

If you are reading this electronically, the Council has saved **£0.75** on printing. For more information on the Modern.gov paperless app, contact Democratic Services

Merton Council

Council

7 July 2021

Supplementary Agenda 3

- | | | |
|----|--|---------|
| 5 | Public questions to cabinet members | 1 - 18 |
| | The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting. | |
| 6 | Councillors' ordinary priority questions to cabinet members | 19 - 24 |
| | The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting | |
| 7a | Strategic theme: Councillors' questions to cabinet members | 25 - 30 |
| | The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting. | |

This page is intentionally left blank

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

1. From: Malcolm Green

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Is the Council aware of the strong support in the local community for a Traffic, Congestion and Pollution Reduction scheme to reduce rat-running by non-local through traffic, in the East Hillside neighbourhood of Wimbledon?

Reply

The Council is aware of the desire for the East Hillside Low Traffic Neighbourhood / TCPR (similar to that of South Fulham). Officers, local councillors and Cabinet Members have met with residents and understand the support for the project. The Council applauds East Hillside LTN Group for their efforts in securing local support for the scheme and setting out the local issues. At present, due to TFL funding constraints the Council is not yet able to embark on the scheme. We have however committed to installing traffic sensors to gather data to support a funding case in future for the project.

2. From: Andrew Boyce

To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Education

Given Cllr Stringer's elevated position, will she ensure the S106 works on The Path in South Wimbledon are prioritised in a way that her predecessors never achieved? Will she also apologise on behalf of Cllr Whelton for citing coronavirus as the latest excuse for the Council's inaction over 7.5 years?

Reply

The s.106 funded public realm improvements are now being delivered on-site. Works scheduled to be completed by 2nd July. Shortly followed by the planting of the rain garden.

We thank local residents for their input into the design over the past few years, and recognise that the project has taken longer than we anticipated due to a number of unexpected issues, from changes in national guidance that affected the initial design, to most recently the coronavirus pandemic leading to other works e.g. street widening, being urgently prioritised.

3. From: Kevin Clarke

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

Please outline plans to manage traffic levels at Garth Rd Recycling Centre as part of movement strategy to reduce pollution and congestion in Merton.

Reply

The Reuse and Recycling Centre (HRRC) is operated by Veolia ES. In 2020 early on in the pandemic the site was temporarily closed for a period of six weeks following government guidance on social distancing. Following amended guidance from

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

Government and in line with our neighbouring boroughs within the South London Waste Partnership, the site was reopened to the public on the 13th May 2020.

As part of the remobilisation of this element of the service in-line with social distancing guidance, our objectives were to:

- Reopen the HRRC site in a safe and controlled manner
- Ensure social distancing measures are in place to protect staff and customers,
- Ensure measures are in place to safely manage an anticipated increase in demand
- Ensure the Contractor continues to prioritise and maximise recycling wherever possible
- Ensure that reopening the site in no way contradicts any of the key Government advice around restrictions on non-essential travel

Due to the residential location of our facility in Merton, further control measures were required to safely manage the increase in demand and to ensure that all queuing and traffic management issues were retained within the boundary of the operational site to ensure local services operating in the vicinity were not negatively impacted. This includes, neighbouring businesses, Passenger Transport service and the wider waste collection and street cleansing service.

Following the re-opening of the site, there was justified concern that the backlog of residents requiring to use the facility in Garth Road needed to be managed to minimise the level of queuing beyond the site boundary. To achieve this aim, the service introduced a booking system seven days per week which ensured the total number of visitors per day was restricted and evenly spread throughout the week.

Following a regular review of the service provision, we did remove the booking system in Feb 2021 for a brief period. Despite the then existing Government guidance restricting travel for 'essential journeys' only, the Garth Road facility was unable to meet the level of demand of users. This demand created significant queuing along Garth Road, with residents queuing up to two hours to access the site. As a consequence, an immediate review was undertaken and the service reintroduced the booking system to address the local concerns.

We are continuing to undertake regular user reviews of the service and are working in partnership with our neighbouring boroughs to ensure the site is operating in line with all Government guidelines and minimise the impact on any long-term restriction whilst addressing the environmental concerns associated with traffic movements.

We will keep this under review and inform the public if and when any further changes are made.

4. From: Tim Dare

To the Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Public Safety and Tackling Crime

Does the council have any strategy to reduce arson activities around the area near Lavender Park and College Field Business Park? For example, to cooperate with

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

property management companies to increase surveillance and remove existing burnt vehicles?

Reply

We have spoken with the London Fire Service who have indicated that the location does not feature as one of their repeat locations for deliberate fires, however they have confirmed that they are happy to work with the Safer Merton team to look into the issues at the location and to see how we can work together to resolve them.

College field Business Park has come to note for a separate issue of lorries parking up obstructing roads/pavements and a site visit took place in relation to this in the last few weeks. The Safer Merton Team will be following working with the Management Company in relation to addressing the specific issues identified on the site visit.

We have made the Safer Neighbourhood Team aware of the concerns about arson / burned out vehicles at this location and they will be carrying out patrols in the area and be on the look-out for such activity.

Merton Council's Abandoned vehicles team cooperate with the land owners and managing agents in relation to the removal of abandoned vehicles from their premises (a fee is chargeable for removal of abandoned vehicles from private land). The team report one vehicle was removed by them from this location in the last year – a caravan which was burned out a few weeks ago.

Moving forward the Safer Merton team will work with the London Fire Service and Police Safer Neighbourhood Team to arrange for a visual fire/crime prevention audit to take place will make recommendations as to any further actions which could be taken help reduce arson and other crime and anti-social behaviour.

In the meantime, if there are further concerns of ASB of this type they can be reported via:

- www.met.police.uk (Metropolitan Police Online Reporting)
- Calling 101 (Metropolitan Police Non-Emergency)
- Calling 999 in an emergency for Police or Fire Services.
- Abandoned Vehicles can be reported at www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/abandoned-vehicles

5. From: Nicholas Waring

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Please provide progress reports please as follows:

The Parade, Haydons Road - Street frontage heritage improvements

Ford, 66/67 Plough Lane – unauthorised removal of trees

PlanWimbledon – designation as Neighbourhood Forum

Reply

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

Haydons Road Parades

Haydon's Road shopfront improvements are part of a rolling programme across Merton. Colliers Wood High Street was completed in 2020, with delays due to Covid.

The Council is now on-site refurbishing Bramcote Parade in Mitcham. Haydon's Road was always intended to be the next project after Bramcote Pde. In 2020, the Council also allocated additional CIL funding to Haydon's Rd Parade to increase the scope of works to include all four blocks of Haydons Road North. Design work will commence late summer 2021.

