

Merton Council Council

12 September 2018

Supplementary Agenda

21 Supplementary Councillor Questions and Replies

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Please note there were no supplementary Public Questions

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06: Non ST Questions

From Councillor Dennis Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Education

With the recent news that Harris Academy Morden has become the latest in a long line of schools in Morden being rated Outstanding by Ofsted, can the Cabinet member guarantee that this focus on improving the borough's schools will be maintained?

Reply

The Local Authority continues its rigorous and relentless focus to ensure that the Borough's schools continue to improve. The ambition is for all schools to be good or better and to increase the proportion judged to be outstanding. The Education Division has plans and mechanisms in place to enable this to happen, including its refreshed School Improvement Strategy and 'Support and Challenge' groups for schools where matters are of concern.

The capacity for school improvement is limited, as it is in all local authorities. This in the context of national policy, whereby resources for this function are no longer directed to the same extent towards local authorities.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor. I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for her reply. Now that the term is started, is the Cabinet Member able to update us on the new intake at Harris Wimbledon at Whatley Avenue?

Reply

Thank you very much Councillor Pearce. I am delighted to report that 128 children were admitted into Harris Wimbledon and their first day was last week Thursday. I called and congratulated them on opening and since then I think in fact today an officer actually visited the School and reported back that they are all settling in well, so we're very pleased we're very delighted and parents are all very delighted as well. Whilst I am on the topic of Harris, can I also use this opportunity to congratulate Harris Morden for being Ofsted inspected and being outstanding. Thank you.

From Councillor Nick McLean to the Cabinet Member for Finance

How would the Cabinet Member for Finance rate the Council's ability to collect Council Tax from residents?

Reply

The Council tax team have had continued improvements over the last 5 years or more and at the end of 2017-2018 we achieved our highest ever rate of collection for Council tax, collecting 97.69%.

At the end of July, 4 months into the financial year we collected 39.91% of the Council tax due. If we continue at this rate, we are forecast to exceed our target the rate we achieved last year. I am confident in our ability to collect the majority of council tax due to the authority.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor and may I also thank the Cabinet Member for his response. Over the last five financial years over £5.6 million in Council Tax has not been collected. Will he accept this is not good enough and what actions will he take to improve the performance of this department in the future?

Reply

I'd like to thank the member for his follow up but he may have missed the written response which outlined that the collection rates in Merton over the last few years have been a record high for this borough, considerably better than they were when the Conservatives were running the Council and it's very important to stress that a lot of hard work has gone in by our staff to make it easier for people to pay their Council Tax and to improve the rates of collection and I think we should all in here applaud them for achieving a record level of collection of 97.69%, a collection rate that is the best on record ever in Merton under Labour.

From Councillor Russell Makin to Cabinet member for Children's Services

How is the council meeting the increase in demand for Early Years childcare in the borough?

Reply

There have been recent, new duties to secure sufficient childcare/early education for eligible families for 30 hours of funded (free) childcare and education. To date there appears to be sufficient provision across the borough for Merton families to access this new entitlement. 962 children took up a 30 hour funded place in the summer term.

Between March 2016 and March 2018 there has been an increase of 100 Ofsted registered childcare places (Ofsted published data). The estimated under 5s population during this period has been stable and predicted to slightly decrease over the next 5 years.

No Supplementary Question.

From Councillor Andrew Howard to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

Does the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport believe that Merton Council treats motorists fairly?

Reply

Yes, I do. Firstly, we maintain our highways excellently and in comparison with the rest of London our highway condition and levels of investment compare well ensuring motorists can move safely and smoothly through the borough. Secondly, we manage congestion hot spots and enforce against those who breach moving traffic regulations thereby keeping traffic moving. Thirdly, we manage parking providing an efficient controlled parking zone service and the efficient enforcement of

highway and off street parking. Our parking charges are fair, transparent and reasonable and in comparison with the rest of London below average.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor. Thank you to the Cabinet Member for his reply, I do have a supplementary, which is; since June 2016, Merton Council has installed 44 ANPR and Bus Lane cameras which have issued over 180,000 tickets, costing motorists over £12 million. Will he accept that the lack of clear signage has caused unsuspecting motorists to be hit by the fines and will he apologise for this?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Howard for his supplementary, no I won't apologise for that factor. If anyone is dissatisfied with being issued with a fine, they do have the right to appeal and there is also an independent appeal available as well. In terms of traffic enforcement and ANPR, it is right that we do enforce people going into bus lanes or taking illegal turns or traffic movements, that is correct and I believe that Merton Council is doing this in the right and correct way, thank you.

