

1. From: Kevin Clarke

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Dundonald Primary School was identified as a School Street candidate in the June Cabinet report but no plans were published and the school was not included in the August Cabinet Member report/Decision Notice. Please outline the reasons why safety measures for children travelling to Dundonald School could not be advanced?

Reply

The school street programme that we have recently delivered was an extremely challenging programme- large number of schemes within an extremely tight time frame and limited available funding. It simply would not have been possible to include all the schools in the borough. Additionally, those schools located on local distributor roads would require the appropriate and greater level of assessment in particular with regards to the impact on the surrounding roads – something that we did not have the time or the funding for.

2. From: Barry Smith

To the Cabinet Member for Children and Education

What proportion of Merton pupils are unable to fully access online learning due to lack of equipment/internet connection and what is Merton council doing to support these children being able to access home learning as fully as their peers?

Reply

The Council does not collect the numbers of these pupils to gather a Borough wide picture. However, individual schools are aware of who these pupils are, and are providing paper copy work for them in the event of their needing to self-isolate without access to online learning technology. We are also working to increase access to suitable equipment / online connectivity. The Education Division ensures that information is sent to all our schools about all schemes, national and local, to provide equipment and internet connections, and supports schools in making applications to these schemes. Most recently the Council has allocated funding for additional equipment for pupils facing 'digital disadvantage' and any requirement to self-isolate, and is working with schools with the highest proportion of disadvantages pupils to identify those young people with immediate need.

3. From: Luke Taylor

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Of the proposed School Streets schemes across the borough, how many are currently active and when are the rest due to become active?

Reply

In 2019 we introduced 3 school streets. During Sept/Oct 2020 we introduced 25 school streets. We now have 28 active school streets. There is only one pending TfL approval which we believe to be soon.

4. From: Kirsten Galea

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health

When does the council expect the CCG to have the first Long Covid clinics in place to start seeing patients in South West London?

Reply

Services to support those suffering long Covid symptoms are currently available in all four South West London Trusts, in line with the national specification. Colleagues across the Trusts are working towards developing one networked service by the end of this month (November).

5. From: Richard Poole

To the Cabinet Member for Children and Education

How many Merton schools were able to put in place meals or vouchers for those families eligible for Free School Meals over the recent half term, what proportion of those children eligible were covered by this provision? How many meals/vouchers were issued and what was the cost to the council?

Reply

The council agreed to reimburse schools for support they provided to families eligible for Free School Meals over the October half term up to the value of £15 per child, and if they had not done so to provide supermarket vouchers or hampers retrospectively.

As of 13 November, 23 schools had submitted a claim to the council for 2,473 pupils, to the value of £36,013. Since this is less than half of schools we expect that substantially more children have benefitted but there is a lag in schools claiming from the council.

6. From: Dr Simon Jones

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health

How does the current level of demand for health services compare to previous years and what steps are being taken to pro-actively reach out to groups of people where demand is significantly below expected levels to encourage take up of services?

Reply

The current level of demand for health services varies across services. In this response we focus on the impact on secondary care, which considers diagnostic, urgent and emergency care and referral activity. We also consider the impact on general practice and mental health services, in addition to the work being done to encourage greater uptake of these services.

Secondary care

South West London and CCG performance against waiting standards is just under 60%. This is the highest performing in London, but work is being done to meet the full recovery target of 92%.

Since June, there has been a steady return to business and usual activity (BAU) and in August, the backlog of patients waiting over 18 weeks reduced by 5,719. South West London is now at 98% of BAU activity for first outpatient work and 81% for admitted activity. Patients on waiting lists are actively contacted and booked in.

Provider and CCG performance also achieved the two week wait standard for cancer in August, at 96.6% and 96.4% respectively. South West London again leads London in performance against this target.

The activity in diagnostics were tracking at 89% against pre-COVID-19 activity levels showing that South West London is making progress on the reduction of the backlog. Some diagnostics are being carried out in primary care to support this, and reduce waiting times for patients.

Urgent and Emergency Care: attendances at A&E are tracking at 78% of BAU levels but are also impacted by initiatives to use 111 more effectively . 111 calls are 32% higher than this time last year

Referral volumes are steadily increasing however they remain approximately 20% lower than the same period last year (as of August 2019). There are national and local campaigns for patients to present early

Mental Health

Mental health service activity across inpatient, community and primary care is well in excess of levels in 2019 / 2020.

