

Merton Council

Council

19 April 2023

Supplementary Agenda 3: Councillor Questions

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|----|--|---------|
| 6 | Councillors' ordinary priority questions to cabinet members | 1 - 10 |
| | The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting | |
| 7b | Strategic theme: Councillors' questions to cabinet members | 11 - 18 |
| | The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting. | |

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From Cllr Neaverson to the Cabinet Member for Transport

How is the Council supporting people who live and work in Merton to be able to rent, own or share an electric vehicle?

Reply

Merton will soon become the best-equipped area for on-street charging in Outer London.

Of the 90,000 households in the borough, an estimated 37,000 cannot access off-street electric vehicle (EV) charge points at home. Officers are finalising the roll-out of 530 lamp column charge points within the next six weeks, having reached the halfway mark on 30 March.

The project will triple the number of public charge points available to Merton residents from 259 at the start of January to 789. Once completed, 78,000 Merton homes will have at least one charge point within a two-minute walk of their home.

In addition to the current roll-out of lamp-column chargers, the Council is also in the process of bidding for LEVI (Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure) funding announced recently which will further increase EV charging infrastructure for our residents and businesses.

The Council's Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel have established an EV Charging Task Group which has met over the past three months and is due to report back to Cabinet a set of recommendations to shape the borough's EV charging strategy which officers will commence this spring.

We have also written to every large supermarket operator, retail park owner and petrol forecourt operators in the borough to encourage greater provision of rapid EV charging in these locations to support residents to charge cars as part of shopping trips and also to contribute to the borough's carbon reduction goals. The Council is also encouraging petrol station operators to convert sites to local EV charging hubs.

Merton also has a number of car-club operators in the borough including Enterprise and Zip-Car. Zip-Car already offer a number of EV vehicles to members in the borough. In discussion with ZipCar, we understand that they intend to have a fully electric fleet by 2025.

We want Merton to be one of the best places in London to own or drive an electric vehicle and we are making significant progress.

From Cllr Hall to the Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage

AELTC are making various claims about the feedback received on their plans, could the Cabinet Member please detail what agreements have been made between cabinet members, officers, and representatives of AELTC regarding the Club's

planning application for developing the former golf course regarding publicising and sharing the results of informal and formal consultations with residents?

Reply

Officers have been negotiating with the agent for the planning application around matters of planning judgement and potential heads of terms for a Section 106 legal agreement for planning obligations, but their views and recommendation have not been finalised and will not be confirmed until the report to the Planning Applications Committee has been completed, signed off and published for public consumption.

It is not a legal requirement of the national Development Management Procedure Order 2015 for details of informal consultations between applicants and the Council to be published on the planning register. All comments from statutory advisors and formal responses to them by applicants are displayed online at the Council's website. The analysis of these by the Planning Case Officer, together with all material planning considerations, will be published in the report to the Planning Applications Committee in due course.

From Cllr Macauley to the Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

What are the Council's plans to mark the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles?

Reply

The Coronation of King Charles III will be one of the country's biggest celebrations in decades – and we're working hard to ensure the borough can mark the occasion appropriately. We've taken an approach of enabling our communities to celebrate the way they want to and applied this across the key themes of Street Parties, Big Lunches, and the Big Help Out on Monday May 8.

For street parties - as with the Queen's Jubilee celebrations, we are again waiving the fees associated with street closures and supplying party packs to make it easy for people to hold street parties. We have more than 100 street parties booked, which is more than the Jubilee celebrations in 2022.

For Big Lunches – larger-scale events – we opted to use our resource to offer money to local community groups and organisations to help them run their own parties, in the way they want to. £350 grants are being awarded to all organisations holding a Big Lunch.

This has been a very popular offer. We have more than 40 Big Lunch events booked, ranging from 100 to 500 people per event. Successful applicants include Age UK Merton, Wimbledon & Putney Common Conservators, the Commonsides Trust and Morden Little League.

Our grants are helping to pay for things like speakers, food and gazebos, while the council is also providing tables and chairs for those events that require them, at no additional cost for residents.

Councillors' Ordinary Priority Questions to Cabinet Members

A big screen will also be installed for the weekend at Fair Green in Mitcham, as there are community events booked there for both Saturday and Sunday.

