

Merton Council Council

12 July 2017

Supplementary agenda

22 Supplementary Questions and Replies

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From: Darren Stillwell

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

Following the Conservators decision to increase the charge to the Friends of Mitcham Common for use of the Ecology Centre as a result of the idverde contract, will Merton Council provide details of other facilities where new or extra charges are to be made as part of that contract?

Reply

TO BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

Merton Council is able to offer a range of meeting venues for hire for community and commercial activities in its parks across the borough and levies fees as appropriate to the nature of the hire and the hirer. The vast majority of these are let by and operated by idverde, but the setting of fees and charges remains a decision for the Council.

The relevant fees and charges for room hire were last increased, marginally, in April of this year, but this was not as a direct consequence of idverde's involvement but part and parcel of a Council fees and charges review that occurs annually in the last quarter of any financial year in anticipation of the new financial year.

From: Barbara Mansfield

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Disruption and mistakes have been ongoing in Mitcham for a long time. Is the Council going to accept responsibility for the loss of trade to all the business's situated on and around the Fair Green and pay compensation to traders, as a result of the "Rediscover Mitcham" project?

Reply

The improvements we are making to Mitcham town centre have already improved the public realm and as with any change there will inevitably be some disruption to pedestrian and traffic movements.

The works have been phase in cooperation with TfL. During the planned disruptions businesses and the community have been kept informed of the programme of works. Whilst the longer term regeneration of the town centre has been taking place the Council has made every effort to ensure that the businesses have been informed on the progress and supported wherever possible.

Several of the businesses have received new shop front grants including:

- Ginos - grant for internal and external works and to assist the creation of his café.

- Star Café (now Cravings) - grant for internal and external works to rebrand and provide public toilet facilities.
- Tag Elezz - grant for internal and external works.
- Bling Boutique - Shop front grant
- Old 3 Kings Public House - Large external refurbishment
- Top Fashion - grant for external works
- Macgraths - grant for internal and external works
- Incredible smiles - external works

We have made extensive efforts to kick start a new market for the town centre. We have provided new market stalls and covers for the market square and set up a storage space to hold all the equipment securely. We have worked with local training providers to support entrepreneurs to set up market stalls on a Friday and Saturday and supported this through covering the cost of the rent for the plots.

We did provide an offer for some compensation to the market stalls to pay for the rental fees during last summer's disruption where the bus stops were moved and meant fewer people coming into the market square. The market square was directly impacted during this period but has now been settled for some time.

As a council we have also provided regular updates at Mitcham Community Forum and on www.merton.gov.uk/rediscovermitcham

From: Andrew Morgan
To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

The months old rubbish pile behind the Grade II listed White Hart pub in Mitcham is three meters high. It is a health hazard and a fire hazard. Photographs were submitted with this question. When will Merton Council use its powers to require the landowner to clear it?

Reply

Both Environmental Enforcement and Planning Enforcement have been involved in attempting to deal with this issue. The waste is all on private land and as such is the responsibility of the landowner to remove. One huge pile has already been removed to be sadly replaced by another. The underlying problem is a lack of security to the site making it easy to access. The occupying company are based in the Isle of Man and the leaseholder based in Wimbledon, which makes liaison with these parties all the more challenging. Planning Enforcement have tried to call the company on a number of occasions with no response and officers have written to both and have had no reply. An Environmental Enforcement officer for this area visited on 3rd July 2017 after being informed of the latest fly tip. She has found evidence that will assist with our enforcement and will pursue this, however to solve the on-going problem, the company need to secure the land. Officers will continue to work towards a long term solution and utilise our enforcement powers as necessary to bring this matter to a satisfactory conclusion.

From: John Davis

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Planning Enforcement Cases: will Merton Council list those currently outstanding in Cricket Green Ward, and when each of these was first initiated, plus those cases that have run their course within the last three years?

Reply

The Council has limited ability to run bespoke reports from the enforcement module on the database system. At this time there is the ability to run a list of all outstanding cases but not access those that have run their course. There is the ability for new reports to be established on the system, however, this requires specialist consultant time to be booked in and procured. The Council will consider this in future but this will need to be merited and offer value for money spent.

From: Amanda Calver

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

In the interests of transparency, will the council publish how members of the Planning Application Committee vote on each application?

Reply

Under the Council Rules of Procedure (Section 10 of Part 4a of the Council's Constitution) votes at meetings of the Council, including the Planning Applications Committee, are taken by a show of hands or, if there is no dissent, by the affirmation of the meeting.

Under the provisions set out in Paragraph 10.4 of Part 4a of the Constitution, a recorded vote can be taken if at least six members present at the meeting demand it. In this case, the names of members voting for and against the motion or amendment, or abstaining, will be recorded and the names entered in the minutes to show who voted for and against and who abstained.

From: Ros Davis

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

Barring lorry/van parking in Glebe Court, has led to Cricket Green road being blighted with overnight trucks outside residences. A no-parking notice covering coaches and lorries applies from 6.30pm to 8.00am, but only two lamp-posts have signs. Can every lamp-post display signs, and can enforcement follow?

Reply

TO BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR STREET CLEANLINESS AND PARKING

Cricket Green is a much loved conservation area and we seek to minimise street clutter by avoiding repetitious road signs. As mentioned there are existing "no

parking” notices we feel that adding signs to every lamppost would be detrimental to the street scene. We appreciate there is a balance to be struck between clutter and enforcement and will raise this with our Parking Enforcement team and look to ensure that enforcement is carried out .

From: Tony Burton

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

To ask Merton Council whether and/or when it will publish the green space maintenance specification in its contract with idverde as promised by the Director of Environment and Regeneration in November 2016?

Reply

TO BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

The Council has already provided a late draft final version of the specification to Friends of Parks and other interested parties and we remain committed to providing the relevant details of the final specification insofar as it is able within commercial and information security constraints and is aiming to do so imminently, subject to review and advice from the Council’s legal advisors.

From: Nichola Thompson

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

Back in December, you asked residents to submit ideas for spending of the CIL. We could do with some major environmental improvements in our area at the north end of Haydons Road. How has the council decided to spend these funds, and will we see any local benefits?

Reply

Thank you for making comments on the council’s consultation. The council has drawn together everybody’s comments and will report these back to Cabinet in September 2017 with a view to allocating funds to specific projects across the borough and ensuring resources are devolved in an equitable way between all parts of the borough.

From: Ingrid Dickenson

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

Why did planning officers omit air pollution readings from their report recommending planning approval for a Cement Batching Plant on Waterside Way, close to a primary school, playground, public allotments, nature park and WandleTrail riverwalk, and why are air quality readings not taken into account for all local developments?

Reply

The planning application is still to be determined and an updated report will be reported to Planning Applications Committee when it comes for determination. The report on air quality will be produced after taking advice from the Councils Environmental Health Officers. We will take air quality readings when relevant to the application but rest assured we do take this issue extremely seriously.

From: Melanie Nunzet

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

Has Merton Council used the service of the Mitcham Common Manager in each of the last three years, and what payment has been paid to Mitcham Common Conservators for services rendered?

