

From Mary Butler

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

Councillors often mention the number of people on their housing list and use that to justify granting permission to all sorts of developments, so, by council ward, how many people on that list have moved in to any of those new developments each year from 2018 to 2022?

Reply

The Council has nominations rights to housing association homes that become vacant in the borough, and when these are new build, the Council normally has 100% rights to rented units. There are currently in excess of nine and half thousand households waiting for accommodation, and as result the Council looks to maximise the nominations we receive to meet housing need and ensure all nominations are taken up. The Council does not hold information specifically on new build nominations by ward, but from April 2017 to march 2021 there were 104 cases housed in new build properties off of the housing register.

From Tony Burton

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change

In response to a Council Question on 2 February 2022 Merton Council said it would deliver on its Rediscover Mitcham commitment to register additional green spaces around Fair Green as a Town or Village Green over "the next six months". Nine months have passed. When will it make the registration?

Reply

The Council is in the process of registering the additional land as a result of the rediscover Mitcham Project. Documentation has been produced and is currently going through the appropriate process of registration with Legal and recording with Land Charges. Some delays were experienced as members of the team were on duty throughout a major incident over the summer. The update of the Town Green boundaries is currently ongoing and is hoped to be completed by the end of the year, dependent on ensuring the correct legal procedures are followed.

From Tom Killick

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

Have the wands protecting cyclists from other traffic on Merton High Street been removed in order to be replaced and can the Cabinet Member advise when this will take place, and if not, why not?

Reply

The wands on Merton High Street were added in addition to the statutory cycle lane as part of the covid-transport plan. In this particular location, they have suffered problems with wands constantly being hit, removed or gone missing.

We had reports of the wands' reflective strips getting dirty, despite Council officers going out to clean them.

The issue was that with the wands not being reflective, they were being hit by larger vehicles and either being damaged, or come out of the ground completely. This left the black plastic blocks in the road where we then received complaints of motorists hitting the blocks. It posed an ongoing maintenance and safety issue that the Council couldn't sustain.

Council officers consulted the Cabinet Member, local ward members and Merton Cycling Campaign about the proposed removal of the wands.

We have secured funding from TFL as part of this year's LIP programme and will be consulting soon on plans to introduce stepped-track cycle lanes on this section of Merton High Street (similar to the new ones in Plough Lane, Holborn Way and London Road Mitcham Bridge). The works are planned to be completed by April 2023.

I'm sure cyclists will agree that the stepped track cycle lanes offer a better and longer term solution to improving our cycling infrastructure than the temporary wands and blocks

From Malcolm Brown

To the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

Can you please confirm the number of Merton residents who receive council-funded social care from third party providers who do not pay at least the London living wage, do not pay the HMRC approved car mileage usage rate, and do not pay for time spent on training?"

Reply

At any one time there are around 650 Merton residents who are in receipt of council-funded care from third-party providers. The Council's current home care contracts do not require that London Living Wage is paid as a minimum, and officers are not aware that any of those third party providers currently pay the London Living Wage to care staff. These contracts will be recommissioned in 2023 and in line with the recent Cabinet decision to seek Living Wage accreditation it is intended that London Living Wage be a requirement of the new contracts. The current contracts do require payments for travel time and that training be provided but different third party providers have their own policies with regards to payments for travel time and training. We will be strengthening these requirements through the new contracts when they are commissioned next year so that all contracted providers are required to pay agreed amounts for mileage. London Living Wage will also be required to be paid to carers when attending training.

From Chris Stanton

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change

What action is Merton Council taking in collaboration with the local community to replace the stolen swords on Mitcham war memorial?

Reply

After a recent heritage theft of three bronze swords from the Lower Green Scheduled War Memorial, the Council reported this to English Heritage.

The Council Greenspaces and Planning Conservation Officers have been working with Mitcham Cricket Green Community and Heritage on an application to the War Memorial Trust for the re-casting of the bronze swords. The reinstatement of the lost bronze swords will be informed by the remaining sword and by photographs held of the memorial. The replacements shall replicate as closely as possible the originals and will require further repatination to align with the original sword. In addition, the

grant application will also recommend additional works to the memorial as listed below.

