

Merton Council

Council

1 February 2017

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From Sarmad Gassoub

To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

How can the Council possibly justify operating a noise abatement service in Merton that is restricted to summer weekends when its cash reserves run into millions of pounds and when neighbouring boroughs like Wandsworth are able to offer a daily service?

Reply

We currently provide a noise pollution service Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm and every Saturday night from 11pm to 4am. During the busy summer months of June, July and August we also provide an additional Friday night service 11pm to 4am.

The provision of any service is determined by a number of factors, including; cost, resourcing, demand and priority. The council has looked at various service level options including the provision of a full night duty service as well as a 24/7 service. These options have been presented to Cabinet, where the decision was taken to maintain the existing level of service provision.

We now share our noise services with a partner borough. As part of this sharing of services we are committed to maintaining the service provision that we currently have, but there is limited demand for an extended service which would be unaffordable in the current financial climate.

From Diane Neil Mills

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

What were the costs associated with the recent resurfacing works undertaken in July through September 2016 of Courthope Road SW19, broken down by category of expenditure (e.g. contractor labour, contractor equipment/overheads, materials, council supervision/overhead)?

Reply

The total cost associated with the footpath reconstruction works within Courthope Road, SW19 was £52,562.03 and the total cost of the carriageway resurfacing that was undertaken shortly after was £20,136.01. Therefore a total cost of all £72,698.04 for the renewal of the public street scene. This work included more intricate works to re-set the edging cobbles in the carriageway.

I'm unable to give you a breakdown of expenditure for contractor labour, contractor equipment/overheads, materials, council supervision/overheads within this total cost as each individual rate within the Highways Works and Service Contract 2012-17 is already inclusive of these elements.

**From Debra Earl
To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

Why not increase the rates by at least 10% a property to improve the services offered by the council? I seem to have paid £1,300 for a number of years now.

Reply

Whilst the level of council tax is determined by the local authority, the government sets a limit each year by which it can increase, without the need for a referendum. This level is currently 2%, in place from 2013/14 to 2017/18. Prior to this In 2011/12 to 2012/13, the limit was 3.5%.

Just as importantly, it needs to be remembered that council tax is a regressive form of taxation. In other words, people with lower incomes tend to pay a higher proportion of their income on council tax than those who are richer. That is one reason why in Merton we have maintained council tax rebates for the very lowest earners, but we also have a duty to consider the cost of living of those who are just about managing.

Particularly at a time when millionaires have received income tax cuts and there is a widespread problem with tax avoidance and evasion, we do not think that the government should be forcing councils to increase council tax, by cutting grants that fund services, or by introducing their council tax levy (the so-called "precept"). The government needs to get to grips with the national crisis in adult social care that has emerged under their watch, properly fund councils for the services its citizens require, and ensure that the costs are spread fairly and do not fall on those who are struggling to make ends meet.

**From Geraldine Kirby
To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking**

I am very concerned about fortnightly refuse collection, I have indoor cats, as do many residents and their waste is deposited in my domestic waste. I believe constitutes a severe public health hazard and I would like to know what the council are going to do to mitigate this risk?

Reply

The changes in waste collection and introduction of wheelie bins is scheduled to be implemented in October 2018.

Animal faeces, similar to nappies, providing that they are appropriately wrapped present no health issues with this waste being collected on alternate weeks.

As with current collections it will be the responsibility of the resident to ensure that this waste is effectively wrapped before depositing into the wheelie bin.

The major contributor to the 'smelly waste' is food and as this is collected weekly there are no health concerns with moving to an alternate week collection for the general waste

From Terry Sullivan
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Rediscovering Mitcham project in Mitcham town centre. This is scheduled for completion January 2018--18 months after start. Why is this minor project taking so long-is it to justify the obscene price-tag?

Reply

Rediscover Mitcham is a 3 year major project representing £6m investment in Mitcham town centre, with the majority of the funding from TfL.

The programme of works has already delivered the new Market Square, re-paving of Majestic Way, creation of the Clock Tower Gardens, restoration of the Clock Tower itself (supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund) and the cleaning and general improvements to Three Kings Pond.

The current phase of works involves changes to the road layout and creation of the bus street. The project programme was publicised via our website and Mitcham Community Forum mid-2016. The current phase of works are running to schedule and on-track for completion in December 2017.

Major town centre projects are by their nature, complex, particularly when keeping the town centre active and traffic flowing during the works. We do not consider the project to be 'taking so long'.

From Andrew Boyce
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

What progress has he made in bringing before full Council, for its decision, the application to include the 1820s cottages at 34-40 Morden Road in South Wimbledon on the Council's local list of heritage assets?

Reply

I have been very supportive of the efforts of my colleague Cllr Andrew Judge to get these added to the local list of heritage assets and recognise the value of our existing 1820 cottages, which any future development should improve, not demolish. Any recommendations on their inclusion will be made by officers to the Borough Plan Advisory committee on 8th March and then to the subsequent Full Council meeting for a decision, but I do hope that the cottages are added to the council's local list of heritage assets.

**From David Anderson
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

What actions are the council taking to ease the impact of a significant increase to traffic and pollution on residents in close proximity to the Durnsford Road, Plough Lane, Gap Road, Haydons Road junction?

Reply

In terms of traffic, TfL's annual monitoring report (Traffic in London) suggests that traffic has been broadly stable in Merton over the last 4/5 years. However, there appears to be an increase on light commercial traffic along major roads with particular area of growth being home deliveries etc.

It should, however, be noted that Haydons Rd, Plough Lane, Gap Rd and Durnsford Road are all London Distributor Roads forming part of the borough's key strategic network i.e., these roads are key thoroughfares and they accommodate commercial units / industrial estates. In terms of overall action, the Council has a number of initiatives that is aimed at promoting public transport, sustainable modes of transport such as cycling, pedestrians facilities, car clubs, electric vehicle charging points and we support business and new developments with sustainable travel plans, the overall aim is to reduce the need for vehicular trips.

In terms of air quality, the council has a number of initiatives that are aimed at reducing pollution by promoting public transport, sustainable modes of transport such as cycling, pedestrians facilities, car clubs, electric vehicle charging points, travel plans etc.

**From Nicola Thompson
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

I note that air quality monitoring has been suspended in Plough Lane since 2014. When will it be reinstated, and could similar monitoring could be installed in the heavy traffic area of north Haydons Road which is a popular walking route for parents and children of nearby primary schools?

Reply

The diffusion tube network used to help monitor Nitrogen Dioxide in the borough changes from time to time and these 'tubes' are sometimes located in different places to provide additional information or focus on a particular problem area. I am pleased to say that Plough Lane has been reinstated. I note from discussions with officers that diffusion tubes placed at this site have been removed or tampered with in the past, which hasn't helped with the data collection. The whole issue of monitoring and site selection is currently being discussed by the council's Sustainable Communities Scrutiny and Overview Panel. One potential outcome from this dialogue is likely to be an enhanced and more robust monitoring network in the future.

**From Garry E Hunt
To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking**

What is the justification for Merton Council to introduce quickly in April 2017 a very high parking levy, purporting to improve Merton's air quality, specifically for owners of diesel vehicles in CPZ areas and without warning to the residents' concerned?

Reply

Air Pollution in London has been described as a 'Public Health emergency' in the House of Commons. Locally this has been debated at Scrutiny and Cabinet and we consider that the health problems caused by air pollution and in particular diesel vehicles to be so significant and important that we must take steps now to help address the 9,000 deaths associated with poor air quality in London. A consultation process regarding the diesel surcharge is currently underway and residents can make their opinions known through this process.

**From Anthony Fairclough
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

As there are about 25,000 households in rented accommodation in the borough, has the council actively considered introducing selective licensing in the borough or any parts of it, and what research was undertaken?

Reply

The Council is awaiting feedback on central governments recent consultation on the licencing of HMO and related reforms before carrying out research into selective licencing.

**From Gemma Illsley
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

How is the council planning to resolve the congestion at the Haydons Road/Plough Lane junction and impact on the side roads; namely Haydon Park Road?

Reply

Annually the Council nominates key signalised junctions to TfL for review to optimise efficiency and reduce congestion (where possible). Last financial year, the Haydons Road/Plough Lane junction was reviewed by TfL and the appropriate changes within the phasing were made to maximise the capacity and operation of the junction.

To address the reported problems within the adjacent side roads as caused by the various banned movements at the Haydons/Plough junction, Merton worked with TfL to remove the banned turns thereby removing the need for motorists to use the residential side roads.

From Antony Buckle

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Does Council share the view of the Planning Inspectorate who, in 2015, deemed the 1820s cottages at 34-40 Morden Road in South Wimbledon heritage assets, which positively contribute to the character of the area? If so, will it endorse that view by adding the cottages to its local list?

Reply

I have been very supportive of the efforts of my colleague Cllr Andrew Judge to get these added to the local list of heritage assets and recognise the value of our existing 1820 cottages, which any future development should improve, not demolish. Any recommendations on their inclusion will be made by officers to the Borough Plan Advisory committee on 8th March and then to the subsequent Full Council meeting for a decision, but I do hope that the cottages are added to the council's local list of heritage assets.

