buzzing and active but most members and staff have been working from home since 19 March. Chairs of committees still need to attend City Hall but most others connect from home. The economy in London has a huge issues, for individuals and businesses, and the Economy Committee investigation into the high street has continued. On Housing Committee members are looking at what happens to homeless who were housed as an emergency measure. The Environment committee also looking at impacts from pandemic.

A resident asked about the cycle lane on CS7. Leonie responded that Department for Transport funding was offered to councils to quickly change spaces to encourage walking and cycling, and make social distancing easier. This included introducing wands on the cycle lane along the A24 from Balham to Morden, and through Colliers Wood, in order to create a safe segregated space for cycling. The changes have been implemented to allow for increased walking and cycling, which people are choosing due to COVID, but to allow this, the changes were required due to a history of accidents on this road. More walking and cycling also helps improve air quality, which is a good thing, as poor air quality has been associated with more serious COVID illness. This is an 18 month trial and Transport for London welcomes [views on the scheme](#) and residents can [email](#) as well. Leonie has received comments supporting the scheme, some would like to see an extension of the segregation, and others feel the changes are awful. Leonie is in contact with Will Norman and Heidi Alexander to raise concerns on behalf. Changes have been made to address serious

injuries and air quality. A lot of parking has been removed, London Fire Brigade and Met Police have said there is no impact on response times. More adjustments to bus stops will be made to make it easier for passengers, especially those with visual impairment.

A resident asked about the Mayor of London's view on changes to parking provision. Leonie said the Mayor has been consulting on changes to the 5% of roads under TfL. The Mayor has been offering schools money to install green walls, and is encouraging boroughs to address air quality. TfL is also addressing polluting buses. Cleaning up London's air has become even more important to help prevent serious illness from COVID. We also need Londoners to improve their cars. The Ultra-Low Emission Zone expansion will expand to South Circular in 2021, and this will help across London as owners change their cars. Also all new taxis need to be electric. There are no plans to expand the ULEZ beyond the South Circular but this will need to be reviewed over time.

Cllr Gretton asked about Uber drivers not being supported by the Mayor of London. Leonie said TfL have engaged Uber and other similar companies but Uber have not behaved as well as others. The main issue was with passenger safety. Leonie also explained that the extension to congestion-charge was a condition of the central government financial support to TfL. That agreement also included ending Zip card for under 18s. London politicians across all parties are working together to keep the concession.

3 COUNCIL UPDATE - LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR STEPHEN ALAMBRITIS (Agenda Item 3)

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. 38 of these died in care homes, and Merton Council is working closely with care homes to support them. 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. The local community also came together to support residents and Stephen highlighted the work of Merton Mutual Aid, Dons Local Action Group, Commonsense Trust, and foodbanks, as well as paying tribute to the many volunteers who contributed. Stephen also thanked the local MPs Siobhan McDonald and Stephen Hammond.

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. 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.

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.

Sutton and Merton are still on lower end of infection scales, and Stephen paid tribute to Director of Public Health and her staff of their hard work. Merton redeployed staff to help with the crisis, for example the Bailiffs team were tasked with distributing food parcels.

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.

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.

Cllr Mark Allison, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, was asked by the Chair to provide an update on the Council's finances. He said Merton has used its resources to support the community and worked in partnership with local groups. Merton has distributed more than government has provided to local businesses. Around £27m has been spent on COVID that has not been reimbursed. This equates to 25% of council tax income. Merton will need to dip into reserves and will need to make cuts of around £17m for 2021/2. We hope the government will acknowledge the shortfall and meet these additional needs.

Cllr Gretton asked about the Government commitment to provide 75p in £1 in lost income. Cllr Allison responded that this is welcome but the shortfall will still have a huge impact, and in practice the support is unlikely to be as high as 75%. This will still mean significant cuts to local services.

4 EMISSIONS BASED PARKING CHARGES CONSULTATION (Agenda Item 4)

Cath James, Assistant Director of Public Protection, 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. The ULEZ scheme will replace the current diesel levy. The consultation will remain open until 23 October 2020.

Cllr Gretton asked about parking scratch cards, saying that residents found them quick and convenient, but have increased from £1.50 to £8.50 at the top end of the scale. Ben Stephens said that in the consultation there is a scale for scratch cards and visitor permits, and these will be cheaper for less polluting, higher for more polluting cars.

A resident asked about cars being parked on streets that were not in Controlled Parking Zones. Cath James said that CPZs are resident led in Merton, areas have selected to have controls and to pay to restrict outside use. Merton Council only has certain powers so has to use the ones we have.

5 COVID-19 COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS (Agenda Item 5)

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 positive cases are increasing across London and in Merton. 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 NHS Test 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](#).

A question was asked about the impact of reopening of schools. Barry said that the risk to children of becoming severely ill is low and there are negative impacts of being out of school. Schools have done a huge amount of work to reduce the risk of transmission and have risk assessments in place. When schools have had small outbreaks they have been supported by Public Health and CSF to manage them.

Councillor Dehaney thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

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