

**Merton Council**  
**Council**  
**22 November 2017**  
**Supplementary Agenda**

31 Supplementary Questions and Replies

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**1. From: Hamish Norbrook  
To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

I would like to ask what facilities the Council has in place for disabled councillors?

**Reply**

Reasonable adjustments are provided for disabled councillors so that each councillor is able to carry out his or her duties without disadvantage due to their disability. This may include, but is not limited to, reports in accessible formats, specialist IT equipment and support to obtain financial assistance and advice through Access to Work.

**2. From: Sophie Shelton  
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

Ridley Road Wimbledon has many families with young children, elderly and disabled residents, but no speed calming measures. It's noticeable that increasing vehicles are travelling in excess of limits. Can the leader please confirm what action will be taken to reduce the speed of vehicles along this road?

**Reply**

We do take safety very seriously and respond to safety issues through our annual local safety and accessibility programme; however, due to the availability of funds and resources, it is not possible to address all safety concerns particularly rat running, perceived danger and excessive speed/volume of traffic which are problems in a number of residential roads throughout the borough.

It is therefore necessary to prioritise by giving first consideration to those areas with recorded personal injury accidents and areas outside schools. Engineering solutions are then considered to address accidents' contributory factors. According to our records over the past 3 years there has not been any recorded Personal Injury (PI) accidents in Ridley Road. This road is a relatively narrow road, and with parking on both sides, unhindered 2 way traffic is not possible. It is subject to a 20mph speed limit and according to our latest speed data that was collected in 2014, the average speed in one direction was found to be 20mph and 17mph in the other. Although we would prefer lower speeds, such speeds are not recognised as excessive speed and therefore when compared to other priorities, it would make justifying any action extremely difficult at this point in time. We will of course keep such matters under review.

**3. From: Tony Burton  
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

What is Merton Council's policy determining which planning applications are considered by the Planning Applications Committee and how was this applied with respect to the Queen's Head development in Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area which was determined by officers?

## Reply

When determining planning applications, officers are bound by the Council's adopted scheme of management:

"The Head of Public Protection and Development is authorised to determine all planning applications and associated applications except the following:

- Where a written request, which gives clear and precise reasons, is received from a Council Member that an application(s) should be determined by Committee
- Where objections have been received which cannot be overcome by conditions but where the application is judged to be in accordance with the Development Plan and so recommended for approval (minor developments or changed of use are excluded from this exception)
- Where the proposals are significantly contrary to Development Plan Policy, unless recommended for refusal
- Proposals which are subject to Section 106 agreement that would contain any heads of terms or contributions that are not a standard requirement of the Local Plan or (for proposals where a standard requirement has been subject to modification through negotiation or otherwise) depart significantly from the standard requirement of the Local Plan; or applications for release or significant modification/variation from such obligations.
- Where conflict arises between the officer's recommendation and the advice issued by English Heritage or other body with similar statutory status
- Determinations in cases where an appeal has been lodged against non-determination which involved public enquiry or informal hearing
- Revocation/modification of planning permission and discontinuance order
- Where the Council may be involved in compensation or service or a purchased notice (except in relation to stop notices)
- Where the proposal involves the Council either as applicant or landowner and the scheme is not of a minor nature
- Where enforcement action will follow on from a refusal of planning permission
- Where an Environmental Impact Assessment has been provided or requested
- Where the applicant is a Councillor or Council officer
- Where officers consider that the application should be determined by Committee
- Major hazardous substances
- Council's own applications."

This policy delegates wide ranging jurisdiction over the determination of planning application to officers. The receipt of objections to a scheme in itself does not preclude officers from issuing a decision to approve an application.

## Summary of objections to planning application

In this instance 77 neighbours were notified and 3 objections received relating to the principle of the loss of the pub and detailed issues of design. A conservation area site and Press notice were posted, One letter was received from a neighbour concerned that the wall on their boundary be retained or replaced and that the bin store be situated away from their boundary. CAMRA objected to the loss of the public house. Mitcham Cricket Green Heritage Group objected to the initial design.

As part of a re-consultation on the revised plans no objections were received from the public and the Mitcham Cricket Green heritage group were happy with the bulk scale and massing but had reservations on the material choices and detail. The original design went to the councils Design Review Panel who gave it an Amber. The revised drawings were considered by the Councils urban designer who considered them appropriate for this site.

### **Assessment of objections as part of planning assessment**

SPP policy DM R5 states that the loss of a public house will only be permitted where the applicant can demonstrate to the council's satisfaction that the public house is no longer economically viable and there are alternative public houses located within the local area.

The application was submitted with a Viability and Marketing Report outlining the recent commercial history of the site. The previous three tenants failed to operate at a profit and left the business in debt. At the end of 2015 Shepherd Neame Brewery started looking for a suitable tenant but failed and started marketing the building in March 2016 but received no offers for a pub use. Given the overall general downturn in pub use due to competition from cheaper supermarket drink, the economy of scale of the pub and local demographic changes the report concludes that the public house is unviable. Although currently closed the nearest alternative pub, the White Hart is due to reopen and there are two larger pubs nearby in Mitcham Town centre and the Ravensbury Arms has now reopened. For these reasons the proposals, whilst the loss is regrettable, are not considered contrary to policy DM R5.

Concerns regarding materials, boundary treatment and refuse arrangements are all matters that can be covered by condition.

### **Conclusions**

Having regard to the scheme of management, officers considered that the sole objection regarding the principle of the loss of the pub could not be supported on the basis of the available information including information that had been provided.

The more detailed design concerns did not so much relate to the fundamental aspects of the proposals and could be addressed by condition.

Officers considered that the nature and scope of objections were such that it did not warrant the scheme being reported to Planning Committee.

**4. From: David Anderson  
To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking**

Please explain what the council is doing to solve the growing fly tipping problem in the borough.

### **Reply**

The Council is tough on those who litter or fly tip our streets, we take a range of actions including the following

- Any evidence found within the waste we collate and dependant of the evidence found and quantity of waste we issue a £400 fixed penalty notice. Any other fly tip waste reported along with good intelligence i.e. someone witnessing someone/vehicle dumping the waste we investigate and proceed to court via our legal service team.
- We place fly tipping signs up where possible within hot spot known areas.
- We work with our own CCTV section to help identify fly tipping culprits.
- We have carried out a number of overt ANPR (auto numbering plate recognition) exercises with the police which involved, a planned operation where areas within the borough are used for stopping vehicles especially carrying waste and ensuring they have their waste carrier licence and any waste being carried at the time we request them to send in receipts of where the waste has been disposed of. Offenders are prosecuted.
- We offer up our Free Bulky waste collection service to residents in order to encourage not to fly tip bulk waste items such as furniture.

### **5. From: Richard Hilton To the Cabinet Member for Education**

Conservative Lancashire County Council has banned Halal meat from sources where the animal has not been stunned before slaughter. Is ritually slaughtered meat, including Halal meat served in Merton schools? If so, can you assure me that the meat is sourced from suppliers where the animals are stunned before slaughter?

### **Reply**

School meals is a delegated responsibility for schools, but the council offers a central school meals contract for primary and special schools to buy into, currently operated by Chartwells. All but 3 of the borough's primary and special schools (including Academies) do so.

I can confirm that the halal meat supplied by Chartwells is procured with full consideration to the humane treatment of animals including being stunned before slaughter. This requirement was stated in Chartwells bid for the contract and the company has recently confirmed that this continues to be the case.

### **6. From: Stephen Kelly To the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking**

Can someone explain why the Merton Park Conservation Area has a daily leaf collection, a man who puts everything in sacks for collection.

Meanwhile in adjacent Dorset Road we have had no collection this year and the leaves are piled waist high on the pavement.

### **Reply**

Across the borough we have a number of street champions who volunteer to keep their roads clean and support the service in sweeping up leaf fall material.

All roads with heavy leaf fall are included in the annual 'leafing plan' and are visited as a minimum of twice during the season. The leafing season runs for ten weeks between October and December – we are now in week 4 of the leafing season with additional resources provided by our contractor.

In addition to regular cleansing operations, leaf fall clearance is undertaken. The leafing plan document lists those roads that historically have experienced heavy leaf fall or have been prone to flooding in adverse weather conditions. The plan allows for two visits across the ten week period by the leafing resource to each of the roads listed in the plan.

The proposed leafing schedule is not exhaustive and other locations will be cleared as required.

### **7. From: Tom Shirley**

#### **To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

What are the council's plans to meet its responsibilities to residents including children using schools and parks to reduce the heavy and dangerous traffic and levels of air pollution at the northern end of Haydons road and the small residential roads that come off Haydons road?

### **Reply**

The council has just completed public consultation on its Air Quality Action Plan, this proposed a number of measures to tackle air quality. These measures will be discussed and approved at Cabinet and include:

1. Emissions from Developments and Buildings.
  - Adoption of air quality as a key priority in our new Local Plan.
  - New planning guidance to ensure that air quality is considered carefully as part of any new development.
  - Cleaner construction.
  - Incorporating our key areas of poor air quality into the council's mapping system.
  - Stricter enforcement of building heating and power sources.
  - Better information in our smoke control areas.
  - Consider air quality implications and sustainability of our buildings and homes.
2. Public Health and Awareness.

- Continue to work with our Public Health colleagues in measuring, assessing and tackling poor air quality.
  - Work with internal council partners to embed the issue of air quality across the council.
  - Promotion of key health projects aimed at air quality such as AirText, Love Clean Air, STARS and the Workplace Charter.
  - Continue to promote polices around active lifestyles and away from use of cars.
3. Delivery Servicing and Freight
- Promote and, where practicable, sign up to cleaner transport initiatives.
4. Borough Fleet Action
- Ensuring the council's fleet and/or our contractors' fleet is as clean as possible.
5. Localised Solutions
- Review traffic movements and pinch-points in our Air Quality Focus Areas with a view to minimising congestion and reducing traffic emissions.
  - Consider options for restrictions of polluting traffic in areas of poor air quality by the use of Clean Air Zones.
  - Audit our schools that are in areas of poor air quality and where necessary take action to protect our children.
  - Continue and improve our air quality monitoring role to ensure that we are gathering important data and able to quantify the impact of this plan.
6. Cleaner Transport in the Borough
- Adopt and enforce anti-idling legislation.
  - Increase and improve the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure in the borough.
  - Review the new emissions based parking levy and its impact.
  - Review policy on free parking for zero emission cars.
  - Provision of infrastructure to support cycling and walking in the borough.

We hope this will work to improve air quality and reduce heavy traffic across the borough.

**8. From: Julia Townsend  
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

Are the roadwork repairs on Ashcombe Road bridge in Wimbledon on schedule to complete by the due date of one December?

