

Merton Council

Colliers Wood and NE Mitcham Community Forum Agenda

Membership

Councillors:

John Dehaney

Date: Thursday 5 October 2017

Time: 7.15 pm

Venue: St Joseph's Church Hall (Entrance at 30 Park Rd, SW19 2HS)

This is a public meeting and attendance by the public is encouraged and welcomed. For more information about the agenda please contact getinvolved@merton.gov.uk or telephone [020 8545 3896](tel:02085453896).

All Press contacts: communications@merton.gov.uk, 020 8545 3181

Colliers Wood and NE Mitcham Community Forum Agenda

5 October 2017

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|---|---|--------|
| 1 | Welcome and Introductions | 1 - 4 |
| 2 | Council Update - Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Alambritis | 5 - 14 |
| 3 | Open forum | |
| 4 | Date of next meeting | |

Note on declarations of interest

Members are advised to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting. If a pecuniary interest is declared they should withdraw from the meeting room during the whole of the consideration of that matter and must not participate in any vote on that matter. If members consider they should not participate because of a non-pecuniary interest which may give rise to a perception of bias, they should declare this, withdraw and not participate in consideration of the item. For further advice please speak with the Assistant Director of Corporate Governance.

Colliers Wood & NE Mitcham Community Forum
5 October 2017
Chair's Report

The meeting was held at St Joseph's Church Hall, and chaired by Councillor John Dehaney. Six residents attended, as well as two other Merton Councillors. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Alambritis

Councillor Alambritis gave a presentation on the challenges the council faces, recent achievements and the vision for 2020. The presentation can be found at:

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/council-and-local-democracy/community-forums/colliers-wood-and-north-east-mitcham-community-forum>

In response to questions Councillor Alambritis said that the residents survey had used a standard random sampling approach which meant we could be confident the results were representative of the wider population of the borough. Councillor Alambritis also explained that freezing council tax was a manifesto commitment in 2010 and 2014 as he views council tax as a regressive tax that hits the poorest hardest.

In response to questions about street cleaning and waste collection Councillor Alambritis said that the council is working hard with Veolia to improve the service, that enforcement action will continue and that the introduction of wheelie bins in October 2018 will reduce the litter from ripped black sacks.

A large number of questions and points were made in relation to Merton Hall and the decision of the Planning Applications Committee on 21 September. These are set out below with the response from Councillor Alambritis.

Point raised	Response
Why spend more than £3m on the new site for Elim Church	Merton Council has a statutory duty to meet demand for school places and research has shown the need for a new secondary school was in South Wimbledon. In order to achieve this, the Council needed to agree a land swap with Elim Church and Merton Hall was the most appropriate location. Elim Church will continue to make the hall available to hire to the local community.
Elim Church teaches that homosexuality is wrong and will therefore not be inclusive landlords of a community facility	Elim Church is welcoming to all, as shown by its hosting of the Wimbledon Foodbank
The site in High Path is not appropriate for a new school.	A full report on the research carried out should the demand was in South Wimbledon.
Why did the Leader and Cabinet Member for Education visit Elim shortly before the planning meeting.	Councillors attend many religious groups and neither the Leader nor Cabinet are involved in deciding planning applications.
What would be the impact of an application	The Council would note any decision by

to Historic England for listing of Merton Hall?	Historic England but the site is not listed.
Why the land for the school is being paid for by Merton and not the EFA?	The project is a partnership between the Council, EFA and Harris Federation. The EFA are contributing a considerable sum.
Who made the final decision on the land swap with Elim Church?	The Cabinet

Policing Update

PC Mark Cockburn from the Colliers Wood Safer Neighbourhood team provided an update on policing issues in the area. Some the most recent activities include:

- Two brothels on London Road closed down
- Regular weapons sweeps, including finding knives and a shot gun
- Section 59 warning issued to motorcycles on pavements
- Aggressive beggar given a Community Protection Notice
- Supporting a vulnerable local resident whose property was being used for criminal activity
- Arrested a suspect in several sexual assault
- Driving license of an aggressive driver revoked
- Working with Merton Council to identify fly-tippers

Other regular local issues include shoplifting in the Tandem Centre, shed burglary, moped crime, and bike thefts. A prolific bike thief was recently arrested and residents can get their bikes marked at the police station.

All officers in Merton now fitted with Body Worn Cameras. This is helpful in gathering evidence, and in some cases changing the behaviour of some individuals. The footage is deleted after 31 days unless it has evidential value. Under the Data Protection Act it is possible to apply to see footage of yourself if it has been retained.