Ford Plough Lane

Latest information is available at:

<https://news.merton.gov.uk/2021/06/11/council-investigating-legal-action-following-plough-lane-felled-trees/>

PlanWimbledon

Latest information is available in the Cabinet Reports of 22 June 2021.

(Agenda Item 6)

<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=146&MIId=3972&Ver=4>

6. From: Barry Smith

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

Veolia frequently leave green rubbish bags on the streets for days, often until they are reported as a fly-tip. Can the council explain why Veolia are not clearing these bags the same day they fill them, and whether they are being paid extra to clear them as fly-tips?

Reply

The service is aware of the growing concerns with green sweeper sacks being left out overnight.

Our contract does allow for these sacks to be left at roadside but requires street cleansing sacks to be collected at the end of each working day. Where this has not been completed, they contractually have 24 hours from notification to rectify this service requirement.

Officers are currently reviewing how this element of the services is monitored with the aim of creating additional reporting functionality for the operational staff to log when and where they have left sacks that will require a collection. This will allow the mobile response crews to efficiently undertake the collection in a timely manner.

In the interim, I would welcome further information on your experience in order to ensure that these areas are rectified and proactively inspected in order to ensure our service provider is delivering on our requirements

Regarding any additional payments made to the service provider for collecting omitted bags on street, I can confirm that no additional expenditure or charge has been incurred by the Council to undertake the collection of green sweeper sacks.

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

7. From: Lee Walker

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

During the pandemic, Northcote Road, in Wandsworth borough, was transformed into a fantastic outside space for hospitality venues. What ideas does Merton council have for the creation vibrant outdoor spaces similar to that of Northcote Road?

Reply

Northcote Road is undoubtedly a popular destination and has a critical mass of hospitality venues to justify the environmental changes made there. Merton Council has also been supporting businesses through the reallocation of highway space to support, in particular, the hospitality sector and safeguard jobs. The Council supported the relocation of Wimbledon Village Farmer's Market onto the High Street in Wimbledon Village with part-time pedestrianisation. The Market is more covid secure in the larger space and has become a popular part of the village experience.

The Council has also approved over 50 licences for tables and chairs on the footway, helping bars and restaurants create extra space and to animate the street-scene. We are also supporting businesses using government grants to create parklets– utilising parking bays for outdoor dining with the introduction of decking and planting to again, add vibrancy to the street scene and support traders. We will be following up the outdoor dining parklets with community parklets in the next phase. Through the use of Neighbourhood CIL, the Council also awarded a grant to LoveWimbledon to improve Hartfield Walk for the existing traders and visitors.

8. From: Liza Robbins

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

How do you get in touch with Merton planning and what is the agreed response time? Please advise who will raise this question on my behalf?

Reply

Contact details for the Planning Service are published on the Council's planning web pages: <https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/planning/apply-for-planning-permission> - *Contact Us is found at the bottom of the link*

There are both general enquiries e-mail addresses and an e-mail address for registering a complaint about a possible breach of planning control – planning enforcement.

There are separate e-mail inboxes where someone is proposing to carry out development but seeks pre-application advice and the web page indicates that an acknowledgement is sent within 5 days of the receipt of a valid pre-application submission.

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

If the Development Control Team receives an e-mail in the “planning” inbox it is either answered the day it comes in or it is passed on to the relevant officer that can answer a query.

Complaints received about possible breaches of planning control are acknowledged by letter as part of the recording process.

The Development Control Team has a planning duty line details of which are published on the Council’s planning web pages and an officer is available to take calls each weekday afternoon

9. From: Petra Jones

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

What steps will Merton take to ensure the regeneration is funded properly? Will all residents have their removal costs paid for, for example? I would like the councils support to ensure my future is protected. What will you do to support us?

Reply

The funding and delivery of the Merton Estates Regeneration project is the responsibility of Clarion Housing Group – supported by the Council’s strategic planning policies and the planning approvals granted for Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury Estates.

Clarion’s offer to residents is set out on their website and has been directly communicated to residents by Clarion’s officers and information packs posted to residents.

Specific questions related to individual personal circumstances should be reported to Clarion. Clarions offer to residents sets out payment details for removal costs – currently £3,000 to cover the cost of moving.

Further details are online at
<https://www.myclarionhousing.com/my-community/regeneration-projects/merton-london>

Merton Council have also agreed a pledge for residents living in the estate regeneration areas.

10. From: Robert Kennedy

To the Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Local Environment and Green Spaces

What consultation process did London Borough of Merton go through in deciding to close part of Church road/turn a large part of Wimbledon park into a car park? Why

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

do council feel this is a good use of very limited public open land during times of social distancing/climate emergency?

Reply

The partial closure of Church Road during this year's Championships has been undertaken with advice from the Metropolitan Police regarding safety and to accommodate the changes to the Championships operations this year including crowding at the gates due to covid restrictions.

The AELTC engaged with over 600 local residents prior to the Council undertaking the Traffic Management Order for the closures. As the scheme is experimental, the Council's consultation is live and we encourage residents to feed back what the experience of the closure was; to inform whether the scheme is repeated or amended for future years.

www.merton.gov.uk/restrictions-wimbledon-2021

The Council has a long standing legal agreement with the AELTC to support this world renowned event. This is principally to support the queuing and some limited car parking. This year the space requirements have been reduced but the requirement for car parking has remained and has been provided. We will continue to work hard with the AELTC to ensure sustainable transport solutions are promoted.

11. From: Peter Cameron

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

In 2019 Merton Council allocated money under the Neighbourhood Fund scheme to Haydon's Road parade for refurbishment improvements. What happened to this allocation, where is the money and when does the work commence?

Reply

Haydons Road Parades

Haydon's Road shopfront improvements are part of a rolling programme across Merton. Colliers Wood High Street was completed in 2020, with delays due to Covid. The Council is now on-site refurbishing Bramcote Parade in Mitcham.

Haydon's Road was always intended to be the next project after Bramcote Parade. In 2020, the Council also allocated additional CIL funding to Haydon's Rd Parade to increase the scope of works to include all four blocks of Haydons Road North. Design work will commence late summer 2021.

12. From: Emma Maddison

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Please could you summarise the housing enforcement action taken by the council against any housing association since 2010?

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

Reply

Housing Associations have standard procedures to follow if their Landlord Does not carry out repairs and the Council expects them to fulfil their repairing obligations in accordance with their statutory repairing obligations (Landlord and Tenant Act 1985) and their tenants conditions of tenancy . Where a housing association tenant raises issues of disrepair with the Councils Housing Enforcement team then the tenant is advised to contact their Landlord in the first instance to exhaust the housing associations complaints system and where necessary raise the complaint with the Housing Ombudsman. In instances where the repair remains outstanding the Councils housing enforcement team will raise the matter with the housing association to seek a solution, which could be by way of informal action which is usually sufficient to resolve the matter.

