

Merton Council Council

17 November 2021

Supplementary Agenda 2 – Questions and Replies

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1 From Jonathan Foster

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

Why have the missing speed cushions on Lower Morden Lane junction of Garth Road still not been reinstated?

Reply

The replacement speed cushions are scheduled to be installed by the Council's Highway contractors on 19th November 2021.

2 From Dawid Miskurska

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

The recent road resurfacing has not addressed this issue and I would like to know what is being done about the missing speed restrictor on Lower Morden Lane / Garth Road bend?

Reply

The replacement speed cushions are scheduled to be installed by the Council's Highway contractors on 19th November 2021.

3 From Imelda Cooney

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

I would like to know why every few months scaffolding is erected on blocks on Penfold Court and other blocks and I've never seen any contractors or workers on there or any work being carried out. I'd really appreciate the rationale behind this and also when any meaningful repairs and improvements will be made to Penfold Court

Reply

Penfold Court is not a council owned dwelling and is in fact a residential block of flats owned by the Clarion Housing Group. Any questions regarding repairs and improvements to the dwelling must be made directly to the Clarion Housing Group in the first instance

4 From Steve Baker

To the Cabinet Member for Housing Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

The recycling facility in the Co-Op car park in Wimbledon Chase is being removed “due to persistent fly-tipping”. Can you explain how depriving the local community of a much needed recycling facility will reduce fly-tipping?

Reply

Over the last year we have continued to see a sustained level of both fly tipping and contamination at this site.

Despite the service attempting to improve this situation by increasing the frequency of collections to three times per week along with twice weekly inspections by the Council’s client team, the Co-Op, as the land owner, have requested that we remove this site from their carpark.

5 From Amy Fionda

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

Why not make collecting bulk waste from households free again (or at least, significantly, reduce the cost) thereby lessening the current increase in the escalation of flytipping?

Reply

The chargeable bulky waste service was implemented in January 2019, following a fundamental review of waste collection services which prioritised reuse and recycling services over previous unsustainable approaches to waste management.

Following the November Sustainable Communities Scrutiny and Overview Committee, it has been recommended to the service that a review of the bulky waste service is undertaken along with a financial impact assessment for providing reduced rates for those residents on a low income. Any recommended changes to the current policy will be presented for Cabinet consideration.

With regards to impact on fly tipping, there is little if any direct correlation between charging for bulky waste and fly tipping. This is because the majority of fly tips cleared by the council are those that are categorised as “a car boot load” and primarily consists of household waste in black sacks. When we introduced the fee

payable collection service, we saw no impact on the fly tipping incident rate and other waste authorities across London report the same experience.

6 From Frank Pocock

To the Cabinet Member for Housing Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

How much did the borough-wide implementation of the blanket 20 MPH speed limit cost Merton Council?

Reply

Implementation of the borough wide 20mph speed limit was funded by the Council's TFL funding allocation. The project cost £257k to deliver over two financial years.

7 From Sue Brownrigg

To the Cabinet Member for Housing Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Why is the street lighting in Merton so bad? As a female walking home from work along Dorset Road I feel incredibly unsafe and vulnerable - and it is extremely dangerous not to be able to see the trip hazards caused by tree roots. No-one should feel unsafe when walking home from work.

Reply

The council is working closely with partners to ensure we capture and respond to the concerns raised around the safety of women and girls across the borough. The Metropolitan Police are piloting a service for anyone to anonymously tell the police about public places where members of the public have felt unsafe, this could be for environmental issues, for example street lighting, abandoned buildings or vandalism and/or because of some behaviours, e.g. being followed or verbally abused. We would encourage members of the public and residents to use the online tool so this information can be captured. Although a London wide tool, Merton will be in liaison with the police to extract the Merton information. Locations can be highlighted by visiting www.police.uk/streetsafe

This will greatly assist us in providing a more targeted assessment and response to the locations highlighted. ‘

We are aware of the incident that took place in the Lidl Car Park and are unable to comment further on this as this is subject to an ongoing police investigation’.

Our lighting engineers have assessed various locations in the borough in response to enquiries and have found that whilst the street lighting levels are up to the industry standard, there are locations where the lighting is obscured by mature street trees. As there has been a mild Autumn, many trees still have leaves on them, which is unusual for this time of year. The Council is monitoring the situation and will be revising tree maintenance schedules to account for this.

We will continue to review street lighting levels to ensure we maintain a level which optimises safety whilst balanced against intrusiveness and light pollution.

Street lighting faults can be reported online at <https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/streets-and-pavements/street-lighting-faults>

8 From Clarissa Frattini

To the Cabinet Member for Housing Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Street lighting is inadequate. The streets are dark and street lamps are often obscured by trees. Many women feel unsafe to walk home in the evenings. Sarah Everard and the recent attempted rape of a teenager behind Lidl doesn't help. What can the council do about street lighting?

Reply

The council is working closely with partners to ensure we capture and respond to the concerns raised around the safety of women and girls across the borough. The Metropolitan Police are piloting a service for anyone to anonymously tell the police about public places where members of the public have felt unsafe, this could be for environmental issues, for example street lighting, abandoned buildings or vandalism and/or because of some behaviours, e.g. being followed or verbally abused. We would encourage members of the public and residents to use the online tool so this information can be captured. Although a London wide tool, Merton will be in liaison with the police to extract the Merton information. Locations can be highlighted by visiting www.police.uk/streetsafe

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9 From Barry Smith

To the Cabinet Member for housing Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

As the draft electric vehicle charging proposals from TfL are now available and make it clear that most non-rapid on-street charging will be provided by private companies, does the council have plans to start working with such companies now to provide charging for all residents reliant on on-street parking?

Reply

Yes, and Merton already works with a mixture of private companies to provide Electric Vehicle (EV) charging options to residents. Based on the draft London-wide EV strategy, which has just been launched, we are currently developing a Merton EV charging strategy which will be published in 2022.

Merton is currently in the top 20% of local authorities for the number of EV charge points available to the public. EV Chargers are currently available via Source London, Char.gy and rapid chargers are available from ESB Energy on the TFL network.

- There are currently 258 EV charge points in Merton:
- 6 Rapid Chargers – ESB Energy
- 140 On Street - SourceLondon
- 90 Lamp Column Chargers - Char.gy
- 22 Superstore/Retail Park charge points.

