

Merton Council Council

12 April 2017

Supplementary agenda

- 25 Supplementary Questions and replies
 Public Questions
 Member Questions (non Strategic Theme)
 Member Questions (Strategic Theme)

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From: David Stephenson
To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Why does this unfair levy only apply to council tax payers who live in a controlled parking zone? What about diesel drivers in the rest of the borough? Are you not discriminating against those in controlled parking zones simply because you have their car details?

Reply

Air Quality in London is a Public Health Emergency according to experts and reported in the House of Commons. Merton is exercising its powers to respond to this emergency in the best way it can. It is well known and scientifically proven that diesel cars contribute much more damage to London's poor air quality and the health issues arising. We are following many other boroughs in implementing a surcharge on residents purchasing parking permits for diesel vehicles. We are unable to directly deal with motorists outside of these zones but acknowledge that work is underway by the Mayor of London to address this. This is not discriminatory but simply an illustration of the powers we have and the fact that we are utilising them to do what we can to clean up London and Merton's air.

From: Tony Burton
To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Housing and Regeneration

Will Merton Council publish its pre-application advice on development proposals for the site of the Burn Bullock and Mitcham cricket pavilion and inform the tenants - Mitcham Cricket Club - when it has been provided?

Reply

Currently the council does not automatically publish its pre application advice on-line. These are not formal planning applications and there is no statutory requirement to place the information on line. As it is not a formal application there is also no requirement to inform the tenants. However, the council is reviewing its position regarding publishing pre-application advice, balancing the confidentiality some applicants expect with the public interest in such issues.

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

When will the Listed Building Repair Notice issued in August 2014 for the Burn Bullock be enforced and what action is being taken to remove this listed building from the national Heritage at Risk Register where it remains despite works done thus far?

Reply

The owner of the property has been working with the council since the service of the notice and significant repairs to the building have been made. However, it is considered premature to seek removal of the property from the Risk Register at this

stage as it is considered important that enforcement powers be retained if matters deteriorate for any reason.

From: Simon McGrath

To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Housing and Regeneration

What is the % of affordable housing in developments approved by Merton Council since 1.1.2017?

Reply

Between 01 January 2017 and 31 March 2017 Merton Council has issued one decision notice for a major housing development that provided affordable homes. The planning decision (Forestcove Road 16/P3430) provided 11 affordable rented homes and 5 starter homes (homes to be sold at a discount in perpetuity), a total of 22%; Merton's Planning Applications Committee resolved to grant permission for other major housing developments during the same time period (for example at 25 High Path, which will provide 80 affordable rented homes (60% of the total). This application has been referred to the Mayor Of London who may decide to determine the application himself or allow Merton's decision to approve stand.

From: John Davis

To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Housing and Regeneration

Given that another tree planting season has ended, I ask when will Merton Council / Rediscover Mitcham /TfL plant the Liquidambar feature tree proposed in the tree planning for Rediscover Mitcham at Fair Green? Further, when is it envisaged that reported dead and vandalised street trees will be replaced?

Reply

Major construction is still taking place on and around the Fair Green, therefore the new trees to be planted along the edge of the Green will be planted next season. This avoids risking damage to the trees during the construction period.

In general terms, Merton Council's policy is to apply arboricultural first-aid measures to vandalised trees wherever practical and to replace dead street trees where it is necessary. Where a tree is repeatedly vandalised and may need replacing, it is often more practical to seek an alternative location for its replacement. Each case is therefore considered on its own merits depending on the circumstances of the tree's death or damage.

In some cases, the damage may have occurred as collateral damage as part of a local development project, for example, and the completion of the associated works may determine where the replacement tree is sited to maximise the chances of its growth and survival.

Regrettably, it is not always possible to replace every dead tree during the same financial or calendar year that it expired owing to the demands of the operational service and given that the core replanting season typically occurs between

December to March, and planting works are pre-planned between September and November.

From: Daniel Weir
To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Housing and Regeneration

What are Merton Council going to do about Rowan Park? The park should been handed over to Merton Council a public space over 3 years ago per the section 106 on Rowan development (20.23 and 20.24) and is falling into disrepair.

http://planning.merton.gov.uk/MVM.DMS/Planning%20Application/1000060000/1000060451/07P1216_S106%20Agreement.pdf

Reply

THIS QUESTION WILL BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

Three years ago Rowan Park was not in a suitable state to be handed to the Council. Over the last 3 years, a number of design and maintenance issues have been resolved. The landscape has also matured during that timeframe making it a more attractive environment for the enjoyment of local residents.

The Council's Greenspaces team is actively engaged with the site developer to finalise the handover of the park to Merton. The final checks are being carried out and are expected to be completed this month, with a view to handing over the site shortly afterwards. The Longthornton ward councillors have worked hard for their residents on this issue and I am looking forward to their being able officially open the park after such a long time.

Supplementary

I just want to know what action plan there is for the Park. The state it is in at the moment, with no discernible change. I've actually walked around with yourself and Ged Curran; Councillors have been down there, I believe that the place has been mis-managed by Crest Nicholson and we've ended up in a catch 22 situation that Merton won't look after the Park as should have been agreed after 3 months, let alone 3 years, I just want to know what action comes. We as residents, I've spoken to residents who have living there since the beginning, both in the park and in the surrounding area have seen no discernible improvement in the standards, I've got photos which show the weeds growing everywhere, the flooding arrangements, the flood storage capacity which is meant to be helping with the drainage, you can't even see the drainage tunnels anymore, we are all just fed up. We are really worried that this is our chance that we only just found about, it is going to be handed over in the state that it is actually in. It is very upsetting for lots of young families that have moved onto the park who have been promised the park would be in an acceptable state.

What points can we as residents put down that can agreed so the state of the park plan will be there when it is handed over?

Reply

I'd like to thank you Daniel for your question. As it stands at the moment, we are undergoing what is called "snagging". I have to tell you that the first time I inspected the Park in any depth was in January this year where it was an extremely wet and cold day. But I saw a park that had a good deal of promise. I want to assure you that the park won't be handed over until it is in a decent state, and a decent state will be determined by our officers and I will be there at that meeting as well. In the longer term, I want to work with you, and I know your ward councillor wants to work with you as well, to make sure that the park becomes better and better over time, and I would like to extend this invitation to you to work with me after this to ensure that the park that you want is the park that you get.

From: Richard Hilton
To the Cabinet Member for Finance

What progress has there been with the formal investigation into the Labour Leader of Merton Council, Cllr Alambritis over the Council Tax 'consultation'? When will the investigation conclude and will the results of the investigation be fully disclosed to the public?

Reply

I understand that the investigation is complete and the results will be presented to a meeting of the Standards and General Purposes Committee. I strongly believe that it is right that we listen to all of our residents, particularly on issues such as council tax which have a disproportionate impact on the poorest in our community.