From Joanna Durrans

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Does Council recognise the positive benefits, both to it and the local community, which could be realised were it to agree to add the 1820s cottages at 34-40 Morden Road, South Wimbledon to its local list of heritage assets?

Reply

I have been very supportive of the efforts of my colleague Cllr Andrew Judge to get these added to the local list of heritage assets and recognise the value of our existing 1820 cottages, which any future development should improve, not demolish. Any recommendations on their inclusion will be made by officers to the Borough Plan Advisory committee on 8th March and then to the subsequent Full Council meeting for a decision, but I do hope that the cottages are added to the council's local list of heritage assets.

From Simon McGrath

To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Given the short timescale for implementing new parking charges for diesel cars, what is the council's objective in introducing the charge? For example, what percentage reduction in diesel vehicles registered to park in the borough over what period of time would be considered a success for the policy?

Reply

I refer you to my answer outlined in question 9 with regards to the urgency of implementing this policy.

We are proposing a two year review of this project to evaluate its success. Encouraging vehicle owners to move away from diesel cars is essential to reducing poor air quality in our borough and in London as a whole. A recent study shows that a modern diesel car emits more toxic pollution than a bus or heavy truck, this is something we cannot ignore and where we can take steps to change behaviour of owners, we should. I would consider any shift away from polluting vehicles as a success.

**From John Tippett-Cooper
To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health**

Given continued funding cuts, is the council confident it will continue to meet its statutory duties in relation to adult social care and has the council sought legal advice in relation to its statutory duties in the last 12 months?

Reply

The Council is committed to continuing to meet its statutory duties for adult social care. This is why it is considering putting significant extra funding into this budget for 17/18. Officers of the council are fully aware of the relevant statutory duties, but do from time to time take legal advice on specific matters of interpretation.

**From Sandra Vogel
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

Will Merton Council a) update its Nitrogen Dioxide monitoring figures last posted online in 2013 b) explain its commitment to improving air quality across the borough c) clearly and precisely describe how that commitment is reflected in practice d) commit to encourage citizens to engage in air quality monitoring.

Reply

Merton Council has set up a website called "Love Clean Air" <http://lovecleanair.org/> which outlines air pollution within Merton and the surrounding boroughs. All boroughs are now coordinating their monitoring and annual reports through this website and I would urge colleagues and members of the public to visit it as it is very informative and user friendly.

**From Vincent Bolt
To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

Has the council made an assessment of the initial impact of the Brexit vote on 24 June on council investments, including the impact on the council's pension scheme? If so, what was the impact?

Reply

The Director of Corporate Services presented a Briefing Paper on the short and medium to long-term impact of Brexit on the Council's Pension Fund, the Local

Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and UK and wider global economy to the Pension Fund Advisory Panel (PFAC) at its meeting on Wednesday 29 June 2016.

In summary, the Briefing Paper discussed:

- The extreme volatility in the immediate aftermath of the Referendum result including falls in UK domestic and foreign markets equity prices, rise in Credit Default Swaps pricing and sharp decline in the value of Sterling
- Review and downgrade of the UK economic outlook by the major ratings agencies; and
- Yield compression due to uncertainty and increased demand for Government bonds and index-linked bonds

As for the implications for the L.B Merton Pension Fund and the LGPS, the Paper sounded a note of caution:

- Merton Pension Fund is a long-term investor with well-diversified investment portfolio. The Fund is cashflow positive with no need to dispose assets to pay pensions
- Brexit could pose significant political and economic challenge in the near term. However, it could deliver real opportunity from a global investments perspective in the medium to long-term
- Equity markets have demonstrated some resilience, rebounding strongly since the lows following the Referendum result. The value of the Pension Fund assets appreciated from £533m at the end of May 2016 to £588m at the end of July 2016 reflecting the post-Brexit rally in equity markets and currency gain from weak Sterling. The market value of the Pension Fund was £623m at 31 December 2016. To put this into context, the FTSE 100 index was 6,230 at 31 May 2016, 5,982 at 27 June and 6,724 at 29 July. The index of the top 100 UK companies closed at 7,183 on Friday 27 January 2017.
- Review of the Pension Fund investment strategy is in progress. The review will seek an appropriate balance between growth and matching assets, taking account of the Fund's financial circumstance, global economic, financial and markets forecasts, the Council's risk appetite and current Government regulations and pooling agenda
- Pension Fund accounting deficits fluctuate with bond yields
- Need to avoid knee-jerk reaction to market volatility. The Pension Fund assets are managed by external fund managers with full discretion and expertise to act appropriately when threats and opportunities are perceived.
- Weak Sterling has been beneficial to the Pension Fund performance by virtue of its un-hedged overseas exposure
- Upcoming crystallisation events such as South London Waste Partnership transaction will be negotiated carefully by Council officers and the Fund actuary

At the time of writing, it remains unclear how Brexit and the evolving UK and global political and economic landscape would impact the Pension Fund long-term save that there is the view that:

- Brexit is a risk to UK domestic exposures with perhaps some long-term opportunities (although it will never be known if those opportunities would

have been greater than the opportunities arising from remaining within the EU).

- The global economy is heating up. The US economy could overheat by 2019
- European political risks may be overstated
- The new US administration is changing the distribution of growth forecasts
- Inflation and interest rate will rise

In conclusion, a better cyclical picture is emerging but policy uncertainty and complexity remains, from a pension fund perspective, largely due to Brexit.

From Dr Amal Hassan

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Will the planned diesel levy be means-tested? If not, has an assessment been undertaken on the impact of the levy increase on residents on lower-incomes?

Reply

No, tax and vehicle emissions are not normally 'means tested' I do not consider the parking surcharge to be disproportionately high and it is still lower than that levied by some other London boroughs. Merton' resident parking permits are amongst the lowest in London.

From Viv Vella/MacVeigh

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Will the council be supporting the Homelessness Reduction Bill currently passing through parliament that promotes best practice in reducing homelessness?

Reply

The Council welcomes the principle behind the Homeless Reduction Bill that would see the homelessness prevention activity starting earlier. We are however concerned that if the bill is approved and becomes law, it is critical that we are provided with appropriate levels of central government funding to meet the costs of resourcing.

From Myriam Bertero

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Does the council have estimates of the total increase in annual revenue from the new parking charges for diesel vehicles?

Reply

The aim of introducing a Diesel levy is to reduce the number of diesel vehicles within Controlled Parking Zones requiring a parking permit. It is expected that over a 1 to 3 year period a reduction in the demand for parking permits for diesel vehicles in controlled parking zones will occur thus justifying this method of managing demand.

05_Public Questions

The table below shows the total number of parking permits issued and the number that are diesel and the revenue estimates for the 3 year phased introduction of this surcharge.

Revenue raised must lawfully be used on transport purposes including the cost of the Freedom Pass as well as traffic schemes that will assist in reducing congestion and air pollution.

Permit Type	Number of permits currently issued	Number of Diesel vehicles	Current first permit charges PA	Surcharge 2017/18 £90	Surcharge 2018/19 £115	Surcharge 2019/20 £150
Resident Parking Permit	16,136	5,486	£65	£493,740	£630,890	£822,900
Business Parking Permit	523	182	£752 inner zones £662 outer zones	£16,380	£20,930	£27,300
Trades Permit	211	73	£900 (Full Year) £600 (6mnths) £375 (3mnths) £150 (1mnth) £50 (1 wk)	£6,570	£8,395	£10,950
Total	16,870	5,741		£516,690	£660,215	£861,150

The above table is based upon the numbers of diesel vehicles, However we expect this figure to decline as the surcharge starts to impact upon ownership.

**From Carl Quilliam
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

Has the council made an initial assessment of what changes and additional investment would be needed to implement the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Bill? If not when will you be doing so?

Reply

The Council takes the view that until the Bill is passed and the detail becomes clearer it would not be necessary or appropriate to develop a funding and capacity assessment . Any such assessment would need to be considered alongside any government formula for investment.

**From Rachel Waitt
To the Cabinet Member for Education**

What assessment has the council made of the impact of cuts to school budgets on the numbers of teachers and teaching assistants in Merton?

Reply

As my fellow councillors will be aware from national press coverage and from campaigns being led by London Councils, teacher unions and headteachers professional associations, there are considerable concerns about the changes being made to school funding for April 2017. The fairer funding formula is deeply worrying as, even for Councils like Merton, who may slightly gain from the process, that there will be less money for London schools and schools overall at a time when pupil numbers are at their highest. The government is redistributing money from areas with higher levels of deprivation as well as delivering savings for the Treasury. With increases in staffing costs; inflation on non staffing costs; and the application of the apprenticeship levy on schools' budgets, the actual position is that many schools will have a reduced amount of money to spend per child. The Council works with all its maintained schools to ensure that any budget pressures or issues are addressed promptly but a few schools have had to make difficult decisions and restructure staffing leading to redundancies or vacant posts. When maintained schools make these decisions they always discuss them with the Council. Although the impact to date has been limited we will continue to work with schools to keep the situation under review.