From Cllr Hina Bokhari to the Leader

In the last month we have seen some shockingly Islamophobic and Antisemitic statements made by leading politicians that have worried many people. Will the Leader of the Council take this opportunity to make a clear statement to reassure all Merton residents that as a Council we will stand firmly against Antisemitism and Islamophobia and work for a more open and inclusive borough?

Reply

Merton is a proudly diverse borough. Many people are uncertain about their place in society after the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union. Ethnic and faith communities have reported anxiety about a climate of hostility targeted at them. Hate crime has no place in our communities, in our society, in Merton. Our borough succeeds and thrives when the community is united, and it's a big part of what makes Merton a wonderful place to call home, and we should continue to strive to make the borough welcoming to all.

Our Hate Crime Strategy sets out our zero tolerance approach to Islamophobia, Antisemitism and any other hate crime, and ensures that it underpins all the work of the council. As Leader of Merton, I reaffirm my commitment to ensuring the council looks after everyone, and that we all work together for an open and inclusive borough.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you for the reply from the Leader of the Council. Whilst recognising Merton's decision, people locally are concerned about the recent decision of Wimbledon Labour Party not to back the full IHRA definition of antisemitism which brings a national issue firmly to our doorstep. What is the

Leader's response to this and the abuse that some of Merton's Councillors have received on Twitter over this issue?

Reply

I thank Councillor Bokhari for her supplementary. As I state in my written response and as we'll be discussing the IHRA definition and its adoption by this Council, we as Merton Council we as the Labour group in Merton Council are completely utterly committed to a zero tolerance approach to Islamophobia to antisemitism and it is important not to politicise this issue but to remain strong, to remain united against any kind of tolerance to Islamophobia or antisemitism so that we remain a Borough that is completely and utterly against all forms of discrimination.

From Councillor Pauline Cowper to the Cabinet member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities

Merton is leading the way in London for Community Sponsorship – what are the ambitions of the Council to expand the programme?

Reply

Merton is proud that through the work of the Faith and Belief Forum the Raynes Park Salvation Army successfully sponsored a Syrian refugee family in February 2017. After the arrival of the family the Salvation Army held a workshop to share their experience of Community Sponsorship with other Faith and Belief and Voluntary organisations. As a result the Wimbledon Synagogue successfully pursued an application to the Home Office to participate in the scheme and will shortly welcome another refugee family into the borough.

The scheme is dependent upon voluntary organisations committing to sponsoring a refugee family and the council aims to continue to encourage local groups to consider Community Sponsorship.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor. How does the Council ensure any special needs of the families in the Community Sponsorship Programmes are met?

Reply

I thank you Councillor Cowper for your supplementary question. I'd like to reassure you that the Council work very closely with schools and hospitals to ensure that we meet the needs and requirements on the Community Sponsorship and we are endeavouring to achieve this all the time. Thank you.

From Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

Will the Cabinet Member please explain why opposite South Merton Station vehicles are allowed unrestricted parking right up to the bollards on the bridge, thus causing extreme difficulties for buses and the many large lorries travelling from Morden to Bushey Road?

Reply

The Council relies on road users to report obstructive parking. Upon receiving a complaint, the Council investigates and undertakes the statutory consultation for the introduction of the appropriate waiting and loading restrictions if deemed necessary. We recently received one complaint regarding this location and a consultation is programmed. Although it is suggested that at times buses cannot pass due to obstructive parking, London Buses have not raised this point with us and thus far we have only received one complaint which we are acting upon.

Residents can also now report illegal parking via <https://www2.merton.gov.uk/transport-streets/parking/illegal-parking.htm>

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor I do have a supplementary and I thank the Cabinet Member for his response but if I am the first complainant, I would be rather surprised, if you're saying there's only been one thus far. I certainly won't be the last I can assure you. So, would the Cabinet Member please explain why under this Labour administration continue to be fined and restrict parking in highly residential roads but take little or no action on roads designated for buses and heavy lorries like Martin Way which have more and more heavy traffic?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Simpson for his supplementary question in relation to obstructive parking and enforcement. This Council is very diligent in terms of our enforcement and where a traffic offence has arisen we will actually take the necessary action that is needed though obviously Councillor Howard earlier thought that we are too severe but I can say to you as a Council we do take action with those issues of obstructive parking, we look into it and have the necessary consultations about further controls that we can actually put in place. We do want to keep our roads flowing freely and we will undertake the action which is needed. Thank you.