The Mayor is holding a special Big Lunch for our fantastic local charity contacts, and myself and the Leader will be attending another special Big Lunch for our community and voluntary partners, to be held at Merton College.

For the Big Help Out – the volunteering-themed day – we are running a ticketed volunteering event at Three Kings Piece in Mitcham, where residents can come along to help us plant wild flowers and share a bite to eat. We're also working with Merton Connected to support a sustained push to encourage even more residents to volunteer in their communities regularly.

And we're promoting our brilliant staff volunteering policy internally, which allows every colleague at the council to take two paid days off for community volunteering every year.

Finally, we will be making sure the borough looks the part. 150 Coronation lamp-post banners will be installed in our high streets, and our libraries and other central areas will be planted with flowers to mark the occasion.

From Cllr Mercer to the Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

We are all enjoying the daffodils which are visible in lots of the Borough. We all love the green spaces in Merton and we know that bulbs are cheap when bought in bulk. Would the Council consider making an annual grant available to provide supporters of our parks (such as Friends groups) and residents groups with bulbs for planting each year?

Reply

Thank you for your comments about the bulb drifts in Parks and Amenity Locations across Merton we are very pleased with the outcomes so far, which this year has totalled some 250,000 spring bulbs including standard Daffodil mixes seen primarily on Merton Amenity Grass Verges as well as more floristically diverse Bee and Butterfly Biodiversity Mixes which includes more Pollen and Nectar rich bulbs which you will see in Merton Park as part of a Pollinator Parks Program set to launch in 2023. Many of the flowers you see were planted by local volunteers, and I'd like to thank everyone who has given up their time and put on their gardening gloves to help to add colour to our greenspaces.

You are correct that bulk purchases are a cheaper way to add visual interest and colour and if suitable mixes chosen can also provide much needed early nectar sources for pollinating insects and this year we have been using a Machine Bulb Planting technique that sees circa 100-150 bulbs planted per square meter by machine and creates a much denser carpet of colour in spring. We will obviously continue to promote community bulb planting events for smaller area in tandem also.

The councils will soon re-launch its Ward Allocation Scheme April 2023- March 2026 with £15K allocated per ward that community groups can request funding for. This

year LBM Greenspaces have been working closely with colleagues in Planning to provide a catalogue of options that will include Machine Bulb Planting and Community Bulb Planting as priced options and the mixes that could be offered and the benefit they hold from colour and visual interest as well as more those richer in early nectar for foraging insects. Watch this space for the launch package that will go out to ward councillors and community groups alike.

From Cllr Barlow to the Cabinet Member for Transport

Could the Cabinet Member for Transport please provide an update on the Council's plans for data collection in and around the proposed East Hillside Low Traffic Neighbourhood.

Reply

Council officers are finalising positions for the cameras, including those for the East Hillside area as a priority in the programme. Electrical connections are due this month. Officers have engaged local groups and have received some suggestions for further camera locations on the periphery of the neighbourhood. These locations are being assessed prior to the installation of sensors which we anticipate will be in the coming weeks (April - early May)

From Cllr MacArthur to the Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

Following the recent opening of the Toynbee water fountain, could the Cabinet Member for Civic Pride please advise as to the administration's policy regarding the installation of further water fountains across the Borough and outline any specific plans they may have?

Reply

The Council is proud to have partnered with the Heritage of London Trust (HOLT) to restore the Victorian Toynbee Fountain, not only for its historic value, but as a working water bottle refill station.

The Council is in discussion with HOLT regarding restoration of the Hanbury Fountain as a future project.

Elsewhere in the borough, the Council has worked with Thames Water and the Mayor of London to install new water refill stations in Colliers Wood, Mitcham, Raynes Park, Morden and Wimbledon town centres.

The installation was carried out by Thames Water; under a programme led by the Mayor of London and co-ordinated by the FutureMerton team.

<https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/environment-and-climate-change/waste-and-recycling/single-use-plastic-bottles/drinking-fountains-london?ac-50764=160301>

The Mayor / Thames Water's programme has now ended. There isn't at present any new programme for installing water fountains. If there are any suggested locations; it may be suitable as a candidate project via Civic Pride – Investing in Neighbourhoods funding, and the next round will open in the autumn.

From Cllr Hayes to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Greenspaces and Climate Change

What is the Council doing to increase the borough's tree canopy?