**From Giorgia Gamba
To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health**

What representations has the council made to Merton CCG in relation to the closure of the Wilson GP surgery and drop-in centre?

Reply

The council shares the concerns of residents about these changes and the manner in which they have been communicated and is working closely with the CCG to clarify the situation for patients and residents who currently use the Wilson.

The CCG have informed us that the contract for the practice was coming to an end and the walk-in centre did not comply with the latest standards for integrated urgent care. Given the planned re-development of the Wilson site, the CCG made a decision not to renew the contract or continue to provide the walk-in centre. As such, the CCG have informed us that patients are being asked to transfer to one of several practices within 1.5 miles of the site. The CCG have given assurances that a support package has been agreed for both the patients and the GPs to assist in the transfer and all vulnerable patients have been identified, supported and tracked to ensure smooth hand-over.

05_Public Questions

The council welcomes these measures to ensure continuity of access to care, but will be monitoring this closely to ensure all patients are able to register at a suitable alternative practice.

In addition, the CCG have informed us that an analysis of users of the walk-in centre has shown that a majority of patients would ordinarily have been seen by GPs, but could not get appointments. As such, the CCG has agreed that a primary care hub open 8am-8pm, seven days a week, will be set up in one of the practices in Mitcham until the Wilson site is developed, which will allow better access to all GPs with additional and flexible appointments and integrated with existing out-of-hours GP services.

In the longer term, the CCG and the council have been working on ambitious plans to redevelop the Wilson site as part of the East Merton Model of Health and Wellbeing, which aims to address the greater health needs in the east of the borough. The plan is to co-create a new Health and Wellbeing Centre on the Wilson Hospital site to enable easier access to primary care, investigations and treatment as well as wellbeing services led by the local community for the people of east Merton. Following extensive discussions with local people over the summer, the service model is being finalised. Proposals seek to integrate one of the two borough primary care hubs for provision of extended primary care - 8am-8pm 7 days a week - on the Wilson site.

From Christopher Holt
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

After beginning the third stage Local Plan Estates Plan consultation on the run up to Christmas, will the council be able to accept responses from the public past 3rd February 2017? Why weren't residents given more time & publicity for this also?

Reply

There has been extensive promotion of the estates Local Plan consultation through the council's website, mail outs and community forums. We have already allowed for an extra two weeks for this consultation to take account of the holiday period. This final stage of pre-submission publication of the council's Estates Local Plan started on 8th December 2016 and will end on 3rd February 2017; eight weeks long when government have advised it should be six weeks. Even prior to this stage, we have already undertaken more than four and a half months of consultation on the council's Estates Local Plan since 2014. It is also normal practice for Planning Inspectors to require additional consultation as part of examining the plan later in 2017. Following all the feedback from everybody, we are now keen to give residents the certainty of a final plan and make progress towards submitting the Plan to the Secretary of State by the end of March.

From Cypren Edmunds
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Social tenant buildings in the borough are either initiated by the local authority and delivered by a resident provider, much to the dissatisfaction of all who dwell in it. Can

the Council take Lewisham council's lead and propose bigger initiatives in Merton?
How widespread does Merton Council promote Self Building?

Reply

Affordable homes in Merton are managed by Registered Providers, either by the Registered Provider buying land and building homes themselves or buying homes directly from the developer or via the planning system which requires up to 40% of major residential developments to be affordable where this is viable. Merton Council does not own or build social housing since transferring its stock to a Registered Provider in 2010. Merton Council has a self build register and already has 194 people interested in self build in Merton: www.merton.gov.uk/self-build-register.

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06: Non ST Questions

From Councillor Imran Uddin to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Could the cabinet member update me on the budgetary pressures his department is facing this year?

Reply

The significant budgetary pressures on adult social care come from three main sources:

- We are having to pay higher fees to providers to ensure that we can still commission care and support for our customers. The reason for this is partly because of cost pressures for providers themselves (for example the National Living Wage) and partly because we are looking for capacity in a shrinking market in some key areas such as dementia nursing care. The market is shrinking in real terms as self funders and the NHS are making more use of it.
- The amount of care we are commissioning has increased in two key areas. Firstly the volume of home care hours (and particularly 'double ups') has gone up due to the increased dependency levels of those we are supporting, partly due to the NHS discharging patients earlier and less rehabilitated. Secondly, as in every year, there are people with high levels of need coming through into adult services as young people.
- Some of the mitigating underspends officers were able to use in previous years are no longer available

It is well known that the pressures in the first two areas are being seen right across the country.

I have worked hard with the Cabinet Member for Finance and with key officers to understand these pressures and how long term these are likely to be, and as a result we are looking to take some difficult decisions in order to ensure that we continue to abide by our agreed July Principles and prioritise services for vulnerable people.

From Councillor Linda Taylor to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Can the Cabinet Member explain why, in a congested street in the centre of Wimbledon Park which forms part of a CPZ, it is possible for a Spanish-registered car to park there every day since November, effectively free of charge, whilst residents who have paid for an official parking permit have to park in streets some distance away from their homes?

Reply

The issuing of Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) is a legislative process.

When a PCN is issued, if payment is not made, in order for the case to progress to the next stage, the legislation we work to requires us to apply to the DVLA for details of the vehicles keeper so we can serve them with subsequent statutory documents.

06: Non ST Questions

Where a vehicle has a foreign registration, the DVLA do not hold records of the vehicle keeper. This means that we are unable to serve the subsequent statutory documents to the vehicle keeper, as required by the relevant legislation.

Because we are unable to serve the Notice to Owner, Charge Certificate and Order for Recovery to the address of the vehicles registered keeper, as we are legally required to do, we are unable to satisfy the legislative requirements of the act that allows us to undertake the civil enforcement of parking contraventions in England, and the PCN becomes un-enforceable.

Where a foreign vehicle is brought into the UK, there is no requirement for the vehicle to be registered with the DVLA until it has been in the country for 6 months. At this point, if the vehicle has not been registered, the DVLA have powers to seize the vehicle and fine the owner.

Regrettably, unless there are changes to the relevant legislation, or changes requiring vehicles with foreign registrations to be registered upon their entry to the UK, this is a problem that enforcing authorities will continue to experience.

From Councillor Pauline Cowper to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Regeneration and Housing

Can the Cabinet Member outline some of his priorities for town centre regeneration in the coming year?

Reply

Merton is progressing with a number of town centre regeneration schemes which collectively will accommodate additional homes and support economic growth in the borough.

My priorities for 2017 range from the completion of some projects and setting out the groundwork for future projects.

Colliers Wood

In 2016 we saw the completion of major public realm upgrades at Baltic Close, Wandle Park and the Wandle Riverside as part of the £3m Connecting Colliers Wood Scheme (in partnership with TFL)

In 2017, we will shortly see the completion of the new piazza at Colliers Wood Tower and the first residents moving into the newly refurbished (and vastly improved) tower later in the year. Our regeneration team are supporting local business in the area through our programme of shopfront improvement grants. Three shopping parades in Colliers Wood will benefit from new shopfronts in the next year. We will also see the completion of the new Colliers Wood Library.

Rediscover Mitcham

We have already delivered the new Market Square, re-paved Majestic Way, created the new Clock Tower Gardens and restored Mitcham's iconic clock tower with the Heritage Lottery Fund and vastly improved the landscape and water quality of Three

06: Non ST Questions

Kings Pond. Five empty shop units have been brought back into use. This year's Christmas lights in Mitcham were a spectacular new addition to the Fair Green.

In 2017 our priority is to complete the Rediscover Mitcham works, which include rationalising many of the road junctions, improving traffic flow, creating segregated cycle routes and re-opening London Road for buses. We will also be exploring opportunities for new business space and creative pop-up ventures in Mitcham Town Centre once the major road works are complete.

Morden

In 2017 the Council's regeneration priority will be to select a development partner to deliver significant regeneration in Morden. Work is now well underway with TfL and the GLA to test the viability of Morden's regeneration plans as a pre-cursor to taking the project to the market. We are making good progress with concept designs for Morden's road layout, traffic flow and solutions to the overcrowded and unsightly bus station. We hope to engage residents and business further in these plans later in the year.

We have also invested in many of Morden's independent businesses through shopfront and lighting improvements on London Road and we hope to complete in March, the transformation of the Art Deco Morden Court Parade.

Our latest newsletter for Morden regeneration is available online at www.merton.gov.uk/moreMorden

Future Wimbledon

Wimbledon is our main town centre with half the borough's jobs and a significant amount of local interest in Wimbledon's future, in terms of how the council will manage growth, respond to design quality and heritage and integrate emerging proposals from Crossrail 2.

We have now started the community workshops to understand people's views, concerns and aspirations for the town centre. This is in preparation for our masterplan that will be prepared throughout 2017. We will also be engaging businesses and landowners as the project progresses.