Referral and access to psychological therapies (IAPT) also continues to increase. IAPT recovery has maintained a steady performance throughout with the move to virtual appointments. South West London CCG continues to meet the dementia diagnosis target, but challenges in undertaking assessments during COVID-19 means work is being undertaken, such as monitoring by the Mental Health Transformation Board, to ensure this performance is not interrupted

Primary Care

GP practices are actively reaching out to their most vulnerable patients, including those living with long term conditions, those living with a learning disability and severe mental illness. They continue to target children for immunisations and women for cervical smears and have made very good progress on delivering the flu vaccination this year. Once again, they are ranked first in London. The national campaign promoting the NHS is open continues.

**7. From: Matthew James Willis
To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health**

What measures will Merton Council be putting in place to support clinically vulnerable (previously shielded) people during the November lockdown?

Reply

Merton Council recognises the impact and disruption the Covid-19 pandemic is having on residents lives and their wellbeing. The impact is particularly evident on residents who are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV). This is the group who were previously shielding and lists have continued to be updated with names added and removed throughout the pandemic.

Since the initial outbreak earlier in the year Merton Council has been working closely with its partners in the voluntary sector to ensure that all residents have the support they need. The Merton Community Response Hub has been set up and has been operating since March 2020. This provides residents with a single point of contact for any queries or support they may need during the Covid-19 pandemic. The types of support available includes support with shopping and assisting CEV residents with priority online supermarket slots, collection of prescriptions and signposting to a range of services. Services signposted to include organisations that can support individuals on subjects such as money management, employment, benefits and housing.

Any CEV resident who contacts the national CEV hub requiring support will be contacted by Merton Council to ascertain their support needs and who will put arrangements in place with local partners.

**8. From: Shipra Gupta
To the Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Public Safety and Tackling Crime**

What measures is Merton Council putting in place to support and assist victims of domestic abuse during the November lockdown?

Reply

Referrals for domestic violence incidents are screened and then presented at the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), which is held every three weeks. The MARAC is chaired by a representative from the police and includes membership from all relevant sectors including Adult Social Care, Housing, Children Schools and Families as well as voluntary sector partners. A social worker from the Merton safeguarding team is a regular participant to the MARAC meetings where full sharing information agreements are applied. If there are urgent cases that fall out of the set meeting timescales 'extra ordinary' multi-agency meetings are arranged. The arrangements for working with victims of domestic abuse have remained in place during the pandemic and while the group meet using video conferencing the work has continued to support people throughout with victim support continuing to operate a

virtual one stop service. Merton's Domestic Violence and Abuse services are still operating virtually and have done so since the end of March.

- Information about services has been put out on social media on a regular basis since the end of March.
- Victims have been advised that they are allowed to leave their house if they are not safe and that police officers will go into a house to ensure someone's safety.
- 16 days against violence and abuse campaign takes place in November 25th November – 10th December and there will be information going out on Social media to advertise services.
- Support services within Merton are still operating virtually and continue to support victims.

For more information, please visit: www.merton.gov.uk/domesticviolence

9. From: Tony Burton

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Please explain, in the light of the Local Government Association's guidance on "Probity in Planning" that "Every council should regularly review the way in which it conducts its planning business" when the last review was undertaken and what changes were made?

Reply

The planning service is constantly adjusting its service in response to changes in legislation and government guidance. For example the Planning Applications Committee reviewed and adjusted its public speaking arrangements in 2018 and this year the service was established virtually in response to the pandemic.

Members of the planning Committee operate within a published code of conduct to ensure procedures are adhered to. It is understood the last one was over 10 years ago and the matter is kept under review to see if changes or a review is needed. However, given the current national emergency, it is not considered that resources should be directed to such a review at this particular time given other service pressures and as it is not a formal statutory requirement to do so.

10. From: Jane Plant

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Assuming council's declaration of climate emergency intends to arrest the degradation of the environment, will forthcoming policies to achieve this, including the Local Plan and Tree Strategy, address the true monetary value that trees contribute, or will compensation for losing a mature tree to development continue to be a sapling?

Reply

I would like to start by thanking Jane Plant for her work as coordinator of the Tree Warden Group in Merton.

Neither the current nor emerging Local Plan policy on trees specifies the size or age of a tree to be used as replacement tree. Both the current and emerging policies require applicants to have regard to BS 5837:2012 'Trees in relation to construction - Recommendations', BS 3998:2010 'Tree Work – Recommendations' and other relevant documentation such as the Arboricultural Advisory and Information Service's 'Arboricultural Practice Note 12

Both the current and emerging planning policies also state that the council may require semi-mature replacement trees when, for example, the original trees had an important landscape or screening function.