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From Councillor Agatha Akyigyina to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness

What are the recycling targets for Merton and how will the changes to waste services help meet, and hopefully exceed, these targets?

Reply

Over the last 5 years Merton's recycling rate has plateaued at between 36-38% compared to an annual target of 42%. The new waste collection service has been designed to promote recycling at the kerbside and encourage residents to participate in the food waste service which will continue to be a weekly collection. With the current service of unlimited black sacks collected every week we have found it challenging to encourage our residents to participate in the food waste service. We currently estimate that less than 50% of our residents use this valuable service which directly contributes to our overall recycling performance and significantly reduces our disposal cost.

Our Neighbouring boroughs of Sutton and Kingston have already introduced this alternate weekly wheeled bin waste collection service and both have experienced an increase in recycling rates in excess of 45%.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor. I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response and I'd like to ask, what work has been done on public engagement to filter through this vital information on recycling as part of the new scheme?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Akyigyina for her supplementary question. We have had extensive public engagements regarding the roll out of the new service. There are 900 people attended the 5 roadshows in total and I have been personally invited by ward councillors, by residents associations to go and speak and I was totalling up before this meeting and it comes to about 1000 people that I've seen at those meetings, so we're up to 2000, I know Councillor Whelton hosted one in his ward and there were three to four hundred people there as well. So the level of public engagement and the discussion about the need to recycle more and have cleaner streets has been extensive so I'm delighted to announce that.

From Councillor Adam Bush to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness

Does the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness consider that the administration has performed well with regards to recycling?

Reply

Yes, in the context of the current service and waste collection methodology but the proposed new service should significantly improve performance. Our ability to

improve our recycling rate is directly attributed to our residents' engagement with the service and the methods of collection and storage employed.

To address this, we have carried out a comprehensive borough-wide communication programme, involving doorstep encouragement with the aim to achieve a sustainable behaviour change and encourage recycling and food waste diversion.

In addition to this last year Merton was one of the 5 successful London boroughs being funded by Resource London to carry out a food waste campaign. The campaign, partnered with Sainsbury's, with their "waste less save more" campaign.

Despite this level of engagement over the last 5 years our recycling performance has remained static between 36-38%. 21% of this waste can be attributed to the kerbside collection service, as such if we are to increase our overall recycling performance we need to encourage behaviour change at the kerbside and ensure that our waste collection service is designed to encourage our residents to recycle all suitable materials at the kerbside. Our new waste collection arrangements from October 1st should significantly improve performance.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor. Can I start by thanking the Cabinet Member for his response. Since 2010 the recycling target has never been hit and recycling levels have fallen over the last Council. Is this poor performance why he has had to hand over control of recycling back to Veolia?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Bush for his supplementary question. Merton has not been performing as well in recycling in some areas as it could do, I'm fully aware of that. I think I announced at a previous meeting that compared with Sutton we recycle about 3kg of food waste per household per month. Sutton is at 7.5kg for a service they only started just over a year ago. So I am very optimistic that we will in working in partnership with Veolia we will achieve a much higher collection rate. Sutton for all its' teething problems last year is now they announced at the South London Waste Partnership meeting last night that they believe they've got to 50% across all recycling now and that's a tremendous improvement for them. We need to be out there evangelising recycling and I think that I would encourage all members of the Council as I know they do, to talk to their residents about recycling and together we'll see that success, so we've not handed anything over to Veolia, we're working in partnership with them.

From Councillor Eloise Bailey to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

The Cabinet Member indicates in the Strategic Theme Report that he intends to argue against the "deliverability" of the 10 year housing target for Merton in the draft London Plan. Given the need for housing, can he outline what he intends to do to enable the housebuilding we need?

Reply

Merton Council absolutely recognises the very challenging situation that is London's housing crisis and the Council is already working hard to accelerate the delivery of housing and proactively promotes development in a plan-led way. We have a significant amount of new housing planned such as 700 homes at Plough Lane, 2,900 planned through Clarion's Estate Regeneration programme and the Council owned Merantun Development Ltd is progressing with delivering homes on small, council-owned sites.

Our Local Plan actively targets new housing growth in areas of good public transport accessibility and we are working with TfL and the Mayor of London to seek a development partner to deliver a major housing-led regeneration of Morden town centre. We are a proactive pro-growth borough and we have a lot of identified potential to deliver new housing, improved neighbourhoods and to boost our local economy – however good growth must be plan-led and created in dialogue with our local communities, which Merton's regeneration, local plan and masterplanning projects are.

