

Councillor Priority Strategic Theme Questions to Cabinet Members

S1. From Cllr Ross Garrod to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Can the Cabinet Member outline how we can continue to support older people with disabilities, despite the reductions to our funding from central government?

Reply

The report in our council papers tonight gives an overview of how the council seeks to meet the needs of older people in our very challenging funding environment. I would draw Cllr Garrod's attention to certain key themes:

- Our consistent application of our value based use of resources framework, now used widely across England
- Our innovative prevention strategy, including Celebrating Age, our Ageing Well programme in partnership with the voluntary sector, our winning of Compact awards in this area, and the dementia Hub
- Our use of technology especially that provided by MASCOT to enable people to be safe in their own homes
- Our work with the provider market to ensure that we get good value for money while at the same time ensuring that local people can gain access to quality services
- Our use of self directed support, so that older people who choose to do so can use a direct payment to shape their own care, and with support mechanisms in place such as pre-paid cards and Merton Managed Accounts
- Our continued focus on safeguarding, including the pioneering multi-agency hoarding protocol where local people have been supported to live at home in a safer environment
- Our excellent work with our health partners, including our very good performance in enabling people to leave hospital when they are ready, and our establishing of 3 integrated locality teams.

It will be very difficult to give as much support as we would like to older people with disabilities with so much less funding, but I believe that we have the right strategic framework in place to make every pound count.

S2. From Councillor Charlie Chirico to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:

What housing schemes for over 55s in Merton is the Council planning to support/endorse over the next 12 months?

Reply

Funding for new affordable homes comes from the GLA and as a non stock owning housing authority the Council cannot bid directly to the GLA for funding. Instead it works with registered providers to develop new homes. During this bidding round our developing partners have chosen not to bid for developing supported specialist housing for older people as it does not meet their current priorities.

Nonetheless, Merton has a total of 35 older peoples sheltered housing schemes run by housing associations, in addition to three extra care schemes. This specialist accommodation comprises nearly 800 units in total and is well spread throughout the borough and when vacancies occur residents can be considered for these units , subject of course to the individual policies of partner housing associations.

We also consider the needs of older people living in Merton who choose to remain living in their homes and we provide support which includes technological and health and social care regimes and our aids and adaptations service, which allows people to stay in their homes longer. With 800 specialist units available and a significant proportion of older people preferring to remain in their own homes, we take the view that there is not necessarily clear evidence to develop additional sheltered accommodation for our residents at this time, even if the funding was available. Nonetheless we continually review both the need and the funding landscape for any opportunities that may present themselves in this regard.

S3. From Cllr Brenda Fraser to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Can the Cabinet Member outline whether she believes the funding to implement the new Care Act duties for Merton will be adequate to our needs?

Reply

It is very difficult to know whether the funding for 15/16 will be adequate, since there are a range of new duties for which demand and costs are uncertain. Bodies such as the Local Government Association and London Councils have expressed concern that the funding won't be enough. This is a national issue. All councils in England have agreed to collect and submit data on the costs of implementation so that this can be tracked. For the funding reforms from 2016 onwards the Department of Health has just finished consultation, and councils are about to model potential costs using a model developed by DH in partnership with councils.

S4. From Councillor Brian Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Would the Council support a project to enable Public Health to research the health profile of all older people in the Borough?

Reply

Public Health already researches the health profile of older people in Merton. The JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) is a Merton document that contains key information on our population profile to inform commissioning decisions. It also has a separate section on older adults where a set of age-related conditions are considered in more detail. The JSNA is a live document with a programme of continuous updates as new research is undertaken.

This includes a recently completed in-depth falls needs assessment, with another two health needs assessments currently underway that directly apply to our older populations, on dementia and neurological conditions. Previous work includes a detailed adult mental health needs assessment, where data was considered among other things, by working age and older adults. Summaries of this work will be included upon completion in the online JSNA www.merton.gov.uk/health-social-care/publichealth/jsna.htm

S5. From Cllr Sally Kenny to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Will the Cabinet Member join me in welcoming the new chair of the CCG to the job and will she ensure he is aware of the huge importance older people in Merton attach to the services on offer at St Helier hospital, including accident and emergency.

Reply

I welcome Dr Andrew Murray to the role of chair of the CCG. I am due to meet with him shortly and will ensure that the value that local people and this council place on St Helier Hospital is made abundantly clear to him, particularly in the light of the shocking relations this week about secret plans to close the hospital.