11. From: Mary Butler

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

When did Merton Council last give planning permission for an application for a significant new building or structure without elevations, plans and sections at 1:50 or 1:100 scale, and how was this requirement met by the “General Arrangements” plans included with the application for a replacement Mitcham Bridge (20/P2438)?

Reply

Merton receive over 4000 planning applications per year and it is not possible to answer the specific question raised in terms of the plan sizes and when Merton last gave planning permission for such an application. Historically, planning applications are often very different requiring varied assessments and what might be relevant to one application in terms of the submission may not be applicable to another. Officers use their judgement to ensure sufficient information is submitted to ensure all applications can be properly assessed

In any event, plans included with the planning application for Bishopsford Road Bridge, ref; 20/P2438, fully complied with the Council's published validation requirements.

1. Site Location Plan, Scale 1:1250
2. Proposed Elevation and General Arrangements, which includes the following;
 - Sections, Scale 1:50
 - Plans, Scale 1:50
 - Elevations, 1:50
 - Details of boundary treatments and materials, Scale 1:25
3. Proposed Highway Plan Scale 1:1250

4. Proposed reinstatement details of the new bridge, Scale 1:50
5. Existing images and CGI for the proposals,
6. Various other plans imbedded within the submitted technical documents; including flood risk and WFD Screening and Scoping (existing and proposed bridge structure), Ecology, Trees and other reports

12. From: Daniel Goode

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Please provide specifics regarding what official investigations – by experts – were undertaken to ascertain if the wall to be removed in the Bishopsford/Mitcham Bridge rebuild is the last remaining extant structure from the house (and estate) that once stood on the Ravensbury Park site and therefore it's age/historic importance.

Reply

As set out in the heritage strategy submitted with the planning permission https://planning.merton.gov.uk/MVM.DMS/Planning%20Application/1000111000/1000111309/20P2438_Heritage%20Statement.pdf, the heritage consultant visited the site. The report sets out their investigation of the wall and states "The existing wall is approximately 6ft in height and prevents views into the park, whilst also enclosing one side of the road leading to the bridge. It comprises brickwork of varying date, some 19th century but much of it has been rebuilt (as evident in Fig.19). This arrangement encourages pedestrians to edge near to the road and is not ideal. The report also states on page 27:

The existing brickwork of the wall is in a poor condition. The bricks themselves are of no particular interest and of varying date, but the patina of age and the overall character of the wall, within the context of the bridge and the conservation area, has been considered and acknowledged.

13. From: Chris Stanton

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Please provide details of the information showing how the plans for the new Mitcham Bridge (20/P2438) are "fully compliant" with Local Transport Note 1/20 and the 2014 London Cycling Design Standards, as stated by the case officer to the Planning Applications Committee on 22-10-20.

Reply

As set out in the Committee Report, the design follows the guidance in Local Transport Note 01/20 in providing a shared surface of 3.0m as a better provision than providing nothing at all for cyclists as stated in the Local Transport Note 01/20. London Cycle Design Standards 2014 also allow for shared surfaces where there isn't space for segregation, particularly on a short stretch.

14. From: Sandra Vogel
To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

The Modifications Sheet presented to Planning Applications Committee on 22 October for planning application 20/P2438 (Mitcham Bridge) fails to mention that six objections were received on 21 and 22 October, focusing instead only on representations of support. Why was the PAC kept in the dark about late objections received?

Reply

The above noted objection letters were only sent to the planning representations in box. Planning officers were not copied into the email, therefore planning officers did not have the immediate opportunity to view these objection letters before PAC, as they were all uploaded by the admin team on 23/10/20.

Planning records show these objections were received on 21/10/20 and 22/10/20. The planning Applications Committee was held on 22/10/20 at 7:15pm.

1. Received 21/10/20 @ 11:51am - objection received without address, planning admin wrote back to objector, response received, Planning admin uploaded on internal explorer 26/10/20.
2. Received 21/10/20 @ 1:49am - Uploaded on internal explorer 23/10/20.
3. Received 21/10/20 @ 9:10am - Uploaded on internal explorer 23/10/20.
4. Received 21/10/20 @ 12:26pm - Uploaded on internal explorer 23/10/20.
5. Received 21/10/20 @ 9:49am - Uploaded on internal explorer 23/10/20.
6. Received 22/10/20 @ 3:01am - Uploaded on internal explorer 23/10/20.
7. Received 22/10/20 @ 12:12pm - Uploaded on internal explorer 23/10/20.