**Reply**



It is anticipated that the bridge will be reopened on 12 December 2017  
Updates are available on our website at  
[www.merton.gov.uk/major-roadworks-schemes](http://www.merton.gov.uk/major-roadworks-schemes)

We are aware that the delays caused by unforeseen utility company errors have caused much inconvenience to residents and we appreciate the patience and endurance of the community as we undertake the essential bridge strengthening works.

**9. From: Sandra Vogel**  
**To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

Which businesses in Mitcham participate in the community toilet scheme, how is their participation advertised to the public, what do these businesses get paid for participation, and when will the accessible 24/7 free public toilets promised as part of the town centre works to be completed in January be provided?

**Reply**

Details of the council's Community Toilet Scheme are available online at  
<http://www.merton.gov.uk/communitytoiletscheme>

You can use the toilet facilities in participating local businesses when they are open, without having to make a purchase. Participating premises display a sticker in their window.



The Community Toilet Scheme enables local businesses like pubs, restaurants and shops, to work with the council to make more clean, safe and accessible toilets available to the public.

In Mitcham, the following business participate and the facilities are publicised by the Community Toilet sticker on the premises, and on our website.

<b>Mitcham</b>	<b>Cravings Café</b> 47 Upper Green E, Mitcham CR4 2PF	Monday - Saturday 09:00 - 16:00
<b>Mitcham</b>	<b>King's Arms</b> 260-262 London Road, Mitcham, CR4 3HD	Monday-Thursday 11.00 am-12.00am Saturday-Friday 11.00 am-

		12.30am Sunday 12.00pm-11.30pm
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Business aren't paid to participate, they receive a discount on their business rates to cover the cost of cleaning and additional sanitary wares. The discount ranges between £800-900 per year.

Cravings Café was the recipient of a shopfront improvement grant. As a condition of these works, the council negotiated their inclusion in the Community Toilet Scheme at no cost to the Council.

The provision of a toilet as part of the rediscover Mitcham project has long been on the agenda. The priority for the Council at the moment is the completion of the public realm works. We will revisit the options available to provide a toilet facility mid-2018 once the roadworks and project budgets are reconciled.

In the mean-time, our businesses in Mitcham have shown commitment to the community toilet scheme and we encourage others to do so. We also encourage Mitcham residents to support their local businesses and Market by spending more than a penny in the town centre.

**10. From: Barry Smith  
To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

What steps are the council taking to ensure that residents who are entitled to a council tax discount as a result of Severe Mental Impairment are aware of their right to claim this discount and their right to claim a refund for any overpayment in previous years?

**Reply**

The council promotes all council tax discounts and exemptions on the website. All the discounts and exemptions available are listed and details given on qualifying criteria. Council tax bills refer residents to the website for all relevant information regarding council tax.

Information on how to apply is also provided. Applications can be backdated to previous years for some discounts and exemptions if satisfactory evidence is provided to substantiate their claim. Where there is an overpayment a refund can be made or the credit used to offset any other council tax debt.

**11. From: Hina Bokhari  
To the Cabinet Member for Education**

What measures are the council taking to ensure that those children with SEN who are entitled to assistance with transport to and from school are able to access this assistance?

**Reply**

Merton's SEN Transport Policies are available on the Merton's Local Offer. This gives details of all transport options available to parents/carers and young people as well as the application form.

The SEN and Disabilities Integrated Service employs its own dedicated Transport Co-ordinator whose role it is to co-ordinate transport arrangements with parents/carers, young people and schools and to agree the transport plan.

The Transport Co-ordinator works closely with the schools and colleges and also takes referrals for transport from these educational establishments.

The Transport Co-ordinator also oversees the Independent Travel Training and refers children and young people on to this scheme.

We are currently providing transport assistant to 477 children and young people with a Statement of SEN or Education and Health Care Plan.

**12. From: Richard Hackforth-Jones  
To the Cabinet Member for Education**

As the council have the choice over the next two years as to whether to stick with the old schools funding formula or move to the new formula, which is the council favouring, when will the final decision be made and when will this be communicated to schools?

**Reply**

Merton agreed at the Schools Forum meeting held on the 15th November following consultation with schools, academies and the Schools Forum to use it's local funding formula for 2018/19 (2019/20 will be decided on next year). Amongst other considerations, this enables Merton to phase in the impact of the National Funding Formula on individual schools and spread the additional funding Merton is expected to receive over more schools. Schools will be informed what their 2018/19 grant allocations are in the beginning of February 2018.

**13. From: Klaartje Dresselaers  
To the Cabinet Member for Adult Health and Social Care**

Given that the likelihood of under-recording severe mental illness (SMI) in Merton was identified in 2014, what measures has the council taken since to improve recording of SMI, and has the council now improved spending on SMI to at least the national average?

**Reply**

It seems that the question refers to the mental health needs assessment that was produced in 2014 and is based on health outcomes and health spending by the NHS. The Council is able to provide contextual information around the question asked, however, the funding and responsibility for this sits with the NHS.

We have reviewed the available information and provided local data from Public Health England and NHS England. Data is available over time and is available up to 2015/16.

- Merton had a significantly lower than average number of people with Severe Mental Illness (SMI) known to GPs according to the 2012/13 data used in the Mental Health needs assessment. (*Source: Mental Health Needs Assessment 2013/14*).
- The current trend data (see below) on SMI recorded prevalence on practice registers in Merton shows that numbers have increased over time. In 2015/16 we had 1,899 people in Merton registered with SMI compared to only 1,695 in 2012/13. Even though the rate of SMI recorded prevalence has increased over time we are still lower than the national average. (*Source: Severe Mental Illness profile - <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile-group/mental-health/profile/severe-mental-illness>*)
- Prevalence of SMI in Merton (0.86%) in 2015/16 is lower than neighbouring boroughs in South West London – Sutton (0.92%), Wandsworth (0.95%) and Croydon (1.09%).
- It is expected that the numbers of people with SMIs will increase in the next five years. (*Source: Mental Health Needs Assessment 2013/14*).
- We have no information specifically on spend for SMI over time.

**14. From: Tamara Kohler  
To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

Given that Universal Credit will be rolled out to the Mitcham Job Centre in December 2017 what steps have the council taken to support claimants in Merton, given the widely publicised problems that universal credit has caused elsewhere?

**Reply**

Universal Credit was implemented in the Sutton Job Centre almost two years ago and as a result Merton residents with an SM4 postcode have been claiming Universal Credit since February 2016. The council already has in place a universal support service which helps residents apply and access Universal Credit and also provides personal budgeting support. Different council sections assist with this support including assistance at local libraries, advice and support from social workers and welfare benefits staff. This support will continue to be available when Universal Credit is rolled out to the Mitcham Job Centre in December 2017 and rolled out in other parts of the borough between January and March 2018.

**15. From: Somayeh Aghnianejad  
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

How many complaints have been received about food waste not being collected since 1 September 2017?

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

As from 1 September 2017 we have received 15 Stage 1 complaints relating to Food Waste collections.

**16. From: Paul Kohler  
To the Cabinet Member for Community Safety Engagement and Equalities**

What discussions has the Council had with Stephen Hammond MP and Siobhain McDonagh MP about the closure of Wimbledon Police station?

**Reply**

The closure of Wimbledon Police station was not a Merton Council decision. This came as a result of the government's decision to cut an additional £400m from the Met Police budget, bringing the cuts to £1 billion, and the resulting consultation driven by MOPAC and the Metropolitan Police to which the council did respond. This response was a cross party condemnation of the closure proposal which stressed the need to retain both Wimbledon and Mitcham stations. This position was echoed by both MPs.

**17. From: John Braithwaite  
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

What percentage of building work across the borough for each of the last 5 years has been certified by the council's building control team and what percentage has been signed off by private inspectors?

**Reply**

Officers have told me this averages at about 65% to the council's building control team and the balance to private approved inspectors.

**18. From: Susan Bucknall  
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

What plans do the council have to improve the issuance for Fixed Penalty notices for fly tipping from the currently abysmal 0.19% of fly tipping offences recorded ?

**Reply**

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

We will continue to issue fix penalty notices for fly tipping where we have evidence as to who is responsible for dumping the waste.

Fly tippers are becoming more sophisticated in ensuring that there is little or no evidence to trace back to them so preventing successful legal action. Such evidence would include papers or details regarding the company or individuals who dumped the waste. Without this direct evidence then unless we have a witness who is

prepared to provide a statement and agree to attend court, we will struggle to prosecute.

It would be inappropriate use of council money to pursue actions, thereby incurring legal fees and other costs, without a reasonable chance of success.

We will continue to promote fly tipping as unacceptable behaviour through our litter/fly tipping campaigns

**19. From: Jo-Anne Pownall**

**To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

There was supposed to be funding from the development of the laundry towards Garfield Rec. Where's that funding? What will it be used for? What additional funding is planned as the playground and other features need updating/making safer, the pond has dried up. Please advise on this important community space.

**Reply**

The Council has a sum of £10,700 earmarked for improvements to Garfield Recreation Ground, secured through a local planning agreement. Our plans are to invest this sum in improvements to the playground; specifically, new seating, replacement safety surfacing, and some new play items (springers) to replace existing ones.

There are no current investment proposals for this site beyond this.

The playground is regularly inspected and any significant safety issues are addressed and resolved promptly.

The nearby ponds at Wandle Nature Park are seasonal features. These ponds comprise the concrete settlement tanks of the former sewerage works. Their water levels are imposed by the prevailing weather conditions and therefore subject to natural season fluctuations.

**20. From: Simon McGrath**

**To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

Where the Planning Committee has an approved development with less than 40% affordable homes, what follow up is carried out to check that the achieved sale/rental prices of the properties do not exceed those forecast in the Viability assessments?

**Reply**

In most cases the Council will include what is commonly known as a 'Clawback mechanism' or 'review mechanism' that is secured by the associated legal agreement. After a specified time period, ranging from 6 months to 2 years following completion of a development, the applicant is required to review the viability of the scheme and this includes a review of actual sale prices and the matter is then reassessed.

## **Supplementary**

Thank you very much for the answer. Can I ask how much money the Council has recovered in its cases where they've reassessed the viability study, in some recent period, last year for example?

## **Reply**

I'd like to thank Mr McGrath for his supplementary. I haven't got the answers off-hand but I'll ensure that it is responded to.

### **21. From: Emily Robertson To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

How many FOI requests since 1 Jan 2017 have not met the 20 working day time limit? What % of the total is this?