Reply

TO BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

The Mitcham Common Manager is directly employed by Merton Council and is an integral part of the Greenspaces management team, albeit mainly deployed at Mitcham Common.

The Council has co-funded the operations at Mitcham Common in the form of a grant for many years. In the current financial year this grant is £24k. In 2015/16 and 2016/17 the grant was £48k. There have been no other contributions or payments to the Mitcham Common Conservators during this time.

From: Paul Carter

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

How are travel plans enforced and which planning permissions have included travel plan conditions in each of the last 2 years and how many times, and where, has enforcement been taken against breach of a travel plan in that time?

Reply

Travel plans are often required by condition attached to the original planning permission. If the plan is not implemented in accordance with the agreed submitted criteria, then planning enforcement officers can instigate enforcement action, which may include the service of a breach of condition notice. Sometimes the plans are covered by legal agreements which can be similarly enforced through the courts if necessary. Ultimately, it is for the Council to determine whether enforcement action is expedient in each case. There have been no enforcement cases to date.

From: Sandra Vogel

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

What criteria does Merton Council use when determining whether to notify those who have made representations on planning applications of changes to the development proposed made after the period of public representations and before determination?

Reply

In the first instance, the Council will only notify the public of changes to application proposals if those changes increase or significantly change any relative impacts. Immediate neighbours are notified, including those who have expressed a view but may not have been initially notified. If communication is received after the period of public representation, that communication will still be considered providing a decision has not been made. The statutory requirement is to either notify neighbours or erect site notices. Merton facilitates both. In any event, all application details are provided on the website (not a statutory requirement) so any changes can be viewed.

From: Paul Rasmussen

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

What are the chances of replacing the ugly and out of place electricity pylons with crafted, visually appealing structures like tennis players? Or even footballers if the stadium ever starts. See article - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-13473408>

Reply

The Wandle Valley electricity pylons have been a feature of the area for many years (for good and bad reasons) linked to the large electricity transformer station at Plough Lane. The pylons and the whole electricity distribution system is the responsibility of National Grid. We are not aware of any investment plans from National Grid that would provide any opportunity to improve (or indeed remove) the pylons.

The most recent example has been the London Olympic Park where 52 pylons were removed by creating two 6km long tunnels costing £250m.

The Council has in the past explored the possibility of removing the Wandle Valley pylons, but at a cost of c£5-11m per pylon, it is completely cost-prohibitive for the Council to consider given current financial restraints but if alternative sources of funding can be found that does not involve council funding, I would certainly be supportive both here and in other locations.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/energy/11864783/Power-lines-to-be-taken-down-at-cost-of-11-million-per-pylon.html>

<http://www.building.co.uk/pylon-removal-starts-as-tunnels-finished-at-olympic-park/3127621.article>

From Anthony Fairclough

To the Cabinet Member for Finance

Does Merton have a major incident plan in place, and when was the last time this was tested by a drill?

Reply

Merton does have a major incident plan in line with the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The plan is tested and validated through a variety of exercises both internally and externally with London Councils and blue light services. The Major emergency plan does not activate all areas of the council in one go as it responds to the scale and nature of the incident. For example our Major incident plan has been activated as part of the response to the Grenfell Tower fire and officers from a number of departments via the emergency planning team are continuing to support the affected Boroughs as part of the mutual aid arrangements activated under the major incident plan.

The plan is routinely tested to ensure departmental plans and arrangements align to the major incident response and the dates of these and what was tested are as follows:

Spring 2015/16	Service plan	Legal services annual exercise
Summer 2015	Dept plan	Full departmental table top
5/11/15	Sub Regional Resilience Forum (SRRF)	Marauding terrorist attack – FM/Social care/E&R
29/1/2/3 Feb/Mar	Multi Agency Exercise Unified Response (EUR)	Building collapse/underground – BECC/RC Mgr./E&R
12/05/16	AELTC	Emergency planning team
09/06/16	CS&F	L2/L3 table top
30/06/16	SRRF	CBRN – E&R, BRF
30/10/16	London Resilience Forum	Move to Critical – Public Protection
11/10/16	Ex Connects	Whole council BECC activation and response test
23/11/16	Chemical Biological Radiation Nuclear	All departments & BRF
08/11/17	SRRF	Flooding – E&R / LALO
09/02/17	Safer City	Whole council response/ London GOLD Activation

11-12/04/17	Team	IT Critical incident response test
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The council has also activated the plan in response to 3 other incidents across the borough in 2016/ 17 where the deployment of specially trained Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO) occurred and Borough Emergency Control Centre staff were activated.

From: Luke Taylor
To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

How many fewer parking permits have been issued for diesel vehicles since the introduction of the diesel surcharge, compared to the same period in the previous 5 years?

Reply

We do not have data for the previous five years as the council’s system did not record whether a vehicle was petrol or diesel. From April 2017 this data is currently being recorded when parking permits are renewed.

From: Andrew Biden
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

What actions are the Council taking in relation to the regeneration of the parade of shops between Haydons Road station and the junction at Plough Lane (including an update on the Co-Op retail unit and next door unit, which has had unsightly scaffolding erected outside it for nearly a year)?

Reply

Haydons Road parade does not currently feature in our current programme of shopping parade improvements. Recent parade improvement projects in Mitcham Fair Green, Morden Court Parade, Leopold Road and Colliers Wood High Street have been delivered by leveraging in external finance from various funding bids, including the Mayor of London’s Regeneration Fund and developer contributions.

Unfortunately, we don’t have the funds or officer capacity to undertake all the parade projects that people would like us to. We will certainly keep Haydons Road in mind if any future funding opportunities arise.

The Co-Op development is still under construction and whilst scaffolding may be considered unsightly, it is essential whilst the works are completing.

From: Vincent Bolt
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

What discussions has the council had with housing associations relating to fire safety in their properties in Merton and will the council be providing any additional funding to support fire safety initiatives in social housing in Merton as a result?

Reply

The council has contacted all housing associations in the borough regarding fire safety. All responses to date indicate that their fire safety measures are up to date. The council is not aware of any major works arising from any additional fire safety checks made and there have been no requests to the council to provide any additional funding.

From: Hugo Forshaw
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

How many properties in the borough have a medium or high fire risk assessment rating, or have been deemed unsafe for habitation?

Reply

The Council works closely with other agencies to make the borough safer and we have discussed this question with the Local Fire Commander who provided the following advice:

“Landlords, such as housing associations, have a legal duty under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO) to carry out a detailed fire risk assessment to identify any risks and hazards in their buildings and then to act on the findings to put them right.

It is important to understand that responsibility for making buildings safe sits with the owners or managers of that building. It is the responsibility of the Fire Brigade to enforce fire safety legislation not to issue safety certificates or keep records for all of the properties requiring a fire risk assessment.

The London Fire Brigade’s fire safety officers are currently visiting tower blocks across London identified with cladding which have failed government fire safety tests. Once on site they are carrying out in-depth inspections to ensure all the correct firefighting facilities and fire precautions within those blocks are in place and advising on any immediate actions that need to be taken.