Merton's annual housing target is currently 411 homes per year. We consistently achieve this target as it's based on a sound assessment of land supply and good strategic planning. In 2016/17, our current monitoring year, 648 new homes were completed. This overachievement is down to completed large schemes at Colliers Wood Tower and Atkinson Morley boosting numbers.

Merton's new housing target in the draft London Plan is 1328 homes per year. This ambitious target highlights the pressing need for homes. This would mean that Merton has to achieve twice as much housing as we delivered in 16/17.

To put the challenge into context, Merton would have to build the equivalent of the Colliers Wood tower every 8 weeks. Or two (existing) High Path estates every year.

Merton promotes a plan led approach and our new draft Local Plan and Call-for-Sites has identified developable land that can come forward for housing. We will be consulting residents on this in October 2018.

However, Merton is not blessed with lots of large brownfield sites ready for redevelopment. The Mayor's target heavily relies on small-plot infill and expecting residents to redevelop their own homes at greater densities. In terms of Merton's historic performance in small-sites and subdivisions over the past 10 years, we know that the GLA assumptions will be incredibly challenging.

We have made representations on the Mayor's methodology applied to Merton via our response to the draft London plan and at the London Plan enquiry in autumn-winter this year.

The challenge for the council, and our residents who also clearly accept the need for more housing and more affordable housing is to work with the Council positively and identify and support development proposals through the planning system, our regeneration programmes and new local plan preparation.

We are a pro-growth borough but good growth has to be pitched at a deliverable level. We are working hard to ensure that Merton's housing target is fair, achievable and delivers the right kind of places that will make Merton an even greater place to call home.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you to the Cabinet Member for your full reply. My supplementary is a simple question; will you meet the first year target?

Reply

I think in terms of the target, the target is extremely challenging at the moment but it's only part of the draft London Plan. We have argued that we have delivered 650 homes the last year it's a very stretched target, clearly we are currently in negotiation with the GLA and we have made representations going forward we want to maximise the amount of housing provided in Merton but we're not overrun with brownfield sites compared to some other boroughs but we do need to get buildings we do need to have high densities on our sites because we have a huge housing crisis here in Merton and as Cabinet Member I am determined to tackle that housing crisis. Thank you.

From Councillor Sally Kenny to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness

Can the Cabinet member confirm the number of prosecutions for flytipping in the past three years?

Reply

The number of Prosecutions in relation to fly tipping is 21, some of which have been to court and some are pending hearing dates. Of those that have been to court, they have resulted in positive outcomes, with fines issued.

The figures for £400 fines issued for fly-tipping offences are as follows:

Yr 16/17 total 16 paid fines

Yr 17/18 total 23 paid fines

Yr 18 to date total 12 paid fines

We continue to seek evidence and to pursue fly-tippers wherever and whenever we can, however this is extremely challenging.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor. I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his reply and ask him following on from his answer where he says it is extremely challenging to pursue fly-tippers, can he please describe this process?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Kenny for her supplementary question. It is not as straightforward as you'd think fining people for fly tipping because you need to get the evidence. So we do have cameras and recently we identified 22 people fly tipping on Streatham Road, the recycling centre on Figges Marsh, and even despite those prosecutions it still continued there but it was coming down. I went out with one of our enforcement officers last week and it involves going into black bags that are found around the streets and what we were doing was ripping them open, looking for address labels, anything put in there, photographing that and then taking

the address, those people are written to, they're invited into the Civic Centre to have a conversation about how their rubbish ended up in another street or on someone else's property. So we do pursue that. In the past I've never been a name and shame sort of person but I'm getting to the point where I think we will need to be naming and shaming and really revealing who the culprits are openly because it will go through the courts and if it's in the courts domain then it's in the public domain and Merton will pursue people if we have the evidence we will follow it through and I believe we will be successful in bringing that down. Fly tipping is a national epidemic, everywhere you go there's more fly tipping around, maybe it's the success of schemes like the landfill tax and alike but people are looking for a cheap way out. We all have a responsibility as well when someone offers to come and take your rubbish away from your front garden for fifty pounds, then they can't possibly be disposing of it for fifty pounds or a hundred pounds, we need to see their licence, so ask for that as a resident and encourage your residents to do that as well. Thank you very much.

