

Merton Council

Council Meeting

Membership

The Mayor: Councillor Joan Henry

The Deputy Mayor: Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina OBE

Councillors: Sally Kenny, Stephen Alambritis MBE, Laxmi Attawar, Thomas Barlow, Hina Bokhari, Mike Brunt, Billy Christie, Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Anthony Fairclough, Edward Foley, Brenda Fraser, Jenifer Gould, Daniel Holden, Andrew Howard, Natasha Irons, Linda Kirby MBE, Paul Kohler, Edith Macauley MBE, Peter McCabe, Simon McGrath, Nick McLean, Aidan Mundy, Dennis Pearce, Marsie Skeete, Eleanor Stringer, Martin Whelton, Helena Dollimore, James Williscroft, Sheri-Ann Bhim, John Braithwaite, Michael Butcher, Caroline Charles, Eleanor Cox, Klaar Dresselaers, Chessie Flack, Kirsten Galea, Ross Garrod, Jil Hall, Billy Hayes, Susie Hicks, Dan Johnston, Andrew Judge, Usaama Kaweesa, Samantha MacArthur, Gill Manly, Stephen Mercer, Stuart Neaverson, John Oliver, Robert Page, Michael Paterson, Tony Reiss, Slawek Szczepanski, Matthew Willis, Max Austin and Victoria Wilson

Date: Wednesday 16 November 2022

Time: 7.15 pm

Venue: Council chamber - Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX

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

Council Meeting

16 November 2022

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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. For further advice please speak with the Managing Director, South London Legal Partnership.

Partnership.

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Agenda Item 3

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COUNCIL

5 SEPTEMBER 2022

(7.15 pm - 9.31 pm)

PRESENT

(in the Chair), Councillor Joan Henry,
Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina,
Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Councillor Laxmi Attawar,
Councillor Thomas Barlow, Councillor Hina Bokhari,
Councillor Michael Brunt, Councillor Billy Christie,
Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah,
Councillor Anthony Fairclough, Councillor Edward Foley,
Councillor Brenda Fraser, Councillor Jenifer Gould,
Councillor Daniel Holden, Councillor Natasha Irons,
Councillor Linda Kirby, Councillor Sally Kenny,
Councillor Paul Kohler, Councillor Edith Macauley,
Councillor Peter McCabe, Councillor Simon McGrath,
Councillor Nick McLean, Councillor Aidan Mundy,
Councillor Marsie Skeete, Councillor Eleanor Stringer,
Councillor Martin Whelton, Councillor Helena Dollimore,
Councillor James Williscroft, Councillor Sheri-Ann Bhim,
Councillor Michael Butcher, Councillor Caroline Charles,
Councillor Eleanor Cox, Councillor Klaar Dresselaers,
Councillor Chessie Flack, Councillor Ross Garrod,
Councillor Jil Hall, Councillor Billy Hayes, Councillor Susie Hicks,
Councillor Dan Johnston, Councillor Andrew Judge,
Councillor Samantha MacArthur, Councillor Gill Manly,
Councillor Stuart Neaverson, Councillor John Oliver,
Councillor Robert Page, Councillor Michael Paterson,
Councillor Slawek Szczepanski, Councillor Matthew Willis and
Councillor Max Austin

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Braithwaite, Galea, Howard, Kaweesa, Mercer, Pearce, Reiss and Wilson.

Councillors Dresselaers, Hall and Willis attended remotely.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3 FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH (Agenda Item 3)

The Mayor invited Councillor Stringer to move and Councillor Alambritis to second the motion.

Councillor Stringer:

Thank you Madam Mayor. Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, Councillors, Officers and observers I'm delighted that we're here tonight awarding the Freedom of the Borough to two people who've given so much of their time and energy to the people of Merton and making Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen of ten further former colleagues.

So can I take this time to also thank all of those who left the Council at the May elections and thank them for all the work they did for our Borough.

Madam Mayor I'm going to talk about Mark Allison and why he deserves this honor of the Freedom of the Borough. First you have the motion in front of you but I'll run through some of the facts; he was a Councillor for twenty years, including ten years responsible for the Boroughs' finances; seven and a half of those as deputy leader. In Autumn 2020 when Stephen Alambritis, still Councillor Alambritis stood down from ten years at the helm, Mark was elected as new Leader of the Council.

Madam Mayor taking on leadership while we're in the middle of a pandemic is a challenge but Mark didn't let that stop him continuing to deliver improvements for Merton residents while still making sure that we were doing everything we can to protect our residents from illness and support the economy during the lockdowns. Mark's achievements are many and I'm sure my colleague Councillor Alambritis will cover some of these but for starters he was key to insisting that we protect the lowest income residents from council tax even when the government took away that funding, he was crucial in shaping those principles that protected children's and adult services from the worst of the cuts as austerity started to bite and recent achievements like the OFSTED judgement that our children's services are outstanding is a testament to his focus on looking after our most vulnerable residents.

He also made sure that we had the funds to deliver the things that benefit all residents like a new leisure centre in Morden and a new library in Colliers Wood.

Madam Mayor, his commitment to Merton went well beyond his achievements at the Council he also spent his spare time, when not watching football, working to make life better for local people including setting up a new foodbank service at the start of the pandemic with his wife Jenny over in Pollards Hill and then continuing to regularly volunteer there.

He also spent many more hours on the doorstep listening to residents than was expected of him making sure to be in wards right across the Borough always willing to speak to voters especially when they had concerns to raise.

Madam Mayor I've outlined some of the achievements of Mark but what is hopefully clear is his hard work and his commitment to Merton and beyond this there's how he achieves things. Mark's approach was to develop relationships with people, put his trust in them and encourage those with good

ideas and I know this as someone who was a new Councillor four years ago. Straightaway Mark supported me in my ward work, was always ready to discuss any ideas I had and then when I was put on Cabinet he continued to support me particularly with tricky situations and even when I had very different thoughts on how to help to do things.

Madam Mayor I think what makes Mark different is he doesn't just give his trust and attention to allies he is happy to work with and consult with anyone with talents and ideas so as long as they are willing to work collaboratively too. This led to him appointing a Cabinet that was diverse not just in characteristics such as ethnicity and gender but diverse in opinions.

So Madam Mayor I'm proud to call Mark my friend, I'm proud of what he achieved in Merton and I'm grateful that we are bestowing this honour on him.

Councillor Alambritis:

Deputy Lieutenant, Madame Mayor, Councillors, Officers and guests.

My wife always asks me what am I up to now as I head into the civic centre for yet another evening?

When I said what I was doing namely seconding this motion tonight for Mark Allison, she screamed at me "What are you doing talking up a QPR fan"

Well here goes

It started with an election victory in 2002 for Mark Allison

Mark made it straight into the Cabinet for Special Projects and promptly launches My Merton

My Merton is a MUST read publication with a 86,000 circulation greater than the Spectator at just 83,000 in 2019 and the Liberal Democrat Voice at only 50,000 and the Morning Star at just 10,000

Between 2010 - 2014 I made Mark my Cabinet Member for Finance

Our 2011 July Principles when we protected residents from the cost of living crisis were put together by Mark

We Froze the council tax for 6 years

We kept Council Tax low

And it was Mark who insisted on maintaining one of Britain's most generous council tax rebate schemes

Mark also made sure we protected services for the most vulnerable, through a funding ratio ensuring budget cuts are lower for children's services and adult social care and so we have outstanding status from Ofsted for our childrens services

Between 2014 – 2020 I made Mark my Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Mark makes sure we get money for a new library, a new day centre, a new secondary school, 23 expanded Primary schools (no portakabins) and a new leisure centre

So not a bad list of achievements for residents of Merton from a QPR fan

Hey, look he has recovered some dignity as I understand he was there at the first AFC Wimbledon match against Sutton United back in 2002 where it all started and now his second team is AFC Wimbledon. Mark thank you very much.

I second this motion Madam Mayor.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Whelton to speak to the motion.

Councillor Whelton:

Thank you Madam Mayor, it's a great honour to support this recommendation for former Councillor Allison to be made Honorary Freeman of this Borough. I've known Mark for the past twenty seven years and we cut our political teeth way back in Sutton a long time ago challenging Borough, and Mark was always a very good friend and support when I was just starting myself in the Labour Party.

I've known Mark longer than I've known anyone else in this Council chamber, politics there was a challenge but both of us ended up in Merton which was slightly more fruitful territory than Sutton is for the Labour Party.

As well as that I've worked closely alongside Mark over the past twenty years I got elected with him at the same time to the Council in 2002 and I also served alongside him as a Cabinet member for the past twelve years.

I have to say I think Mark's record speaks for itself, I know the huge work you've done in Pollards Hill in terms of setting up and continuing to run the fresh foodbank which has helped hundreds and hundreds of people over the past two and a half years in one of the most deprived areas of the Borough. I also know as well the work he did through Covid.

Covid had been one of the most challenging times for this Council and in terms of the support he gave to businesses and the local community as the then Cabinet Member for Finance but obviously subsequently Leader after Councillor Alambritis stood down.

It's sad Mark is no longer with us in this Council chamber but I think this is recognition of his considerable service to the Council and I ask Council tonight to support this thank you Madam Mayor.

The Mayor then called for a vote and the vote was carried, unanimously. The Mayor then called for a vote and the vote was carried, unanimously. Mark Allison was invited to receive certificates conferring upon him the titles of Honorary Freeman of the Borough and Honorary Alderman affixed with the common seal of the Council.

The substantive resolution was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That, by virtue of the power vested in it by Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council does admit Mark Allison as Freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

This honour is bestowed on Mark Allison in recognition of the substantial contribution he made to the Borough as a Councillor since his election to the Council in 2002, including serving as Leader of the Council from 2020 – 2022 and Deputy Leader from 2014-2020.

Mark held many positions on the Council and made a substantial contribution to the borough, especially in enhancing businesses, economic growth and prosperity, and in protecting those who are more vulnerable and on low incomes. Mark also played an important role in supporting charities in the Borough. As Cabinet Member for Finance, Mark oversaw the management of the Borough's finances for over ten years. Mark also ensured all Council staff were paid the living wage and introduced bereavement leave for staff who miscarry.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor Mark Allison is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

4 FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH (Agenda Item 4)

The Mayor invited Councillor McLean to move and Councillor Holden to second the motion.

Councillor McLean:

Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, Councillors and guests, I'd like to begin by saying myself and Councillor Holden will be speaking to conservative colleagues tonight but the conservative group congratulates all former councillors being honoured for their contribution to this Council, all of whom greatly respected the privilege it was to represent the residents of their respective wards with a dedication to public service they can all be proud of.

Madam Mayor, It is my honour to propose the motion that by virtue of the power vested in it by section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council does admit David Tyrie Williams as freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

This honour is bestowed on David Tyrie Williams MBE JP in recognition of the exceptional contribution he made to the Borough as a councillor in over 45

cumulative years of service since his first election to the council in 1974 including serving as Leader of the Council from 2006 to 2010, the Mayor of Merton in 2012-13, Deputy Mayor 1981-82, Leader of the opposition 1999 - 2006 and his extensive civic service.

David has held a number of posts and senior positions on the Council throughout his time as a councillor and has chaired various committees and boards. David has also served the Borough in many other ways including having been a school governor at various levels for over 50 years, a member of the endeavour youth club management committee in Morden for 35 years and a member of Merton Deanery Synod for 16 years.

David has also served as a magistrate in Merton since 1986 and in 2019 received an MBE for political service in Local Government.

It is also moved that former Councillor David Williams is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

Madam Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant, Ladies and Gentlemen that is the service record of former Councillor David Williams MBE JP and it is that outstanding dedication to the service of this Council and the residents that David was elected to represent that we are here to acknowledge tonight, as this Council bestows upon him the Freedom of the Borough.

As Council Leader there were many achievements, not least the opening of the Mitcham Eastfields train station; the first a very significant transport infrastructure project in the constituency of Mitcham and Morden.

David Williams, the heart of the conservative group for decades steeped in professionalism, constitutional knowledge, a perfectionist; this Council will miss his wise input. But Madam Mayor what has struck me with serving with David over the last four years is that despite the decades that he has been a member of Merton Council he remains a moderniser. Yes always an anchor to former practices but also keen to do things differently and that to me is the depth of his character, his energy and respect of this Council and the residents of Merton has not diminished, nor has his desire to serve the public as he once again takes up his place on the bench as a magistrate.

On a personal note, I want to thank him for his support to me, he has been my mentor and his friendship and guidance has been greatly appreciated. That said, something tells me he will still be getting quite a few telephone calls he hasn't quite escaped yet.

Madame Mayor it is with immense honour that I move this motion that David Williams MBE JP be admitted Freeman of London Borough of Merton and is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton, nobody deserves it more. Thank you.

Councillor Holden:

Thank you. Deputy Lieutenant and Madame Mayor it is my pleasure and honour to second the nomination of my good friend and former Hillside ward colleague David Williams to be awarded the Freedom of the London Borough of Merton.

David is well deserving to be a Freeman of Merton after having served a grand total of 45 and a half years as a Councillor in Merton. As Councillor McLean has outlined David has served in all the local civic roles which one can do in this place which very few others have ever done or achieved.

So what was happening in 1974 when David first joined this place, well there had been an energy crisis, a three-day week, an invasion of a European country namely Cyprus, the UK hosted the Eurovision song contest, there were two general elections, a local government reorganisation and you couldn't eat at McDonald's in this country although that changed in December of that year. Now we fast forward to 2022 so upon David's retirement there are some similarities; we are facing again an energy crisis, a European country Ukraine being invaded, we've had ward boundary changes and we are about to host Eurovision again and also you can eat in many more restaurants too.

The phrase plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose - the more things change the more they stay in the same comes to mind. David has been steadfast and resolute standing fast in honour and strength throughout all those years. David has served in two wards first in Canon Hill and then when I was just four and a half years old David became a Councillor in Hillside ward which he has brilliantly served for 32 years.

David has throughout his time had a series of ward colleagues including Chris Grayling MP and retired councillors James Holmes and David Simpson, both of whom we are honouring as Honorary Alderman tonight.

The third ward Councillor often changed at each election. I first met David at the Hillside Conservatives Christmas party in December 2010 where I was warmly welcomed by David and David and Stephen Hammond MP at this point David had already been in situ in Hillside for 20 years.

David was also an excellent Mayor of Merton in 2012 coinciding like this year in the Jubilee year. In that year David created recognition pin badges for individuals or groups who had done good work in the community or helped the Mayoral team. The badge here that I often wear on my jacket at these meetings, I proudly wear for services that I did to David Williams and Krystal Miller when they were Mayor of Merton.

Only a couple of years later I was selected to stand with both Davids at the 2014 council election becoming the latest in the series of new third Councillors in Hillside. I was somewhat the junior upstart member with new ideas and keenness to use social media but David kept me on the straight and narrow and taught me a lot of about being a good Councillor for which I am eternally grateful.

David's expertise in Local Government is well known and regarded which is why he received an MBE in 2019 at which point both David's had an award.

I think I have some way to go before I receive one as well. I do at times affectionately call David the oracle because of his deep knowledge of all things Local Government and even as he approached and went into retirement David received calls from other Councillors asking for advice knowledge or his recall of history; I'm sure that will continue if David doesn't mind.

Madam Mayor I am delighted to second this well deserved nomination David Williams to become a Freeman of the London Borough of Merton and an Honorary Alderman thank you very much.

The Mayor then called on Councillors Fairclough and Macauley to speak to the motion.

Councillor Fairclough:

Deputy Lieutenant Madam Mayor, before I speak about David Williams I just wanted to say that over recent weeks my group's thoughts have been with all the families affected by the tragedy in your ward Madam Mayor at Galpins Road, particularly with the families most affected. I've already said to Hannah and I think that she and we should be proud of her teams and how they came together and are still doing to support residents on the ground in such awful circumstances I'm sure we're all grateful for their services.

Turning to the matter in the citation, we've already heard from Councillors McLean and Councillor Holden in detail and I just wanted to add a few words of my own and on behalf of my group.

I think it's important to highlight that the legislation that powers local authorities to bestow the Freedom of the Borough the 1972 act explains that this honour should be given to those who have rendered eminent services to the Borough; on any understanding over 45 years service to the Borough falls within this definition and we should all be grateful to David for his work.

I would also like to highlight his manner; he is courteous respectful and although strident online, particularly on Twitter, someone who will always engage with fellow Councillors of all parties as individuals.

I enjoy speaking with David as we've done at Mayoral and Civic events and he is generous with his opinion and fair-minded, I can certainly understand why his colleagues were keen to support him as Leader of the Opposition and after winning the 2006 election why they were keen to support him as Leader.

He is also I think the only Councillor to use both points of order and an intervention by way of personal explanation within Council meetings and the same one even and he's probably one of the few councillors who understands that the

latter exists; certainly a level of procedural and constitutional wonkery that any Liberal Democrat would be proud of. Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you David.

Councillor Macauley:

Thank you Madam Mayor. Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, Councillors, officers, distinguished guests. I'm delighted to have arrived back in London safely this morning from the Tennis in New York in time for this very important meeting.

It gives me great pleasure to speak on the nomination for the Freedom of the Borough in respect of David Williams MBE JP. I am a joint member of the bench in Wimbledon Magistrates Court, now the southwestern Magistrates Court. David initially joined the bench in 1986 but came off in 1987 when he left the Council and went to Hong Kong for two years. He came back to the Council and the bench in Wimbledon in 1990 he was Deputy Chairman of the Wimbledon bench until it merged to the Southwestern Magistrates Court and also Deputy Chairman of the Youth bench for three years to 2020.

David also mentored more than a dozen new magistrates, in fact when I joined the bench in 1995 having known David before I was elected to Merton Council in 1998, we both attend the same church Saint Martins in Lower Morden; David was very helpful to me during my chairmanship training together with Jackie McCabe, Peter McCabe's wife they helped me with my training and I was delighted with all the help I got from David as we all know that Wimbledon bench are very strict with their court's procedures, the criteria was quite clear in that you have to have first-class knowledge of the criminal justice system. David has served the court for well over 30 years and even when he decided to retire last year he has now been called back to the bench as Chair for a further four years due to the great contribution which he has made to the court with outstanding and excellent knowledge of court procedures and loyalty to the bench. He has never claimed any expenses for his services to the court.

David has also been a school governor for various schools for nearly 50 years i.e prior to his first election as a Councillor. He became a Councillor in Cannon Hill ward in May 1974 to October 1987 and for Hillside ward from May 1990 to May 2022, some 45 years.

David has chaired several panels and several committees i.e allotments, Housing, improvement grants etc he was Deputy Mayor in 1982 and he served alongside Theresa May during her eight years on the Council 1986-1994. He was also involved in education matters initially Deputy Group Leader 1994 to 1999 and Group Leader from 1999 to 2010 and Leader of the Council from 2006 to 2010. He became the Mayor of the London Borough of Merton in 2012-13 which was the time of the Olympics and Diamond Jubilee and in later years he was involved in finance including Standards and General Purposes Committee.

David was awarded an MBE for political services to the Borough he received his MBE from her majesty on the 8th of June 2019 and his MBE was presented by his Royal Highness Prince William at Buckingham Palace which was well deserved for all his political services to the Borough and I think at the time when he was receiving his MBE, Prince William turned round and said to him my goodness me you spent over 40 years in the London Borough of Merton you are a hero. Both in politics and criminal justice system David has made substantial contributions to this Borough and awarding him with the Freedom of the Borough is highly and richly deserved for such a very hard-working and dedicated man thank you very much Madam Mayor.

The Mayor then called for a vote and the vote was carried, unanimously. David Williams MBE JP was invited to receive certificates conferring upon him the titles of Honorary Freeman of the Borough and Honorary Alderman affixed with the common seal of the Council.

The substantive resolution was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That, by virtue of the power vested in it by Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council does admit David Tyrie Williams MBE JP as Freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

This honour is bestowed on David Tyrie Williams MBE JP in recognition of the exceptional contribution he made to the Borough as a Councillor in over 45 cumulative years of service since his first election to the Council in 1974, including serving as Leader of the Council from 2006 – 2010, the Mayor of Merton in 2012/13, Deputy Mayor 1981/82, Leader of the Opposition 1999-2006 and his extensive civic service.

David has held a number of posts and senior positions on the Council throughout his time as a Councillor and has chaired various Committees and Boards.

David has also served the Borough in many other ways, including having been a School Governor at various levels for over 50 years, a member of the Endeavour Youth Club Management Committee in Morden for 35 years and a member of Merton Deanery Synod for 16 years. David has also served as a magistrate in Merton since 1986 and in 2019 received an MBE for Political Service in Local Government.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor David Williams MBE JP is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

5 HONORARY ALDERMEN AND ALDERWOMEN (Agenda Item 5)

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor David Dean.

Councillor McLean:

Thank you Madam Mayor. Former Councillor David Dean served on Merton Council for 16 years in the wards of Trinity and Dundonald. Members that have served with David during this time will attest that he is indeed a unique character. While David Williams was the embodiment of sound structure and authority, David Dean prescribed more to the view better to ask for forgiveness than permission; a quality for getting things done but a group leader's nightmare. Indeed, when I'd make one of my regular calls to conservative group Councillors I would invariably say to David what are you up to, bracing myself for the response.

But Madam Mayor David did get things done, Mr Daffodil himself, a Councillor who didn't just talk or jump on a bandwagon but delivered. Despite sometimes causing my blood pressure to rise, David was an important member of our group because he brought that all-important breadth of political argument from left to right. As a functioning political group this is the important ingredient to good debate.

Madam Mayor my Council colleague Councillor Holden will speak further to David's time on this Council however I'd like to finish by referencing his contributions to the debate in this chamber. I know he was not a particular favourite with other parties but he would have been horrified if he was, but I think deep down even non-conservative members might just miss David a little bit. I know we certainly will miss him a lot.

David, you like so many receiving this honour tonight have served the London Borough of Merton with a dedication that you can be very proud of and I wish you the very best. Madam Mayor is my very great privilege to move this motion for David Dean to be conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman.

Councillor Holden:

Thank you I'm honoured to second the nomination of my friend and former Councillor David Dean to the status of Honorary Alderman for the London Borough of Merton.

David served a total of 16 years on this Council, first in Trinity ward then in Dundonald ward. David is a somewhat unique individual character, extremely well liked and regarded by a lot of colleagues and residents, his plain speaking and dedication to getting things done despite the odds and then some he well and truly rubbed up the wrong way. I'm pleased to say I'm one of the former. David is a close friend and confidant we still regularly chat about Council and party matters.

In this place David had two main passions; town planning and the environment. Throughout my time here I served with David in committees where he displayed these passions, namely the Planning Applications Committee and the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel. David defended residents from bad applications often going against the politically correct consensus to do so. This won him plaudits from the residents but did annoy some in the administration, who even once managed to throw him off the committee until I got him back on.

David's other passion the environment was ably demonstrated by single-handedly planting thousands of trees, tens of thousands of daffodils and being an early adopter of electric cars and electric vehicle charging long before it came to fashion.

David always offered good entertainment in this place, a unique individual with a good heart, he did his own thing and got things done. A true environmentalist and 16 years of dedicated service to the community, he is truly deserving as Honorary Alderman. Madam Mayor I second the nomination for David to be Honorary Alderman thank you.

The vote was carried, unanimously and David Dean was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor David Dean is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor John Dehaney.

Councillor McCabe:

Deputy Lieutenant, Madame Mayor, Colleagues and friends, it's an absolute pleasure to nominate John Dehaney, my friend, my colleague for the title of Honorary Alderman.

John was born in Kingston Jamaica and he worked in an accountancy office before coming to this country as a cashier and got an experience of accounting and he came to the UK in 1961, just after the Windrush generation; but I'm sure he would have experienced many of the experiences of that generation and when he arrived here he was straight to work in post office counters, where he worked in Tooting for many years and then he applied to become a VAT inspector and he did that job and served this country for 20 years, 222 days before retiring in 1995.

He joined the Labour party in 1990 and stood for the Council in 2002 representing Graveney ward, representing the ward in which he lived amongst the people who were his neighbours and he represented them with great distinction.

He served on the general purposes committee and for some unfathomable reason, certainly as far as I'm concerned, the Planning Committee for many years - glutton for punishment if you ask me. He also served on the scrutiny commission he served as the Deputy Mayor on two occasions which is very rare indeed - the first being in 2006 and seven where he was serving his apprenticeship to what happened the following year when he took on the role of Mayor in 2007-8 supported incredibly well by Audrey his wife.

When I think of John I'm reminded of a man who is, as he is this evening, impeccably turned out, always looking like a million dollars and he also brought to our proceedings a common sense approach, both to life and to politics.

John is and was incredibly hard working for the people that he represented and he took on the role, the thankless task I would say as a treasurer of the Labour group and when you think about it, having served for so many years as a VAT inspector he was superb extracting money from his colleagues, always with a smile on his face - you always felt really pleased to have parted with your money when John asked you and you know there was never any problem with collecting the subs from us here because you know you become fearful of VAT inspectors if you've had anything to do with them.

John and I share a number of things; we share our politics but we also share our faith and for me John lived his faith, he didn't just go along to mass on a Sunday and pray but he actually demonstrated his Christianity in the way that he set about his life and I think that may come from his time in primary school where he like me he was taught by some pretty fierce nuns who drummed into him the important messages in life.