13. From: Dolores Llatas Beltrán To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

Could the Council confirm the quantity and frequency of the watering of new street trees that the contractor is paid to do and also the number of years they are paid to do it?

Reply

Merton Council's Greenspaces tree works contractor is undertaking the watering of Merton's young tree plantings. They have confirmed, as of their email 25/6/21 the following information;

- There are seven geographical areas across the borough where young trees are being watered. These geographical areas are within Mitcham that is split into three areas; the Morden area, which includes New Malden; and the Wimbledon area that has two distinct areas.
- Across the areas outlined above, the service is currently watering approximately 650 young new trees that have been planted.
- All of the above trees have now been watered four times, commencing from the 2nd - 3rd week of May.

In relation to the number of years the contractor is paid to undertake this work, I can confirm that young trees from planting seasons 2018-19, 2019-20 & 2020-21 are the stock being watered. Those from planting seasons pre-dating the earliest here are now deemed to be established & not watered by our contractor. We undertake a strategic view on watering and, dependent on the seasonality of weather conditions, will support trees through watering until they are established. This can vary due to localised conditions, site placement and the species of the tree.

14. From: Andrea Milde To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Regarding front gardens, a) Why does Merton Council allow front gardens to be paved given how important green front gardens are to biodiversity and wildlife, b)

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

What sanctions does Merton Council apply to front gardens paved without permission, c) How many times have sanctions been applied in the last year?

Reply

The Council's Highway guidance for applying for dropped-kerbs includes advice on minimising the amount of hard-standing in front gardens and to minimise surface water run-off. Paving over of garden amenity is controlled by planning, where an area greater than 5 square metres is to be hard paved planning permission must be applied for. If the area is paved with porous materials then the water is retained within the garden footprint or if surface water runoff is channelled into a soakaway within the property then the water is retained within property. This would satisfy the Planning requirement.

The council has limited planning control over this as in most cases people are allowed to lay hardstanding over their front garden without the need for planning permission under the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended).

Class F – hard surfaces This provides permitted development rights within the curtilage of a house for - (a) the provision of a hard surface for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse as such or (b) the replacement in whole or in part of such a surface F.1 Development is not permitted by Class F if permission to use the dwellinghouse as a dwellinghouse has been granted only by virtue of Class M, N, P, PA, or Q of Part 3 of this Schedule (change of use) Conditions F.2 Development is permitted by Class F subject to the condition that where - (a) the hard surface would be situated on land between a wall forming the principal elevation of the dwellinghouse and a highway, and (b) the area of ground covered by the hard surface, or the area of hard surface replaced, would exceed 5 square metres, either the hard surface shall be made of porous materials, or provision shall be made to direct run-off water from the hard surface to a permeable or porous area or surface within the curtilage of the dwellinghouse The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government has produced separate guidance on permeable paving. This can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7728/paving_frontgardens.pdf

We take action against unauthorised crossovers in placing bollards across the kerbline. It has not been possible to calculate the volume in the time permitted. As can be seen from the above detail the case for planning enforcement is limited and we have no evidence of enforcement action being required or taken.

15. From: Sharon Belaidi

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Lots of front gardens are now concrete drives- why can't LBM stipulate a couple of feet MUST remain environmentally friendly before applications for a dropped kerb

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

are granted? Please make every street tree/trees in parks a T.P.O. (I worry about the few trees in playing fields adjoining David Lloyd, SW20)

Reply

All vehicle crossover applications are provided with links to the guidance available for constructing Hard Standings and advised to contact planning to ensure designs are compliant. Crossover applications are only required to obtain planning through the application process when they are on a Classified Road, in a Conservation Area or are either a flat or maisonette. Applicants are reminded of their responsibility to ensure the Hard Standing complies with planning.

16. From: Matthew Willis

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

What **action** did the council take in response to the condition of Eastfields estate housing **before** 1st of June 2021?

Reply

The circumstances where the Council has control over any housing association is limited, it is the social housing regulator which has the overall powers relating to the regulation of the housing association sector. The ability of the Council to interfere with housing association business is limited to its statutory duties which includes the enforcement of the Housing Act 2004 and associated legislation. Where any housing association tenant living in Merton raises issues of disrepair with officers and / or ward councillors these are dealt with either through case work, liaison with the Housing Association (including the Clarion Housing Group) and regular performance review meetings led by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency.

17. From: Eve Cohen

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Applications for tree works provide insufficient information to enable residents to be aware, or for officers to assess applications. Location of the tree on site (with plan), the work proposed and the reason for it should be included. Why are applications not deemed invalid until adequate information is provided?

Reply

Thank you for your question and I agree it would be good if this was provided, however, we cannot require it but will look at how we can improve the information provided in future. There are 2 main forms of 'applications'. The first relates to conservation areas and is a section 211 notice. That gives the local planning authority 6 weeks notice of an intention to carry out tree work. It does not require the submission of a tree works application form or any reasons for the tree work. All that is required is sufficient information to identify the tree, and the tree work to be carried out. It is up to the notifier to decide whether a plan would help their notice.

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

The second form relates to works to trees covered by tree preservation orders. This does require the submission of a tree works application form, and the reasons for the tree work. Sufficient information must be provided to identify the tree and its location. Again, a plan may not be necessary, but is frequently provided by an applicant.

When registering either form of submission, the description will aim to describe the location of the tree and what work is proposed. Occasionally, notifications/applications will remain invalid until the admin person is satisfied that the correct amount of information is provided. The tree officers can also ask for additional information if it is considered the application, once registered, appears to be unclear, or requires clarification. In the case of tree preservation orders, an application for tree work can be refused consent if it becomes apparent that the application is unsatisfactory in a significant way.

18. From: Dr Simon Jones

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Will Merton Council publish the full transfer agreement covering the transfer of its housing stock to Clarion in 2010?

Reply

The Agreement is subject to a confidentiality clause which protects sensitive personal data and commercially sensitive information contained within the document and any ancillary agreements. Any proposals relating to the publishing of a full agreement will need to be first approved and agreed with Clarion and not be in breach of the provisions of the Agreement but subject to those caveats we can provide the agreement.