From Councillor Ed Gretton to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

The Mayor of London has said that London is experiencing a 'public health crisis', linked in part to pollution. What steps has the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness [**Air Quality is in the portfolio of the Cabinet member for Adult Social Care and Health**] taken to ensure that the boroughs children are kept safe from air pollution?

Reply

I am acutely aware of the problem with Air Quality in London and within our own borough. There are areas within Merton, particularly along main roads, where air pollution levels are consistently high and where people including children experience significant amounts of exposure, with an impact on respiratory illness. I meet regularly with our Pollution colleagues and have made this a personal priority. Merton has produced a new Air Quality Action Plan 2018 – 2023 that covers the steps we will be taking to tackle pollution in our borough over the next 5 years. The plan has 70 measures over 9 different themes to tackle every aspect of the air pollution agenda.

This Plan was built on the work of the Council's Air Quality Task Group that reported directly to Scrutiny last year, with many action measures warmly welcomed throughout the borough. The Plan and its implementation is strongly supported by our colleagues in Public Health, who welcome the opportunity to work jointly to improve children's health and reduce the health inequalities that arise from air pollution, a key determinant of people's health.

The Plan is bold and in taking difficult but important decisions, such as levying polluting vehicles and investing in staff to deliver the plan. The plan also has a specific category aimed at schools and protecting our children.

I would urge my colleagues to read the Plan and support its implementation in the borough over the next 5 years.

Link to the AQAP:

<https://www2.merton.gov.uk/Merton%20AQAP%2020182023.pdf>

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor. My question relates to air quality and the impact on children and young people in our Borough, specifically Madam Mayor, the Mayor of London and I know it doesn't fill people with a great deal of confidence nowadays when we speak of the current Mayor of London Madam Mayor but he's intended to carry out a school air quality audit on Merton Abbey School in November Madam Mayor, Merton Abbey School which is a school which means a lot to us all. Will the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health apologise for his failings to date to address the air pollution that surrounds the local area around High Path and the school and will he explain why he has failed to allocate s106 monies and CIL monies to properly address the problem which is well outstanding and overdue Madam Mayor.

Reply

Well no, I won't apologise; we've got a very ambitious air quality action plan which was detailed in the answer to the original question with a number of very ambitious measures and in the past when we sought to introduce those measures such as the diesel levy his party has opposed those and it is measures like that that will improve air quality for children, so I hope as we look to introduce further measures in the air quality action plan his passion and enthusiasm for air quality will rub off on his colleagues.

From Councillor Peter Southgate to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness

Is Glyphosate/Glyphosate (marketed as Roundup) currently used as a herbicide by Merton Council for its contractors and is its future usage under review?

Reply

Glyphosate is currently used on both the parks grounds and highways maintenance contracts.

The Council has alerted its contractors to recent concerns these about his herbicide, they have confirmed they are reviewing matters with their suppliers.

The EU renewed the licence for the use of glyphosate-based weed killers, such as Roundup in 2017, it is licensed until 2022. Under UK and EU law it is therefore certified safe to use when applied by qualified staff as per the manufacturer's instructions. As such Merton's contractors will continue to use the product whilst this review is conducted.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor and I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response. I'm pleased to see though that the use of Glyphosate is under review, I do note that under current UK and EU law it is classed as legal, I'd ask him to note the World Health Organisation has branded it as quote "probably carcinogenic to humans" and we must all I'm sure be aware of the award of punitive damages against Monsanto of \$289million just a few weeks ago. In the process of reviewing our contractors use of Glycophosate, can I ask him to take a look at what Hammersmith and Fulham do with the use of innovative chemical freewater this is particularly foams as a much safer alternative to glycophosate.

Reply

Thank you and I'd like to thank Councillor Southgate for his supplementary question. We take the Health and Safety of all the people that are delivering weedkiller to the streets and people living in the area seriously so that's why we've been following and monitoring the advice that's been given. I'm more than happy to look into what a fellow Labour Council is doing in London successfully, if it does work then getting our officers to look at that but I'm sure it's been considered in the array of options in the past but times change and new evidence comes to light and we always need to keep that under review I take your point.

From Councillor Joan Henry to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport:

Following the Mayor of London's investment in Electric Vehicle Charging Points, can the Cabinet member update us on the coverage and accessibility of these points across Merton?

Reply

There are currently 21 publically accessible (on-street) fast charge points (7kw) spread across the borough, which are able to charge a typical electric vehicle in 3-4 hours. A further 44 fast charge points are in the process of being commissioned by Source London.