Colliers Wood Library

Anthony Hopkins, Head of Library & Heritage Services, from Merton Council provided an update on the building of the new library in Colliers Wood. The new site is starting to take shape following some delays in the construction work. The work should be completed in December and then will open in late January or early February. The new library will include a coffee shop, three rooms for community use, more IT equipment and Wi-Fi, as well as new furniture and fittings.

In response to questions Anthony said there are around 60 flats above the library, all of which have been sold. The name Wimbledon Reach has been dropped by the developer and they have returned to using Colliers Wood. There will be no net increase in library staff but staff will be reallocated to Colliers Wood from other sites. The community facilities will be used by Adult Education, and children's activities as well as being available for hire. Merton has a successful Library service with the highest level of usage per capita in London and has been held as an example of good practice by the national Library Task Force. Merton also provides advice to other boroughs, including Hounslow recently. 35% of residents in Merton are regular users of the library and 80% are members. Merton has an automatic enrolment scheme for primary school pupils and is planning to extend this to secondary schools.

Soapbox

Nell Allen provided an update on the No to Wheelies Campaign. A petition with more than 1100 signatures has been submitted to the council but signatures are still being collected. The proposed alternative to fortnightly collection involves using newly designed bell-orb bins collected through a slave bins method. Nell said that there was need to separate paper/card from glass and plastics collections due to contamination issues.

Close of meeting

Councillor Dehaney thanked residents for attending and closed the meeting.

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Colliers Wood & NE Mitcham Community Forum Meeting 5 October 2017

Merton 2020

Cllr Stephen Alambritis
Leader of the Council

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Agenda Item 2

The challenges we've faced

- Families want to live in Merton so we need more money to create school places for all children
- People are living longer so we need to spend more money on looking after them in old age
- But our funding from central government has been slashed
- Since 2010, the government have cut **40%** of the funding for local councils
- The budget gap we faced in 2011 was **£70m**

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A business-like council

- Agreed our “July Principles” to protect services for the most vulnerable
- Focussed on key priorities:
 - Protect the vulnerable
 - Keep council tax affordable
 - Be a great place to grow up & go to school
- Re-engineered the council so more efficient

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How we save you money

- Shared Services with other boroughs eg Legal
- Better deals with our contractors- Conway GLL
- Looked at everything the Council does and cut out inefficiencies
- Better use of IT e.g. libraries
- These moves have helped us to protect services and deliver low Council Tax

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Adult Social Care

- Our residents are living longer, but as a result there is a greater need for council funded care services – we spend **over £50m**

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Despite government cuts, this year we **increased** funding for adult social care by **over £9 million**

- Gone from one of the lowest spenders on adult social care to above average of comparators

Children's Services

- Welcome medical advances mean more disabled children survive into adulthood, but means increased need for council funded care
- It can cost **£50,000** a year to care for one disabled child
- We pay for children in care up to age 25, including university costs
- Increased birth rate means we need to expand schools
- We have added **an extra £1million** to the Children's Services budget this year and for the next few years
- Ofsted - Merton in top tier for children's social services

Our achievements

Despite the financial pressures, there's lots to be proud of:

- Helping low income families
- GCSE results up yet again this year
- 4,000 extra primary school places – new classrooms, halls and sports facilities – and new secondary on the way
- Increased the budget for adult social care by over £9m
- New family friendly & efficient leisure centre in Morden opening next year
- New library in Colliers Wood opening soon
- New stadium for Wimbledon; new businesses in Centre Court
- Kept council tax low and parking permits frozen

Environmental Services

- Agreed a joint waste collection contract with Sutton, Croydon and Kingston to save money
- Could save about **£48m** over the life of the contract
This is money we can use to protect other services and make up for government cuts
- New service will stop the problem of black sacks and open boxes spilling rubbish on streets (responsible for 50% of Merton's litter)

Top marks from our residents

- Record results in this year's residents survey
- **76%** of residents say Merton Council is efficient and well run – highest ever
- **Two thirds** say we're value for money – well above most other councils
- **75%** of residents say the council listens to them and acts on their concerns
- **90%** satisfied with Merton as a place to live

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Merton 2020 Vision

- We want to continue to “look after the pennies” and be a business-like borough
- We want to continue to be a great place for families
 - For young people, with great schools
 - For older people, with good quality social care
 - For all the family with great libraries, parks and leisure centres