19. From: Tony Burton

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

When in 2021 will Council fulfil the commitments made by Cabinet on 9/11/20 to:

- Publication -consultation draft Green Spaces Strategy
- Publication- consultation draft Tree Strategy
- improved reporting- idverde's contract performance
- introduction- one stop web based reporting for the public
- quarterly written updates - Green Spaces officers to the Scrutiny Panel

Reply

Officers have been working on these various recommendations to the service as agreed by Cabinet. It should be noted that current progress has been delayed over the last several months due to multiple restrictions in place and the service focus on delivering front-line services during the Pandemic. This has not diluted the ambitions of the service to progress with the commitments but has required the service to prioritise these in line with the resource capacity in the service.

The tree strategy is currently being commissioned and there will be substantial consultation integrated into the workplan to deliver this strategy. Following the

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

completion of this integral strategy, the service will focus on the delivery of the green spaces strategy, which shall be informed by the Council's climate commitment.

The implementation of systems to create enhanced reporting for stakeholders and residents has commenced. The process for the creation of integrated IT systems will naturally require development time, but it is anticipated that by the end of the calendar year a new enhanced system will be available, if not sooner.

Improved reporting for the *idverde* grounds maintenance contract has commenced and revised business procedures are in place to improve operational awareness of the services delivered. The improved reporting will include the tabling of the *Annual Review* at the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel, which will be followed by regular interval highlight reporting to the *Panel*.

20. From: Deborah Crosby

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Love Wimbledon will soon apply to be the Town Centre BID 2022-2027. Regarding the voting process:

- Do residents vote?
- Do landowners (as opposed to business tenants) get a vote?
- Does each business only get one vote, irrespective of size?
- How many businesses/landowners are eligible to vote?

Reply

- Do residents vote? – **No**
- Do landowners (as opposed to business tenants) get a vote? – **No**
- Does each business only get one vote, irrespective of size? - **Those eligible to vote in the ballot will be those non-domestic ratepayers listed on Merton Council's database for each hereditament (business premises) situated in the geographical area of the proposed BID at the date of the Notice. The business must have a rateable value of over £20,000. Each person/business entitled to vote has one vote for each hereditament occupied or (if unoccupied) owned by him or her in the geographical area of the proposed BID. Some ratepayers may receive more than one vote if they have more than one property**
- How many businesses/landowners are eligible to vote? – **the current voters list contains 458 hereditaments**

21. From: Regina Denton

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

What was the age profile of responses received in the consultation for Stage 2a of the Local Plan and how does this compare to the age profile of Merton?

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

Reply

Of the people who responded to the local plan question on age profile, the table below sets out the comparison

Stage2a	Under 18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
%	1%	1%	10%	26%	22%	19%	21%
Merton	Under 18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
%	24%	6%	14%	17%	14%	11%	13%

22. From: Richard Poole

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Please can you summarise the legal relationship between Merton Council & Clarion (including its subsidiaries)

Reply

In 22 March 2010, the Council transferred its housing stock to Merton Priory Homes following a successful ballot of the tenants, as required by the relevant legislation.

The interests of MPH transferred to Circle 33 which has since become part of the Clarion Housing group. Clarion are a separate legal entity from the Council. The agreement under which the transfer of stock took place set out the terms upon which that transfer took place. Apart from as provided for in that transfer agreement and other related documents, there is no ongoing legal relationship between the Council and Clarion, beyond that which the Council has with other registered providers or landowners in the borough.

23. From: Mark Morgan

To the Cabinet Member for Finance

What is Merton Council's policy for the handling of the absence of response / silence from potential respondents in the assessment of the support or opposition to matters the Council runs a consultation about?

Reply

For most consultations we would ask for information from respondents about their demographics to help us understand how representative those responses are. We would also look to understand who the key stakeholders are in order to understand if those most likely to be impacted by a decision have responded to the consultation. When the results of the consultation are reported to decision makers this would include a description of who has responded to the consultation for the decision makers to give due consideration to.

24. From: Augustin Bataille

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

What conversations has Future Merton had with Love Wimbledon on a potential business-led neighbourhood forum for the Wimbledon CBD?

Reply

There have been no specific conversations between FutureMerton and LoveWimbledon about the creation of a business-led Neighbourhood Forum.

25. From: Joseph Hackett

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

In the last Town Centre BID process in 2016, (a) How many businesses were eligible to vote, and (b) How many businesses cast a vote?

Reply

(a) How many businesses were eligible to vote – **the voters list contained 450 hereditaments**

(b) How many businesses cast a vote? – **270 (a turnout of 60%)**

26. From: Suzanne Grocott

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Clause 4.35 of the “LBM Neighbourhood CIL Report (interim) Spring 2021” states that Merton is expecting over £40 million in CIL over the next 10 years. Please would the Cabinet Member provide a breakdown of this forecast of £40m by key projects and ward.

Reply

The Question is referring to paragraph 4.35 of the [interim review report \(Appendix 1 to item 8 on the 22 June Cabinet agenda – Neighbourhood CIL Review\)](#) which discusses future demands of large strategic development and estimates the amount of CIL income that could be generated from the developments to meet those demands. The key developments and estimated CIL arising is listed below. The figures are estimates for each project given they are yet to have reached the stage when a liability under the CIL Regulations can be calculated more precisely. The wards within which the developments are located are also listed however it should be noted that due to the strategic nature and large scale of developments the demands for investment will stretch beyond the individual wards and the borough boundary.

- Estate regeneration - £25 to £30 million (Abbey, Ravensbury, Figges Marsh)
- Morden Town Centre - £10 to £20 million (Merton Park, Cannon Hill, Ravensbury, St Helier)
- Benedict's Wharf - £5 to £10 million (Cricket Green)

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

It is noted that the Government's Planning White Paper in 2020 proposed the replacement of CIL with a new Infrastructure Levy which subject to the details that Government take forward may result in less money becoming available for the types of projects that can be funded by CIL. Proposals include requiring the new levy funding to cover affordable housing that currently is delivered directly by developers under S106 agreements would contribute to this reduction in funding.

27. From: Rob Cowan

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

What is the target for new housing to be built in Wimbledon over the next five years, and how much of it would be in the town centre?

Reply

Whilst not a target, over the next 5 years there are 1,500 new homes identified in the housing trajectory for the Wimbledon neighbourhood (Hillside ward, Trinity ward, Wimbledon Park ward, Village ward, and the eastern half of Dundonald ward). 230 of these homes are within the Wimbledon town centre boundary, 141 of which are the new YMCA. This includes the Wimbledon stadium where over 800 homes are currently under construction

28. From: Lynne Gordon

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

When was the latest consultation undertaken with businesses from (i) the Town Centre CBD; (ii) Weir Road Industrial Estate; and (iii) Plough Lane Business Park about waste matters? How many businesses were reached out to and what was the number of responses?