Supplementary

That Merton Labour Group misused public funds is not in question. I would like to know, if the results of the investigation into misconduct by the Leader of the Council for his sham consultation will be made public? If not, will the Conservative Group be following up on it? Has the Council referred themselves to the Information Commissioner, given that it is admitted that the nearly 3000 responses were passed to the Merton Labour Group even though they were sent back in official Merton Council headed letters? Thank you.

Reply

Thank you for his supplementary. The report has been finalised but hasn't been published yet, so far as I am aware. When it is published I understand that it will be published for the general public. I don't know what the conclusions are going to be; whether it is shown that there is misuse of public funds, but the one thing that I would say, is that anybody who comes here wishing to constrain the rights of us Councillors to speak to our residents about the important issues like the Council Tax, shouldn't be involved in politics. I know he is involved in UKIP which amounts to the same thing. I would strongly urge everyone involved in local politics to allow and enable Councillors to speak to their residents about important matters and to receive feedback from them in the way that our residents want to present that feedback.

From: Laura Paine
To the Cabinet Member for Education

Which schools in Merton are likely to lose funding overall under the government's new funding formula? Can you provide a list?

Reply

The main differences between the National Funding Formula and Merton's Funding Formula are as follows:

- The amount for the basic per pupil funding (Age-Weighted Pupil Unit) is less than Merton's current formula.
- The amounts for additional needs funding (deprivation, lower attainment and English as an additional language) are higher than Merton's current formula.
- The lump sum will be £110,000 under the national funding formula compared to Merton's £150,000.

This means that, although Merton as a whole will be getting more funding under the new formula, some schools will see an increase while other will see a decrease. The funding flow will be to schools in more deprived areas and where attainment is lower.

Also, due to the reduction in lump sum, small schools are more likely to see a reduction in their funding.

Based on the 2016/17 funding formula and the consultation formula values, which are all subject to change, the following schools will see a reduction in the national funding formula:

- Dundonald Primary School
- Hatfeild Primary School
- Hollymount School
- Merton Park Primary School
- Wimbledon Park Primary School
- St Matthew's CofE Primary School
- Holy Trinity CofE Primary School
- Bishop Gilpin CofE Primary School
- Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School
- St John Fisher RC Primary School

The above describes the changes in cash terms and does not take account of inflation, salary or pension contribution increases which would then result in real term reductions as has been reported by various institutions, including London Councils.

From: Derek Sendall
To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Housing and Regeneration

How many names were on the petition to start the cpzwc3 Pitcairn Road ?
How many paper voting forms were sent out for cpzwc3?

Why is Island Road being victimised over cpz3?

Why will the council or councillors not listen to the concerns of the people who live in the area?

Reply

We received a petition from 125 residents in Arnold, Road Finborough Road, Pitcairn Road and Crusoe Road.

In response to requests from residents, we sent out 69 questionnaires in hard copies.

The Council carries out careful and comprehensive 2 stage consultations with all consultees in proposed CPZs . The initial informal consultation was completed and based on the results the Council progressed to the statutory consultation. The Council considered all feedback received from residents on individual roads, and in this case, the majority of residents of Island Road consistently voted against the scheme even if neighbouring roads were to be included within a CPZ. Having considered the feedback received, and consulted with your local councillors, the road was excluded from the controlled parking zone in line with the wishes of residents.

Supplementary

I'd like to refer you to the paper: August 19th 2016 on paragraph 3.1.

Why was the vote that took place in 2015 not on the papers for the petition that was put forward? The petition again was put forward in 2016 for another vote which I believe is totally illegal. Also, I've only received this today from the Freedom of Information, that 15 people voted on forms on the CPZ and there was nowhere that the numbers of these 15 people are anywhere on the paper, it's only online.

Reply

I'd like to thank Mr Sendall for his supplementary questions. In terms of the CPZ consultation; we urge everybody to respond on the proper forms which are sent out from the Council in terms of Controlled Parking Zone consultations. In relation to his own situation, we have listened very closely to residents on his road and have exempted Island Road from the Controlled Parking Zone so Mr Sendall you won't be included in that zone following my decision and following representations from residents. Thank you.

From: Viv Vella

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

What projects is the council undertaking with the local CCG and Better Care Fund to better integrate health and social care services and improve outcomes for residents - in particular for residents with dementia?

Reply

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The council and CCG, along with other NHS and voluntary sector partners, have had a shared integration programme in place since 2013. We have 4 over-arching objectives: to reduce emergency admissions to hospital, to reduce lengths of stay in hospital, to reduce admissions to care homes, and to improve patient experience.

To achieve this we are seeking to provide more integrated services in the community. We have had liaison social workers in place since 2013 in order to improve communication with our primary care and community service NHS colleagues. We have been providing training and support for front line staff on integrated and person centered working. Recently NHS community staff have co-located with our staff in the civic centre. We have an integrated equipment service. For the forthcoming year we will be looking more closely at how we work together to assist discharge from hospital including our intermediate care/re-ablement services.

Specifically for people with dementia, some of our social workers are co-located and managed in the mental health trust service for older people, in order to provide a more integrated service. Some of the BCF funding has been used for dementia community nurses.

From: Debbie Wambergue
To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

How much has the council invested in services to support people with dementia in each of the last 5 years?

Reply

Adult Services spends nearly £23m per annum on care and support services for older people, as well as providing social work and support to the voluntary sector. Our systems do not currently enable us to distinguish between spend on people with dementia as opposed to older people with other care needs. The table below shows our spend on older people care placements over the last ten years, which includes significant spend on dementia services. The 2016/17 figures are provisional pending the closure of the year's accounts.

| | F/Y 2007/08 | F/Y 2008/09 | F/Y 2009/10 | F/Y 2011/12 | F/Y 2011/12 | F/Y 2012/13 | F/Y 2013/14 | F/Y 2014/15 | F/Y 2015/16 | (Jan'17) 2016/17 |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| OP care | 18,814 | 17,318 | 19,090 | 21,559 | 21,559 | 21,595 | 21,508 | 21,502 | 21,489 | 22,808 |
| Dementia Hub | 346 | 330 | 250 | 250 | 250 | 209 | 232 | 239 | 239 | 239 |

As well as supporting various services for older people in the voluntary sector, the Council has funded the Dementia Hub since April 2013 with annual Council funding of £239,000.

From: Victoria Wilson

To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Housing and Regeneration

What representations has the Council made to the new operators of South West Trains in relation to service improvements and the introduction of step-free access at stations in Merton?

Reply

Officers met with Stagecoach on 2 occasions to discuss our aspirations and sent a letter of support setting out our views including desire to see step free access at both Raynes Park and Motspur Park Stations. However, it did not prove possible to meet First/MTR Group representatives within the consultation timeframe permitted. Significant South West Train franchise infrastructure improvements including congestion relief at Wimbledon Station remain intrinsically linked with the progression of Crossrail 2. The council will also lobby as opportunities arise for accessibility improvements to Thameslink and Southern stations within the borough including step free access.