Madame Mayor, John Dehaney is a thoroughly decent man, a great Councillor and a worthy recipient of the title Honorary Alderman, I move the motion.

Councillor Christie:

Thank you Madam Mayor, good to see you John. Unlike Councillor McCabe I've only known John for eight years but in those years John and I have become good friends so I'm delighted to second his nomination as an Honorary Alderman this evening.

John's 20 years of service to the people of Merton have seen him take on many roles from committee chairman to school governor, two stints as deputy mayor as Councillor McCabe said and as the 43rd Mayor of Merton in the year 2007 2008. That was the year I finished my A levels and so I wasn't fortunate enough to witness his fantastic fundraising efforts for his two charities Sickle Cell Thalassaemia and Deen City Farm but I can well imagine how John would make a fantastic Mayor.

He's the most dignified person I know, charming, friendly and always immaculately dressed, John never had an off day when representing the Borough, whether as Mayor or attending Council meetings or on Sunday morning canvassing sessions, walking up the path of some unsuspecting Graveney resident with his disarming 'good morning madam' he knows how to talk to people in a way that makes them want to engage.

Madam Mayor, just as Bill Clinton used to say of his wife that voters who elected him got a two-for-one deal, so it is the case with Audrey, John's wife and I want to take a moment to recognise her too. Ever-present at his side for community events, formal occasions and every single mayoral fundraiser, Audrey and John have both been fantastic servants and supporters of this Borough.

So Madam Mayor not every Councillor earns the title of Honorary Alderman when they retire, it's only conferred on those that the Local Government Act describes as persons of distinction who have rendered eminent services to the Council as a member.

Dignified, charming, always present, kind, honourable and with a distinguished record of service for the people of Merton I can think of none more deserving than former Councillor John Dehaney and I'm happy to second his nomination for the title of Honorary Alderman thank you.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Kirby to speak to the motion.

Councillor Kirby:

Thank you, I've known John and his lovely wife Audrey a long time before he became a Councillor and I think I might have even been involved in persuading him to become one which was a really special thing for him to do.

John is one of the loveliest colleagues that you could wish to work with and I think we've spent the time that he and I have been on the Council together having a lot of laughs together we do an enormous amount in the ward and he is very well liked by local residents.

He is the epitome of sartorial elegance, I think he's a bit worried about the moth invasion in his wonderful collection of suits. I think it's absolutely wonderful for him to be granted this and I totally support it, he's a lovely man.

The vote was carried, unanimously and John Dehaney was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor John Dehaney is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.'

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor Nick Draper.

Councillor Cooper-Marbiah:

Thank you. Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, Councillors and guests I'm delighted to move this nomination for the title of Honorary Alderman to be awarded to my friend and former colleague Nick Draper. This is in recognition of his 24 years of service for the residents of this Borough.

Over those years he served as Councillor for three wards; Lower Morden, Colliers Wood and St Helier. His extensive service covered nearly every area of the Council including Cabinet member for community and culture from 2012 to 2019. Whilst on the Council he chaired various committees including the Licensing Committee and for five years Nick chaired Merton Council's life chances scrutiny panels. He also served as a member of many committees including Standards and General Purposes Committee, Planning Applications Committee, Appointments Committee, Borough Plan Advisory Committee and many many others.

Nick was a Governor of Cricket Green where he also served as Chair of Governors and I know that he served that School with great passion whenever he spoke about it. He also served as governor at St Thomas of Canterbury and the Smart Centre. In addition he represented Merton on various outside bodies including the Mitcham Common Conservators and the Wandle Valley Trust.

One of Nick's proudest moments was when he became Mayor of Merton in 2009 raising 47,000 pounds for his chosen charities and undertaking 391 official engagements. Anyone who knows Nick will know him for his enthusiasm, fun and good humour. This came through during his Mayoral year when he became the first Mayor of Merton to perform on the guitar to serenade his wife at his Mayoral reception.

On a personal note Nick is hugely responsible for me being a Councillor and I thank him for that.

Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, Councillors, Nick worked many years with distinction for Merton, it therefore gives me great pleasure to propose this nomination for Council to confer the title of Honorary Alderman upon him thank you.

Councillor Attawar:

Thank you. Madam Mayor it gives me great pleasure to second the nomination of my friend and former ward colleague Nick Draper to be Alderman of the Borough of Merton.

I remember the night in 1994 when Nick found himself accidentally elected Councillor for Lower Morden; he was so worried about breaking the news to his wife Sheila that Siobhain McDonagh had to accompany him to break the news to her for him. That said, there was no one more proud of Nick and the work he did for the community and on the Council than Sheila.

In 2002 he became the Councillor for Colliers Wood and I joined him in 2010 when Sheila Knight stepped down. Whatever your view of Nick you could not fault him for his commitment, dedication and enthusiasm on the Council. He was very political and never missed an opportunity to score political points if he could. As a ward colleague he was a great team player and always supportive of his ward colleagues.

In typical Nick fashion he threw himself heart and soul into every challenge thrown at us, whether it was the dawn raid to sort out the anti-social business, the regeneration of Colliers Wood Town Centre after the riots in 2011, or simply helping a resident build a brick wall which needed rebuilding, the residents all knew he was always there for them no matter how small or big their problem. As Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure he could be found in the library singing to the children at rhyme time every Monday morning which the children loved. Amongst his many achievements while Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure was seeing the brand new library for Colliers Wood and the new Leisure Centre in Morden built.

Madam Mayor I second Nick Draper's nomination for Alderman of the Borough of Merton.

The vote was carried, unanimously and Nick Draper was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED;

That former Councillor Nick Draper is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.'

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor James Holmes.

Councillor McLean:

Thank you Madam Mayor. Former Councillor James Holmes served on this Council for 16 years. At the tender age of 21, James represented the Hillside ward from 1994

until 1998 and then most recently the trinity ward from 2010 to 2022. James is a former Deputy Leader of the Conservative group, has served in a number of shadow cabinets and has his passion being education and children services where he excelled on scrutiny panels.

His work as a Governor at Melrose College has been tireless and something he can be very proud of. James was a very successful Chair of the Wimbledon Community Forum, a champion of greater local resident involvement. A very effective politician, James practiced a nonpartisan style of politics; for the new members to the Council who did not have the privilege to witness his debating style, I can tell you it was quite something - his calm ability to sum up a debate and deliver a winning argument was quite artful, he used his polite demeanour to devastating effect.

Madam Mayor, James was a very important member of the conservative group representing the breadth of political opinion I mentioned earlier, although on a different wing to David Dean. Over the last four years I've got to know him a lot more, a man with a very funny and dry sense of humour, someone whose opinion I value. For a politician James does not crave the limelight, indeed it was always very difficult to have his photo taken - not something that happens with politicians in Trinity Ward often.

James you like so many receiving this honour tonight have served the London Borough of Merton with a dedication and humility that you can be very proud of. Your contributions to debates in this chamber will be greatly missed.

Madam Mayor it is my honour to move the motion for James Holmes to be conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman.

Councillor Holden:

I'm honoured to second the nomination for my friend and former Councillor for Hillside ward James Holmes for the status of Honorary Alderman for the London Borough of Merton.

James served a total of 16 years on this Council across two non-continuous periods, first in Hillside ward and then in Trinity ward from 2010 until its dissolution this year. I've known James since about 2011 when I first became more involved in the local scene and I thought what a jolly good chap he is. James often used to like to tell stories to us new and young councillors back in 2014, the only problem being it was sometimes hard to know if it was true or a witty joke. James was always very cheeky and witty like that.

Never knowingly angry or losing his cool James got on well with everyone, he was well liked and regarded within our party and across the chamber and with the officers. James's particular passions in this place were children and policymaking. James served on the children's and young people's scrutiny panel, coordinated school governorships across the Borough and spent much energy to develop an education and skills for young people across the Borough.

James also loved serving on scrutiny task groups and doing good work in the cross-party fashion in these forums. He was dedicated to improving the lives of residents in the Borough. Though we had different backgrounds and on different wings of the party, James was a very good friend to me. He even once got a parking ticket whilst taking me for dinner at the Ivy in the village and refused any money for it so that became a very expensive birthday dinner and I'm very grateful to him for paying for it.

I will miss James very much in this place and as a group we'll miss him very much, Madam Mayor I second the nomination for James to be Honorary Alderman.

The vote was carried, unanimously and James Holmes was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor James Holmes is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.'

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor Russell Makin.

Councillor Whelton:

Thank you Madam Mayor it's an absolute great honour to move that Russell Makin is made Honorary Alderman of London Borough of Merton.

I've known Russell for over 25 years and he was also before I became a Councillor in Pollards Hill served four years in that ward and I have to say his knowledge, his expertise but also his understanding of the area was a great help when I was elected in 2002 in what was not an easy ward, it certainly stood me in good stead for the subsequent 20 years I've served the people of Pollards Hill.

When I first came on Merton Council in 2002 my first position was Chair of the Street Management Panel and Russell was the then cabinet member for transport. I have to say it was an absolute eye-opener dealing with some very fraught cpzs in the Borough some difficult traffic management schemes but also having to deal with a myriad of different issues - street management is never an easy task to undertake but Russell as the then Cabinet Member performed it admirably and he was a great support to myself in that position which obviously stood me in good stead many years later when I was the actual Cabinet Member for street management.

We also got to know each other quite well traveling on the train to London each morning and talking about his hobbies and the things he likes to do, but also talking

about the Council, giving me the knowledge and breadth of his experience. I also recognise his role in terms of education, his position as chair of governors at Haslemere School and one of the most memorable engagements I had when I was the Mayor of Merton many many years ago was attending an engagement and actually having to open an all-weather park which included jumping up and down which certainly caused a few interesting photographs at the time, but I know as well how dedicated he was to that position, to the service of that school but also to his ward of Cricket Green which he served for 20 years after he had four years as a Pollards Hill Councillor.

He's a colleague who will certainly be sorely missed by many of us, I certainly enjoyed his dry sense of humour and his wit but he's been a supportive colleague through some very difficult times so I'd like to say thank you Russell and thank you for all your service of the Council but also to everyone else here tonight who are receiving Honorary Alderman and Honorary Freeman we owe you all a great debt of gratitude for your service to Merton Council, thank you Madam Mayor.

Councillor Akyigyina:

Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, Councillors and distinguished guests. What can I say about Russell? Russell is a very complex man with a great heart, he's one of the nicest people you can meet and when you get to know him you know he's a really good guy, he'll help you any way he can.

When I became a Councillor at first he was very good in giving me information and supporting me in what I need, sometimes people think that he's a bit grumpy but he's not, as I said he's a really good guy even I remember when he was on transport we would discuss things about transport when you were governor I would actually go in there to do some visits and speak to the mums that were there and you would actually support me. The head was there we would have a good conversation about what was going and how the children were doing he was very very very very very supportive of the school and also about the children and also the committees that he'd been on. I think I'll leave it here before my voice goes for the next person but

Russell is a great guy and I think you deserve what you're getting and it's my honour to actually support you getting this Alderman status thank you very much.

The vote was carried, unanimously and Russell Makin was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor Russell Makin is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderwoman on former Councillor Oonagh Moulton.

Councillor McLean:

Thank you Madam Mayor. Former Councillor Oonagh Moulton served on Merton Council for 20 years representing the Wimbledon Park Ward with immense dedication.

During her time on Merton Council, Oonagh was the Mayor of Merton, Leader of the opposition and Conservative group leader. Education and children's services was always a long-standing priority and Oonagh held roles in both cabinet and shadow cabinet. In recent years health and well-being became a focus, serving on the health and well-being board and the Covid vaccination task group. As a strong community champion Oonagh was also a governor of Merton schools for nearly 20 years, firstly at Bishop Gilpin serving on the board for 10 years, the management board of the smart centre before becoming a governor at Ricards Lodge and later at Wimbledon Park Primary School. For Oonagh being the Mayor of Merton was a huge privilege of her time on the Council she found it an extraordinary year, particularly meeting so many wonderful unsung heroes and supporting communities in the voluntary sector across the Borough whilst also raising some healthy funds for Macmillan Merton and the Wimbledon Civic Theatre Trust.

Madam Mayor after six years as conservative group leader Oonagh retired in 2019 and I had the privilege of succeeding her and on a personal note I would like to thank her for the support and positive guidance she continued to demonstrate. Her character, professionalism and likability will be missed by the conservative group and this Council and I wish her the very best, Madam Mayor it is my great privilege and honour to move this motion for Oonagh Moulton to be conferred the honorary title of Alderwoman.

Councillor Holden:

Madam Mayor thank you it is my privilege and honour to second the nomination of my friend and former Councillor Oonagh Moulton to the status of Honorary Alderwoman of the London Borough of Merton.

Oonagh had served 20 years on this Council being a founding councillor for the current Wimbledon Park ward in 2002 following the recent boundary changes that ended the old Durnsford ward. One of those Councillors from the then Durnsford ward was one Theresa May. Like Theresa, Oonagh was a determined disciplined hard-working public servant who offered our conservative group a strong and stable leadership for six years. Oonagh was well regarded both within our conservative group and across the chamber and with officers. Oonagh has also been the Mayor of Merton and it was at her Mayoral Charity ball in 2011 when I met her for the first time.

Oonagh was very kind and helpful to me as a young Council candidate back in 2014 and made sure new councillors received support mentoring and other opportunities to develop, including arranging for me to attend several LGA training courses. Oonagh always led from the front and was at all events and campaign sessions and was consistently top of my infamous campaign spreadsheet even outdoing me. Oonagh inspired others to be involved in all aspects of the Council role and it's a creed that I have tried to follow since. This often involved travelling to events like conferences around the country and I was always in tow often the bag carrier, photographer and in effect Oonagh's aide-de-camp.

I very much admire Oonagh and I think it's fitting to bestow her the status of Honorary Alderwoman, Madam Mayor I second the nomination for Oonagh thank you.

The vote was carried, unanimously and Oonagh Moulton was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderwoman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor Oonagh Moulton is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderwoman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of her loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor David Simpson CBE.

Councillor McLean:

Thank you Madam Mayor. Former Councillor David Simpson CBE served on this Council for 20 years representing the Hillside ward. A former cabinet member between 2006 and 2010 where he held the post of cabinet member for the environment, David was also a member of the shadow cabinet most recently shadow cabinet member for Safer Merton. His work on the Licensing Committee, locations board and with the police was very much valued. Once again my colleague Councillor Holden will speak further to David's service to the London Borough of Merton, however I'd like to reflect further on his contribution to the Conservative group in particular as group whip.

As many in this Chamber will recognise, the role of group whip is essential to a strong and functioning political grouping and David carried out this role with a balanced blend of support, persuasion and the odd sprinkling of menace. Often a man of few words but when he spoke you certainly listened, crikey you listened. A man who would deliver the unvarnished truth- valuable advice to a group leader and it is in that spirit that I wish to thank him for his guidance to the previous Conservative group leaders past and present; former Councillors Debbie Shears who indeed is with us tonight, Oonagh Moulton and myself.

David, you like so many receiving this honour tonight have served the London Borough of Merton with distinction. I wish you the very best in your retirement and it is my very great privilege to move this motion for David Simpson CBE to be confirmed with the title of Honorary Alderman.

Councillor Holden:

Thank you Madam Mayor I'm honoured to second the nomination of my friend and former Hillside colleague David Simpson to the status of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton.

David served a total of 20 years in this Council in Hillside ward replacing one Chris Grayling MP. He served continuously alongside David Williams who had already served 12 years prior to David joining. I first met David Simpson at the Hillside Conservatives Christmas party in 2010 with a bit of a theme going on there, where I just joined the local party in Wimbledon. A few years later I would join David and David in this place as the third Hillside Councillor where we had a good eight years together serving the residents of Hillside.

David's main talent was his ability to get things fixed quietly behind the scenes such as his hard work on the licensing committee, the locations board and with the local police. David never sought any limelight for this which is very rare for us councillors. David also used his skills in our conservative group where he was group whip for many years. For a few years I was his understudy, an apprentice to his being master if you will.

David knew everything and always had advice ready for the group leader for the party and even the MPs. David got things done, smoothed out problems and made sure the ship kept on sailing. Even though David has retired we know we can go to him for wise counsel, my nickname David as the master of dark arts as a result of his talent and skill for getting things done.

I will miss David from Hillside he was an able ward colleague whom I learned a lot from. I wish him well in retirement, Madam Mayor I second the nomination for David Simpson to be Honorary Alderman.

The vote was carried, unanimously and David Simpson CBE was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor David Simpson CBE is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor Peter Southgate.

Councillor Foley:

Thank you. Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, fellow Councillors in the chamber, officers and distinguished guests, I'm very pleased and proud to nominate my friend and former Councillor Peter Southgate as Honorary Alderman for the London Borough of Merton.

Peter was first elected in 2002 as some of you know and were also elected in that year as we've heard tonight. He has dedicated 20 years to serving the residents of Merton Park as an independent Councillor, during that time he served as the group leader of the Merton Park Independents and at a time when the Merton Park Independents played a part in the balance of power.

He also served on the Planning Applications Committee, he distinguished himself as the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission for 16 years. Peter was also Deputy Mayor and a school governor at Merton Park primary school. I was very fortunate and privileged to have served with him for eight of these years and as a new Councillor his knowledge and experience has proved invaluable.

Just before I finish I'd also like to give a mention to the dedication of his loyal wife Pauline, who's with him tonight. I think one always forgets, it's been mentioned tonight by some other Councillors but Pauline has done a sterling job. As I got to know both of them over these times and was very privileged to be at their golden wedding anniversary and I think Pauline needs a mention tonight as well, but Peter's service to the London Borough of Merton over this period deserves to be recognised. Madam Mayor I nominate him for this title of Honorary Alderman for the London Borough of Merton thank you.

Councillor Alambritis:

They say you can tell a person's character by their favourite film. Actually they also say, you can tell a person's age by their favourite film! So here goes!

More than half a century ago in 1971 a film was shot in the North East in parts of Newcastle, Gateshead, Hartlepool and Blythe.

And this is Peter's favourite film called 'Get Carter'

Here are some of the critical reviews

It is an acclaimed 1970's British thriller starring Michael Caine as a hardened gangster returning to his hometown in search of the truth behind his brother's death

The film is also said to be tough, grimey and gritty

Carter is said to be menacing and brutal but retains his coolness

So how can this be our former councillor's favourite film?

Is Peter really a hardened gangster? A hardened scrutiny chair more like!

Is Peter grimey? Certainly not. Tough on the executive and gritty in questioning yes!

Is Peter menacing and brutal. No but coolness personified? Yes!

They also say you know a person better by their middle name

Peter's is William

We all have read the books of that name by Richmal Crompton and some of those titles are interesting

There is 'William the Showman'. Not our Peter, always modest.

There is 'William the Dictator'. Not Peter, ever the democrat.

Then there is 'Just Willam'. Peter working on his own? No, always the team player.

My favourite William book is titled 'William Does His Bit'.

To former councillor and scrutiny champion in Merton, Peter William Southgate, you have certainly done your bit for our residents and I am very happy to second this motion.

The vote was carried, unanimously and Peter Southgate was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor Peter Southgate is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderwoman on former Councillor Geraldine Stanford.

Councillor Linda Kirby:

Thank you I would have to say first of all that Geraldine is a very close friend of mine so I'm very happy to move this motion. Geraldine in her time on the council which was from 1990 to 2022 has been an excellent Councillor and in that time she was Chair of Finance, Cabinet member for corporate resources, Cabinet member for education and she was Mayor of Merton too and as well as sitting on numerous other committees and she has been very very active in her own ward.

She has been an excellent ward Councillor keeping in regular contact with her local residents and taking up their concerns. She was involved with me in setting up North East Mitcham Community Centre back in 1982, in setting up the Colour House Children's Charity and also in setting up the North Mitcham park friends group, as well as every year running along with me Graveney and Figges in bloom. Geraldine is also very interested in history and is on the board of Merton Priory Trust and

produced the lower and upper Mitcham heritage maps that were accessible on Merton's website.

She organised the annual mayor of Merton's entry to the London new year's day parade making costumes and raising over 54,000 pounds for Mayoral charities plus jointly organising the Mitcham Carnival for many years. Her commitment to the Council has been absolutely phenomenal and I think she thoroughly deserves to be an Honorary Alderwoman.

Councillor Mike Brunt:

Thank you Madame Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, fellow Councillors, distinguished guests I stand as someone who was elected with Geraldine Stanford in 1990 for the first time; I'll mention a few names Slim Flegg, Dave Proctor, Tony Colman, Nathan Lee, Keith Harris, Gerard Harkin, Fred Flatt, Maria Dingwall, Andy Vail, Mazhar-Ul Khan, Chris Watson. There were 13 of us elected for the Labour party in 1990 and there's been one that's been ever present ever since then and that's Geraldine Stanford.

It's been an honour to be a Councillor with Geraldine, she's phenomenal when it comes to casework her knowledge of the area and that's a sad loss, although I'm sure it's not a complete loss because she will be nudging her Councillors with any casework that comes her way in future.

She's been a friend through that time. I stood as I mentioned in 1990 with Geraldine we were fresh on the Council just took control, some of us didn't know what we were doing really at the time because we hadn't expected to be there. If I hadn't beaten a certain Christopher Grayling in Dundonald ward then we wouldn't have had control so it's been an honour to serve with Geraldine. She's been group secretary of the Labour group for over 25 years, she was ever present on the Planning Committee and what she didn't know about planning and the dedication she put to that throughout that time isn't worth knowing.

I lost in 2002 at the electorate's decision by six votes which is not grating with me but I do remember it and I lost in 2006 and decided that was it. I happened to be on holiday in Hong Kong in 2016 in March and I had a phone call in the middle of the night and it was from Geraldine, saying to me we've got a by-election in Figges Marsh would you consider standing and it was great to be invited to do that and I stood alongside Agatha and Geraldine in 2018 to be re-elected, but what Geraldine taught me through that time as well is the importance of being local and that motivated my decision to move to Abbey ward where I live now and I'm proud to represent, but Geraldine is at the heart of what it is to represent local people with dedication and in a quiet unassuming way and I'm delighted to second the proposal that she be made an Honorary Alderwoman of the Borough of Merton.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Judge to speak to the motion.

Councillor Judge:

Thank you Madam Mayor, Deputy Lord Lieutenant and colleagues. In 1995 when I was first selected as a candidate for Figges Marsh, Geraldine took me on a tour to show me every site of interest in the ward and enabled me to benefit from her detailed knowledge. In fact throughout her time on the Council she remained first and foremost a ward Councillor, committed untiring but also as Councillor Brunt has mentioned, very modest about her achievements.

She was always heavily involved in casework and served as a ward organiser through many elections. Now in those days with our colleague and friend Danny Connellan, Figges Marsh Councillors led the Council, we were a very happy ward team.

Geraldine as you've heard held the education brief and she was able to contribute much from her personal experience of teaching at a time of great change for our schools when they moved from three to two tiers and she was a sensible and well-informed presence in the cabinet.

Personally I owe Geraldine a great deal for being such a good friend over many years and I thank you Geraldine for your 32 years of unstinting public service and comradeship, thank you.

The vote was carried, unanimously and Geraldine Stanford was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderwoman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor Geraldine Stanford is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderwoman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of her loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the committee/panel. To find out the date of the next meeting please check the calendar of events at your local library or online at www.merton.gov.uk/committee.

COUNCIL

21 SEPTEMBER 2022

(7.15 pm - 10.54 pm)

PRESENT

(in the Chair), Councillor Joan Henry,
Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina,
Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Councillor Laxmi Attawar,
Councillor Thomas Barlow, Councillor Hina Bokhari,
Councillor Michael Brunt, Councillor Billy Christie,
Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah,
Councillor Anthony Fairclough, Councillor Edward Foley,
Councillor Brenda Fraser, Councillor Jenifer Gould,
Councillor Daniel Holden, Councillor Andrew Howard,
Councillor Natasha Irons, Councillor Sally Kenny,
Councillor Linda Kirby, Councillor Paul Kohler,
Councillor Edith Macauley, Councillor Peter McCabe,
Councillor Simon McGrath, Councillor Nick McLean,
Councillor Aidan Mundy, Councillor Dennis Pearce,
Councillor Marsie Skeete, Councillor Eleanor Stringer,
Councillor Martin Whelton, Councillor Helena Dollimore,
Councillor James Williscroft, Councillor Sheri-Ann Bhim,
Councillor John Braithwaite, Councillor Michael Butcher,
Councillor Caroline Charles, Councillor Eleanor Cox,
Councillor Klaar Dresselaers, Councillor Kirsten Galea,
Councillor Ross Garrod, Councillor Jil Hall,
Councillor Billy Hayes, Councillor Susie Hicks,
Councillor Dan Johnston, Councillor Andrew Judge,
Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, Councillor Samantha MacArthur,
Councillor Gill Manly, Councillor Stuart Neaverson,
Councillor John Oliver, Councillor Robert Page,
Councillor Michael Paterson, Councillor Tony Reiss,
Councillor Slawek Szczepanski, Councillor Matthew Willis,
Councillor Max Austin and Councillor Victoria Wilson

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

At the start of the meeting, Councillors Garrod, Macauley, Kohler, McLean and Foley spoke following the death of Queen Elizabeth 2nd.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Flack and Mercer. Councillors Alambritis, Dollimore, Reiss and Skeete attended remotely.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2022 are agreed as an accurate record.