Reply

Waste services supported, by our Environmental Enforcement team, regularly liaise with and work in partnership with our Town Centre BIDs, Industrial Estates and Business Parks on environmental matters, focused on street cleansing and fly tipping.

With regard to waste collection, there is no requirement to undertake formal consultation with businesses. Although the Council is required to provide a commercial waste collection service it is up to the individual business to make their own commercial waste arrangements within statutory requirements. As such there is no duty to consult on waste matters, per se, and it is not usual to consult on this type of service. That said regular stakeholder forums with these areas are undertaken and regular checks are made to ensure all business have appropriate waste arrangements in place. Failure to comply may and has resulted in prosecution.

29. From: Susan Hale

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Why has a decision on the Hartfield Walk planning application not been made yet?

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

Reply

The planning application at Hartfield Walk has not yet been determined as the application has to go before the Planning Applications Committee due to the number of representations received. The Case Officer is currently awaiting plans of the archway to form part of the application. Once officers have received these plans then a committee date can be looked at.

**30. From: Nicola Thompson
To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate
Emergency**

Following an accident involving an HGV and a cyclist at the Durnsford/Gap Road junction on 6/08/20 a Merton Council spokesman promised "a safety audit of the junction for pedestrians and cyclists". What are the conclusions of this safety audit and how will this dangerous junction be improved?

Reply

On 6th August at about 07:26 hours, an HGV was travelling east in Gap Road. The HGV was held at a red light at the signal controlled junction with Plough Lane/Durnsford Road. A cyclist also travelling east in Gap Road, cycled along the nearside of the HGV. The signals changed and the HGV started turning left into Durnsford Road, colliding with the cyclist. A contributory factor as listed by the Police is that the cyclist misjudged the vehicles path or speed and the police concluded that no further investigation would be carried out. This also means that the police do not consider the road layout to be unsafe.

Council officers committed to undertake a safety audit which would normally be part of the Council's road safety funding from TFL. In March 2020, TFL suspended normal funding for due to their financial pressures with covid-19. We had expected this funding to be reinstated this financial year, but this has not been the case. Once funding becomes available a safety audit will be considered whilst being mindful of other service critical priorities.

**31. From: Alan Maries
To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency**

In the consultation for Stage 2a of Merton's Local Plan how many businesses responded from:

1. Wimbledon Town Centre BID;
2. Weir Road Industrial Estate;
3. Plough Lane Business Park?

Reply

In the consultation for Stage 2a of Merton's Local Plan businesses responses were:

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

1. Wimbledon Town Centre BID; 6
2. Weir Road Industrial Estate; - 0
3. Plough Lane Business Park - 0

It should be noted that the Council is also engaged with businesses and landowners in these areas through the pre-app planning process and planning applications process for major developments, as well as the preparation of the Future Wimbledon SPD which had a landowner forum and business representation.

32. From: Susie Hicks

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

What discussions has the cabinet member had with either of the two borough MPs on housing repair issues prior to 1st June 2021?

Reply

As cabinet member I can provide assurances that where necessary and appropriate I have and will continue to do so, raise issues with the 2 borough MP'S regarding housing repair issues affecting their constituencies. It is the case however, that many such cases are already known to the relevant MP through their own surgeries and their tireless engagement with their local community.

33. From: Robin Vaughan-Williams

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

What steps is the council taking to encourage local residents and business follow the example shown by Merton Garden Streets? How are people being made aware of different opportunities and how to get involved? What means, including social media and more traditional methods, are being used?

Reply

As part of Merton's Climate Change Campaign, which is running throughout 2021, in March Merton Council set out a number of actions that individuals and businesses can take to help green Merton. Please see the pledge page [here](#) for more details.

Merton Council has also promoted the Merton Garden Streets initiative via our Climate Action Newsletter which is circulated to over 2,500 people (please see bulletins [here](#) and [here](#) for more details) and via our Twitter account.

The Merton Garden Streets initiative is also promoted by Merton's Climate Action Group on the Merton Garden Streets [website](#) and the Merton Climate Action Group Twitter account.

34. From: Tim Day

To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Is Merton Council supportive of Neighbourhood Planning?

Reply

Public Questions to Council 7 July 2021

Merton Council is supportive of Neighbourhood Planning and most recently officers have been working constructively in supporting Plan Wimbledon's recent consultation.

35. From: John Boyd To the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Many approved planning applications involve a loss of natural habitat for birds and small wild animals. An example would be a new house or houses approved in the garden of an existing house when hedges, grassed areas and flower beds might be lost.

Is this environmental loss routinely documented?

Reply

The Council does not undertake any regular monitoring on environmental loss in the borough from planning applications. Planning officers would however note that The National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 170(d) requires planning decisions to provide net gains for biodiversity and the London Plan Policy G6(D) states that development proposals should aim to secure net biodiversity gain. Adopted Council planning policy CS13 requires, where appropriate, development to integrate new or enhanced habitat or design and landscaping which encourages biodiversity and where possible avoid causing ecological damage. Developers must propose full mitigation and compensation measures for any ecological damage that is caused.

The question is couched in terms of a presumption of "environmental loss".

However, the Council's planning officers routinely require applications, ranging from small to large sites, to provide information to assess their biodiversity value, in order to assess whether there is a loss of biodiversity and will make planning approval conditional upon mitigating the impact of the development requiring for example the planting of native trees, encouraging initiatives such as green roofs on buildings, requiring bat and badger surveys to be undertaken, and providing guidance so as to avoid demolition activity that might impact on birds during the nesting season.

Officers are able to use Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) to supplement any information received on applications and which provides a range of information on the natural environment. [Greenspace Information for Greater London – the capital's environmental records centre \(gigl.org.uk\)](http://gigl.org.uk)

6: Councillor Questions to Cabinet Members

From: Councillor Brenda Fraser to the Cabinet Member for Children and Education:

Can the Cabinet member update the council on the extension of SEN provision to the Whatley Road site?

Reply

Following an extremely positive meeting with Kids First (the representative group for parents with children with SEND) Cabinet agreed a fortnight ago (22 June) to start a statutory consultation to expand Melrose School to provide the additional SEN provision at Whatley Avenue, which had long been an education facility, most recently been used as a temporary site of the new Harris Wimbledon Academy. This consultation started last week and runs for the 4 weeks required by statute to 29 July. Subject to the outcome of the consultation a decision will then be made to proceed. We are on target to open the expanded new provision in September 2022, providing 80 additional places for the growing number of children with special educational needs, with a focus on ASD.

From: Councillor Adam Bush to the Cabinet Member for Performance, Recovery and the Local Economy:

What steps has the council taken to support local businesses as we move out of the pandemic?