From: John Tippet-Cooper

To the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Does Merton Council have any capacity to accommodate further unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and was Merton Council contacted by the Home Office/other Government Department in respect of this capacity to care for and support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children prior to Mr Robert Goodwill's announcement on 8 February 2017 (written statement HCWS467)?

Reply

Merton is part of a Pan London arrangement to distribute unaccompanied asylum seeking young people across the capital. Each month we get children allocated through this agreement and as result of this steady flow and the Dubs and Dublin Treaty children arrival before Christmas, the majority of London boroughs are now at or nearly at the 0.07% nationally agreed threshold. Merton is not yet at the cap and is still taking children through the rota on a regular basis. We anticipate that we will be needed more frequently now many of the other boroughs have reached their cap number. There is always some movement, however as when young people reach 18 and become care leavers they are taken away from a borough's quota/cap but obviously remain in local authority care with support. Through London Councils we continue to lobby government for adequate funding to enable us to continue to support unaccompanied asylum seeking young people both whilst they are in care and as care leavers.

We do not have a record of Home Office contact in February but on other occasions we have been able to offer specific placements for one or two children depending on the availability of our foster carers and our ability to commission appropriate placements.

From: Philip Ling

To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Housing and Regeneration

How many diesel vehicles are used by the Council, including those in outsourced services e.g. refuse collection? What plan does the Council have to reduce this number considering they are also encouraging local residents to reduce diesel vehicle usage?

Reply

The Council currently has 96 vehicles in its fleet, this includes one plug-in electric vehicle, which is used as a pool car and one hybrid electric-petrol car, which is the Mayor's vehicle and six petrol cars. The remaining 88 vehicles are diesel. The vast majority of the diesel vehicles are buses or vans rather than cars.

The greenspaces contract with ID Verde uses 18 vehicles, all of which are diesel. On the waste and street cleaning contract with Veolia, 68 are diesel. The vast majority of which are refuse collection vehicles. By entering into joint contracts with neighbouring authorities, we are enabling the contractors to make the most efficient use of the vehicles through cross boundary working and optimisation of the collection rounds thus reducing overall emissions.

The new waste collection service which is due to commence in October 2018 will bring a new fleet of collection vehicles of the most modern and efficient standard thus further reducing emissions compared to the current fleet.

The Council is currently reviewing its in-house Transport Services to ensure it is operating as efficiently and cost effectively as possible. This review will include an analysis of the current fleet and consideration of our future fleet vehicle requirements which will also consider the carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide emissions with an aim to reduce these as much as possible whilst still delivering value for money for our residents.

From: Anthony Fairclough

To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Housing and Regeneration

What actions have been taken by the Council in each of the last 5 years to support tenants in the private rented sector?

Reply

The Council supports private sector tenants in numerous ways over many years, and not just in the last five

This support includes

- 1/ Advice and Assistance on security of tenure and Protection From Eviction
- 2 Advice and Assistance on Housing disrepair
- 3/ Enforcement action against non compliant Landlords in accordance with the Housing Act 2004 and associated Legislation
- 4 / Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation, Housing Act 2004

5/ Appropriate advice and assistance on rehousing options, debt management and welfare reform

6/ Drop in Service on a daily basis for private tenants to meet with officers

7/ Delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants where necessary and appropriate and reasonable and practicable.

From: Richard Hackforth-Jones

To the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

What is the council planning to do in relation to improve support for people with dementia over the next 2 years and how much will the council invest to achieve this?

Reply

Funding for the Dementia Hub for 2017/18 is £239,000. The Council will be re-commissioning the Dementia Hub services in 2018 jointly with the CCG as part of the 2017/18 BCF plan. In addition the council spends approximately £23m on care and support services for older people, some of which goes towards support for people with dementia.

In March 2017 the Council launched its commitment to be a 'Dementia Friendly Community' by 2020. Our aim is to make the day to day life of people living with dementia easier, such as using shops or local services. The launch brought together the Council, CCG, Alzheimer's Society, police and other statutory agencies, voluntary sector and community groups, all committing to take action to make Merton a dementia friendly community.

Over the next two years the Council through the Dementia Action Alliance (DAA) will focus efforts to increase and widen membership of the DAA. We will undertake work to get shops and businesses to undertake Dementia Friends training. Information and awareness raising will also be carried out. Larger projects are also planned including a 'dementia friendly library'.

The Council has plans to be part of the 'Coordinate My Care' project. CMC is a joint approach between health, social care and LAS in identifying residents who are at the 'End of Life' care/Gold Standard Framework. The principles of the CMC are to ensure a multi-disciplinary approach in care/support planning for this client group and also promoting information sharing between relevant organisations.

From: Vincent Bolt

To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Waste

Would it be possible for the council to pull out of the proposed arrangements for wheelie bins/waste collections, if so what would the costs be, now, and after May 2018?

Reply

The Council, in partnership with Croydon, Kingston and Sutton Councils has just let a contract for waste collection that will run for the next 8 years. Under this contract Merton's waste collection arrangements are due to change from October 2018. The

arrangements will be the optimal arrangements to save money, keep the streets clean and increase recycling. As a consequence, the Council will save c£2.2m per annum in operational budgets. The new collection arrangements are expected to increase the recycling rate. The financial impact of this improvement is yet to be fully financially quantified and will be dependent upon market conditions which change over time.

The contractual arrangements can be changed by negotiation with the contractor Veolia. It is not possible to state what the cost of changing the planned waste collection arrangements would be without detailed negotiations with the contractor and also taking into account the financial impact on other parties to the contract.

The Council could withdraw from the contract completely – again it is not possible to state what the cost would be without substantial work but the financial impact would be significant. The change would not only expose the Council to potential breach of contract but also result in further costs of procuring a service together with the liability for any increased costs that would fall to Merton if the cost of the joint contract for the remaining partner boroughs increased as a result of Merton's decision.

From: Claire Bolt

To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Housing and Regeneration

What discussions have the council had with housing associations in Merton in relation to supporting the government's estate regeneration programme - in particular, have the council supported any funding bids to refurbish or rebuild any estates in Merton, such as the funding recently awarded to Clarion?

Reply

The Council has raised the government's estate regeneration programme with another Housing Association with housing stock in the borough who, whilst confirming they were aware of the programme, decided that they did not wish to apply.

From: Emma Maddison

To the Cabinet Member for Environment, Housing and Regeneration

Please could I ask the council how many empty commercial properties were there in the borough in each of the last five years and currently?

Reply

QUESTION TO BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE

The council does not hold data on private properties. However the number of council owned commercial empty properties is as follows:

2012 = 26 Empty Commercial Properties

2013 = 16 Empty

2014 = 8 Empty

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2015 = 6 Empty

2016 = 10 Empty

The current number empty = 9

Please note that the figures for each year includes all those that have become vacant during that year but may have been relet within the year

From: Nicola Reade-Lyons

To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

How can I be sure that my latest subject access request (SAR) won't be heavily redacted or tampered with as has happened on my 3 previous attempts?