The above noted objection letters were only sent to the planning representations in box. Planning officers were not copied into the email, therefore planning officers did not have the immediate opportunity to view these objection letters before PAC, as they were all uploaded by the admin team on 23/10/20.

It is considered to be reasonable for the planning admin team to be allowed reasonable time to upload comments given the number received by the section, although they try and do this as soon as practicably possible. With late comments being received a day before or on the day of PAC it is unfortunate they were not reported to Committee, however, there is a risk that such late comments may not be uploaded in-time for officers to view and report verbally. This is especially important given the current remote working situation where person to person contact in the office

is significantly reduced. The application had been in the public domain for some time with the initial consultation taking place 11 August 2021 and the standard consultation period requesting comments to be received by 1 October. In any event, the letters mentioned above raised issues already fully covered in the report to members so it is considered no one was prejudiced by them not being reported to members.

With regards to the letters/petitions in support of the scheme, please note that these were hand-delivered to planning administration and also emailed directly to planning officers. Therefore, officers were aware of these comments in-time to be able to report verbally at PAC.

15. From: Carolyne Price

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

For the new Mitcham Bridge the council is destroying 7.75m depth of park and trees to gain 1.34m needed for its scheme. 16 trees at risk fall outside the 1.34m strip. Why flatten the whole wood to requisition so small an amount of land?

Reply

As set out in the arboriculture report submitted with the planning permission [https://planning.merton.gov.uk/MVM.DMS/Planning%20Application/1000111000/1000111309/20P2438_CGO%20Ecology%20-%20\(trees\).pdf](https://planning.merton.gov.uk/MVM.DMS/Planning%20Application/1000111000/1000111309/20P2438_CGO%20Ecology%20-%20(trees).pdf) and referenced in the Committee report, of the 47 trees and two groups surveyed, 23 trees will be removed. About half have to be removed to facilitate the development, and the other half are unsuitable for retention and would have to be removed regardless of the development. Reasons for removal include where trees are dead, dying or overhanging the road.

16. From: Emma Maddison

To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

How is Merton Council monitoring Veolia's performance on collection of recyclables introduced for home collection with the current contract? What action is taken by Merton Council on performance monitoring/requiring action from Veolia where residents have complained about non-collection/improper collection of recyclables (e.g. recyclables collected as landfill)?

Reply

The operational performance of the contract is overseen and managed in a number of different ways in order to maintain and improve performance for the benefit of our residents. The contract monitoring function is managed within the Public Space division whose primary role is to monitor the contract through site visits and daily interaction with the contractors' Neighbourhood Environmental Managers, residents, stakeholders and local Members.

They also gather intelligence and information, analyzing data held in the Council's customer management system to the target where improvements are required. In addition, they have access to the contractor's operational management systems in order to determine what resources are being used in order to deliver the services and when. Through their work they are developing strong relationships with key stakeholders as well as intricate knowledge of the wards for which they are responsible. This helps them to pre-empt problems and resolve issues in order to avoid disruption and inconvenience to our residents.

The level of missed collections is a key indicator of how the collection service is performing. Following the service change in October 2018 and the introduction of wheelie bins the trend for the number of missed collections /per 100K has fallen steadily and the current level of missed collections is averaging at just over 1 missed collection per crew per day.

With regards to the improper collection of recycling material where it is alleged that there has been mixing of waste stream each incident is investigated by our service provider and the findings assessed by the client team . This will include vehicle footage taken from the vehicles cameras, route data of each collection round serving the identified location and tonnage data of the waste disposed of from the individual rounds.

Residents should continue to report missed collections via the Council website so they can be rectified quickly.

**17. From: Paul Sheehan
To the Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Public Safety and Tackling Crime**

Please provide precise figures for the number - and type – of a) crimes and b) antisocial incidents reported to the police and/or Merton Council, along the path running through the green space between the footbridge over the Wandle at Bishopsford/Mitcham Bridge and London Road over the last three years.

Reply

The Met Police's response to the planning application for Bishopsford Bridge includes a table of different types of crime in the local area.

https://planning.merton.gov.uk/MVM.DMS/Planning%20Application/1000111000/1000111309/20P2438_Comments_25.08.2020.pdf

The Met Police's response states that the open rail design is of benefit security wise as it will facilitate natural surveillance to the nature reserve, Ravensbury Park and towards the western footbridge. The removal of the wall separating Ravensbury Park and London road A217 and replacing with railing again would allow for greater visibility along the pedestrian footpath so reduce the chance of crime, fear of crime and avoidance of the area.