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE MAYOR, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Agenda Item 4)

The Leader provided an update on the situation at Galpins Road and thanked all those involved in the response.

There were no announcements from the Chief Executive.

The Mayor then provided a brief update on her recent and upcoming events and activities.

5 PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS (Agenda Item 5)

The responses to the written public questions were circulated prior to the meeting. No supplementary questions were received.

6 COUNCILLORS' ORDINARY PRIORITY QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS (Agenda Item 6)

The responses to the written member ordinary priority questions were circulated prior to the meeting. The Mayor then invited each of the members in turn to ask (if they wished) a further question to the Cabinet Member. A copy of the supplementary questions and responses will be included in the 'member ordinary priority questions to Cabinet Members' published document.

7a STRATEGIC THEME: MAIN REPORT (Agenda Item 7a)

The Strategic Theme report on work to make Merton a fairer, more equal Borough and support those on lower incomes by tackling poverty and fighting for quality affordable housing was moved by Councillor Judge and seconded by Councillor Manly

.The Conservative Amendment to the Strategic Theme report was moved by Councillor Austin and seconded by Councillor Holden.

The Liberal Democrat Amendment was moved by Councillor Hicks and seconded by Councillor Page.

Councillors Fairclough, Oliver, Dresselaers, Reiss and Galea also spoke on the item.

The Conservative amendment was put to the vote and fell: Votes in Favour: 22, Votes against: 28, Abstentions: 1.

The Liberal Democrat Amendment was put to the vote and fell: Votes For: 22, Votes against: 27, Abstentions: 2.

RESOLVED: That the Strategic Theme report is agreed.

7b STRATEGIC THEME: COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS (Agenda Item 7b)

The responses to the written member strategic theme priority questions were circulated prior to the meeting. The Mayor then invited each of the members in turn to ask (if they wished) a further question to the Cabinet Member. A copy of the supplementary questions and responses will be included in the 'member strategic theme priority questions to Cabinet Members' published document.

It was also noted that a copy of the remaining Member questions and responses will be published after the meeting, in line with Constitutional requirements.

7c STRATEGIC THEME: MOTIONS (Agenda Item 7c)

No Strategic Theme motions were submitted.

8 REPORTS FROM THE RAYNES PARK COMMUNITY FORUM 30 JUNE 2022 (Agenda Item 8)

The report was noted by the Council.

9 NOTICE OF MOTION - CONSERVATIVE MOTION (Agenda Item 9)

The motion was moved by Councillor Cox and seconded by Councillor Paterson.

The Labour amendment as set out in agenda item 24 was moved by Councillor Stringer and seconded by Councillor Whelton.

Councillor Fairclough spoke on the item.

The Labour amendment was put to a vote and was carried – votes in favour: 42, votes against: 8, abstentions: 1.

The substantive motion (as amended) was then put to a vote and was carried – votes in favour: 42, votes against: 8, abstentions: 1.

RESOLVED:

Council notes that on 4th March the Mayor of London announced his plan to expand the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) from its current boundary of the North and South Circulars to cover almost all of Greater London, including Merton. These plans could see the ULEZ expanded by 29th August 2023, subject to the current consultation which Merton Council has formally responded.

Council notes that although Merton enjoys high levels of transport connectivity, there are some lower income areas, particularly in the eastern edge of the Borough that are affected by poorer transport accessibility and do consequently have relatively higher levels of car ownership. TfL figures show that 64 per cent of Merton households own a car and ONS figures show that 60 per cent of London households earning between £23,192 and £29,546 own a vehicle.

Council notes that expanding the ULEZ to Merton will impact residents facing economic hardship, particularly low income residents in areas with poor public transport accessibility that are more dependent on a private vehicle.

Therefore, Council welcomes the response to the proposed extension of ULEZ submitted jointly by the Leader of the Council and by the Cabinet member for Transport where:

- The Council recognised the importance of tackling the challenges of toxic air pollution, the climate emergency, traffic congestion but thorough consideration should also be given to the cost-of-living crisis.
- The Council considered supporting measures including a more generous scrappage to mitigate the impact of switching to electric vehicles or retrofitting to become ULEZ compliant. An enhanced scrappage scheme should only be made available to residents in the expanded zone and not offering those in the existing ULEZ zone a second chance of funding.
- The Council noted that the proposals include considering a large-scale and targeted vehicle scrappage scheme to support Londoners, including, for example, those on low incomes, disabled people, charities and businesses. It is therefore disappointing that the consultation does not provide a firm commitment or adequate details to assess the adequacy of any scheme. The scrappage scheme has to go further and consider retrofit options to save embodied carbon and consideration given to extended measures such as annual travel cards and bike ownership for those who wish to scrap their car.
- The Council requested further details that demonstrated the adequacy of the proposed scrappage scheme and mitigating measures on mitigating the impact on all residents including those on low income and other vulnerable groups, particularly those in areas with poor public transport options. The Council also wanted TfL to go further and plan for active travel and public transport enhancements in low PTAL areas.
- As an employer, the Council also stated its concern about the negative impact identified in the IIA on employees working in social and health care, who rely on a vehicle for essential work journeys. The Council strongly urged TfL to give particular consideration to how the scrappage scheme and wider support measures could be extended to key workers such as nurses, doctors, teachers, police, ambulance and fire brigade workers, as well as those on low to modest incomes who require a vehicle to perform essential work duties or those working shifts at unsociable hours.
- The Council went on to state that the impact on small businesses requires deeper consideration and greater support needs to be offered to small businesses and the self-employed where cars or vehicles are an essential part of the trade and their jobs

can't be undertaken by bike or public transport; for example construction workers, tradespeople, delivery drivers.

Furthermore, the Council recognises that the administration is also working with TfL on a faster upgrade to a zero-emission bus fleet in Merton and on increasing the roll out of rapid charging points in the borough.

Given the need for measures to counter the cost-of-living impact on low-income households, small businesses, charities and disabled residents:

- Merton Council calls upon the Leader of the Council to write to central government to urge them to fund the most generous scrappage scheme to support residents transition to sustainable transport modes, should ULEZ be Page 4 expanded, to improve air quality and support residents through the cost-of-living emergency.

10 NOTICE OF MOTION - CONSERVATIVE MOTION (Agenda Item 10)

The motion was moved by Councillor McLean and seconded by Councillor Barlow.

The Liberal Democrat amendment as set out in agenda item 24 was moved by Councillor Hall and seconded by Councillor Wilson.

Councillor Christie spoke on the item.

The Liberal Democrat amendment was put to a vote and fell – votes in favour: 15, votes against: 35, abstentions: 1.

The substantive motion was then put to a vote and was lost – votes in favour: 22, votes against: 28, abstentions: 1.

11 NOTICE OF MOTION - LIBERAL DEMOCRAT MOTION (Agenda Item 11)

The motion was moved by Councillor Kohler and seconded by Councillor Bokhari.

The Labour amendment as set out in agenda item 24 was moved by Councillor Kenny and seconded by Councillor Butcher.

Councillor Barlow spoke on the item.

The Labour amendment was put to a vote and was carried – votes in favour: 27, votes against: 23, abstentions: 1.

The substantive motion (as amended) was then put to a vote and was carried – votes in favour: 27, votes against: 23, abstentions: 1.

RESOLVED:

Council notes:

The deleterious effect of the Cost of Living emergency on the borough as a whole and welcomes the administration's response in establishing a £2million Cost of Living Emergency Fund, maintaining one of the country's most generous Council Tax Support schemes, continuing the provision of Free School meals to those eligible during school holidays, setting up a series of Cost of Living events across the borough and building on its status as a London Living Wage employer to ensure Merton becomes a London Living Wage accredited authority;

The failings of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition Government that, according to research undertaken by Carbon Brief, has made energy bills in the UK nearly £2.5 billion higher than they would have been if climate policies had not been scrapped;

Since 2011 London Borough of Merton has invested nearly £2 million installing nearly 1.5MWP of solar panels at 29 of the borough's schools; and since 2013 the Council has worked with our schools to promote energy saving, including through loft insulation in 19 schools and upgrading to LED lighting at 4 high schools and a number of primary schools.

Schools across the UK are facing increased energy, staffing and maintenance costs;

The lack of Government support in helping schools address these cost increases;

The likelihood that, without additional funding from central Government, schools will have little choice but to deal with these additional costs by cutting back on teachers & support staff, teaching hours and/or other cuts that will adversely affect the education of children across the UK.

Council Requests :

The Leader of the Council to write to the new Secretary of State for Education to press them to immediately provide additional emergency funding for schools;

Relevant Cabinet members and Officers work with local schools to improve all schools' energy efficiency.

12 NOTICE OF MOTION - LABOUR MOTION (Agenda Item 12)

The Motion was moved by Councillor Irons and seconded by Councillor Neaverson.

Councillor Holden also spoke on the item.

The motion was agreed.

RESOLVED:

Council Notes:

The successful achievement by six of the borough's fantastic parks and open spaces in being re-awarded the prestigious Green Flag Award.

The annual Green Flag Award is an international mark of quality which recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, and is the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the UK and around the world.

The success of Abbey Recreation Ground, Colliers Wood Recreation Ground, Dundonald Recreation Ground, John Innes Park, Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields, and South Park Gardens is a huge testament to the Council's Parks and Green Spaces team and the friends' groups in the borough who work tirelessly year round to ensure these parks are attractive places that people love and enjoy visiting, that support their health and wellbeing, and support biodiversity and the environment. Our excellent parks and open spaces are a source of pride for the Council and for Merton residents.

This Council notes that Merton residents are no further than 250 metres from their nearest park or playing field and looks forward to more of our great parks and open spaces right across the borough achieving Green Flag Award recognition in years to come.

13 NOTICE OF MOTION - LABOUR MOTION (Agenda Item 13)

The Mayor advised the meeting that the 3 hour mark was approaching and that the Council would be asked to vote to extend the meeting for a further 30 minutes to conclude the remaining business on the agenda.

The motion to extend was agreed and the Mayor advised the Council that the meeting had been extended for 30 minutes and the business would continue.

The Motion was moved by Councillor Kenny and seconded by Councillor Kirby.

Councillors Howard and Kohler also spoke on the item.

The motion was agreed.

RESOLVED:

Council Notes:

That this Council notes and congratulates all Merton students who have recently received A-Level, Applied General and Technical, GCSE, and vocational results. This Council also congratulates Merton's schools, colleges and teaching staff on their students' achievements.

This cohort of students were significantly affected by the pandemic so these results are an incredible achievement. Early figures show that 32% of students in Merton

schools received the top grade of A/A* AND 61% at A*-B. On Applied General courses, the average point score for students was 38.69, and above the national and Merton 2019 outcomes. For GCSE's, early figures show that 80% of students achieved at least a pass grade (4-9) in GCSE English and Maths, which is well above the very early national average of just over 70%.

Merton has some incredible schools and colleges and these results demonstrate their continued excellence, in spite of such hurdles. This Council believes education and lifelong learning have a crucial impact on the quality of people's lives. These results are a great milestone in the lives of these Morden residents

14 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION (Agenda Item 14)

The report was moved by Councillor Christie and seconded by Councillor Garrod.

The Liberal Democrat Amendment to the report recommendations was moved by Councillor McGrath and seconded by Councillor Oliver.

Councillors McLean and Page also spoke on the item.

Councillor McGrath moved a procedural motion under Part 4A, Paragraph 8.10(f) of the Council's Constitution that the matter be referred back to the Standards and General Purposes Committee for further consideration. The motion was seconded by Councillor Fairclough.

The procedural motion was put to the vote and fell – votes in favour: 23, votes against: 27, abstentions: 1.

The Liberal Democrat Amendment to the report was put to the vote and fell – votes in favour: 23, votes against: 27, abstentions: 1.

The report was then put to the vote and agreed – votes in favour: 27, votes against: 23, abstentions: 1.

RESOLVED:

That Council authorise the following amendments to the Council's Constitution:

- A. Part 4B Para 17 and 18 (urgency procedures) as described in paragraph 2.2 of the report and detailed at Appendix A
- B. Rule 2.3h (Community Fora Motions) as described at paragraph 2.6 of the report
- C. Part 4A Para 21.5 (Remote Attendance) as described in paragraph 2.12 of the report and detailed at Appendix B
- D. (Use of Resources) Part 5E as described at paragraph 2.13 of the report
- E. Part 3D – Scheme of Delegation to Officers as described in Paragraph 2.9 to 2.10 of the report
- F. To agree the treatment of contract extension for decision making purposes, details of which are set out in 2.11 of the report

15 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22 (Agenda Item 15)

The report was moved by Councillor Foley and seconded by Councillor Brunt.

Councillor Kohler also spoke on the item.

The report was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That Council receives the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

16 STREET TRADING POLICY UNDER THE LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED) (Agenda Item 16)

The Mayor advised that the 30 minute extension agreed to the meeting would be insufficient and therefore moved a further extension for a further period to allow all the business on the agenda to be considered.

This was agreed and the meeting was extended.

The report was moved by Councillor Macauley and seconded by Councillor Stringer.

The report was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That Council agreed to adopt the Council's Street Trading Policy for 2023-2028 under the London Authorities Act 1990 (as amended) as approved by Members of the Licensing Committee on 28th June 2022 to come into effect on the 1st January 2023

17 CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND RELATED MATTERS (Agenda Item 17)

The report was formally moved by Councillor Garrod and formally seconded by Councillor Stringer.

RESOLVED:

That the Council:

1. Notes the changes to the membership of Committees that were approved under delegated authority since the last meeting of the Council

18 PETITIONS (Agenda Item 18)

Councillors were invited to bring forward any petitions to present.

RESOLVED

That Council

1. Accepts receipt of petitions presented by:
 - Councillor Williscroft entitled 22/PO440 Grand Drive
 - Councillor Galea entitled Match Day Parking
 - Councillor Foley entitled Better, brighter street lighting and identifying black spots where you feel unsafe in Merton Park

19 BUSINESS FOR THE NEXT ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
(Agenda Item 19)

That the Strategic Theme for the next ordinary meeting of the Council, being held on 16 November 2022, shall be To promote a dynamic connected and inclusive community; an economy with safe vibrant high streets and jobs for our residents with a focus on supporting our diverse community by working with Merton's Voluntary and Community Sector.

20 SENIOR COUNCIL STRUCTURE (Agenda Item 20)

The report was formally moved by Councillor Garrod and formally seconded by Councillor Stringer.

Councillor Fairclough also spoke on the item.

The report was agreed.

RESOLVED:

A To note the outcome of the senior management review carried out by the Chief Executive and the creation of the following executive director roles;

- 1) Executive Director of Innovation and Change
- 2) Executive Director of Adult Social Care, Integrated Care and Public Health
- 3) Executive Director of Environment, Civic Pride and Climate
- 4) Executive Director of Housing and Sustainable Development
- 5) Executive Director of Finance and Digital

B To note the outline job descriptions for all of the roles attached as appendix two and that Appointments Committee agreed the approval of the final documents to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the Appointments Committee.

C To note that the Appointment Committee has agreed to engage an executive search agent for any recruitment campaigns based on their track record and

approach to attracting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic candidates and has delegated to the Chief Executive the authority to appoint the executive search agent following soft market testing.

D To note that the Appointments Committee has agreed to establish a sub[1]committee for the purposes of agreeing a shortlist of candidates and to act as the interview panel for the final interview.

E To note that the Appointments Committee has approved the general recruitment process as outlined in paragraph 2 and has delegated the implementation of that process to the Interim Head of Human Resources in consultation with the Chair of the Appointments Committee.

F. To agree that the Council offer the current (2021) Director salary range of £110,192 - £127,716 for the roles together with such suitable market supplements as the Chief Executive, in light of the advice of the retained executive search agent, considers appropriate pending a wider review of pay.

21 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda Item 21)

RESOLVED: That the public were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following report on the grounds that it is exempt from disclosure for the reasons stated in the report.

22 SENIOR COUNCIL STRUCTURE (EXEMPT REPORT) (Agenda Item 22)

RESOLVED:

That the recommendation within the exempt report was agreed.

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Councillors' Ordinary Priority Questions to Cabinet Members

From Councillor Whelton to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services

What impact has the mini-budget of 23 September, and the subsequent financial and economic turmoil, had on the Council's finances?

From Councillor Simon McGrath to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services

Could the Cabinet Member please outline any changes made in the Civic Centre Car Park since May 2022, the cost of any such changes, the reasons for making such changes and whether specific representations were made to the Council for any such changes.

From Councillor Hayes to the Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage

Can the Cabinet Member outline the role that Merton's libraries can play as hubs in our communities?

From Councillor Nick McLean to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change:

After the recent traveller incursion on Cannon Hill Common, can the Cabinet Member update me on the current status of the council's 'Persons Unknown' injunction?

From Councillor Jenifer Gould to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change

According to a study undertaken by the Natural History Museum, the UK is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries on Earth, this decline is projected to worsen with business-as-usual scenarios. So, can the Cabinet member explain why, over the past twelve years, the Council has failed to update the maintenance plans including ecology reports for Merton's 15 nature reserves and will she commit to doing so now? Would she also include what actions the Council is taking for climate change mitigation in relation to Merton's Nature Reserves?

From Councillor Attawar to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

What discussions has he had with NHS partners about their plans to relocate health services from St Helier Hospital to Belmont?

From Councillor Max Austin to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Civic Pride:

Please can the Deputy Leader tell me whether Merton's Winter Night Shelter, organised by Faith in Action, will operate this Winter with the Council's support?

From Councillor Robert Page to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services

Could the Cabinet Member set out:

Councillors' Ordinary Priority Questions to Cabinet Members

- a) the approach taken by the Council to collect Council Tax arrears;
- b) the number of overdue accounts pursued in each of the last 5 years; and
- c) the number of overdue accounts resolved in each of the last 5 years by use of bailiffs/bailiff services?

From Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Transport

Please can the Cabinet Member tell me how many EV charging points have been installed since May 1st?

From Councillor Williscroft to the Cabinet Member for Transport

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the administration's plans to provide 500 additional EV charging points across the borough by March 2023?

Committee: Council

Date: 16 November 2022

Wards: All

Subject: Strategic Theme Report: Promote a dynamic connected and inclusive community specific focus on supporting our diverse community by working with Merton's Voluntary and Community Sector.

Lead member: Councillor Eleanor Stringer, Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

Lead officer: Louise Round, Interim Executive Director of Innovation and Change

Contact officer: John Dimmer, Interim Head of Corporate Policy and Improvement

Recommendations:

A. That the Council review and consider the contents of this report.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 Council, at its meeting on 2nd March 2022, approved the new Business Plan 2022 - 2026. The Business Plan sets out five strategic priorities and each meeting of the Council receives a report updating against one of the council's strategic themes.

The Business Plan sets out how the council will deliver its ambition with five strategic priorities to shape and guide delivery:

- Maintaining excellent education and skills for all ages and needs;
- Promote a dynamic, connected and inclusive community and economy with safe, vibrant high streets and jobs for our residents;
- Support residents who are most in need and promote the safety and wellbeing of all our communities;
- Ensure a clean and environmentally sustainable borough with inclusive open spaces where people can come together and enjoy a variety of natural life;
- Work to make Merton a fairer, more equal borough and support those on lower income by tackling poverty and fighting for quality affordable housing.

1.2 Performance against these priorities is monitored by Council. Each meeting of Council receives a report updating on progress against one of these priorities. This report gives Council an opportunity to consider progress on the priority to promote a dynamic connected and inclusive community; with a specific focus on supporting our diverse community by working with Merton's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Merton has an exceptional track record of working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector, supporting it with a well-established, far-reaching and substantial funding programme. Now, more than ever, we are aware of the importance of a dynamic, connected and inclusive community, and it is a key

component in the strategic priority of nurturing and restoring Civic Pride. By working in partnership with Merton's voluntary and community sector, including through financial support for frontline organisations, the Council is directly investing in our communities and supporting residents from a diverse range of backgrounds and with a range of needs. SEE SECTION 3

2.2 The strength of our partnership working has been a key component in the council being able to respond quickly to helping people in Merton to survive and to thrive. In recent years, Merton Council and Merton's VCS have worked together weathering the Covid pandemic, welcoming Ukrainian refugees and responding to the Galpin's Road tragedy. Key to the council's role in meeting these challenges has been its strong relationship with the borough's large and diverse voluntary and community sector. SEE SECTION 4

2.4 By working in partnership with Merton's voluntary and community sector, we have found and will continue to find ways to help residents tackle the cost-of-living crisis – a crisis which threatens to drive a divide between our communities. SEE SECTION 5

2.5 Vital in all this work is an emphasis on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). SEE SECTION 6

3. CIVIC PRIDE – WORKING WITH AND SUPPORTING MERTON'S VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

3.1 Civic Pride is one of the new administration's key priorities for Merton. We want Merton to be a place where people are proud to live, work and study: where everyone can thrive, and where we embrace the strength and diversity of our communities. The work the Council does in partnership with the voluntary and community sector, and the substantial funding programme that goes towards supporting the sector, is a vital component in giving our diverse communities a sense of civic pride.

3.2 The voluntary and community sector is the fifth largest employer in the borough, and is supported by the council, alongside other key funders such as the Wimbledon Foundation, Clarion Futures, Merton Chamber of Commerce and Merton Giving.

3.3 Merton has a thriving community of volunteers. Based on the 2021 Merton Residents Survey around 70,000 residents did some form of unpaid volunteering work in their community over the past year, from helping out at food banks and taking part in litter-picking, through to offering up more specialised help such as accounting.

3.4 Merton Connected runs a volunteer brokerage service funded by the council which covers formal ongoing volunteering opportunities rather than on-offs. Their registration figure for the last year (2021/22) was 254, whilst this year to date (2022/23) the total number of individuals registering through our online portal or through our outreach activities, is 428.

3.5 Merton's libraries have a pioneering volunteering scheme that last year saw 560 residents contribute 34,950 hours. The success of the project has been nationally publicised and is a Volunteering England good practice example. Volunteering has been a great way to get people back into work or to give something back to the community and our volunteers make our libraries more reflective of the communities they serve.

3.6 In spite of financial challenges faced by the Council, we have been increasing funding towards Merton's VCS in recognition of the scale of their support for the community.

3.7 Funding for the VCS in 2018/19 totalled £9.929m, and in 2019/20 funding increased to £10.041m.

3.8 Funding to the VCS for 2021/22 was £10.55m, an increase of 5%.

Commissioned services make up the largest part of the money allocated to the voluntary sector (64%) compared to grants (31%), notional funding (3%) and discretionary rate relief (2%). £1.5m went towards the Strategic Partner Programme which provides grants to VCS organisations on advice, wellbeing and support to the sector including volunteer brokerage. £220k rate relief went to 79 charities and voluntary organisations, and £286k notional funding to community associations including premises. In terms of funding by department:

- Environment & Regeneration provided £825k to the VCS including grants for crime prevention and neighbourhood social infrastructure.
- Children, Schools & Families provided funding of £778k including funding for substance misuse services and support for young carers.
- Community & Housing provided funding for £7.4m to the VCS including funding for housing related support services, supported living services for people with disabilities, homelessness prevention and preventative services to enable people to live independently and well.
- Corporate Services provided funding of £1.5m including grants for advice organisations such as Citizens Advice, law centres and organisations such as Merton Connected and BAME Voice.

3.9 With Civic Pride being one of the priorities, we are further expanding our core funding of the sector through our Civic Pride Fund.

3.10 Firstly, a Civic Pride 'Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector' fund has been established to reflect our commitment to investing in the local VCS infrastructure to support our local communities. The Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector fund brings together multiple funding pots under one single grants process. Despite the ongoing financial challenges facing councils, Merton Council have committed to invest in this refreshed programme, with a 35% increase in overall funding for 2023/26 (an increase of £1.3m, or £441,259 pa on the 2019/22 fund). The budget for the 2023-26 programme is £5,067,279 (£1,689,093 pa).

3.11 Secondly, the Civic Pride 'Investing in Neighbourhoods' which uses Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding with a focus on projects that support demands that developments such as new homes and commercial buildings place on our neighbourhoods, which has included funding public realm and shopfront improvements to our high streets. The current bidding round value of this fund is £750,000 to share between successful bidders. We have invested over £5m Neighbourhood CIL funding since 2018 across a wide variety of projects.

3.12 The proposed aims of the new 2023-26 Civic Pride Fund: Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector are to:

- invest in and support Merton's local voluntary and community infrastructure;
- nurture a strong sense of community and reduce inequalities;
- bring together preventative services that provide information, advice and support in the community to strengthen Merton resident's physical, social, emotional, and economic resilience.

3.13 In order to achieve these aims, the Fund is divided into four themes specifically focused around areas where people may need help and support in Merton. Organisations will be able to apply for funding against one or more of the following themes:

Theme 1: Services that provide help: the services that provide emergency assistance to people in crisis and direct help to adults in need.

Theme 2: Services that grow strengths and capabilities: the services that provide good quality information, support and non-accredited advice, accredited advice and casework and specialist and/or legal representation where necessary.