Reply

The rules governing disclosure of third party information is covered by section 7(4) of the Data Protection Act. The council will redact information if it cannot comply with a request without disclosing information relating to another individual, who can be identified from that information.

Detailed guidance is found in the ICO's subject access code of practice;
<https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1065/subject-access-code-of-practice.pdf>

From: Andrew Boyce

To the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Does Council agree the importance of listening to the views of local residents on decisions it makes which may impact that community and on which there is strong local support or opposition?

Reply

Broadly speaking, yes we think it is important for the views of residents to be part of the decision making progress. However, we make decisions in the wider interest of all residents, and not those of individual residents. For example, planning applications are on occasion opposed by some residents, and they often believe that their views have "strong local support", but decisions have to be made based on a wider basis than this. Similarly, social media can have a distorting effect on a person's perceptions; he or she may believe that their views have strong support based on a small number of "likes", but the council has to make decisions in the best interests of around 200,000 residents, and that small sample of "likes" is unlikely to be representative.

Supplementary

I wasn't planning to ask a question tonight, but I came along to watch the debate and the discussion on the South Wimbledon Residents Motion but I do now have a question prompted by that. Can the Deputy Leader of the Merton Labour Group please explain why he had the arrogance to amend a residents-led motion on South

Wimbledon which not only undermined the spirit of that motion, but has probably undermined some of the work that has been happening quite successfully thus far on it?

Reply

I'd like to thank you for the supplementary; the debate will come later and I am quite happy for colleagues to talk about it then. The work that the local Councillors for the Labour Party have done in the South Wimbledon Abbey area has been immense in standing up for their constituents and includes a great deal of things that were not included in that motion, and we felt it was important that the work of the whole Community should be recognised and my understanding is that is the reason for the changes. Please do wait around and listen to the debate.

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From Cllr Laxmi Attawar to the Cabinet Member for Education

Could the Cabinet Member update us on progress with the new secondary school planned for South Wimbledon?

Reply

I'm delighted we are on track to open a brand new comprehensive state secondary school in the borough and I know that it is welcomed by many parents who are worried when they look at how other London boroughs are struggling to accommodate increasing numbers of secondary aged children. Luckily in Merton the administration planned for this increase well in advance and is working with Harris, a great local provider who have turned around previously failing schools in Mitcham and are now keen to open a new school in South Wimbledon so that parents and young people at the heart of the borough can also benefit.

With regard to the overall project, the council and the EFA have now agreed terms to acquire and develop a site in the High Path area next door to Merton Abbey Primary School. The building on this site will not be completed until Summer 2020. For the first two years, from September 2018, the academy will operate from Whatley Avenue in the redeveloped adult education centre.

In February and March, the Harris Federation consulted residents in the Wimbledon area on admissions and curriculum issues in respect of their planned new secondary Academy. In advance of signing a funding agreement for the school, the EFA expects the sponsor to provide details of proposed admissions arrangements and sufficient interest in the school from prospective pupils. The Federation has consulted on a proposal to admit pupils from three 'nodal points' at Merton Abbey, and Wimbledon Chase and Park stations. To date over two hundred parents/carers have attended meetings and views on the admissions arrangements have been invited. The council has submitted a response to the consultation with a preference for the school to recruit students from communities close to the site.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for her response. Can she confirm whether we will support Colliers Wood parents who are delighted about the School; they are asking Harris to include Colliers Wood as one of the recommend nodal points for applications.

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Attawar for her supplementary question. As Cabinet Member for Education my responsibility is for all our children to have access to good schools and to help them to achieve their full potential. The shortage of Primacy School places in Primary Schools was met by expanding schools by one form of entry area in the most local area possible. Singlegate Primary School is an outstanding Ofsted rated school in Colliers Wood with no secondary school anywhere near it. We've therefore made a strong case for pupils from Colliers Wood to gain admissions toward the new School. So yes, as Councillor Attawar has said,

parents and ordinary residents are very excited about the new school and have shouted a lot about it; they came up with a campaign “speak up for Colliers Wood” which was very popular not only with parents but with neighbours and everyone in Colliers Wood encouraging them to go and vote for it, so we hope that will help.

From Councillor Brian Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking:

What measures is the Cabinet Member taking to increase the use of the garden waste collection service?

Reply

Under our new contractual agreement Veolia provide a dedicated education and engagement team who will promote the garden waste service to ensure residents are aware of the scheme, encourage take up and minimise the impact on other services. Veolia will work closely with the Borough to increase the take up rate by an estimated 5% over the next two years. In addition, the cost of the garden waste scheme is being kept as low as possible to cover the costs of the service whilst keeping it at a rate that still retains existing customers and attracts new ones.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response. Firstly, can he categorically confirm that it was he who took the decision to abolish concessions for the Garden Waste Service. Secondly, why does he think it is acceptable to increase the charge by 40% for retirees and residents on benefits. Thirdly, how does he intend to ensure that residents don't have their bins stolen or lost, given that if they do, they will be charged yet again by the Council?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Lewis-Lavender for his supplementary. In these challenging financial times we are having to look to deliver a service that meets expectations of residents whilst also keeping Council Tax affordable; so there will be changes to the service and we will see the full implementation in October 2018.

From Cllr Imran Uddin to the Leader of the Council

What response has the Leader had to his letter to the government about Surrey's social care funding arrangement?

Reply

I am not aware of any reply from government to this joint letter from council Leaders which I was happy to put my name to.

Supplementary

06: Non ST Questions

I'd like to thank the Leader for his response. I was just wondering whether he is as appalled as I am that he has not received a response from the Government in relation to this sweetheart deal with Surrey County Council, and whether he expects Merton to be offered a similar deal?

Reply

I thank Councillor Uddin for his original question, raising a very important issue on sweetheart deals between the Government and their Tory chums in Tory Councils, and the possibility of sweetheart deals for other Councils. I doubt whether we will get any sweetheart deals; the only answer I see is from BBC Surrey about the Leader of Surrey Council David Hodge and the fact that he is pleased that he will be getting from this government £21 million, plus fast tracking into for a pilot for business retention, whereas here in the London Borough of Merton we may get a tenth of that and no way through any kind of sweetheart deal. Absolutely appalling stuff from the Tory Government in favour of a Tory Council.

From Councillor Oonagh Moulton the Cabinet Member for Finance:

Please can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the plethora of problems that have followed the launch of the long awaited new e5 Financial Information System, and in particular the impact of these difficulties on the ability of Merton Council to close its accounts at the end of the 2016-17 financial year?

Reply

Teething problems are often experienced when implementing a new system, along with changes in procedures. Whilst there were problems with the implementation of the new finance system, these are now being resolved and the system is working far better now than it was eight weeks ago.

Problems with the implementation included a fault that meant that the organisation was unable to order stationery from our supplier Office Depot, some of our suppliers being paid later than they, or we, would expect, some issues with direct debit payments from some of the council's customers, and it being harder than we would like for the organisation to carry out purchasing and debt collection related tasks.