## **Reply**

Total number of FOI's received and answered from January 2017 to end September 2017 is as below:

· Total received	1,271
· Total answered on time	936
· Total not answered on time	335
· % answered on time	73.6%
· % not answered in time	26.3%

### **22. From: Andrew Boyce To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

Earlier this year, this Council passed a motion on South Wimbledon. With that in mind, if the current administration is returned at next year's election, what commitments will it give to funding and implementing the South Wimbledon Enhancement Plan which local residents have been developing over the past year?

## **Reply**

Abbey Ward Councillors and Council Officers have already been supporting the South Wimbledon community in creating the South Wimbledon Enhancement Plan. As the plan is still a draft, we do not yet fully understand the funding or resource implications of the plan. We are committed to helping the community identify suitable funding to achieve the plan's objectives. We await the final draft of the plan to better understand the financial asks.

An early quick win of the initiative has been the installation of festive lighting in South Wimbledon, funded by the Council with support from the FutureMerton team and FM Conway. We also recognise the efforts the community have gone to in crowdsourcing the local Christmas tree this year.

## Supplementary

Thank you very much for the answer to my question. I am not going to talk very much about the South Wimbledon Enhancement Plan but I am going to talk about an issue that came up in some of the discussions we've had around it and that's principally about the state of the streets in South Wimbledon. Since the summer of this year I've been making numerous representations to Councillor Ross Garrod about the state of the weeds in the streets in South Wimbledon. I've been assured that Veolia are dealing with it but the streets still seem to be the same since the summer. So are we going to finally tackle the weeds around South Wimbledon?

## Reply

I'd like to obviously thank Mr Boyce for his supplementary since his question was on a completely different issue; I know that my colleague Councillor Garrod is working very hard in terms of resolving the street cleaning issues in South Wimbledon because we know it has not been up to scratch, we know it has to improve and that Veolia do have to get their act together on the matter but it's important as well that we ensure that we do have those parties in South Wimbledon alongside because you do care about our local community .

### **23. From: Dan Goode**

#### **To the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities**

With the Pentecostal movement's beliefs on LGBT rights widely known and easily accessible, why didn't Merton Council think to do a full equality assessment on the move of Elim Pentecostal to Merton Hall & why did it fall to residents to inform the council of the Elim organisation's anti-LGBT stance?

## Reply

**I do not recognise your description of the congregation of the Elim church in Wimbledon.**

The Equality analysis undertaken in July 2016 considered the potential impacts regarding the new school that were deemed significant at that time – that was the displacement of a Day Centre for vulnerable adults and impacts on primary school children. Merton Hall is not a council service, only had 12 regular lets, and there was a plan to provide alternative premises.

The council has included Merton Hall in a revised Equalities Analysis which will be available with any further council decision, but the conclusion is that there are alternative premises provided and available elsewhere so no one is adversely impacted.

However, we are aware of concerns from residents that Merton Hall should still be available to hire for wider groups. The Elim Church has confirmed its facilities will be available for lettings when not required by them, and they will of course need to adhere to Equalities Legislation in doing so.



**24. From: Nicola Thompson  
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

Road markings indicating 20mph zones are so worn they're barely visible on many streets. Re-painting them would be a welcome reminder to drivers that they must curb their speed in these zones. For the sake of all road-users, particularly pedestrians and cyclists, when will the 20mph road markings be refreshed?

**Reply**

It is appreciated that the presence of 20mph road markings offer some supplementary benefit to the legally required signs however these markings are not legally required and due to limited available funding, only those markings that are legally required or have enforcement and safety implications are fully maintained.

Notwithstanding this every effort is made to refresh 20mph markings across the borough and each site is assessed on its own merit.

**25. From: John Carroll  
To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

Being only entitled to 50 words to communicate, I can only say - the website is an awful experience for me a technologist, I can only imagine how bad it is for elders, please, reconsider everything, from process's and forms to communication and feedback, User experience is important. Thank you

**Reply**

Thank you for your question and feedback. I am sorry that your experience has not been a more positive one. Our new website has considerably more transactional functionality than before and this is mirrored in the number of service requests we receive from residents. We continually review feedback received (including from the link on the website) and involved users in the redesign, and we reconsider user-friendliness and processes where appropriate. We are also continuing to roll-out further services on the website to ensure residents have 24/7 access.

**26. From: George Dunnett  
To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

Will the council install low-cost, electric vehicle charging points in lamposts for drivers without off-street parking as other councils across London are beginning to do(e.g.Hounslow: [https://www.hounslow.gov.uk/info/20053/transport/1497/electric\\_vehicles\\_and\\_charging\\_points/2](https://www.hounslow.gov.uk/info/20053/transport/1497/electric_vehicles_and_charging_points/2))? This would support the council's goals of improving air quality, be of limited cost to the council, and cause minimal disruption.

**Reply**

The Council is already working to implement such infrastructure and we are undertaking the necessary investigations in terms the necessary changes to existing

lamp columns, power supplier and operational matters. We plan to roll out up to 12 Lamp column socket chargers in 2018/19

Merton is actively promoting electric charging points and will continue to do so.

The last three years have seen a three fold increase in the number of electric cars in the borough, with 300 Merton residents owning electric cars and many more people going electric throughout the capital.

A total of 21 charge points have been installed across the borough in nine locations with plans to expand the network further. 36 fast-chargers are currently progressing through the planning system for installation in 2018 and we intend to roll out a further 30 charging sites in 2019 in addition to 2-3 Rapid Charging stations (50Kw) to be installed by TfL

By the end of 2018/19 there will be over 100 on-street charging points, in addition to those already available in new housing developments, healthcare sites and retail parks.

Keep updated with our Electric Vehicle Charging roll-out at <http://www.merton.gov.uk/electric-vehicle-charging-points>

**27. From: Greg Bryant  
To the Cabinet Member for Education**

Following Scrutiny on 9/11 on the new Harris Wimbledon school in High Path, can the Council clarify whether it has a confirmed agreement that students of the new Harris Wimbledon will be able to use the Nursery Road playing fields (freehold owned by Rutlish Foundation) for sport and PE purposes?

**Reply**

The council has a 99-year lease of Nursery Playing Field that runs until 2059. The report to CYP Scrutiny Committee sought to reassure the Panel that the children attending Harris Wimbledon, like all schools, will have the benefit of accessing a local playing field.

The council will therefore ensure a portion of Nursery Road Playing Fields is available for Harris Wimbledon school pupils, though the specific arrangement will change over time as the school grows and needs and priorities change.

The council is also aware that Rutlish School has an entitlement to use about half the Nursery Road playing field facility for its own use during school hours, though it is currently used much less than this. We are clear that any future arrangement would successfully accommodate the needs of both schools and we are in contact with Rutlish School and the Rutlish Foundation in this regard.

**Supplementary**

Thank you for the answer on Nursery Road playgrounds. My follow up question is: the pavilion on that ground is condemned, it's not fit for purpose; do Merton Council have any funds, plans or ideas to rectify that?

**Reply**

Not as far as I am concerned but when it comes to providing playing fields for students that will be at Harris as in your original question which I've already answered but I don't have information on the pavilion.

**28. From: Julie Gould**

**To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

When will you be serving notice on Veolia UK to terminate contract for waste collection? They are in fundamental breach.

**Reply**

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

On 2nd November 2017 the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny and Overview Committee were updated on the current performance of the Veolia contract following this meeting Veolia have agreed to come back to scrutiny and provide an update on service improvement. Regular contract meetings are held between South London Waste Partnership, Veolia and LB Merton officers. Veolia have apologised and committed to ensuring the service meets the contract standards.

**29. From: Richard English**

**To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

What checks do the Council undertake in order to ensure that the information provided in Planning Applications and supporting documents is accurate and truthful, and what action can the Council take in situations where these are proven to be false or inaccurate?

**Reply**

All applications are considered by qualified trained planning professionals. Evidence submitted as part of a planning application is scrutinised and may be passed to a relevant expert within the Council or if necessary an outside expert. However, evidence submitted by professionally qualified individuals is considered on its merits and officers have experience and training on judging the quality of that evidence. If information is found to be false or inaccurate and that is fully demonstrated and accepted, the determination of the application will be delayed until the matter is resolved.

**Supplementary**

Thank you for the answer. In the recent application concerning Merton Hall, even a cursory glance of the data provided by Elim Church themselves showed that the number of car journeys currently made by the congregation would not be likely to reduce by 4% but by zero. Given the impact that this will have upon parking in the surrounding streets, is it not reasonable for residents to expect that the Committee would properly review applications and challenge false claims?

### Reply

I'd like to thank Mr English for his supplementary. I believe that everything was considered in terms of that planning application, I believe that the correct decision was taken. Clearly in relation to parking if they have got a concern about parking in the local area I suggest that local residents work alongside their local councillors and submit a petition if they do want to have extended local hours and then there will be a consultation but I am satisfied that everything was followed in terms of the planning application itself at Merton Hall.

### 30. From: Emma Sutton

#### To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

What replacement community facility with 200 capacity is there in the immediate future to replace Merton Hall as the Harris Academy & Elim church are yet to built. All saints school hall with 80 capacity is already available to hire, the new Pincott road site is only 40.

### Reply

The main Hall at Merton Hall is 178m<sup>2</sup>. There are eight schools within ¾ mile of Merton Hall (so about 15 minutes walk), all with similar sized halls (at least 165m<sup>2</sup> and some larger than Merton Hall) - Pelham, St Mary's, Merton Abbey, Holy Trinity, Rutlish, Dundonald and Wimbledon Chase. Schools would welcome the financial benefits of hiring their halls out of hours.

There are also other premises of similar size, including St Saviour's Church, Morden Assembly Hall, Vestry Hall, Mansel Centre, St Johns Hall High Path, Merton Arts Space, that are available for private hire. Many other local premises for hire are listed on the Wimbledon Community Association website:  
<https://wimbledoncommunity.org/venue-search/>

#### School Halls nearby:

School	Distance from Merton Hall (m)	Hall size (sqm)
Pelham	156	171
St Mary's	525	165
Merton Abbey	615	165
All Saints (Haydons Rd site)	912	131
Holy Trinity	959	169

Rutlish	1,200	377
Dundonald	1,219	155
Wimbledon Chase	1,234	226
Merton Park	1,234	106

(note – hall at Merton Hall is 178m<sup>2</sup> plus 38m<sup>2</sup> backstage area)

Others we know of but there will be more:

- All Saints School Hall (133m<sup>2</sup>)
- Morden Assembly Hall (120m<sup>2</sup>)
- Pelham School Hall (160m<sup>2</sup>)
- St Saviour's Church (170m<sup>2</sup>)
- Vestry Hall (163m<sup>2</sup>)

A large selection of community facilities for hire are also available via Wimbledon Community Association website: <https://wimbledoncommunity.org/venue-search/>

**31. From: Sara Sharp  
To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

The Council recently set up Merantun, an independent property development firm. How will the private sector be involved and how will Council board members separate between their legal duties as a Local Authority and duties under Company Law?