From Councillor Najeeb Latif to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

There appears to be deep concern and mistrust by the local trades union representatives in relation to the procedures and awarding of the contract to *idVerde* for parks and green space maintenance. This council has a duty of care towards the employees being transferred across to this company. Will the Cabinet Member therefore give a categorical assurance that in negotiating this outsourcing the rights of all staff members have been protected under TUPE and can he detail in his answer precisely how this is so?

Reply

I am pleased to see Cllr Latif is taking an interest in protecting workers under TUPE, although I am disappointed he has not raised his concerns about government policy until now. I assume he is aware that his Conservative friends in government have purposely diluted TUPE rights, with employers now able to renegotiate conditions one year after the transfer of staff. Previous TUPE rules which protected staff from being forced to move to a new place of employment have also been removed by the Conservative government.

It is already becoming clear that TUPE is under further threat from the Conservatives under Brexit, with Conservative MEP Martin Callanan calling for the scrapping of the Working Time Directive, the Agency Workers' Directive and the Pregnant Workers' Directive and leading Conservative think tank Civitas stating: "Securing an opt-out from TUPE with respect to public services should be a key priority."

This attack on TUPE is part of a pattern of attacks on workers' rights by the Conservative government including:

- Hiking up employment tribunal fees so that this is now only an option for the well paid
- Reducing the amount of time employers need to consult on collective redundancies from 90 days to 45 days
- Removing legal aid for all employment cases except discrimination

The Conservatives also tried to make it easier to sack workers and wanted striking workers to wear special armbands and to give police 2 weeks' notice of their tweets.

The council has had to consider different ways of delivering services such as green spaces due to the Conservative government's 40% cut in funding to local councils. Such dramatic government cuts inevitably mean cuts to local services but in Merton we have been innovative and found a way of working with our neighbouring boroughs to retain a quality green spaces service at a much lower price.

The Council recognises that this new way of working has meant some significant changes for the Greenspaces team and appreciates that the staff, some of whom have worked for the Council for many years, have been apprehensive about this.

The Council has recognised its responsibilities throughout the procurement process and both local authorities concerned (Merton & Sutton) and the incoming contractor, *idverde*, are aware of the TUPE law, have practical experience of transferring staff to external contractors and consider that the requirements of TUPE have indeed been met.

There has been a regular series of meetings and newsletters to update staff on progress since the procurement was first announced in the autumn of 2014 and throughout the process. A number of meetings have taken place between the staff, unions and *idverde* since the summer of 2016, including two individual staff one-to-one meetings.

In detail:

- The obligation to inform and consult prior to a transfer arises under reg.13 of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (SI 2006/246). The council has undertaken extensive meetings specifically focused on the Phase C procurement with members of its Departmental Consultative Committee (DCC) over the past year providing detail on the ongoing progress of the two contracts (Lot 1 and Lot 2) thereby complying with its duty to inform alongside communication's with employees as described previously (briefings, team meetings, FAQ's, newsletters)
- Once the contract was close to being awarded and at the end of Fine Tuning, the Council's HR Department requested on 8 November 2016, that *idverde* provide detail of any 'measures' they envisaged taking. While there is always an obligation to inform, the obligation to consult arises only if either the transferor or the transferee anticipates taking measures in relation to affected employees as a consequence of the transfer.
- The formal consultation commenced on 16 December 2016 after the council's recognised trade unions representatives were formally advised that a transfer would take place and were invited to a meeting, facilitated by the council, to enable *idverde* to present their initial measures envisaged. Unfortunately, the invitation was declined by the Trade Unions but they were provided with the information on the same day. The council invited the Trade Unions to make any representations regarding these measures.
- *Idverde*, with the Council's help, agreed to arrange one to one meetings with all employees affected by the transfer. Many attended these one to ones and some declined. However, *idverde* produced a further list of FAQs and answers as a result of the one to one's.
- The regular communication and newsletters provided employees with the opportunity to also request a one to one with London Borough of Merton officers, if they were best placed to provide answers. This communication channel also provided an ongoing dialogue between the council and its employees.
- Once *idverde* were provided with the Employee Liability Information (as required by TUPE legislation) they had further measures envisaged and then requested further meetings be facilitated so they could present these to Employee Representatives (Trade Unions) and then to employees this took place on 17 January 2017.
- The Council received a formal 'measures' letter incorporating all measures envisaged by *idverde* on 19 January 2017 which it provided to the Trade Unions on the same day and sent individually to all employees affected by the transfer.
- The Council facilitated further one to one consultation opportunities (18 and 19 January 2017) with *idverde* to enable those who could not attend the first time the opportunity to meet with them and also for further questions arising as a result of further information received and the measures envisaged.
- The Employee Representatives raised concerns following the detailed measures presentation and letter and a further consultation meeting was held on Monday 30 January 2017 that provided further clarification of the measures by *idverde*.

06: Non ST Questions

The transfer of the relevant components of the parks and grounds maintenance service to *idverde* occurred on Wednesday 1st February 2017.

In relation to staff terms and conditions under TUPE, the employees of the outgoing employer automatically become employees of the incoming employer at the point of transfer. They carry with them their continuous service from the outgoing employer, and should continue to enjoy the same terms and conditions of employment with the incoming employer.

Following a transfer, employers often find they have employees with different terms and conditions working alongside each other and wish to change/harmonise terms and conditions. However, TUPE protects against change/harmonisation for an indefinite period if the sole or principal reason for the change is the transfer. Any such changes will be void.

Collective agreements in place at the time of the transfer also transfer to the incoming employer. These include terms and conditions of employment negotiated through collective bargaining as well as the wider employment relations arrangements. Examples include: the collective disputes procedure, time off facilities, training for union representatives, negotiated redundancy procedures or job security arrangements and flexible working arrangements. Terms and conditions from collective agreements may be renegotiated after one year provided that overall the contract is no less favourable to the employee.

Finally, whilst not a TUPE matter Pensions are protected as the contractor is taking 'Admitted Body' status and staff who are members of the LGPS will continue to enjoy the benefits of a Local Government Pension unchanged.

From Councillor Dennis Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Regeneration and Housing

Could the cabinet member update us on the provision of affordable housing in the borough?

Reply

Over the past 5 years Merton has strengthened its performance on the delivery of affordable homes. This is despite the reductions in government grant for affordable housing and substantial changes to national planning rules which mean that most offices and other commercial buildings converted into homes no longer have to provide any affordable housing as part of their new development. The table below sets out Merton's performance since 2010. The lower performance in the 2015-16 financial year is due in part to the changes in national planning rules for the conversion of offices and the high number of homes build in Merton last year.

Over the past five years we have also worked in partnership to deliver some exceptional and award winning affordable homes: Brenley Park in Mitcham, winner of 2013 Best Development in the Affordable Homes Sector and in 2015 the Richard Rogers designed Y-Cube nominated for RIBA's prestigious Stirling Prize. Looking to the future we are continuing to pursue greater affordability for our residents in taking

forward the recommendations of the cross-party Affordable Housing Task Group from 2016.

We report on Merton's performance each year in our authority monitoring report: www.merton.gov.uk/annual_monitoring_report

Financial Year	Total number of homes built in Merton (private and affordable) –	Number of affordable homes built in Merton	% Affordable (against 40% target)
2010/11	357	112	31%
2011/12	453	162	36%
2012/13	478	141	29%
2013/14	440	163	37%
2014/15	459	186	41%
2015/16	678	68	10%
Total	2865	832	30%

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

In view of the rising concern over pollution generated by exhaust vehicle emissions, has the Cabinet Member considered introducing spot fines for motorists who leave their engines running unnecessarily e.g. When parked?

Reply

The Council can adopt powers to enforce vehicle idling and this is one of the measures currently proposed as part of the Councils new Air Quality Action Plan. We anticipate this plan will be open to consultation in February 2017.

From Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Finance

I am aware that the Customer Contact Programme is in the process of being implemented albeit considerably delayed and that the Council is encouraging residents to interact online/by email wherever possible. However for countless residents it remains a real challenge to get a response from certain parts of the Council. Many of my residents who need to use the phone – especially those without internet access or where relevant enquires are not yet automated – share my frustration at being pushed from pillar to post only to end up where I started, with no clear indication of when or even if I will get an answer. Does the Cabinet Member

06: Non ST Questions

understand the significance of the problems I have outlined above and does he agree with me that, as part of the Customer Contact Programme work, it is vital that the Council addresses the difficulties residents and Members have in getting through to the right person and then getting appropriate action?

Reply

Merton's Customer Contact strategy sets out the council's intention to make services more accessible for customers and enable them to be delivered 'right first time, on time'. The Customer Contact Programme is the primary vehicle to deliver this ambition and has already redesigned over 400 of the council's business processes so that they are available for customers to complete online, without having to call or come into the council. These new processes are also available to our contact centre staff so that where a resident chooses to call the council, their query or service request can be resolved immediately during that initial call. It is important to note that there is no intention to remove the telephone as a point of access, only to ensure that as many queries as possible can be answered by the officer taking the call rather than residents having to speak to a number of people. As a result of this we have seen an increase from 10% to over 50% of customers using the website to complete transactions with us. It has also had the effect of encouraging residents who may not have used Council services before to do so, as for example our new on-line bulky waste collection service. Our new Customer Contact system records all interactions so resident can be assured that we understand the history and issues related to their inquiry or request. Given your indication that both residents and Members are having difficulty getting through to specific service areas, officers have contacted you seeking clarification and will respond as soon as their investigation of the issues is complete. Please let me know if you would like any further assistance from me.