The LFB can confirm that there are currently no properties in the borough of Merton that have been deemed unsafe for habitation as a result of these recent inspections.”

The Council is working closely with Clarion and with all other landlords of clad building and buildings over 30 meters in height to ensure they assess the increased risks exposed by the recent tragedy and respond to the issues raised.

From: John Braithwaite

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

With the proposed rerouting of traffic, as part off the Morden regeneration scheme, do these proposals include the widening of Aberconway Road, and if so by how much?

Reply

The transport proposal for Morden town centre regeneration are still being evaluated and a final scheme design has yet to emerge, it is therefore difficult to determine the extent or scope on any potential works on Aberconway Road at this stage.

Stakeholders will be kept informed as appropriate of the results of the highways modelling and proposals associated with the chosen scheme when the appropriate details are available.

From: Andrew Boyce

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

What steps, including funding, has the Council taken in the last two years to promote local history and heritage in South Wimbledon?

Reply

TO BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

Cabinet signed off a new Heritage Strategy for Merton in October 2015. The Heritage Strategy sets out a range of objectives linked to promoting and conserving our rich heritage and was devised in partnership with a number of local historical and community organisations. Austerity cutbacks dictate that Merton has minimal funding to devote to the strategy, but it manages tremendous achievement with the help of its partners, as the recent Heritage Discovery Day at Morden Library demonstrated.

Heritage works in South Wimbledon include the following projects:

- The works to improve the Chapter House and Merton Priory as a visitor attraction centre are shortly to begin and will be finished in 2018, led by the Priory Trust. This is part of a wider £2.4 million Heritage Lottery Fund project to improve access and conservation to the Wandle Valley.
- Working with the council Communities First delivered a walking and oral history project that focussed on Abbey Mills and its industrial heritage.
- Repair works have been undertaken to the Merton Priory Wall by its owner the National Trust, and we are working with the Trust to enhance the area around it.

- Early stage work is in place to commemorate Nelson's 'Paradise Merton', where Doel Close is currently situated, as part of Clarion's redevelopment of the High Path estate.
- We continue to liaise with local organisations to develop new projects in the South Wimbledon area. There is, after all, so much more that is being delivered and that is to be delivered. I look forward to Mr Boyce's future involvement as a volunteer.

From: Natalie Gordon
To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Watermeads Residents' Association would like clarification on who is responsible for emptying the dog bins at the entry to Rawnsley Avenue, on the green behind the estate, and on the path behind 50 Octavia Close. We have tried on numerous occasions to identify this. They are causing residents' much concern.

Reply

I will contact Clarion and officers and get back to you with clarification on this matter.

From: Debbie Wambergue
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

Clarion may have to demolish some buildings as a result of potential fire risk following the Grenfell tower disaster. Are Clarion planning to demolish any buildings in Merton and what assurances has the council received that remaining buildings meet high safety standards?

Reply

Clarion Housing have no plans to demolish buildings in Merton as a result of any potential fire risk. Clarion have provided assurances that all tall buildings have up to date fire risk assessments and that those buildings have been re-inspected since the Grenfell Tower fire. Clarion report that they have worked closely with the London Fire Brigade to ensure that their response to this disaster is compliant with the London Fire Brigade requirements.

From: Raylis Rasmussen
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

What is the council doing about smartening up the parade of shops on Haydons Road North where the new Co-op is due and P&P Glass is located? I suggest investing to improve the parade of shops with things like the railings, flowers, cleaning, pavements as outside Wimbledon Park tube station.

Reply

Haydons Road parade does not currently feature in our current programme of shopping parade improvements. Recent parade improvement projects in Mitcham

Fair Green, Morden Court Parade, Leopold Road and Colliers Wood High Street have been delivered by leveraging in external finance from various funding bids, including the Mayor of London's Regeneration Fund and developer contributions.

Unfortunately, we don't have the funds or officer capacity to undertake all the parade projects that people would like us to. We will certainly keep Haydons Road in mind if any future funding opportunities arise.

The Co-Op development is still under construction and whilst scaffolding may be considered unsightly, it is essential whilst the works are completing.

From: Paul Kohler
To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Please confirm the specific measures the funds raised by the diesel surcharge have been, or have been earmarked for being, spent on.

Reply

By law, any revenue generated from parking must be spent on transport related schemes. These include but are not limited to, traffic management and control schemes, road and infrastructure schemes and Concessionary Fares (ie the Freedom Pass).

From: Simon McGrath
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

Please list all of the planning applications which have been approved since 1 January 2016 for application with more than ten units, and for every one the total number of units and the number which meet the definition of affordable housing.

Reply

The Council does not have a report that can list such cases and nor is the database system currently designed to record those specific criteria. All applications including decisions and reports are displayed on the Councils website and are available for public viewing and scrutiny. The Councils policy on affordable housing, Policy CS8, specifies that the site characteristics including size, site suitability and economics of provision such as financial viability issues can be considered. As the Council independently viability tests all affordable housing cases which do not meet the 40% target, all applications therefore comply with the policy.

Supplementary

Thank you. My supplementary question; my question was about Planning Applications with a percentage of affordable housing; to which the answer is there isn't a list in the form that I have asked for. At the last Planning Committee I think two developments approved, one had 19% affordable housing, the other had 0%, none whatsoever. My supplementary question is, as the Council has not the slightest

intention of following its own policy, would it not be better to simply abandon the 40% target?

Reply

Well I'd like to thank Mr McGrath for his supplementary, this Council is fully committed to the 40% affordable housing target and in relation to both those developments, there are independent viability tests which we are obliged to carry out. We do try to maximise the supply. Those viability tests came back to say that is the only amount that is affordable but rest assured as a Local Authority we do take this with the upmost seriousness as well, because we do need to have more affordable homes in the Borough of Merton. As a Council it is something that we work tirelessly to maximise the supply and I can assure you we are fully committed. But we are working under the policy guidance as laid down by the Government. Clearly we have our own policies but we do have to bear in mind that if we refuse applications there is risk of an appeal and there could be no affordable housing could be granted, so this authority is committed to affordable housing, it continues to be committed to affordable housing, and I hope to see further affordable housing developments come forward over the next year and especially given Mayor Sadiq Khan who is actually committed to affordable housing unlike the last mayor Boris Johnson.

From: Hina Bokhari
To the Cabinet Member for Education

Which 5 Merton schools have the highest proportion of SEN pupils relative to the size of the school, and what support does the local authority provide to those schools?

Reply

I have assumed that the question relates to mainstream rather than special schools or Pupil Referral Units.

The five mainstream schools with the highest % of SEN pupils i.e. relative to the size of the school are Malmesbury Primary School, Harris Academy Morden, Benedict Primary School, St Mark's Primary School and All Saints Primary School. This information include pupils with a statement of special educational needs or Education Health and Care Plan and those identified by the school as needing additional support but not a statutory assessment of their needs.

