

Merton Council Council

12 July 2017

Supplementary agenda

21 Councillor Non-Priority Questions and Answers

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Councillor non priority questions

From Councillor David Williams to the Leader of the Council:

Would the Leader please list the meetings and correspondence he has had since the last ordinary meeting of the Council on 12th April 2017 to save St Helier Hospital?

Reply

Since 12 April I have:

- Agreed a comprehensive report at the 3 July cabinet meeting which set down on record the council's absolute opposition to any plans in the STP (Sustainability and Transformation Plan) to downgrade or close St Helier Hospital and committed the council to vigorously fighting any such proposal.
- In relation to the plans by the CCG to downgrade the hospital, publicly declared in the Wimbledon Guardian that "Merton Council could not be clearer in our opposition to any closure of services at St Helier Hospital" and "We will fight any government plans to destroy our precious local hospitals with all our might"
- Worked hard to ensure the re-election of our excellent local MP Siobhain McDonagh who has been a stalwart champion of St Helier hospital and who I truly believe is the reason the hospital has survived at least five attempts to close it.
- Raised the issue of better collaboration between hospitals and local services at numerous meetings of London Councils and South London Partnership and linked this with the need to keep acute service at St Helier hospital open.

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

Given that the administration's new diesel tax has raised £88,000 within just 2 months, please will the Cabinet Member provide full details for Members of the specific initiatives for improving air quality which the Council intends to spend the new income they have received on along with a clear implementation timetable for each of these projects?

Reply

By law, any revenue surpluses generated from the parking services account must be spent on transport related schemes including the monitoring of vehicle emissions (and also including the Freedom Pass). The specific initiatives for improving air quality together with an estimated timetable are contained in Merton's Draft Air Quality Action Plan (Page 9, Table 1) and these can be categorised as follows:

- Emissions from developments and buildings
- Public health and awareness raising
- Delivery servicing and freight
- Borough fleet actions
- Localised solutions
- Cleaner transport

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From **Councillor Suzanne Grocott** to the **Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking**:

Can the Cabinet Member tell me:

- a) the percentage of food waste collected in Merton i) when food waste liners were distributed directly to residents' homes; ii) when the liners were supplied only via the borough's libraries and iii) since the provision of caddy liners has been stopped altogether?
- b) Whether, rather than simply stopping the service altogether, the council has considered selling the food waste liners from libraries to generate income?

Reply

Over the last 5 years the level of food waste has remained constant and currently represents between 6-7% of the total residual waste collected.

The table below illustrates the percentage of food collected from domestic household over the last 5 years and the level of provision provided by the council.

YEAR	%	Service Provision
13/14	7%	Free liner delivered to every household
14/15	7%	Free liner delivered to every household
15/16	6%	Free liner delivered to every household
16/17	6%	Liners distributed free from Libraries
17/18 (YTD)	7%	Provision of free liner removed

We continue to review our services and look for areas of efficiency and revenue income. We have looked into selling liners from our libraries and council buildings however this requires an increased level of stock control and regular deliveries due to limited capacity to store the boxed sacks at the individual sites. In addition to this there is the cost of additional administration to take cash payments from multiple sites. This additional cost would not be cost effective for our residents who can readily purchase liners from all high street supermarkets or on line.

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

Please can the Cabinet Member tell me:

- a) How many PCNs were issued in Merton for environmental offences (fly tipping, graffiti etc.) in the last financial year ending 31st March 2017?
- b) How many of these PCNs were paid?

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- c) How many PCNs have been issued in Merton for environmental offences (fly tipping, graffiti etc.) in the current financial year since April 2017?
- d) How many of these PCNs have so far been paid?

Reply

- a) 5996 FPN's issued
- b) 4435 FPN's have been paid
- c) 1430 FPN's have been issued
- d) 909 FPN's have been paid so far we are still have a payment process time scale on some of these tickets awaiting payment

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

Please can the Cabinet Member tell me:

- a) How many enforcement officers are currently employed in Merton by Kingdom Environmental Protection Services compared to April 2015?
- b) How many environmental enforcement officers are currently employed by Merton Council compared to April 2015?
- c) What is the cost of employing Kingdom Environmental Protection Services and how does this compare with the cost of Merton Council's own directly employed environmental enforcement officers?
- d) What is the current cost per PCN issued in Merton for environmental crime?