S6. From Councillor Jill West to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking:

Would the Cabinet Member tell me what arrangements the Council has put in place for older people regarding the pilot of wheeled bins in Mitcham?

Reply

The Council recognises that some residents have difficulty in presenting waste whether it is in a black bag or a wheeled bin and we have arrangements in place to support them through assisted collections.

Elderly and disabled residents who are unable to easily manoeuvre the wheelie bin will be eligible for an assisted collection. In these circumstances wheelie bins will be provided but the resident will not be required to present their bins on the kerbside for collection. The bins will be collected and returned to an agreed location.

In locations where space is restricted and the storage of the bins will restrict the disabled access the service will continue to provide a full collection service from black sacks and recycling boxes.

As part of the pilot scheme the service is monitoring the number of assisted collections required as a result of implementing wheelie bins. In line with current procedures each request for an assisted collection is reviewed and if applicable a site visit will be undertaken.

S7. From Cllr Mary Curtin to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Can she detail the services we are offering to dementia sufferers and their carers at our new award winning dementia hub.

Reply

The dementia hub has been highly commended for the innovative approach to providing care and support to dementia sufferers and their carers. Moving away from an outdated day centre style facility which is not necessarily the most helpful approach for this client group, the new facility aims to put the needs of service users and their carers at the heart of provision, building independence and peer support through a variety of different services both in the centre and in the community including:

- New weekly patient assessments in a more welcoming community facility as an alternative to acute settings
- Falls prevention group workshops
- Weekly memory triage clinic
- Weekly neuro psychology clinic
- IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) sessions which offer interventions for treating people with depression and anxiety disorders
- Gardening Club
- Record Club
- “Dementia cafés” which are peer support groups where service users meet as a small group to offer support over a cup of tea
- Chiropody
- Optician
- Dentist
- Hairdressing
- Massage and reflexology
- Carers groups during the day time and evening
- Group for people with early onset dementia
- Life After Diagnosis workshops for people with dementia
- Life After Diagnosis workshops for carers
- Singing for the Brain

Much of the work of the centre involves engaging people out in the community with “dementia cafes” at other community sites and home visits to service users and their carers. Two members of staff are Dementia Champions and provide Dementia Friends sessions at the Hub as well as various settings in the community. There is also a Connecting Communities Project Offer based at the Hub whose role is to engage with BAME communities.

This new approach to working with dementia sufferers and their carers has already been recognised as groundbreaking in its determination to listen to the needs of dementia services and their carers in developing services that deliver what they want.

S8. From Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Would the Council agree that the Government has the interests of older people high on its agenda and welcome the fact that funds have been provided to protect universal benefits for Merton's pensioners, including the Freedom Pass?

Reply

As Cllr Lewis-Lavender should be aware, the Freedom Pass is mainly paid for by the council and cost us c£9m last year, with a similar amount budgeted for next year. Sadly it in fact appears that her colleagues in this Conservative led-government do not care about older people in Merton based on the evidence of the huge cuts they have made to council services which will inevitably impact on older people, given the largest portion of council spending is in this area. It is truly unfortunate that Cllr Lewis-Lavender, who I know personally does care about older people, is not aware of the terrible impact her government is having on older people in Merton.

S9. From Cllr Pauline Cowper to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:

Can she update me on the performance of our award winning MASCOT service?

Reply

MASCOT continues to develop well, supporting older and vulnerable residents, as well as providing out of hours support to other parts of the Council. We now have 1496 Merton residents as customers receiving a monitor and response service, as well as contracts with a number of Housing Associations monitoring sheltered housing schemes. In the past three months MASCOT staff have made 432 responsive visits, including 320 cases where a customer has fallen. We have avoided an ambulance being called on 138 occasions.

Through the winter MASCOT utilised some extra health service funding to carry out the Winter Homes Healthy People Scheme, whereby staff visit older and vulnerable customers and ensured that all aspects of their heating systems worked properly as well as fitting monitors so staff are alerted should the temperature drop.

Another new development has been a service to support timely hospital discharges. This micro-environment service entails moving furniture to create space for a hospital bed if required, and installation of key safes as well as the usual alarm and monitors. MASCOT has also re-launched the handyman service with an increased emphasis on checking domestic appliances as well as Telecare equipment. From 1st April MASCOT is included in the Fairer Contributions Policy, making it easier for social services customers to have Telecare as part of their package of care.

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