The LA provides a range of support including:

- support for Special Needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) in schools;
- advice from Educational Psychologists for school staff, parents and children;
- an early intervention service for those with identified needs who have not yet completed the statutory assessment process; and

support services targeted at particular needs i.e. services for children with social, emotional and mental health needs, those with autistic spectrum disorders, sensory support services for children and young people with visual or hearing impairment,

speech and language therapy services and services supporting children's health needs

From: John Tippett-Cooper

To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

There is a planning application for the redevelopment of Haslemere Industrial Estate. Given that the redevelopment falls far short of the affordable housing target (19%), please can the Council explain why a policy compliant 40% affordable scheme was not possible and if necessary publish the independent viability assessment report?

Reply

The Scheme was tested for viability by an independent consultant commissioned by the Council and this report concluded 19% was the maximum affordable contribution whilst the scheme still remained viable. The Viability reports contain commercially sensitive information and are not routinely published, although are made available to Councillors (as decision makers) on request. The Council is also looking at publishing such reports in the future with the agreement from developers.

From: Emma Maddison

To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

What is the impact of council staff parking on the streets surrounding council workplaces (such as the Civic Centre) and how is the council currently and in the future going to support its staff to travel to work by alternative means, and reduce the impact on local residents?

Reply

No record is held or required to be held on the impact of staff parking on the public highway surrounding workplaces.

The Council will shortly be refreshing the staff travel plan and repeating its objective to promote sustainable travel to, from and during work. The Council has been successful in promoting greater use of cycling to work and also at work through the purchase of pool bicycles for staff to use to go about their work. In addition, we have successfully deployed a fully electric pool car for the past 2 years.

As we consolidate staffing at Merton Civic Centre the staff travel will be looking to reduce reliance on the motor car and considering how we can promote greater car sharing as well as active transport (cycling and walking).

From: Carl Quilliam

To the Cabinet Member for Education

How many primary and secondary pupils in Merton were in classes of 30 or more in each of the last five years, including the most recent figures available?

Reply

The School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 prescribe certain limited circumstances in which pupils may be admitted as exceptions to the infant class size limit. It is therefore unusual for classes in Reception and years one and two to exceed 30 and in the last five years this has been limited to 2 classes each year and 3 in 2015/16.

There is no legal restrictions on class size above Key stage 1.

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From **Councillor Jerome Neil** to the **Leader**

Would the leader join me in congratulating both of our local MPs on their recent re-election?

Reply

I would certainly like to congratulate Siobhain McDonagh MP on her well deserved re-election in Mitcham and Morden with an increased majority which now stands at almost 21,500. She is an extraordinarily hard working and tenacious representative for her constituency. I also congratulate my own MP Stephen Hammond on his re-election in Wimbledon, albeit with his majority slashed by more than half to 5,500 votes. I am sure he will continue to serve his constituents to the best of his ability.

Supplementary

Given Siobhain McDonagh increased her majority to over 21,000 votes and that Stephen Hammond saw his cut to just 5000, is the Leader looking forward to the next General Election?

Reply

I thank Jerome Neil for his original question, highlighting that Siobhain McDonagh increased her majority to 21,500 and reflecting on the fact that Stephen Hammond had his majority slashed and am I looking forward to another General Election, yes I am and the earlier the better. Now I hear that Stephen Hammond doesn't normally rush to the counts that early, he waits for the 10 minutes before the actual count, but on seeing the result in neighbouring Putney and the result in neighbouring Battersea he hastily made his way to the Counts to vouch safe his reduced majority. Now todays parliament run by the Tory government that has seen fit to give a billion pounds, Madam Mayor, to the DUP, as he and his cohort run for cover, Stephen Hammond has his own leader in Teresa May, former Merton Councillor here, and she's just one month into her hung parliament and she's already running out of steam. Madam Mayor, come the next general election here in Wimbledon it will be warm Prosecco for Stephen Hammond and hopefully sparkling champagne, maybe some babycham for us on this side of the chamber.

From **Councillor Abdul Latif** to the **Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking:**

Merton Council has issued nearly 1,000 permits for diesel vehicles since introducing its diesel levy at the start of April 2017. The council estimates it will raise over £250,000 in the first year.

Can the Cabinet Member give an undertaking that some of the funds thus raised will be invested in purchasing new Air Quality Monitoring Equipment to reliably monitor Oxides of Nitrogen (NOx) and Particulate Matter (PM10 and PM2.5)?

Reply

06: Non ST Questions

By law, any revenue generated from parking must be spent on transport related schemes. These include but are not limited to, traffic management and control schemes, road and infrastructure schemes and Concessionary Fares (ie the Freedom Pass).

With regards to air quality monitoring; I can confirm that air quality monitoring is taken very seriously. The problems relating to the older monitoring equipment are being addressed and the Pollution Team has successfully secured council funding for new equipment. The Pollution Team has also doubled the number of diffusion tubes in the borough to get a better assessment of air quality.

Supplementary

I thank the Cabinet Member for his response that the Pollution Team has successfully secured Council funding for new monitoring equipment. Can the Cabinet Member give a timescale when the new monitoring equipment will be commissioned and will be up and running especially for the site ME1 which is located by the library and secondly my second question that is related to this is, can new monitoring equipment be installed at the junction of Plough Lane with Gap Road, Dunsford Road and Haydons Road, this is the crossroads where heavy traffic is causing emissions?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Latif for his supplementary question and I think we should be celebrating the fact that Merton is leading the way in tackling air pollution; the introduction of the diesel levy as well as securing more funding towards monitoring equipment to monitor the levels of toxic air. After 8 years of inaction by the Conservative Mayor Boris Johnson I'm glad that we are moving things along and we've got a Mayor in Sadiq Khan who is committed to tackling this issue. In relation to your two specific points, I'll be able to give you some more information at a later date.

From **Councillor Mike Brunt** to the **Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance**

Could the Cabinet Member update us on the results of the Residents survey?

Reply

The most recent residents survey took place in February and March 2017 and as in previous year involved face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of more than 1000 adults.

The results of the survey show a record number of residents think Merton Council is efficient and well run (76%). The survey also reports record satisfaction rates among residents who agree the council is doing a good job, responds quickly when asked for help and involves residents when making decisions.

06: Non ST Questions

Over 90% of Merton residents are satisfied with the local area as a place to live, which is significantly better than the national figure (80%). Most residents (96%) feel safe during the day and after dark (85%).

Nearly two thirds of residents agree the council provides value for money (65%), well above the national figure (47%). Seventy-five percent agree the council acts on the concerns of local residents and 81% were in agreement that the council kept them informed about services and benefits.

Significantly more residents said they were satisfied with the leisure and sport facilities compared with when the council asked residents in 2014.

Resident satisfaction with all council services outweighed dissatisfaction. However, the survey will help us plan for improvements, as it highlights areas where high levels of satisfaction can still be improved upon. For instance, when asked how much of a problem litter was in their local area, 63% of residents said they did not think it was a problem and 37% said it was a fairly big or very big problem. We believe that even this good result can be improved upon, but recognise that the continued use of black bin bags in our refuse collection service constrains our ability to improve these satisfaction levels.

Supplementary

I think that we all would want to live in places which we find safe and a good place to live and I would like to congratulate the Cabinet Member and all the staff involved in the excellent result from the Residents Survey that's just come out. I'd like to know what lessons can be learnt from it?

