

COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 8 JULY 2015

NOTICE OF MOTION

This Council shares public concern about travellers illegally occupying public green spaces and other public areas in the Borough.

Council thanks officers, the police and the courts on their recent work to move on travellers illegally camping on some of our parks and open spaces.

However, it is frequently the case that travellers evicted by the Council from one site then simply move on to occupy another site in the vicinity. This has been going on for many months in and around Merton, usually at the expense of public funds where it is public land being occupied, although there have also been encroachments on private land.

The process of undertaking travellers' needs assessments and applying for court orders and injunctions is not only costly and time consuming for the authorities concerned but also causes a good deal of inconvenience and anxiety to the local residents.

Subsequent cleaning up and appropriate securing of the sites after the travellers' eviction is only achieved by spending further tax payers' money.

This Council therefore resolves that it should:

- Take a proactive approach to secure public parks in the borough by working closely with Friends groups, councillors and local residents on practical and innovative solutions that help prevent illegal encampments whilst maintaining access for residents;
- Adopt a stronger stance in order permanently to prevent travellers from illegally occupying public parks and other public spaces in the future;
- Take full advantage of the summary recently published by the Government of the powers that public bodies, such as Merton, have to help them deal with unauthorised traveller encampments;
- Consider measures to improve communication with local residents when unauthorised encampments do occur; and
- Put into practice the outcomes of the review of the welfare assessment procedure being carried out by officers to identify ways of speeding up the process whilst continuing to abide by the legal requirements.

Cllr Charlie Chirico

Cllr James Holmes

Cllr Abdul Latif

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