Reply

We know from a recent study that Merton's total tree canopy (including trees on private land) covers an area of 1,040 hectares) . This is equivalent to approximately 28% of the borough.

The major concentrations of canopy cover are in Wimbledon and Mitcham Commons and Morden Park. From the study we also know that of the total tree canopy:

- 26% consists of woodlands contained within parks and public open spaces (266.12ha).
- 1.5% consists of individual woodlands (15.2ha).
- 11.2% consists of street trees (116.7ha).
- 61.3% is in private gardens, cemeteries and institutional grounds (641.98)

But as you will see from (Figure 2 Map) showing tree canopy distribution and (Figure 3 Graph) showing % Tree Canopy cover in Merton by Ward shows that nearly all wards in Merton have a tree canopy cover below the London average of 21%

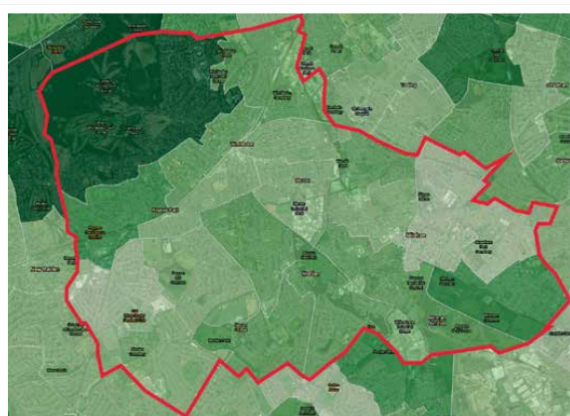


Figure 2 – Tree canopy cover distribution in Merton by Ward (pre-2022 Merton Ward boundary changes 2022). Darker green indicates more tree cover (Source UK Ward Canopy Cover Map. Forest Research)

Councillors' Ordinary Priority Questions to Cabinet Members

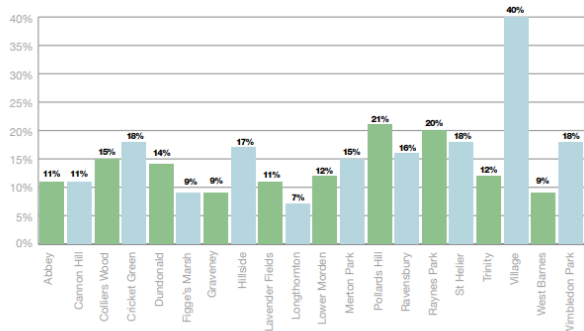


Figure 3 – Percentage tree canopy cover in Merton by ward (pre-2022 Merton Ward boundary changes 2022).
(Source: UK Ward Canopy Cover Map. Forest Research)

The above knowledge and insight is helpful, but only goes so far. This is because we still need a much more detailed understanding about the composition of our urban forest and the value of its benefits, so that we can target effective improvements and benchmark our strategic progress. The Phase 2 of Merton's Tree Strategy which is currently in scoping phase will see a more detailed I-Tree survey of Merton's Urban Forest in both Council Owned and Private Land

This will all enable us to focus our tree planning resource towards areas of greater need. Councillors would have noted our 10,000 tree commitment in 2022-23 which has been funded from a mixture of council funded tree replacement and new planting as well as a variety of external funding initiatives that the council's tree team has pursued including Urban Tree Challenge / Queens Green Canopy / Trees for Cities Urban Community Woodland Projects and Trees for Streets Street Tree Sponsorship program seeking targeted funding to expand our tree canopy in most needed wards. As well as the borough proactively managing its existing canopy and veteran trees.

From Cllr Galea to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services

What plans does the Council have to further develop the Council's ED&I agenda/strategy and support managers and staff at all levels to develop, monitor and review public facing policies, strategies and procedures to enable inclusive and accessible services to the residents of Merton?

Reply

Our new Council Plan, Building a Better Merton Together, includes a number of priorities that are aimed at improving inclusion and accessibility. These include:

- Launching a new Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy – including street safety, White Ribbon Accreditation, awareness campaigns and a new initiative for young women.
- Developing our support for Black businesses, including introducing a new Best Black Business Award in the Merton Business Awards.
- Developing our apprenticeship scheme to increase opportunities with a focus on disadvantaged young people.