Stone cleaning

Stone cleaning using steam cleaning equipment and hand cleaning using natural bristle brushes and a chemically neutral soap and low-pressure water

Re-pointing

Careful removal of defective/loose mortar from construction joints. Re-pointing of construction joints with an appropriate lime mortar

Inscription work

The lead lettering appears to be in relatively good legible condition however if upon closer inspection there are letters which are damaged or lost, their replacement/repair to match the original design should be part of the project. I would also propose that if there is evidence for the lettering having originally been painted, then the re-painting of lettering using an appropriate oil-based paint in colour to match to improve legibility can also form part of the works

Railings

These works have already been completed as they related to a Ward Allocation Funded improvement project and was delivered by the Greenspaces Team in September 2022.

An application will be submitted to the War Memorial Trust in December 2022 and await decisions March-April 2023.

From John Davis

To the Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage

What action is Merton Council taking to replace the unsightly black metal frame and door blighting the 500 year old Grade II listed dovecote at The Canons and will this be completed as part of the current Lottery Project? This and other snagging points still remain unresolved.

Reply

It is acknowledged that the current door to the dovecote is not in keeping with the building and the intention is to rectify this within the site-wide interpretation works which is currently being developed.

The delivery of this project will be managed through the Green Flag Management and Maintenance Plan being developed for the site ready for January 2023 application.

From Serafina Zammataro

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

Given rejection of plans for developing high rise tower blocks on Mitcham Gasworks at a public meeting called by the MP and by 99% local residents in a street audit will Merton council reduce the number of homes planned and withdraw support for "tall buildings" in the new local plan?

Reply

The Council's Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State in December 2021 and is now being examined by independent planning inspectors. The independent planning inspectors held public hearings in June and again in October 2022. Mitcham Gasworks was discussed at both hearing sessions as a part of the discussion on site allocations and also as part of the discussions on housing supply and urban design. Considering local feedback, the Council has worked hard with St William to review and agree a [new Statement of Common Ground \(dated September 2022\)](#) which proposes a reduction in building height to nine storeys, from the original 14 storeys, with a range of homes which will take account of the need for new homes, including for affordable homes, in Merton. Just over nine storeys was the approximate height of a previous gasholder on the site.

All the information connected with the Local Plan examination is published on the Council's website [Local Plan submission and examination library | Merton Council](#) or by www.merton.gov.uk/local-plan-submission

The Inspectors published a "hearings closing note", also available online at [INSP20 Merton Hearings Closing Session](#) sets out their next steps for the Local Plan examination over the next few months. This will include undertaking all the actions arising from the hearings and then public consultation on all the modifications made to the Plan so far during the examination. There will therefore be further opportunity for residents and others to comment on any changes to the Local Plan's site allocation for Mitcham Gasworks. Please keep an eye on Merton Council's website www.merton.gov.uk/local-plan-examination for more details including forthcoming consultation dates once the planning inspectors have approved it.

From Tom Conway

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

When will the pavement, which is cordoned off on Morden Road next to Spur House, be reopened and why has it taken three months for LB Merton to arrange for a temporary bus stop to be established nearby?

Reply

At present the timeline for the reopening of the pavement is unknown. The Council's Building Control and Legal Services teams are working together on court order proceedings to ensure the landowner of Spur House makes all balcony glazing safe. The Council has organised for the Glass and Glazing Federation to assess the building, and this analysis has been carried out, but the necessary remedial works have not been implemented yet. Only when these are complete can the cordon be removed. The Council did request that a temporary bus stop be established the start of the works, this is the responsibility of Transport for London but we understand that a temporary stop is in place.

From Dr Pippa Maslin

To the Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage

Merton is the home of the Wimbledon Championships, but public access to tennis courts in the borough is patchy. I am aware that the Council Leader wants to promote sport. What is the plan for the currently unusable courts in Morden Park?

Reply

Currently the Greenspaces' Team CIL improvement plan will see £350,000 invested into the boroughs tennis courts infrastructure this financial year. These investments will see improvements at Haydons Road Rec (Commenced in August 2022) and Colliers Wood Recreation Ground and Morden Rec (Commencing in Spring 2023), which will see the improvements to eight lighted tennis courts and allow multi-sports to also be played, including basketball, football, netball and cricket.

The Greenspaces Team are also working with colleagues in Leisure Services, Planning and external funders from the Lawn Tennis Association to review the condition and future requirements for the further tennis courts across our parks that shall require future investment, including those in Morden Park. To date, the Team has prepared detailed assessments of our tennis courts within our parks across the borough. The survey work will allow us to look at potential funding opportunities to bring these sites into improved playable condition, while the work we are undertaking at neighbouring sites, such as Morden Recreation Ground, will better inform the type of playing services required in order to meet resident demand for sporting areas that cater for differing sporting opportunities.