Reply

- a) April 2015: 5 Kingdom Enforcement Officers
July 2017: 5 Kingdom Enforcement Officers
April 2015: 4 LBM Enforcement Officers
July 2017: 5 LBM Enforcement Officers
- b) The Council's agreement with Kingdom Security Limited is to provide additional enforcement officers for littering and dog fouling offences in high footfall areas where littering is most prevalent and enforcement is effective. The Council does not pay Kingdom according to the number of officers employed by Kingdom within Merton. The business model has been designed to be cost neutral for the Council. The model works on the basis that the Council receives the full revenue income for the Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) and from this revenue pay Kingdom Security a proportion for each correctly issued FPN. The objective is to address the fact that people littering on our streets is now the number one concern of our residents.

Our internal team have a far greater range of responsibilities beyond focusing on littering enforcement within high footfall areas. They carry out engagement activities to educate and inform residents and commuters about the penalties associated with littering and encourage them to act responsibly with regard to their litter. They also engage with businesses to ensure they have commercial waste contracts in place and present their waste responsibly. They also carry out investigations relating to fly-tipping offences and

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abandoned vehicles. Given the nature of the offences, these activities do not result in as many FPNs but still play a valuable part in keeping the borough clean. The total cost of the 5 Environmental Enforcement Officers is circa £187,000.

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) can be issued for the following offences:

- Litter offence £80 issued by (Merton Enforcement Officers/Kingdom)
- Small fly tips £400 issued by (Merton Enforcement officers) Duty of care (business waste)
- £300 issued by (Merton Enforcement Officers)
- Abandonment of a vehicle £200 issued by (Merton Enforcement Officers)
- Urinating FPN £80
- Spitting FPN £80

From **Councillor Janice Howard** to the **Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking**:

Can the Cabinet Member tell me a) how many complaints have been received from i) businesses and ii) residents about missed waste collections since the waste contract passed to Veolia, and b) how this compares with the level of complaints that were being received prior to the handover?

Reply

Veolia took over the operational management for waste collection in April 2017. This has been supported by the new Customer Relationship Management system (CRM). This new enhanced service allows residents to directly report missed collection, fly tipping and street cleansing issues on line rather than calling the council or in many cases contacting waste services direct.

Over the last 3 months we have received 381 Stage 1 complaints regarding waste and street cleaning services.

This compares to 124 Stage 1 complaints for the same period last year (Quarter 1 2016 / 17).

Unfortunately we are unable to filter this data between commercial and domestic services.

From **Councillor Suzanne Grocott** to the **Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**:

Residents in Edna Road have faced problems with flooding as a result of blocked gulleys. What measures is the Council able to take to recoup the cost of repairing damage of this kind which is caused by builders or other such companies operating irresponsibly e.g. by mixing cement on or near the public highway?

Reply

The council can use powers under the Highways act 1980 to prosecute the individuals or companies concerned if we can definitively identify the individual or

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company who has committed an offence, such as pouring building waste into road gullies. If we have clear evidence that a utility company has caused defects to our highway drains, the Highway Authority (the Council) can take action to recover costs under the New Road and Streetworks Act 1991.

If residents or anybody else has clear evidence against a particular individual or company that such an offence has been committed, please send all details to the council's FutureMerton team by contacting us on future.merton@merton.gov.uk or by writing to us at FutureMerton, London Borough of Merton, Civic Centre, Morden SM4 5DX. A successful prosecution will require people to come forward as witnesses with their evidence and is likely to involve court attendance.

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

Some councils are considering charging residents to take their own bags of waste to the reuse and recycling centre. Can the Cabinet Member guarantee that Merton Council is not going to start charging residents to use the Garth Road facility?

Reply

There are currently no plans to introduce a charging scheme for residents to dispose of domestic waste at our recycling facility in Garth Rd.

Under current legislation we are not allowed to charge residents for the disposal of domestic waste. In line with this legislation our re-use and recycling site is only permitted by the Environment Agency to take domestic waste. To safeguard the council against abuse from both residents and builders we do limit the amount of hard-core / DIY which can be taken into the site at ½ tonne per household but we do not charge for this waste.

As suggested some councils are considering introducing a charge per bag/ sack. This is in direct relation to hard-core and DIY waste which can be interpreted under the legislation as non-domestic and therefore can be charged.