Councillors' Ordinary Priority Questions to Cabinet Members

- Engaging with event companies to attract cultural events to the borough.
- Working with our communities to relaunch the LGBTQ+ forum.
- Celebrating the 75th Windrush anniversary in partnership with local groups and communities, for which planning is well advanced.

We have also committed to launching and delivering on a new Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy. Officers are preparing a draft of this strategy now, which will come to Cabinet in draft form in July. It will then be the subject of broad public consultation before a final version is recommended for adoption by Council later this year.

Alongside the new strategy we are also putting together a report that provides data on a range of council services and how these are experienced by people with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. This report will then be updated on an annual basis both with data for the most recent year available and with narrative explaining what we are doing to address any issues of accessibility highlighted by that data.

From Cllr Andrew Howard to the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning

Please can the Cabinet Member tell me how many children failed to return to school in Merton after the Covid19 lockdowns, excluding children who are receiving elective home education?

Reply

Attendance is measured at various points in the school year. The data covering four half terms (up until Easter 2022) has been published and national comparators exist for this data set. Ofsted use the four half term data to judge attendance when they are inspecting schools. Rates of attendance in Merton have dropped during this period, as they have done nationally, demonstrating the impact of the pandemic as schools have moved back to normal expectations of attendance. Anxiety on the part of both children and their parents is affecting attendance levels. Merton continues to be above the national average for attendance and Merton's rate of Persistent Absence is also better than the national average. Improving attendance will be a significant priority for Merton in 2022/23, as it is nationally, and in line with newly issued guidance from the Government. Attendance is 2% below pre – pandemic levels and Persistence Absence is running at double the pre pandemic level based on 2 term data.

	Merton	National
Attendance	93.6%	92.7%
Absence	6.4%	7.3%
Persistent Absence	18.9%	22.0%

Date for 2 terms, Autumn 2021 and Spring 2022

Severe Absence is a new attendance category brought in as part of the Government's new approach to attendance. Merton Schools and the Local Authority have been working in partnership to support and challenge families to ensure the attendance of their children. There have been briefings for schools, governors, community champions.

Significant input from young inspectors told us many of the issues for young people that lead to severe absence. A key element of this is anxiety and mental health support. All Merton Schools have access to Mental Health in Schools Teams in Merton. We are working on drilling down of severe absence planning in Merton and are doing some baseline work which we intend to lead to a pilot with a couple of schools after Easter.

From Cllr Kaweesa to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services

How is the Council continuing to support people through the cost of living crisis?

Reply

Since the council declared a cost of living emergency in July 2022, it has continued to work with its partners to identify and support people in need.

A Cost of Living Emergency Support Fund of £2million was agreed by Cabinet in September 2022. Cabinet agreed allocations for the first £1million, focusing on crisis support and addressing immediate challenges and an update on this first tranche of funding was presented to January Cabinet.

Ongoing mechanisms are in place for engaging with voluntary sector and other key partners, including the Community Response Steering Group made up of the Council and partners, sharing ideas and best practice, determining volunteering and neighbourhood support and oversight of local demand and emerging themes and its Fuel Poverty Subgroup, plus the Food Response Network.

A cross-council Cost of Living Working Group was also established in November 2022 which draws together and builds on the various strands of work being undertaken to address the cost of living crisis by sharing knowledge on the changing scale and nature of residents' cost of living needs, both short and long term. This working group has developed and overseen the implementation of the draft Cost of Living Strategy and Action Plan setting out activities, timescales and ownership. The group has also taken the lead on collating and considering proposals for the second tranche of the £2million Cost of Living Support Fund. Alongside the £2million Cost of Living Support Funding, the Cost of Living Working Group is also keeping track of other pots of funding we can potentially draw upon, to maximise our available resources, as well as developing an approach to encouraging businesses in Merton to become London Living Wage employers.

The Cost of Living Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2025 – A cross-council boroughwide approach to supporting people living in Merton, sets out a two-year

Councillors' Ordinary Priority Questions to Cabinet Members

plan to ensure the council is responding to the cost of living crisis in the most effective and collaborative way possible by identifying and fully utilising means of support and funding across different areas, and by identifying and responding to the real needs of our residents. The priorities and actions set out in the Action Plan will be aligned going forward with those set out in the new Council Plan and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

Proposed allocations of the second tranche were considered and agreed at March Cabinet.