From Councillor Russell Makin to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Regeneration and Housing

Can the cabinet member comment on whether he has raised the issue of Southern Rail and the levels of service our residents in Mitcham are having to endure?

Reply

I have written to Chris Grayling, the Secretary of State for Transport with fellow South London transport leads on 18 November calling for devolution of Southern trains services to Transport for London immediately, given the appalling unreliability, delays and overcrowding that are being suffered on a near daily basis for Merton commuters who use Southern rail. I am disappointed that the secretary of state has reneged on promises previously made by the government and is not prepared to take action to address the issues with Southern Rail which is causing economic hardship on a near daily basis to many hard working people in the borough who rely on Southern Rail.

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

Does Merton Council still endeavour to clean residential streets once a week?

Reply

Subject to contract award, From April 2017 the operational responsibility for street cleaning will be undertaken by our preferred/ recommended contractor, Veolia.

Veolia propose to implement a Neighbourhood approach to deliver the street cleaning operations which will allow the needs of the local area to be understood and addressed directly by accountable area Environmental Managers. This allows the staff to be fully integrated as part of the local community which they are responsible for.

The proposal is to establish 3 Neighbourhoods aligned to ward boundaries to facilitate this integration and provide local Members with clear visibility of the resources and points of contact for their ward. The contractor will be required to ensure that on the completion of any cleaning activity i.e. manual sweeping, litter picking and mechanical sweeping the relevant area of land has been cleaned to a Grade 'A' standard as reported in line with the guidelines set as part of NI 195, (the National Indicators for local Authorities). In addition to this the frequency of cleaning needs to ensure that town and district centres and residential roads meet a Grade 'B' standard as a minimum.

The Output specification may require cleaning of streets more frequently than weekly in some instances but it will be the output standards that matter.

From Councillor Joan Henry to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Can the cabinet member update us on progress on modernising our refuse and recycling collection services?

Reply

We are working in conjunction with our neighbouring boroughs as part of the South London waste Partnership and have concluded fine tuning. We are currently in the process of finalising all financial and legal documents ready to issue Alcatel (late January). We are on schedule to award the contract early February with contract starting on 1st April 2017. The changes in waste collection and the introduction of wheelie bins are scheduled for Oct 2018.

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From Councillor Abigail Jones to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Can the Cabinet Member update us on the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children that Merton has supported?

Reply

As at 31st December 2016, Merton has supported 32 unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs) under 18 during the current financial year. The monthly figure varies as we take in young people through the London rota or they reach the age of 18 and become a care leaver. In recent months it has varied between 16-20 UASCs being supported. Each young person has had an allocated social worker and has been provided with a care placement or semi-independent accommodation depending on age. Support in respect of education or employment and immigration status is also routinely provided. Merton continues to support our UASCs as they become care leavers and into independence.

From Councillor Charlie Chirico to the Cabinet Member for Education

Can the Cabinet Member update me on how effectively the pupil premium is being utilised in Merton?

Reply

Pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium in Merton schools are doing well. At all key stages, with the exception of progress scores at KS2, the gap for these pupils with their peers is smaller than that found nationally.

Accountability for schools with regard to the spending of the Pupil Premium has been tightened this academic year (as of 1st September 2016), with each school required to produce a detailed pupil premium strategy. These strategies are monitored by governing bodies. In addition, Ofsted scrutinise a school's strategy during an inspection, and identify how current pupil performance indicates that the spending has had an impact on outcomes for targeted pupils. For the five schools inspected by Ofsted this academic year, Ofsted have commented particularly positively in the reports for four:

- "Excellent support ensures that disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils make rapid progress." (Good school moving to outstanding)
- "Leaders have used the pupil premium funding effectively to provide pupils with well-targeted support that ensures that they are ready to learn. Leaders have already taken steps to refine their use of the pupil premium to diminish differences in achievement for the most able." (School judged to require improvement).
- "Your disadvantaged pupils also made better progress than was typical nationally. However, despite this better progress some disadvantaged pupils did not attain as highly as all pupils nationally." (School judged to require improvement).
- "The distance between those pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by additional government funding known as pupil premium and other pupils has

dramatically diminished over recent years.” (Good school retaining a good judgement).

The achievement of PPG eligible pupils remains a focus for the Council.

From Councillor Laxmi Attawar to the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services

Can the Cabinet Member update me on the Transforming Families Programme?

Reply

The Transforming Families team can work with around 65 families at any given time over a period of six months, which can extend up to nine months for complex cases. The TF programme in Merton is on course to successfully meet the target of engaging 378 families on the Troubled Families Expanded Programme in 2016/17. In terms of the number of families achieving significant and sustained progress, we estimate a total of 210 by 31 March.

The DCLG recently visited to look at the work of the team and programme in Merton. Their feedback was largely positive. They were particularly impressed by the passion and commitment demonstrated by TF staff. The DCLG officials also spent some time talking to parents. They relayed to us that they found the words of a number of the parents that attended the session very moving. Merton is thought of highly by DCLG and we continue to have a good working relationship. They have offered to support our case for maintained core funding next financial year. With respect to service user feedback, we conduct quarterly forums to hear the views of families. We usually hold separate forums for children and parents. At the most recent young people’s service user forum, the majority of young people stated that they felt supported by their allocated TF Practitioner.

The DCLG funding formula poses on going challenges for the team as part of our income is dependent on payment by results. This will continue to pose a considerable challenge to us in the future and this will be monitored closely.

From Councillor Jill West to the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services

The Youth Service in Merton has been cut severely in recent years. What innovative ideas does the Cabinet Member have for providing activities that engage young people without adding to pressures on the Children and Young People budget?

Reply

Merton Youth Services and their partners have responded with great creativity to the national situation of reductions in funding to councils which has impacted on spend available for youth services. Merton still runs three key hubs for youth work in Pollards Hill, Phipps Bridge and Eastfields (the adventure playground).

Each centre is developing community partnerships to bring in new organisations with their own external funding to support young people to enhance the work of council youth workers. This year we have had an excellent animation project funded by

Wimbledon Tennis Foundation for example, Fulham Football Club, the Joseph Maye project and AFC Wimbledon have both provided additional sports sessions, including football and gym training. Catch 22 have a run a mixed martial arts project in 2 of our centres. The May Project are currently working with young people from Pollards on a film project. We have had a woman mentor working with our young women and we are working with Morden Hall Park to get our young people involved in environmental projects. "The Monday Club" has been established at Phipps open to local residents to use the centre to get together with their children in order to promote community ownership of the centre. These residents are planning how to increase the numbers of parents and their children involved. At the Adventure Playground the Salvation Army run an excellent community drop in during the day and are developing plans for their own Monday session.

In addition through working with local housing providers they are offering employability support to residents and receiving free rent but contributing to a fund that support the delivery of youth work.

Going forward we have set up Friends of Pollards Hill Youth Club with parents and ex members of the club as a charity that can seek external funding. In addition we have the exciting development of working with a charity called BECS Link who are supporting us to connect with new charities, sports clubs and businesses in a partnership with Rayners Park School. We hope that this will enhance the offer even more in 2017. We are also working with two primary schools and Fulham Football Club to deliver 'Double Club' providing curriculum support to identified children followed by an hour of football with a Fulham coach. The latter is funded by Circle Housing.

The future funding position remains challenging for our youth services but we will continue to work hard to sustain this very important local youth offer.

From Councillor Sally Kenny to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Following the release of examination data can the Cabinet Member update us on school performance in Merton?

Reply

Pupils in Merton schools continued to perform strongly in the exams and assessments carried out in the summer of 2016.

- In the EYFS, the proportion of pupils achieving the Good Level of Development (GLD) has risen by 3.5 percentage points to 71.2%, maintaining outcomes in Merton above the national average for the second year in a row, and in line with the London average.
- In Year 1, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Phonics Screening Check has risen by three percentage points to 80%, which is just below the national and Outer London averages.
- At the end of Key Stage 1 (KS1), in Year 2, the proportion of pupils achieving the new expected standard in the core subjects is 74% in reading, 64% in writing and

73% in mathematics. Merton outcomes are in line with the national averages in reading and mathematics and just below in writing.

- At the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2), in Year 6, the proportion of pupils achieving the new expected standard in the core subjects is 57% and four percentage points above the national average. No schools were below the Department for Education (DfE) Floor Standard. One primary school has hit the threshold for the new DfE Coasting Schools Standard.
- At the end of Key Stage 4 (KS4), in year 11, the Attainment 8 score is 52.4 (in comparison with the national average of 48.5); and the new Progress 8 score is 0.27 (in comparison with the national average of -0.03). The proportion of students achieving at least A* - C grades in English and mathematics rose by eight percentage points to 70%. This remains well above the national average of 59%. No Merton school was below the DfE Floor or new Coasting Schools' Standards.