Non-priority- questions under the strategic theme (Safer and Stronger Communities):

From **Councillor Michael Bull** to the **Cabinet Member for Finance**:

In the wake of the Grenfell Tower disaster, can the Cabinet Member advise me whether:

- a) The London Borough of Merton has undertaken a review of its emergency planning protocols?
- b) He is satisfied that if (God forbid) an emergency arose within Merton on the scale of the Grenfell Tower disaster, the council could respond to it in a timely and efficient manner and provide victims with appropriate support?
- c) The council has appropriate contingency plans for this kind of (one hopes, very rare) extreme event?

Reply

- a) A review of our plans and protocols will take place as part of the post incident review and lessons learned will be implemented. The scale of this incident will affect all London Boroughs and the plans that all boroughs have in place as part of the civil contingencies framework. We will revise plans and arrangements in line with London planning protocols.
- b) The scale of this incident has triggered a review of pan London arrangements. It has been recognised that no single borough has the resources or capability to respond to an incident of this magnitude. The process of triggering a major incident and mutual aid across all 33 London boroughs will feature in the post incident enquiry.
- c) The Council has plans based on the London and borough risk registers which are formulated with the Police, Fire Brigade, NHS, LAS and PCT's. Again it is expected that the enquiry will trigger a review of these risks. Reviews are also being undertaken with the housing associations to consider their contingency plans and arrangements.

From **Councillor Linda Taylor** to the **Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**:

Following the tragic fire in Kensington and the questions regarding the rapid spread of the fire, can the Cabinet Member tell me whether:

- a) Tower blocks in Merton such as the Brown and Root Tower in Colliers Wood and those on the High Path estate all have automated fire alarms, and if they do, when they were last tested?
- b) The new cladding on the Brown and Root Tower in Colliers Wood passes standard building regulations, and what the grade of the cladding is?
- c) There are lifts in all of the tower blocks in Merton, and if there are, whether they are fire lifts?
- d) The pressure of the fire hoses in all of the high rise buildings in Merton is adequate, given that reports suggest the pressure in the Grenfell Tower was not as good as it should have been?

Reply

- a) The Council is not the responsible authority in relation to fire appliances and systems in Tower Blocks. The Fire Brigade is responsible and there is a system of checks building owners must comply with.
- b) The Council was not responsible for checking compliance with building regulations in relation to the Brown and Root Tower, the owners used a private Approved Inspector as is their right under government regulations introduced to encourage competition in the market. However, in any event, the council has written to the owners and the Approved Inspector and have requested details of the cladding, some of which has been provided. In addition, the Government has written to all tower block owners to ensure that any cladding is tested.

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- c) The Council does not hold this information. Fire safety is the responsibility of the building's owner. Any new build towers would need to comply with building regulations which would include the relevant requirements.
- d) This is not a matter regulated by the Council, it would be a matter for the Fire Brigade to discuss with the building owners and water supplier in each case.

From **Councillor Suzanne Grocott** to the **Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities**:

Following the terrible events at the Finsbury Park Mosque last month, can the Cabinet Member tell me what additional security measures have been put in place at Merton's mosques and what discussions she has had both with the police and the mosques themselves to address any concerns about their security?

Reply

Merton police have a Counter terrorism response vehicle (CTRV) on borough. The vehicle is used to visit potentially vulnerable locations, events etc. as directed by the borough Counter Terrorism lead Supt Collings. The vehicle has been a permanent fixture on the borough for around two years as a direct response to the increase in CT threat level to SEVERE.

As part of business as usual Merton Police visit and work with the local mosques, either through visits from local policing teams or by engagement with the CT lead. These visits do include the offer of free CT awareness training.

Post the terror attacks in London, and the attack on the Finsbury Park mosque, Merton police did revisit the existing policing plans and increased visits to each mosque to a minimum twice daily visit. Police also reviewed resourcing to ensure sufficient staffing responses were available to deal with any potential threat and to also reassure the public and local communities around the increased activity of Ramadan.

Post Ramadan Merton police continue to visit and engage on a daily basis as requested by the local Mosques post the Finsbury Park attack.

From **Councillor Adam Bush** to the **Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities**:

Please can the Cabinet Member outline the findings of the Race Disparity Audit which I understand Merton is required by the Government to complete?

Reply

To date the London Borough of Merton has not received any guidance or directive from the Department of Communities and Local Government to undertake such an audit.

However, the Council has a comprehensive Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy 2017-21 that sets out its equality objectives and the progress made to date

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in terms of improving outcomes for groups with protected characteristics, including race and ethnicity.

The government agreed to audit its own government departments in 2016, which may be what the Councillor is thinking of, and the results were expected this summer but as yet no results have been published.