

MORDEN COMMUNITY FORUM

23 OCTOBER 2024

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Dennis Pearce (in the Chair),

## 1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held in the Council Chamber and chaired by Councillor Dennis Pearce. Ten residents and six councillors attended. 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. Since the last meeting it has been a very busy time at the Assembly with the elections resulting in changes to the party groups on the assembly. Leonie is the Deputy Chair of the Environment Committee, and also sits on the Housing Committee, the Oversight Committee and the Fire Committee.

There have also been changes to the team of Deputy Mayors, with Jules Pipe adding fire added to his Planning and Regeneration portfolio. Mete Coban has become Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy, and Kaya Comer-Schwartz has left Islington Council to become Deputy Mayor for Crime and Policing subject to her confirmation by the assembly.

Scrutiny of Mayors function by the assembly continues including reviewing how the Mayor is tackling homelessness and rough sleeping which has been increasing in London.

Leonie said some people will be angered by the verdict in the Chris Kaba shooting by a firearms officer. Whilst very few people are shot by police in London the Home Secretary has said she feels that officer's names should not be released in cases where they have discharged their firearms. Officers face extremely difficult choices. The next [Police Committee](#), on 6 November, is likely to cover this issue as well as residents concerns about officers taken off borough to police protests in central London and progress on the New Met for London Plan in response to the Casey review.

The London Fire Brigade has also been going through a review of its culture after women officers said they have faced discrimination and misogyny. Leonie also said that London Fire Brigade came out of special measures in March.

Leonie said that many councillors have reported that getting a response from Transport for London can be challenging but Assembly Members have special contact line for case work, so councillors are welcome to get in touch with casework issues.

Cllr McLean asked if there would be decision on Wimbledon and Mitcham Police stations soon. Leonie said she will raise this with new Deputy Mayor once they are confirmed and in place. It is likely that the full Estate strategy will also be raised at the Police Committee.

A resident asked if the homelessness problem could be helped by bringing empty properties back into use and that rough sleepers are unable to get work without an address. Leonie said that the mobility of homeless people makes it hard to get work and prove a local connection for housing applications but there are organisations that offer support. Many empty properties are the wrong size or in poor condition, but councils or Housing Associations can offer to take them on from the private sector. Cllr Seyda said homeless often need support to take on a new home, and local groups do this, including Faith in Action in Merton. Leonie said it is important to support and fund organisations like this and that [Dons Action Group](#) is holding a sleep out on 9 November to raise funds for their community work.

A resident asked about the dangers of e-bikes catching fire and Leonie said that 'thermal runaway' of batteries is an important issue with e-bikes causing 155 fires in London in 2023. It is important not to overcharge batteries and not leave them blocking exits. These problems can be aggravated by taking off the speed limiters or using a suspect conversion kits. LFB have been [campaigning](#) to raise awareness and can provide promotional materials.

A resident asked if illegally converted e-bikes are enforced by the police. Leonie said she understood that legislation is needed to clarify the rules as the law has been superseded by technology. Leonie said that parking the dockless bikes is also causing problems, especially for visually impaired pedestrians. Many councils are trying to introduce specific parking bays near transport hubs.

Cllr Mercer asked if the feasibility study on toilets on the transport network that was commissioned by the Mayor will be released soon. Leonie has not received the report but will continue pursuing need for a toilet in Morden. Jon Green said that older people who visit the Guild often site the lack of toilets as an issue that prevents from them engaging in activities. Leonie said Age UK have also raised this concern along with the need for more benches.

Cllr Pearce asked about the introduction of road safety measures on St Helier Avenue. There was a [consultation on proposals](#) to improve the road in summer 2024, and we are waiting for the results to be reported.

### 3 WARM AND WELL PROJECT (Agenda Item 3)

Jonathan Green from [Wimbledon Guild](#) introduced the [Warm and Well](#) project. The Guild provides a wide range of activities and services for people aged 18+. They have an office in Wimbledon on Worple Road and a new office in Morden, on Crown Parade near to the Civic Centre. Many referrals to the services are by word of mouth so Jon hopes attendees will be encouraged to pass on the details to family, friends and neighbours. There are fitness and exercises classes, discussion and social groups, a wellbeing service for the over 50s, and a welfare grants programme. The 200+ volunteers are essential for delivering these services.

The Warm and Well project focuses on energy and helping with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. They offer free home energy assessments, and support residents with debts and arrears. The project also helps residents identify and avoid scams, including joining the [priority services register](#). In some circumstances they can also provide fuel vouchers. Jon said he was confident that everybody in the room could make at least two changes to help with their energy costs.

A resident asked if there was still a need for meters to be read with so many households having smart meters. Jon said that even with smart meters scammer will still try and access the property by saying they need to check it.

### 4 LOCAL NEWS AND EVENTS (Agenda Item 4)

Kris Witherington, Engagement Manager for London Borough of Merton, gave a list of notices for upcoming events and activities.

#### **Cost of Living**

The final cost of living event of the year is on Sat 16 Nov 2024 10.30am - 1.30pm at Mitcham Library. There is a Cost-of-Living [e-newsletter](#) you can sign up for.