**Reply**

Merantun Development Ltd is a private sector company, wholly owned by Merton Council, whereby LBM is the sole shareholder.

The private sector will be involved to the extent that Merantun will commission private sector contractors to design and build the properties.

Currently there is one non-executive director on the Board who is a Council employee. Two further council nominated Directors will be appointed in due course as non-executive directors.

The Companies Act 2006 imposes certain general duties on a director of a UK limited company. A director has duties to promote the success of the company, to act independently of other interests and to exercise reasonable care, skill and diligence.

A director of a company must also avoid a situation in which he/she has, or can have, a direct or indirect interest that conflicts, or possibly may conflict, with the interests of the company (section 175, Companies Act 2006). This covers a very broad range of situations where:

- the director's interest may be actual or potential, and direct or indirect
- the conflict with the company's interests may be actual or potential.

If an actual or potential conflict might arise, it can be authorised in advance either by the shareholder (either before or after the event) or by the other Directors of the Company (in advance of the event). If Directors are placed in the position to make this decision they need to also bear in mind their other duties especially with regards the ones mentioned above.

Separate to the duty under section 175, there is the duty to declare an interest in a proposed transaction or arrangement under section 177. If a director has a direct or indirect interest in that transaction or arrangement, he/she must declare that interest to the Board.

Failure to discharge the duties above can have serious implications. Therefore the Directors on the Merantun Board will be provided training to assist them identifying the potential for conflict and the necessity to declare interest. In any event the duties described above and the responsibilities of the Directors are not alien to those who work in Local Government as the same sort of obligations are placed on council employees and members when conducting Council business.

### **Supplementary**

As Merantun company as an independent company will be given Council or rather public lands as earmarked in the report, where does that leave transparency and democratic accountability under the Government Act of 1972 to realise best value after the treatment of the Merton Hall and Elim transfer?

### **Reply**

I'd like to thank Ms Sharp for her follow up and welcome her back to the chamber, I suspected that it might be an issue really about her dislike of the Elim Church after all and so it's proved. The Merantun property company has been set up in a totally orthodox way in order to achieve best value for the Council and to provide the best income stream for the Council and to ensure that the assets that we have are used to their full potential so that people in the area can be housed appropriately. I think it is a very good innovation by this Council, one that was agreed by Full Council and I very much look forward to it starting its' work.

### **32. From: Eve Cohen To the Deputy Leader**

To Cllr Mark Allison: At the last Council Meeting you stated that Merton Hall was underused. What is the definition of underused and what are the figures to substantiate this?

### **Reply**

Underused means that the bookings were less than the total or reasonable maximum capacity available such that the buildings use was not optimised or fully utilised. The table below illustrates the underuse.

Merton Hall was underused as there were only five regular bookings throughout the week for the main hall and a further seven regular bookings using the smaller spaces. The full schedule of regular users from 2016 (prior to the council's proposal to transfer the hall to Elim was announced) is provided in the table below. All of the regular users have been successfully relocated.

In terms of casual bookings, over the period January 2015 – September 2016 there was, on average, one casual booking per week at the hall (97 bookings over a period of 91 weeks).

<b>Merton Hall (SWCA) Regular bookings</b>		
<b>Day</b>	<b>Name of User</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>Monday</b>	Capoeira Adults Main Hall	20:00-21:30
<b>Tuesday</b>	Siegeris Main Hall/Balcony	16:00-19:30
	C P Fitness Balcony	19:15-20:45
<b>Wednesday</b>	Sanga 7 Balcony	19:00-21:00
<b>Thursday</b>	Perform Workshop Balcony	15:45-18:00
	Shogun Martial Arts Balcony	19:00-21:00
<b>Friday</b>	Johane Masowe Balcony	08:45-17:00
	Om Sakthi Pooja Bar Area	10:00-14:00
	Ratnavadivel Hindu Balcony	18:00-22:00
	Kenshukai Karate Main Hall	18:30-22:00
<b>Saturday</b>	Rugby Tots Main Hall	09:00-12:00
<b>Sunday</b>	New Life Church Main Hall	10:00-13:00

### **Supplementary**

In the answer to my question about the usage of Merton Hall there was still no definition of underused in terms of hours per week, month or per year, number of bookings per month or year nor in terms of numbers of users. How do the number of users compare with the use of Elim Church? Of the previous existing users of Merton Hall one group had 200 users a week, two other groups had 50 users a week and that is only 3 of the 12 regular users. When I myself tried to book the hall myself for a

birthday party over 3 consecutive weekends there was no availability on any Friday Saturday or Sunday evening.

### **Reply**

I'd like to thank Ms Cowen for her follow-up. I don't really know what the question was, however I think that the points that have been raised in previous meetings and in the Planning Committee meeting have been thoroughly dealt with. Merton Hall was not an asset that was being used to its full potential. It is very good that the Elim organisation will be able to go there and to maintain it for the sake of the community. It is a very good thing that the best aspects of it in terms of its heritage will be retained and it's very kind of the Elim to agree to this land swap because not does it mean that they will be able to continue their excellent work in the community in running our foodbank but it also means that an asset is freed up that enables thousands of kids in Merton to get a great education with a great education provider such as the Harris who have improved educational standards unbelievably for our young people in Mitcham and in Morden and I know that many many thousands of parents wish to see that extended across the board into South Wimbledon so I am very grateful to Elim for agreeing to this particular transaction.

### **33. From: Anthony Fairclough To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

What measures were undertaken by Merton to ensure that Connect House, Willow Lane, and Vantage House, Weir Road were suitable to house families as temporary accommodation? In addition, who was responsible for issuing the Building Control certificate?

### **Reply**

For a period up to 30 May 2016 government has stated that a change of use of an office building and land within its curtilage to a residential use falling within the Class C3 dwelling houses Use Class (which includes flats and houses) will be permitted development (i.e. the change of use will not require planning permission); this was a policy introduced under the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government. The council was opposed to this changed in policy and has an Article 4 Direction to exempt Wimbledon town centre and Merton's industrial estates from this permitted change (effective from 3rd April 2015) but unfortunately it was not granted for Willow Lane, and even if it had, it would not have applied retrospectively.

The Council has a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation to households who are homeless, in priority need, not intentionally homeless and have a local connection with the borough until a suitable and settled housing solution can be found. The Council has the lowest numbers of households in temporary accommodation in London, The Council has no households accommodated in Vantage House. This dwelling is used exclusively by Tower Hamlets The Council has 6 households living in Connect House, which is a building providing 84 units of



accommodation. The remaining units are in the main occupied by households from the boroughs of Sutton and Croydon.

The Council would, before providing temporary accommodation, satisfy itself that a dwelling was suitable. There are key factors in assessing suitability include the needs of each households, space and arrangement, health and safety considerations,, affordability and location. Each case is considered individually.

For both Connect House/ Vantage House all the necessary works to these buildings were approved by private Building Control Inspectors and the necessary completion certificates were issued to the Council.

### **34. Carl Quilliam**

#### **To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

Given that the council is only proposing to provide 26% affordable housing with its own property company, is the council proposing to drop the council's own affordable housing target or is it proposing to hold developers to a higher standard than it feels it can achieve itself?

#### **Reply**

Our Affordable Housing Policy CS.8 also states that in seeking affordable housing provision the Council will have regard to site characteristics such as site size, site suitability and economics of provision such as financial viability.

Developments brought forward through the Council's property development company will be policy compliant schemes and be assessed no differently to that of any other development in the borough.

### **35. Nicola Richards**

#### **To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

In its carpark analysis for Elim's move to Merton Hall, did Council analyse how travel of existing users of Merton Hall would be affected by eviction? Local users are now driving around the borough to get to classes no longer accommodated in alternative venues, instead of walking to Merton Hall.

#### **Reply**

No analysis would consider the detail in this question as the council has no control regarding where private groups decide to go. All users were provided alternative premises or assisted in finding alternative accommodation. As the table below shows, all user groups successfully found an alternative location if they needed one. Most alternatives were within the local area, but some of the groups that used Merton Hall were not local to the immediate area in any case.

#### **Analysis of regular groups previously at Merton Hall:**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Status</b>
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<b>Capoeira Adults</b>	Opted to move to alternative accommodation (non-SWCA)
<b>Siegeris</b>	Moved to All Saints School Hall and Victory Road Annexe (managed by SWCA)
<b>C P Fitness</b>	Opted to move to alternative accommodation (non-SWCA) as Pincott Rd was unsuitable for their needs
<b>Sanga 7</b>	Opted to move to alternative accommodation (non-SWCA)
<b>Perform Workshop</b>	Moving to All Saints School Hall in January (managed by SWCA)
<b>Shogun Martial Arts</b>	Opted to move to alternative accommodation (non-SWCA) - All Saints Church Hall
<b>Johane Masowe</b>	Moving to King George V park (council facility managed by idverde) in October
<b>Om Sakthi Pooja</b>	Moving to Pincott Road in November (managed by SWCA)
<b>* Wimbledon Mandram (Ratnavadivel Hindu)</b>	Moved to Pincott Road (managed by SWCA)
<b>Kenshukai Karate</b>	Moved to All Saints School Hall (managed by SWCA)
<b>Rugby Tots</b>	Opted to move to alternative accommodation (non-SWCA) - Raynes Park High School
<b>New Life Church</b>	Group closed (unrelated to move from Merton Hall)

**36. From: Sean Robertson  
To the Cabinet Member for Finance**

What minimum commitments and responsibilities are required by councillors in their role as representatives of the borough?

**Reply**

Councillors are required by law to attend one meeting every 6 months and the council requires them to agree to its Code of Conduct (contained in Part 5A of the Council's Constitution) and set out in full below:

“As a member, or co-opted member of Merton Council, I have a responsibility to represent the community and work constructively with our staff and partner organisations to secure better social, economic and environmental outcomes for all.

In accordance with the Localism Act provisions, when acting in this capacity I am committed to behaving in a manner that is consistent with the following principles to achieve best value for our residents and maintain public confidence in this authority.

The Act further provides for registration and disclosure of interests and in Merton Council this will be done in accordance with guidance issued by the Standards Committee.

#### *Principles*

**Selflessness** Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

**Integrity** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

**Objectivity** In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

**Accountability** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

**Openness** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

**Honesty** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

**Leadership** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

#### *Commitment*

I agree to behave in accordance with all our legal obligations, alongside any requirements contained within this authority's policies, protocols and procedures, including on the use of the Authority's resources."

### **37. From: Ian Veacock**

#### **To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

Re: Veolia. Waste Collection from Flats. It was stated this would be 'as required': How is this being liaised with caretakers? We have been informed today that the twice weekly clearance is now weekly and we have insufficient bin capacity and space for this.