All EV charge point locations in Merton can be found on <https://www.zap-map.com/live/>

10 From Sandra Vogel

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

Please provide tree canopy cover a) by ward and b) for the borough, and plans to increase tree canopy a) by ward and b) for the borough, and information held on the loss of tree canopy a) by ward and b) across the borough over each of the last 10 years.

Reply

Please find below the data the service currently holds on canopy cover. . In terms of the canopy cover over this 10 year time period, the service does not maintain this information, as much of the cover is on private land or outside of the planning process.

In terms of the plans of the service to increase canopy cover, the service has recently commenced a project to develop a Tree Strategy for the Council's trees. Within this project, the service will develop a strategic approach to improving not only the number of trees planted, but it shall also focus on preserving and enhancing our tree canopy cover.

LBM TREE-RELATED CANOPY COVER / MANAGEMENT	% of the borough	area km² <small>[LBM Total Area 37.6 km²]</small>	GI analysis (%)
Tree canopy under LBM (individual & group) outside woodland	4.09%	1.5 km	20%
LBM woodland cover direct control	2.40%	0.9 km	12%
Tree/woodlands privately owned under partial LBM control (planning control)	7.40%	2.8 km	36%
Tree/woodlands outside LBM control (commons & National Trust)	6.64%	2.5 KM	32%
Merton tree canopy cover	20.5%	7.7 km	100%

GI = Green infrastructure is defined as tree and other vegetation cover

11 From Tony Burton

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

Following the commitment in 2017 to undertake annual reviews of the Local List of historic buildings and other structures to ask Merton Council why only one such review has since been undertaken and when the next one will start and finish?

Reply

The Local List is reviewed annually by our Conservation Officer with additions and demolitions being incorporated. Last year's Local List was submitted to Council in November. The Conservation Officer is currently working on this year's List.

Additionally, the definitive record for London is maintained by Historic England – the Greater London Historic Environment Record (GLHER). There is a dedicated team that produces this. It is also referred to in the Mayor's London Plan. We liaise regularly with Historic England.

12 From Nicola O'Reilly de Brett

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Does Merton Council have a plan to urgently address the very high air pollution in West Wimbledon? Please can through traffic on West Barnes Lane prior to the Tesco barrier be reduced. The barriers cause queues of traffic which idle pumping fumes out whilst waiting. Has the council considered closing the barrier or some other way of reducing the pollution?

Reply

For the purposes of this response, we assume the level crossing referred to is the West Barnes level crossing. As the level crossing – and the associated barriers – are the responsibility of Network Rail, and are operated in a manner that maximises road safety, the Council has limited control over their use.

However, to tackle the issues with idling, we have recently held two anti-idling events at West Barnes level crossing; one in conjunction with Idling Action London following a workshop at Sacred Heart Primary

This area is also highlighted for interventions in our idling action plan for the borough. This includes funding from the Local Government Association (LGA) for a Behavioural Insights project to look at anti-idling messaging at West Barnes Lane level crossing to help reduce the impact of emissions from queuing traffic. An interactive LED sign will be installed in January 2022 and its impact reviewed and reported upon.

In addition, we have included this location in our new 'Breathe London' Monitoring network which also includes traffic and transport monitoring. The data gathered will help us understand the levels of pollution; the interventions needed and measure success of any work in this area. This work is part of our Air Quality Action Plan – a comprehensive approach to improving air quality throughout the borough.

Parking Services Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) have received anti-idling refresher training in September 2021 and in principle are equipped to engage with Idling drivers as part of their day-to-day duties. The difficulty the CEOs encounter is that idling is usually the secondary offence, primarily drivers who idle are parked illegally and CEOs must first deal with the parking contravention. CEOs will be invited to high profile idling events such as the one scheduled in Colliers Wood on the 23rd November.

13 From John Davis

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

We have seen several instances recently of TPO'd trees being felled or butchered. In view of the current shortage of qualified Council Officers in planning department, what safeguards are in place to protect other such trees, and prosecute the recent offenders?

Reply

With regard to prosecution, we recently prevented a developer from mistakenly felling a large horse chestnut tree which had a TPO on it. Once a member of the public brought the matter to our attention, we were able to contact the developer and tree surgeon and stop work. Unfortunately, by this time the tree had already been considerably damaged and might not be saved. An enforcement officer attended the site to inspect the damage, and the developer has been notified that we will be taking action against them.

14 From Shirin Shah

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

My question that I would like answering, is what are Thames Water and Merton Council doing to prevent continuing flooding of Wydell Close. Our driveways and gardens are constantly suffering sewage water contamination.

Reply

We have undertaken detailed investigations including high pressure jetting of the highway surface water drainage system, which includes the road gullies and their connection point to the outfall into the Pyl Brook. No defects have been found in our

system. We are also proposing to install a 4G gully sensor in the lowest gully in Wydell Close, which will remotely monitor silt and water levels and allow us to react should these levels exceed the pre-set thresholds for response.

There was a public meeting held onsite with the MP, Thames Water, the Environment Agency and Merton. This issue in Wydell Close is sewerage and foul water flooding, which Thames Water are responsible for. Similarly, Thames Water would also be responsible for installation of their FLIP devices if it meets with their criteria for internal foul water flooding.

We are meeting regularly with Thames Water regarding this issue to ensure actions are being fulfilled. Merton are also undertaking a 'section 19' flood investigation into this matter under the Flood & Water Management Act requirements.

More help is provided on the Thames Water page here:

<https://www.thameswater.co.uk/media-library/home/help/emergencies/flooding/sewer-flooding-guide.pdf>

Most importantly, please can you ensure that this flooding issue is noted and recorded as sewer flooding on Thames Water's sewer flooding questionnaire : <https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=zb56VRQyu0-OUUFLaOu3ljewBCxI7CJHjCHCf31I76FUMEMwNkkxRVdIMEVVS1BPM0xZVVBTViZFUi4u>

15 From Rosemary Davis

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

In Cricket Green, Mitcham, we welcomed the idea of a school street, but have not noticed any traffic reduction during the designated hours, even during school term time. What traffic flow data, and number of prosecutions has the council obtained since creating school streets?

Reply

As the school street in question was introduced during the pandemic when traffic flow and public transport were not operating at normal levels, a before survey would not have been a true reflection of mode and level of transport. In the absence of this, an after survey would not provide meaningful data for comparison.

However, it is true to say that we continue to have moderate levels of non-compliance which suggests that the full benefit of school streets has yet to be fully

realised. We are nonetheless confident that traffic levels are reducing, and will reduce further.