Thanks to the hard work of the team involved, in terms of closing the accounts, the processes and reports that we need to run have all been carried out as planned and as expected and we are working through the closing process in the normal way. So far, there doesn't seem to be any cause for concern. In addition, our external auditors EY have done testing which provides additional assurance, as they have 'identified no significant issues to date'.

There are still a number of issues to work through but once this process is completed the Council will have a far better financial system than it did previously and be better

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placed to ensure that we have the reporting and controls in place to ensure the highest quality of financial management in the organisation.

Supplementary

I understand that amongst other things, a number of Council contractors and Local Businesses haven't been paid or in full. Given the administrations' claims to run a business friendly council, can the Cabinet Member tell me who is going to take responsibility for all these delays in our functions, and will there be an enquiry as to how on earth the debacle has happened?

Reply

Thank you for the follow up. Of course when new systems are introduced it is quite common for there to be teething problems, this not being without problems in this particular case. We all have some responsibility for that because we all as an organisation recognise it is important to make changes to systems that are not working. When you replace one system that is not working and try and implement a new one, most organisations find that there is a transition period. As a Business Like organisation we could not possibly carry on with a system that was liable to breakdown and we felt therefore that it was important therefore to replace it with the new one. There has been a transitional problem, we are working on that, things are getting better, and we will do our best to ensure that our Contractors and our Residents get the sort of service that they should expect. Making no decision and making no changes would be worse than doing what we are doing now and I think it is important to recognise the great work of our Officers, our staff and the Councillors who scrutinise them, for looking at things like this and making sure that when you need to introduce new systems you do and then you learn from the mistakes that are made with the introduction.

Cllr Sally Kenny to the Leader of the Council

What work is the council doing to protect services at St Helier hospital?

Reply

The Council is fully committed to protecting services at St Helier hospital and has taken all opportunities to remind the local NHS about this commitment. In line with the recently agreed motion to full council,, we are currently publicising the meeting the NHS is holding to discuss the STP and we are encouraging residents to turn up at that meeting and to make their voices heard and make clear that we will not countenance any downgrade of services at our local hospital.

Supplementary

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I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response and ask him if he is surprised that the NHS did not mention that their meeting on the 25th April is about the STP and planned possible Services Closure?

Reply

I thank Councillor Sally Kenny for her original question on a very important issue regarding the NHS and our Local Hospital and for her supplementary. The answer is no, I am not at all surprised that the local NHS did not mention their meeting of the 25th April, which I shall be attending, is all about the STP and plans for Hospital Service Closures especially to do with St Helier Hospital. And it is this side of the Chamber that will do all it can to advertise that meeting, to encourage residents to go to that meeting, to support St Helier Hospital and to do all it can to make sure there is no downgrading of any services at St Helier Hospital and I urge the others on the other side to be there, arguing the same arguments, which they've not done for the last 8 years.

From Cllr Gilli Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:

How much would it have cost if the new Morden leisure centre previously approved by the Council back in 2010 had been built in 2014 to the same full specification?

Reply

It is impossible to calculate the costs retrospectively since the specification we have for the new Morden Leisure Centre was not put out to the market at any time between 2010 and 2014. Pricing would have been dependent on a number of factors including the contemporary market forces, labour markets and material prices as well as improved, cheaper construction methods.

Supplementary

I'm surprised you haven't heard the work accurate, having said that given that you seem to be unable to calculate the difference between 2010 and now; it doesn't take a lot of working out that obviously nowadays it is going to be a lot more expensive. Having said that, will the Cabinet Member, I do thank him for his reply; does he now regret the administration not pressing ahead with the Conservative plans for a new Leisure Centre in Morden, and will he apologise to Merton tax payers for depriving them of valuable use of facilities for keeping fit and healthy?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Lewis-Lavender for her further question and I look forward to joining in the debate later on this evening. No, I have no apologies to make. In 2010, first of all I was told that because of the building construction costs at the time it would cost more than it would cost us now to do so. But more to the point, we had, as you will remember, we had a crisis in our Primary Schools at that time, and we were involved in heavy building at the time and I wanted to make sure that the reserves that we had were going to be used towards that in preference to anything

else. We found later on in 2013/14 that we did have the money to spare so we used it. But going back to her question, if a Tardis were actually invented, I am sure that she and her colleagues would much prefer not back to 2010 back to before 2010 when you had 4 years in which to do this building yourself. You didn't, you put money aside, that's all you did. You could have built it, you didn't build it; there is no point in telling us now that we were wrong not to do what you didn't do.

From Cllr Jerome Neil to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Given the rising concern about the growing numbers in temporary housing, what action is the cabinet member taking to address the issue?

Reply

The Council is well aware of the growing issue of homelessness and is aware that currently there are 74,000 households in temporary accommodation in England with over 50,000 of those in the London area.

The Council has for many years managed to maintain its position of having the lowest number of homeless households in temporary accommodation in London and this have been achieved by having a robust homelessness assessment process and being committed to homeless prevention. As at the end of February 2017 there were 188 households in temporary accommodation being accommodated by the Council under the provisions of the Housing Act 1996, Part 7.

Homeless Prevention Activities assist households avoid the trauma that a homelessness episode brings. These activities include, working with excluders and private Landlords to prevent homelessness, providing legal advice on housing issues including security of tenure and debt advice. Where homelessness cannot be avoided officers work with households to identify an alternative housing solution so that a planned move, wherever possible, can be achieved.

Additionally the Council continues to explore the how it can improve its offer to homeless households and will of course need to consider and adopt any changes that might flow from the Homeless Reduction Bill which is currently awaiting Royal Assent.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response. Does the Cabinet Member think we do enough to tackle the challenge of homelessness?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Neil for his supplementary question. I think it is very concerning in terms of Government and Homelessness. We have 190 people in temporary accommodation in Merton, although this is the lowest, it is 190 too many. As a Council the government does need to act, because across London, more and more people are actually being priced out, with benefit caps but also as well the lack

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of generally affordable supply of housing, so it does take us as a Council to work collectively to ensure that there is more of a supply and I am working closely with Housing Associations identifying areas for further temporary housing accommodation. But it also takes the Government to act. It is unacceptable that communities are being broken up, that many people are being forced to move outside of London and people who have jobs here, people who have their children here, people who have grown up in the Borough; I find that absolutely heart-breaking. Whilst the Council can do something, it is also a crisis across London and it does take the Government as well to act upon the matter.

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

Since 2014 how many street cleaners' jobs have been cut in Merton?

Reply

Between April 2014 – March 2016 the street cleansing service operated with 57FTE for manual litter picking. This was reduced in 2016/17 by 7FTE following the introduction of 5 electric Glutton sweeping machines. This was part of the budget setting / MTFS process.

Veolia will implement a Neighbourhood Approach to deliver the street cleaning operations which will allow the needs of local areas to be understood and addressed and ensure our staff becomes an integrated part of the local community. As well as utilising the operatives for manual litter picking and sweeping, Veolia will be introducing 2 new large mechanical sweepers and 4 small mechanical sweepers.