From Councillor Adam Bush to the Cabinet Member for Education

In view of the limited outdoor space on the proposed site for the new secondary school, how does the Cabinet Member propose to ensure pupils have plenty of scope for exercise and games, in line with current government policies on fitness and reducing childhood obesity?

Reply

The specifications for the proposed new secondary school have been drawn up under the supervision of the government's EFA. Any criticism of the site should be directed at the government and the site requirements introduced with their "free school" policy. Nevertheless, we believe that the borough's new school will provide an excellent offer for young people, in partnership with the excellent Harris Federation, whose schools continue to achieve very good results.

Due to the challenges of building in an urban area, most new schools in London are built on small sites. Harris has already demonstrated it is possible to build an outstanding school on a similar sized site at Harris Boys in Dulwich.

The new school will have a small outside sports facility on site and playing fields will be within walking distance so that students can participate in two hours per week of physical education as all schools do. It is also possible to phase lunch times to make best use of external space. The school will have a modern 4 badminton court sized sport hall.

The Harris Federation are launching a consultation on the new school next month including 7 public meetings, and the Executive Headteacher will be able to explain how he will be able to effectively ensure quality PE activities for children.

There has been widespread criticism of the government for "watering down" their childhood obesity strategy. Despite having limited resources, the council is working hard to overcome the paucity of government ideas, and we have published our own strategy for helping to reduce childhood obesity, our Child Healthy Weight Action Plan, published in December 2016.

From Councillor Agatha Akyigyina to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

How many foster carers do we have in Merton?

Reply

Merton had a total of 62 fostering families as at 31st December 2016.

In house fostering is the placement of choice for most of our looked after children and young people and CSF department has a small team which undertakes publicity campaigns, recruits prospective foster carers and completes the statutory assessment process prior to applicants being approved. For 2016-17 we set an ambitious target to approve 15 new fostering families. To date we have approved 12 families since April 2016 and are expecting to meet this year's target.

From Councillor Linda Taylor to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Can the Cabinet Member explain what services and support are being given to the children and families from Tower Hamlets currently living in Vantage House in Wimbledon Park?

Reply

Unfortunately due to this Government's amendment to planning policy, provision of such housing within a site like Vantage House is allowed through the government's new rules of permitted development. Consistent cuts to local authority funding and a lack of government investment or commitment to affordable housing means that local authorities are often forced into taking such steps to provide housing for families who need it the most. As a result, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets entered into a 5 year lease in Summer 2015 with the owner of Vantage House for it to house 71 homeless households from Tower Hamlets on a temporary basis. The arrival at the time of such a large number of families, including pregnant mothers and small children placed a significant burden on local health and children's services, but we worked in co-operation with Tower Hamlets and our then local community health provider to assess needs and provide relevant services. Our Community Health Provider provided a health visitor to support the pregnant mothers and children under 5. Early Years provided a weekly drop in play activity in a local building and supported families through outreach. Some school age children commuted to Tower Hamlets for their education, others were settled in Merton schools.

Whilst Tower Hamlets remains the authority which owes the residents a Housing duty the families are now eligible for local services from Merton. Since September 2015, 29 children from Vantage House have taken up places in Merton schools. With regard to Early Years, initially a stay and play group was set up close to Vantage House which was well attended. After approximately a year and once children centre staff had brokered most of the older ones into local 2 year provision the numbers were not enough to sustain the group. However, some families do now attend Abbey Children's Centre stay and play sessions and the targeted Young

Parents group at Church Road. In addition a Family Support Worker has been doing a monthly drop in meeting in reception at Vantage House where any residents can come to see her and get information, advice and guidance or referral for additional support. On average 6/7 families have attended the drop in each month. In addition the Family Support Worker attends Vantage House once a fortnight for specific work with families. The Family Support Worker works closely with our specialist health visitor and the locality health visitor to identify, refer and support the families in the block. Currently there are 49 parents and 52 children registered on Estart, and each of those would have had a children's centre contact.

In common with other residents some children from Vantage House may have special needs and some may be assessed as needing some of our specialist Education or Social Care services. Adults are also eligible for adult services if they meet the relevant criteria. Universal and specialist Health services are also provided locally.

From Councillor Jerome Neil to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

We talk a lot about young people but how much do we listen to them?

Reply

Listening to children and young people is absolutely at the heart of the work of the CSF department and is a value shared by our Children's Trust and Safeguarding Children Board partnerships and we are keen to ensure *that the views and ambitions of children and young people have informed and improved our local service offer*. The partnership has also signed up to a 'Participation Promise' which means we will enable children to be listened to and to be involved in making choices and decisions in how we spend money for children's services. Our User Voice Strategy is implemented by an annually refreshed action plan and contains a number of commitments to ensuring that children, young people and families' voices are central to driving service and practice development across children's services. These are summarised below with some examples of how we have responded.

1. Delivering on our Participation Promise: Providing opportunities for all children and young people to influence the services which make Merton a great place to grow up. This includes:
 - Facilitating young people's forums and conferences - e.g. Merton Youth Parliament, specialist groups including Children In Care Council and school councils, events such as HealthFest and the recent LGBTQ Conference
 - Inviting young people to take part in service commissioning processes and quality review – e.g. the work of our Young Inspectors and Young Advisers.
 - Enabling young people to take part in consultations and surveys, which inform service and strategy developments - e.g. Anti-Bullying Strategy; Annual Young Residents' Survey.
2. Enabling users of children's services to influence key decision makers and inform the continuous improvement of our service offer systems and processes. This includes:

- Facilitating user forums for vulnerable children who are in receipt of Children's Trust Services – e.g. Children in Care Council, and the Your Shout Group for learning disabled young people.
 - Enabling users to take part in consultations and surveys, which inform service and strategy developments – e.g. LAC and Care Leavers survey; agreeing the LAC Pledge.
 - Supporting young service users to deliver training – e.g. looked after children involved in new foster carer information sessions and training.
 - Facilitating access to advocacy, and to complaints processes – e.g. Jigsaw 4u advocacy; and our internal IRO service.
 - Enabling feedback by users on their level of satisfaction, including access to feedback sessions with senior managers – e.g. young offenders satisfaction survey; Lead member, Merton's Director of Children's Services, and other senior managers and decision makers across the Children's Trust, regularly attend forums to hear directly about users' level of satisfaction with services.
3. Delivering on Merton's approach to social care practice: Putting children and young people's wishes and feelings at the centre of individual case work decision making and planning.
- Using child centred practice models for assessment, planning and review – e.g. Implementing a child centred approach through utilising Signs of Safety; Motivational Interviewing; and our Helping Families' Programme in TF.
 - Supporting children to participate in their reviews – e.g. Piloting a model of LAC reviews to ensure that the child is more clearly at the centre.
 - Ensuring that 'user voice' is included in case audit processes – e.g. Our Children's social care Quality Assurance (QA) Framework includes provisions to review and evaluation of how well children, young people, and families participate in decisions about their care.

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COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2017
ITEM 7c
LABOUR AMENDMENT

That the words underlined are inserted and those struck through deleted as follows:

This Council supports and promotes the most effective and robust scrutiny process possible for Children and Young People, particularly given the vulnerable groups involved, the Ofsted requirement for effective scrutiny and the recommendations from the 2006 Leach Review of Overview and Scrutiny in Merton and the 2009 follow up report by Professor Leach which found that there was “much to commend about the approach to overview and scrutiny in Merton”, with our performance comparing favourably to other authorities assessed.

Whilst respecting the independence of the scrutiny function and the panels’ responsibility for their own work programmes and ways of carrying this out most effectively, This-this Council ~~therefore~~ resolves to ask that Scrutiny would be more effective if the Children and Young People O&S panel would like to consider any of the following suggestions, some of which they have considered previously or already incorporate in their work:

- 1) As it does at the start of each municipal year, consider whether it wishes to select~~ed~~ one or more co opted members with relevant professional experience outside the Borough;
- 2) ~~considered~~ whether to ask the departments to provide more detailed recommendations to guide and focus debate, bearing in mind that this may have resource implications for already overstretched departmental officers managing frontline service delivery to residents;
- 3) whether they wish to receive~~d~~ fuller executive summaries from departments to aid understanding, bearing in mind the caveat in 2, above;
- 4) ~~enjoyed~~ whether they wish to take greater advantage of already strong~~greater~~ Scrutiny officer support in the form of recommended questions and areas of focus, an approach that is already working well; and
- 5) ~~had as they already do when convening workshops, or undertaking task groups, consider whether they wish~~ the opportunity to invite expert witnesses~~non voting observer members~~ from outside the Borough for one or more meetings because they have a particular expertise in matters being scrutinised.

Motion now to read

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commend about the approach to overview and scrutiny in Merton”, with our performance comparing favourably to other authorities assessed.