#### **Reply**

**TO BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANLINESS AND STREET CLEANING**

The collection of all waste streams from communal properties in Merton is on an output rather than a specified input or frequency basis. This means that the bins will be emptied before they become full on a minimum weekly basis.

The frequency of communal bins are tailored per site. This flexible approach is a service enhancement for those in flatted properties who previously received a fixed scheduled collection. This enables the contractor to manage the demand for collections in these properties better and contribute to achieving the Service Performance Indicators.

**38. From: Nigel Benbow  
To the Leader of the Council**

Can the Cabinet Leader please tell me what written representations were received from the Abbey Ward councillors in relation to Merton Hall in the period between submission of most recent planning application for it and the September PAC?

**Reply**

I understand the Abbey ward councillors, Cllr Abigail Jones and Cllr Katy Neep, submitted representations on the Merton Hall planning application when it first went to committee in April (Cllr Andrew Judge is a member of the planning committee and as such needs to remain unbiased). As Mr Benbow will be aware, this application was turned down by the planning committee and the representations from Cllrs Jones and Neep were taken into account when officers drew up a revised application and the amendments they suggested were made to the new application. Cllrs Jones and Neep also received emails from residents about the second application and ensured all of these were passed onto the planning officers to be considered by committee.

I understand Mr Benbow is standing as a candidate for the Conservative Party in Abbey ward. With so many parents in South Wimbledon supporting the council and government's plans for a new secondary school, I do hope he will focus on the needs of Abbey residents rather than on party political opportunism.

**Supplementary**

And even more worryingly were the Labour PAC members 'whipped' to vote through the council's second application for the demolition of Merton Hall whilst Cllr Andrew Judge did all the speaking at the PAC meeting?

**Reply**

Thank you Nigel for your supplementary I understand it was about the planning permission in regard to Merton Hall and the process around that. My understanding is that the planning application regarding Merton Hall went through the approved processes and at each stage the Legal Officer was present throughout and that the Planning application went according to the Planning regulations guidance as set out by the government that all local authorities have to abide by. Thank you for your time Nigel.

### **From Cllr Laxmi Attawar to the Cabinet Member for Education**

Can she update us on progress in delivering a new secondary school in South Wimbledon which many Colliers Wood parents are looking forward to?

#### **Reply**

The council has made excellent progress in delivering the complicated project to provide a secondary school that is so much needed but, as I will explain, some targeted opposition is making matters difficult.

The council's main role has been to ensure there is a clear site for the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to build the permanent school. There are three main site components and all are on timescale to deliver a clear site as required for early 2019 so that ESFA can build the new school for September 2020 after two years in the temporary home of Whatley Avenue.

The risk to the project is to ensure the Elim Church move from the High Path site on time. We have obtained planning permission for a scheme at Merton Hall that received the highest 'green' rating from the independent design review panel, and we have received tenders from contractors to enable us to start the works shortly.

Unfortunately, however, there have been recent applications and challenges to our proposal which seem to be timed to disrupt the plans agreed by Cabinet in July 2016. The council is ensuring we receive the best possible advice to ensure this does not delay the opening of the school.

The council has recently received the secondary school admissions applications which just underlines how much we need the school to open in September 2018. We have received 268 additional resident admissions applications compared to last year and 209 of this extra (and 1187 in total) have requested a Merton School as a first preference. Parents are now aware of the excellent progress our secondary schools have made but if we don't open the new school for September 2018 we simply will not have sufficient secondary school places for our residents.

#### **Supplementary**

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for her response. Would she join me in congratulating our schools, officers, students and parents at Merton being named the top borough in the country for the progress made at their GCSEs?

#### **Reply**

I want to thank Councillor Attawar for her supplementary question. The figures released show that the progress made by pupils across Key Stage 4 in Merton Schools was the best performing in the entire Country in GCSE. Not just in London but in the entire country and so for that Madam Mayor yes I join you in congratulating our students, parents and teachers and staff as well for the fantastic result that we've had. A special thanks to our officers for their support for the schools and to head

teachers as well; I have the privilege of visiting schools across the Borough and without fail head teachers always tell me about the quality and level of support that they receive from our officers so I want to thank them for that support as well. Madam Mayor there couldn't be a better time to open a secondary school in Merton. We have 100% of our secondary schools have been OFSTED inspected and rated good or outstanding and with the new school to open I have no doubt that it will follow a similar path and so I just want to be clear that we are committed to opening this new school, we will do everything we can do to make sure it opens because the students need a place, parents are depending on us to provide space for their children so therefore we are going to open the school. So thank you very much for your question but yes we are doing very well in Schools in Merton.

**From Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing:**

What is an acceptable timeframe for utility companies to undertake necessary repairs in Merton?

**Reply**

Utility repairs are categorised under two scenarios based on the severity of the situation.

The first is 2 Hours, these are emergency repairs that require action within 2 hours or will be made safe by the London Borough of Merton and recharged to utility companies.

The second is 28 days. These are repairs that are required to start the guarantee period of their works. These are followed up on a 28 day basis and a raised every 28 days to the utility until the works are complete or have to be escalated due to the situation deteriorating.

There are no powers to enforce a utility to carry out works in a particular timescale though we do encourage the shortest possible.

**Supplementary**

Thank you to the Cabinet Member for his answer. I want to ask him why won't he do more to ensure that the works undertaken on key road routes are expedited more quickly to minimise the severe impact on residents and to avoid severe congestion and chaos. For example, the Ashcombe Road bridge has been out for a long time and the recent Thames Water works in Wimbledon.

**Reply**

I'd like to thank Councillor Holden for his supplementary. Many utilities are in their hands they have got that right to do that work I think sometimes they don't give us enough notice in terms of emergency works. We've also been frustrated with utilities I know in Mitcham Town Centre, where they decided to dig up the bus lane a month or two before it was meant to have opened and it had a slight delay as a result. So it

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is very unfortunate but obviously we are slightly hamstrung by the guidance we have to follow if they want to undertake work they do have that right. In relation to Ashcombe Road bridge I have had many representations from local residents and councillors about that bridge; clearly that work has to be undertaken it is unfortunate that it is over a longer period, but I'm confident that the works will soon be completed and that access route will again be open to local residents and I know it will make a big difference in terms of the traffic flow in that area.

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

What work has been done to address issues raised in relation to Connect House in the Willow Lane business park?

#### **Reply**

Officers are taking a proactive approach in seeking to address the issues at Connect House. Officers have visited the site over the last couple of weeks regarding a range of issues including allegations of a rat infestation, litter and poor quality accommodation. Officers have just concluded inspecting the units and Connect House and have applied the Housing Act 2004 Health, Housing Safety Rating System to determine what hazards, if any, exist. Officers are able to confirm that no category 1 Hazards were identified. Notwithstanding this officers continue to discuss matters with the London Fire Service and the managing agents of the dwelling on options to improve the housing conditions for those households living in Connect House.

#### **Supplementary**

Thank you for the answer to the question. Will the Cabinet Member agree with me that these issues have been caused by the Conservative Government's decision to allow developers to convert office blocks on industrial estates into temporary housing without recourse to the Council?

#### **Reply**

I'd like to thank Councillor Making for his supplementary and he is quite right in terms of these applications being granted permission without recourse to the Council given that they were permitted developments. This was a terrible policy implemented by Eric Pickles during his tenure as Communities Secretary and it has meant that buildings as a result we have Connect House we've seen the issues recently as rightly highlighted by Siobhain McDonagh, but also as well Vantage House in Wimbledon and despite her best endeavours to get an article 4 exemption we were unsuccessful in terms of that. I think there does need to be a level of accountability in terms of change of use, it didn't exist in this case and unfortunately accommodation was provided which was completely in the wrong place and the wrong position and we are living with this consequence, it's not just here in Merton; this has happened all over London and it's part of a huge housing crisis we face in this capital city with

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54,000 in temporary accommodation in London. It's appalling and I'm afraid the Government even today have done nothing more in terms of addressing that housing crisis.

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

How much is currently allocated in the budget for pavement cleaning in Merton, and how does this compare to the previous 5 years?

### **Reply**

The budget allocation for the street cleaning service (excluding disposal) in previous years is outlined below:

2016/17 = £3,386k  
2015/16 = £3,528k  
2014/15 = £3,536k  
2013/14 = £3,494k

There is no comparable cost as the street cleaning service is contained within the overall contract cost of £6.5m (again excluding disposal).

### **Supplementary**

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his answer. Our street cleaning may be included in the overall contract costs. I understand from an answer which I got in reply to a query as to the disgusting state of the pavement on Hartfield Road by the Wimbledon station bus stop that the new waste service provider is not contractually obliged to undertake specialist cleaning of pavements using jetwash and steaming however could provide this service through a schedule of rates i.e. an additional cost of the current contract. So, how many other services which Merton Council used to perform have not been outsourced to Veolia to perform, but instead quietly dropped by this administration?

### **Reply**

In terms of the jetwash, as far as I'm aware the Local Authority did not provide that on a regular basis. In terms of Wimbledon Town Centre that was actually provided by Love Wimbledon and we thank them for the care that they provide to our Town Centres. In terms of the original question about pavement cleaning and street cleanliness, as we know in October 2018 wheelie bins will don the streets of Merton and they are known to reduce street litter by up to 50% in residential areas.

### **From Cllr Pauline Cowper to the Leader of the Council**

Can the Leader update me on the future of Wimbledon and Mitcham police stations?

### **Reply**



As announced on 01 November, as part of the MOPAC response to their consultation document – Public Access Strategy – the decision, made by the Police and MOPAC, has been made to sell Wimbledon Police Station and retain Mitcham due to the government's decision to cut an additional £400m from the Met Police budget, bringing the cuts to £1billion. Wimbledon's 24/7 front counter service will close and the 24/7 service will move to Mitcham with Mitcham station set to undergo investment to bring teams in to work from this building in due course. This transfer is expected to happen by the end of the year.

The Police and MOPAC will work through the timelines for this process consulting and/or updating the borough as appropriate. The full process of decanting all of the back office functions to Mitcham will take some time.

### **Supplementary**

I gather that the Leader has written to the Home Secretary regarding the £1billion government cut to the Met Police's funding. Has he received any reply?

### **Reply**

I thank Councillor Pauline Cowper for her original question and her supplementary. I have the letter here that I wrote to Amber Rudd, the Home Secretary and no, I've not had any response and that's because I would imagine that spreadsheet Phil has not ended austerity and box office Phil as he is known after today's awful budget he presented, is not going to look after the police and bring back the £1billion cut to Police funding, in fact he's going to continue cutting the police and so probably that's why I've not received a response from Amber Rudd; spreadsheet Phil, Box office Phil has not done the job for her.