The new Morden Leisure centre will provide an additional 5 fast charge points. A third batch of 39 charge points is currently going through the planning process and aim to be operational in late 2018/early 2019.

Transport for London are also rolling out a network of rapid chargers (50KW) across London capable of charging a vehicle in 15- 30 minutes including 2 chargers on London Road, Morden. These rapid chargers are aimed at taxis and other high usage vehicles. As part of the Go Ultra Low Carbon Scheme (GULCS) Merton proposes to trial a number of lamp column chargers in 2019 aimed at overnight parking. The council is now ahead of target to deliver 125 publically assessable charge points by 2020/21.

We also have a number of charging points across the borough in new developments such as Brenley Park, Nelson Hospital, Asda Mitcham, Priory Retail Park and other off-street locations being negotiated as part of planning permissions.

Details of charging points in Merton and our roll-out programme are online at <https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/electric-vehicle-charging-points> Our web page also links to Source London with an online map of all available charging points

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor. I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his reply. It seems to me that as well as electric car schemes, car clubs and car sharing are good ways of reducing the number of cars on our streets. What schemes are there in Merton?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Henry for her supplementary. Merton has been at the forefront of rolling out schemes, car club schemes over the past few years it's something that we do want to encourage alongside electric charging points and electric vehicles and that's why we have reduced permit charges in terms of electric vehicles. As an authority we do want to see more rolled out across the Borough, we do want to reduce emissions, it's something we take extremely seriously here in this Council and I'm confident that over the next few years we will see more coming to the fore in this Borough because to date many have worked very successfully and I have no doubt that we will continue to see car clubs but also as well electric cars roam in this Borough.

From Councillor David Dean to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

Will the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture clarify when the council intends to begin charging Little Leagues for using the boroughs sport facilities?

Reply

The Little Leagues currently enjoy a range of outdoor football pitches at various sites across the borough. The plan is that charging will commence for the forthcoming football season, beginning on Saturday 15th September.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor, I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his answer. I'd like to ask, I often hear the Cabinet Member talk about building communities but for a small sum of money he can change his mind here, simply because he is destroying a community; tens of thousands of boys and girls that play little league and many of them will never be able to do again, so my simple question to our Cabinet Member is, when is he going to start practising what he preaches?

Reply

Thank you very much, I'm grateful to Councillor Dean for his supplementary question of sorts. There was something in there somewhere. I'm actually quite glad that Councillor Dean told us at the last Council Meeting that as a child he was in the little league growing up in Carshalton in the London Borough of Sutton, because London Borough of Sutton do charge for their little leagues pitches and have done so for a very considerable period of time. I have to say, I haven't as yet heard of any tales of deprivation caused by Sutton's actions which rather goes against what his supplementary question said. In fact at the last Council meeting if he remembers, I asked our fellow Lib Dem members if they could liaise with their fellows in Sutton and I have heard nothing from them since. But, if they or Councillor Dean you, can provide me with any conclusive evidence that Sutton's children are substantially missing out, as per your supplementary question, I will take that into account and revise.

From Councillor Anthony Fairclough to the Leader of the Council

Following his meeting with Michelle Dix on 4 July 2018 and his answer to a question from Cllr McGrath at full Council on the same day, what steps has the Leader of the Council taken to make the Independent Review on Crossrail 2 affordability, the Department of Transport and the Mayor of London aware of the his opposition to an additional tax on households living near a Crossrail 2 station?

Reply

Crossrail 2 is expected to cost £30bn. Given the recent delays with Crossrail 1, confidence may have been shaken with CR2. However Transport for London are not only committed to CR2, they have made it clear that affordability and funding is a clear priority to move to the next stage of planning.

Crossrail and Crossrail 2 are two separate projects. TfL are working closely with the DfT to further develop Crossrail 2 which is an essential part of the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy.

Crossrail 2's Independent Affordability Review has been considering ways to make the scheme more affordable. Following submission of its interim report to the Mayor and the Secretary of State, TfL await a decision on next steps which will allow the CR2 team to submit a Hybrid Bill in 2021 and begin construction by the mid-2020s.

It was confirmed in our meeting with Michele Dix that the land-value capture tax was just one of a wide range of potential funding scenarios being tested as part of the Independent Affordability Review. It is right that CR2 and the Treasury assess all possible funding options, and it is just that; an idea that has to be considered. There is no firm proposal on the table for a local land tax to fund CR2, so, unless it does become a reality, we have no further information at present but will monitor closely.