16 From Joyce Bellamy

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

Recently we have been advised of several planning breaches involving trees felled without council permission, even when within Conservation Areas. What enforcement has LBM enacted to bring the perpetrators to book and how will the council publicise responsibilities of owning trees to their owners to prevent future breaches?

Reply

Please see Q13. Where breaches are brought to our attention, we will act which could include a requirement to plant replacement trees. With regard to publicising responsibilities of owning trees, it would be impossible to do this to all owners. There is however general information on the Merton website, and production of a Tree Strategy which will be widely publicised, commenced on 1st November. Additionally, anyone wishing to do work to trees is required to complete an application form available both on the Merton website and through the Planning Portal. There is extensive advice on this on the Planning Portal.

17 From Andrew Biden

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Does the Council have any plans to introduce further LTNs within the borough to support its net zero target? If yes, where? If no, why?

Reply

Merton Council is supportive of LTNs as a method of improving road safety and creating quieter, healthier streets which enable more active travel choices for residents. The Council has recently made permanent, the experimental LTNs introduced in 2020.

The Council is supportive of introducing further LTNs, subject to consultation with residents and local councillors. At present, due to the TFL's financial pressures and interim nature of the TFL Local Implementation Plan funding, there are no live

projects to introduce new LTNs. This will be reviewed in the next financial year if funds are available. In the meantime, if residents wish to explore an LTN for their area, we welcome local dialogue amongst residents to determine support in principle for new LTNs.

18 From Kevin Clarke

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

Please will you clarify when the Decent Homes Standard was formally suspended following the Council Meeting on 7-Jul-2014. Also on which date was the Decent Homes Standard reinstated?

Reply

The Decent Homes Standard is part of the Stock Transfer Agreement between Merton Council and Clarion Housing. The Decent Homes Standard was temporarily suspended in 2014 (for Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury Estates only).

This was to provide a period of time for Clarion to assess whether the Decent Homes Standard on these estates should be met through refurbishment or via regeneration. This also provided time for Clarion to engage residents on the options which concluded that regeneration was the preferred route to ensure Decent Homes for the longer term.

In 2018, Planning Permission was granted for the redevelopment of Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury estates. The Decent Homes Standard was not reinstated as regeneration of the estates is the approved way forward to achieving the decent home standard as well as providing additional homes, and more sustainable homes for residents for the long term. Had regeneration plans not been supported or approved, then the temporary suspension of Decent Homes would have been reinstated.

Due to delays in the delivery of Clarion's regeneration programme. Merton's Cabinet's Decision in September 2021 includes the agreed recommendation that: That Cabinet agreed to support an amendment to the Stock Transfer Agreement to commit Clarion to delivering Decent Homes Standard upgrades linked to any failure to achieve regeneration delivery milestones to ensure these works are guaranteed to be delivered within a specified timeframe irrespective of the status of Merton Estates Regeneration Project. Where it is necessary to upgrade block decorations and door entry systems or replace old kitchens and bathrooms with new, Clarion are continuing to do this on a case by case basis to ensure decency in tenants home prior to regeneration.

The Decent Homes Standard remains in place for the remainder of Clarion's stock in Merton. Clarion have also committed, as part of the regeneration project, to maintain properties on the estates pending the reprovion of homes.

19 From Mervin Eubanks

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

Willow Lane, Mitcham, is blighted by fly-tips, uncleared for months. A single camera is in operation, but all we see is a "Council Aware" notices on the rubbish. The tips are a health hazard, and over spills are a danger to legitimate traffic. When will any meaningful clearance be done?

Reply

I am pleased to advise that the Council is actively supporting those responsible for managing this land and assisting them in finding a long-term solution. A project team is well established with representatives from all impacted stakeholders including the Mitcham Conservators.

To support the funding of this project, the waste service has submitted a bid for two fixed CCTV units to cover this stretch of Willow Lane. The Conservators have agreed to contribute to this with the clearance of the fly tip.

20 From Mary Butler

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

Can you please provide details of all tree preservation orders in the Borough within Conservation Areas and not on land owned by Merton Council.

Reply

All tree preservation orders in Merton are listed on the Council's website at <https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/planning/tree-preservation-orders/list>

All trees in Conservation Areas are protected. Maps of all of Merton's Conservation Areas are also available online at

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/conservation-heritage/conservation-areas-list>

21 From Mary-Jane Jeanes

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

Applications for tree work lack essential information. Will the Council make it compulsory that all applications i) specify the species; ii) specify the exact locations on plans; iii) give precise reasons for the proposed work; iv) ensure that all this, and other relevant documents, are published on Planning Explorer?

Reply

Application forms for tree work are in a standard national form and are available both on the Merton website and on the planning portal.

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/planning/tree-preservation-orders/apply>

There is extensive advice and information on the Planning Portal to assist with completion of the form. Information required on the form includes the species, the location, the description of works required. Where the tree is protected by a TPO, the reason for undertaking the work is required.

We currently do not have the full information available to be publicly searched online but this is an issue we are currently looking into addressing.

22 From Rob Cossins

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

What is the council's plan for increasing the number of new electric vehicle charging points across Merton and will the council establish targets?

Reply

Although there is more work to be done, Merton is currently in the top 20% of local authorities for the number of EV charge points available to the public. EV Chargers are currently available via Source London, Char.gy and rapid chargers are available from ESB Energy on the TFL network.

At present there are 258 EV charge points in Merton:

- 6 Rapid Chargers – ESB Energy

- 140 On Street - SourceLondon
- 90 Lamp Column Chargers - Char.gy
- 22 Superstore/Retail Park charge points.

Based on the draft London-wide EV strategy, which has just been published, we are currently developing a Merton EV charging strategy which will set out our plan for increasing the number of EV charging points. This will be published next year.

All EV charge point locations in Merton can be found on <https://www.zap-map.com/live/>

23 From John Braithwaite

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social and Public health

Anti-idling measures are outlined on the Merton Council website, yet there does not seem to be any move to enforcement. Are parking wardens trained and empowered to ask people to turn their engines off, and if not why not?

Reply

Parking Services Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) received anti-idling refresher training in September 2021 and are equipped and empowered to engage with Idling drivers as part of their day-to-day duties. The difficulty the CEOs encounter is that idling is usually the secondary offence, primarily drivers who idle are parked illegally and CEOs must first deal with the parking contravention. CEOs will continue to take action and be involved in specific anti-idling events such as the one scheduled in Colliers Wood on the 23rd November.