### **From Councillor Brian Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

Following huge opposition by the residents of West Barnes to parking charges at Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields (including a petition with 1,400 signatures presented at the Council Meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017), people living nearby are both puzzled and angry that the park gates are now being opened at 6.15am thus allowing commuters to park and preventing local park users with cars from parking there. Can the Cabinet Member please explain the logic behind his decision? Is he seeking to punish residents for opposing the administration's proposals?

### **Reply**

### **QUESTION TO BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND CULTURE**

The recent pay-and-display car parking proposals of the Council formed part of an initiative of the Council to introduce formal controls to address a number of misuses of the parking opportunities offered within its public parks. Commuter parking issues were principal amongst these, most especially at Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields.

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The Council noted the petition submitted by local residents in response to its consultation proposals and decided not to proceed with these as a consequence. The effect of this is that the Council has no formal means to enforce parking controls that the petitioners evidently did not want.

With the parking control initiative at this venue having now been concluded and the overall measures agreed, access to this park has now reverted to the standard opening times, that is, the park is fully accessible by 08.00 hours. This, of course, has potentially exposed the park to the commuter parking burdens that the Council's proposals were mainly designed to address.

### **Supplementary**

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his reply. When I discussed the proposed parking charges with the cabinet member and presented a 1400 strong petition against these charges, the car park gates were being opened at 9.30am. This was a system that worked well and kept out commuters. At present and since the 23<sup>rd</sup> October this year, the gates have been opened at 6:15am leaving the car park clear for many many commuters to park all day. Does he not agree that through his actions in opening this early, he is not thinking of all the residents who wish to enjoy the benefits of this beautiful green flag park and also given the importance that this administration claims to place on the welfare of small businesses, does he not understand the detrimental affect that this will have on the very popular soft play centre that operates in the pavilion at the park. I will be presenting tonight another 1400 signature petition protesting at the earlier opening of the car park gates. Thank you Madam Mayor.

### **Reply**

I'd like to thank Councillor Lewis-Lavender for his question, I shall be answering this because it's a park. If one had the benefit of hindsight or the use of a tardis we probably would have done what we do with all our other parks which is open the gates at 8am in the morning because that is what we generally do. We didn't do that big problem because we knew there was a big problem with commuters and because we knew we had a solution for it. The solution was rejected by the people and so we reverted to what was happening before never agreed it was part of the plan improving the access to that park. Now the last thing that anybody on this side would want to do would be to punish residents for opposing the administration. We listened to what the local people wanted and we acted accordingly. I have to say that the primary decision was taken by my colleague Martin Whelton and I supported him 100% in that because we was right, he listened, took note and he changed what we were going to do. We can look at a petition to change the time again to 09:30, I'm quite happy to do that, it doesn't bother me a bit, but in so doing those residents who want to use the car park to visit the park at 08:00 or anytime up to 09:30 will of course be denied that access, which again, that has got to be the choice of local residents, if they really don't want access to that car park before 09:30 in the morning, we can look at that but it's not a question of punishing, it's precisely the reverse of that; we want people to access that car park as local people so that they can actually use the park to their benefit.

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

The new London Plan sets an overall target of 66,000 new homes every year, compared to the current target of 49,000 homes (an increase of 35%). Merton would see the highest increase of all the London boroughs, with its target more than trebling from 411 to 1328 new homes each year (an increase of 223%) How does the administration propose to respond to the Mayor's new target for Merton?

**Reply**

The Mayor of London's highly ambitious housing targets for Merton are a draft based on the government's overall housing target for London and the GLA's assessment of land and housing capacity for Merton (GLA Strategic Housing Land Assessment).

We will continue to work with the Mayor of London and his officers towards to assess the capacity and deliverability of the GLA assumptions.

There is a considerable need for new homes in London, however we are keen that the final London Plan (due to be adopted in 2019) sets a target for Merton's share of London's new homes that is both ambitious, but deliverable.

Part of our response will be based on the current consultations underway in the review of Merton's Local Plan. We encourage all Merton residents and councillors to respond to our 'Call for Sites' to suggest suitable sites for new housing and development. This evidence will bring greater clarity and certainty on housing growth options and our targets. Please respond to our Local Plan review at [www.merton.gov.uk/newlocalplan](http://www.merton.gov.uk/newlocalplan)

**Supplementary**

I thank the Cabinet Member for his answer. I wonder can I ask him if he agrees with the position taken by the Local Government Association that Local Authorities are best placed to determine local housing needs and can I impress upon him the importance of using our new local plan as it emerges to determine our housing capacity in the Borough from the ground up and indeed to use the local plan to resist having targets imposed from the top down by either the Mayor or the DCLG.

**Reply**

I'd like to thank Councillor Southgate for his supplementary. In terms of the target, clearly we do have a strategic authority in London with the Labour Mayor of London in Sadiq Khan. We really need to deliver that much needed housing both in Merton and across London as a whole. Clearly the GLA works closely with Merton Council. I think that relationship is extremely valuable but it's important as well from the Mayor given that he has control of the housing here in this city that we do build the much needed new homes and I have to say that whilst this Council is ambitious and we do

want to build more homes, there is a tendency in some councils in London to have an approach where they don't want to build the much needed new homes. We in Merton are clear; we have a housing crisis in this city, we need to address that housing crisis, the Mayor of London working alongside the Labour Council here in Merton is committed to doing that. Yes it is an ambitious target, but it is actually a target I welcome because we do need to get building and we do also need to provide the housing that this city desperately needs and needs to be delivered.

**Under Section 9 Part 4A, Para 12.7 of the Council Constitution the time allotted for answering all questions shall be limited to 15 minutes. Since the 15 minutes had concluded the Mayor announced that there would be no further supplementary questions taken for this item.**

**From Cllr Mike Brunt to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

Can the cabinet member update council about progress on the regeneration of High Path, Eastfields and Ravensbury?

**Reply**

Clarion Housing Group has submitted three outline planning applications to Merton Council.

These are now available online:

- 17/P1717 Outline planning application for Eastfields Estate
- 17/P1721 Outline planning application for High Path Estate
- 17/P1718 Outline planning application for Ravensbury Estate

These are now available to view and make comments on Merton's Planning Explorer by visiting [www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings](http://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings) Click the green button 'find a planning application' and type in the planning application number (e.g. for Eastfields: 17/P1717). At the bottom of this page, the "related documents" link lists all the planning application information. We have also set up a dedicated webpage to explain how to consult:

<http://www2.merton.gov.uk/environment/designandconservation/design/estates-regeneration.htm>

This consultation has been extended to be more than the usual 21 days; please provide any comments by Monday 18th December 2017 Please be aware that the legal letters and the Planning Explorer may say different dates (as they are based on the statutory timeline) but the deadline is 18 December 2017.

## 06: Non ST Questions

Representations can be made via the website as above or by emailing [planning.representations@merton.gov.uk](mailto:planning.representations@merton.gov.uk) or by writing to: London Borough of Merton, Civic Centre, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX.

Residents within and around the three estates are receiving written notification between 18th and 21st November 2017 and the site notices are currently being put up around the three estates.

A printed copy of the outline planning application is available to view by appointment at Clarion's office: The Grange, 1 Central Road, Morden, SM4 5PQ. Please contact Clarion Housing Group's regeneration team on 020 3784 5951 or email [mertonregen@clarionhg.com](mailto:mertonregen@clarionhg.com) to book an appointment.

In addition to the planning applications, the Council's Estates Local Plan has concluded its final consultation following the successful public enquiry in June 2017 and the Planning Inspector's proposed amendments. The Estates Local Plan is intended to be presented to Full Council for adoption in February 2018.

### **From Councillor David Dean to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:**

Why has the Dundonald Pavilion hall not been open to booking for the last year and why are the toilets still closed, when this Labour administration promised a new pavilion would mean bringing back the toilets?

### **Reply**

The pavilion at Dundonald Rec has been in continuous use for the past 14 months since it was handed over to the Council upon its practical completion.

The downstairs changing rooms have been used by sports groups, mainly football and cricket teams, and the upstairs community room by a children's breakfast club and an after-school club since September 2016.

The community room was not initially made available for casual hirers due to some operational snagging issues with the new building, but these were resolved by September of this year and the room has been available for general hire since that time.

The toilets at this park are operated in line with the general policy that applies across the Greenspaces service and that applied in Dundonald Rec prior to the provision of the new pavilion: specifically, that they are opened for pre-booked activities and events and when a staff member is posted on site and not at other times. Toilets in open spaces are inevitably and regrettably the subject of abuse and vandalism, and are a focus of anti-social behaviour when unsupervised.

### **From Cllr Agatha Akyigyna to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

What impact has the new Fair Green bus lane had on Mitcham since its introduction in August?

**Reply**

It's only been two months since the bus lane in Mitcham has been operational so it it's too early to quantify the impact with any precision.

Generally there has been positive, anecdotal feedback on the street in terms of the look and feel of Mitcham Fair Green and some businesses in London Road have reported increases in footfall and activity in the former pedestrianised area.

The roadworks and expansion of the Fair Green westwards is still ongoing until January 2018. We will fully evaluate the project 12 months on from completion.

### **From Cllr Joan Henry to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

How do we ensure the voices of all our young people are heard and embedded in our decision making?

#### **Reply**

The department has an extensive programme of user engagement throughout the year which is embedded within all our work to ensure that the views of young people are heard and taken into consideration in the planning and delivery of our services. Our approach to this is enshrined within our User Voice Strategy 2014-16 and is continued into the new Children and Families' Voice Framework 2017-19. We publish regular reports throughout the year summarising how we have engaged with young people and this is pulled together within an annual report, the most recent of which (User Voice Strategy 2016/17: End of Year Review) was published in May 2017, informed the Ofsted inspection and was presented to the Children's Trust at their meeting in October. As well as being the final end of year review for the strategy, this report also set out the focus for 2016/17 whilst the revised framework was developed along with input from young people.

The feedback received through participation events and day to day work is essential in ensuring that we maintain a culture which values learning from frontline practice and the lived experiences of children, drawing on these direct conversations. The recent Ofsted inspection recognises the strength of this aspect of our work, stating "Children's wishes and feelings are strongly heard and clearly reflected in practice. Their views and voices are carefully considered in assessments, strategy meetings and social work records to inform planning...". Ofsted then go on to recognise that "Children's participation is encouraged, their individual needs are known and their voice is evident... and an active Children In Care Council influences and guides services for children looked after" and that "Young people are both involved and highly influential."

#### **Supplementary**

Will the Cabinet Member please tell me, I understand that we are the first in London on the stonewall education champions equality index for LGBT equality this year. Can you explain how we have achieved this?