A portion of the second tranche of funding (just under £25,000) is set aside as contingency as different priorities emerge, such as additional winter pressures in 2023/4 and any potential gaps in other related funding streams for example at present we do not know whether the household support fund will continue beyond March 2024.

£154,113.33 is allocated from the second tranche to extend funding to the end of March 2025 for Sustainable Merton and partners to support the Community Fridge Network and £42,000 is allocated to the Wimbledon Dons and the Trussell Trust to help them meet additional need over winter 2023/24.

To support arrangements in the voluntary and community sector for delivering emergency assistance to residents, an additional £100,000 is set aside for a further round of funding in 2023/24.

Provision has been made for £40,000 to top up the Discretionary Housing Payment fund to cover the April 2023 to March 2024 period.

Funding of £150,000 will extend to half terms the Holiday Activities and Food Programme which provides food and activities across school holidays for children on free school meals.

The Council's Communications team is working with partners to develop a new combined Cost of Living Communications Campaign to promote cost of living advice and support to residents, particularly reaching those who are digitally excluded. The campaign, called 'Cost Of Living Action', features a refreshed [cost of living webpage](#) with signposted support organised by topic and community groups, plus a range of campaign resources. £35,000 of the second tranche of funding is allocated to the cost of living communications campaign.

Following a series of well-attended cost of living events for residents in Merton's libraries and the Civic Centre during the latter half of 2022 and early 2023, a schedule of events is being finalised for the remainder of 2023. £10,000 is allocated towards the cost of running this future programme of events.

Finally £199,621 of the tranche two funding has been earmarked to fund the continued operation of the Merton Community Hub from 1 June 2024 to end May 2025.

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From Cllr Attawar to the Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

How is the Administration's commitment to upgrade Merton's CCTV network progressing?

Reply

As referenced in the main report, Merton is investing £1.3m in updating its CCTV systems to help tackle crime and anti social behaviour. Merton CCTV and IT are currently working on finalising the contract with the fibre supplier. We expect this contract to be signed before the end of April. The fibre is going to connect most of Merton CCTV cameras and will be the backbone for the new CCTV network and the new High Definition cameras, but it will take several months before it is installed. As soon as fibre is installed in an area, the upgraded cameras will follow.

In the meantime, we are using existing infrastructure to upgrade the cameras in Wimbledon Town Centre and the Civic Centre. These upgrades are expected to finish by the end of June.

Overall, the upgrade is progressing according to plan. Merton CCTV appointed a consultant who has done similar upgrades in other boroughs, and who has produced the specification, and the design for the upgrade. If everything goes according to plan, most of the cameras in Merton will be upgraded by April 2024.

From Cllr Flack to the Leader of the Council

Could the Leader of the Council outline what he stated as his reason for becoming a White Ribbon Ambassador, when he applied to become one?

Reply

I was pleased to become a White Ribbon Ambassador last year, as part of Merton's accreditation to the campaign – demonstrating Merton's commitment to helping our employees and residents in combatting violence against women and girls. The reason I became an ambassador and have supported this campaign is that I believe all men can make a difference in tackling violence against women and girls by thinking about their own behaviour, and being prepared to call harassment and misogynistic behaviour when they see it.

By working with men and boys and helping them not to repeat the patterns of behaviour of previous generation, we will hopefully one day make violence against women and girls a thing of the past.

From Cllr Holden to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

What action has the council taken to improve the built environment so that it is less intimidating to women and girls?

Reply

Safer Merton has a Violence Against Women and Girls strategy that includes women's safety, and as part of this work Safer Merton work with other teams within the Council to ensure that women and girls feel safe in the borough.

Over recent months, Safer Merton have been working on a Home Office funded 'Safer Streets' project to improve the safety of women and girls in public spaces. Alongside work to train staff working in our businesses and members of our community on how to intervene safely if an incident occurs, this work has included an audit of the Night Time economy in Merton, where officers from several teams undertook a walk around the borough at night and noted any potential areas for improvement. The recommendations from this will be shared with colleagues in Future Merton in terms of the built environment and how this can be improved.