Theme 3: Active, supportive communities: the services that co-design support and solutions with people and communities to help grow their relationships and connections and increase their level of activity. This will include low level preventative activities and Healthwatch Merton.

Theme 4: An enabling system and place: the services that help to support an enabling system and place. This will include voluntary and community sector infrastructure support and the provision of small grants.

3.14 Learning from reports such as the State of the Sector Report (produced by Merton Connected in 2021) and the BAME Impact Report (on the impact of Covid on BAME communities in Merton published in June 2021 and funded by LBM), and listening to our active Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations, we know that smaller organisations can struggle to compete with the larger local organisations when applying for funding. To support and develop Merton's small, volunteer and community led organisations, including diversity-led groups, the Civic Pride Fund: Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector, will allocate funding for smaller groups to build in opportunities and address challenges around infrastructure and capacity.

3.15 Details of grant funding allocations for 2022/23, now including the Civic Pride Fund, will be available in the new year.

4. RECENT WORK WITH MERTON'S VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR FOR A DYNAMIC AND CONNECTED COMMUNITY

4.1 The council is committed to providing high quality and sustainable adult learning to improve the social, economic, health and wellbeing outcomes of our residents. This is delivered through a strategic investment approach: commissioning provision from the best providers in the field and developing sophisticated evidence-based approaches to what we deliver. We aim to reduce inequalities across the borough by focussing a significant proportion of our investment on those most socially and / or economically disadvantaged whilst providing a broad range of learning opportunities to develop all of our residents' skills.

4.2 Merton's library service works in a collaborative way with several organisations to increase the service offer it provides and further work is being undertaken to establish libraries as community hubs. The service has over 60 partnerships in place with organisations such as Wimbletech and the Citizens Advic. Partnerships are focussed on developing the health & wellbeing, learning & employability, digital inclusion, and culture & creativity offers. New services launched recently include the Library of Things, Barclays Community Banking Service, Connecting Merton and Project Sense (sensory libraries service).

4.3 Approximately 450 events are delivered each month covering subjects such as health and wellbeing, culture and creativity, reading and employability. This programme continues to expand.

4.4 On 24 November 2022 the library service will launch its enhanced health & wellbeing offer at Morden Library. The event will officially launch new services in all of our libraries including designated Health & Wellbeing zones so that residents have access to high quality information on how to live well along with digital equipment such as health monitors and a range of high quality digital services provided via our Public Health and NHS colleagues. The enhanced offer will also include a number of health and wellbeing events being held monthly delivered via a new partnership with Nuffield Health. The council is also promoting its libraries as 'warm spaces' – warm, accessible places for people to come to save money on their heating bills during the cost-of-living crisis.

4.5 The Merton Community Hub was rapidly set up by the Council working with the Merton Voluntary Services Council (now Merton Connected), Wimbledon Guild, Age UK Merton, Commonsense Trust, Merton and Morden Guild and Friends in St Helier during the Covid-19 pandemic. Adult Social Care commissioned the service in June 2020 to provide a one-stop shop for people requesting support for a range of needs and the help people connect to support in the community. As the pandemic has eased, this vital service has continued to be regularly used by residents (nearly 3000 contacts since June 2021), but has pivoted to supporting residents on the cost of living. As highlighted by problems of isolation and inaccessibility of services during the pandemic, to truly serve the whole of Merton's diverse community and meet a range of needs, information that might have traditionally been available on a high street must also be made available online and at the end of the telephone. The Hub is due to be recommissioned in 2023.

4.6 The Community Champions Network was set up in September 2020 in response to two community engagement events held in August 2020, where the Public Health team heard that people found information about Covid-19 confusing and often conflicting, they also wanted to support the NHS and Public Health in reducing the transmission of the virus. The Community Champions network was set up to provide Champions with up to date, clear and concise information from the NHS and Public Health. Two years on the Champions network has evolved to discuss wider topics that impact our communities and consists of 230+ Champions who continue to meet every other Wednesday.

4.7 Since the invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022 the Government has set up two Visa schemes enabling Ukrainians to travel to the UK. Merton has welcomed more than 350 adults and children through the Homes for Ukraine Visa scheme, staying with 240 hosts in Merton, while there have been a further 243 families, comprising 265 adults and 172 children, that we know to have arrived through the Friends & Family Visa scheme. Support for our guests has come through work with our strategic partners Polish Family Association, Commonsense Trust and Wimbledon Guild who were commissioned in March 2022 to provide a support service hosted at the New Horizon community centre in Pollards Hill. The Council receives grant funding of £10,500 per person arriving via the Homes for Ukraine scheme but no additional funding for people arriving via the Friends and Families scheme. The New Horizons service has, nevertheless, been commissioned to provide support to all of our Ukrainian guests irrespective of which Visa scheme they have arrived via.

4.8 During the school summer holiday period the New Horizon centre hosted a Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) scheme for Ukrainian children. The HAF funding for this programme was supplemented from the Homes for Ukraine grant funding so that the scheme could also cater for the parents of the children. This programme was very successful and the intention is that it be repeated during future school holiday periods.

4.9 The speed and quality of Merton's response to our Ukrainian guests has been commended by The Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities and we continue to evolve and adapt that response to ensure it continues to meet the changing needs of our guests. Most recently, for example, the Council has agreed to supplement the £350 per month thank you payment provided to Homes for Ukraine

hosts by an extra £100 per month, payable from month 7 of the hosting arrangement. This additional payment is a direct response to the increasing risk of hosts deciding that cost of living increases mean that they can no longer afford to continue hosting.

4.10 Merton was devastated by a fatal gas explosion in Galpin's Road at the beginning of August, which displaced more than 500 residents initially with 48 households staying in temporary accommodation for nearly 3 months. Merton called on its partners and local community to support, who responded quickly and without question, providing wrap around support and emergency assistance in partnership with the Council to all residents affected, initially at the rest centre at Commonside Trust New Horizon Centre. The Council and partners continue to provide support to these residents to support them with their wellbeing and provide financial support where required.

4.11 In early May 2021 we commissioned Collaborate CIC to support us in developing a new approach to working better with communities, the project running through to end of June 2022. As part of the initial phase of work Collaborate reviewed local evidence and intelligence, as well as key learning from other places. They also undertook diagnostic interviews and a series of workshops and focus groups with a range of stakeholders, including VCS colleagues, to gather partner insights and perspectives and scope out the potential for a holistic model. Drawing on this evidence and learning it was clear that there was scope for the council to be much more intentional and ambitious in the way it works in partnership with Merton's residents and communities.

4.12 As part of the project Collaborate CIC developed a 'Working Better with Communities' framework/approach, which was specifically designed for Merton. The framework sets out how the council can take action at different levels to mobilise all the assets in the borough and to create the connectivity and community resilience needed to ensure that everyone gets help when they need it. The current phase of the project continues to focus on piloting, spreading and embedding the approach already developed. Work since April has primarily focused on events to capture the learning to date from the project and finalising the end of project report, plus producing a detailed toolkit and roadmap to help embed the approach. This will be presented to Cabinet in 2023.

5. THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS – WORKING WITH MERTON'S VCS

5.1 In June the council declared a 'Cost of Living Emergency' and consequently set up a £2m cost of living emergency support fund. In the first tranche of the fund, £1m has been allocated to a range of partners in the voluntary and community sector to tackle immediate problems presented by the rise in the cost of living. A new Cost of Living Emergency Assistance Grant Scheme (totalling £100,000) for existing strategic partners and organisations to provide crisis support for Merton residents in need has just closed, with funding decisions to be announced on 11th November. A further £100,000 is going to Sustainable Merton and their wider Community Fridge

partners to ensure surplus food supply is redistributed where needed across the borough. Conversations with Community Fridge are actively underway.

5.2 As well as addressing emergency needs, £400,000 of the Cost-of-Living fund will be used to fund organisations such as Thinking Works that support our Warm and Well initiatives to fund small home improvements which will help keep households warm and reduce their energy bills.

5.3 One of the growing areas of concern is people getting into debt, often for the first time. Citizens Advice has seen an extreme increase in the number of referrals for people seeking advice for getting out of debt, and increasingly for having taken on debt with payday lenders or loan sharks. £200,000 of the first tranche of the Cost-of-Living Support Fund is going towards initiatives identified by Citizens Advice Merton and Lambeth as being the best immediate course of action in giving people the help and support they need regarding debt advice.

5.4 The council has been running a series of free events in Merton libraries offering support and advice to residents. These well-attended events have brought information to residents at the heart of our high streets. As well as food vouchers, each event has had around 17 stalls staffed by council teams and our VCS partners. All the events have proved extremely popular with more than 1300 people attending in total. Feedback from residents has been incredibly positive with 93% of attendees saying the event was excellent / good. A further event on saving energy / saving money is planned for 26 November. VCS partners involved in these events include: The Polish Family Association, The Springfield Law Centre, Wimbledon Guild, Citizens Advice, Commonsense Trust, Sustainable Merton, Thinking Works, Age UK

5.5 The focus of this year's Merton Partnership Summit was 'The Cost-of-Living Crisis: Meeting Needs and Building Resilience'. Around 100 delegates from across the voluntary and community sector, business sector and council gathered to discuss a strategic way forward to work together to address the cost-of-living emergency, as well as formulating a longer-term vision for how to build Merton's resilience in the face of likely ongoing challenges.

5.6 Breakout discussions focussed on five key areas: Food poverty, energy efficiency and homes, jobs and skills, debt and finance, and, crucially, the next generation and making sure that today's young people are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to better face the financial challenges of tomorrow.

5.7 Findings from the Summit will initially be brought to a meeting of the Merton Partnership Exec Board on 7th December.

6. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

6.1 The responsibility for meeting the council's Public Sector Equality Duty rests primarily with the Corporate Management Team, senior managers and Cabinet. The Director of Children, Schools and Families (supported by the Equality and Community Cohesion Officer) is the Corporate Management Team's Equality

Champion and chairs the Corporate Equality Steering Group. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission (OSC) undertakes an annual review of the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy.

6.2 The EDI strategy is currently being refreshed and will set out the council's equality objectives to meet the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010 to publish equality objectives every four years. It will address issues such as:

1. bridging the gap between the levels of deprivation and prosperity in the borough;
2. improving understanding of the borough's diversity and foster better understanding between communities;
3. improving understanding of 'hidden' disabilities and the challenges that disabled residents face in all aspects of their lives. We aim to work in a cross-cutting way and take a holistic approach to more effectively address the needs of disabled residents;
4. supporting those who do not usually get involved in decision-making to better understand how they can get involved and get their voices heard;
5. supporting residents to access on-line access services;
6. providing services that meet the needs of a changing population;
7. employing staff that reflect the borough's diversity.

6.3 Key achievements from the Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy 2017-21 to note include:

- Merton Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2024 was agreed prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, with a key principle of tackling health inequalities – especially the East/West health divide in the borough that is driven by social inequality and the wider determinants of health.
- To support the growing number of people including families experiencing food poverty, Merton Community Fridge Network was set up in collaboration with local VCS organisations, Merton Council and London Food Alliance. Led by Merton Council, the Merton Community Fridge Network since the start of pandemic receives food from the London Food Alliance, via UK charity FareShare for redistribution across the borough. Sustainable Merton are now leading the Community Fridge Network.
- As part of winter grants programme of funding Public Health and Adult Social Care have funded energy efficiency work by Thinking Works, as part of the Borough's 'Warm and Well' scheme. Thinking Works helps vulnerable people save on their energy bills by helping them switch fuel supplier, make cost saving behavioural changes, access grants for heating and insulation, take up benefit checks and reduce debt. Prior to Covid-19 home visits targeted households in the East of the Borough and between February 2019 and December 2020 57% of Thinking Works home visits were in Mitcham.
- Public Health are working with SW London Sustainability and Transformation Plan and housing colleagues to improve the health of rough sleepers. Work has included working with housing to make sure all rough sleepers are registered with a GP practice and promoting awareness of and referral routes into commissioned health services such as healthy living, substance misuse and sexual health services.
- The Connecting Merton project was launched via Merton's libraries. The project loans ICT equipment and provides broadband connectivity along with

training for vulnerable residents who have limited or no ICT access in their homes.

- The council has contributed nearly £400,000 since 2020 (some of this via Government Grants) to the Merton Giving Fund to provide small grants to small groups for COVID-19 support. Grants have been given for a range of projects tackling issues such as food poverty, isolation, mental health, digital exclusion and providing infrastructure support.
- Adult Social Care has continued to develop its performance reporting mechanisms to now include an analysis of safeguarding activity by ethnicity, which will be refreshed on a regular basis and used to inform future commissioning activity as well as helping us to understand where focused work with sectors or individual providers is needed
- As part of our response to the issues raised by the pandemic, we commissioned B.A.M.E. Voice to undertake research to understand the 'lived experience' of the borough's B.A.M.E. communities and build resilience and trust. The research findings and recommendations will inform the refresh of the EDI strategy.
- We have launched an online recruitment and selection course which we will ensure addresses how to avoid unconscious bias in the recruitment process. Managers will be required to refresh this training every 2 years.
- A pilot Mutual Mentoring programme was launched in April 2022 that paired Black Asian and Minority Ethnic staff with partners from the senior leadership team.
- Additionally, Merton has been a pilot site for the Workforce Race Equality Standard and recommendations and the learning from this piece of work will also contribute to the revised strategy.

6.4 The EDI strategy is being informed by:

- The new administration's priorities
- The outcome of extensive community engagement
- Commissioned research such as the Black Asian and Minority (B.A.M.E.) Ethnic Voices, Community Resilience COVID-19 report and Mencap report into the impact of the pandemic on residents living with a disability
- Black Lives Matter concerns
- Existing evidence of inequalities in the borough

6.5 The following draft Equality Objectives have been developed:

- Tackling poverty, the structural differences in social circumstances and the resulting differences in access and outcomes
- Encourage recruitment from all sections of the community, actively promote staff development and career progression opportunities
- Promoting a safe, healthy and cohesive borough where communities get on well together
- Promoting Community engagement to empower our residents, improve understanding of the issues faced by local people and develop services to meet the differing needs.
- Improving our evidence base to inform our decision making

6.6 The draft strategy will be brought to the OSC on 18 January 2023 as part of the consultation process with the aim of launching it in April 2023.

7. REPORTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION/PANELS

7.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission praised the great work by the Council and Voluntary Sector during the pandemic in setting up the Community Response Hub. Following on from the pandemic, Members recognise the voluntary sector is often uniquely positioned to respond to local challenges and have focused their attention on the capacity, grants and infrastructure support available. The CEO of Merton Connected has provided information and answered members' questions openly and the Commission look forward to receiving an update at its January 2023 meeting on how exposure and publicity can be improved for voluntary groups.

8. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

8.1 Ongoing consultation and engagement has taken place as set out in this report.

9. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

10. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Any legal or statutory implications are addressed in the report and for the purposes of this report there are no further comment.

11. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Much of the work outlined in this report and commissioned by the council has a direct positive benefit in reducing inequalities and improving community cohesion.

12. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

12.1 None for the purposes of this report.

13. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 None for the purposes of this report.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 None for the purposes of this report.

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Agenda Item 8

RAYNES PARK COMMUNITY FORUM
20 SEPTEMBER 2022

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Matthew Willis (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held in Raynes Park Library and chaired by Councillor Matthew Willis with Tony Edwards from the Raynes Park Association (RPA). Around 30 residents and six councillors attended with 116 additional views on YouTube. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 2)

Flooding update:

- Merton has a live [Flooding Survey](#) which feeds into Merton's Section 19 reports. Please complete if you have been affected by flooding
- The Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) bid for Worple Rd raingarden was unsuccessful
- Recent thunderstorms and flooding – Raynes Park town centre remained reasonably dry in the event which has been a test for and shows a success of recent highway drainage works and sewer clearance between Merton and Thames Water.
- Travelodge/Durham Rd – private issue reported to management of the Travelodge to repair.
- Merton Council officers have met with Cllrs to discuss plans for Raynes Park town centre and would like to develop a community flood plan
- Merton assessing options to look at other raingarden locations in the town centre
- Integrated Survey for Flood Alleviation scheme

Tony Edwards said that the RPA was keen to work with Thames Water and Merton Council to identify locations for rain gardens.

Cllr Victoria Wilson said that a leak on Amity Grove has been reported. Cllr Wilson reminded residents that leaks, and flooding should be reported to Thames Water, issues with gullies report to Merton Council.

Cllr Chessie Flack introduced Peter Lam from Hale Architecture and Charlotte Williams from Quad, who are acting on behalf of Aviva in relation to site on 82-86 Bushey Road. In 2016 Aviva received planning for retail and the site was demolished but it did not proceed to construction. They are now bringing in a new application for light industrial use and they plan to apply by the of end September. The site is next to Pets at Home and forms an L-shape. To protect housing on north side they will create a barrier using the buildings with yards only facing into the site. They have high sustainability aims so will be including green roofs, new trees, wildflower meadows, use passive solar protection, low temperature hot water and rainwater harvesting on larger warehouses. Aviva also want to include a new public clock using the clock faces that were removed from the site and put into storage. There will not be a pedestrian footpath to Bodnant Gardens as there will not be a need for public access. The pre-application [consultation](#) ends next Thursday.

A resident asked what kind of companies would be likely to use the new development. Charlotte said that it would be mainly last mile distribution companies, and trade counters. A resident asked about road safety for local school pupils and Charlotte said they will be meeting with the school to discuss their safety concerns. A resident asked if Pets at Home would be staying at the site and Charlotte said they have just signed a new long-term lease with Aviva and there would be improvements to their part of the site as well.

A resident asked about the use of wood in the design and Peter explained that they would be using treated timber cladding that will be able to sustain the look for a long period of time. A resident asked about access to A3 for HGVs and Charlotte said this should be fine.

A resident said that the area is hostile to pedestrians and cycles, and no footpath will restrict access for those working at the site. Charlotte said security would be at front of site, so that is where access is and whilst most will drive there will be cycle parking and dropped curbs.

Cllr James Williscroft spoke about Merton and Sutton joint cemetery board. Cllrs from across parties and boroughs cooperate well. The toilets and wating rooms at Merton cemetery have had a deep clean and investment promised to improve them.

Cllr Caroline Charles said that at Northeast Surrey Crematoria a wall had been knocked down by a car and a new garden of remembrance was being built. The pews are also being refurbished.

Cllr Willis said they have submitted a funding application to South Western Railway (SWR) with the RPA for additional murals. This was for up to nine murals in the skew arch and would involve local schools and community groups. Work would not commence until April 2023 but a decision is expected by the end of the year.

There will be a Bat walk on Cannon Hill Lane 7.30pm on Friday 23 September.

3 POLICE UPDATE (Agenda Item 3)

Sgt Ben Hobbs was unable to attend.

4 RAILWAY EMBANKMENT (Agenda Item 4)

Elizabeth Lane from the RPA had provided an update to Cllr Willis. Elizabeth has been doing a lot of work on the embankment. She had met with Network Rail (NR) on 11 August to inspect the site, and NR need to send a team to clear rubbish and boulders before they will grant a license to the volunteers to access the site. Elizabeth has already submitted a significant amount of paperwork to help the project. SWR have also been discussing the option to adopt the green spaces on Platform 4.

A resident asked about lifts at Raynes Park station and step free access. Cllr Willis said that an Access for All application has been submitted to NR by Merton Council. The earliest we will hear is early 2023 and works will not be for several years.

5 GENERAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

Tony Edwards gave an update on local issues.

The 'kiss and ride' north of station is on private land so does not have restricted parking enforced. Stephen Hammond MP has been chasing Workspace, the owners of the land, and will hopefully be able to meet with them soon.

Railway land being transferred to Merton Council from Network Rail on south side of station to expand the public space and create more room for pedestrians. NR is reviewing the final documents, but Future Merton has cleared the land ahead of it being transferred.

The 'Parklets' in Raynes Park are on temporary traffic orders until the end of the year, but public seem to support so likely to be kept.

Tree strategy update from Merton Council said that they planted 2562 trees last year and will plant another 500 this year. A draft strategy for Council trees should be coming out in September. Once the Merton Council tree strategy is complete the Council will then need to look at wider tree policies for non-Council trees.

6 PLANNING UPDATE (Agenda Item 6)

The Development Control team had provided an update that Kris Witherington shared.

LESSA site application is going to Planning Applications Committee on Thursday 22 September with an officer recommendation of approval subject to conditions. There are no other major planning applications being considered although we have been approached with pre-application enquiries, but these only involve informal discussions with potential developers at present and remain confidential. There are currently six enforcement cases open in the area including starting works at 2A Amity Grove before conditions have been agreed. Cabinet will be considering the new [Investing in Communities Fund](#), using Community Infrastructure Levy funding, on Thursday 22 September, and we expect this fund to open for applications on 3 October.

A resident asked about an enforcement issue on the Edna Road development with builders not accessing the site correctly. Cllr Willis offered to follow up on this.

A resident asked if the Investing Communities Fund was the same as the previous ward allocation finding. Cllr Eleanor Stringer said this was a replacement of the Neighbourhood Fund for larger projects, usually more than £20,000. The Cabinet will be looking at ward allocation funding over the next year. There is less funding currently due to lack of development during COVID, but the Council is looking for applications from across the borough.

A resident asked about Manuplastics and Cllr Willis said that they are in pre-application discussions, looking at self-storage rather than residential or retail.

A resident said that the area can be blighted by sites not being completed and there should be penalties for irresponsible landowners. Cllr Willis said it always worth raising with Cllrs to see if they could raise issues with the owner.

Cllr Willis said an application for the LESSA site was turned down by PAC in June and the scheme going to the meeting in September. Cllr John Oliver said the application now includes a multi-use pitch and contribution for sports facilities elsewhere. He also said another organisation has a plan for using the space for rugby and cricket.

A resident said the Tesco site is now being demolished and asked if there are any plans to start work. Cllr Willis said he will need to check up on this.

7 WARM AND WELL (Agenda Item 7)

Olivia McKay from [Wimbledon Guild](#) gave an update on the [Warm and Well](#) project. The project is a partnership with Thinking Works and Age UK Merton. It started in 2018 as a 6-month pilot to help reduce winter related deaths, injuries, and hospital admissions and is currently funded until next March. The project has also expanded to helping residents keep cool during heatwaves.

Olivia refers eligible residents to [Thinking Works](#), an energy efficiency specialist. They can provide advice and vouchers to help residents with their energy bills. To be eligible you must be a Merton resident and either over-65, have a long-term health condition, or be on a low income.

Olivia also refers residents to the free Handyperson service and to Age UK Merton and Citizens Advice, who offer advice on benefits and debt management. The Welfare department at the Guild also provides small grants for items like white goods and school uniforms. For any further information please email [Olivia](#).

8 CLIMATE ACTION UPDATE (Agenda Item 8)

Dominique Hill, Climate Change Project Officer, Merton Council, provided an update on the Climate Action Plan. In 2019 Merton Council declared a climate emergency with a target of achieving net zero for the Council by 2030 and borough by 2050. The Council is responsible for less than 2% of emissions. A [Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#) was agreed in 2020 and followed by two climate delivery plans.

There is a long way to go to meet targets and meeting them will require partnership working. There are other benefits to these actions including improving air quality, helping the local economy and jobs, as well as reducing fuel poverty.

[Climate Action Group](#) supports community action on climate in areas like buildings and energy, transport, green economy and greening Merton. Projects have included Merton Garden Streets, where residents and businesses have got involved in planting up their streets. So far 115 streets have signed up, with over 10,000 volunteer hours. Other projects include Energy Matters, promoting energy efficiency in schools, and the [Wheel](#) repair café, a chance for residents to bring goods that can be repaired. The Climate Action Group is looking for more volunteers and you can [email the team](#) if you want to get more involved.

The Council is developing a Climate Action Engagement Strategy to look at how best to engage residents and will be developing a survey for residents to take part.

Coming up to mark Car Free Day on Thursday 22 September there will be Dr Bike sessions in Morden and Wimbledon; a Cycle cinema at Canons House in Mitcham on Friday at 7.30pm, and a Repair Café at Canons on Saturday. The best way to keep in touch with that is happening is to sign-up to the [e-newsletter](#). You can also pledge to

take action and share your story online using the hashtag #MertonClimateAction to encourage others to do the same. You can find lots of pledge ideas by looking up Merton climate pledges

A resident asked about involving Clarion in improving the energy efficiency of homes. Dominique replied that Clarion are keen to be involved so it is worth raising this with them.

A resident asked about the connection with the tree strategy and Dominique said that they work closely with the Green Spaces team.

A resident asked about insulation in existing housing. Dominique said that retrofitting properties is very important. The new Local Plan has been improved to make sure new properties do not add to the problem, but existing homes will need to move over to heat pumps rather than gas and these require well insulated properties. The Council is promoting the Mayor's [Warmer Homes Programme](#) and is working with social housing landlords. Lots of pots coming from national govt and will link to these in our websites. The team is looking to recruit specialist retrofit officers to plan this work.

A resident asked about involving private landlords and Dominique said we will need to incorporate these as it is a complicated area. The Mayor of London also looking at this and there are national standards for energy efficiency of homes.

A resident asked about the Solar Together scheme and problems with some of the suppliers. Dominique said this is a Mayor of London scheme, and they are reviewing this currently, they are also looking how to include businesses. There was an issue in phase 4 of the scheme due to high demand exceeding the supplier's capacity but Dominique is happy to pass on any concerns.

