

Councillor Priority Questions to Cabinet Members

1. From Cllr Marsie Skeete to the Cabinet Member for Education:

Can the Cabinet Member update me on progress in expanding Dundonald school so more local children in Wimbledon get the chance to go to this excellent local school?

Reply

I am pleased to confirm that tomorrow (16 April) the council will be offering an additional 30 reception year places at Dundonald Primary School, and this will be repeated year-on-year as the school expands from 210 to 420 school places.

To provide the additional buildings including re-configuration of Dundonald Recreation ground space, we have now completed the first phase of works to relocate the children's public playground and multi sports (tennis courts) area, Both will be further extended by a third at the end of the project when the existing dilapidated recreation ground pavilion will be demolished. The next, main phase, is due to start shortly, and has been contracted to budget. This is to provide the extended school facilities and replacement pavilion facility.

2. From Councillor Michael Bull to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:

Can the Cabinet Member commit to the resurfacing of the Apostles roads by 2018

Reply

There are approximately 1200 roads in the borough. A prioritisation model, which includes factors such as engineer's assessment, condition survey data, past reactive maintenance expenditure, traffic generators etc. is used to develop the yearly carriageway and footway programme. The model ranks the roads in priority order as shown below. Current funding levels permit only an average of 25 carriageway and 10 to 15 footway schemes per year.

Road Name	Carriageway Ranking Highest number = best condition	Footway Ranking Highest number = best condition
Bronson Road	960 (Resurfaced in December 2014)	436
Chestnut Road	351	740
Sydney Road	585	570
Dorien Road	112 (Resurfaced in May 2011)	554

Dupont Road	129	529
Edna Road	24 (Likely to be resurfaced in 2015/16)	207
Carlton Park Avenue	701	227
Vernon Avenue	120	211
Prince George's Avenue	243	426
Aston Road	304	340
Clifton Road	270	715
Gore Road	97 (likely to be resurfaced in 2018/19)	403

We have over 1200 roads in Merton, and we have to prioritise our investment. We now do this on a four year rolling programme which is updated annually using new highway condition information. This we use to ensure we can allocate resources more effectively and give residents advance notice of planned works.

In the Apostles roads, the following streets are included in our four year investment programme:

- Edna Road (2015-16)
- Gore Road (2018-19)

In addition to this; the following roads in the area have already benefited from resurfacing:

- Dorien Road – Completed May 2011
- Bronson Road Completed December 2014

This is also in addition to the significant investment in the town centre as a result of our commitment to the Raynes Park enhancement plan.

If there any specific issues that Cllr Bull thinks have been overlooked in the Apostles roads, we can address his concerns via the Highways team.

3. From Cllr Abigail Jones to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:

Now that the planning application has been agreed could he update me on the timeline for the delivery of a brand new library at Colliers Wood?

Reply

We are delighted that the residents of Colliers Wood will benefit from a new and improved library facility. The new library will increase customer floor space and ensure that a range of activities can take place to cater for different needs whilst ensuring a sustainable library for the future. We expect construction of the new library to begin towards the end of the summer with the new library opening mid-year 2017. During the development period temporary facilities will be open in the local area. We are currently finalising our plans for temporary library facilities and will be speaking to residents groups shortly.

4. From Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking:

How is the council addressing the waste collection issues for flats in order to improve recycling outcomes?

Reply

We regularly work with individual blocks of flats and their resident associations to see how we can help improve recycling opportunities and participation.

In order to increase recycling and reduce disposal cost the food waste service was expanded borough wide under the current administration, including being rolled out to incorporate collections from flats.

Through a range of communication initiatives and community events, residents have also been encouraged to sign up to our Mega Recycling scheme. This can be done either online or by post. Those registering are entered into a prize draw, with a top prize of £250 cash and 10 prizes of £100 every month, for individual households. There are also separate prizes for blocks of flats and larger estates.

In October 2014 prizes were given to the estates that sign up the greatest proportion of residents. In order to not disadvantage smaller developments separate prize draws are in place. In total £18,000 prize money was awarded to flats. These prizes are used to fund local environmental improvement schemes on the estates.

The scheme has been heavily promoted through printed media, including posters, leaflets, JC Decaux advertisement hoardings and press releases.