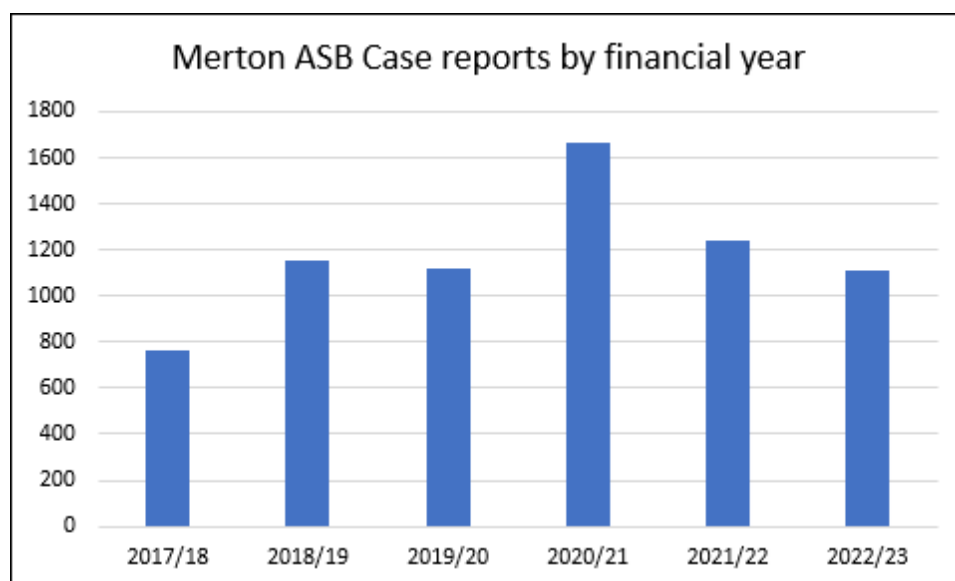
In addition, Merton's CCTV system is currently being upgraded and this includes additional cameras being installed in hotspot locations where women and girls feel vulnerable.

From Cllr Kohler to the Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

Anti-Social Behaviour is a pernicious and growing ill in our society. In addition to the valuable data in paragraphs 4.2-4.4 of the Strategic Theme Report can the cabinet member please provide quantitative information concerning long-term trends, current outcomes and how the success of the Council's current ASB processes & procedures are monitored and evaluated?

Reply

The number of reports to the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Team are detailed below. There was an increase in reports during the Covid-19 pandemic which have now stabilised back to previous levels.



The wards with the highest number of reports to the Council's ASB team in 2022-23 were Cannon Hill, Lower Morden and Lavender Fields. It should be noted that Cannon Hill and Lower Morden wards rank 19th and 18th lowest out of the total 20 wards in terms of overall crime during 2022-23 however there have been a number of complex neighbour disputes being dealt with in these wards, which has led to an increase in reports to the ASB Team.

In terms of evaluation, the ASB team conduct customer satisfaction surveys on victim led reports to assimilate how residents feel their cases were dealt with and to take feedback on how the service can be improved.

The team are also making improvements to the use of the case management system to make full use of its capabilities in collecting ASB data and its breakdown.

We know that residents want the situations addressed quickly. Therefore, an important Key Performance Indicator is monitoring the time it takes to respond to reports from residents, with 97.7% of complaints responded to within the correct timeframe in quarter 4 of 2022-23.

From Cllr Bhim to the Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

It is good to see that Merton has formally responded to the Metropolitan Police Service Turnaround Plan. How will we support the implementation of the plan, and help the Met to learn from the excellent examples of local community policing we have here in Merton?

Reply

We broadly welcome the Turnaround Plan, and appreciate the recognition of the significant challenges that the Metropolitan Police face regarding public trust and addressing the appalling failings that have been uncovered in Baroness Casey's

investigations. We strongly agree the plan will have a positive impact on policing in London. It sets out a series of commitments for an inclusive and diverse workforce and a stronger neighbourhood policing model.

Our experience of working with the Met in Merton is that a strong relationship already exists at a local level. This relationship is built on the foundation of partnership working. As detailed in the report, key examples of this are a weekly meeting between Safer Merton and Police Neighbourhoods Inspector to highlight key issues and areas requiring joint intervention. Problem solving takes place via the monthly Partnership Tasking meeting co-chaired by Safer Merton and the Police to collaborate to identify locations that are hotspots for ASB and crime. A weekly Violence Communication Strategy meeting discusses violent crimes of note on borough and how to safeguard those involved.