9 COUNCIL UPDATE (Agenda Item 9)

Cllr Eleanor Stringer, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Civic Pride, provided an update on behalf of Leader of the Council.

It has been a tough six weeks with the gas explosion at Galpins Road involving a huge effort to rehouse and support residents. As the Cost of Living crisis gets worse, the Council has been hosting events in libraries and [making support available](#). The Council was also responsible for the local response to the death of Her Majesty the Queen.

Since the elections in May 2022 Merton has a new Leader and Cabinet. The administration has three main priorities:

- Rebuilding pride in Merton
- A sustainable future
- Making Merton the borough of sport

To help rebuild pride in Merton there is lots of really good work taking place despite issues that do still need to be addressed. The council wants to make it easy for residents to volunteer so they have a stake in the borough, to improve our town centres, to support business, and recognises that street cleaning not good enough.

To help create a sustainable future we want to encourage sustainable travel, improve safety to encourage active travel, address the housing shortage and affordability including building 400 homes on Merton Council land.

Merton already has a huge sporting heritage through Wimbledon tennis, AFC Wimbledon, Mitcham Cricket Club but we also want to drive investment in being active and healthy.

Cllr Stringer said she recently went on a tour with Chris Larkman and seen the work going on in Raynes Park. It is great that so many volunteers coming forward. Flooding still a key issue and Cllr Stringer said she was glad it is being addressed. Policing and community safety are still a big issue and has been raising this with Safer Neighbourhood Teams

A resident asked about Raynes Park Bowls club having to share with West Wimbledon after damage by badgers and vandalising of the pavilion. Cllr Stinger was not aware of this but was happy to look into what was happening.

A resident asked about incentives for retail in town centres. Cllr Stinger said that planning policy allows us to restrict the types of use on some land, but national laws make it harder to protect retail space. She is looking at what levers we have to protect high streets and shopping parades, following up on the work of the Scrutiny Task Group. We have launched the [Merton local app](#) to help residents find local businesses. We are also looking at night-time economy and if more places can stay open after 6pm, making town centres a destination.

A resident said that parking charges need to be balanced to the needs for the high street. Cllr Stringer said that we could look at re-design of roads in Raynes Park in consultation with residents.

A resident asked about social enterprise companies. Cllr Stringer said that there were lots of charities and voluntary groups that are Community Interest Companies (CICs). We also work with local businesses to look at their Social Responsibility.

A resident said that with the Cost-of-Living crisis there were lots of households slightly above threshold for support who will need help. Cllr Stringer replied that the

Council is thinking about how we will support different families. Some plans going to cabinet on Thursday but have held money back to see what comes from central government. It will be tough for many households.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 10)

Cllr Willis thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

The next meeting is Wednesday 7 December 2022, at 7.15pm in Raynes Park Library

Agenda Item 9

WIMBLEDON COMMUNITY FORUM
5 OCTOBER 2022

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Paul Kohler (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held at the Arts Space in Wimbledon Library and chaired by Councillor Paul Kohler. Twenty residents and nine councillors attended with 77 additional views on YouTube. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained how the meeting would work.

2 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 2)

A resident raised the issue of litter and maintenance in Dundonald Rec. The parks team have provided the following response:

Dundonald continues to be a popular park, due not only to its location but the facilities on offer too. We recognise that sometimes of the year are busier than others and where we experience this seasonal trend, we ask our service delivery partners idverde to respond accordingly. Within the contract there are no limitations on the number of times that a bin needs to be emptied, it is done as and when required. If there is a particular issue, we look to increase the frequency accordingly. There was a spike when the mobile café was in the park but since its demise, we have not had any report of significant littering issues. If any issues are noted they can be reported [online](#). The playground remains popular as always and as such is subject to wear and tear. The playground is inspected on a weekly basis by idverde and where issues are noted these are actioned accordingly. Where spare or replacement parts are required there can be a long lead in time due to Brexit and the parts coming from Europe, but these units are left in such a way as that they are safe. We aren't aware of any other live issues in the park. There have been recent works as part of CIL Ward Allocation Scheme funding, and this has meant we have been able to paint a large section of the boundary railings. We continue to work with the local friend's group on various matters and we're currently in the process of drawing up a planting scheme with them.

Cllr Fairclough said the Friends group has been given equipment for litter picks and has been working with contractor. Green Flag assessment highlighted issue of bin so is being negotiated with Merton Council.

A resident asked about dockless Lime bikes being left and blocking pavements. Cllr Fairclough said there had been a meeting with Lime as the Council did not have an agreement with the company before the bikes came to the borough. A resident said people can sign up to be paid to move the bikes.

A resident asked about enforcement of 20 Mile Per Hour speed limits. Cllr Fairclough has spoken with Merton Council about the need for traffic calming. Killed and Serious Injury stats increase priority of the road. The Metropolitan Police enforce speed limits rather than the Council. A resident said anyone can contact the SNT to arrange for Speedwatch event where residents work with the police to monitor speeds.

A resident from the Battles area asked about restriction on dogs off lead in parks being proposed by Friends of [Hayden's Road Recreation](#). A resident said there was a need for more bins that were regularly emptied, and another said that signage needed if there are restrictions. Kris Witherington said that under the [Public Space Protection Order for dogs](#) in parks that Council officers could direct owners to put their dogs on a lead if they are a nuisance.

A resident said there has been a deuteriation in the quality of experience at Centre Court Shopping Centre and it does not have an offer for young people. Cllr Kohler said that the new owners, Romulus, have been flexible so far and want it to be a success. Craig Hurring said there would be new announcements for a wider range of retail offers and most new developments would be in place by next year. It was agreed to invite Centre Court to next Forum to provide an update on their plans.

A resident asked about the planning proposal at St Georges House. Cllr Hicks said the Section 106 agreement has not yet been made, so the plans have not yet been referred to Mayor of London.

A resident asked about tree pits where tarmacking has taken place up to the trunk. Cllr Fairclough said Highways were doing it to avoid trip hazards, but street trees team said the trees need some space.

3 UPDATE ON STREET NAMES MOTION (Agenda Item 3)

Cllr Kohler explained that a motion had been submitted to Council on behalf of the Wimbledon Forum in relation to streets named after individuals who had been involved in the slave trade. Cllr Holden said his group was did not feel able to support the motion so did not second or vote for the motion. Cllr Brunt said the rules have been changed to allow Cllrs to amend the motions from the Forum in case motions were not feasible.

Kris Witherington, Engagement Manager, provided an update following the submission of the motion from to the Council. Kris has spoken with the Highways team and Street Custodian to get a sense of what our options are. The most salient points are:

- Changing street legally requires agreement from 80% of residents and the Council would need to compensate residents for the costs they would incur. This would seem prohibitive
- Drax Avenue is privately owned and therefore the Council doesn't have the power to change the road sign, we could only suggest to the owners they consider doing so
- For Marryat Road, Marryat Place and Draxmont these are publicly owned so we could change the signage on those roads
- In terms of adding some text to the existing signs Highways recommend producing new signs rather than affixing something to the existing sign, which would cost in the region of £250 per sign
- The Street Custodian suggests engaging Legal to advise on exact wording, and then going to consultation with residents on those roads
- In terms of the wider issue of street naming the Street Custodian has adopted a policy of using things rather than people for street names, for example on the new Ravensbury estate streets. [Southwark](#) is currently running a survey to suggest future names and this is something we could do as well.

4 LOVE WIMBLEDON UPDATE (Agenda Item 4)

Craig Hurring, Chief Executive of [Love Wimbledon](#), said this first forum he has been able to attend and hopes to come to future meetings. Craig has previously worked for South Bank and was involved in similar community forums there.

Love Wimbledon is the Business Improvement District for Wimbledon Town Centre. The BID started a third five-year term in April 2022. The BID as three core objectives

- Great places, spaces, and experiences
- Support for businesses
- Create a greener, sustainable town centre

Places, Spaces, Experiences

There was a Friday Food & Play Pop-up in the piazza during the summer, which had a good cross generational reach and will return in 2023. There will be a [Winter Weekender](#) on 26/27 November. This will include a pedestrianised area on 27 November to bring in Christmas markets and a fireworks display.

Support for businesses

Love Wimbledon provide masterclass sessions for businesses looking at key challenges like recruitment and hybrid working. They also host speaker events working with Merton Chamber.

Sustainability

The Greater London Assembly is supporting Love Wimbledon to recruit Climate Change Champions. This involves a sustainability audit of local businesses to help them reduce energy use. Craig is working to engage local businesses to sign them up for this free help.

Love Wimbledon has also added giant planters in the piazza, and hanging baskets outside Elys.

In September Love Wimbledon resolved 21 incidents of graffiti, 29 reports of fly-tipping and six highways' issues.

A resident asked about cycle parking in Hartfield Walk that has been changed and are now not useable for adult bikes. Craig said he was happy to look into this.

A residents asked about delivery motorbikes parking on Wimbledon Bridge Road, blocking the drop-off spaces for the station. Craig agreed this is a problem and is working hard with Council to get companies to change policies. We have found alternative sites in Hartfield Road and St Georges car park but we need to get companies to redirect their riders.

Cllr Wright asked about attracting businesses and Craig said he thought we have been too modest about what there is to offer, so he is very keen to encourage more businesses. New office schemes help attract new businesses, but it also will help if we can better connect the spaces like the Village, the Common, and Plough Lane.

A resident asked how new businesses coming to Wimbledon benefit the local community. Craig said that Love Wimbledon is funded by businesses but clearly making the high street attractive to residents is essential to everyone's success. The closure rate in Wimbledon lower than national and slowing down but new additions have been welcome. The BID cannot dictate who comes in but can market the town centre and encourage businesses to move here.

A resident asked about cultural opportunities in the town centre. Craig said is very supportive as we already have New Wimbledon Theatre and the Polka Theatre, but Craig is keen to have more. Love Wimbledon recently worked with Mitcham Photography club to hold their exhibition. Having a new cultural space is very important and will make well-being and economic sense.

A resident asked how residents find out what is going on. Craig said that he will attend future forum meetings, residents can look on the [website](#) and sign up to a monthly e-newsletter.

A resident asked if lost street trees will be replaced, and Craig said he wanted as a greener town centre as possible so is happy to look into this.

5 CLIMATE ACTION UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

The Climate Change team were unable to attend the meeting so this item was not discussed.

6 COUNCIL UPDATE (Agenda Item 6)

Councillor Eleanor Stringer, Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Civic Pride provided an update on behalf of the Council Leader. Cllr Stringer said that following the elections in May this was a new administration with new leader and many new councillors. The administration's top objective is rebuilding pride in Merton by being responsive to resident needs and views and taking innovative approaches to tackling challenges.

The administration has three main priorities:

- Civic pride:
 - This includes pride in our communities, places, and town centres, as well as our cultural facilities and community sector.
 - We want to make it easier for residents to be active in local communities and to invest in our town centres.
 - We also want to focus on basics like keeping street scene, which is why we are recommending not renewing Veolia contract
- Sustainable Future
 - We want to encourage active travel and sustainable transport including making Merton the best place to own an electric car or e-bike.
 - We want a shift in planning policy to get energy efficient new homes.
 - We want to build 400 affordable properties on Council land by 2026
- Creating a borough of sport
 - Merton has a huge amount of sporting heritage, including both national and local facilities.
 - We want to get more investment into grassroots sport.
 - We want residents to have healthier lifestyles.

In Wimbledon we need to get the balance between businesses and residents, and work together, as often it is businesses keeping our town centres open. Culture is important and very important and we support the development of a new Concert Hall as long as it is sustainable and will benefit residents. So far, we have had positive

discussions with the trust. Cllr Stringer agreed with Craig that we should do more to market Wimbledon.

A resident asked where this new concert hall would be and Cllr Stringer said this on the Morrison car park.

A resident raised the previous discussion about dockless Lime bikes. Cllr Stringer said we want to make it easy to make to rent electric bikes but need to work through the issues and will have a plan to address these issues. Cllr Alambritis is leading on this and there is also cross-London work on creating appropriate rules. Cllr Brunt Lime app does instruct safe storage and can fine for blocking the highway. The app can also be used to report bikes left inappropriately.

A resident asked how the administration will encourage grassroots sports, and if there will be a sports summit. Cllr Stringer said there is now a Cabinet member for Sport and actions will include investing in facilities in parks, looking at what funding can we unlock for clubs to open-up access, and working through schools and Merton Schools Sports Partnership.

A resident asked about bins in parks and said there is a problem with design of some especially in Garfield and Dundonald Recs. Cllr Stinger said the contract for parks is different to street cleaning, but she would be happy to look into the situation in those parks. Cllr Hicks said Merton Council is looking at new fox proof bins for parks.

A resident said they did not feel the climate emergency was being recognised in planning decisions. Cllr Stringer said the new Local Plan, currently going through inspection, would tighten environmental regulations but she recognised the need for better enforcement. The Council is working with Merton Climate Action Group to support projects like Garden Streets but much more work is needed. Cllr Kohler said the new officer in charge of enforcement, John Berry, has improved the work of the team.

A resident asked about street trees being tarmacked over and the area outside South Wimbledon station. Cllr Stringer said the Council is investing in two Civic Pride funds, one for the Voluntary and Community Sector and one for the Neighbourhood Fund. This second fund can be used to improve area, for example the rain garden at the bottom of Wimbledon Hill and the fountain being renovated at the top of the hill. The Council is also increasing the number of trees and will check on what has happened to the street trees in Wimbledon.

A resident said that attracting businesses to Wimbledon was a contradiction to Civic Pride, as planning applications were not creating an area to be proud of. Cllr Stringer said this was a false dichotomy as we need a thriving local economy, but we are not

prioritising this over residents. Cllr Stringer said she was proud of the contribution of small businesses and is working with them to make sure they contribute to the community. Cllr Stringer said planning law complex, with rules set nationally and some locally. In the past the Planning Applications Committee (PAC) has rejected applications only for them to be overturned on appeal. The Council will work more with developers in advance, and the new Local plan will help this. Craig Hurring added that a lot of businesses also live locally and also want to contribute and take pride.

A resident commented that the St Georges House development was going to ruin central Wimbledon and they were disappointed that the PAC voted in favour. Cllr Hicks said that the vision for Wimbledon town centre includes tall office blocks so how will the centre have thriving businesses but also keep a distinctive character. Cllr Stringer said this was recognised in in consultation process for the Local Plan and as a result building on the Broadway is kept small.

A resident asked of the Future Wimbledon planning guidance will need to be revisited. Cllr Stringer said the process takes a long time, and work on the new Local Plan started many years ago. All town centres are at risk so we will need to have vision, apply the rules and work with residents.

A resident said they were involved in recreating the Friends of Wimbledon Town group and creating a new website. They want to work with Love Wimbledon and Merton Council, LBM to find out what is happening and inform residents. They will monitor planning applications street by street.

A resident said that young people were going out of Wimbledon due to the poor offer for them. Cllr Stringer said that the Council cannot direct specific shops set up here, but we want the town to be a destination for all residents. There has been a shift in shopping patterns, but we want to encourage the right kind of businesses. Craig said Ely's is thriving and improving their offer. Cllr Stringer agreed that the key to a thriving town centre is that it has to work for residents.

Cllr Stringer said that if the delivery mopeds do not relocate, we work with the police to carry out enforcement.

Cllr Stringer wanted to highlight the [support available for residents](#) struggling with the Cost-of-Living crisis. This is taking up a lot of time and funding to address and she encouraged residents to reach out to neighbours who might need help.

7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 7)

Cllr Kohler thanked everyone for attending and close the meeting.

Future meetings, all at 7.15pm
Wednesday 30 November 2022 in the Arts Space at Wimbledon Library
Wednesday 22 March 2023 venue TBC

MITCHAM COMMUNITY FORUM
6 OCTOBER 2022

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Aidan Mundy (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held at the New Horizon Centre and chaired by Councillor Aidan Mundy. 10 residents and five councillors attended with 78 additional views on YouTube. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained how the meeting would work.

2 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 2)

A resident raised several local issues.

- Issues with street drinkers. Individuals feel abandoned and need help and there were inconsistencies with how off-licence premises serve these individuals.
- There are fly-tipping in Town Centre and subsequent rodent infestation in main car park. The Public Space team had responded that there has been engagement with businesses regarding wastes produced; engagement with residential properties above the shops regarding waste presentation; clearance of wastes from alley behind black railing; litter picking along the alley; Sibthorpe Car Park bins removed, signage put "fly-tip aware"; regular monitoring of all areas, and reporting of any waste relating issues over to Veolia for them to address.
- Appointment of Town Centre Manager, the Future Merton team had responded that there is no funding currently to do so
- Car Park by Morrisons and Farmfood has an infestation by pigeons

3 COUNCIL UPDATE (Agenda Item 3)

Cllr Billy Christie, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, on behalf of Leader Cllr Ross Garrod. Cllr Christie said that following the elections in May this was a new administration with new leader and many new councillors. The administration's top objective is rebuilding pride in Merton so that everyone has a stake in making Merton through investing in people, places and services .

The administration has three main priorities:

- Civic pride:
 - This includes pride in our communities, places, and town centres, as well as our cultural facilities and community sector.
 - We want to make it easier for residents to be active in local communities and to invest in our town centres.
 - We also want to focus on basics like keeping street scene, which is why we are recommending not renewing Veolia contract
- Sustainable Future
 - We want to encourage active travel and sustainable transport including making Merton the best place to own an electric car or e-bike.
 - We want a shift in planning policy to get energy efficient new homes.
 - We want to build 400 affordable properties on Council land by 2026
- Creating a borough of sport
 - Merton has a huge amount of sporting heritage, including both national and local facilities.
 - We want to get more investment into grassroots sport.
 - We want residents to have healthier lifestyles.

We know residents want to see improvements in street cleaning, as a result we have agreed an Improvement Action Plan with Veolia including a night-time response team. We have also recruited ten additional enforcement officers to prevent littering and fine those that do. There is also a new emergency response vehicle to respond to fly-tipping. The Action plan is being regularly reviewed and monitored. We have also partnered with [Fix My Street](#), a free App to make it easier for residents to report fly tipping and other problems. At Cabinet we will be deciding whether to extend the Veolia contract or not. If we do not extend we will be looking how to improve services

We have introduced the [Merton Local App](#) to support local businesses and this has already been downloaded more than 4000 times. Other achievements include:

- Funding already secured from GLA for 93 new homes
- 250 new EV charging points secured through funding from Net Zero
- £2m added to climate emergency fund
- £1m investment into local sports facilities including 40 tennis courts being refurbished
- £2m fund being used to help people hit the hardest by the Cost-of-living crisis. We already have the most generous CT support schemes. We have held four [cost of Living events](#), another one taking place at Pollards Hill on 29 October. We are also providing vouchers for school meals during holidays.

A resident asked what the definition of Affordable housing is, Cllr Christie explained that there is a national definition of 80% of market rent but the plan in Merton is to build social rent which is much lower.

A resident asked about naming and shaming fly-tippers, whilst another said we also need to look at causes of this crime. Cllr Christie said we need to do more to tackle fly-tipping and have launched our [Wall of Shame](#) featuring CCTV footage to help identify individuals. There is a difference between commercial fly-tippers and individuals, but we will prosecute wherever we can.

A resident asked about using waste food and it was pointed out that the [Community Fridge](#) did this.

4 LONDON ASSEMBLY UPDATE (Agenda Item 4)

Leonie Cooper, Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth, provided an update on the work of the London Assembly. The Assembly consists of 25 members, and Leonie was elected in 2016 and 2020 to represent Merton and Wandsworth. The Assembly's role is to hold the Mayor of London to account in the areas where he has responsibility. This can include areas where the Mayor has budget, for example housing, or has a decision making role like larger planning applications. Leonie is able to speak directly to the Deputy Mayor for Housing to help investment locally, or Deputy Mayor about larger planning applications such as Mitcham gasworks.

Leonie explains that she sits on Environment Committee, Housing Committee, Fire and Resilience Committee. There is also a monthly three hour question time for the Mayor.

The Mayor is also responsible for the Metropolitan Police, which has been in spotlight following the Chris Kabba killing and scandals involving WhatsApp messages. The new Commissioner will need to appear before committee soon. Louise Casey is undertaking a review of culture in the Met Police and there is also a review by His Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary. We expect more and more of officers, so they are under stress. A Home Office assessment says Met should receive £194m more in funding than it does.

London Fire brigade dealt with 4000 calls in July due to grass fires, including one in Morden Hall Park caused by disposable BBQs.

Transport for London had drop in fare income due to COVID and whilst the government has funded other transport providers it has been giving TfL short term deals with lots of conditions. Funding is now secured until 2023 and hopefully finances will start to recover. TfL has consulted on cutting buses in central London and on extending the Ultra-Low Emission Zone. They are still analysing results of these consultations.

The Business Improvement District in Wimbledon is paid for by local shops so it would be up to Mitcham businesses if they wanted to do the same.

A resident asked about the ULEZ and congestion charging cost businesses working in London. Leonie said residents should always check any fines to make sure it is correct or could be cloned plates.

A resident asked about ventilation on the Underground. Leonie said TfL still needed to agree capital funding with government so this would need to cover big ventilation projects. It is difficult to increase capacity significantly on the underground, but the Elizabeth Line is a distinct improvement with air conditioning.

5 CLIMATE ACTION UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

Amy Mallett, Climate Engagement Officer provided an update on the Climate Action Plan. In 2019 Merton Council declared a climate emergency with a target of achieving net zero for the Council by 2030 and borough by 2050. The Council is responsible for less than 2% of emissions. A [Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#) was agreed in 2020 and followed by two climate delivery plans.

There is a long way to go to meet targets and meeting them will require partnership working. There are other benefits to these actions including improving air quality, helping the local economy and jobs, as well as reducing fuel poverty.

[Climate Action Group](#) supports community action on climate in areas like buildings and energy, transport, green economy and greening Merton. Projects have included Merton Garden Streets, where residents and businesses have got involved in planting up their streets. So far 115 streets have signed up, with over 10,000 volunteer hours. Other projects include Energy Matters, promoting energy efficiency in schools, and the [Wheel](#) repair café, a chance for residents to bring goods that can be repaired. The Climate Action Group is looking for more volunteers and you can [email the team](#) if you want to get more involved.

The Council is developing a Climate Action Engagement Strategy to look at how best to engage residents and will be developing a survey for residents to take part.

The best way to keep in touch with that is happening is to sign-up to the [e-newsletter](#). You can also pledge to take action and share your story online using the hashtag #MertonClimateAction to encourage others to do the same. You can find lots of pledge ideas by looking up Merton climate pledges.

A resident asked about tackling air quality and pollution. Amy said that we have introduced 65 school streets to reduce pollution, can find out about other actions in the Action Plan. Transition to Electric Vehicles will help. Cllr Mundy said that 20 MPH limits were usually about road safety but can always be reviewed.

A resident said that planting more trees can help.

6 COST OF LIVING (Agenda Item 6)

Several local organisations attended the meeting to explain what services they offer and provide advice to residents. The organisations were:

[Mitcham Jobcentre Plus](#)
[Citizens Advice Merton](#)
[Commonside Development Trust](#)
[Merton Credit Union](#)
[London learning Consortium](#)

7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 7)

Cllr Mundy thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting so that residents could get advice from the organisations in attendance.

Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 21 February 2022 at 7.15pm, venue to be confirmed.

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COLLIERS WOOD AND NE MITCHAM COMMUNITY FORUM
11 OCTOBER 2022

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Linda Kirby (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held at Colliers Wood Library and chaired by Councillor Linda Kirby. Ten residents and three councillors attended with 52 additional views on YouTube. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained how the meeting would work.

2 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 2)

A resident raised a concern about a storm in February that brought down fencing at a house on Acre Road that is owned by Clarion Housing. Both the tenant and their neighbours have not been able to get a response from Clarion.

A resident raised concerns about Grenfell Road being in poor condition with bin collection issues. Cllr Kirby said there was a long history of problems on this road. Cllr Kirby said residents could contact her for an update. The Waste Team had provided an update:

- We have undertaken a full waste container audit and delivered a range of new wheeled bins to various properties that required further secured storage on their property.
- We have increased the frequency of waste collections in this street to twice per week along with increasing the frequency of sweeping to twice weekly following on after the waste collection service.
- Our Client team continue to undertake daily site inspections and document their findings including photographs of any issues that need rectifying.
- We are working with the local ward councillors to discuss alternative waste storage arrangements for this road following on from which we would like to engage directly with the residents of Grenfell Road to better understand their priorities. This is to ensure that residents are fully engaged and help to design delivery options and agree any alternative options prior to the implementation of a new service delivery method. This could include the installation of new purpose build communal storage containers along the roadside.

A resident raised concern about the unmanned Library opening hours as they feel unsafe in some areas of the library when it is not staffed. The resident said they understands it helps keeps the library open longer but very concerned about safety of users. Cllr Cooper-Marbiah said there was coverage with CCTV but happy to bring up the particular issues with library staff.

A resident said that the Veolia contract for street cleaning has been improved and then got worse again. They said street cleaning not robust enough and hoped the new contract will see improvement. They said the contract for collection flats would be weekly or as required but this hasn't happened.