The government delays in reaching a conclusion on Crossrail 2 are not only holding back economic growth, jobs and investment; the hiatus is causing concern in many of our communities where people and businesses simply want to know what's

happening and Merton Council strongly urges the government to reach a positive conclusion soon so that we can all proactively plan for growth.

It's no surprise that government are pre-occupied with Brexit, to the detriment of other parliamentary business and nationally important projects such as CR2, HS2 and northern powerhouse rail. Investing in infrastructure should not be a north vs south choice for the government. Post-Brexit, UK still needs to invest in ageing and over capacity rail networks. The need for CR2 is clear.

London's population is still very much on the up, with the ONS expecting the capital to reach 10.1million by 2036 (that's a 14% increase from 2016). And with current services into Waterloo already running at capacity, the need to expand London's transport system is essential. Wimbledon Station will also reach peak capacity in the 2030s. Relieving overcrowding was Crossrail 2's primary objectives.

Our support for Crossrail 2 in principle remains. Merton and CR2 needs a decision from the government in order to determine with the CR2 team, the impact and also opportunity for new, essential infrastructure in Merton. We still believe that with Crossrail 2, it's a question of when, not if.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you to the Leader for his rather detailed answer on Crossrail 1 and 2. I note that the Leader says that charging additional Council Tax is an idea that has to be considered so I just wanted to check that he is in fact opposed to the idea of charging people who live within 3 kilometres of Crossrail 2 stations additional Council Tax and if so, what does he plan to do to show that position? Thank you.

Reply

I thank Councillor Fairclough who has asked exactly the same question as a supplementary as his original question, therefore the written answer retains, thank you.

From Councillor Laxmi Attawar to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

How will the Mayor of London's Healthy Streets agenda be reflected in the regeneration of Morden Town Centre?

Reply

The Mayor's aim for 2041 is for 80 per cent of Londoners' trips to be on foot, by cycle or by using public transport. High quality public spaces can sustain this and can be achieved through a 'Healthy Streets Approach', measured by ten indicators which include (I suggest using the highlighted indicators):

1. Pedestrians from all walks of life
2. People choose to walk, cycle and use public transport

3. Clean air
4. Shade and shelter
5. People feel safe
6. Not too noisy
7. Easy to cross
8. People feel relaxed
9. Places to stop and rest
10. Things to see and do

Design details for the regeneration of Morden Town Centre will only be finalised once a deliverable scheme has been developed in collaboration with a development partner.

We have been working closely with our delivery partners, Transport for London, in preparation for the procurement of the development partner. Both parties recognise the need for Morden to be a healthier environment for residents, shoppers and commuters, and have adopted 'making Morden a London-wide exemplar of the Healthy Streets Approach' as core objective of the project.

Merton Council and Transport for London have jointly formed the Morden Town Centre Transport Steering Group, which is tasked with delivering the Mayor's Transport Strategy in Morden. This transport steering group is currently working to develop a set of requirements and parameters for the town centre, which will define how the Healthy Streets Approach can be realised through the Morden Town Centre project. This ongoing work is being directly supported by the same team that first created the Healthy Streets Approach, so we can be confident that the project will fully embody this Mayoral objective and become a good example of 'Healthy Streets' in London.

FM is working closely with Merton Public Health to ensure the Healthy Streets approach is adopted as part of the Morden Regeneration project by way of Health Impact Assessment, which is being produced by Public Health.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor I do have a supplementary. I thank the Cabinet Member for his answer. Can he please reassure me that residents will continue to be engaged with us as the regeneration of Morden Town Centre takes place?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Attawar for her supplementary question on Morden regeneration. As we start to work up Morden during the Autumn and go to the market next year of course engagement with residents will absolutely be essential and that's a key component of the project to take Morden to delivery will see a transformation of the Town Centre, nearly 2000 new homes but also as well improving the public infrastructure and the public realm in the Town Centre to ensure that it's an attractive place to live work and learn. I have no doubt that we will see Morden start to come to fruition over the lifetime of this administration and I look forward to engaging with residents on that. Thank you.

From Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness

In light of the repeated failings of Veolia to keep Merton's streets clean, does the Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Cleanliness believe that appointing Veolia has been a success?

Reply

While so far the level of street cleansing since Veolia took on the contract has not met our required standard, it is reasonable to say that the full benefits of the service will not be experienced until we have introduced the service changes in October this year. The benefits of a wheeled bin service include the effective containerisation of waste will result in less wind-blown litter and reduced spillage. This enables an alternative approach to resourcing street cleaning and we are confident that this will deliver a higher quality of street cleansing. It should also be borne in mind that this contract continues to deliver significant financial savings, easing the pressure on other key services to find savings.