On behalf of those who live in Merton, our key priorities are to build strong neighbourhood policing links to reduce local crime and ASB, and to work with our young people to keep them from becoming victims or perpetrators of crime. We have sought assurances that both the Police stations in the borough will remain open to continue providing these services to the community. And we will continue to campaign to keep them open. Even with both stations, we recognise that the ambition to increase Police numbers and keep ward officers based locally may present problems in identifying suitable accommodation. Therefore, we have made clear we would welcome exploring opportunities for co-location with Council services.

We embrace strong local leadership and the return of a Merton based Superintendent and hope this will enable local officers to be kept focused on local issues. The new Superintendent is linked in closely with Safer Merton and will act as a co-chair of Merton's Community Safety Partnership Board, which sets our local priorities for reducing crime and ASB.

Via regional partnership forums, Merton are sharing the good practice and learning we have from our local community policing. We are also feeding this into regional consultations and discussions. Merton have offered to meet with the Commander for Neighbourhood Policing and Community Engagement to further share the excellent examples of local policing in Merton.

We are contributing at a local and BCU level to police plans on how to improve confidence and trust. Initiatives such as the 'Street a Week' (where local ward officers door knock a road to introduce themselves to residents and offer support) began in Merton and are now being rolled out in the other boroughs in the south west BCU.

Merton also works in partnership with the Police to run the Merton Neighbourhood Watch scheme which aims to reduce crime and the fear of crime and build stronger relationships between communities. Merton's scheme is recognised as a model of good practice in the BCU, and as such we have shared our resources and experience with the Police Partnership and Engagement team.

Councillors' Ordinary Strategic Theme Questions to Cabinet Members

In terms of reaching out to our residents, we continue to share our community contacts and take part in joint communications to ensure Police are linked in with our communities to make reach and representation as diverse as possible.

We will continue to work on supporting the plan from a local authority perspective, and hope that if well implemented, the plan will lead to improvements in trust in the Police and a reduction in crime.

From Cllr Hicks to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

We note at paragraphs 5.21-5.22 of the strategic theme report that Cabinet has recently approved the extension of Community Dementia Services, and to keep the Alzheimers Hub in Mitcham open for another 2.5 years. The report does not mention the decision made at the Council Budget meeting in March, to close the Eastway Day Centre. This will end whole day respite care within Merton and diminish accessible dementia support for families in the West of the borough. What specific plans does the council have to replace the services lost through the closure of Eastway Day Centre, in order to provide support for the carers of people with advanced dementia, and to provide accessible support for families looking after relatives with dementia in the West of the Borough?

Reply

The dementia hub is a centre of excellence for people with dementia in Merton and we have worked with the Alzheimer's society of the past few years to improve and extend this service to focus an outreach model into people's homes and the communities as well as a building-based model and we have extended this contract. The decision at the Council Budget meeting in March was to include a savings proposal to support balancing the budget. The proposal relates to the closure of Eastway Day Centre. This proposal and it's implementation will be facilitated by extending and expanding the community offer of support to people with advanced dementia. The expanded community model will support people at an earlier stage in their dementia journey and will also focus on providing outreach support to people in their own homes and communities across the borough, not just from the physical hub in Mitcham. There are numerous other providers of day opportunities for people with dementia within and across the borough boundaries and in near neighboring boroughs, some of which will often be closer to where a person lives than the travelling distance from home to Eastway.

We are now beginning a process of engagement with all those directly affected by the proposal to close the centre and this engagement and formal consultation will inform the decision-making process for taking the proposal forward to implementation. We are aware of our statutory responsibilities to those who have identified eligible needs under the Care Act and where necessary a review of their individual support plan, in view of not being able to use Eastway, will identify suitable alternative ways to continue to meet those needs.

We also recognize the importance of providing respite to carers of people with dementia in order that they can continue their caring responsibilities. We recognize the reassurance that centre based activities and sessions can provide for a carer and the benefit they provide to people with dementia and intend that this forms part of the offer in the future model, albeit not directly provided by the local authority.

From Cllr Williscroft to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

How are our local NHS trusts performing in relation to discharging patients from hospital, and how are we as a Council supporting them to help people get back to their homes?

Reply

A number of key metrics demonstrate an NHS Trusts performance on discharge and these can be benchmarked relative to the South West London (SWL) sub-region and London as a whole region. The main hospitals that require London Borough of Merton support to discharge patients are; St Georges Hospital, Tooting; Epsom & St Hellier and; Kingston.