#### **Reply**

I thank Councillor Henry for your supplementary. I'm proud to say that we have been named as top London Borough in this stonewall index. You've heard me talking in this chamber before about the great partnership working that we have here in Merton and definitely within children's services and this is a prime example of delivering on that, so working across Council Officers, across our schools, across our LGBTQ+ forum but more importantly across our young people and this is something I'm really proud to say that our young people have led and developed, they have pushed this agenda and they have ensured that LGBTQ+ rights are on the agenda of our Health

and Wellbeing forum and other forums. They have taken the lead at events including a health forum that they held last year at South Thames College and also last week at a trans in education event bringing together our teachers from primary and secondary schools to really share with them their experiences and also how they want to see education in Merton made accessible to all. So, I thank Councillor Henry for her supplementary question and I thank formally all our young people who are ensuring that we stay at the forefront of this agenda.

**From Councillor Abdul Latif to the Cabinet Member for Finance:**

Can the Cabinet Member update me on the council's asset management strategy and how regularly it conducts reviews of the rents charged on commercial premises it owns?

**Reply**

The strategy at present is directed at maximising revenue and is expected to achieve over £100,000 above budget from the non-operational property by the end of this financial year. The reviews of rents of commercial property are specified within the leases to the individual tenants. The usual rent review intervals are five or ten years and the Property Management team ensures that rent reviews are undertaken in line with the terms of the leases.

**Supplementary**

I thank the Cabinet Member for his response around the review of Leasehold lenders. Can the Cabinet Member ensure that a full public consultation is carried out on the future development of the Battle Close Health Club site now that Cabinet has agreed to take surrender of the leasehold interest of the virgin health lease as the closure date for the club has now been announced?

**Reply**

I'd like to thank Councillor Latif for his follow up he raised a very important point about business rates and about the rent and also about what's happened at Battle Close where Virgin Active have unfortunately approached us to dispose of their gym and they've told us that they didn't want to sell it to a competitor or have it used for a competitor and therefore we've taken the prudent decision in terms of the Council assets, that its better for us to take it back and be able to exploit that land in the future in a way that benefits the community, than it would be to leave it empty, derelict and causing a problem for residents living in the area. It's obviously a very unfortunate decision that Virgin have taken but we feel we are doing the right thing. In terms of future uses you have to understand that it's still quite at an early stage for us, we feel there might be some advantages in terms of housing because there has been a very real and acute housing shortage across London and we would like to do our part to help some of the young people and families around Merton to get somewhere good to live such as in that area which is a very nice area. So that is one of the options that may be available. Should that be something that we would then wish to pursue, of course there would be consultation in the usual ways as there



always are with planning applications and if we are the applicant, which at this stage we don't know, then clearly we would want to develop a scheme that not only benefits the people who are looking for housing but also has as minimal impact on local residents as possible and then it would be for the planning committee to make its decision on a quasi-judicial basis as always to see what's best. But we think what we have done is a very pragmatic and reasonable thing to do in the circumstances. Not ideal but it's the best way forward.

**From Cllr Brenda Fraser to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health**

Can the Cabinet member outline what Merton is doing to tackle food poverty in the borough?

**Reply**

The council recognises that tackling food poverty is a key way to help reduce health and social inequalities in the borough. The council has recently been awarded "Most Improved Borough" for 2017 at Sustain 'Good Food for London' awards ceremony, held in October 2017. This reflects Merton's ongoing commitment to tackling food poverty through supporting and promoting initiatives such as the Merton Child Healthy Weight Action Plan, the Healthier Catering Commitment for food businesses and UNICEF's Baby Friendly Initiative for our commissioned Community Health Services, which supports breastfeeding.

To build on this work and develop a joined-up and comprehensive approach to tackling food poverty across the borough, the council is currently finalising a Food Poverty Action plan, led jointly by Public Health and Corporate Services.

Following a successful bid for funding from the Mayor of London to support this work, the council commissioned local charity Sustainable Merton to conduct a programme of workshops, community conversations and asset mapping. Based on this in-depth work with communities and partners, a comprehensive action plan has been developed to bring partners together to tackle food poverty across Merton.

The Food Poverty Action Plan will focus on working with partners to deliver three key aims:

- Delivering a joined-up and strategic approach across all partners in Merton to tackling food poverty
- Improving the use of surplus food and reducing food waste to contribute to a reduction in food poverty
- Strengthening and supporting the wealth of community and volunteering initiatives already working to tackle food poverty in Merton

Key actions included in the plan include establishing a new operational group to oversee implementation, expanding the Healthy Start voucher scheme (which provides free vitamins and food vouchers to eligible families), supporting breastfeeding across Merton and ensuring that food poverty is considered in all relevant strategies and policies of the council.

Merton's Food Poverty Action Plan will be finalised in December 2017.

### **Supplementary**

Can I thank the Cabinet Member for his answer and can I congratulate the member on Merton winning the award for the most improved borough in combatting food poverty and would he agree with me that the Wimbledon Foodbank run by Elim Church is invaluable in combatting food poverty and can he confirm if this work will continue in their new home?

### **Reply**

I thank her for her question, for her supplementary question and for her congratulations. I think the award is something that we should all be very proud of and a further example of how this administration looks after the residents who need our support the most, addressing our key aim of bridging the gap. I absolutely agree that the work of the Wimbledon foodbank hosted at the Elim Church is invaluable in combatting food poverty and I know that Elim is keen to continue this important work when it relocates to its new home. It's a fantastic facility and I think we should make clear our gratitude to Elim for wanting to continue it. I would however say that I think that it's absolutely shameful that so many people, many of whom occupy the jobs that the Government constantly boasts it's creating, that so many people have cause to use food banks. Madam Mayor the Chancellor today spoke of an economy that confounds those who seek to talk it down; the use of food banks is just one reminder that this is an economy that continues to fail millions of people.

### **From Councillor David Dean to the Cabinet Member for Finance:**

If you add up Merton Hall, Morden Leisure Centre, parks assets (ID Verde) and waste collection assets (Veolia), how much does this add up to in pounds that have been transferred to external, profit-making groups?

### **Reply**

None of these assets have been transferred to external, profit-making groups.

Having liaised with the government's Employment & Skills Funding Agency and the agreed school provider, it is proposed to dispose of Merton Hall to a non-profit faith group as best consideration and best value in the delivery of a Secondary school, in return for an asset that the community will receive in order to deliver a school.

Morden Leisure Centre as an asset remains the property of the council. The appointed contractor Greenwich Leisure Limited are a registered not-for-profit social enterprise.

No Parks assets have been transferred to idverde save for some existing grounds maintenance plant and equipment. The company also leases operational buildings for the delivery of services. These assets will all return to the council at the end of the life of the contract, the plant and equipment being replaced on a like-for-like

basis at the end of the contract period, based upon an inventory of the items that transferred on 1st February 2017.

No waste collection assets have been transferred to the ownership of Veolia. The buildings at Garth Road are leased to the contractor who is charged the market rate for rent. In 2017 /18 this was £233k.

The operational responsibility for managing the plant and machinery is under licence, with the ownership and responsibility reverting back to the council at the end of the contract.

Had the Council not transferred such assets to Veolia and idverde then the contractors would have had to purchase/lease new ones and pass the cost on to the Council, which would have been a poorer value solution for council taxpayers.

### **Supplementary**

I have no further supplementary question.

### **From Cllr Ian Munn to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health**

Could he update me on the future of the Wilson Hospital in Mitcham which is an area of high inequality but currently stands empty whilst the Nelson, in an area of lower health inequalities, is an excellent facility and thriving local centre.

### **Reply**

The council is working closely with CCG and NHS colleagues to develop the site of the Wilson Hospital into a Health and Wellbeing Campus for East Merton which will include provision of primary care services. The aim is to develop an integrated model of health and wellbeing, with the community and voluntary sector directly involved, which specifically works to tackle the inequalities seen in this area of the borough.

This programme of work is Merton CCG owned and led, driven by a need to improve the range, integration and quality of health services in the east of the borough, but also to rationalise and upgrade estates. There is significant opportunity for partners including the council to work with the CCG to develop a holistic model of health and wellbeing centred on the Wilson site which also takes into account local community assets such as the Canons redevelopment.

The Wilson Programme Board (WPB) has responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the whole Wilson Health and Wellbeing Campus. WPB membership includes senior executive managers from Merton CCG, NHS Property, and partners including the council and MVSC, facilitating strategic oversight, timely decision making, and robust challenge. As delivery of the Wilson Hospital site is a Merton CCG programme, the WPB reports through Merton CCG governance structures, although regular updates are also provided to the Health and Wellbeing Board, which provides scrutiny and oversight.

This is a long term programme of work with the Campus expected to open 2021. In the meantime Merton CCG has boosted capacity for extended primary care access Monday to Friday and opened two primary care access hubs, one in the Nelson and one in Cricket Green practice Mitcham, offering appointments 8am to 8pm Saturdays and the one in Mitcham also open 8am to 8pm on Sundays.

### **Supplementary**

15 years ago residents in East Merton were promised that there would be a health facility provided on the Wilson Site, instead we got the Nelson development. Can the cabinet member tell me whether he has faith in the CCG's ability to deliver on their promise to develop a new East Merton health centre on the Wilsons site or anywhere in Mitcham?

### **Reply**

I thank the Councillor for his question and supplementary. I know how important it is for residents in the Cricket Green ward that something is delivered on the Wilsons site. I think we can all agree that the closure of the walk-in centre was regrettable; both in the decision itself and in the way it was communicated to the patients who used it and indeed it has served only to put pressure on other parts of the system. The long term vision for the Wilson, to provide a holistic health and wellbeing campus is an exciting one and something that the east of the borough is desperately in need of, as Councillor Munn has alluded to. The Council's role in this is as an enabler to enable some of the community and wellbeing aspects, but it is the CCG that has to drive and deliver the project; and to answer his question, I do believe that the CCG is fully committed to delivering the Wilson but the director and I are in regular contact with the chair and managing director of the CCG to ensure that they follow through and deliver this important facility for his residents.

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

Please can the Cabinet Member update me on what progress Merton Council has made on upgrading the borough's street lights to LED and how much money has been saved as a result?

### **Reply**

Merton currently has 363km of roads and 810km of footways and cycleways. Laid end-to-end they'd stretch from Mitcham Fair Green to Barcelona. These routes are lit with over 13,000 lamp columns.

We have already switched over 3,335 lights to low energy LEDs. Which has achieved a saving of approx. £80,000 to £100,00 per year on energy costs. The reason for the range is due to the switchover being a rolling programme and that energy prices change each year.