Reply

Thank you for his follow up question. I'd really like to echo the point that's been made about the great hard work that our staff and our residents have put into making this a very good Council with record results of the Annual Residents Survey. In terms of lessons to be learned I think it's very important that we reflect upon the tone and style of this Council over the past few years. Very pragmatic, sensible, having prepared to make tough decisions, but to talk about those decisions with our residents and most of all to be business-like, because people want a strong Council that can make decisions on their behalf that is then able to do things like keep our libraries open, build a new leisure centre and build new schools for our children. This is a great place for our families and our children to grow up and the real blessing is that we want to see that continue to improve under continuing constraints from government cuts, but there's only one thing we must learn next year and that's to elect another labour administration in 2018 and based on the recent results that's exactly what's going to happen.

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

Can the Cabinet Member tell me:

06: Non ST Questions

- a) How many elderly and disabled residents and those in receipt of qualifying state benefits were using the garden waste service on 1st April 2017 and have therefore lost their discount?
- b) How many of these residents have cancelled their garden waste collection since being informed they would lose the concessionary rate as from 1st April 2017?
- c) How much revenue has been lost as a result of residents cancelling the service since 1st April 2017 thereby offsetting any additional revenue due to be generated by the council as a result of the abolition of the concessionary rate?
- d) What assumptions were made about the cancellation rate that would result from the withdrawal of the concessionary rate when the decision on this was being taken by the administration?

Reply

A) The chargeable garden waste service was introduced in 2011 with an annual subscription of £65. The fee has been fixed since 2011 with no inflationary increases. As of May 2017 we have 7,755 garden waste customers. 2,996 (38%) of these customers would have originally qualified for the concessionary rate.

B) The garden waste service always experiences natural turnover of customers as residents move or their circumstances change. We have not carried out an analysis of how many customers joining or leaving the service fall into the different customer types. However, the overall number of customers continues to grow.

C) We are not aware of any loss of revenue overall.

D) It was assumed that this change would not result in cancellation levels that could not be offset against the continued growth of our customer base overall and a charging mechanism which offsets the operational cost of providing this non statutory service.

Supplementary

Up to nearly 3000 people who previously paid a concessionary rate of £50 for Garden waste collection now have to pay the new full rate of £70. A 42% increase with no consultation. Just like the food waste sacks, this was a service which was free before Labour took control in Merton. How many more hits on their wallets are the elderly, disabled and those on low incomes in Merton going to have to endure at the hands of this uncaring administration?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Lewis-Lavender for her supplementary. In relation to charging for garden waste we've kept that at a steady level but due to increases of disposal we've had to increase that in line with that. In terms of the change in policy from Garden Waste being free and moving to bulky waste, let's celebrate the fact that this council was able to offer 5 free items every 3 months for Council tax payers to get disposed of free to help keep our streets clean to help keep furniture off our roads and pavements and I feel that that's the right policy to do that.

From **Councillor Abigail Jones** to **Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

Could the cabinet member update us on the AFC Wimbledon application?

Reply

The applicants are concluding their development agreement between each other and once this is concluded it will expedite signing the Section 106 agreement. Meanwhile the applicants have been undertaking other matters to ensure development can start swiftly such as engaging with Thames Water on drainage in the area and reviewing their road safety audits with council officers. Once the Section 106 agreement is signed, it will be uploaded on the council's website.

Supplementary

Can I thank the officers and members for all the work that has been undertaken so far to bring the dream of AFC Wimbledon returning to the Borough to fruition. Can I ask him if he expects the section 106 agreement to be concluded shortly; it's time to bring the Dons home.

Reply

Can I thank Councillor Abigail Jones for her supplementary question; yes it is certainly time to bring the Dons home. They've been out of the borough 25 years this year, 25 years too many in my view. I am confident that the section 106 agreement will be signed imminently and that construction can actually start on the stadium. This is a welcome development, it is fantastic that AFC are coming home, I look forward to joining Councillor Jones who I know is an avid AFC fan at the first home game in 2019. It is something we as a Council should celebrate; AFC Wimbledon have been an enormous success; 15 years yesterday they played their first match when they were reformed and it's been a fairy-tale. That fairy-tale will hopefully go on for a lot longer and we will see their rightful place be restored in the London Borough of Merton.

From **Councillor Brian Lewis-Lavender** to the **Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**:

There has finally been consultation undertaken with residents and park users on the administration's proposals to introduce parking charges at Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields. In view of the fact that:

- The original parking meter that the council put in place without consultation will now have to be changed to take the new pound coins;
- The white lines will need painting on parking bays;
- Money will need to be collected from the meter on a regular basis;
- The whole scheme will need policing; and
- The park risks being laid open to possible vandalism as a result of the money in the parking machines;

06: Non ST Questions

Can the Cabinet member put a price on how much this scheme will cost Merton to run each year in view of the relatively small amount of revenue it is likely to generate?

Reply

As the Councillor will no doubt be aware, there is an increasing problem of commuters parking their cars in car parks meant for users of our local parks and green spaces whilst they commute to work in central London. This ties up parking spaces all day that are meant for local residents who want to use our parks for a few hours to use our sporting facilities, walk the dog or just enjoy the fresh air. The introduction of parking charges at Joseph Hood is therefore intended to advantage ordinary park users who want to use the car park for an hour or two over commuters who want to use it all day.

Many of the issues the Councillor raises in his question apply to the parks and their car parks irrespective of whether or not there is pay-and-display parking present. The white lines in the car park at Sir Joseph Hood MPF have been repainted at regular intervals in the past, for example, and so this is not a new requirement. The income from the parking scheme will obviously assist and support the work of the Greenspaces team and provide an additional income stream to support our parks infrastructure, even if that is not the primary purpose of the scheme.

The scheme has involved several Council teams in its planning stages: Greenspaces, Parking Services and Traffic and Highways and their combined knowledge and experience has been pooled in its production and in order to ensure that it is both effective and cost-efficient.

The parking meters, for example, are solar-powered and their running costs are therefore minimal beyond their initial purchase price. Parking Services' Civil Enforcement Officer will be policing the scheme within parks as a small additional component of their very much wider parking control remit across the borough and, similarly, the cash collection needs will simply be absorbed within a pre-existing borough-wide contract that services a number of venues and facilities, including the borough's parking meters. All-in-all, the additional cost of each individual additional machine will be extremely small in this context. But of course the most beneficial aspect of the scheme is that it will discourage commuters from taking up car park spaces all day and allow residents to enjoy our local parks and greenspaces.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response and to ask him; has the Cabinet Member also taken into account the fact that Local residents have already paid for use of car parks at Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field from within their Council Tax and that we are supposed to be encouraging residents to use our parks to keep fit? Would he therefore agree that his proposals for this scheme are an adverse step and even more so if the revenue generated by any car park charges does not go directly back into improving the park?