24 From Matthew Willis

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

Our town centres need certainty. Without scapegoating Network Rail, TFL, or the Department for Transport, what are the Council doing to have Crossrail 2 confirmed or cancelled?

Reply

On 31 October 2020 the Secretary of State for Transport wrote to the Mayor of London confirming the basis upon which TfL would receive financial support from HM Government in light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on TfL's finances –

referred to as the 'H2 Funding Settlement'. This in effect confirmed that there would be no development funding available for Crossrail 2 for the foreseeable future.

Within the H2 Funding Settlement it was stated that:

"In relation to Crossrail 2, prioritises safeguarding activity and brings an orderly end to consultancy work as soon as possible. DfT will support such safeguarding activity for this project as required."

TFL are working with Government to make the necessary arrangements for the Secretary of State to update the Safeguarding Directions, so that they reflect the most up to date plans for the scheme as soon as possible. To date, there has been no indicative timescale for updated safeguarding.

Regardless of the timetable for if or when Crossrail 2 may materialise, Merton Council absolutely see the need for the safeguarding to be updated. The last official safeguarding was in 2015, which didn't include any land south of Wimbledon Station. The Council has also called for TFL and DfT to at least proceed with updating the safeguarding so that it is concurrent with the latest Crossrail 2 route.

The situation at present is that there is land safeguarded in Merton that may never be needed for CR2 and other sites which CR2 identified in their 2016-2018 consultations that isn't formally safeguarded. We agree that certainty is needed. With TFLs current budget position, it is unlikely that any further safeguarding work will progress without DfT's agreement.

25 From Dan Collins

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

What reviews and subsequent actions are being taken with regards to the state of the streets around the borough due to rubbish? It has become all too frequent to find either fly tipping, un-emptied/overflowing public bins, or rubbish bags left out and torn by foxes. We should seriously be considering a review of how efficient our current spending on this area is, and if deemed so, look at methods to invest further to tackle these issues.

Reply

As part of a current review of the mechanical street sweeping service, we have invested in specialist mechanical pavement sweepers which will tackle weeds and detritus in our residential roads, along with pavement washers for our town centres and transport interchanges to improve overall standards.

The service has successfully bid for additional funds to develop a number of street improvement projects including a mobile fly tipping clearance unit, a jet washing programme to target “grot spots” and additional beat sweepers.

Fly tipping is a priority area for the service, and we have launched a pilot programme to specifically address small bags of waste dumped on our streets. Since its launch in October 2021, this pilot programme has issued approximately £15,500 in fines to offenders. This action coupled with bespoke communications sent to 2,500 residents within the pilot areas will provide the basis for consistent innovation and investment in our fight against fly tipping.

Our client team have undertaken more than 6,100 street inspections this year and have used these inspections to hold Veolia to account. In addition, regular independent inspections have been undertaken in line with National Indicator 195 (Ni195) to determine the effectiveness of street cleansing in Merton. Findings from these independent inspections show that 88% of streets were assessed to be within the required standard for litter.

In addition, we have invested in a new, user-friendly reporting tool so that residents can raise issues with ease. This tool, which will be available by the end of the year, will notify residents once a reported issue has been resolved and provide the service with data which will drive better allocation of resources.

26 From Dr Pippa Maslin

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

In Merton, the absence of robust policy to safeguard our trees means that many are under threat, primarily because of insensitive development and a lack of care. This undermines efforts to mitigate climate change. What are the key dates for the production, consultation period, and adoption of a Tree Strategy?

Reply

The development of the Merton Tree Strategy commenced on the 1st November. Currently, officers are working with an independent consultant to undertake the baseline collation of information and data. This will also include borough wide site visits with officers to better understand the composition of the Council’s urban forest.

The process will include interviews and consultation with external stakeholders and partner colleagues within departments in the Council. The information captured during this phase will be utilised for drafting the first draft strategy. Following this drafting and in the new year, the draft will be circulated for secondary consultation and a survey undertaken to determine feedback. The information from this stage will

be used to prepare the final draft strategy prior to presentation to committees to seek official approval and adoption of the developed strategy. It is envisaged that the whole process shall take 16 weeks from commencement.

Finally, the council does have a robust approach to safeguarding trees, including when there are proposed developments to provide more housing or improve the local economy. Trees and arboriculture are considered in all major applications, and the council has a track record of demonstrating that it is possible to build new much-needed homes and increase provision for local businesses while also increasing the number of trees.

27 From Paula England

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Given there is a procedure for removal and sale of vehicles. How many vehicles have been removed, sold or otherwise disposed of, per month, since 01/11/19? What was the total net amount of sales proceeds? What percentage of total dues did the total net proceeds represent?

Reply

Since 1 November 19 we commenced removal on 129 cases. Not all of these would have been actually removed as the debtor would have settled the debt before the vehicle was towed. Others would have been paid before the vehicle was sold. We sold six vehicles – total proceeds £4,895
In three cases the sale proceeds cleared the debt and fees incurred

28 From Jeremy Hudson

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

When the Council sold the freehold of Wimbledon Park Golf Club to the All England Lawn Tennis Club in 1993, both parties publicly and solemnly promised to their local communities that the land would not be built upon. In the light of the Club's professed intention to renege on that promise, what are the Council doing to uphold that promise?

Reply

The council are currently considering the hybrid (part outline and part detailed) planning application submitted by the All England Lawn Tennis Club for their landholdings at Wimbledon Park; planning reference 21/P2900. Covenants relating to land are not a planning matter so will not be considered as part of determining this application.

The Council as the land owner with the benefit of this restrictive covenant takes this matter extremely seriously. At present there is no requirement for the Council to take any action since there is no breach or immediate pending breach of any of the restrictive covenants that were placed on this land in 1993. The Council will ensure that appropriate legal consideration is given to this matter as and when necessary and will act appropriately.

29 From Sarah Golby

To the Cabinet Member for Children and Education

Why has Merton council declined to join incentive schemes that encourage parents to switch to using reusable nappies? For example, the Real Nappies for London scheme which currently has 8 participating boroughs.

<https://www.realnappiesforlondon.org.uk/apply/>

Reply

Thank you for your question on encouraging parents to switch to using re-usable nappies. With finite resources, this has not been a priority area for funding in Merton. The council however remains committed to reducing waste and recycling as part of our waste management strategies and to see how we can better use our communication channels to promote re-usable nappies to new parents going forward. For example through our Health Visiting services who support families with newborns and our Children's Centres.

