

MORDEN COMMUNITY FORUM
13 OCTOBER 2021

(7.15 pm - 8.30 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Nick Draper (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held via Zoom, and chaired by Councillor Nick Draper. Three residents and eight councillors attended on Zoom with 58 additional views on YouTube. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained how the meeting would work.

2 UPDATE FROM THE LEADER OF MERTON COUNCIL (Agenda Item 2)

Councillor Mark Allison, Leader of the Council, thanked the chair for the invitation. Mark has been a Cllr for nearly 20 years and is proud of his connection with the local area. He was born locally in St Helier Hospital and grew up in St Helier area before moving to Mitcham. Mark said that Merton is a great community but there are huge challenges. Morden is one of the more disadvantaged areas and over the last decade huge progress through improving schools, a vital element in improving life chances, a new leisure centre and maintaining council tax support. A lot of this progress has been undone by the impact of the COVID pandemic has hitting areas like Morden harder than other places.

As part of a mixed race family Mark said he is passionate about fairness and being inclusive, including appointing the most diverse cabinet in Merton's history. As Leader he plans to celebrate Merton's diversity, as with Black History Month currently.

Mark has been Leader since November so has only experienced the role during the COVID pandemic. Mark launched Merton Together to recognise how many in the community wanted to step up and help their neighbours. Mark thanked everyone who got involved in responding to COVID as their efforts have made a huge difference. Merton Council has worked with the NHS and other partners to help keep people safe but of course many families have lost love ones or had their circumstances changed and their lives may never be the same again. Supporting these households through this will be a major priority.

As a result of the major changes for many we launched the Your Merton engagement exercise to listen to residents about what they value and what their ambitions are for the borough. We are still analysing the results but it is clear that residents value their

community, their local open spaces, and were much more conscious of their local area, especially their local high streets. Mark said he is still in listening mode and wants to hear what people have to say. Three of the issues have come out of the listening exercise we have started to address:

- Concerns about the cost of living – which is why we will not be raising parking charges
- The need for better homes – being isolated in poor housing has had a huge impact on some so the council will be investing in development of affordable homes
- People want to feel safe – although Merton is a low crime area people want to feel safe. £1m upgrade in CCTV coverage

Mark said he knows that there are other local issues that will need addressing and wants to work together, as we did during the pandemic, to tackle the challenges ahead. Mark said he was proud of Merton and Merton's community, and wants to build on residents' priorities.

A resident asked about the South London Waste Plan Public Hearing held at the Civic Centre on 2 September where it was reported that Merton did not have any air quality data for the waste plan sites, and the two inspectors were surprised. The Merton Environmental Health officer said that new sensors were being installed by the end of September and the data would be available live on the website. The resident wanted to know if the sensors have been installed, and if the data is published now. Mark did not know so offered to follow up. Mark said there was generally good news for Air Quality in Merton at the moment with more school streets introduced than any other boroughs.

FOLLOWING THE MEETING this update was provided by colleagues:

Merton are in the process of rolling out one of London's largest AQ monitoring networks. This is funded through an external grant and will include 68 Breathe London sensors and Vivacity traffic monitors. The Vivacity monitors are starting to come online and the Breathe London Monitors are currently being calibrated and we'll start to see these on lampposts at the beginning of November, following a delay caused by the worldwide lack of microchips.

The industrial estates across Merton, including Weir Road, were included in this monitoring. Data will be published live on Breathe London, with open access to the public, from about a week after they are installed. In addition and specifically around Weir Road we have secured funding to work with the waste transfer stations and how they monitor and react to exceedances. This project has just been through procurement and we have appointed a consultant to work with us, the Environment Agency and the businesses.

For the South London Waste Plan the next step in the independent examination process is for the four boroughs to carry out a 7-week public consultation on all the

proposed amendments arising from the independent planning inspector's examination. The Inspectors' will take the consultation responses into account for their final report. The dates for this public consultation are yet to be agreed; please check the [examination website](#) for updates and all other relevant documents.