The project is currently working closely with resident group at Watermeads and High Path to increase recycling facility on these developments.

5. From Cllr Katy Neep to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services:

Can the Cabinet Member outline our performance in relation to ensuring our looked after children have the best chance to settle in a loving adopted family?

Reply

I am delighted to let the Councillor know that since 2010 we have improved our performance significantly. We have quite small numbers of Looked After Children (LAC) in Merton and we are grateful for this but our performance prior to 2010 was still not good enough. I am pleased to report that since then we have doubled the number of children adopted and reduced the average time for a child entering care and moving in with an adoptive family by almost half. This is a great achievement and is testament to the hard work of our staff in children schools and families. I also want to pay tribute to the invaluable work of our foster carers and of course to those families who welcome an adopted child into their lives.

The Councillor may be interested to know that adoption matching is undertaken at the earliest opportunity in Merton and our practice is good in this area. At this time all but one of our children who have a definite plan for adoption are matched or placed with adoptive carers.

LB Merton ensures a specific focus on achieving permanence for our looked after children. For all children who become looked after a Permanence and Care Planning Meeting (PCPM) is convened in the first 4-6 weeks of placement to ensure that we are considering permanence/adoption planning from the earliest opportunity – contingency planning that includes consideration of adoption is in place for all children aged 0-6 years. There is good liaison between the adoption team and social work team which means that matching of children with carers is taking place at the earliest opportunity. All children are allocated to a family finder who will use a number of resources to identify positive matches for our children (this includes our local Consortium, the National Adoption Database and the Adoption Link Service). Once a positive match/matches are identified a selection meeting will be held to formally consider and evidence how the potential adopter is able to meet the needs of the child. The match will then be formally agreed at our Adoption and Fostering Panel. In all cases a post adoption support plan will be put in place to ensure that the adoptive parent is aware of support to be provided/how to access support in the future.

6. From Councillor Adam Bush to the Cabinet Member for Finance:

Can the Cabinet Member please tell me:

1. How many senior officers are currently in temporary posts or acting/interim posts?
2. Which level 1, 2, 3 or 4 manager posts are currently filled in this way i.e. with temporary/acting/interim staff and the comparable daily rate at which each one is being remunerated?

3. What the total additional cost is to the Council of temporary and agency staff filling these posts rather than permanent staff members?

Reply

As Councillors can ask one question I will treat Cllr Bush's first question as a priority question, with the subsequent questions being dealt with as non priority questions in the usual manner.

20 senior officers are currently in temporary posts or acting up posts.

7. From Cllr Tobin Byers to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:

Could he update us on plans for the regeneration of Morden town centre so that it becomes a thriving centre for residents and businesses alike?

Reply

The Council's future Merton team are making great progress in preparing plans for Morden and we're gearing up towards a programme of community engagement to commence this summer – to redefine our shared vision for Morden.

We have embedded the regeneration of Morden Town Centre with our planning policies for Morden through the LDF Core Strategy (2011) Sites & Policies Plan (2014) and Morden Station Planning Brief (2014). We've been working with major land owners and TFL to develop credible plans and we've improved the Civic Centre building; reaffirming the Council's commitment to its presence in Morden.

Whilst the administration stand by the more Morden vision, as Cabinet Member for regeneration and environmental sustainability; I have been working closely with the Council's regeneration team to ensure that our vision for Morden is refreshed and relevant to London's growth agenda and that there is a clear, coordinated plan of investment for Morden over the next 4 years.

Morden is changing. Its residents are younger, the population more diverse and the number of people working in Morden has increased. Passenger numbers at Morden Station are now at 20,000 per day. The area has a lot of disposable income that should benefit the town centre; but we recognise that Morden is not an attractive town centre to enjoy. Morden has the potential to be better. We know that the town centre offer is not what residents and visitors expect and the look and feel of Morden's High Street is extremely dated.

Regeneration is complex, and requires a long term commitment. We stand by the vision for Morden and have been investing time and resource to ensure that plans are right for Morden, that they are funded and above all, that our vision is achievable, deliverable and credible.

In summary, the Council are working on the following key work streams:

MASTERPLANNING

£600,000 LBM investment in 2015/16 to 'Unlock Morden's Potential' This funding will go towards community engagement programmes, developing our vision, preparing a masterplan for the town centre and procuring a development partner for the town centre to commence the regeneration.