#### **Making More of Morden**

Results from the Meanwhile use consultation will be reported to Cabinet on 4 November. [www.merton.gov.uk/moremorden](http://www.merton.gov.uk/moremorden)

#### **Legacy Fund and Budget consultation**

We are currently consulting on the spending of £15m resulting from the receipts from the sale of a council owned private company and on our budget priorities for next year. The [Legacy Fund and budget consultation](#) will be open until 27 November 2024

### **Flood Strategy consultation**

The council is developing a new Flood Strategy for 2025-8. As part of this work there will be a public consultation later in the autumn. The consultation is likely to focus on the overall approach to flood prevention and the issue of surface water.

### **Fireworks**

Saturday 2 November, Morden Park

[Fireworks displays in Wimbledon and Morden, south west London | Merton Council](#)

### **Conversations with the Leader**

The first question time style event with the Leader of the Council will take place on 12 November in Vestry Hall. [Booking details will follow soon.](#)

### **Assembly meeting**

7pm on Wednesday 4 December in Morden Baptist Church. This is the first of the new format meeting for community forums, based on Citizen Assemblies, with residents discussing the topics and coming up with potential solutions amongst themselves.

### **Investing in Neighbourhoods and Community Climate Action Funds**

The Investing in Neighbourhoods Fund is for projects to address demands placed on neighbourhoods by new development such as housing. It is funded by the [Community Infrastructure Levy](#).

The [Community Climate Action Fund](#) is to support community-led projects that help reduce carbon emissions or build resilience to the impacts of climate change. We are running one bidding round for the Community Climate Action Fund each year from 2023 to 2025, with around £166,000 of funding available in each round.

The deadline for bids to be received is 11:59 PM, Monday 4th November 2024.

## 5 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 5)

Cllr Mercer gave an update on the toilets issue investigated by the Overview and Scrutiny panel. Recommendations by the panel included contacting TfL about Morden which the Cabinet member did. Cllr Mercer said that the Mayor's feasibility study has been due for a year but hopes it will be released soon. The study will map out a network of toilets across the Underground, then if Morden is selected a technical review on the station itself will follow.

There is no obligation on councils or TfL to provide toilets but as an alternative they could promote the community toilet scheme. Cabinet also agreed to this recommendation and have appointed a Community Toilet Scheme officer. The officer

will be looking at successful schemes across London to learn the lessons as well as working with local groups.

On 19 November it is world toilet day and there will be events to mark this including a lobbying visit to parliament by the British Toilet Association. The association is also meeting with the TUC's Health and Safety group who are also producing a report on the problem of poor access to toilets for mobile workers.

Cllr Kenny asked how the toilets will be maintained and how this will be paid for. Cllr Mercer agreed that maintenance is a key issue, and a lack of cleanliness can be a barrier to use. The community toilet scheme means those toilets are already being maintained by the host organisation. A resident asked if there was a shortage of accessible disabled toilets. Cllr Mercer said that the Changing Places toilet scheme has had £30m funding for high specification toilet, we have had some set up in Merton, including in Wimbledon Quarter. There are too few toilets generally including accessible provision.

FOLLOWING THE MEETING: [Transport for London announced](#) their plans for improving toilet provision and this included new toilets at Morden Station.

A resident asked about the use of the drinking water fountains funded by the Mayor of London, and if there is funding for more. Leonie said that the scheme came out of Environment Committee report recommendation to help reduce single use plastic bottles. The scheme was not in the original Mayoral budget but in conjunction with Thames Water the scheme was funded. Some sites were requested, and others targeted major transport hubs, including Morden. The fountains have tickers to track use and see how many plastic bottles were saved. Whilst the scheme is finished Leonie is happy to ask the Mayor, for the latest usage figures and if there plans for more sites.

A resident asked why the cost of Controlled Parking Zones is going up. Cllr Kenny suggested that the resident contact the Cabinet member, Cllr Alambritis and copy in their ward Councillors to ask for an explanation.

FOLLOWING THE MEETING – the [consultation on the proposals](#) stated that the increase was due to the increasing cost of managing and enforcing the zones, and there had not been an increase in fees since 2020.

A resident asked about dockless e-bikes obstructing pavements and if there could be a London wide policy on this. Leonie said that London Councils, the body representing the 32 boroughs is coordinating a review of e-bikes and scooters. A pan-London agreement maybe opposed by Uber and other owners. Cllr Kenny said the Leader of the Council is also aware of the issue and looking at ways to tackle the problem.

Jon mentioned three community projects in the local area that he thought were having a positive impact

The Open Table on Wednesday offers lunch to on a pay as you feel basis and is hosted in the Martin Way Methodist Church. It is a project run by members of the Church and individuals from the local community. It serves around 30 – 40 people each week.

There are also two local community garden projects. The community garden at Martin Way Methodist Church has a really positive impact on the local area, and in Mostyn Gardens the Muslim Women of Merton had done a tremendous job transforming a previously overgrown part of the park. Every Wednesday morning the Friends of Mostyn Park gather there to continue the development of the area and everyone is welcome to participate in the areas transformation.

Cllr Pearce thanked attendees and closed the meeting.

#### 6 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 6)

'Assembly' 7pm, Wednesday 4 December 2024, Committee Rooms, Civic Centre  
Community Forum meeting 7.15pm Thursday 20 March 2025, Council Chamber