30 From Richard Weekes

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

Could the Council please provide the street sweeper route and frequency map for Graveney Ward

Reply

Our contract with Veolia is an output based specification that requires our streets to be maintained to the required acceptable standard. In areas in which our roads are below the established standard, the service provider is required to attend to these areas and ensure that the road is brought back up to standard in the agreed time scale. As such the contract is not based on a prescribed frequency of sweeping or litter picking.

It is important to note that Veolia's schedules will vary depending on pedestrian foot traffic, land use and need. The schedules are continually reviewed in order to ensure the efficient deployment of the suitable resource.

I have asked the Waste Services Team to look into ways in which we can improve our customer offering and look at publishing the street cleansing service in a format that allows our residents to use an easy look up table to search for their specific street and see the current frequency of the local street cleansing schedule.

31 From Roy England

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

What constitutes "exceptional circumstances" for vehicle removal, who decides what they are; who decides that a vehicle should be put forward to the Head of Service for agreement for removal, how many vehicles, by month, has the Head of Service been invited to remove and how many has he approved?

Reply

For the collection of council tax, and parking fines the discretion to undertake a removal is with the Enforcement Agent and not the Head of Service. The department do not deal with abandoned vehicles where the process may be different. I can get a written answer to you from the Enforcement Agent regarding your question about exceptional circumstances.

32 From Richard Poole

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

Can the cabinet member responsible please give an update on the rollout of permanent enforcement measures for each of the School Streets schemes introduced in the borough since 1st April 2020?

Reply

In Merton we have one of the highest numbers of School Streets in Greater London, with a total of 28. To ensure compliance with operating times - to improve road safety and reduce pollution - we have introduced a number of fixed ANPR cameras. Enforcement officers also monitor School Streets equipped with CCTV equipment.

33 From Guy Lockwood

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

Can the cabinet member explain what steps have been taken to improve Veolia's street cleaning performance, and why these steps have not led to improvements across the whole borough?

Reply

In order to hold the contractor to account and improve service standards we created a Neighbourhood Client Team who undertake site inspections and walk-about with local ward Members who have concerns about littering in their area. During the first half of this year, our client team have undertaken more than 6,100 street inspections and, as a result of the data they have gathered £47,092 has been deducted from Veolia for underperformance.

In addition to this regular independent inspection have been undertaken in line with National Indicator 195(Ni195). Findings from these independent inspections show that over the last 6 month we have seen a sustained improvement with the level of street cleansing standard and 88% of streets were of the required standard for litter.

34 From Simon Jones

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

What enforcement powers does the council have to ensure social housing in the borough meets the "Merton Standard" promised to residents back when council housing stock was transferred over to housing associations?

Reply

The Merton Standard does not apply to all social rented housing in the borough and only applied to the transferred former council housing stock following the stock transfer in 2010. The Merton Standard formed part of the offer to former council tenants and gave them some choices regarding choice of kitchen styles colours and finishes and involve residents in the selection process when meeting part of the Decent Home Standard . At no point can the The Merton Standard be seen as an alternative for repairs to be carried out to tenants home and is not the legislative enforcement framework for residential rented dwellings, including social rented dwellings and these are found in the Housing Act 2004 and associated legislation

35 From Sivas Ranjan

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

What guarantee can the Council give the public that the trees on Merton High Street will be protected and not felled as part of the High Path Regeneration?

Reply

There are no plans, and never have been any plans to remove the mature trees on Merton High Street as part of Clarion's estate regeneration programme for High Path.

The Council's adopted Estates Local Plan highlights that the tree belt south of Merton High Street is an "area of high landscape value" The plan also shows that the trees are to be retained.

Clarion Housing Group have secured outline planning permission for the regeneration of High Path Estate (with design detail expected phase by phase)

The permitted planning approval for High Path regeneration shows the Merton High Street group of trees as retained, with building lines set further south from Merton High Street to account for the presence of the trees.



Approved masterplan showing Merton High Street trees retained.

36 From Andrew Boyce

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

What consideration has been given to the provision of communal waste receptacles for those residents living on main roads and high streets, in small flats, with little to no internal storage space for waste receptacles?

Reply

For households with no external storage areas such as flats and communal properties, I am pleased to advise that we have maintained the weekly collection service and in areas of time banding this is increased to twice weekly collection as part of the blue and purple sack collection service.

I note the valuable feedback regarding communal receptacles on main roads, however, I would be concerned that this would have the potential to either be a hindrance to the footpath or if placed in parking bays, reduce the space around local businesses to park. In addition, there is the added concern that the permanent installation of waste storage containers may contribute to localised fly tipping as historically experienced at some Neighbourhood Recycling Centres.

From Councillor Peter McCabe to the Leader

Is the Cabinet Member aware of reports of the soaring building costs of the proposed hospital at Belmont which threatens the economic viability of the whole scheme?

Reply

I am aware that additional requirements have been imposed on the 40 new and enhanced hospital schemes by DHSC and that this impacts on the financial viability of the Epsom St Helier proposal. I have also become aware of potential constraints on the overall capital pot and I have written to the CCG requesting clarification of the implications and sight of any revised plans as a result. I have not yet received a response.

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

Given the recent fiasco and waste of public money on the Hartfield Walk project, what processes has the cabinet member put in place to ensure valuable CIL money is spent wisely, correctly and projects have the necessary planning & licensing permissions that may be applicable?

Reply

The Hartfield Walk project is not a waste of public money. The Council received a CIL funding application from LoveWimbledon to deliver a series of placemaking improvements to what was an unassuming, blank space in Wimbledon town centre. The CIL bid sought to green the space by introducing planters, public seating, play graphics on the footway and to provide kiosks to support existing businesses. The kiosks also have green roofs to improve biodiversity. The project, as built, has delivered on these objectives.

The Councillor is mistaken regarding licencing. The business owners had the appropriate street trading licenses issued by the Council before, and after the Hartfield Walk improvements.

Cllr Dean's views on planning and the pre-planning communications should be directed to the applicant.

The Council already expects recipients of CIL funding to undertake their own due diligence on delivery matters such as planning. This will be strengthened in grant award contracts. It is disappointing that some of the Hartfield Walk structures were in place before planning permission was granted – despite officers raising such concerns.

From Councillor Stephen Alambritis to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Can the Cabinet Member provide an estimate of the number of Merton residents who have lost £20 per week as a result of the Government's decision to withdraw the extra

Universal Credit paid during the pandemic, and what is the overall net loss after the Government's attempt to make amends through the Household Support Grant?