PUBLIC REALM

One of the biggest challenges in Morden town centre is London Road; one of TFL's major arterial roads. The Bus Station at Morden is also an unwelcoming environment to visitors and users of Morden. Overall, the design and quality of streets and public spaces in Morden is well under-par and We have spent the past 18 months preparing the evidence base an research that will support a £9m package of works by LBM and TFL to overhaul Morden's public realm. We're proposing to reduce the dominance of traffic, remove the gyratory, create new public spaces and achieve a step-change in the quality of Morden's High Street. There's a lot of testing still to do and we'll consult on options before the Major Scheme Bid is submitted to TFL in August 2015. If approved, we hope to deliver the improvements in 2017/18.

DEVELOPMENTS

£42m funding bid to the Mayor of London's Housing Zone Programme. This project could provide a significant injection of funding to speed up the regeneration of Morden, focusing on housing growth and mixed-use development on the Morden Station site as well as the Council's own commercial land-holdings in the town centre. This funding will not come directly to the Council; but be made available to developers to fast-track delivery of the regeneration proposals. Feedback on this bid in summer 2015 will strongly influence our developer selection options.

Morden Station Development

From 2012-2013; we've worked with TFL to agree a development brief that will guide the redevelopment of the Morden Station site. Morden Station is the catalyst to reinvigorate the town centre and our plans will provide new retail, restaurants, public spaces and much needed housing for the town centre. We're now working with TFL to identify a development partner for Morden Station. TFL have confirmed (noted in the Financial Times) that they are procuring development partners for a range of sites in London; of which Morden is one. Formal announcements are expected in Autumn 2015, with detailed proposals and planning applications anticipated late 2016.

www.merton.gov.uk/moreMorden

Morden Park Leisure Centre

The future of Morden Park Pool has been a concern for local residents and users in recent years. We have continued to carry out minor repairs to keep this facility operating for a few more years than we originally anticipated, but now recognise it needs to be replaced.

We will be drawing up plans and proposals for a new family friendly leisure facility that all can use. We will keep you up to date with our progress via the web and local

media. We would encourage you to have your say and to look forward to brand new leisure facilities in 2018.

www.leisureformorden.com/

Tramlink Extension

In July and August 2014, Merton and Sutton Councils asked residents businesses and others what they thought of a proposed new Tramlink which would run between the existing tram stop at Morden Road via Morden town centre, St Helier Avenue and on to Sutton town centre.

Over 10,000 responses were received and the majority of respondents were in favour. The consultation reports were given to Transport for London to encourage the Mayor of London's support for the scheme.

The Mayor of London may decide to support further feasibility work to explore the potential for a Morden-Sutton Tramlink in more detail from 2015-16 onwards. If this happens, there would be further consultation on the details of the scheme once the feasibility work was completed.

www.merton.gov.uk/trams

8. From Councillor David Dean to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration:

What meetings or correspondence has the Cabinet Member had with the Car Club Coalition?

Reply

I am delighted to report that, as part of our involvement in London Councils, a working group has been established with individual boroughs and car club operators to look at how parking provision for car club vehicles can be simplified. London Councils' transport and environment committee, which Merton is represented on, has endorsed a new car club strategy for the capital, drawn up by the Car Club Coalition. Now that the strategy has been adopted I very much look forward to looking at more detailed borough level work in implementing the overall strategy in Merton.

9. From Cllr Joan Henry to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services:

Can the Cabinet Member outline the work we have done with other councils to tackle child exploitation?

Reply

The council has been involved in a recent 4 borough peer review of our work around Child Sexual Exploitation with the London Boroughs of Kingston, Richmond and Sutton. Our peer reviews were submitted to London Councils and have formed part of a London wide response to Child Sexual Exploitation. This has contributed to London wide proposals for improving cross borough working and sharing of

information and data. We regularly work with other local authorities where there are children placed by other local authorities in our area at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation, perhaps because they are running away or other vulnerabilities. Our local commissioned service to support young runaways provides support to young people from other local authorities who may be looked after in Merton. With partners and especially the Police we have used cross borough intelligence to improve the management of risk of young people. We remain committed to deepening our cross borough working with our neighbouring boroughs and this work will be undertaken on a strategic and operational level.