Moving forward. Our current future investment plans for 2018 & 2019 will see a further 6,000 lights going to LED (cost permitted) therefore taking our total percentage of LED's street lights to 70% of the borough. Where technically feasible and value for money we aim to convert all light fittings over time

### **Supplementary**

Does this administration plan to sign up Merton to the lighten up pledge as part of the 10:10's LED campaign to encourage Council's to switch fully to LED street lights within 5 years? If not, why not?

### **Reply by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing**

This is actually under my portfolio. We have received a lot of correspondence in relation to this; clearly everything would have to be fully costed given the huge pressures we are under in terms of Local Government finance we can't give a carte blanche pledge to say that this will be implemented. However I will say that LED is actually delivering savings for the Borough in terms of its rollout and in terms of its energy cost. We would like to see more LED lighting but clearly as well we do obviously need to consider the budgetary issues going forward because there are initial costs to it and I think many Councillors will be well aware of the rollout of LED lighting across Merton over the last few months on many of our roads. I think that has made a big improvement, so we have already done a lot in terms of LED, there is more to do but clearly the funding needs to be found in order for that to happen. Thank you.

### **From Cllr Mary Curtin to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health**

Could the Cabinet Member update me on the "engagement" carried out by Epsom and St Helier Trust over the summer, which includes options that could see St Helier lose it's A&E and other acute services at the current site which is in an area of health inequality, with these services potentially moved to Epsom or Belmont where health outcomes are already far higher.

### **Reply**

Following the engagement period, Epsom and St. Helier NHS Trust has just published a Strategic Outline Case for Investment in their Hospitals 2020-2030 (report available on their website), alongside a report detailing the responses received from their process. At this very early stage, Commissioners are reviewing the Strategic Outline Case and considering the recommendations that have made. In line with Department for Health guidance, as the proposals put forward for consideration have a capital investment, they will also require NHS Improvement approval in order to proceed to the potential next stage of the Trust capital approvals process.

If Commissioners give their approval to proceed, the next stage would be the development of a Pre-Consultation Business Case that will be required in line with

NHS England guidance for planning, assuring and delivering service change for patients.

The Council is currently seeking clarity on how the process undertaken by the Trust will be reflected in the STP 'refresh', due to be published this month, and how the STP will assess whether any changes are required in any other Trusts in the STP footprint.

The Council will continue to engage constructively with the Commissioners. Following discussion, it has been agreed that a wider piece of work needs to be undertaken through the STP and Estates Strategy assessing the health needs of the population. The Council will closely monitor this and engage at the appropriate time.

The Council remains fully committed to ensuring that Merton residents continue to have access to a full range of NHS acute services on the St Helier site.

### **Supplementary**

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response, but as he is not doubt aware, thousands of Merton residents responded to the engagement on St Helier Hospital in the summer, but the trust analysis of the results focuses more on the smaller number of responses that were on the official consultation forms. Does he think this is fair on the people of Merton?

### **Reply**

I'd like to thank her for her question and her supplementary and I'd like to thank her too for her support for St Helier, I know residents in her ward like my own care very passionately about its future and are very concerned about the latest proposals the trust put out. I know many residents too have concerns about the manner in which the process was run, particularly the lack of information provided and the relatively closed nature of the questions and this lead to many residents setting out their comments in letters and emails directly to the trust but still within the prescribed timescales. The exercise undertaken by the trust elicited a relatively low number of responses compared to the circa 6000 letters and emails which came in from the community. I think the way that these letters has been represented is disappointing and undermines the process that the trust has gone through and I will be raising this point with the Chief Executive and the commissioners whose job it is now to take this forward as part of the STP.

### **From Councillor Suzanne Grocott to the Cabinet Member for Finance:**

I am sure all Members were sorry to hear the news that our Director of Children's Services, Yvette Stanley, will be leaving Merton next spring to move on to a new role. Can the Cabinet Member please outline what the council's HR processes are whenever an employee leaves the organisation (at whatever level)?

### **Reply**

The processes for recruiting to a vacant role are set out as follows:

Preparation

- Establish if the role is needed in its current form
- Could it be carved to allow for an apprentice to be appointed
- Review the job description to ensure relevant
- Consider different delivery models, if applicable

Process for senior appointments on an Interim/agency basis

- Establish if interim/agency/acting up is required to cover vacancy – if so check if additional position available on Itrent: if not complete establishment control form
- Complete recruitment authorisation form and obtain relevant approvals from Head of Service AD, Finance, Director and HR business partner

Process for senior appointments on a permanent basis (for all other levels of staff, the standard recruitment process is followed and managed in-house without the need for an executive search agent)

- Produce report for Full Council to obtain permission to commence the recruitment process – if salary of role in excess of 100k
- Call meeting of Appointments Committee to appoint a final panel
- In line with procurement process, issue invitations to tender to suppliers on the current LGRP (Local Government Resourcing Partnership)
- Receive bids from suppliers, review on both quality and price element and award to preferred supplier
- Invite preferred supplier to briefing meeting
- Produce timetable of key dates of recruitment process, advertising text and associated microsite to attract candidates to the role
- Merton liaises with relevant media to advertise role
- Preferred supplier to carry out executive search while job is live
- Once advert and search closes, preferred supplier to carry out initial sift and rate all candidates as a) recommended b) marginal or c) not recommended
- Appointments committee meet with preferred supplier to agree longlist of candidates
- Preferred supplier arranges for longlisted candidates to undergo a preliminary interview with a technical assessor, that has been agreed by Merton
- Preferred supplier produces reports for each of the longlisted candidates following preliminary interview with technical assessor
- Appointments committee meet with preferred supplier to agree shortlist of candidates
- Preferred supplier arranges for shortlisted candidates to undergo psychometric assessment as agreed by Merton
- Preferred supplier produces reports for each candidate of outcome of psychometric assessment for consideration by the Appointments Committee
- Preferred supplier invite shortlisted candidates to the final panel day
- Preferred supplier takes up references for all candidates invited to interview, and these are held in a sealed envelope until required

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- Merton in liaison with the preferred supplier arranges the final panel interview day, to include relevant stakeholder panels, 1:1 with Chief Executive and then final interviews with the Appointments Committee
- Appointments committee decides successful candidate
- Merton makes the offer to the successful candidate
- Preferred supplier feeds back to the unsuccessful candidates
- Merton issues written offer to successful candidate subject to relevant pre-employment clearances
- Merton carries out pre-employment clearances

### Employee leaving the organisation

- Candidate hands in notice
- Merton accepts resignation in line with contractual notice
- Merton provides reference for candidate to new organisation, if requested
- Merton carries out exit interview with leaving employee
- Merton to arrange for handover to be agreed in conjunction with leaving employee and agree actions and responsibilities
- If appropriate inform key customers and partners of who to contact in the interim
- Merton to action the leaver on iTrent so no overpayment is made
- Merton to remove access levels to IT systems and security pass

### Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for the answer, it's very comprehensive so thank you for that. Just to add, on the very last point where it says Merton to remove access levels to IT systems and security pass; please can I ask whether something could be done to actually inform people who may send an email to people who have left, that they have some method of knowing that they have left, I know I'm not the only person I've had a couple of instances where I have emailed people and I have suddenly found through a different method, often from members of the public, that the people have retired or have left suddenly and no effort is made to communicate this to members and frankly it's just embarrassing, so I don't know whether we can just try and add something else so that members know that if they send an email to someone who is not there anymore you will get something back telling you that.

### Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Grocott for her question and for her very constructive comments as well about what should happen, whether we should have a standardised out of office for staff that leave, that's something I will take up separately with HR there may be practical reasons why that hasn't happened on particular occasions, which we can only look into. I should also say that something which is missing from my answer and I'm sure it will be from yours just by pure accident of circumstance is that we wish really to put on record how sad we are that Yvette has told us she is leaving us, she has done a fantastic job over many years, been a really good director, a great member of the management team and a really



good colleague and I'm sure that this process will be painful because it means that she is going.

### **From Cllr Sally Kenny to the Leader of the Council**

Could the Leader outline how we use bailiffs and ensure that already vulnerable residents are given the opportunity to clear their debts.

### **Reply**

We use bailiffs as a last resort to collect unpaid debts. Our recovery procedures encourage residents to make contact with us to discuss any problems they have at the earliest opportunity. Officers will enter into payment arrangements with residents at all stages of the recovery process. We offer open surgeries where residents can come in to discuss accounts and payment plans and we also offer managing your money workshops to residents to help them with financial issues.

The bailiffs will assess each case on its own merit and will enter into payment arrangements with residents. They are trained to identify vulnerable residents and in such instances will withdraw from the property in line with national guidelines.

Last week the Money Advice Trust congratulated Merton for reducing the number of cases it passed to bailiffs by 14% over the previous two years. In fact, the Money Advice Trust recognised that in London parking fines make up a disproportionate amount of fines, so they looked at council tax arrears in particular and they found that in Merton we have reduced our use of bailiffs in council tax cases by 38% in two years, a significant achievement. This is because we keep council tax affordable for low income families, we work with residents in arrears to find payment solutions that work for them, and we use bailiffs only as a last resort.

### **Supplementary**

Can I thank the Leader for his response and congratulate him on the 36% reduction in the use of bailiffs for Council Tax collection. Would he agree our decision to continue to fund Council Tax benefit despite Tory cuts has contributed to this and would he therefore call on the party opposite who voted against it last year to vote differently tonight?

### **Reply**

I thank Councillor Kenny for her original question and her supplementary. Yes I do believe that we as a Labour Council in this London Borough of Merton in continuing to provide support by absorbing a nasty Conservative cut to Council Tax Support since 2011, that it has led to a huge reduction in the use of bailiffs to collect tax arrears; overall a 14% reduction in our use of bailiffs and a 36% reduction in the use of bailiffs for Council Tax arrears and that is to be very much welcomed. Whilst over 97% of Council Tax continued to be collected within a year to a year and six months. Not only is the Money Advice Trust congratulating the London Borough of Merton for so doing in reducing the use of bailiffs on their knock on the door campaign "Stop The Knock" but also year in year out one of the most prestigious charities in this

Country, the Child Poverty Action Group continued to congratulate us on our approach to defending supporting families on low pay who look to the Council to support them through these very difficult times. I'm really really disappointed that the party opposite continue to play dilly dally with this straight forward support of people on low pay throughout the Borough in Wimbledon, Raynes Park, Colliers Wood, Morden and Mitcham, tonight they stuck in a mealy-mouthed amendment looking forward to 2019/20 so that irrespective of this brilliant move by this Council that we touch the doorstep of every Council Tax benefit supplicant so that everyone pays even the poorest, that's what they want to do, that's what we're not going to do and that's why we will oppose their amendment. Thank you.