Whilst respecting the independence of the scrutiny function and the panels’ responsibility for their own work programmes and ways of carrying this out most effectively, this Council resolves to ask if the Children and Young People O&S panel would like to consider any of the following suggestions, some of which they have considered previously or already incorporate in their work:

- 1) As it does at the start of each municipal year, consider whether it wishes to select one or more co opted members with relevant professional experience outside the Borough;
- 2) consider whether to ask the departments to provide more detailed recommendations to guide and focus debate, bearing in mind that this may have resource implications for already overstretched departmental officers managing frontline service delivery to residents;
- 3) whether they wish to receive fuller executive summaries from departments to aid understanding, bearing in mind the caveat in 2, above;
- 4) whether they wish to take greater advantage of already strong Scrutiny officer support in the form of recommended questions and areas of focus, an approach that is already working well; and
- 5) as they already do when convening workshops, or undertaking task groups, consider whether they wish the opportunity to invite expert witnesses from outside the Borough for one or more meetings because they have a particular expertise in matters being scrutinised.

**COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2017
ITEM 11
LABOUR AMENDMENT**

That the words underlined are inserted and the words struck through are deleted:

That this Council:

1) Notes remarks made by Conservative MP Dr Sarah Wollaston, Chair of the Health Select Committee:

‘The political response to a health and care system in severe distress, and more importantly to the people it serves, has been dismal. There has been a failure to grasp the scale of the financial challenge facing both health and social care and the consequences and inefficiency of their continuing separation.’

2) Notes remarks made by Lord Porter, Conservative Chair of the Local Government Association:

‘Social care faces a funding gap of at least £2.6bn by 2020. The government must recognise why social care matters and treat it as a national priority.’

And

‘Council tax rises will not be enough to prevent the need for continued cutbacks to social care services and very many other valued local services.’

And

‘There needs to be an urgent and fundamental review of social care and health before next year’s spring Budget. It also needs to include action to properly fund social care with genuinely new government money. This is now the only way to protect the services caring for our elderly and disabled people, which are at breaking point and ensure they can enjoy dignified, healthy and independent lives, live in their own community and stay out of hospital for longer.’

And

“The Government must recognise why social care matters and treat it as a national priority.”

3) Notes remarks made by the Leader of the Council during 2016 on the level of Council Tax levy in 2017/18 and to engage in a consultation with the public:

‘Now, if residents tell us they want to pay more council tax I am happy to go along with that.’

‘For me it is what the residents want that counts. I will be fully consulting residents on next year’s budget and if they tell me they want to pay more, in

the light of demographic changes, then I will follow their lead.

'I was elected to serve local residents and that is what I will do'

(Leader's Speech - Budget Council Meeting, 2 March 2016)

and

| **24)** That in respect of the consultation process:

'...we will consult residents and members handed it all over, in the way they should, at arm's length to ensure unbiased consultation, in keeping with Cabinet Office criteria on consultation.

'That's exactly what I have done.'

(Councillors' Questions – Council Meeting, 14 September 2016)

and

| **35)** With regard to his Administration:

'In Labour we believe in straight talking, honest politics. Some people think we should try and weasel our way out of it but that is not the new politics we practise here'

(Leader's Speech - Budget Council Meeting, 2 March 2016)

6) Notes the unanimous position of Merton's Overview and Scrutiny Commission at their meeting on 26 January 2017:

'1. The Commission recognises that Cabinet has acknowledged that the growing cost of adult social care is not temporary and is something for which the Council must make provision.

2. The Commission urges Cabinet to look at the budget situation beyond 2017/18 and asks Cabinet to consider a number of options including, but not limited to

a) an increase in council tax;

b) review earmarked reserves to see whether they meet the purpose for which they were originally intended and, where this is not the case, to release them for use to partially address the predicted budget gap

c) continue to focus on the savings that will still have to be made, and to bring forward savings where it has been identified that these could be achieved sooner;

d) recognise that this still won't be enough to meet the growing burden of adult social care, as set out in the following statement from the Local Government Association (12 January 2017):

"Council tax raising powers announced by government will not bring in enough money to fully protect the services which care for elderly and vulnerable people today and in the future.

Genuinely new government money is now the only way to protect the services caring for our elderly and disabled people and ensure they

can enjoy dignified, healthy and independent lives, live in their own community and stay out of hospital for longer”

The Commission urges Cabinet to give its full support to the LGA and London Councils in their efforts to secure a properly funded settlement from government.’

In recognition of the national crisis this government has allowed to explode in adult social care, and its refusal to give councils a penny extra in real funding to look after older and disabled residents,

~~In consequence and as no mention was made at Cabinet on 16 January 2017 proposed an additional £9m growth in the adult social care budget. Clearly this growth cannot be funded by council tax increases alone, even if this were fair on our residents. In the complete absence of any additional resources from government, all options for funding growth including levying the government’s adult social care precept will be assessed by Cabinet.~~ of a Labour Party Press release dated 10 January 2017 with its implications for the raising of an Adult Social Care (ASC) precept arising out of the Consultation, the Council resolves now its intent that the maximum permitted increase in the ASC precept is inserted into Council notes that Cabinet will bring forward recommendations for its budget for 2017/18 and the MTFs for 2018/19 on 13 February in the usual manner, having also considered the feedback from the Scrutiny process and the results of the consultation on spending and council tax levels, and these recommendations will form the basis of ~~when~~ the Cabinet’s recommendations when they are brought to its Budget setting meeting on 1 March 2017. - In advance of this, council welcomes the administration’s efforts to allay the fears of our vulnerable and elderly residents and re-assure them that the Council cares for their needs by maximising its available resources and proposing the allocation of additional funding for adult social care; and calls on the government to end its refusal to properly fund the nation’s adult social care and end the social care crisis afflicting our country.

Motion now to read

That this Council:

1) Notes remarks made by Conservative MP Dr Sarah Wollaston, Chair of the Health Select Committee:

‘The political response to a health and care system in severe distress, and more importantly to the people it serves, has been dismal. There has been a failure to grasp the scale of the financial challenge facing both health and social care and the consequences and inefficiency of their continuing separation.’

2) Notes remarks made by Lord Porter, Conservative Chair of the Local Government Association:

‘Social care faces a funding gap of at least £2.6bn by 2020. The government must recognise why social care matters and treat it as a national priority.’

And

'Council tax rises will not be enough to prevent the need for continued cutbacks to social care services and very many other valued local services.'

And

'There needs to be an urgent and fundamental review of social care and health before next year's spring Budget. It also needs to include action to properly fund social care with genuinely new government money. This is now the only way to protect the services caring for our elderly and disabled people, which are at breaking point and ensure they can enjoy dignified, healthy and independent lives, live in their own community and stay out of hospital for longer.'

And

"The Government must recognise why social care matters and treat it as a national priority."

3) Notes remarks made by the Leader of the Council during 2016 on the level of Council Tax levy in 2017/18 and to engage in a consultation with the public:

'Now, if residents tell us they want to pay more council tax I am happy to go along with that.'

'For me it is what the residents want that counts. I will be fully consulting residents on next year's budget and if they tell me they want to pay more, in the light of demographic changes, then I will follow their lead.'

'I was elected to serve local residents and that is what I will do'

(Leader's Speech - Budget Council Meeting, 2 March 2016)

and

4) That in respect of the consultation process:

*'...we will consult residents and members handed it all over, in the way they should, at arm's length to ensure unbiased consultation, in keeping with Cabinet Office criteria on consultation.
'That's exactly what I have done.'*

(Councillors' Questions – Council Meeting, 14 September 2016)

and

5) With regard to his Administration:

'In Labour we believe in straight talking, honest politics. Some people think we should try and weasel our way out of it but that is not the new politics we practise here'

(Leader's Speech - Budget Council Meeting, 2 March 2016)

6) Notes the unanimous position of Merton's Overview and Scrutiny Commission at their meeting on 26 January 2017:

'1. The Commission recognises that Cabinet has acknowledged that the growing cost of adult social care is not temporary and is something for which the Council must make provision.

2. The Commission urges Cabinet to look at the budget situation beyond 2017/18 and asks Cabinet to consider a number of options including, but not limited to

a) an increase in council tax;

b) review earmarked reserves to see whether they meet the purpose for which they were originally intended and, where this is not the case, to release them for use to partially address the predicted budget gap

c) continue to focus on the savings that will still have to be made, and to bring forward savings where it has been identified that these could be achieved sooner;

d) recognise that this still won't be enough to meet the growing burden of adult social care, as set out in the following statement from the Local Government Association (12 January 2017):

"Council tax raising powers announced by government will not bring in enough money to fully protect the services which care for elderly and vulnerable people today and in the future.

Genuinely new government money is now the only way to protect the services caring for our elderly and disabled people and ensure they can enjoy dignified, healthy and independent lives, live in their own community and stay out of hospital for longer"

The Commission urges Cabinet to give its full support to the LGA and London Councils in their efforts to secure a properly funded settlement from government.'