A resident said that some electric streetlights damaged and not repaired. These can be reported on the [Council website](#).

A resident said that Wandsworth Council is building council housing, whereas Merton's decision to transfer its stock was a mistake and the Clarion regeneration is resulting in higher housing costs. The resident wanted to know if Merton Council will be more joined up building affordable housing. Cllr Kirby said Cllr Garrod will set out some plans

Harry Cowd, Chair of the Board of Trustees of Merton Vision said that the organisation has been in discussion with NHS about developing Clarendon House into new GP surgery and headquarters. Harry as been told that all NHS developments now on hold due to price increases. If the project goes head Merton Vision would move temporarily to the Wilson but that is also problematic and will delay the plans for developing the Wilson into a care hub for Mitcham. Harry asked if Merton Council can help move this up the agenda. Merton Vision is still supporting clients remotely but does not have a base for in-person services. Cllr Macauley said we need clarification from the Government. Cllr Kirby said services in Mitcham in dire need of investment and the MP, Siobhan McDonagh had met with NHS and still seeking clarification.

3 LONDON ASSEMBLY UPDATE (Agenda Item 3)

Leonie Cooper, Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth, provided an update on the work of the London Assembly. The Assembly consists of 25 members, and Leonie was elected in 2016 and 2020 to represent Merton and Wandsworth. The Assembly's role is to hold the Mayor of London to account in the areas where he has responsibility. The Assembly has plenary sessions twice a month with a focus on a key area, such as police, transport, or London 2012 legacy and then at the Mayors Question Time each month each Assembly Member has five mins to ask a question on any topic.

Leonie is lead Labour party lead for Environment and now Chairs the Oversight Committee that focuses on staffing and business of the whole Greater London Authority (GLA). Committees can undertake investigations and make recommendations. The Oversight Committee will be looking at pension funds for the Metropolitan Police, GLA, Transport for London and London Fire Brigade to see how investments are being managed. The Committee will also look at Green Bonds, with Mayor putting in £90m to lever in additional private funds to help achieve Net Zero.

Other big issues include Metropolitan Police with Sir Mark Rowley taking over as the new Commissioner and will be facing Assembly Members tomorrow to talk about the strategy for the Met including staffing, estates, and internal culture of officers. There is a lot to be done to regain public trust.

London Fire Brigade HMI report also found there was a need to change culture and other changes are being made in response to the Grenfell disaster including new equipment and policies.

Transport for London has been in an ongoing fight between City Hall and Department for Transport. TfL funding has been entirely from fares income since 2018 so COVID had a huge impact on income levels. Central government has funded other travel bodies without conditions but for TfL there have been a lot of difficult conditions to qualify for funding. TfL has recently consulted on extending the Ultra-Low Emission Zone to cover the whole of London and reducing bus services in central London and we are waiting for results to be published.

Next plenary is on the Cost-of-Living crisis and Leonie will be asking about improving energy efficiency.

A resident said buses during school travel time being very busy especially 57 and 200, and this was causing problems getting on. Leonie said she is happy to raise this with Deputy Mayor Seb Dance. The central London bus cuts do not directly impact Merton but we are unlikely to see increase in number of services. A resident asked if buses could cover part of route during peak time and Leonie said that this depends on turning the buses and capacity.

A resident said they did not know there was no government funding for TfL and Leonie said the previous Mayor, Boris Johnson, did a deal to offer up the TfL operating budget as austerity cuts to government before leaving office. This also means that public transport users subsidise road maintenance in TfL roads. £500m is paid in Vehicle Excise Levy by Londoners but none of that comes to London.

A resident asked who pays for the Freedom pass and Leonie explained that Boroughs pay for over 65s and disabled passes whilst the Mayor pays for 60-65 year

old passes and this element is under pressure from Department for Transport deal. About £8m a year is paid by Merton Council into the scheme.

Cllr Macauley asked about what was being done to tackle violence against women and girls. She said women in Lavender ward were worried about safety walking home from Colliers Wood tube station late at night and asked what can be done to get more police onto the beat. Leonie said when Safer Neighbourhood Teams were introduced by Mayor Livingstone there were three PCSOs, two PCs and one Sargent, but the austerity reduction in numbers mean this has been reduced. Since 2016 Mayor Khan has put more money into the Met and the Government commitment in 2019 or recruiting 20,000 new officers means an extra 6000 should come to London. We have still not had these officers so numbers are still not at the level needed. Even the Home Office acknowledges there is a £200m shortfall on the grant for the Met. The Mayor has [Violence against Women and Girls strategy](#) but the Met still stretched thin, and still has to focus on a range of other issues. Leonie meets with Cmdr Elizabeth Chappell, Borough Commander for Merton, Kingston, Richmond, and Wandsworth and asks her about vacancies every time.

A resident asked when the session on Green bonds will start and Leonie said in November.

4 CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN (Agenda Item 4)

Dominique Hill, Climate Change Officer, Merton Council provided an update on the Climate Action Plan. In 2019 Merton Council declared a climate emergency with a target of achieving net zero for the Council by 2030 and borough by 2050. The Council is responsible for less than 2% of emissions. A [Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#) was agreed in 2020 and followed by two climate delivery plans.

There is a long way to go to meet targets and meeting them will require partnership working. There are other benefits to these actions including improving air quality, helping the local economy and jobs, as well as reducing fuel poverty.

[Climate Action Group](#) supports community action on climate in areas like buildings and energy, transport, green economy and greening Merton. Projects have included Merton Garden Streets, where residents and businesses have got involved in planting up their streets. So far 115 streets have signed up, with over 10,000 volunteer hours. Other projects include Energy Matters, promoting energy efficiency in schools, and the [Wheel](#) repair café, a chance for residents to bring goods that can be repaired. There are [repair café and upcycling events](#) taking place at Canon's House in November and December. The Climate Action Group is looking for more volunteers and you can [email the team](#) if you want to get more involved.

The Council is developing a Climate Action Engagement Strategy to look at how best to engage residents and will be developing a survey for residents to take part.

The best way to keep in touch with that is happening is to sign-up to the [e-newsletter](#). You can also pledge to take action and share your story online using the hashtag #MertonClimateAction to encourage others to do the same. You can find lots of pledge ideas by looking up Merton climate pledges.

Mayor of London's [Warmer Homes scheme](#) provides funding for low income, low energy efficiency households. This closes in March 2023 and is the currently only funding scheme available.

A resident asked about the Library of Things and Dominique said this was based at [Morden Library](#). Another resident asked if it was possible to donate tools to the Library and Dominique said she would need to check.

A resident asked about the impact of paving over front gardens for parking and said that it needs education to encourage residents to plant in their front gardens. Cllr Kirby said too many cars for on street parking to be free and any paving over should involve a porous surface.

Cllr Macauley said that Hawthorn Avenue looks lovely after involvement in the Garden Streets.

A resident said that Clarion needs to let planting to develop before being cut down. They also said that the council should lobby for reduced paperwork for extensive solar panels and that the Church of England is looking at green issues locally. They also said that there should be a green sign-off on planning applications.

A resident asked about non-electronic communications and Dominique said that the team does a lot of in-person events and in My Merton Magazine.

5 COUNCIL UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

Councillor Ross Garrod gave an update on Council issues. Cllr Garrod had just come from a public meeting for the residents in Galpin Road. Cllr Garrod said he grew up in Merton, lives in borough and his family still lives here. It is an honour to be leader of Merton Council and he is proud to come from Merton with its fantastic parks, schools, outstanding Children's services. The overarching aim for the new administration is to reinstate pride in Merton, with everyone having a stake in making Merton a place we are all proud of. The Council has three main priorities:

Civic Pride

- Residents to have a stake, volunteer, rewarding communities for local action

- Supporting high streets and town centres.

Building Sustainable Future

- Encourage sustainable transport, move to Electric Vehicles, e-bikes, and active travel
- Tackle climate emergency
- Build new affordable homes, with a target of 400 new genuinely affordable homes on Council land by 2026
- Shift in emphasis in planning through new Local Plan to get good quality green and energy efficient development

Sporting borough

- New Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage
- Make Merton best borough of sport
- Investment grass root sport and healthy lifestyles
- [Social prescribing](#) helps NHS link to local activities
- Supporting the [Walk and Talk](#) service to bring people together to tour the borough
- Working on blueprint for weekly free activities for 4–16-year-olds and those over 65

Actions so far have included

- £2m added to climate emergency fund
- Supporting residents through the cost-of-living crisis including £2m fund being used to help people hit the hardest. We already have one of the most generous Council Tax support schemes. We have held four [cost of Living events](#) including one in Colliers Wood, with another one in Pollards Hill at end of October. We will be recruiting two additional benefits advisors based in libraries, providing support for the Community Fridge and vouchers for school meals during holidays. We will also be working with Thinking Works to do energy audits in people's homes
- Cabinet agreed to end Veolia contract Street cleaning and waste collection in 2025
- [Merton Local App](#) to promote local businesses already downloaded 4000 times and features more than 400 local businesses
- Weekly walk around estates to see conditions and speak with residents
- New scheme for Housing Multiple Occupation landlords means they will require planning permission to divide up existing family homes. We will also be introducing a landlord licensing scheme
- We have recruited ten additional enforcement officers
- We had an outdoor screen at the Canons for the Wimbledon tennis and Women's Euro final to create a community feel

- We have extended the existing Public Space Protection Order for Anti-Social Behaviour related to alcohol in five wards. We will be consulting on extending borough wide
- We have announced two new Civic Pride funds, one for the [Voluntary and Community Sector](#) and for [Neighbourhood projects](#)

A resident said that Colliers Wood Library is important existing community hub but feels unsafe when not staffed. Cllr Garrod said that since introduction of the card scheme we have seen an increase in footfall but happy to look at the safety concerns. Cllr Garrod explained that the screen at the Canons had been sponsored by the All-England Club and will build in future years.

A resident said that the High Path regeneration results in loss of sports facilities and children's play space and that the said that the planning application LESSA would reduce available space for sport. Cllr Garrod said this is private land and Planning Applications Committee has to look at planning law to make decisions.

A resident asked about homelessness in Morden and Cllr Garrod said that officers monitor and work with homeless to provide support. Underground staff also supporting those in Morden.

A resident asked about the cost-of-living support and Cllr Garrod said there was a comprehensive package of support with details on the [website](#).

A resident asked if the landlord licensing scheme will involve a fee and Cllr Garrod said that there will be a fee and the scheme will give tenants security that they are renting from monitored and quality landlord.

A resident asked about Britannia Point and Cllr Garrod said that the Council had stepped in and engaged with landlord to make the area safe. We have issued notice of dangerous structure and the landlord's initial submission was not acceptable, so a new plan was submitted last week which we will assess to make sure it is safe for residents.

Councillor Kirby thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

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MORDEN COMMUNITY FORUM

19 OCTOBER 2022

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Caroline Charles (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held in the Council Chamber and on Zoom and chaired by Councillor Caroline Charles. 15 residents and 11 councillors attended in person, four on Zoom with 73 additional views on YouTube. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained how the meeting would work.

2 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 2)

Dickie Wilkinson said that there is a photo competition running on [What does Morden Mean to you](#). Pictures can be of people or landscapes but no selfies and there are competitions for adults and children. There is a 2 November deadline for submissions.

Cllr Dollimore reminded residents that they could book a [Home Safety Visit](#) from London Fire Brigade and suggested fire safety could be an item at a future forum meeting.

Ahead of the meeting a resident had asked if there was any update on plans for the new emergency health care facility at Sutton hospital and the closing of the A&E at St Helier Hospital. The Council are aware that there are rumours about the project having financial challenges but there is nothing official at the moment. We will keep residents informed.

3 LONDON ASSEMBLY UPDATE (Agenda Item 3)

Leonie Cooper, Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth, provided an update on the work of the London Assembly. The Assembly consists of 25 members, and Leonie was elected in 2016 and 2020 to represent Merton and Wandsworth. The Assembly's role is to hold the Mayor of London to account in the areas where he has responsibility.

Transport for London has been in an ongoing fight between City Hall and Department for Transport. TfL funding has been entirely from fares income since 2018 so COVID had a huge impact on income levels. Central government has funded other travel

bodies without conditions but for TfL there have been a lot of difficult conditions to qualify for funding. The final station on the Elizabeth Line, Bond Street is set to open. Leonie has lots of case work in relation to issues on TfL roads.

London Fire Brigade HMI report also found there was a need to change culture and other changes are being made in response to the Grenfell disaster including new equipment and policies. There had been a huge problem with grass fires in the summer resulting in a dramatic increase in calls to their call centre in Merton.

Metropolitan Police has a new commissioner in Sir Mark Rowley. There is a lot to be done to regain public trust with Dame Louise Casey's report highlighting the scale of the issue with the culture in the Met. The Commissioner is hoping to have more officers from the national recruitment programme.

A resident asked about expenses for councillors and Leonie said councillors receive an allowance, details of which are on the website.

Cllr Cox asked about the plans to extend the Ultra-Low Emission Zone to cover the whole of London. Leonie said TfL has recently consulted on this plan and plans to reduce bus services in central London and we are waiting for results to be published. Leonie expects a decision in November or December.

A resident asked about restrictions on the use of the freedom pass and if these are likely to return to the pre-Covid conditions. Leonie said that the restrictions were one of the conditions attached to a Department of Transport deal and were introduced to tackle overcrowding at peak hours. Now they are part of funding cuts so it is unlikely they will be reversed.

Cllr Dollimore asked about lowering the speed limit on St Helier Avenue from 40 to 30 MPH and the need for more pedestrian crossings. Leonie said it can be hard to get a response from TfL so there is not any news at the moment. More broadly TfL is moving to 20MPH speed limits on the roads it manages. A resident said St Helier needs more than just a reduction in speed restrictions to make it safe, and Leonie agreed that enforcement will also need to be considered. Cllr Dollimore reminded residents they can contact their local Safer Neighbourhood Team to arrange for Speedwatch events to monitor speeds on problem roads.

A resident asked about the roll out of electric buses and Leonie said that TfL has a programme of buying new hybrid buses, retrofitting diesel buses and introducing hydrogen cell buses. A move to fully electric is slow because of the infrastructure required. TfL is also moving the taxi fleet from diesel to electric. A resident asked if it was possible to re-introduce trolley buses and Leonie said this was one of the options considered for the tram extension, but they do require significant infrastructure.

Cllr McLean asked about plans for Wimbledon police station. Leonie said a new Estate Strategy will set out plans and is supposed to be released in the autumn, but no date has been set yet.

Cllr Mercer asked if the 20MPH limits would be across London and Leonie said TfL controls 5% of roads in London so they can only enforce any limit on those roads.

A resident asked if it was possible to stop lights being left on overnight in offices and shops, and Leonie said that the Mayor does not have the power to enforce this, but given the rise in costs this might change behaviour.

A resident asked about step-free access and the lack of investment at Morden station, and Leonie said that £200m has been spent on improving access but this can be difficult in some stations, including on the Northern Line south of Clapham.

4 COUNCIL UPDATE (Agenda Item 4)

Councillor Ross Garrod gave an update on Council issues. Cllr Garrod had just come from a public meeting for the residents in Galpin Road. Cllr Garrod said he grew up in Merton, lives in borough and his family still lives here. It is an honour to be leader of Merton Council and he is proud to come from Merton with its fantastic parks, schools, outstanding Children's services. The overarching aim for the new administration is to reinstate pride in Merton, with everyone having a stake in making Merton a place we are all proud of. The Council has three main priorities:

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- Residents to have a greater stake, volunteer, rewarding communities for local action
- People value our parks, high streets and town centres so we will invest in these

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- Encourage sustainable transport, move to Electric Vehicles, e-bikes, and active travel
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- New Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage
- Make Merton best borough of sport

- Investment grass root sport and healthy lifestyles
- Working on blueprint for weekly free activities for 4–16-year-olds and those over 65

Actions so far have included

- Supporting residents through the cost-of-living crisis including £2m fund being used to help people hit the hardest. We will be recruiting two additional benefits advisors based in libraries, providing support for the Community Fridge and vouchers for school meals during holidays. We will also be working with Thinking Works to do energy audits in people's homes
- We have held four [cost of Living events](#) including one in Colliers Wood, with another one in Pollards Hill at end of October.
- £2m added to climate emergency fund
- Cabinet agreed to end Veolia contract Street cleaning and waste collection in 2025
- [Merton Local App](#) to promote local businesses already downloaded 4000 times and features more than 400 local businesses
- Weekly walk around estates to see conditions and speak with residents
- New scheme for Housing Multiple Occupation landlords means they will require planning permission to divide up existing family homes. We will also be introducing a landlord licensing scheme
- We have recruited ten additional enforcement officers
- We have extended the existing Public Space Protection Order for Anti-Social Behaviour related to alcohol in five wards. We will be consulting on extending borough wide
- We have announced two new Civic Pride funds, one for the [Voluntary and Community Sector](#) and for [Neighbourhood projects](#)

A resident asked about fly-tipping in St Helier Avenue and Netley Gardens including problems caused by an HMO not using the bins correctly. Cllr Garrod said fly-tipping is a national problem and is infuriating. Merton has 10 mobile CCTV cameras that are deployed covertly. We have been publishing videos on our Wall of Shame to get help from residents in identifying offenders and this has resulted in five fixed penalty notices being issued. We will continue to issue penalties to fly-tippers. We are introducing additional regulation of HMOs and part of this will be a requirement to be clear on waste collection arrangements.

Cllr Pearce said that he would like to see more responses to the Local Plan hearings from Morden residents.

A resident said that the toilet in the Civic Centre needs to be open all the time. They also asked if Cllr Garrod could raise with the NHS that they include the George Cross the NHS received for its response to COVID on their publicity materials. Cllr Garrod said he was happy to raise this with local NHS leaders.

A resident said there were redundant tennis courts in Morden Park and Cllr Garrod said we have some fantastic parks, and the Council is investing in improving facilities.

A resident said the fee for garden waste collection was too high in Merton and Cllr Garrod said the price in Merton was similar to the other boroughs in the South London Waste Partnership.

Cllr Cox asked what support would be available for businesses with cost of living, talent and supply chain issues. Cllr Garrod said the energy support package is coming from central government and the Council does not have the budget to financially support businesses. Cllr Garrod said he has met with the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses to understand their issues and is working with the South London Partnership to support training in the area. We are also introducing new course on green skills through our Adult Education provider.

Cllr Mercer said that the six-month agreement for many families hosting Ukrainian refugees is coming to an end soon and asked how the Council could support these families. Cllr Garrod said he was pleased to attend the Ukrainian Independence Day celebrations at the New Horizon Centre and Merton schools have higher rate of Ukrainian students than other boroughs. The needs to be government action on the homes for Ukraine scheme but Cllr Garrod will raise with Cllr Stringer the need for Merton to have a local plan.

5 BEEKEEPING (Agenda Item 5)

Dave Charnley from the [Wimbledon Beekeepers' Association](#) gave a presentation on the work of the group. Dave said that the group is based in Morden Hall Park and provides training and advice on keeping bees. There is a ten-week [beginners training course](#) starting in February and many graduates from these courses continue learning with the Association after they have finished. The Association is also able to collect honey-bee swarms located in the borough. The group also work with other hives in Merton and attend shows, events and school talks. They make products including honey and candles that are on sale on Sunday mornings in Morden Hall Park.

A resident asked about removing green fly without harming bees and Dave said garlic and washing up water will remove the green fly without any impact on bees. Cllr Alambritis asked about swarms spotted locally and David said bees are currently getting ready for winter so the group would be keen to check on any local sites.

Cllr Gould asked about which pesticides have been impacting on bees and Dave said neonicotinoids used on farmland are the most damaging and it has been great to see some grass verges left to grow this year in Merton. Cllr Mercer asked if planting

daffodil bulbs are helpful to bees and Dave explained that they are not any use. The Association has advice on bee friendly plants but crocus and snowdrops are good bulbs to plant for bees. A resident said that off-street parking results in a loss of habitat and Dave said that they can only keep so many hives in an area depending on the availability of forage and plant diversity. Fortunately in Merton there is a lot of open space for bees to forage.

6 WARM AND WELL (Agenda Item 6)

Olivia McKay, Warm and Well Engagement Officer for Wimbledon Guild, gave an update on the [Warm and Well Project](#). The project started in 2019 and is a partnership between Merton Council, Age UK Merton and Thinking Works.

Thinking Works is a free service in operating across five south west London boroughs that provides home energy assessments and assess eligibility for additional utility support. Thinking Works also provide a starter pack to residents that can help improve water and energy efficiency. Wimbledon Guild provides also provides referrals to Thinking Works for fuel vouchers. To be eligible you must be a Merton resident, and either over 65, have a long-term health condition or on a low income.

Wimbledon Guild also provide a handy person service, a free service for older people or those with long term health conditions, to do those small jobs that do not need technical qualifications and excludes gardening or decorating.

The Warm and Well project also provides outreach to share information and can refer to other Guild services.

For more information, please email Olivia omckay@wimbledonguild.co.uk

7 CLIMATE ACTION UPDATE (Agenda Item 7)

Amy Mallett, Climate Engagement Officer provided an update on the Climate Action Plan. In 2019 Merton Council declared a climate emergency with a target of achieving net zero for the Council by 2030 and borough by 2050. The Council is responsible for less than 2% of emissions. A [Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#) was agreed in 2020 and followed by two climate delivery plans.

There is a long way to go to meet targets and meeting them will require partnership working. There are other benefits to these actions including improving air quality, helping the local economy and jobs, as well as reducing fuel poverty.

[Climate Action Group](#) supports community action on climate in areas like buildings and energy, transport, green economy and greening Merton. Projects have included Merton Garden Streets, where residents and businesses have got involved in

planting up their streets. So far 115 streets have signed up, with over 10,000 volunteer hours. Other projects include Energy Matters, promoting energy efficiency in schools, and the [Wheel](#) repair café, a chance for residents to bring goods that can be repaired. The Climate Action Group is looking for more volunteers and you can [email the team](#) if you want to get more involved.

The Council is developing a Climate Action Engagement Strategy to look at how best to engage residents and will be developing a survey for residents to take part.

The best way to keep in touch with that is happening is to sign-up to the [e-newsletter](#). You can also pledge to take action and share your story online using the hashtag #MertonClimateAction to encourage others to do the same. You can find lots of pledge ideas by looking up Merton climate pledges.

Mayor of London's [Warmer Homes scheme](#) provides funding for low income, low energy efficiency households. This closes in March 2023 and is the currently only funding scheme available.

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 8)

Cllr Charles thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 22 February 2022 at 7.15pm, in the Council Chamber.

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Motion to Council 16 November 2022 – Conservative Motion

Waste and Street Cleaning Contract Merton Assembly

This council recognises that the decision by the Labour administration to enter into the current waste and street cleaning contract with Veolia has had many negative ramifications for Merton residents. Due to continued failures by Veolia, residents lost confidence in the waste collection and street cleaning service as streets were not kept clean, missed collections occurred, fly tipping was not cleared and graffiti was not cleaned.

This council believes that residents must have confidence in any new arrangement that the Labour administration enters. The future contract must deliver:

- Stronger contract management with officers having the confidence to use step in clauses.
- A waste collection service that responds to the concerns of residents.
- Clean streets across the borough.
- Ensure that all property types have on time collections.
- Immediate removal of fly tipping.
- Make recycling easier and more accessible to the public.
- The flexibility to deliver a great service for all parts of the borough.

Therefore, council calls upon the cabinet to convene a Merton Assembly once the terms of the new waste and street cleaning contract are known.

The Merton Assembly will:

- Be open to all residents and interested parties to attend.
- Be held in public and broadcast live on the Merton Council YouTube channel.
- Allow the Labour administration to present their plans to the public.
- Allow residents and other interested parties the opportunity to question council officers and cabinet members about the details of any new arrangement.
- Hold a vote on whether the assembly supports the new proposals.

Cllr Nick McLean

Cllr Daniel Holden

Cllr Thomas Barlow

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Committee: Council

Date: 16th November 2022

Wards: All

Subject: Council Tax Support Scheme 2023/24

Lead officer: Roger Kershaw, Interim Executive Director of Finance and Digital

Lead member: Councillor Billy Christie

Contact officer: Rebecca Dodd, Head of Benefits

Recommendations:

-
1. That the updating revisions for the 2023/24 council tax support scheme detailed in the report be agreed, in order to maintain low council tax charges for those on lower incomes and other vulnerable residents.
 2. That Council agrees the proposed revisions to the 2023/24 scheme.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.0. This report details the proposed revisions to Merton's adopted council tax support scheme to ensure that the level of support awarded stays in line with the old council tax benefit scheme had it continued and therefore residents are not worse off due to the new scheme.
- 1.1. That Council agrees to implement recommendation 1 and 2.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. **Council Tax Support Scheme 2023/24**
- 2.2. As part of the Spending Review 2010, the Government announced that it intended to localise council tax benefit (CTB) from 1 April 2013 with a 10% reduction in expenditure. These plans were included as part of the terms of reference for the Local Government Resource Review and the then Welfare Reform Bill contained provisions to abolish CTB.
- 2.3. Following a formal consultation exercise full Council agreed on the 21 November 2012 to absorb the funding reduction and adopt the prescribed default scheme in order to maintain low council tax charges for those on lower incomes and other vulnerable residents. CTB was formally abolished with effect from 1 April 2013
- 2.4. Council have subsequently agreed to continue with the same scheme, subject to revisions on an annual basis for 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- 2.5. The Government have stated that under the new local council tax support scheme pensioners must not be worse off and that existing levels of support for them must remain and this protection will be achieved by keeping in place existing national rules, with eligibility and rates defined in Regulations broadly similar to those that previously existed. This is known as the Prescribed Pensioners scheme.