Reply

The last 18 months has had a devastating effect on the economy, with some businesses feeling the brunt of the crisis far more than others. And although we may be moving out of the worst period of the pandemic, it remains likely that we remain amid a prolonged economic downturn.

In anticipation of the impact the pandemic would have on local businesses, in April 2020 the council formed a COVID-19 Business Tasks Group. Chaired by James McGinlay, Head of Sustainable Communities, the task group included representatives from Future Merton, Property Management, Business Rates, Regulatory Services Partnership and Communications. It also included Diana Sterck from the Merton Chamber of Commerce.

Initially meeting every week, and now every fortnight, the task group has built on the council's already strong relationship with the business community, the task group enabled the council to take a community informed and fully integrated approach to its support of local businesses.

Complimenting the task group, the council has worked closely with partners including the Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Districts, the Department for Work and Pensions, Merton Connected, and several local training providers to understand and respond to local business needs as and when they developed.

6: Councillor Questions to Cabinet Members

Furthermore, a weekly business bulletin is sent to business rates payers (who have opted in) inform businesses of the support available and enable them to work with us as they responded to pandemic and prepare to the recover. This includes guidance on latest legislation, business support available including grants and public health messages.

In 2020, the Council's Business Rates team was quick to recognise the immediacy of the financial challenges that many local businesses faced and were in the top three quickest London Boroughs to pay the small business, retail, hospitality, and leisure grants.

In 2021, the Future Merton team, the Business Rates team and the Communication team worked together to both facilitate the reopening of the high streets in spring. There was also the awarding of the Additional Restrictions Grants payments with the support of MVSC and the Merton Chamber of Commerce to eligible businesses by the end of June, which should hopefully trigger the award of a further £1.9m.

Accompanying the direct payments to businesses, the Future Merton team has also procured parklet spaces – to promote Al Fresco dining and so support the badly hit dining sector – and is now working with retailers to adapt their forecourts and shop fronts, and procuring both a market management programme to support outside trading and an e-trading platform to promote the shop and stay local offer in Merton.

A list of the grant schemes and financial support is detailed below:

Extended retail, hospitality and leisure relief	£44.5 million	Business rates relief
Nursery relief	£0.779 million	Business rates relief
Business Support Grants – small business grants and retail, hospitality and leisure grants	£29.318 million	Direct grants
Discretionary Grants	£1,312,750	Discretionary grants (own scheme)
Local Restrictions Grants – Addendum – (lockdown 5 November to 2 December)	£3,099,762	Grants for business rate payers mandated to close in national lockdown
Local Restrictions Grants – Open (17 October to 4 November)	£360,853	Grants for business rate payers affected by tier 2 restrictions
Local Restrictions Grant – ARG (Discretionary Grants (5 November to 31 March 22)	£4,130,960	Discretionary grants (own scheme) – phase one being administered
Local Restrictions Grants – Open (2 December to 19 December)	£305,984	Grants for business rate payers affected by tier 2 restrictions

6: Councillor Questions to Cabinet Members

Local Restrictions Grants – Closed (2 December to 19 December)	£13,924	Grants for business rate payers affected by tier 3 restrictions
Local Restrictions Grants – tier 4 (20 December to 4 January)	Not notified yet	Grants for business rate payers affected by tier 4 restrictions
Christmas Support Package for Pubs	£38,400	Grants for wet led pubs
Local Restrictions Grants – Addendum – (lockdown 5 January to 15 February)	£4,649,643	Grants for business rate payers mandated to close in national lockdown
Closedown Business Grants	£9,297,000	One off grants for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses
Top up to Local Restrictions Grant – ARG (Discretionary Grants (5 November to 31 March 22)	£1,834,777	Additional funding for Discretionary grants (own scheme)

From: Councillor Sally Kenny to the Cabinet Member for Women and Equalities:

As once again women in Westminster struggle for equality, with Stella Creasy MP being denied maternity cover, can the Cabinet member please let us know what she is doing to improve workplace conditions for women at Merton Council?

Reply

In addition to a range of flexible working benefits that Merton provides to all our staff Merton is one of the few London Councils that provides up to 10 days leave additional paid leave for woman and their partners who suffer Stillbirth or Miscarriage. We also provide up to 10 days additional paid leave for the parents of a premature baby (a baby born before 36 weeks) in order to recognise the fact that these premature babies are likely to have ongoing medical problems. Merton have also done a lot of awareness raising with staff on how women can suffer from the menopause and are currently in the process of adding this as one of our absence reasons on our HR self-service system.

Merton also provide a range of tools, training and information to support mental health and all employees, Members and their families have access to our employee assistance programme.

Merton have recently had a Member on maternity leave, with maternity cover provided for their role in the Cabinet.

From: Councillor Hina Bokhari to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration

6: Councillor Questions to Cabinet Members

Other than simply including them in the Local Plan, what plans do the council have for the sites identified for use by Merantun Development Ltd?

Reply

The council is current looking at options for those sites and hope to decide imminently on their use. Information is currently being gathered on relevant matters [including ground conditions and title for example] and the sites all have planning permission for housing which is their preferred use.

From: Councillor Mary Curtin to the cabinet member for Adult Social Care and Public Health:

Can the Cabinet member update us on the status of Merton's Dementia Hub and the services it provides to our residents?

Reply

The Dementia Hub has continued to operate as best they can in line with government guidance during the pandemic. If the current restrictions are lifted later in July, then we expect them to be re-opening for face to face support and activities in August.

Thanks to an additional health funding, I am pleased to be able to confirm that the service will continue to operate from the Hub building in Mitcham. However, it has always been an ambition that the Hub does outreach work and is not just focussed in one place, but is accessible to all. We have already engaged in discussion with stakeholders through various forums. We will also be running two online events on the 6th and 14th July for customers and carers of the Hub. An online survey will also be going live shortly. Once we are able to do so we will be organising face to face events as well. We will be seeking views on what is important to them and how they like to access services.

We are in the process of renewing the contract with the Alzheimer's Society to commence October 2021.

From: Councillor John Dehaney to the Cabinet Member for Finance:

Can the Cabinet member tell us how many of our very welcome citizens originally from the EU have applied for settled status here, and what can be done for those that may have missed the deadline?

Reply

As of 31st March 2021 there had been 43,820* recorded applications of EU citizens living in Merton to the EU Settlement Scheme. The council undertook a comprehensive communications campaign to raise awareness of the 30th June

6: Councillor Questions to Cabinet Members

deadline, highlighting key points of support within the community such as Citizens Advice Merton and Lambeth and the Polish Families Associations.

The deadline for applications has now passed. However, we are continuing to work closely with local providers to ensure the provision of advisory and specialist immigration support to those members of our community who continue to need it, as there may be extensions to the deadline, but the criteria is not clear at this stage.