Reply

As at August 2021 there were 7,992 Merton residents in receipt of Universal Credit. This equates to an estimated yearly loss of £8.3 million for residents. The Household Support grant awarded to Merton is £1,186,607. The fund is not intended to just help residents in receipt of Universal Credit.

From Councillor Eloise Bailey to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

Can the cabinet member give an update on (a) drain cleaning by ward since August 2021 and (b) details of meetings he has personally attended with Thames Water and/or the Environment Agency on flooding during the period 2020-2021?

Reply

- a) Just this calendar year to date we have completed over 6500 gully cleans across the borough. With a number of additional cleans to high priority gullies during July and August. The Council continues to undertake significant work to mitigate this risk and to ensure our highway assets flow as freely as possible.

The Leader of the Council has written to Thames Water following the flooding in July asking them to improve arrangements and invest in the necessary work to reduce this risk. Thames Water have arranged an independent review of this occurrence which will report in the new year. We hope to invite Thames Water to attend our Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel once they have completed the independent review to explain how they will address this recurring problem.

- b) I met with Thames Water on 20th October 2021.

Councillor Joan Henry to the Cabinet Member for Finance

Can the Cabinet member reassure me that the Council will be make it a priority to look after some of our most vulnerable residents by continuing to offer one of the country's most generous Council Tax Support Schemes?

Reply

At tonight's meeting we will be voting on adopting our 2022/23 Council Tax Support Scheme. The proposal is to again adopt the same scheme with the government uprating. This scheme still protects the most vulnerable residents and is one of the most generous schemes in the country.

From Councillor Dickie Wilkinson to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

At its meeting on 3rd February this year, council agreed to create the role of Morden Champion to drive forward the regeneration programme. Could the Cabinet member please update us on the progress made towards appointing the Morden Champion since then?

Reply

A cross-party Members' steering group has been established to oversee regeneration activities in Morden town centre. This ranges from the delivery of CIL funded projects, updates on planning activity and the status of the overall regeneration programme. I am actively considering the appointment of a Councillor Champion for Morden.

Councillor John Dehaney to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

Would the Cabinet Member outline how she is improving the borough's streets and parks in the next few months?

Reply

Our Neighbourhood Client Team will continue to conduct site inspections and work closely with the contractor's Area Managers to ensure that service standards are maintained, and any rectifications are addressed in line with our contractual agreements. In conjunction with the Assistant Director of Public Space, we are looking at restructuring this area in order to build greater resilience into the service with a focused neighbourhood approach which will be underpinned by a Cleaner and Green Programme Board.

To raise awareness of how our community can play their part in keeping Merton Clean, we will continue to expand our Keep it Clean, Love Merton campaign. This includes developing better communication of collection times, how to report issues and what penalties may be given if you are caught dumping waste on our streets.

We will continue to work on our pilot programme that specifically addresses small bags of waste dumped on our streets. Since its launch in October 2021, this pilot programme has issued approximately £15,500 in fines to offenders. We will be re-procuring a new environmental enforcement Contract with an increased specification to including the investigation and prosecution for fly tipping.

The service has invested in new street sweeping appliances that will be received shortly and deployed across the borough to improve the standards of sweeping on our footways. This makes the service more effective and improves the physical collection of dirt and litter.

In addition, and in response to feedback from our residents, the service has also invested an additional £300k in a jet washing programme for “grot spots”, a roving fly tipping response unit, improvements in signage and small infrastructure in our parks and a programme to improve biodiversity in urban areas.

From Councillor Nigel Benbow to the Cabinet Member for Children and Education

Funding growth is often requested to meet the increased demand for travel care and support services for children and young people. Can the Cabinet Member for Children and Education assure this has a neutral impact on those with protected characteristics to ensure the needs of children and young people are met to the same high standards of service provision in line with acceptable requirements?

Reply

Any decision where it is proposed that provision for young people should change, is scrutinised to understand the impact on vulnerable groups, including those children with protected characteristics. Through this scrutiny officers will seek to ensure that these groups are well supported, and not affected in an unfairly negative way.

From Councillor Sally Kenny to the Cabinet Member for Children and Education

Can the Cabinet Member please update us on the continuing work of the Council in supporting disadvantaged pupils during school holidays?

Reply

The council will be running and commissioning a range of Holiday, Activities and Food (HAF) Programs over the winter break. The council youth service will be running provisions at both youth centres, and the Adventure Playground will be open on an open access basis to local children in the first week. The three council provisions are focused on providing services in the three most disadvantaged areas of Merton. In addition, 10 voluntary sector providers have come forward to run a range of activities including sports and arts based work. There will be visits to Wimbledon Theatre Panto as well as workshops and Cinderella at the Polka. AFC Wimbledon and Tooting and Mitcham football club have also donated tickets for matches over the holiday. There will be some provision each day in the first week, between Christmas and New Year and on the first day in January. In the Government’s recent Autumn Budget and Spending Review, there was notification of the continuation of HAF funding nationally next year. Details will be announced in early 2022.

The council is using the Household Support Grant to ensure we continue to fund £15 per week school holiday supermarket vouchers for young people in receipt of Free School Meals, designating a further £600,000 to cover the recent autumn half term, the forthcoming Christmas holidays, the February half term and Easter holidays.

The Government’s Covid Support Grant, which previously helped to cover the cost of Free School Meals was insufficient for the summer holidays, but the council covered the gap with use of £75,000 from its own resources.

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From Councillor Stephen Alambritis to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Following the welcome decision not to further increase parking charges, can the Cabinet Member reassure us that she is seeing a change in people's behaviour with regard car-use, and is the anti-idling message getting through?

Reply

Data from residential permit holders in Merton shows a shift towards cleaner, greener vehicles has been taking place in the last 18 months, since emissions-based charging was being considered by Cabinet. The number of Electric Vehicles registered in Merton has already increased from 482 in the first quarter of 2020 to 824 in the first quarter of 2021. There has been an overall shift of approximately 15% of residential permits into a lower emissions band, which is consistent across all areas of the borough and irrespective of the length of enforcement of any Controlled Parking Zone.

It therefore appears that the package of policies and measures already implemented by Merton, TfL and the Government may have had a greater influence than anticipated on accelerating the transition to lower emissions vehicles.

Merton has already implemented and will continue to deliver a wide range of measures to support sustainable travel choices and to tackle climate change and air quality. The full range of actions the Council is taking are set out in Transport Strategy (LIP3), Air Quality Action Plan, and the Climate Strategy and Action Plan.