Reply

I thank Councillor Brian Lewis-Lavender for his supplementary question. I'd like to reassure him if I may that the whole point of this charge is to make it easier for local residents to use the park. One of the problems we have throughout Merton is that Commuters are using free parking spaces in our parks rather than paying the charges on the street. I don't think that's fair, I'm sure he doesn't think it's fair either. I think those very small charges that we are bringing in will deter those all day commuters while at the same time giving parks users a chance to park their cars should they need to do so. Of course I always recommend to parks users that they walk to the local park or cycle to the local park, that's what I do I'm sure that's what you do as well Brian. I don't accept for a moment that this is an adverse policy and I expect it to do well.

From **Councillor Sally Kenny** to the **Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

Would the cabinet member update us on plans to regenerate Morden?

Reply

Morden town centre is this administration's regeneration priority and good progress has been made this year. The FutureMerton team have recently completed the restoration of the Morden Court Parade using funding from the Mayor of London. This scheme is a marked change in quality and the perception of Morden, where the project has revealed the art-deco detailing and created new shop fronts and signage. The project wasn't without its challenges as it involved council officers working with 65 different land owners. The council has received positive feedback on this project which shows that we're off to a good start with Morden.

The wider regeneration scheme is complex and time-consuming. The Council is working in partnership with TFL to develop a strategy for how both the Council and TFL will form a partnership to deliver a comprehensive regeneration project in Morden. This month, we have appointed consultants to advise LBM and TFL on the best form of partnership and the best procurement process so that we can jointly appoint a development partner to lead on the delivery of Morden.

There is a lot of work underway in the background and we will be providing regular updates at the Overview and Scrutiny Panel prior to any decision making on Morden's Regeneration.

Our vision for MoreMorden has been refreshed and received great support from Mayor Sadiq Khan and Val Shawcross, GLA Member for Transport. The Council is also finalising the first phase of design work and traffic modelling work to determine the scope for removing Morden's one-way system, viable options for relocating the bus stands and the creation of a new public space at Morden Station.

Keep updated at www.merton.gov.uk/moreMorden

Supplementary

06: Non ST Questions

Could I congratulate the Cabinet Member on the works done in Morden so far, in particular the improvements to Morden Parade and could he give details on how we can encourage a more pedestrian friendly environment in the Town Centre?

Reply

Can I thank Councillor Kenny for her supplementary I think she's quite right that we do want a more pedestrian friendly environment in the Town Centre so we are working very closely with TFL who are responsible for management of the road network in the centre of Morden and are bringing forward proposals to actually improve the network as part of that regeneration. One of the things we are looking at closely is the location of bus stands in the Town Centre; when you come out of Morden station to be greeted by buses I don't think that's a very attractive sight, so we are looking very closely to improve the environment to make it more pedestrian friendly (so that) and that there isn't a four-way highway then right through the middle of it and we're surrounded by a big traffic system around the Civic Centre so I very much welcome the work of TFL we are liaising very closely with them; I welcomed Sadiq Khan down here along with the Leader in April and just last week we had Val Shawcross who is the Deputy Mayor for Transport and also the Cycling Commissioner, looking at ways to improve cycling facilities in the Town Centre. So I look forward to working with Councillor Kenny and many other Morden Councillors on this regeneration. It's one of the most exciting schemes we have in this Borough and it can generate a huge amount of new housing as well as improving the public realm here and it's something I very much welcome.

From **Councillor Jill West** to the **Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking:**

Can the Cabinet Member tell me:

- a) How many people have been successfully fined and prosecuted for fly tipping in Merton since the new powers came in on 9th May 2016 enabling councils to issue on the spot fines of up to £400?
- b) What percentage of these fines has so far been paid?

Reply

- a) A total of 28 fixed penalty notices (FPN) of £400 each have been issued since 9th May 2016 to current date.
- b) Payment has been received on 43% of these FPNs. We have at least 5 FPNs currently going through the payment timescale to pay.

Supplementary

Given the low number of fines issued compared to the number of flytipping acts reported what practical action is being taken to ensure that enforcement officers are being proactive in stopping littering in vulnerable areas of the Borough and to improve their performance including when it comes to ensuring that all fines issued are actually paid?

Reply

I thank Councillor West for her supplementary question. I'd like to draw her attention to figures from last year in terms of Local Authorities, in terms of collecting their fines, Merton was in the top Ten in the UK in terms of collecting fines that they have issued for flytipping and this year we compared quite favourably to our neighbours like Sutton in terms of the amount of fines that we are actually issuing to our residents. Here in Merton we take a zero tolerance approach to littering and flytipping and we made that decision to increase the Fixed Penalty Notice for larger flytips to £400 there are currently a number of cases going through the courts that we are working actively to get the prosecution and then to get the income from the fines for that. In terms of what we are doing as a Local Authority, since the contract was put in place with Veolia from the 1st of April we've got three neighbourhood client officers that are collating the data that we've never had available effectively before to monitor hotspots for flytipping. As I'm sure you'll appreciate when it comes to flytipping it is extremely difficult to get a prosecution without the evidence there. As flytippers become more and more aware of the means of how they are caught in terms of leaving bank statements and bills within the rubbish they discard, they are now wising up to and removing that from their black sacks. Yes we are doing what we can and we are looking into ways that we can increase that because like everybody here we want cleaner streets and to keep our streets as clean as they can be.

From Councillor Brenda Fraser to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Could the cabinet member give details of when the council last reviewed its policy on crossovers?

Reply

TO BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION,
ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING

Merton Council last undertook a full review of the Council's Crossover Policy in June 2007 with minor amendments in 2013. A Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Task Group has been established to review Merton's policy in comparison with neighbouring boroughs. We are mindful of seeking to strike the right balance between accommodating parking needs and the visual and environmental impact on the front gardens and Merton's street scene.

Supplementary

I'd like also to thank the Cabinet Member for his answer, and can I ask that he review our policy on crossovers and consider offering more flexibility for our residents?

Reply

06: Non ST Questions

Can I thank Councillor Fraser for her supplementary question on crossovers. I think the review on crossovers is long overdue so I'm delighted that the scrutiny panel led ably by Councillor Abigail Jones will be undertaking a review. That review will be reporting back by October, and a paper will then be brought before Cabinet in November. Having worked closely with Councillor Fraser I'm well aware of the issues in her ward but other wards as well where I know colleagues would like to see more flexibility in terms of our Policy so as a Council working alongside Scrutiny we will look comprehensively at the proposals and a paper will then be brought before Cabinet in November.

From **Laxmi Attawar** to the **Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

Given the tragic events at Grenfell tower in Kensington and Chelsea has the cabinet member taken steps to ensue Merton residents in high rise flats are not at risk.

Reply

The council has sought and received assurances from all housing associations in the borough that have tall buildings that they are complying with DCLG guidance and required actions on carrying out appropriate Fire Safety checks following the Grenfell tower fire. I have met with senior managers at Clarion Housing who have confirmed that their tall buildings have recent Fire Risk Assessments and they are also doing an additional review of fire safety in these buildings. The council has also sought assurances from owners/managing agents for buildings in private ownership that they too are complying with DCLG guidance and required actions. As Cabinet member I have personally been briefed on several occasions and assured myself that officers are undertaking all that our residents would expect.