It is important to note that the contract is an output based specification and as such the inputs and staffing numbers are the responsibility and risk of the contractor.

Supplementary

Thank you to the Cabinet Member for his answer. The fact is, there has been a 39% reduction in street cleaners since April 2014, with Veolia proposing to cut another 5 posts. Residents already complain that they hardly ever see street cleaners or sweeping machines at work. What assurances can the cabinet member give me that under Veolia the cleanliness of residential streets will be any better with fewer staff and what will the service reductions in his Phase C contract as its disguised as efficiencies?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Daniel Holden for his supplementary, I think most of it is going to be covered in a later debate, but what I will say to you, and what I've already said tonight, is that we are having to battle against these financial challenges that have come from Central Government and to provide a service that is both

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affordable and will deliver a great service to residents is what we are delivering here at Merton and you'll see that in October 2018.

From Cllr Pauline Cowper to the Leader of the Council

How is the council supporting businesses in the borough?

Reply

The council is support businesses in a wide variety of ways. We have just won an award for being "small business friendly" by making it much easier for local companies to bid for council contracts. This is the third "Small Business Friendly borough" award that Merton has won in the past four years.

Over the past two years over 70 businesses in Merton have benefitted from our "Brighter Business" programme, helping to reduce running costs for local businesses www.merton.gov.uk/what-businesses-can-do We have recently published advice for small shops on improving their shop fronts, including an interactive toolkit. With the support of the GLA, we are improving the shop fronts and investing in signage, lighting and the overall appearance of Morden Court parade.

We continue to work closely with Merton Chamber of Commerce on a range of programmes, including The Generator business centre, home to 23 start ups employing over 150 people. We are also working with Business Improvement Districts in LoveWimbledon; Willow Lane and the emerging South Wimbledon Business Area. www.merton.gov.uk/business/businesssupport

For business rates, Merton Council has a local business rate discount scheme. At present this scheme is designed to encourage businesses to occupy empty business premises in our area. It is run in addition to government's statutory business rates relief programme. A hardship relief scheme is also available for struggling businesses.

We have recently worked closely with South Wimbledon Business Association to support the Business Improvement District and with Wimbledon Village B.A. to fund the feasibility of a BID in that area.

Supplementary

Could I congratulate you on again winning the Best Small Business Friendly Borough and could he comment on the pressure facing the Local Businesses facing an increase in their Business rates?

Reply

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I want to thank Councillor Pauline Cowper for her very important question on small businesses and for her equally excellent supplementary. As a former football referee, I didn't see many hat tricks on the pitch, but here in the London Borough of Merton we do have a hat trick; a hat trick of awards for the Small Business Friendly Borough, awarded by London Councils. London Councils is made up of 32 boroughs, including a 33rd that is the City of London Local Authority non party organisation that recognises the excellent work of this Business Like Council led by Labour in Merton. Business rates are set by the Government of the day, they call it uniform business rates, it is uniform throughout the country, set by the national government; we are simply collectors of this tax. It is a Labour government that introduced the Small Business Rate Relief that we are doing our level best to help small businesses in this borough including a discount scheme. In terms of the recent evaluation, that is all down to this tory government applying more pressure on small businesses and we are seeing an increase in the number of empty shops purely down to the government's business rates system. Thank you madam mayor.

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Cllr Abigail Jones to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Will the cabinet member update council on when he expects a further consultation on Crossrail 2 and Wimbledon?

Reply

Transport for London has been reviewing the business case for Crossrail2, details of which were submitted to the Department of Transport and HM Treasury earlier this calendar year. It is hoped that further government project support will be forthcoming in the coming months, but there is no fixed date for the consideration of the business case or for any consultation that might follow. Additional information is available at crossrail2.co.uk

We have been clear as a council that the original proposals for Wimbledon are unacceptable, and that any revised scheme needs to enhance business and retail in the town centre. On a cross-party basis representations were made on the need for changes and on the need to ensure that any revised scheme does not cause economic detriment to the borough.

The council have also strongly supported a station at Tooting Broadway instead of Balham as it will improve transport accessibility from the Mitcham and Colliers Wood area to central London along with providing relief to the Northern Line. It will also provide economic opportunities for the east of the borough by supporting business and helping to bring jobs to the borough

An update on Crossrail 2 is included within the Strategic Theme Report - Sustainable Travel item 2.5 to this meeting.

Supplementary

I thank the Cabinet Member for his answer to my question. Can he outline how we are working with local businesses on Crossrail 2 proposals to protect areas affected?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Abigail Jones for her supplementary question. We are working very closely with business in the Town Centre, both with the Chamber of Commerce and LoveWimbledon. I've also met with the Leader of Close Brothers of who are a major employer in the Town Centre and will be impacted by Crossrail 2. I think its important that business needs certainty and I think the current level of uncertainty is not helpful at all for the Town Centre people, because we want business to thrive, and I believe as a result of Crossrail 2 it will allow businesses to grow and attract businesses to the town centre. As I've said before many times at Council the original proposals were unacceptable they do need to change. I'd also like to add that we have met with business owners at Weir Road who again will be impacted by Crossrail 2. Business is a key component in the borough we have on may occasions been recognised as a Small Business Friendly Borough and we have a track record of working closely with business, it is something we will continue to do.

Crossrail 2 has many many benefits for businesses but it is also important that we do keep jobs in the borough and we have a strong business rates base.

From Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking:

Can the Cabinet Member please tell me a) how many electric vehicle charging points there now are in Merton; b) how that figure compares with all other London boroughs; c) what the total capital cost was of the installation of these charging points; d) what the estimated revenue to the Council is due to be from electric vehicles; and e) how many residents' parking permits have been issued in total for electric vehicles in Merton since the start of 2017?

Reply

The Council has facilitated the delivery of 19 (fast) on-street charging points at nine locations, with one location still subject to statutory public consultation. Once complete the council intends to work with SourceLondon to install a further batch of around 20 electric vehicle charging point bays during 2017/18. SourceLondon provide a useful map of electric charge points across London: www.sourcelondon.net/stations which shows how we compare.

Installations are provided at no charge to the council. From these charging points there will be an annual income of approximately £6,200 to the council. The use of electric vehicles is significantly higher across central and inner London boroughs, which translates in greater requirement for charging infrastructure. This has perhaps been motivated by free entry to the central London Congestion Charge Zone, which offers significant financial savings for car owners.

Separately we are also working with Transport for London to facilitate up to 10 rapid charge points, including dedicated taxi charge points. The Council has not issued any electric vehicle parking permits since the start of 2017.