3 LOCAL CANCER SERVICES (Agenda Item 3)

Dr Navdeep Alg, South West London Clinical Commissioning Group cancer lead gave a presentation on cancer services in the area. The presentation can be found attached to this report. The pandemic has delayed care and diagnosis in some cancers and there is a need to catch up. This is particularly the case for breast, lung, and urological cancers, mainly due to less screening taking place during the pandemic.

South West London CCG is trying to raise awareness through social media, local press, TV, and non-digital advertising. They are working with an organisation called Community Links to target particular communities and offer information in community languages.

The CCG is also attending public engagement events to have face-to-face contacts. This includes a Cancer Awareness Day at Vestry Hall on 6 November. Dr Alg is happy to attend any community events and asked if anyone has any ideas for events he could attend to email Steven.Nzekwue@swlondon.nhs.uk. Dr Alg also asked attendees to help share the message that services are open and we want to see patients who have symptoms.

4 COVID AND PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE (Agenda Item 4)

Barry Causer, Public Health Lead for COVID Resilience, gave a presentation on the latest situation with COVID in Merton. The presentation is attached to this report and covered the latest statistics, and key updates.

The numbers of new infections is 'hovering' but at high levels, mostly driven by schools returning, increased social activity and people returning to work after the summer break. Merton is in the middle of the pack of South West London boroughs, and we need to remain cautious. There are higher numbers of young people, especially secondary school age getting COVID, but there have been breakthrough infections into those people who have been double vaccinated, due to waning immunity levels.

There has been a limited impact of these infections on NHS Indicators, which is different to earlier stages of the pandemic e.g. admissions look stable and the death rate remains low, due to the success of the vaccination programme. The government has announced two plans:

- Plan A based on vaccinations, test, track and trace
- Plan B explain the increased risk, introduce COVID passes, more working from home and mandatory face coverings

The COVID vaccination programme, is our front line of defence and has four strands:

- Evergreen – 1st and 2nd dose vaccinations for those who have not had a vaccine yet
- Boosters – for those most vulnerable e.g. care home residents, those over 50, front-line health and care staff and those with underlying health conditions
- Third dose – for those immunosuppressed residents
- Single dose for 12-15 year olds in schools

It is important to get your annual flu jab if offered by the NHS and those who aren't eligible for a free flu jab can get a flu vaccine for a few pounds at Community Pharmacies across Merton.

Regular asymptomatic testing remains vital and Lateral Flow Tests are available from assisted test sites in Merton (Wilson Hospital and Centre Court shopping centre) and can be collected from libraries, and community pharmacists for home use.

Better Health Merton is an overarching brand for services that support residents to improve their overall health. To find out more you can sign-up for the [Council COVID newsletter](#), and if you would like to be more involved in supporting your community you can still join the [COVID Champions](#). There is also financial support available to local community groups through [Merton Giving](#).

Cllr Draper asked about reports that there is an outbreak of colds that get confused for COVID. Barry said that protecting ourselves from COVID has had a knock on impact on immunity to other viruses like colds and flu. Residents should get a flu jab, stay at home if unwell and get a PCR just if not sure if symptoms are COVID or a cold.

Cllr Alambritis asked if it will be possible to get pneumonia jabs from GPs and Barry said will check.

5 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 5)

Northern Line Closure – from 15 January to May 2022 Transport for London will be carrying out improvement work at Bank station. As a result there will be no trains between Kennington and Morgate on the Bank branch of the Northern Line. All services from to and from Morden will use the Charing Cross branch and Transport for London expect services on this line to be busier than usual. More information is available at <https://tfl.gov.uk/travel-information/improvements-and-projects/bank-and-monument>

6 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 6)

Councillor Draper thanked residents for attending and closed the meeting.

The next meeting is on Wednesday 23 February 2022 at 7.15pm, venue to be confirmed.