Supplementary

I thank the Cabinet Member for outlining the steps he has taken to ensure residents of high rise flats in Merton are not at risk. Will the cabinet member join me in sending our sympathies to those affected by Grenfell Tower and could he outline how Merton has been involved in helping affected residents?

Reply

Thank you Councillor Attawar for your supplementary. The events at Grenfell Tower were truly tragic and have had a devastating effect on the community of North Kensington and all of us here I think were deeply shocked and saddened by the events four weeks ago today. As an authority we have obviously been working very closely in terms of providing officers to support the disaster relief efforts in North Kensington. I know the Head of Housing Needs Steve Langley has assisting in terms of temporary housing I know that many other officers have also been assisting in North Kensington but also as well in Camden in terms of the ongoing issues as well . At this point I would also like to pay tribute to the work of Simon Williams who has been coordinating efforts in the authority, but also as well to Darren Tulley, the London Fire Brigade Borough Commander. One of my other hats is sitting as vice-chair on the London Fire Authority and working alongside Councillor Moulton on that body, and it has had a huge impact upon the London Fire Service, but also the work of firefighters throughout this Borough who were involved in Grenfell Tower and in the operations centre as well which is based in Merton. This was a huge event it will clearly have an impact on many firefighters for many years to come but I think we owe them a tremendous depth of gratitude but everyone as well who has rallied round to support the community of North Kensington. It's going to be a very long process but I think it is important that everyone collectively recognises that we are stronger together, working together than working apart and I'm also as well delighted at the support we as an authority have been able to offer to Kensington and Chelsea.

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

Has a full review of all housing association buildings in Merton been undertaken since the Grenfell Tower disaster in Kensington and Chelsea?

Reply

See response to Question above.

Supplementary

I thank the Cabinet Member for his response. My question is can I ask the Cabinet Member if any residential buildings in Merton, and I'm particularly thinking about Housing Association buildings, have been confirmed as having been clad in the same or similar material to those used at Grenfell Tower and also if there's a chance that such buildings in the Borough could be found to be so clad over the months ahead?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Taylor for her supplementary. The full range of tests are ongoing, I've heard things back from Clarion, we are waiting for further reassurances in terms of fire safety. I think it's very important that the range of tests are carried out, firstly in terms of residential buildings but moving forward in terms of schools, hospitals and other buildings throughout the Borough. In areas where there are identified issues or where there is a problem we will of course let any relevant Councillors know about that matter because it is important that people are reassured. A large number of buildings across London have failed fire safety checks and clearly those checks are going to continue in the weeks ahead. We have had regular updates as Councillor Taylor is aware; those updates will continue this week but we as a Council do take that role extremely seriously that's why we work very closely alongside London Fire but also as well taking the opportunity of writing to all Housing Associations in Merton Borough to see if those tests have been carried out.

From **Councillor Agatha Akyigyina** to the **Leader**

Would the Leader join me in sending our respects to those affected by the recent terror attacks, including on Manchester, London Bridge and Finsbury Park?

Reply

Like all of us in this chamber I was deeply shocked and saddened by the terror attacks in the last few months. After each of these attacks I sent mine and the council's sympathies and those of the people of Merton to those affected, their families and friends. In Merton we have made time to remember all of those affected, including by holding minutes silences outside the civic centre and opening books of condolence. I would particularly like to thank local faith leaders who have helped us in standing up to hate in society and in focusing instead on all that we have in common.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Leader for his response and join him in sending our sympathies to those affected by the recent terror attacks. Could he outline how Merton responded to the heightened security situation?

Reply

I thank Councillor Akyigyina for her original question and for her supplementary and can I repeat our condolences, our prayers, our thoughts for those affected, their families, their friends. Now Merton Police have a Counter Terrorism Response Vehicle in the Borough, Madam Mayor; the vehicle is used to visit potentially vulnerable locations, events, as directed by the Borough Counter-Terrorism Lead Superintendent Collins. The vehicle has been a permanent fixture in the Borough for around 2years as a direct response to the increase in the Counter-Terrorism Threat Level to severe. As part of business as usual, Merton Police visit and work with the local mosques either through visiting local policing teams or by engagement with the Counter-Terrorism Lead. These visits do include the offer of free counter-terrorism awareness training. Post the terror attacks in London Madam Mayor, and the attack on the Finsbury Park Mosque, Merton Police did revisit the existing policing plans and increase visits to each mosque to a minimum twice daily visits. Police also reviewed resourcing to ensure sufficient staffing responses were available to deal with any potential threat and to reassure the public and local communities around the increased activity of Ramadan. After Ramadan Madam Mayor, Merton Police continued to visit and engage on a daily basis as requested by the Local Mosques post the Finsbury Park attack.

From **Councillor David Simpson** to the **Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities**:

Given the recent reports that Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has been planning for the last 6 months to close half of London's police stations, can the Cabinet Member update me on what this means for Mitcham's front counter which will in all likelihood be affected by this decision?

Reply

As Cllr Simpson will be aware, the Met has already seen the government slash its funding by 20% and now needs to make a further £400 million of savings by 2021, as a result of demands placed upon them by the Government. Although the Mayor Sadiq Khan took the hard decision to increase the GLA levy to help pay for more policing, the Government provides the vast majority of the Met's funding and continued underfunding will mean more front counters closing (in addition to the closure of almost half of front counters under the previous Conservative mayor) in order maintain police officer numbers and keep Londoners safe from crime.

No decisions have been made as to which front counter services will remain 24/7 and/or what timescales the police are working to on this. Currently Merton police are undertaking a needs assessment looking at demand at the two stations for front

counter use. The Mitcham office is open Monday-Friday 09:00-17:00 as opposed Wimbledon 24/7

Until we know what the engagement routes will be from MOPAC and/or the police, and until we know when a decision will be made it is not possible to comment on the long term use of the front counter in Mitcham.

Supplementary

I thank the Cabinet Member for her response, however isn't it just the latest in a long line of great promises from Sadiq Khan; is she therefore prepared to inform the residents of Mitcham that the Labour Mayor of London is quite likely to take away their opportunity to report crime at their local Police Station?

Reply

I thank Councillor Simpson for his supplementary question and I think he had no objection to the last Mayor of London about this. He wanted to close both Wimbledon and Mitcham Police stations and he knew how most of the Wimbledon residents fought very hard for him not to close the courts as did those of us who sat in Wimbledon Court for over 20 years and we made representations at that time so I must confirm with you that no decisions have been made in terms of closing the Mitcham Police station. There are talks going on as I mentioned in the answer which I have given to you, you have to wait until we see what's happening in terms of what has been agreed.

From **Councillor Joan Henry** to the **Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities**

Would the cabinet member update us on how safe Merton is compared to other London boroughs?

Reply

Merton remains the third safest borough in London. Data obtained for the 12 month period to the end of June 2017 shows that whilst overall crime is going up across the capital the rate of increase in Merton is less than the London average and less than the 3 neighbouring boroughs of Wandsworth, Kingston and Sutton. Merton, along with Kingston and Sutton, is in the bottom quartile for levels of total notifiable offences (TNO) and offences of violence against the person (VAP) recorded.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for her response. Would the Cabinet Member join me in welcoming Sadiq Khan's plan to bring back neighbourhood policing which was cut by the previous tory mayor?