Supplementary

I thank the Cabinet Member for his answer. How much and with what regularity have the new electric charging points been used since they went live in February, what positive measures is he taking to encourage residents both to switch to electric vehicles but also to ensure that any future costs incurred by the Council apart from this initiative are properly recovered?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Simpson for his supplementary. I can provide that information at a later stage to you and am quite happy to do so. I would like to mention that as part of the Diesel levy, we are also looking to reduce the permits for residents that have electric vehicles to £25 to encourage the uptake of electric vehicle users in our borough.

From Cllr John Dehaney to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Would the cabinet member outline the action Merton Council is taking to reduce vehicle emissions?

Reply

The council is currently finalising a new Air Quality Action Plan for 2017-22, this contains a number of measures the council can take to help reduce pollution. Specifically with regards to vehicle emissions, this includes;

- Delivery vehicles re-timing trial, specifically around focus areas to try to mitigate the impact of delivery vehicles on the road network.
- Review procurement contract for outsourced transport services.
- Detailed assessment of traffic management solutions for Focus Areas and air quality 'hotspots' to ensure that we identify areas that can be improved.
- As legislation is changing there is an opportunity to look at the possibility of 'Mini 'Ultra-Low Emission Zones' for AQ Focus Areas and pollution 'hotspots' in Merton.
- Formalise proposed anti- idling enforcement arrangements.
- Continued provision and expansion of EV charge infrastructure
- We will look at free or discounted parking charges at existing parking meters for zero emission cars.
- Continue and review the diesel emissions based parking levy for residential and business parking permits in Merton.
- Continue to provide and expand infrastructure to support walking and cycling across the borough.
- Supporting our colleagues in the GLA in proposed changes to extend the ULEZ for polluting vehicles.

Supplementary

I thank the Cabinet Member for his response to my question. Would he agree that our children's health can't be sacrificed for political point scoring, and that now is the time to take action on air pollution?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Dehaney for his supplementary. The simple answer is yes, the time is now to take action and I am glad that people in higher offices than we hold in Merton Council are now getting on board with the actual issue of air pollution, that is really bad for our young children but also vulnerable adults who are disproportionately affected by poor air quality. I think it is a testament to this borough that we are leading with the introduction of the Diesel Levy to help improve air quality in this borough.

From Cllr Abdul Latif to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:

Residents of Trinity ward have complained once again to the Council about the potential danger to pedestrians from cyclists and motorbike riders speeding along the Wandle Trail in Wandle Meadow Nature Park.

In addition, a 15metre long section of its wooden fence along Chaucer Way has been removed while its other sections remain damaged and broken.

Can the Cabinet Member explain why public safety in the park is being compromised and ignored?

Reply

We are not aware of any recent substantial issues with motorcycle activity in Wandle Meadow Nature Park. Assuming that this does occur then this would be an issue for police intervention and action; I would therefore encourage residents to report any incidents to the police using the 101 service.

Following consultation with the Trinity ward councillors it was agreed that the pathway through the park between Haydons Road Rec and the path to Chaucer Way be designated a joint footpath and London network cycle quietway. Cyclists will be expected to respect other park users as is the case with all quietways through London parks. Whilst physical interventions, such as gates and barriers, can impede both motorcyclists and cyclists, these measures also reduce access for other park users, particularly those using wheel chairs or mobility scooters.

I am aware that some of the fencing around the nature park, installed over 30 years ago, is in poor repair. Our intention is to remove or replace it over time, budgets permitting. The site is not intended to be entirely fenced so not all fencing is replaced unless it is required to keep the public safe. The fencing around the park is often surveyed by the Greenspaces team and our contractor *idverde*, and if there is a risk to the public then appropriate measures are considered and are introduced.

Supplementary

I thank the Cabinet Member for his answer. Barriers have been used in the borough to slow down cyclists and motorbike riders speeding on public paths. Can the Cabinet Member consider installing barriers in Wandle Park to slow down speeding cyclists?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Latif for his question. I can't guarantee to do that, there was a consultation which you took part in I believe and it didn't mention any such barriers. We will look at it again, that is a promise, and if it proves to be the case that making changes to the barriers would help then we will look at it.

From Councillor Peter Southgate to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment, and Housing

In the light of growing concern about air pollution in Merton and in particular its effects on the health of our most vulnerable residents, what plans does the Cabinet member have to monitor air quality in the immediate vicinity of our schools – especially primary schools?

Reply

Since January of this year and as a demonstration of Merton's commitment to Air Quality, we have increased our Nitrous Dioxide diffusion tube network from 20 sites to 52 to give us a better picture of pollution in our borough.

One of the measures in our new Air Quality Action Plan is to undertake Air Quality audits of schools in areas of poor air quality. This is to identify measures that both the council and schools may need to take to protect our children.

These measures could possibly include:

- Enforce no engine idling schemes around schools
- Impose changes to local roads to restrict polluting vehicles around schools
- Pedestrianisation of roads near school entrances
- Introduce green infrastructure around schools to absorb/disrupt pollutant dispersion
- Formalise walking buses for large numbers of children, by funding a paid walking bus 'conductor' similar to the school crossing supervisor.

We are also engaging with schools to provide greater awareness about air pollution , to encourage sustainable travel plans and to encourage parents to transport children to school in more sustainable / less polluting ways.

Supplementary

I would like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response. This is wholly encouraging and I'm very pleased to see the practical measures that are set out. I wonder if he would join me in commending work of the Sustainable Communities Task Group who investigated air pollution and further underline his commitment to scrutiny by asking his Cabinet colleagues to take place in the annual scrutiny survey tabled this evening and to join me in encouraging all members to complete this survey.

Reply

Can I just thank the work of scrutiny over the last year in terms of scrutinising this issue; you make a considerable contribution to the Council, you've chaired that Committee for 11 years now, it is something that we take extremely seriously as a borough, reducing air pollution has to happen, part of that I believe will be from the introduction of the Diesel Levy but also as well through taking a number of different measures.

From Cllr Dennis Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

How will the mayor's housing zone for Morden and the plans to build over 1,000 residential units be supported by transport improvements?

Reply

In 2015 the council successfully bid to Transport for London's Major Schemes fund to consider transport improvements in Morden town centre associated with Morden's housing zone. Although Morden has excellent public transport access – with an underground station, many bus routes and a nearby train and tram stop – an important part of the MoreMorden proposals are to make the town centre more attractive and less like only a transport interchange. Transport for London are undertaking traffic modelling and other assessments and these results and the potential for transport and public realm improvements will be shared during the next MoreMorden consultation. We are also working with Transport for London on the consideration of tramlink between Morden and Sutton and we will also benefit in due course from increased capacity on the Northern Line. For more information, please see our regular newsletters and updates to the council's website: www.merton.gov.uk/moremorden

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his reply, could he outline what work in action is being taken to improve the Town Centre layout?