The number of recorded fly-tips across the borough has increased significantly over the last 18 months. The monitoring of fly tip clearance has indicated that the majority are being cleared within the required 24-hour response period. However, there have been some disappointing instances where this has not been the case. This is being addressed with Veolia. The NCOs are also working closely with the LBM Environmental Enforcement Team to address fly-tipping through communication with residents, in-depth investigation of fly-tipped material and issuing of enforcement notices.

We will continue to monitor their performance closely and hold them to account for all areas of the service.

Supplementary

Thank you, I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his answer. I have a simple question; under what circumstances will the Labour Council and the Cabinet Member in particular, bin this failing street cleaning contract with Veolia?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Holden who did warn me he was going to ask a supplementary question when he attended the South London Waste Partnership last night. We have a contract but we need to make sure it works and we need to enforce it. To start from scratch, can you imagine the dilemma and the mess that would throw and the cost and the waste of money to do that, it's much better to work with what we're doing now. I have been out with our Client Officers, report streets below par regularly, I've probably become the bane of the departments life in the number of reports I've put in and it's only through monitoring and pushing that we will actually get Veolia to deliver to the contract that they have signed and we have signed and that is the best way to get cleaner streets in Merton.

From Councillor Billy Christie to Cabinet Member for Finance

What is the level of vital ongoing support provided by the Council to low income families dealing with the roll out of Universal Credit?

Reply

- 1 Merton has a Delivery partnership agreement with the DWP to provide Universal Support Delivered Locally. USDL provides:
 - a. Assisted Digital support
 - i. physical access to UC by providing digital access from our Library PCs
 - ii. one off advice on how to access the UC portals, make a claim and maintain their UC accounts and tasks – funded by the DWP grant and provided by the Welfare Benefits Team and the Libraries through liaison with Work Coaches and the Jobcentre Plus and self-referrals..
 - iii. Ongoing long-term support is also provided by Merton case workers to specific clients as part of their care plans. These tend to be in Direct Payments Team and 14+ Team. Not funded by the DWP.
 - b. Personal budgeting support
 - i. Initial assessment of this is done by the Welfare Benefits team through a triage process.
 - ii. Cases requiring more in depth intervention are referred to the CAB for Merton and Lambeth. Merton funds this through the DWP funding.

NOTE: The DWP provide Merton with specified funding to provide the USDL as shown below:
ADS - £8108 for 151 cases
PBS - £16356 for 251 cases
Merton is then paid in addition to this for each case it receives beyond these. This requires Merton to submit quarterly MI stats to DWP.
- 2 Local Welfare Support Scheme provides advice and assistance in requesting UC advance payments. Where these are not available, instalments of up to 4 weeks can be made whilst UC applicants await their UC payments. This is funded by Merton through the management of the lump sum payment made by DWP in 2013 when crisis loans were abolished.
- 3 Housing Benefit assist DWP UC staff in working out UC claims where questions arise. This can speed up the assessment of UC.

Supplementary

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you to the Cabinet Member for his response. Could I ask him what are the concerns he has about the roll-out of Universal Credit?

Reply

I'd like to thank him for his follow up question. I think most of us on this side although we're really not fans of Iain Duncan-Smith or the Government of now, I think that we all hoped that it might work with the principles of Universal Credit, the principles of ensuring that everybody gets the benefits that they need, that nobody loses out compared to where they were before and also to ensure that people who are in work are actually better off as a result of work. However, 8 years into this programme and 8 years into austerity government we have to be clear that Universal Credit is an absolute shambles and it is causing pain misery and penury for hundreds if not thousands of residents and we should be ashamed of what is happening. He asked what my concerns are and there are so many but I guess for me the most heart-breaking cases are of people with learning difficulties who can't apply, don't know how to apply, aren't given the support that they need when there are changes of circumstances, people with no access to the IT that they need to make the changes who are put into terrible terrible debt as a result of their governments' actions and people with mental health issues who are struggling so much with the depression that's caused by being in such a financial position that their situation gets worse and worse and worse and it is a crying shame that here we stand in 2018 in one of the richest countries in the world, at the richest point the world has ever been that people are in this position in Merton in this fantastic city of London we should all be ashamed and I hope that they will do all they can to get that system working because it hasn't been and you have let us down.