*statistics are published quarterly; next update due August 2021

From: Councillor Nick McLean to the Cabinet Member for Children and Education:

The repurposing of Lavender nursery will help the most vulnerable children in the borough. Does the cabinet member agree with me that this issue is beyond politics and must be urgently delivered?

Reply

The administration has the difficult job of managing the requirements of our vulnerable children with medical needs and ensuring that there are sufficient nursery places for families in the east of the borough. We always intended to balance these needs, and provide education and childcare for the most vulnerable children. We take consultation seriously, and the extensive feedback received in our consultation earlier this year generated further ideas which we have therefore needed to look into. Cabinet a fortnight ago (22 June) agreed to engage with stakeholders on these updated options, and we are now speaking with affected parents and staff to discuss best options that will ensure we can provide for children with medical needs and provide nursery provision existing parents, those on a low income, and SEND children. The administration is clear that its priority is to provide for the most vulnerable children in the borough.

From: Councillor Stan Anderson to the Cabinet Member for Women and Equalities:

Can the Cabinet Member please update us on what funding support is being offered to the voluntary sector, particularly as it continues to recover from the effects of Covid?

Reply

Council funding to the voluntary sector in 2020/21 was £10.5 million. This is an increase of 5% over the previous year and the third year in a row that council support to the voluntary sector has increased. Over the past year the council has allocated £900k to the voluntary sector to support the sector during this challenging time and to meet the substantial increase in demand the sector has experienced as a result of

6: Councillor Questions to Cabinet Members

the pandemic. The additional funding has resulted in the continuation of the Community Response Hub, provision of emergency assistance particularly around food and supporting smaller grass roots organisation supporting communities particularly impacted by the pandemic e.g. older people, people with disabilities and BAME communities. The council has also worked closely with MVSC and the Chamber of Commerce to grow Merton's highly successful community giving scheme – Merton Giving. With support from the council and other partners Merton Giving has distributed over £340k over the last year to small voluntary sector groups and has recently announced a further funding round of £150k.

7a – Strategic Theme: Councillors Questions

From Councillor David Chung to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency:

What are the numbers of people in temporary accommodation in Merton, how does this compare to other London Boroughs, and how are you addressing this issue?

Reply

As at the end of March 2021 there were 197 Households living in temporary accommodation which is the lowest numbers of households in temporary accommodation of any London Borough (save the City of London) .

From Councillor Nick McLean to the leader of the Council:

Do you agree with me that cabinet members who have turned parts of Mitcham into 21st century slums should resign?

Reply

If Cllr McLean is referring to reports about poor maintenance and servicing of formerly council-owned properties, the cabinet member in the previous Conservative administration who led on the decision to hand over Merton's homes to a housing association, and for agreeing the terms of the transfer, is no longer a councillor. I congratulate the Labour cabinet members who have worked so hard to overcome the issues that have arisen as a result of that decision, and as a result of cuts to council funding and funding for social housing since 2010. We will continue to press the current provider of former council-owned properties, Clarion, to keep to its promises to maintain these homes to decent standards, and to regenerate their estates to ensure new homes, including affordable homes, are provided for Merton residents.

From Councillor Geraldine Stanford to the Cabinet Member for Housing, regeneration and the Climate Emergency:

What actions have you taken with Clarion following the terrible reports of conditions on the Eastfield estate?

Reply

I was very disappointed and alarmed at the poor housing conditions for the residents of the Eastfields Estate and acted immediately just as soon as the seriousness of the matter was brought to my attention. These actions included the dispatch of a number of the Councils housing Enforcement officers onto the site, attending a public meeting attended by residents, officers of the Council and the local MP. I have also lead on performance review meetings with Senior Clarion Housing colleagues and Council Officers to discuss Eastfields Estate as well as all other Clarion Merton estates. I have also spoken to colleagues of the residents associations group as well as individual tenants.. I can provide my assurances that these actions do not stop here and I will continue to work for our residents until I am satisfied that the

7a – Strategic Theme: Councillors Questions

dwellings are improved and suitable and reasonable for the tenants continued occupation.

From Councillor Ed Gretton to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency:

Does the cabinet member feel a sense of shame that he has failed to protect West Barnes and the wider borough from predatory development due to his administration's failure to demonstrate a five year housing land supply?

Reply

No. This application was refused by the Merton Council planning applications committee. Government's planning rules make it increasingly difficult for local authorities to defend Planning Application Committee refusals. The National Planning Policy Framework, London Plan and Merton's Local Plan are all pro-growth to address the ongoing housing crisis which recognises the need to deliver more homes, nationally and in London given the housing shortage. The Government's inspector concluded that the scheme in West Barnes did not, in their view demonstrate significant harm to the character of the area.

The comment is also dismissive of the hard work and determination officers have invested in preparing the local plan, borough character study, small sites tool kit and other supplementary planning documents to ensure Merton develops and grows appropriately whilst delivering much needed housing.

From Councillor Paul Kohler to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Given the shortage of affordable housing in Merton, and the apparent lack of progress, since my previous question asking what the Council was proposing to do with the vacant Virgin Active site, will the Cabinet Member please provide an update detailing whether anything has been achieved in the last 3 years beyond the recent commitment to include the site in the local plan?

Reply

As a council, the pandemic has had an impact on the market which confirmed it would have been unwise to market the site until matters had returned to a condition suitable for marketing. The Council is still working to dispose of the site with housing likely to be preferred use of the site. We hope to be able to provide a further update shortly on future options for the site.

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

Can you update us on the council's Housing Strategy?

Reply

7a – Strategic Theme: Councillors Questions

The council's draft housing delivery strategy will be recommended to Cabinet at their meeting on 12th July 2021 for public consultation. Should Cabinet agree, we will publish the draft strategy for at least six weeks and the feedback from residents, landowners, social housing providers and others will be used to inform the draft strategy.

From Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency:

The Labour administration has failed the residents of the Eastfields estate for years; is this down to the negligence of this Labour administration or the cabinet member's personal incompetence?

Reply

I absolutely reject the suggestion that the Labour administration and myself have failed Eastfields Estate residents for years. The circumstances where the Council has control over any housing association is limited, it is the social housing regulator which has the overall powers relating to the regulation of the housing association sector. The ability of the Council to interfere with housing association business is limited to its statutory duties. Where issues of disrepair have been raised with either myself, fellow ward councillors or the relevant MP they have been raised with the Clarion Housing Group and its predecessors Merton Priory Homes and Circle.

From Councillor David Dean to the the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency:

Why have you let down the people of Eastfields?