Reply

This is something that we are working closely with TFL in terms of looking at the layout of the Town Centre, I don't know about colleagues here, but when you walk out of Morden Tube Station and see a whole row of buses in front of it, it is extremely uninviting so we would obviously like changes to happen in terms of where the buses are in Morden. Also as well looking at the Town Centre as well, the one way system; it is TFL roads but we can work as a partner because we want to regenerate Morden, the housing zone I believe, will bring many additional people into it as well, but also act as a catalyst for supporting and regenerating the Town Centre but also as well improving the local environment. So I look forward to working with Councillors in Morden in improving the look and feel of Morden and we hope that they can be brought forward over the next few years as part of the Morden Housing Zone and Regeneration scheme which I have set out.

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

What action is the Cabinet Member taking to reduce pollution from moving or static vehicles?

Reply

See answer to Question from Councillor Dehaney

Supplementary

Thank you to the Cabinet Member for his response. Why has he now decided to introduce anti-idle legislation when I asked for this previously outside South Wimbledon Station and outside such sites like Schools in my ward. Why is he going ahead with it now and talking about air quality when he didn't before?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Holden for his supplementary. I can only speak for since I've been a Cabinet Member and I don't recall seeing any of your representations about the anti-idleing. What I would say is that as a Council we are committed to improving air quality and we will look at every measure to further that aim, and in due course an air quality action plan will be published by this Council and it will incorporate a whole host of avenues that we can explore.

From Cllr Agatha Akyigyina to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

Can the cabinet member update council on what action the council is taking to improve road safety outside schools?

Reply

The Council works closely with schools on School Travel Plans to help address safety issues. In recent years, the Council has worked closely with Merton's schools to:

- Develop and review School Travel Plans with the council's dedicated School Travel Plan officer to establish safe access to and from school for all users, by all means of transport.
- Work closely with schools to deliver road safety education / training to children, both off road (in the playground) and then on-road, for example to teach pedestrian safety to primary schoolchildren
www.merton.gov.uk/kerbcraft and using memorable mascots such as Debra the Zebra www.merton.gov.uk/debra
- We have also introduced physical measures where necessary such as traffic calming measures, controlled crossing points, school beacons and appropriate road markings associated with a 20mph speed limits within the vicinity of schools.
- Use school crossing patrol officers or lollipop as they are affectionately known, to help children cross and reinforce good driver behaviour
www.merton.gov.uk/schoolcrossingpatrols
- Council officers will continue to work closely with traffic police and the schools to address any serious incidences.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response and I'd like to ask him does he think that it is right that we prioritise childrens' safety outside of Schools?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Akyigyina for her supplementary. It is completely right that we do prioritise safety of children outside schools. As a Council we work closely I know with a number of Councillors in this Chamber in terms of safety measures; 20mph zones outside of schools, traffic calming, but ensuring the environment as well is safe. I think one of the things that I certainly myself pick up is the concern that people have about people parking on double yellow lines outside schools and I know the Council has taken action. But it is also important as well that children are safe, that we make an environment to actually encourage children to walk to School, I know many parents do walk their children to school and I hope a lot more do walk their children to school because we have got less correspondence from local residents about cars now. She is right, we do take Road Safety extremely seriously and we do as well work very closely with a number of Schools throughout the borough in terms of road safety and it continues to be a priority for this administration.

From Councillor Michael Bull to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing:

What measures has the council taken to encourage cycling over the last year?

Reply

The council introduced a variety of measures to encourage cycling over the last year

In partnership with Transport for London and the Mitcham Common Conservators, the Council introduced a new shared cycle and footway on Croydon Road. This provides an off-road link along a busy highway to help connect Tooting / Streatham through Mitcham to Croydon and Sutton.

We have also been working with Sustrans / TfL to maximise cycle provisions along Quietways and bridge the gap between such routes that falls onto the public highway. We also provide secure cycle parking provision across the borough. Some key details can be found within the Scrutiny Panel's Strategic Theme Report - Sustainable Travel available at this meeting. More information can be viewed on the Council's website www.merton.gov.uk/cyclequietways

As well as the physical measures, we also provide an extensive programme of safety and cycle training for people of all ages who live, work or study in Merton. To help children be safe, confident cyclists we run off-road training programmes at Merton's primary schools for beginners, on-road programmes with schools for children who are improving cyclists and a series of holiday cycle training courses for children: www.merton.gov.uk/cyclingproficiency

We also facilitate three different levels of cycle training for adults, from beginners through to commuter proficiency www.merton.gov.uk/adultcycling to encourage safe cycling.

The cycle training programmes are funded by Transport for London in line with the Mayor's Transport Strategy.

Supplementary

I thank the cabinet member for his response. What progress is the Council making to join up our Cycle network with those in adjoining boroughs and in providing safe storage space to reduce the surge in bike thefts in Wimbledon in particular?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Bull for his supplementary. In terms of reducing thefts in Wimbledon Town Centre in particular I think its about working closely with Police in the Town Centre and I know my colleague Councillor Macauley as the Cabinet Member for Community Safety has raised this issue with me, because theft is something that needs to be taken extremely seriously but its also as well working closely that secure environment for bikes to be stored. In terms of working closely with other boroughs, I know in terms of the cycleway across Croydon Road which falls in my ward that we did work closely with Croydon and I think it's important that we work closely with all Boroughs but ultimately its for them to take the decision. I think I would like to see ultimately the cycle hire scheme be extended to Merton I think it would bring considerable benefits and it is something we will certainly raise with the Cycling Commissioner for the Mayor; it takes a wider approach across London and I would urge all councillors I think its get on a bike and ride.

From Cllr Russell Makin to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment, and Housing

How will the award of the new South West train franchise to First/MTL impact on train services in Merton?

Reply

The new seven-year South West Train franchise between First Group and MTR will start on 20 August 2017. SWT network stations in Merton include Motspur Park, Raynes park and Wimbledon Stations. Aspirations for step free access at these locations remain linked to the delivery of Crossrail 2.

Non- physical improvements include expanded use and flexibility of smart ticketing/mobile services e.g. A new flexible season ticket for passengers working fewer than 5 days a week, better free wifi at stations and on board trains, improved customer compensation scheme and better help for passengers during periods of disruption. Sunday services should also be improved.

Officers are seeking an early meeting with the new franchise to discuss their proposal for the borough on more detail.

Supplementary

Thank you for your answer to my question the Cabinet Member. What is your view on the refusal of the secretary of state to transfer oversight of this service to TFL?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Makin for his supplementary. As I mentioned at the last meeting it was of particular concern that the transport secretary Chris Grayling has abandoned plans to transfer franchises within London to TFL. It had been planned for the Southwestern franchise in 2021 to be transferred to the mayor; that's not going to happen. TFL have a track record of improvements to train services but also as well in terms of reliability and the look and feel of stations. In terms of the new franchise itself, I hope that it does deliver benefits for hard-pressed commuters in this borough. But I do live in hope, because the record of train franchises to date, especially with Southern, has not been particularly good and First and other franchises that they have run which included the First capital connect which is now again Thameslink, they didn't do a particularly good job of that. Commuters in this borough deserve a good service, we know there is a need for more capacity, so I do look forward to working with First and MTR and we will be very robust as an authority standing up for commuters in this Borough.