- 2.6. When full Council adopted the Government's default scheme in November 2012 it was not clear what would happen with regards to the uprating of the default scheme from April 2014 onwards. Advice received from the then Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) at the end of September 2013 stated that if a Council did not formally agree a revised scheme for the following financial year which would include any "uprating" then its local scheme for the previous year would automatically become its default scheme and as a consequence the "uprating" would not take place and many residents would face an increased council tax bill.
- 2.7. In 2021/22, the Government introduced increases to disregarded earnings and grants and loans for the self-employed to support people during the COVID-19 pandemic. These resulted in increases to Universal Credit and other DWP benefits which reduced council tax support for our residents. The Council awarded the difference in the form of a hardship reduction as part of the Council Tax Hardship facility; however the Council was unable to amend the disregards set out in the Council Tax Support Scheme.
- 2.8. The rules of the scheme for 2021/22 were amended and agreed by full Council to permit any in year changes if the Government made any in year changes to disregards or elements of the Housing Benefit scheme or Prescribed Pensioners scheme that will benefit residents.
- 2.9. Any in year changes will be approved by the Section 151 officer of the Council. However, the Council's decision making process will be followed for any changes.
- 2.10. This means that if Merton wants to continue with its council tax support scheme which is broadly similar to the old council tax benefit scheme it would have to formally consult and agree on the revised "uprating" each year. Merton has subsequently agreed this approach in prior years and is now seeking agreement to the same for 2023/24.
- 2.11. It is estimated that if the uprating was not applied the expenditure of the scheme, if everything else remained constant, would be approximately cost neutral. Increases in payments for non-dependants living in households would not be applied and some residents receiving disability benefits or premiums could face higher council tax bills.
- 2.12. **Council Tax Support Scheme 2023/24**
- 2.13. Each year the Government "uprate" the housing benefit scheme and the prescribed scheme for pensioners. This is where state pensions and benefits are increased by a set percentage and the Government also increase the applicable amounts and personal allowances (elements that help identify how much income a family or individual requires each week before their housing benefit starts to be reduced) and also non dependant adult deductions (the amount an adult who lives with the claimant is expected to contribute to the rent and/or council tax each week).
- 2.14. The Government have also previously introduced new elements to the housing benefit scheme and pensioner scheme which can affect entitlement. These introductions are often made after Council has agreed the CTS scheme for the following year. For example, on 12th February 2022 the Government introduced [new legislation](#) which introduced the £150 energy rebate. This was

introduced after Council agreed the scheme in November 2021 but before the new scheme began on the 1st April 2022. The changes to the scheme will include any changes affecting CTS entitlement under new legislation and changes to the pensioner scheme and Housing Benefit Scheme after Council have agreed the scheme and before the scheme commences on 1st April 2023.

2.15. The Government will uprate the housing benefit scheme from the 1 April 2023 and the detail of this process is unlikely to be known until early December 2022. The Government will also uprate the prescribed pensioner scheme for council tax support from 1 April 2022, with the details announced in December 2022. Once the detailed information is known it is proposed to use the data from these to uprate the council tax support scheme.

2.16. The new council tax support scheme will be effective from the 1 April 2023

2.17. A formal consultation exercise regarding the proposed revision of the scheme was undertaken between 19 August 2022 and 16 October 2022. The consultation was on 2 options which are detailed in the briefing paper in Appendix 1. Only 12 responses were received, 7 preferred Option 1, to apply the uprating, and 5 preferred Option 2, not to apply the uprating. Of the responses, 1 person indicated that they were in receipt of council tax support.

The Council has also consulted with our major precepting authority, the Greater London Authority (GLA). The GLA have acknowledged the Council's proposal and is content to endorse Merton's preferred option 1 and would encourage the Council to take a proactive approach to informing those council tax support claimants facing difficulties paying council tax bills about the help available, particularly in light of the current cost of living difficulties Londoners are faced with.

Full details of the responses to the consultation are included in Appendix 3 .

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1. The only alternative option for the Council Tax Support Scheme based on the consultation undertaken would be not to revise it and not uprate the scheme and continue with the existing scheme. This would result in some of the poorest residents facing increased council tax bills from April 2023.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. A consultation exercise has been undertaken and the results of this are detailed in 2.17 above.

5 TIMETABLE

5.1. The key milestones for council tax support scheme are detailed below:

Task	Deadline
Consultation with public and precepting authority on proposed change to the scheme	19 August 2021 to 16 October 2022

Report to full Council for agreement to proposed change to the scheme	16 November 2022
Detailed analysis of the housing benefit and prescribed pensioner schemes uprating to establish exact parameters to be applied for the uprating of the council tax support scheme	December 2022– or as soon as the information is available from the DWP
Deadline for agreement of amended scheme	10 March 2023
Testing of IT software for amended scheme	February 2023
Implement revised scheme	1 April 2023

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. Based on levels of council tax support, as at October 2022, it is estimated that £13.5 million will be granted in council tax support for 2023/24 assuming a 2% increase in council tax from April 2023. This figure includes the Greater London Authorities share of the scheme (£3.0 million), the cost for Merton is estimated at £10.5 million.
- 6.2. The council has recently submitted its Council Tax Base Return (CTB) to Government. This is based as at October 2022 and incorporates the latest information on council tax support and discounts and exemptions. This will be used to calculate the Council Tax Base for 2023/24 and the Medium Term Financial Statement 2022-2026 will be updated as appropriate during the budget process.
- 6.3. The level of reduction in Council Tax Base due to the Council Tax Support Scheme has decreased from last year and is the highest decrease since the scheme began. The adjustment for reduction in tax base as a result of local council tax support since the scheme was introduced is summarised in the table below:

CTB year	Reduction in Council Tax Base due to Local Council Tax Support Scheme	Change in CT Base	Yr..on Yr. % Change
CTB Oct.2013	10,309.31		
CTB Oct.2014	9,686.64	(622.67)	-6.04%
CTB Oct.2015	9,099.90	(586.74)	-6.06%
CTB Oct.2016	8,639.20	(460.70)	-5.06%
CTB Oct.2017	8,192.10	(447.10)	-5.18%
CTB Oct.2018	8,177.10	(15.00)	-0.18%
CTB Oct.2019	7,688.10	(489.00)	-5.98%
CTB Oct.2020	8,320.70	632.60	8.23%
CTB Oct.2021	8,086.00	(234.70)	-2.82%
CTB Oct.2022	7,462.06	(623.94)	-7.71%

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. Under the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 2012, (“the Act”) every billing authority in England is required to make a Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS). Merton refers to its CTRS as its Council Tax Support Scheme.
- 7.2. Each financial year every billing authority in England is required to consider whether to revise or replace its CTRS. The Act imposes certain procedural requirements which must be satisfied before a billing authority can make any revisions, including a requirement to consult persons who are likely to have an interest in the operation of their CTRS.
- 7.3. The statutory consultation is intended to ensure public participation in the decision-making process. In determining what revisions, the Authority should make to its CTRS, if any, it must have regard to the requirements of the Act, including the outcome of the consultation and the public sector equality duty referred to below. The outcome of the consultation is considered elsewhere in this report.
- 7.4. If the Authority’s CTRS is to be revised as proposed the decision to do so must be made by Full Council no later than 10 March 2023 to enable the revisions to come into force on 1 April 2023.
- 7.5. As with any public law decision of the Authority it may be challenged by way of an application for judicial review.
- 7.6. If the revised scheme is not agreed by 10 March 2023, then the scheme the Council administered for the previous year (2022/21) would become the default scheme for 2023/24.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. A formal consultation exercise has been undertaken. The results of this are detailed in 2.17 above.
- 8.2. Any changes to the council tax scheme which results in reductions of support will mean some residents facing an increase in their council tax bills. Some of these residents, due to the yearly uprating undertaken by the DWP, would not have previously been faced with increased council tax bills. In the past it has sometimes proved difficult in collecting council tax from residents who are on limited income and or benefits.

In considering the proposed revisions to the Council Tax Support Scheme, upon which the Authority is required to consult, the Council must consider the Council’s Public Sector Equality Duty under Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 and to have due regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not, and

- c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None for the purpose of this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The Council will need to continue to closely monitor the cost of the council tax support scheme to ensure it is affordable for future years. Although in previous years we have not seen an increase in caseload, it is possible that the full impact of the welfare reform could result in more families located in inner London moving into Merton which would result in an increase in council tax support expenditure.
- 10.2. Additionally, the applicable amounts and personal allowances used to calculate the local council tax reduction, may rise to match inflation. This may increase the number of residents who are entitled to CTS if wages do not rise in line with inflation. The council tax support expenditure for 2023/24 could further increase if there is an increase in claims. The current economic climate is volatile given the impact of increasing inflation, particularly in energy costs. Unemployment rates are currently low, but many claimants are working and any increase in benefit allowances will mean more people may qualify under the new rates.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- 11.1 Appendix 1 Consultation briefing paper
- 11.2 Appendix 2 Equalities Impact Assessment
- 11.3 Appendix 3 Consultation comments from respondents

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Tax Support update for 2023/24

Merton's Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS) was developed in 2012 after it was announced that the Government's Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme would be replaced by individual CTS schemes run by local authorities from April 2013. The Government decided that pensioners would not be worse off under any local council tax support schemes. To achieve this, the Government continued with a prescribed Council Tax Reduction scheme for pensioners (which Merton must administer). The local CTS scheme is up to each Local Authority to decide. The decision making process must include consultation with interested parties.

Since then, Merton's CTS scheme has replicated the Government's prescribed scheme to ensure that residents would get the same rate of CTS had CTB continued. Merton has also decided to maintain that principle for the 2023/24 scheme.

Additionally, every year national benefits and tax credits for working age people are reviewed by the Government. These adjustments are not always known in advance of the scheme being set by Merton. These reviews can result in increases, decreases or indeed no change to the amount of HB scheme, prescribed Council Tax Reduction scheme and national welfare benefits, tax credits, grants and loans. To ensure the principal of mirroring the scheme continues, several changes are required to the existing scheme from 2022/23 and therefore we are consulting on these proposed changes.

We are consulting on the following options:

Option 1 – To incorporate any changes made to the HB scheme and the prescribed Council Tax Reduction scheme for pensioners during the 2022/2023 financial year and retain the option to make changes within the year the scheme applies where changes are made to HB scheme, prescribed Council Tax Reduction scheme and national welfare benefits, tax credits, grants and loans, where it affects the award of CTS:

This is the Council's preferred option. It allows Merton to amend the scheme in line with these changes made by the Government's at a national level, at any time during the financial year to which it applies. These in year changes will be approved by the Section 151 officer responsible for the proper administration of the council's affairs. The Section 151 officer can also refer the decision to Cabinet.

The effect of this will be that:

1. Any national changes which affect the award of CTS such as equivalent applicable amounts, personal allowances, non-dependant deductions and disregards, may be reflected in the CTS scheme. This includes those changes already known and any which occur in the year the CTS scheme applies. This includes beneficial and non-beneficial changes and allows for consideration of the financial impact to the Council and its residents.
2. There may be changes announced which are beneficial to claimants which we would not be able to introduce until the following year if Option 2 is the selected option.

Broadly speaking Option 1 means the claimant would receive the same amount of Council Tax Support as they would have done under the Government's previous Council Tax Benefit scheme, providing circumstances remain the same. It will allow the Council to decide how changes made to the HB scheme, prescribed Council Tax Reduction scheme and national welfare benefits, tax credits, grants and loans, should be treated under the CTS for Merton.

Option 2 - Continue to award Council Tax Support based on the current scheme, including the current rates of applicable amounts, personal allowances and non-dependent deductions. Not make technical adjustments to the scheme to bring it in line with the HB scheme, prescribed Council Tax Reduction scheme and national welfare benefits, tax credits, grants and loans.

The effect of this will be that:

1. if the national applicable amounts, personal allowances and disregards are increased these would remain the same in the CTS scheme and therefore the claimant would not get as much Council Tax Support compared to the amount they would have got under the Government's old scheme.
2. if the national applicable amounts, personal allowances and disregards are decreased these would remain the same in the CTS scheme and therefore the claimant would more Council Tax Support compared to the amount they would have got under the Government's old scheme.
3. Not making the changes will leave the council tax support scheme misaligned with the prescribed pensioner scheme and HB scheme.

Merton's current scheme will become our default scheme for 2023/24 if no changes are required or full Council do not agree a new scheme.

Equality Analysis



What are the proposals being assessed?	Council Tax Support Scheme for 2023/24
Which Department/ Division has the responsibility for this?	Corporate Services / Resources

Stage 1: Overview	
Name and job title of lead officer	Rebecca Dodd, Head of Benefits
1. What are the aims, objectives and desired outcomes of your proposal? (Also explain proposals e.g. reduction/removal of service, deletion of posts, changing criteria etc)	<p>Agree the Council Tax Support scheme for 2023/24.</p> <p>The national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme ended on 1st April 2013 to be replaced by a locally determined system of Council Tax Support. The funding available for the new scheme will be cash limited and be determined by the Council.</p> <p>The aim of the council tax support scheme is to provide financial assistance to council taxpayers who have low incomes. Persons who are of state pension credit qualifying age are protected under the scheme in that the calculation of the support they are to receive has been set by Central Government. For working age applicants however, the support they receive is to be determined by the local authority.</p>
2. How does this contribute to the council's corporate priorities?	Ensures that residents on low income are supported by the Council with help with their council tax
3. Who will be affected by this proposal? For example, who are the external/internal customers, communities, partners, stakeholders, the workforce etc.	<p>Working age local residents currently in receipt of council tax support, working age residents who will apply for council tax support within the financial year.</p> <p>Pension age residents receive support based on the Government scheme</p>
4. Is the responsibility shared with another department, authority or organisation? If so, who are the partners and who has overall responsibility?	The Council collects a council tax precept for the Greater London Authority from all residents. The amount of council tax support granted affects the level of the precept collected for the Greater London Council

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Stage 2: Collecting evidence/ data

5. What evidence have you considered as part of this assessment?

Provide details of the information you have reviewed to determine the impact your proposal would have on the protected characteristics (equality groups).

The Council has continued to base its local council tax support scheme on the Governments previous Council tax benefit scheme. This has ensured that working age residents have not had to contribute more towards council tax since the localisation of the scheme.

This has ensured that the working age, disabled, families and the less well off all continue to receive up to 100% council tax support based on their circumstances and income.

It also ensures parity between working age and pension age residents, with no group being unequal in entitlement to Council Tax Support.

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Stage 3: Assessing impact and analysis

6. From the evidence you have considered, what areas of concern have you identified regarding the potential negative and positive impact on one or more protected characteristics (equality groups)?

Protected characteristic (equality group)	Tick which applies Positive impact		Tick which applies Potential negative impact		Reason Briefly explain what positive or negative impact has been identified
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
	Age	Y	N		
Disability	Y	N		N	Positive impact for all working age claimants – the level of council tax support will not be reduced
Gender Reassignment	Y	N		N	Positive impact for all working age claimants – the level of council tax support will not be reduced
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Y	N		N	Positive impact for all working age claimants – the level of council tax support will not be reduced

Pregnancy and Maternity	Y	N			Positive impact for all working age claimants – the level of council tax support will not be reduced
Race	Y	N		N	Positive impact for all working age claimants – the level of council tax support will not be reduced
Religion/ belief	Y	N		N	Positive impact for all working age claimants – the level of council tax support will not be reduced
Sex (Gender)	Y	N		N	Positive impact for all working age claimants – the level of council tax support will not be reduced
Sexual orientation	Y	N		N	Positive impact for all working age claimants – the level of council tax support will not be reduced
Socio-economic status	Y	N		N	Positive impact for all working age claimants – the level of council tax support will not be reduced

7. If you have identified a negative impact, how do you plan to mitigate it?

N/A

Stage 4: Conclusion of the Equality Analysis

8. Which of the following statements best describe the outcome of the EA (Tick one box only)

Please refer to the guidance for carrying out Equality Impact Assessments is available on the intranet for further information about these outcomes and what they mean for your proposal

Outcome 1 – The EA has not identified any potential for discrimination or negative impact and all opportunities to promote equality are being addressed. No changes are required.

Outcome 2 – The EA has identified adjustments to remove negative impact or to better promote equality. Actions you propose to take to do this should be included in the Action Plan.

Outcome 3 – The EA has identified some potential for negative impact or some missed opportunities to promote equality and it may not be possible to mitigate this fully. If you propose to continue with proposals you must include the justification for this in Section 10 below, and include actions you propose to take to remove negative impact or to better promote equality in the Action Plan. You must ensure that your proposed action is in line with the PSED to have ‘due regard’ and you are advised to seek Legal Advice.

Outcome 4 – The EA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. Stop and rethink your proposals.

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Stage 5: Improvement Action Plan

9. Equality Analysis Improvement Action Plan template – Making adjustments for negative impact

This action plan should be completed after the analysis and should outline action(s) to be taken to mitigate the potential negative impact identified (expanding on information provided in Section 7 above).

Negative impact/ gap in information identified in the Equality Analysis	Action required to mitigate	How will you know this is achieved? e.g. performance measure/ target)	By when	Existing or additional resources?	Lead Officer	Action added to divisional/ team plan?

Note that the full impact of the decision may only be known after the proposals have been implemented; therefore it is important the effective monitoring is in place to assess the impact.

Stage 6: Reporting outcomes

10. Summary of the equality analysis

This section can also be used in your decision making reports (CMT/Cabinet/etc) but you must also attach the assessment to the report, or provide a hyperlink

This Equality Analysis has resulted in an Outcome 1 Assessment

There is potential negative impact on the SMEs that do not meet the Government criteria. Local equality data needs to be collected at the application stage to give a better picture of the types of businesses applying for the grant or may be ineligible for the grant.

Stage 7: Sign off by Director/ Head of Service

Assessment completed by	Rebecca Dodd – Head of Benefits	Signature: R Dodd	Date: 18 October 22
Improvement action plan signed off by Director/ Head of Service	Roger Kershaw – Interim Executive Director Finance and Digital	Signature: R Kershaw	Date: 18 October 2022

Council Tax Support scheme consultation 2023/24

Response from online consultation

Comments from Council Tax update consultation 2022
No comments.
It shouldn't just be for people claiming benefits. Ordinary people are struggling too.
Low council tax like Wandsworth why paying for centre of London when most people on good wages.

Response from Conservative group

Merton Conservatives support a Merton focused scheme that provides better value for money for Council Tax payers and would offer support to those on low incomes.

Response from GLA

Introduction

As in previous years, the GLA recognises that the determination of council tax support schemes, under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 2012, is a local matter for each London borough. Individual schemes need to be developed which have regard to specific local circumstances, both in respect of the potential impact of any scheme on working age claimants (particularly vulnerable groups) and, more generally, the financial impact on the council and local council tax payers – and therefore the final policies adopted may, for legitimate reasons, differ across the capital's 33 billing authorities.

This fact notwithstanding the GLA also shares in the risks and potential shortfalls arising from the impact of council tax benefit localisation in proportion to its share of the council tax in each London billing authority. It is therefore important that we are engaged in the scheme development process and have an understanding of both the factors which have been taken into account by boroughs in framing their proposals, as well as the data and underlying assumptions used to determine any forecast shortfalls which will inform the final scheme design.

Framing Proposals

As part of the introduction of council tax support in 2013-14, the Government set out its expectation that, in developing their scheme proposals, billing authorities should ensure that:

- Pensioners see no change in their current level of awards whether they are existing or new claimants;
- They consider extending support or protection to other vulnerable groups; and
- Local schemes should support work incentives and, in particular, avoid disincentives to move into work.

The GLA concurs with those general broad principles and would encourage all billing authorities in London to have regard to them in framing their schemes.

Proposed Options for 2023-24 Scheme

The London Borough of Merton has a commitment to keeping the Borough's CTS scheme for non-pensioners aligned to the Government's prescribed CTS scheme and the Housing Benefit (HB) scheme. The intention is that residents should get broadly the same CTS as they would have done if Council Tax Benefit (CTB) still existed. As a result, the council is consulting on two options relating to updating the scheme for 2023-24. These options are as follows:

1. Incorporate any changes made to the HB scheme and the prescribed Council Tax Reduction scheme for pensioners during the 2022/2023 financial year and retain the option to make changes within the year the scheme applies where changes are made to HB scheme, prescribed Council Tax Reduction scheme and national welfare benefits, tax credits, grants and loans, where it affects the award of CTS.
2. Continue to award Council Tax Support based on the current scheme, including the current rates of applicable amounts, personal allowances, and non-dependent deductions. No technical adjustments to the scheme to bring it in line with the HB scheme, prescribed Council Tax Reduction scheme and national welfare benefits, tax credits, grants and loans.

The GLA notes that Option 1 is the council's preferred option, as it would continue to ensure there are little or no differences between the prescribed scheme and Housing Benefit, and the Borough's local CTS scheme. Option 1 would, in broad terms, ensure that, providing a resident's circumstances remained the same, a claimant would receive the same level of CTS as they would have done had the former CTB scheme continued.

If Option 2 were adopted, applicable amounts and personal allowances would remain the same in 2023-24 as in 2022-23, and therefore the claimant would receive a reduced award of CTS compared to the amount which would be received had the scheme been updated, as in Option 1.

The GLA acknowledges that local authorities face difficult choices on CTS schemes, as overall funding from central government has reduced and funding for CTS is no longer identifiable within the settlement. However, the council has committed to maintaining the principle of mirroring the existing scheme, despite uncertainty over future funding levels. Furthermore, the council will continue its policy of not restricting applicable amounts to two dependant children only. These commitments are welcomed by the GLA.

It is clear from the council's website that a discretionary hardship fund is in operation. We would encourage the Council to take a proactive approach to informing those council tax support claimants facing difficulties paying council tax bills about the help

available, particularly in light of the current cost of living difficulties Londoners are faced with.

In light of the above comments, the GLA is content to endorse Option 1, as Merton's preference for the 2023-24 scheme, recognising that the proposed scheme is in accordance with the general principles set out by Government (as listed above).

Council Tax Protocol

The GLA welcomes the fact that Merton remains signed up to the council tax protocol, developed by Citizens Advice, in partnership with the Local Government Association. In recent years the issue of council tax collection practices has become more high profile and the GLA is supportive of initiatives to improve collection processes.

Providing Information on Schemes

Whilst we recognise that the detailed rules on council tax support schemes are inevitably complex, the GLA would encourage all boroughs to make every effort to set out information on their schemes as clearly as possible. Information that may help potential claimants could include an online calculator, to identify whether potential claimants are likely to be entitled to support, as well as 'Frequently Asked Questions' and a summary document outlining concise details of the scheme. In addition, for existing claimants, we would encourage boroughs to consider how the process for reporting changes in circumstances can be made as straightforward as possible.

Setting the Council Tax Base for 2023-24 and Assumptions in Relation to Collection Rates

The council will be required to set a council tax base for 2023-24 taking into account the potential impact of the discounts the council may introduce in respect of council tax support and any potential changes the council may implement regarding the changes to the treatment of second and empty homes.

The council will need to make a judgement as to the forecast collection rates from those claimants and council taxpayers affected by any changes to council tax support. The GLA would encourage the council to provide it with an indicative council tax base forecast as soon as options are presented to members for approval, in order that it can assess the potential implications for the Mayor's budget for police, fire and other services for 2023-24. This should ideally be accompanied by supporting calculations disclosing any assumptions around collection rates and discounts granted having regard to the final council tax support scheme design.

Collection Fund and Precept Payments

By 23 January 2023, the council is required to notify the GLA of its forecast collection fund surplus or deficit for 2022-23, which will reflect the cumulative impact of the localisation of council tax support since it was introduced in 2013-14. The GLA would encourage the council to provide it with this information as soon as it is available.

Response from the Liberal Democrats

The Council's own consultation document states:

“Merton’s Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS) was developed in 2012 after it was announced that the Government’s Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme would be replaced by individual CTS schemes run by local authorities from April 2013.”

Furthermore:

“The local CTS scheme is up to each Local Authority to decide.”

And:

“Since then, Merton’s CTS scheme has replicated the Government’s prescribed scheme to ensure that residents would get the same rate of CTS had CTB continued.”

Concluding:

“Merton has also decided to maintain that principle for the 2023/24 scheme.”

Whilst the Liberal Democrats in Merton welcome the support the Council has made available for those in receipt of Council Tax Support, we believe further support is required. We are living through very different times to those when the scheme was first introduced. Many of our residents are facing unprecedented financial hardships. The cost-of-living emergency is impacting on almost everyone, in ways previously thought unimaginable. People beyond traditional benefit boundaries are in financial peril - food and fuel poverty is a daily reality for many, with the added strain of trying to keep a roof over their head.