In recognition of the national crisis this government has allowed to explode in adult social care, and its refusal to give councils a penny extra in real funding to look after older and disabled residents,

Cabinet on 16 January 2017 proposed an additional £9m growth in the adult social care budget. Clearly this growth cannot be funded by council tax increases alone, even if this were fair on our residents. In the complete absence of any additional resources from government, all options for funding growth including levying the government's adult social care precept will be assessed by Cabinet. Council notes that Cabinet will bring forward recommendations for its budget for 2017/18 and the MTFs for 2018/19 on 13 February in the usual manner, having also considered the feedback from the Scrutiny process and the results of the consultation on spending and council tax levels, and these recommendations will form the basis of the Cabinet's recommendations when they are brought to its Budget setting meeting on 1 March 2017. In advance of this, council welcomes the administration's efforts to allay the fears of our vulnerable and elderly residents and re-assure them that the Council cares for their needs by maximising its available resources and proposing the allocation of additional funding for adult social care; and calls on the government

to end its refusal to properly fund the nation's adult social care and end the social care crisis afflicting our country.

Agenda Item 22

AMENDMENT TO RECOMMENDATIONS AGENDA ITEM 12 COUNCIL MEETING 1 FEBRUARY 2017

Councillor Suzanne Grocott will move and Councillor Michael Bull will second that the words underlined in the amended recommendations below be inserted and the words struck through be deleted.

Agenda Item 12 – Merton Priory Homes Governance

Recommendations:

That Council resolves:

- A. That members note Circle Housing plans to collapse the group structure and consolidate the separate housing associations into one association.
- B. That members note the powers that the council has in order to affect and influence decision making.
- C. That members note the proposed Community Panel for Merton and that any changes to the panel's Terms of Reference will be with the council's consent.
- D. That members note how the Housing and Planning Act 2016, Section 93, impacts on the council's powers and those of the council's nominated board members to the Merton Priory Homes board.
- E. That members note the recent Homes and Community Agency regulatory notice issued against Clarion Housing Group (appendix 2).

~~F. Subject to acceptable final terms for the variations to the Stock Transfer Agreement (STA), council supports these governance proposals and gives its consent to vary the STA and that before the council will reaches its decision on how to use its shareholder vote to agree to the proposed changes at shareholder meetings to the Group structure, Council agrees:~~

- ~~1) To engage a third party to carry out an independent financial evaluation of Merton Priory Homes exiting the Group and operating as an independent organisation in so far as it is possible given that the financial statements (balance sheet and income and account statement) are both publicly available and the organisation is generating a substantial profit;~~
- ~~2) To carry out a proper, independent test of opinion with Merton Priory Homes residents of the proposals concerning the Group structure (i.e. collapsing the Group structure or alternatively Merton Priory Homes becoming an independent organisation) to gauge resident support or otherwise, as happened on a number of occasions prior to the Council proposing stock transfer in 2010;~~
- ~~3) To ensure as far as possible that Merton Priory Homes board and shareholder resident positions are filled by Merton~~

residents prior to any future decisions regarding the Group structure being taken by these bodies.

- G. That members agree that, delegate authority to the Director of Community and Housing to owing to the importance of agreeing the final terms and in the interests of consistency with previous amendments as well as the terms of the variations to the original STA, which will include the Terms of Reference for the Community Panel the decision to agree the amended agreement should be made by Full Council.

The amended recommendations would then read:

Recommendations:

That Council resolves:

- A. That members note Circle Housing plans to collapse the group structure and consolidate the separate housing associations into one association.
- B. That members note the powers that the council has in order to affect and influence decision making.
- C. That members note the proposed Community Panel for Merton and that any changes to the panel's Terms of Reference will be with the council's consent.
- D. That members note how the Housing and Planning Act 2016, Section 93, impacts on the council's powers and those of the council's nominated board members to the Merton Priory Homes board.
- E. That members note the recent Homes and Community Agency regulatory notice issued against Clarion Housing Group (appendix 2).
- F. That before the council reaches its decision on how to use its shareholder vote on the proposed changes to the Group structure, Council agrees:
 - 1) To engage a third party to carry out an independent financial evaluation of Merton Priory Homes exiting the Group and operating as an independent organisation in so far as it is possible given that the financial statements (balance sheet and income and account statement) are both publicly available and the organisation is generating a substantial profit;
 - 2) To carry out a proper, independent test of opinion with Merton Priory Homes residents of the proposals concerning the Group structure (i.e. collapsing the Group structure or alternatively Merton Priory Homes becoming an independent organisation)

to gauge resident support or otherwise, as happened on a number of occasions prior to the Council proposing stock transfer in 2010;

- 3) To ensure as far as possible that Merton Priory Homes board and shareholder resident positions are filled by Merton residents prior to any future decisions regarding the Group structure being taken by these bodies.

G. That members agree that, owing to the importance of agreeing the final terms and in the interests of consistency with previous amendments as well as the terms of the original STA, the decision to agree the amended agreement should be made by Full Council.

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**FULL COUNCIL 1 FEBRUARY 2017
ITEM 16 - Proportionality and Appointment to Committees
LABOUR AMENDMENT**

That the words underscored are inserted and the words struck through deleted

Recommendations: That Council

A. Approve the allocation of seats to political groups, as detailed in amended Appendix A to the report, noting:

- On 27 May 2016 the Evening Standard reported that a Putney resident had alleged Cllr David Dean told him on 3 May 2016 that if Sadiq Khan was elected Mayor of London, “as a white man ... you will be a pariah in your own town. He will treat you like dirt”. The paper stated that the comments had been recorded by a neighbour and went on to report a statement from the Conservative Party as follows: “As soon as we became aware of his comments he was immediately suspended from the party, pending an investigation.”
- On 17 January 2017, more than 8 months after the alleged comments were made, a spokesman for the Conservative Party told the Wimbledon Guardian: “He [Cllr David Dean] has been expelled from the party.” The Leader of Merton Conservative Group, Councillor Oonagh Moulton, told the paper: “I can confirm that Cllr Dean is no longer a member of the Conservative Group nor currently a member of the Conservative Party.”

B. Due to the importance of the Planning Applications Committee and the standards required, aApprove the appointment of nominees to those seats as detailed in amended Appendix B to this report.

APPENDIX A

Parties	Labour	Con	MPIR	LD	NA	
Seats	36	19	3	1	1	
Total councillors	60					
Total in groups	60					
Committees subject to Statutory proportionality	Seats					
Scrutiny committees	Seats					
Commission	10					
Healthier Communities	8					
Children and Young People	10					
Sustainable Communities	8					
JHSC	2					
Committees	Seats					
Appointments	10					
Licensing	12					
Licensing misc	12					
Planning	10					
Standards and General Purposes	12					
Appeals	6					
Advisory Committees established by the Council	Seats					
Pension Fund AC	3					
Borough Development Plan AC	6					
JCC	5					
CADAP	5					
Member School Standards Panel	3					
Total seats	122					
Total rounded	122					
Allocations actual	Labour	Con	MPIR	LD	NA	Variation seats
6	3	1	0	0	0	+
5	3	0	0	0	0	+
6	3	1	0	0	0	+
5	2	1	0	0	0	+
1	1	0	0	0	0	+
6	3	0	0	1	0	+
7	4	1	0	0	0	+
7	4	1	0	0	0	+
6	23	1	0	0	40	+
7	4	0	0	1	0	+
4	1	0	0	0	1	+
2	1	0	0	0	0	+
4	2	0	0	0	0	+
3	2	0	0	0	0	+
3	21	0	0	0	01	+
2	1	0	0	0	0	+
74	38	6	2	2	0	0
Total allocated						
Total rounded	122					122

APPENDIX B

COMMITTEE	LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	MERTON PARK INDEPENDENT RESIDENT WARD	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	NON ALIGNED
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE (10 seats, substitutes allowed)	6 seats Cllr Linda Kirby (Chair) Cllr Abigail Jones Cllr Philip Jones Cllr Andrew Judge Cllr Geraldine Stanford Cllr Imran Uddin Substitutes: Cllr Laxmi Attawar Cllr Joan Henry	2 seats Cllr John Bowcott (Vice Chair) Cllr Najeeb Latif <u>Vacancy</u> Substitutes: Cllr Stephen Crowe Cllr Daniel Holden	1 seat Cllr Peter Southgate Substitute: Cllr John Sargeant	0 seat	1 seat Cllr David Dean
APPEALS COMMITTEE (6 seats, no substitutes)	4 seats Cllr Stephen Alambritis (Chair) Cllr Mark Allison Cllr Sally Kenny Cllr Martin Whelton	1 seat Cllr Oonagh Moulton	0 seat	0 seat	1 seat Cllr David Dean
HERITAGE AND DESIGN WORKING GROUP (5 seats plus representatives of local conservation areas and regional/national)	3 seats <u>Cllr Nick Draper (Chair)</u> <u>Cllr Ian Munn</u> <u>Cllr Geraldine Stanford</u> Substitute:	1 seat <u>Vacancy (Vice Chair)</u> Substitute: <u>Vacancy</u>	0 seat	0 seat	1 seat <u>Cllr David Dean</u>

<u>organisations)- Substitutes allowed</u>	<u>Cllr Philip Jones</u>					
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