With regard to idling, Parking Services Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) have received anti-idling refresher training in September 2021 and in principle are equipped to engage with Idling drivers as part of their day-to-day duties. The difficulty the CEOs encounter is that idling is usually the secondary offence, primarily drivers who idle are parked illegally and CEOs must first deal with the parking contravention. CEOs will be invited to high profile idling events such as the one scheduled in Colliers Wood on the 23rd November. Whilst we believe the anti-idling message is getting through, we have a lot more work to do and will be carrying out more campaigns and advice to motorists.

From Councillor Daniel Holden to Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Can the cabinet member confirm that the introduction of the emissions based parking tax has been permanently cancelled rather than just temporarily stalled?

Reply

Yes. The Council is recommending to no longer proceed with the scheme because it is recognised that many residents are, and will continue, to suffer economically as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and other cost of living increases more generally. Travel patterns which shifted during the pandemic – including a reluctance to return to public transport – have continued longer than anticipated, with uncertainty as to when or

whether they will return. Moreover, Merton has already observed a significant shift to cleaner, greener vehicles during the time emissions-based charging has been considered, potentially linked to London-wide policies such as the ULEZ charge, and borough initiatives implemented in Merton, including low traffic neighbourhoods and school safety zones, as well as the Air Quality Action Plan.

From Councillor Nick Draper to the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Skills

Can the Cabinet Member explain how breaches of licencing conditions of events in Morden Park are dealt with, and include any examples form the past year?

Reply

Officers from Merton's Licensing Service have not been notified of any breaches in licensing conditions of events in Morden Park. However, should any breaches occur, the Licensing Team would follow the Council's enforcement protocol to deal with this matter. Officers are obligated to take a proportionate approach to enforcement and in the first instance would investigate to understand why the breach might have occurred and meet with the licence holder/Designated Premises Supervisor to establish whether there is any basis to any allegations.

Officers would consider what action would be appropriate based on the nature and severity of the breach. Options include:

- No action, where the breach may be minor and has been rectified
- Working with the licence holder/Designated Premises Supervisor to devise and agree an action plan to rectify the issues and preventing them from breaching the conditions in future,
- Written warnings which set out potential future sanctions if there is a further breach of the licence
- Review of the premises licence
- Prosecution

Licensing officers would also assess the severity of the breach and look to engage other Responsible Authorities under the Licensing Act 2003 if necessary, such as the Police, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Fire Service to carry out joint enforcement action. Premises licence reviews and prosecution are used in extreme cases.

It is worth noting that the Licensing Team carry out proactive and reactive licensing compliance visits to licensed premises to investigate complaints or if concerns are raised. These visits ensure licence holders are complying with their business operating schedule. Sometimes these visits are carried out jointly with responsible authorities e.g. Police, Trading Standards, Environmental Health Section and Fire Service. Some of the visits may include test purchases to ensure compliance.

From Councillor Janice Howard to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency:

Can the cabinet member tell me how many penalty notices have been issued since the introduction of the school streets prohibition scheme?

Reply

Merton has a higher proportion of Schools Streets than any other borough in London, as recognised by the London Boroughs Healthy Streets Scorecard, which has this year published data to show the health of each borough's streets according to nine indicators. Indeed, the 2021 Scorecard revealed that more than two in five of Merton's schools now have a School Street (41%). Since introducing these schemes to help children to be safe from traffic, and to reduce levels of air pollution, there have so far been 27,709 penalty notices. A higher volume of notices coincided with the initial introduction of the scheme, and therefore at the start of enforcement (for the first two weeks of operation), a notice was issued for a vehicle entering the street for the first time, but no further charge was issued to the same vehicle.

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

Will the Cabinet member confirm, regardless of the outcome of the Planning Applications concerning the land in question, that the Council will enforce the restrictive covenants, to which the AELTC agreed, when Merton sold the freehold of the Wimbledon Golf Club land to them in 1993?

Reply

The Council as the land owner with the benefit of this restrictive covenant takes this matter extremely seriously. At present there is no requirement for the Council to take any enforcement action since there is no breach or immediate pending breach of any of the restrictive covenants that were placed on this land in 1993. The Council will ensure that appropriate legal consideration is given to this matter as and when necessary and will act appropriately.

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

Can the Cabinet Member update us on the number of FPNs issued for fly tipping offences?

Reply

Over the last 12 months between October 2020 and Sept 2021 we have issued a total of 248 Fix penalty Notices (FPNS) for Fly tipping. Our Fly-tipping Strategy has the primary aim of aligning our approach in tackling fly-tipping, not just through efficient and targeted

enforcement but through wider engagement with service partners, community groups and stakeholders. The goal of the strategy is to provide an overall reduction in fly-tipping incidents and an improved satisfaction of our residents regarding the cleanliness of the streets within their communities

As part of our fly tipping action plan, the service has reinforced the Council's zero tolerance to fly tipping at identified target areas in which we have deployed additional resources in the issuing of FPNs for fly tipping. The primary focus in the short term is to address the dumping of rubbish on the streets such as furniture and black sacks. We know that the majority of residents do not do this but sadly, there is a small minority who think it is ok. To date, we have written to over 2,500 households within the pilot areas advising them of the correct way to dispose of their waste along with reminding them the discarding of waste outside of our collection schedule is a criminal offence.

To take action against these people and tackle their anti-social behavior, we have increased the number of enforcement officers patrolling this area. Anyone caught dumping rubbish will be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice of up to £400 or prosecuted under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which can result in fines, Court action and a potential criminal record. Since the pilot has commenced, the service has issued 55 additional FPNs.

From Councillor Hayley Ormrod to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency:

How can the residents on the Eastfields, Ravensbury and High Path estates trust this administration to ensure Clarion delivers on its promises when the Labour administration allowed so many of the 'ten commitments' to be broken?

Reply

In September 2014, near the start of the project, the council jointly signed up to the following list of 10 commitments with Circle Housing Merton Priory, now the Clarion Housing Group to ensure residents get the best out of any regeneration proposals for the three estates:

1. Circle Housing Merton Priory will consult with residents, consider their interests at all times, and address concerns fairly.
2. Current homeowners will be entitled to at least the market value of their home should they wish to take the option to sell their home to Circle Housing Merton Priory.
3. Current tenants will be entitled to be rehoused in a new home of appropriate size considering the number of people in the household.
4. Existing Circle Housing Merton Priory tenants will keep all their rights and have the same tenancy agreement, including rent levels, in the new neighbourhood as they do now.
5. All new properties will be more energy efficient and easier to heat than existing properties, helping to keep down residents' fuel bills.