18. From: Andrea Milde
To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

When will Merton Council (a) review the probity of its planning decision on the new Mitcham Bridge (20/P2438) given the misinformation presented to the Committee or (b) prepare revised plans that have a lower environmental impact and are compliant with cycling standards?

Reply

(a) The Council is not aware of any misinformation presented to Committee. The planning application went through the appropriate due process including full public consultation. All relevant issues raised were discussed in the report so members were fully informed before the decision was made. It is considered that no probity review is required.

(b) As set out the Committee report, planning permission 20/P2438 should result in net biodiversity gain as well as providing more space for walking and cycling than in the previous bridge. Ecological enhancements include:

- Planting 26 trees to replace those that will be removed or are dead
- Installing 5 bat boxes and 5 bird boxes in nearby trees
- Installing one hedgehog home
- Installing a mammal ledge under the bridge for the use of otters
- bring intrinsic improvements to channel flow and bed characteristics, increasing the extent of gravel bed available for spawning fish by building a single span bridge.
- Providing additional planting and landscaping adjacent the bridge to provide a habitat for water voles.

The Environment Agency and Natural England did not object to the planning application.

19. From: Pippa Maslin
To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Please provide details (including scale drawings and plans) of the 'segregated cycle lane' being provided on the new Mitcham Bridge, as cited in Merton Council's press release announcing planning permission, and where it is included in the documents accompanying the planning application 20/P2438.

Reply

Please see the documents and drawings on Merton's planning explorer here <https://planning.merton.gov.uk/MVM/Online/DMS/DocumentViewer.aspx?pk=1000111309&SearchType=Planning%20Application> including the "proposed highway and general arrangement" <https://planning.merton.gov.uk/MVM.DMS/Planning%20Application/1000111000/100>

London Transport's strategy for active travel. Why were they not initially included and how much time was wasted redesigning the bridge to include them?

Reply

The council encourages pre-application consultations with local people on important planning applications and does not consider it to be a waste of time for any applicant to amend the proposals to take account of local people's feedback. The pre-application consultation on a like for like replacement finished in June 2020 and feedback included requests for more cycling infrastructure. The amended planning application was submitted to the council in early August 2020.

23. From: Charles Barraball

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

10 years ago a resounding ovation from a Sustainable Transport Thematic Group greeted Engineers Mitra Dubet and Peter Thomas announcing:

"Henceforth in Merton's Engineering "Flush would mean mean flush".

Could the Council shed any light on the implementation of that intent on dropped curbs throughout the Borough?

Reply

Over the years the Council has used its limited available funding in providing dropped kerbs (pram ramps) / upgrade existing infrastructure to improve accessibility in response to requests and as part of highway maintenance.

24. From: Natalie Gordon

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Was an Equality Impact Assessment conducted for the decision to remove the Bishopsford bridge wall and if so, what equality impacts were identified and how were councillors made aware of it? I am concerned about the impact of greater noise and air pollution on Watermeads estate and Wessex Terrace residents.

Reply

No. An equality impact assessment considers the impact of a proposal on the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. An equality impact assessment is not required for the removal of the wall. The planning decision to rebuild the bridge includes several requirements to help reduce pollutants and support residents amenity including the requirement for planting and landscaping in Ravensbury Park (condition 6) a construction method statement (condition 9 - including the control of dust etc) and a construction logistics plan

(condition 10). The council's environmental health department had no objections to the planning application:

https://planning.merton.gov.uk/MVM.DMS/Planning%20Application/1000111000/1000111309/20P2438_Comments_25.08.2020...pdf

**25. From: Stefan Wrombel
To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency**

Was evidence of crime specifically relating to the area crossing the bridge and on the paths adjacent to the wall considered as part of the decision to remove the Bishopsford bridge wall?

Reply

The Met Police's response to the planning application for Bishopsford Bridge includes a table of different types of crime in the local area.

https://planning.merton.gov.uk/MVM.DMS/Planning%20Application/1000111000/1000111309/20P2438_Comments_25.08.2020.pdf

The Met Police's response states that the open rail design is of benefit security wise as it will facilitate natural surveillance to the nature reserve, Ravensbury Park and towards the western footbridge. The removal of the wall separating Ravensbury Park and London road A217 and replacing with railing again would allow for greater visibility along the pedestrian footpath so reduce the chance of crime, fear of crime and avoidance of the area.