Reply

I absolutely reject the suggestion that I have let down the people of Eastfields Estate. The overall responsibility for ensuring that the homes on the Estate are properly maintained and do not fall into disrepair is the Clarion Housing Group. This is their responsibility as Landlord and not elected members. The circumstances where the Council has control over any housing association is limited, it is the social housing regulator which has the overall powers relating to the regulation of the housing association sector. The ability of the Council to interfere with housing association business is limited to its statutory duties. Where issues of disrepair have been raised with myself I raised these with the Clarion Housing Group.

We have heard from Michelle Reynolds, Chief Operating Officer at Clarion who admits that their service to the Eastfields tenants was not what they would have hoped for and that they have developed robust actions plans to resolve matters. I can assure you that I will be holding Clarion to their word on this and will monitoring closely their performance across not just Eastfields Estate but across all Merton Estates.

From Councillor Carl Quilliam to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces:

Can the Cabinet member tell us how recent issues around refuse collection on estates being tackled?

Reply

Within the London Borough of Merton there are in excess of 84,000 household of which 19% of the properties are flats (16,000). The housing estates make up 40% of our flats across 40 separate developments which are managed by 17 separate Housing associations and Managing agents. The two largest housing associations are Clarion Housing Group and Moat.

It is important to note that it is the responsibility of the landlord - housing associations and managing agents to manage all waste on their respective sites and to provide the necessary infrastructure to ensure all waste is containerised to the approved specification outlined by the Council to facilitate regular collection.

Following the service review and changes in Oct 2018, the main operational challenge that has arisen is focused where housing estates have mixed property types, which utilise individual wheeled bin collections in conjunction with communal collections. It has proven, in practice that there is an over utilisation of the communal bins as opposed to using the individual wheelie bins provided. This has led to capacity issues with certain communal containers, which can be susceptible to increased fly tipping and disposal of bulky items.

To better understand the challenges being faced by our residents and the service provider, we have established a Stakeholder Forum with the housing associations along with setting up site specific 'task and finish' groups to assist in redesigning the service. This has been successful and, as example, the Watermeads Estate, managed by Clarion, has successfully worked in partnership with both the resident association and officers from the Council to ensure an optimal and sustainable services is delivered which encourages and supports residents to recycle. In addition, the service has been providing support, advice and guidance to Clarion to improve the waste collection arrangements at the Eastfields Estate. This has led to the installation of large waste bin storage areas and the service continues to work closely with Clarion, temporarily providing a weekly collection across the estate for both property types.

This partnership approach has been successful in Pollards Hill, working closely with Moat Housing, and we are in the process of finalising the last of the phased roll out of a new purpose-built waste stores across the estate.

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

Since 2018 we have been asking for a private landlords licensing scheme to be introduced, as the council has been so slow in taking this work forward, and given the dreadful conditions faced by residents in homes provided by Clarion, could the Cabinet Member please commit to appointing a Tenants' Champion, along the lines of that in place in Richmond?

Reply

As Cabinet Member I have tasked officers to continue to explore all options to improve the housing conditions of all its residents, and this includes planning for a Selective Licensing Scheme. I would point out that a Selective Licensing Scheme would not improve the housing conditions of tenants living in Clarion housing stock as housing associations are exempt in accordance with the Selective Licensing of Houses Order 2004. Prior to the Covid 19 pandemic officers were carrying out due diligence as to the merits of a selective licensing scheme. This included the research of relevant legislation and guidance. Selective licence submissions were made by a range of Councils (accepted and rejected by MHCLG) and were reviewed to identify lessons learned and good practice., meetings were held with LB Waltham Forest and LB Enfield, and a data analytics company that assisted the successful introduction of schemes in England and extensive data analysis carried out on a wide range of Merton ward data relevant to the regulatory criteria. However, following the outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic and the disruption and challenges this has brought to our community further work has been delayed. We are also conscious that several councils including Brent, Croydon and Liverpool have also had their application for renewal of the schemes rejected by the Secretary of State due to the evidential base not being robust. Officers have been asked to continue reviewing the position as to the viability and effectiveness of such a scheme as the benefits of selective landlord licensing for improving the conditions of tenants in the private sector is widely recognised. As cabinet member I am aware of the Tenants Champion Scheme operating in Richmond, and whilst I am sure it offers benefits to Richmond residents, its roles and commitments mirrors the work already being undertaken by ward councillors and officers working in Merton. Importantly it points out to residents that it expects residents of housing association homes to take up issues of disrepair with their landlord in the first instance.

From Councillor David Williams to the the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency:

Does the Cabinet Member think that forcing Eastfields residents to live in squalid, damp, rotting homes that are infested with rodents should be a resigning matter?

Reply

I absolutely reject the suggestion that I should be resigning regarding this matter, as I have worked tirelessly as Cabinet Member to improve the housing conditions and choices of our residents. As Cabinet member I have taken the lead on major housing challenges. During the Covid 19 pandemic I have ensured that officers

7a – Strategic Theme: Councillors Questions

delivered the everyone in principle for rough sleepers as well as ensuring that rogue Landlords have had criminal penalties imposed upon them , the most recent being in April 2021 when a fine of some £ 16k was imposed. I can offer my assurances that I will seek to improve the housing conditions on the Eastfeilds Housing Estate by approaching the matter with Clarion with the same degree of commitment and tenacity that I have used in other housing matters

From Councillor Laxmi Attawar to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces:

What is being done to help and support community engagement in the borough's green spaces?

Reply

The service, as part of its core principles, provides community engagement and support to active groups involved in the management and use of our Parks and Open Spaces. Typical engagement and support is provided on a site-specific nature or focused on the mutual objectives when working with a specific group, such as the Tree Wardens. Our work with specific Parks has been beneficial and six of our parks have achieved and maintained Green Flag status.

Recent examples of work of support and engagement with community groups involves work at;

- Morden Park – working with key members of the Friends group about events and how we will work to mitigate negative impacts
- Wimbledon Park – significant engagement and consultation whilst designing the planned necessary works for the lake. While also providing engagement and responding to recommendations involving events.
- Canons HLF – Community Engagement Officer is employed to provide regular meetings with stakeholders and to steer the project based of agreed recommendations.
- Dundonald Recreation Ground – the installation of a concession kiosk was a response to stakeholders and the service worked to provide agreeable and sustained solutions to operate this activity in a site sensitive manner.

Further work is being planned by the service to develop a Green Spaces Strategy which draws on the work undertaken by the Merton Green Infrastructure Study (2020), the Playing Pitch Strategy (2019), the Climate Change Strategy and the developing Tree Strategy, which will further develop links with and support with the community and key stakeholders.