6. Circle Housing Merton Priory will keep disruption to a minimum, and will do all it can to ensure residents only move once if it is necessary to house them temporarily while their new home is being built.
7. Circle Housing Merton Priory will offer extra help and support for older people and/or disabled residents throughout the regeneration works.
8. Circle Housing Merton Priory will continue to maintain the homes of residents across the three neighbourhoods throughout the planning process until regeneration starts, including ensuring a high quality responsive repairs service.
9. Any growth in the number of homes will be in accordance with the Council's Development Plan so that it is considered, responsible and suitable for the area.
10. As a not for profit organisation, Circle Housing Merton Priory will not profit from any regeneration and will use any surplus to provide more housing or improve existing neighbourhoods.

As Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency I do not accept that the 10 commitments have been broken as the majority have been implemented in full. As cabinet member I continue to meet regularly with Clarion Housing to ensure that tenants receive the very best outcomes from the regeneration plans but also that they tackle the repairs issues both on the three estates and on other estates in the borough.

From Councillor Nick Draper to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

Can the Cabinet Member please inform us of any recent successful prosecutions of rogue landlords in the borough?

Reply

In September 2021 the Council successfully prosecuted a rogue landlord and his associated property agency for letting unsafe properties and operating in a completely unlicensed manner, securing fines and costs in excess of £33,000.

Lavender Hill Magistrates' Court heard the case against Pedro Reis Tenajas and London Corporate Relocation Ltd on Tuesday 21 September. Neither Mr Tenajas – who was fined £22,000 by Tower Hamlets in 2019 for issuing sham licenses – nor his co-defendant attended.

In their absence, the court heard from Merton's legal team how the defendants had failed to apply for the correct license to rent out 11 Braemar Avenue, Wimbledon Park as a house in multiple occupation (HMO).

Further charges were made that they had failed to legally act as landlords, had not provided information to the property's occupiers, and had now carried out the legally required safety measures for an HMO.

Magistrates found the case to be proven against Mr Tenajas and noted that the failings were extremely serious, and had potentially put lives at risk. They also said the company had been uncooperative and obstructive, and had provided no company accounts.

London Corporate Relocation was ordered to pay fines and costs amounting to £21,750 to be paid within 28 days, while Mr Tenajas was slapped with a total of £11,530 to pay in the same time span, with a collection order applied to him.

From Councillor Oonagh Moulton to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

What action is the cabinet member taking to enforce the contract with Veolia to ensure public litter bins are emptied?

Reply

Following the commissioning of the waste collection and street cleansing service to Veolia, we have established a new clienting team who are responsible for the day to day contract monitoring and compliance delivery of the contract at a borough level. The Neighbourhood Client Team undertake site inspections and work closely with the contractor's Area Managers to ensure that service standards are maintained and any rectifications are addressed in line with our contractual agreements.

In order to hold the contractor to account there are a series of 'Service Performance Indicators' (SPI) which are used to measure the level of performance against an agreed criteria and service standards. These include the rectification of overflowing litter bins in our Town Centres and residential areas. Over the last twelve month we have received 572 reports (average 48 per month) of overflowing litter bins of which an average of 84% were rectified within the required timeframe.

This is further supported by the South London Waste Partnership who monitor the contractor performance , specifically those issues necessary at pan-borough level.

From Cllr Hina Bokhari to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

Could the Cabinet member detail what measures the council has taken to prevent fly tipping next to bins in West Barnes? And how many successful prosecutions and FPNs against fly tippers there have been, by ward during the period 2020-2021?

Reply

Our Neighbourhood Client Team undertake regular street inspections on a daily basis and ensure that all wards are inspected each week. To date this year , I am pleased to report that regarding street cleansing and litter services, our client team have undertaken more than 6,100 street inspections. Findings from these inspections have shown that

West Barnes is maintained to a high standard and has one of the lowest levels of fly tipping incidents reported across the borough. In 2020/21 the service received on average 26 requests per month, less than one per day with a total of 313 for the year. This compares to a total borough average of 43 per day which equates to a total 15,857 incidents in the corresponding year

In 2020/21 the level of proactive environmental enforcement for fly tipping was greatly impacted due to COVID and the implementation of Government Guidance which prevented our officers from searching through black sacks for evidence. Our focus shifted during the pandemic to scheduling street inspections and ensuring appropriate crews were equipped with the required PPE / equipment to ensure the safe removal of fly tipping incidents.

Over the last 12 months between October 2020 and Sept 2021 we have issued a total of 248 Fix penalty Notices (FPNS) for Fly tipping.

From Councillor Najeeb Latif to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency:

Does the cabinet member believe that the planning department is as efficient as it could be?

Reply

In line with most planning authorities, Merton has been experiencing a significant rise in both planning applications across the board, and related enforcement cases. We are doing our best to tackle these in a consistent manner whilst maintaining quality of decision. We do have a larger backlog of enforcement cases than we would like, but have recently appointed a new Enforcement Team Leader who will be joining us soon and tackling these. With regard to planning performance, our statistics show that despite the increase in workload, and the ongoing issues caused by the pandemic, we are managing to maintain an acceptable level of performance. As of end September, our year to date achievement on Planning statistics was above target:

	YTD Achieved	YTD Target
% Major Applications Processed within 13 weeks	86.68%	80%
% Minor Applications determined within 8 weeks	76.68%	71%
% Other Applications determined within 8 weeks	83.65%	82%
% Appeals Lost	17.5%	35%

The above figures fail to reflect the productivity and efficiency levels of the service since we have proportionately fewer planning officers than most other London Boroughs and our Planning officers carry a larger caseload resulting in greater efficiency.

We recognise that our enforcement statistics need to be improving, but as mentioned, we are soon to having a new Team Leader in post, and we will be focussing on improving this important area of work.

	YTD Achieved	YTD Target
No of planning enforcement cases closed	127	264
Backlog of planning enforcement cases	561	490

From Councillor Dennis Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Public Safety and Tackling Crime

How is the cabinet Member dealing with the alarming rise in reports of Anti Social behaviour?

Reply

Safer Merton continue to respond to the complaints of ASB reported to the council. In order to respond to the increase in demand the council has agreed funding to recruit two additional ASB Officers until March 2022 which will increase the resource from two ASB officers to four in order to meet the rising demand.