The Greenspaces Team will continue to work with colleagues to ensure that investments are made where they are most needed and where we can provide the most impact to the lives our local communities. The Team will continue to work with organisations, like the Lawn Tennis Association, to secure funding to better improve our facilities, including those in Morden Park.

From Lin Bowdery

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change

Why is Garden Waste bin collection so expensive? If the bin collection was made much more affordable, more people would have them which would make for less Fly tipping.

Reply

Our Garden Waste collection service remains a valued service and continues to grow. Over the last 5 years we have seen the level of subscriptions increase from 6,500 customers in 2017 to over 13,000 last year. As such last year we were able to hold the current price and not apply any inflationary increase.

In reviewing the charges for the service compared with our neighbouring boroughs including RB Richmond, the charges range between £82.00 and £68.80 with an overall average of £74 with Merton currently charging slightly above the average at £79.50 which equates to only £3.05 per collection.

Our garden waste is a major contributor to our overall recycling rate which is currently 43% and places us in the top quartile of all London Boroughs recycling performance.

Regarding fly tipping, the level of green waste which is fly tipped is low and only comprises of 7% of all material collected as fly tipping. This is similar to the level of garden waste collected as part of the kerbside general waste of which recent waste analysis suggest that only 7% of this material could have been processed as compostable waste.

As such the garden waste service continues to provide value for those residents with gardens and ensures that we are not subsidising the service.

From Hester Rowland

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change

Why were the local community neither consulted nor informed before the arrival of a chainsaw crew at Norman Rd on 31/10/22 to destroy 3 mature healthy trees? Residents should have some say on what occurs in their own streets, this would avoid them being treated shabbily by Council employees.

Reply

The Council's Greenspaces Team have been working on the above case for many years to try and mitigate the need for removal of the three trees in question. The three Italian Alders on Norman Road have been the subject to an insurance case for subsidence damage to neighbouring properties and appropriate and proportionate action is legally required by the Council to limit the damage being caused.

The Greenspace Team have been working with insurers for a number of years to mitigate the claim of subsidence by modifying the tree canopy and undertaking measurements of the ground movement, but we are no longer able defend this case and the only action available was to remove the trees. I can confirm that we will be replacing lost trees with more suitable varieties under the Council's 2022-23 tree replacement program.

The Greenspace Team apologise for any distress caused by this necessary action being taken without the prior notice to residents. The Greenspaces Team have used this opportunity to improve internal processes and are currently developing an Insurance tracker to monitor all trees that are involved in insurance claims so if a tree fell is required, the necessary correspondence will go out to all residents in proximity of the tree to inform them of the action being taken.

From Fergus Clegg

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change

Why did the council cut down three mature trees at the end of Norman Road at the junction with Merton High Street without consulting residents or councillors, or giving notice of the work to be carried out? We, the residents, want to be consulted before further action takes place.

Reply

As per the previous response on this issue, the three Italian Alders on Norman Road had been the subject to an insurance case for subsidence damage to neighbouring properties and appropriate and proportionate action is legally required by the Council to limit the damage being caused to the buildings through the movement of the soil caused by the trees' growth.

The Greenspace Team apologise for any distress caused by this necessary action being taken without the prior notice to residents. The Greenspaces Team are developing an Insurance tracker to monitor all trees that are involved in insurance claims. If a tree fell is required, the necessary correspondence will go out with at least 2 weeks' notice to all residents in proximity of the tree to inform them of the action being taken and more details about the background to the case, so residents are kept informed.

As you will be aware the works were ceased on the day as the matter was raised by local residents and will not resume until further communications go out to residents, which the team are looking to get out next week. This will give a two week notice of works commencing as well as consultation plan for the three tree replacements that are required and associated future management and maintenance plan of these trees moving forward. The Greenspace Team will want to consult with residents on the options for the tree area at the end of Norman Road, including choosing the type of replacement tree from a selection of appropriate species that will not have the same negative impact to neighbouring buildings.

From Kevin Clarke

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

Please update on the progress of negotiations to bring dockless bicycle to Merton

Reply

This is a priority for the Council and we have been meeting some providers. We are currently working with our Legal Team to determine the best route in terms of procurement / Agreement. Once the route is agreed, further discussions will be held with potential providers to launch in Merton.

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