Reply

I thank Councillor Kenny for her supplementary question, and I think I share the same sentiments as she has expressed. We are very grateful to the current mayor for bringing back neighbourhood policing as this will cut down crime and I think in terms of what we do in the courts this will reduce the amount of work that is taking place in courts today.

From **Councillor Stephen Crowe** to the **Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**:

Can the Cabinet Member confirm:

- a) Whether a review of building control enforcement has taken place by the London Borough of Merton since 14th June?
- b) How many building control officers Merton currently has in post and how many vacancies?

Reply

- a) Assuming this relates to Grenfell: The Building and Development Control Manager has been working very closely with Merton's 'Action' group looking into the issue and we have written to all private building owners over 6 storey's in the borough. In addition, there is a very close watching brief being undertaken nationally including by the profession to ensure findings as they arise, are disseminated.
- b) 3.5 in post. 3 vacancies.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his answer to the first part of my question. Given that only 3 and a half of the six posts in the Building Control function are staffed, how is the Council going to ensure Building Control functions properly, and given the Grenfell Tower tragedy, is there now a need for more than 6 building control officers in on a permanent or temporary basis?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Crowe for his supplementary. I don't know obviously if Councillor Crowe is aware but a lot of buildings don't have to use Building Control Officers, it is actually a discretionary service and there are a lot of people who build residential developments and developments in this Borough use approved building inspected so it is a service that requires income to come in to the authority. I hope that as many people as possible use Merton's building control service I believe we have an excellent service in this borough, but as it stands they are not obliged to use us they can use others, but clearly their checks as well have to be resilient and stand up to scrutiny in terms of building safety as we are only too well aware that this has brought on a heightened importance since the tragic events in Grenfell Tower. So going forward we obviously have 3 building control officers but we are obviously under extreme budgetary restraints, clearly the more revenue that comes into the Borough in terms of Building control the more officers we can employ as an authority.

From **Councillor Stan Anderson** to the cabinet member for **Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities**

With the rise in terrorist attacks could the Cabinet Member outline how in Merton we work to ensure all our communities work together to combat hate?

Reply

Safer Merton holds the portfolio for hate crime. The recent terrorist attacks have not resulted in any increases in Merton's reported hate crime which is different to that seen after the vote to leave the EU. Safer Merton have undertaken a piece of analysis to look at hate crime reports and, working with communities, a four-year hate crime strategy has been developed and published on the website. Safer Merton and the community safety partnership are working with community leaders and partners to ensure that the profile of hate crime is raised and that we set ourselves targets in regard to engaging communities to come together and report hate crime. A hate crime working group, made up of a range of community organisations oversees the delivery of the hate crime strategy holding the council, our statutory partners and each other to account in its delivery. In October we will undertake a range of community engagement work through hate crime awareness week and this will be promoted far and wide to maximise direct face to face engagement and support from our partner agencies.

Supplementary

Bearing in mind the rise in terrorist attacks is she heartened that our residents' survey shows that 93% of residents get on with their neighbours? Would she join me in congratulating local community volunteers and groups on this?

Reply

Thank you Madam Mayor. I thank Councillor Anderson for his supplementary question. It is quite clear from the answers which I gave to the Councillor that since the terrorist attacks happened, Merton has not shown any increase in hate crime and as I'm speaking on this in my speech, I think you need to congratulate the residents of Merton for getting on with each other; 93% of the residents in this borough shared the same sentiments as he has expressed, that they all get on with each other and most people of different backgrounds are united in Merton.

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

What can Merton Council do to ensure that appropriate fire regulations are enforced and being properly complied with in the borough, especially on housing association estates and properties?

Reply

The enforcement role for Fire Safety in the borough is with the London Fire Brigade via the Fire Regulatory Reform Order. There is a team of officers from across the council working collaboratively, and in liaison with the London Fire Brigade, to

monitor Fire Safety compliance in the borough for housing associations and private landlords of tall buildings in the borough.

Supplementary

I thank the Cabinet Member for his response. Having outlined that there is a team working on this issue, can I ask the Cabinet Member what the London Borough of Merton has done since the 14th June to ensure that appropriate fire regulations are in force and are being properly complied with in the Borough?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Bull for his supplementary. Responsibility for that is with the London Fire Brigade but obviously we work closely alongside them if there are any issues in terms of safety of homes which is investigated by Environmental Health, we would obviously closely liaise with this. As an authority we've done a huge amount in terms of fire safety; I myself have gone round to all the Tower Blocks with the Abbey ward councillors to give reassurance to residents but also closely liaised with the London Fire Service as well. I think it takes a collaborative approach. At Merton we have a very strong working relationship with the London Fire Service. Clearly if anything arises it is crucial that Merton and London Fire Service work in partnership to inform residents if any issues do arise. The safety of people is absolutely paramount. Going forward there will be a lot of fire regulation checks at residential buildings and also as well in terms of Schools and other buildings; it hasn't stopped at residential, residential was the top priority but there will be further tests are being carried out in terms of the cladding and any changes which may as a result of the public enquiry take place or before then in terms of building regulations and materials we use in building. So it is a very complex matter but I would advise Councillor Bull that we take this matter very seriously because the safety of the people in this Borough is paramount.

From Councillor Mary Curtin the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

How safe are Merton residents when it comes to the quality of the air we breathe?

Reply

Air quality is a concern across the whole of the UK with 59% of the population estimated to live in areas with illegal levels of air pollution. As with many other London Boroughs and urban areas Merton exceeds the annual legal levels of pollution for Nitrogen Dioxide, which primarily emanates from diesel vehicles. These exceedances are almost entirely around some of our main highways and this is why we have introduced a new diesel levy which discourages diesel vehicles in our borough.

Compared to a number of other London boroughs, Merton has a relatively good record on tackling air pollution, but we should not be complacent and we must take the action we can as a local authority and work with other Councils, the GLA and the Government to tackle this problem. National government has a particularly important

role as of course air pollution cannot be stopped at borough, city or county boundaries but requires a comprehensive whole-country approach.

The health impact of these pollutants is very complex and determined by exposure, age and any underlying health issue. However children are particularly at risk as their lungs are underdeveloped and exposure to high levels of pollutants may lead to issues such as asthma. This is why the Mayor of London has introduced clean air audits for London schools in the top air quality hotspots in order to identify practical steps that can be taken to reduce children's exposure to pollutants.

Merton's Pollution Teams produces an Annual Status Report on Air Quality in the Borough which is published on our website and gives a detailed update on the work we are doing to address what has been termed a national health emergency.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response and could I congratulate him on his decision to take the issue of air quality seriously by introducing the diesel levy and what other plans does he have to address this issue?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Curtin for her supplementary. As I've said at previous Council meetings as a Local Authority we take this matter extremely seriously and will be leaving no stone unturned in terms of the proposals to introduce to tackle this growing issue. In due course we will be publishing an air quality action plan that through the Council assessed what policies we can implement across the Council to help implement and improve our air quality.