One measure is the percentage of the overall bed base of a hospital, discharged by 5pm daily. The SWL average performance is 5.6% and the London average performance 6.1%. Both St Georges (6.8%) and Epsom & Hellier (6%) are above the SWL average and in the case of St Georges, above the London Average. Kingston (4.7%) is currently below both the SWL and London average. Measuring the percentage of total discharges against the total bed base St Georges (12.8%) performs better than the SWL (10.1%) and London (10.5%) averages. Both Epsom (9.6%) and Kingston (8.9%) are performing below these averages.

Further measures include the percentage of patients in a bed who have no Criteria to Reside in hospital and are therefore ready for discharge. This is measured as a percentage of the total bed base. Latest data shows Epsom & St Hellier (17.5%) and Kingston (16.2%) are below the SWL average of 11.4%. St Georges is performing better than the average at 6.1% and on current data, best performing in London.

The Council supports the discharge of Merton residents from hospital and in an average week, 45 residents are discharged from hospitals across SWL and England. The majority (33) are supported to return to their own home through our in-house reablement service. On average 10 people will be discharged to a temporary, bed-based, service until they are well enough to return to their own home. This short stay intervention is typically in a residential or nursing home setting. A further 2-3 people each week will be discharged to a residential or nursing home setting on a permanent basis. This is normally due to the person experiencing a fundamental change in their support needs following illness and a period of time in hospital.

Through the winter period of 2022/23 the Council worked with local NHS colleagues and the voluntary and community sector to implement their Adult Social Care Discharge plan. This was funding first announced in September 2022, confirmed in December 2022 and forms part of the Council's Better Care Fund plan, agreed through

the Health & Wellbeing Board. Further funding has been made available for the whole of 2023/24 and we are currently finalising the plan for this fund. The successes of the winter period will inform this plan.

From Cllr Bokhari to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

How many complaints about mould and damp have the Council and tenants champion received from private renters and housing association tenants?

Reply

A total of 109 complaints regarding damp and mould have been received during 2022/23 by the Council and the tenants champion. In line with the Housing Enforcement policy all complaints are followed up with the tenant or landlord and assessed to determine appropriate advice, guidance or action. This will often involve a Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) assessment and can also lead to informal or formal action against the landlord to remedy the defects.

Following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak who died at two years of age as a direct result of mould in his family home, the Council has taken a number of actions. We have written to every registered provider (Housing Association) in the borough asking them to provide information on their approach to assessing the extent of damp and mould in their properties and the action they are taking. The Council has also arranged up to date training sessions on damp and mould for housing enforcement staff and is looking to provide wider training on awareness for other Council staff.

A Landlord forum was held on the 12th January 2023 which included a training session for Landlords on damp and mould awareness and their responsibilities to maintain and improve their properties. There is also an ongoing series of visits by the Leader, housing enforcement staff, and housing association representatives to social housing estates in the borough to talk to residents first hand.

From Cllr Charles to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

How is the Council using our MASCOT Service to provide assistance to vulnerable and elderly residents to keep their homes safe and comfortable to live in?

Reply

Mascot has over 1400 customers who gain reassurance from the service and which helps them to continue living independently in their own home. Customers are provided with a range of equipment to suit their needs, starting with an alarm, pendant

and smoke alarm as a basic package and increasing to having fall sensors and door exit sensors included as required. Most customers opt to have mobile response attached to their package, meaning that a member of the Mascot team will go to their home in the event of a fall or similar situation. Mascot liaises with family members, emergency services and other relevant agencies as required. Staff will contact family members or social workers if they have concerns for a customer's wellbeing. Families often refer to the peace of mind they get from having Mascot in their loved one's home.

All customers are given a full safety assessment of their property when they sign up and subsequently an annual visit and check is made. This appointment follows a call made on the customer's birthday. There are also regular calls to test the equipment and the connection between each device and the control room.

Mascot has a Handy Person service as part of the package, enabling customers to have a trusted person carry out repairs in their homes.

Since December Merton has been trialling a free four-week installation of Mascot telecare for suitable people being discharged from hospital. At present 41 people have been or are going through this trial. Of the 24 people who completed the trial, 14 have decided to take the service up on a permanent basis, a retention rate of 58.33%.