

Labour Amendment to Conservative Strategic Theme Motion – Item 7c

17th November council meeting

Strategic theme motion – planning enforcement

Council recognises the importance of good town planning and understands that local residents want planning applications that are approved to be adhered to and properly enforced.

Council notes that the building development control function has had an improvement programme underway since 2020, but while many of the improvements have been implemented, some have been delayed due to recruitment issues which the trade magazine UK Construction Excellence describes as a “long-predicted shortfall” in the building control sector across the UK. This in turn has had an impact on the capacity for ~~for a quite a long time struggled to properly undertake~~ planning enforcement with the latest statistics showing that the number of planning enforcement cases closed each month are at 46% of their target.

Residents demand and expect that all development in Merton is in accordance with sound planning principles and planning law, and Council notes that the government has failed to prepare for this long-predicted shortfall in the sector, or to fund councils so that they can provide services to the level that residents and councillors would want.

Therefore, council requests that the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate emergency in conjunction with the Director of Environment and Regeneration lobby the government to put in place measures to improve planning enforcement, to prioritise the rolling out of the improvement programme, and seek to tackle the backlog in cases, and report on progress to council in 6 months’ time, and to ~~each one~~ meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel in 3 months’ time.

Council expects the following aspects to be included:

- ~~Online~~ The cost and viability of an online portal for planning enforcement cases which councillors and residents can see;
- ~~Easier~~ Ways to improve reporting of planning breaches on the council website;
- Action plan to tackle the backlog in planning enforcement cases;
- Analysis of how well planning enforcement measures result in appropriate outcomes;
- ~~Better communication between the Planning Dept and the public and councillors;~~
- ~~Clearer outcomes on planning enforcement with stronger measures taken;~~
- ~~Stronger~~ Continued enforcement of existing planning laws against individuals and developers who break planning rules;
- ~~Council to use~~ Using public communications to highlight enforcement breaches (~~with an~~ including a continued emphasis on those who fell trees in contravention of planning rules);

- ~~Senior Planning officers~~Continuing to review the outcome of development following completion to ensure that greening measures have been implemented, ~~especially including~~ tree planting (in line with the council's Tree Strategy);
- ~~S~~Continued stronger protection of existing trees via ~~greater use of powers under~~ Tree Protection Orders.
- ~~Better~~The importance of good communication between the Planning Dept and the public and councillors;
- A full costing of all the above measures and an outline of the cuts that would have to be made to other services, and the impact of these, if the cost has to be borne in whole by the council rather than from direct additional grant.

Cllr Daniel Holden

Cllr David Dean

Cllr Ed Gretton

AMENDED MOTION READS:

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Council notes that the building development control function has had an improvement programme underway since 2020, but while many of the improvements have been implemented, some have been delayed due to recruitment issues which the trade magazine UK Construction Excellence describes as a "long-predicted shortfall" in the building control sector across the UK. This in turn has had an impact on the capacity for planning enforcement with the latest statistics showing that the number of planning enforcement cases closed each month are at 46% of their target.

Residents demand and expect that all development in Merton is in accordance with sound planning principles and planning law, and Council notes that the government has failed to prepare for this long-predicted shortfall in the sector, or to fund councils so that they can provide services to the level that residents and councillors would want.

Therefore, council requests that the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate emergency in conjunction with the Director of Environment and Regeneration lobby the government to put in place measures to improve planning enforcement, to prioritise the rolling out of the improvement programme, and seek to tackle the backlog in cases, and report on progress to council in 6 months' time, and to one meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel in 3 months' time.

Council expects the following aspects to be included:

- The cost and viability of an online portal for planning enforcement cases which councillors and residents can see;

- Ways to improve reporting of planning breaches on the council website;
- Action plan to tackle the backlog in planning enforcement cases;
- Analysis of how well planning enforcement measures result in appropriate outcomes;
- Continued enforcement of existing planning laws against individuals and developers who break planning rules;
- Using public communications to highlight enforcement breaches (including a continued emphasis on those who fell trees in contravention of planning rules);
- Continuing to review the outcome of development following completion to ensure that greening measures have been implemented, including tree planting (in line with the council's Tree Strategy);
- Continued strong protection of existing trees via powers under Tree Protection Orders.
- The importance of good communication between the Planning Dept and the public and councillors;
- A full costing of all the above measures and an outline of the cuts that would have to be made to other services, and the impact of these, if the cost has to be borne in whole by the council rather than from direct additional grant.

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