The Resolution Foundation report – Arrears Fears¹ explains:

“The cost-of-living crisis will send more financially-insecure families into arrears – the most harmful form of debt. Families face rising costs ... those who cannot cut back on spending and have no savings to fall back on will find themselves unable to keep up with their bills and so are likely to fall into arrears.”

The Citizens Advice Bureau’s *cost of living dashboard*² illustrates this with the crisis advisors are seeing unfold and gives a near real-time insight into the problems people are facing.

The Liberal Democrats in Merton think simply rolling forward the same Council Tax Scheme formulated in 2012, without addressing the current and worsening cost of living crisis is an inadequate response. Neither option 1 nor 2 in the consultation document reflects the harsh economic realities facing a growing number of residents who now need help.

¹ [Arrears fears • Resolution Foundation](#)

² [Our new cost of living dashboard: the crisis we’re seeing unfold | by Morgan Wild | We are Citizens Advice](#)

According to the Trussel Trust and staff at their foodbanks:

“The cost of living crisis is forcing people into impossible decisions because they simply don’t have enough money. Do they eat or buy other essentials such as school shoes for their kids?”

“This isn’t right. If people are to have enough money to live with dignity, we need strong support systems that lift us out of hardship rather than plunging us deeper into poverty. This means investment in our social security system to ensure it’s a strong and effective lifeline for whenever any of us need support.”³

We recognise the Council cannot change the social security system, but know that Merton Council could do more to support a greater range of residents through this emergency.

We consequently call on the Council to be bold and innovative in developing an expanded Council Tax Support scheme, or else other direct measures, to reach those residents who were just about managing, but are no longer doing so, and those who have additional needs that may be exacerbated by the crisis, such as disabled people.

³ [True Cost of Living - The Trussell Trust](#)

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Committee: Council

Date: 16 November 2022

Wards: All

Subject: Adoption of the South London Waste Plan as part of Merton's Local Plan

Lead officer: Mark Gaynor - Interim Executive Director of Housing and Sustainable Development

Lead member: Councillor Andrew Judge, Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

Contact officer: Tara Butler, Deputy Head of Future Merton and Eben van der Westhuizen, planning policy, Future Merton

Recommendations:

-
- A. That Council adopts the South London Waste Plan as part of Merton's statutory Local Plan and subsequent updating of Merton's statutory Policies Map, subject to any amendments necessary in order to give effect to any recommendations contained in the Final Report from the Planning Inspectors and that authority to make such amendments be delegated to the Executive Director of Housing and Sustainable Development in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development.
 - B. That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Housing and Sustainable Development to deal with all the necessary adoption documents and other consequential matters in accordance with the appropriate Regulations.
-

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Following the Cabinet agreement on 7 November 2022, this report recommends the adoption of the South London Waste Plan as part of Merton's statutory Local Plan. This follows the Plan's successful examination by independent planning inspectors. The adoption of the South London Waste Plan will meet the Council's strategic objectives of Civic Pride and Sustainability.
- 1.2. If adopted, the South London Waste Plan will be one of the key documents guiding planning decisions in the borough regarding waste management matters, alongside Merton's adopted Core Planning Strategy 2011, the Sites and Policies Plan and Policies Map 2014, the Estates Local Plan 2018 and the draft New Local Plan. The South London Waste Plan therefore has no direct relation to matters concerning the local authority's waste collection services and the management of related contracts.
- 1.3. The South London Waste Plan (with proposed modifications), the associated sustainability appraisal and the planning inspectors' Final Report will be published on the council's website and as appendices to this report.

2. DETAILS

- 2.1. In 2012 the four boroughs of Merton, Kingston, Sutton and Croydon adopted the 10-year South London Waste Plan, for the plan period 2011-2021, which allocated sites, created planning policies and designated areas for waste management development. The existing South London Waste Plan can no longer be considered as an 'up-to-date' plan as referred to in national planning policy.
- 2.2. In 2019 the four boroughs agreed to work together again and produce a new South London Waste Plan to cover the geographical area of the London boroughs of Croydon, Kingston, Merton and Sutton.
- 2.3. The London Plan sets the boroughs the target of managing 100% of London's waste within Greater London by 2026 and having zero biodegradable and recyclable waste going to landfill by 2026. It also sets targets for local authority-collected waste, commercial and industrial waste, construction and demolition, and excavation waste.
- 2.4. Since the current South London Waste Plan was adopted in 2012, the four boroughs have been working closely together on:
 - Monitoring the South London Waste Plan annually
 - Fulfilling the legal Duty to Co-operate with other councils on waste management issues, responding to other Local Plan documents regarding waste management matters.
 - Preparing and submitting a successful bid for government funding to support a new South London Waste Plan 2022-2037 on the basis of joint working.
- 2.5. In 2018 the four boroughs successfully bid for government funding (Planning Delivery Fund – Joint Working) for £136,594 to support the project.

Relationship with the South London Waste Partnership

- 2.6. Although the South London Boroughs already work together as the South London Waste Partnership and have a shared contract for the municipal collection and disposal of waste, the South London Waste Plan relates to the waste planning functions and responsibilities of the South London Boroughs as Waste Planning Authorities.
- 2.7. As a Local Plan document, at a strategic level, the South London Waste Plan considers the local authority collected waste and the other forms of waste collected by private contractors, and accordingly safeguards sufficient sites to treat both the South London Waste Partnership's waste needs and that of other commercial waste operators.
- 2.8. At a more detailed level, the policies in the South London Waste Plan will be used to assess the merits of any planning application submitted by the South London Waste Partnership's contractor or any other commercial waste operator.

Plan preparation and the planning inspectors' Final Report.

- 2.9. Between 31 October and 22 December 2019, the four councils consulted on a draft South London Waste Plan: issues and preferred options document. Details of the draft report and the consultation findings can be found in the committee report for the Council meeting on 8 July 2020 for which a link is provided as background document 12.4 below.
- 2.10. Following the public hearings, the planning inspectors indicated that some changes to the submission version of the draft South London Waste Plan were required in order for it to progress towards adoption and indicated to the boroughs where these changes ('Main Modifications') were needed. The Main Modifications were consulted on between 14 July and 2 September 2022.
- 2.11. While the planning inspectors have recommended some changes to the Plan, in accordance with the Main Modifications, many important and beneficial new policies will still remain. The evidence base for the South London Waste Plan showed that, across the four boroughs, there are sufficient existing or consented sites to meet waste targets over the next 15 years. As such, the new South London Waste Plan:
- maintains its restrictive approach to new waste sites coming forward. The Main Modifications have introduced a criteria based approach that means new sites will not normally be permitted unless there are exceptional circumstances to justify it. This criteria is set out in Policies WP1 to WP4 and includes a requirement to demonstrate why a new site cannot be delivered in other London boroughs. This strikes a balance between meeting the London Plan waste targets, achieving net self-sufficiency in waste management and not stifling industrial land uses, whilst having some flexibility for new waste sites to be delivered in exceptional cases.
 - removes the 'waste safeguarding' designation from the Benedict Wharf site, which allows it to be developed for other uses, such as housing, once the new waste management facility at Beddington, which will provide the compensatory waste management capacity, is operational.
 - removes the existing designation 'Areas with Sites suitable for Waste Facilities' which covered the Willow Lane, Garth Road and Durnsford Road Industrial Estates.
 - designates no new sites for waste, that are not already operating or have planning permission and designates no new areas for waste in Merton.
 - has air quality policies that are stronger than those in the current 2012 South London Waste Plan.
 - provides strengthened support for the delivery of net zero carbon developments which will contribute towards tackling the climate emergency.
- 2.12. The planning inspectors informed officers on 23 September 2022 that:
- "On review of your response to the Main Modification consultation, the Inspectors are aware that some minor changes might be necessary to*

detailed wording, to incorporate factual updates and other post-hearings matters.

The Inspectors suggest that the following actions are taken, and would welcome your views:

- Changes to page numbering references as a result of formatting changes to be actioned by the Boroughs by way of additional modification prior to adoption;*
- The factual update on the position regarding the Benedict Wharf site to be actioned by the Boroughs as an additional modification prior to adoption;*
- The Inspectors will incorporate the minor changes to MM12 and MM13 (to identify the correct policy criterion) in the MM table appended to their Final Report;*
- The Inspectors will import the correct wording from MM27 into MM31 in the MM table appended to their Final Report;*
- MM120 – the Inspectors suggest that the statement “Biodiversity Net Gain 3.0 is expected by the end of 2021” is deleted, as the phrase “the latest biodiversity metric published by DEFRA” covers any future updates. If this is agreeable the Inspectors will make this change in the MM schedule appended to their Final Report;*
- MM 120 – to take into account changes to Building Regulations and the emerging London Plan response to this, the Inspectors consider that the phrase “100% of planning permissions for intensified or compensatory waste developments achieving at least a 35% on-site reduction in CO2 emissions compared to Part L2A of the 2013 Building Regulations” should be deleted and replaced with “100% of planning permissions for intensified or compensatory waste developments achieving on-site reduction in CO2 emissions in accordance with relevant London Plan targets” – if that is agreeable the Inspectors will make this change in the MM schedule appended to their Final Report.”*

2.13. These further minor changes proposed by the planning inspectors have been agreed by all four partner boroughs and The Planning Inspectorate have committed to sending the draft of the planning inspectors’ Final Report for fact-checking by 18 October 2022 but this report is still awaited. The partner boroughs have agreed to expedite the fact-checking and officers expect to receive the Final Report by early November.

2.14. Following receipt of the planning inspectors’ Final Report, the four boroughs will each need approval for the adoption of the South London Waste Plan by means of a decision at their respective (full) Council meetings. The National Planning Policy Framework now requires that a Local Plan document has a lifespan of 15-years from adoption and as the South London Waste Plan has a plan period of 2022 to 2037, it should be adopted before the end of 2022.

2.15. The current South London Waste Plan has a plan period covering 2011-2021 and was adopted by Merton Council in February 2012. With the current South London Waste Plan ending, it is important that a replacement plan is in place to ensure that the residents in the plan area have up-to-date and

robust policies that can be used to refuse inappropriate applications for waste facilities.

- 2.16. The adoption of the new South London Waste Plan will also ensure that the residents of Merton have waste related Local Plan policies that have a locally defined approach and a consistent basis on which to determine planning applications for waste facilities. This new Local Plan document demonstrates that the councils can meet their combined waste targets whilst proposing that no new sites should be safeguarded for waste facilities, except in some circumstances, such as a replacement site that meets the relatively onerous policy tests.

Delegated authority

- 2.17. If the council resolves to adopt the South London Waste Plan, there will be a number of statutory adoption documents and other procedures that the council will need to undertake, such as notifying the people who participated in the making of the South London Waste Plan, of its adoption.
- 2.18. It is recommended that these statutory matters be delegated to the Executive Director of Housing and Sustainable Development.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. There are no reasonable alternative options, as most of the processes being undertaken are specified by statutory requirements or by government policies (refer to Part 7 of the report).
- 3.2. If the Waste Plan was not adopted, many more sites in Merton and across the three partner boroughs, would continue to be considered suitable for waste management facilities via the planning system. This would leave Merton Council with very limited planning scope to refuse inappropriate waste management planning applications or negotiate amendments to inappropriate proposals. Furthermore, as the council has a statutory requirement to have a waste Local Plan document or policies in place, the four boroughs would have to commence the process of preparing another Waste Plan all over again.
- 3.3. Another alternative is for each borough to produce a waste related Local Plan document or policies independently, which would be far more resource intensive for each borough. The production of a 'sound' Local Plan would in any case require neighbouring boroughs to collaborate in order to develop consistent policies and proposals in line with the legal requirement of 'duty to co-operate'. Furthermore, independent working may trigger a requirement to reimburse the government funding that has been awarded to this project, for 'joint working'.

4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. Consultation was carried out in accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement and the requirements within the Town

and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

- 4.2. Between 31 October and 22 December 2019, the four partner boroughs, Merton, Kingston, Sutton and Croydon, consulted on the Issues and Preferred Options draft of the South London Waste Plan.
- 4.3. At the Council meeting on 8 July 2020, it was agreed that the Draft South London Waste Plan could be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination by a planning inspector, following a six-week pre-submission publication period. The 'submission version' of Draft South London Waste Plan was published from 4 September 2020 until 22 October 2020 and the draft plan and responses received were submitted on 19 January 2021.
- 4.4. Objectors had the opportunity to submit written statements to the planning inspectors and participate in the public hearings sessions that were held in September 2021.
- 4.5. Following the public hearings, the proposed Main Modifications were consulted on between 14 July and 2 September 2022.
- 4.6. Officers have also fulfilled the legal Duty to Co-operate with other councils on waste management issues.

5. TIMETABLE

- 5.1. All four partner boroughs will endeavour to adopt the South London Waste Plan before the end of 2022.

6. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. In 2018, the four boroughs successfully bid for £136,594 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Planning Delivery Fund for joint working to produce a new South London Waste Plan. It was agreed that the London Borough of Sutton would be the project administrative lead and their officers have managed the spending and reporting of these funds.
- 6.2. At the start of the 2022-23 financial year, the boroughs had £49,218 remaining from the original grant funding and officers are confident that the remaining grant funding is sufficient to cover the final stages of the production of the South London Waste Plan.

7. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. Waste treatment is a strategic planning issue across London and a challenge for all successful urban areas. As Waste Planning Authorities, all London Boroughs have a statutory duty to prepare a waste Development Plan Document (*also known as a Local Plan document*) in line with Article 28 of the Waste Framework Directive (2008).
- 7.2. The National Planning Policy for Waste states that Waste Planning Authorities should have regard to their apportionments set out in the London Plan when preparing their plans and work collaboratively in groups with

other Waste Planning Authorities to provide a suitable network of facilities to deliver sustainable waste management.

- 7.3. With the aim of encouraging more local authorities to have an up to date Local Plan in place, the Housing and Planning Act 2016, gives the Secretary of State greater powers to intervene in the plan making process. Specifically, it would allow the Secretary of State to intervene if a local authority was failing or omitting to do anything it is necessary for them to do in connection with the preparation, revision or adoption of a Local Plan.
- 7.4. The proposals in this report and the process described to progress the South London Waste Plan, are in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and the requirements set out in those regulations.
- 7.5. The requirement to send the South London Waste Plan to a Council meeting for adoption, arises from Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Committee System) (England) Regulations (SI 2012/1020)
- 7.6. If the council were to adopt the South London Waste Plan, it would become part of Merton's Local Plan documents and following the decision to adopt the South London Waste Plan, there would be a six-week period for people to challenge the South London Waste Plan through judicial review.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. Local Plans contain planning policies to help improve community cohesion and are subject to Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessments and Equalities Impact Assessments. These appraisals, which are currently available via a link on Merton's Local Plan webpage to the South London Waste Plan webpage hosted by LB Sutton (<https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/planning/local-plan#titleCol13>) will be published on Merton Local Plan alongside the adopted plan.

9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. As set out in the body of this report.

11. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Appendix A – The Draft South London Waste Plan with proposed modifications (available online via <https://www.sutton.gov.uk/documents/20124/60401/Plain+Text+Version+-+South+London+Waste+Plan+with+Mods.pdf/946cd9f7-91db-9b51-16bc-b1790c62cd5a?t=1658222504950>)

- Appendix B - Sustainability Appraisal of the Draft South London Waste Plan with proposed modifications (available online via <https://www.sutton.gov.uk/documents/20124/825670/SA+Addendum+on+Main+Modifications.pdf/5e21a831-cbc3-aeb8-1139-052fb2b64be2?t=1657618599182>)
- Appendix C - Representations received on the proposed Main Modifications to the Draft South London Waste Plan (available online via <https://www.merton.gov.uk/system/files/Schedule%20of%20Representations%20on%20the%20Main%20Modifications%20to%20the%20South%20London%20Waste%20Plan.pdf>)
- Appendix D – Inspectors Final Report (awaited)

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. [South London Waste Plan 2011-2021](#)
- 12.2. [South London Waste Plan Issues and Preferred Options Document \(2019\)](#)
- 12.3. [South London Waste Plan Submission Draft \(2020\)](#)
- 12.4. [Committee report for Council meeting on 8 July 2020](#)
- 12.5. [Waste Framework Directive \(2008\)](#)
- 12.6. [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act \(2004, as amended\)](#)
- 12.7. [The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)
- 12.8. [National Planning Policy Framework](#)
- 12.9. [National Planning Policy for Waste](#)
- 12.10. [The London Plan \(2021\)](#)
- 12.11. [Merton's Statement of Community Involvement adopted \(2020\)](#)
- 12.12. [Merton's Core Planning Strategy adopted \(2011\)](#)
- 12.13. [Merton's Site and Policies Plan adopted \(2014\)](#)
- 12.14. [Merton's Polices Map \(2014\)](#)
- 12.15. [Merton's Local Development Scheme adopted \(2019\)](#)

Committee: Council

Date: 16 November 2022

Wards: All

Subject: Mid-year Treasury Management Performance Report

Lead officer: Roger Kershaw- Interim Director of Finance and Digital

Lead member: Councillor Billy Christie – Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services

Contact officer: Nemashe Sivayogan- Head of Treasury and Pensions

Recommendations:

- A. That Council note the update on Treasury Management performance for the half year to 30 September 2022

 - B. That Council delegates authority to the Executive Director of Finance and Digital (S151 officer) to make short term treasury investment decisions, even if those investments would not currently be in accordance with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy, based on current market conditions/interest rates movements and funds availability to maximise investment returns. The Annual Treasury Management Strategy for FY2023/24 will be presented to the Council in March 2023.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report provides an update on Treasury Management performance for the half year to 30 September 2022. The last performance update report was presented to the Cabinet on the 18 July and covered the full year to 31 March 2022. This report was approved by Cabinet on 7 November 2022.

- 1.2. Since the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak and continued lockdowns the Council took a precautionary move and held most of its cash in liquid form. A large proportion of our cash was placed in money market funds which gave us instant liquidity and security.

- 1.3. Now the BOE base interest has started to go up resulting in raising interest rate/returns on fixed deposits and other cash investments. The current investment strategy has limitations on amount, duration, and counter parties that the Council can deposit cash in. This report asks the Council to delegate short-term investment decisions to the S151 officer in order to utilise any favourable investment opportunities as a result of the financial market movement and/or availability of excess cash balances even if those investments would not currently be in accordance with the existing treasury management policy. This will help us to maximise our investment income for the year.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. The Council's Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators were set out in Section 1, A to the Business Plan Report 2022-2026 presented to the Council on 3rd March 2022. They follow the requirements of the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice and incorporate a debt management strategy that reflects the Council's potential need to borrow to finance its capital expenditure plans.
- 2.2. In addition, the Council follows the Ministry for Housing, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), revised guidance on local authority investments of March 2018 that requires the Council to approve an investment strategy before the start of each financial year. The Guidance stipulated that the Council monitors the Treasury management activity undertaken.
- 2.3 The Council operates a balanced budget, which broadly means cash raised during the year will meet its cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operations ensure this cash flow is adequately planned, with surplus monies being deposited with low-risk counterparties, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering optimising investment return.
- 2.4 The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning to ensure the Council can meet its capital spending operations. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short term loans, or using longer term cash flow surpluses, and on occasion any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.
- 2.5 Accordingly, treasury management is defined as:
"The management of the local authority's borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."
- 2.6 This mid-year report has been prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management, and covers the following:
- A review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement
 - An economic update for the first half of the 2022/23 financial year;
 - The Council's capital expenditure, as set out in the Capital Strategy, and prudential indicators;
 - A review of the Council's investment portfolio for 2022/23;
 - A review of compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2022/23.

- 2.7 The Council approved the 2022/23 Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) at its meeting on 3rd March 2022. The Council's stated investment strategy is to prudently manage an investment policy achieving first of all, security (protecting the capital sum from loss), liquidity (keeping money readily available for expenditure when needed), and to consider what yield can be obtained consistent with those priorities.
- 2.8 The total cash and deposit balance as at the end of 30 September 2022 was £115m. The current forecast of interest income receivable for 2022/23 is £0.938m against a budget of £0.495m. With the Bank of England base rate rising steadily since December 2021 coupled with the recent volatile market conditions driven by global political events interest rates and therefore income returns have increased significantly.
- 2.9 The Council's gross debt is £109.01m at 30 September 2022 and the average rate of interest is 5.87%. Out of the total debt, £26.5m will mature between now and March 2025. Based on the council capital programme the council will make new long-term borrowings if needed.
- 2.10 The Council's stated borrowing strategy is to finance long term borrowing from cash balances to the extent that reserves allow in addition to external borrowing.
- 2.11 Monthly Treasury meetings are held to discuss issues and to review the performance of the investments. Part of these meetings is to establish a position on whether the Council will go to the market to seek external borrowing or to continue funding its financial obligations through internal cash balances.
- 2.12 So far this year the decision has been not to borrow externally. This is mainly due to the fact the Council at this time does not need to borrow for any significant capital projects. PWLB interest rates are steadily increasing and the cost of carry will be a factor in making the decision. The decision not to borrow has been further influenced by the availability of cash balances and expected future capital expenditure. This decision is reviewed every month as part of the monthly treasury meeting.
- 2.13 We are pleased to report that all treasury management activity undertaken between 1 April 2022 and 30 September 2022 period complied with the approved strategy, the CIPFA Code of Practice, and the relevant legislative provisions.
- 2.14 The key drivers for an effective treasury strategy are security, liquidity and yield management. A robust cash flow forecast is in place and is continuously reviewed to take account of the funding requirements both operational and major programme financing. This will better inform the borrowing and investment decisions providing an opportunity to review the budgeted investment income level.

Treasury Management Performance

2.15 The investment balance held as at the 30 September 2022 stood at £115 million and the average rate of return on these investments was 1.45%. The forecast full year interest receivable income is £0.938m set against a budget of £0.495m.

2.16 The table below shows how the cash flow has moved for the half year and the projected cash flow for the next six months.

	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Proj	Proj	Proj	Proj	Proj	Proj
	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Opening Balance	23.17	32.32	30.03	30.73	38.77	27.82	8.22	9.60	9.93	11.85	13.95	3.97
Total Payments	-77.23	-66.66	-57.49	-68.18	-60.00	-72.49	-66.86	-61.96	-61.58	-72.35	-61.55	-62.04
Total Receipts	85.69	66.05	59.17	78.67	50.76	55.74	70.08	65.07	65.07	75.16	52.61	52.61
Capital Expenditure (projected)	0.69	-1.69	-0.98	-2.45	-1.71	-2.86	-1.84	-2.77	-1.57	-0.71	-1.04	-6.09
Net position (balance in the bank)	32.32	30.03	30.73	38.77	27.82	8.22	9.60	9.93	11.85	13.95	3.97	-11.55
Money Market investment	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00
Total Cash (bank + MMF)	82.32	80.03	80.73	88.77	77.82	58.22	59.60	59.93	61.85	63.95	53.97	38.45
0- 3 months Investments	20.00	10.00	0.00	5.00	15.00	15.00						
3- 6 months Investments	20.00	25.00	25.00	30.00	30.00	40.00						
6- 9 months Investments	0.00	20.00	30.00	20.00	10.00	0.00						
9-12 Months	20.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	60.00	60.00	60.00	60.00	40.00	40.00
CCLA- Property investment (3-4months liquidity)	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
Total Cash Position	152.32	145.03	145.73	153.77	142.82	123.22	129.60	129.93	131.85	133.95	103.97	88.45

2.17 The table overleaf sets out the key performance indicators of our treasury management activities and the position as at 30 September 2022. Each indicator has been RAG rated for ease of reference.

Indicator Description	Agreed Performance or target	Status at 30 September 2022	RAG Status
Borrowing Limits for the years 2022/23			
Authorised Limit	£241m	£235m	
Operational Limit	£206m	£200m	
Security: average credit rating			
Portfolio average credit rating	A-	A-	
Compliance with CLG Non-specified investments Limits			
Total investments in Money Markets Fund (MMF)* increased to £100m at Sept 2021 Council meeting	£100m	£50m	
Total of other Pooled Funds	£10m	£10m	
Budgeted Investment Return			
Return on Investments	0.50%	1.45%	
Liquidity: cash available			
Total cash available without borrowing	£10m	£72m	
Total cash available including borrowing (cash + under borrowing)	£20m	£104m	
Deposit Interest rate exposure			
Fixed rate exposures	No limit	£55m	
Variable rate exposures	£100m	0	
Maturity structure of borrowing			
Under 12 months	0% - 20%	0.1%	
1 to 2 years	0% - 20%	18%	
2 to 5 Years	0% - 40%	10%	
Five years and within 10 years	0% - 20%	1%	
10 to 20 years	0% - 30%	11%	
20 to 30 years	0% - 50%	19%	
30 to 40 years	0% - 70%	41%	
Principal sums invested for periods longer than 365 days			
Investments longer than 365 but less than 2 years	£0m	£0m	

3.0 Risk Management and Creditworthiness Policy

3.1 This Council applies the creditworthiness service provided by Link Group. This service employs a sophisticated modelling approach utilising credit ratings from the three main credit rating agencies - Fitch, Moody's and Standard and Poor's. The credit ratings of counterparties are supplemented with the following overlays:

- Credit watches and credit outlooks from credit rating agencies;
- CDS spreads to give early warning of likely changes in credit ratings;
- Sovereign ratings to select counterparties from only the most creditworthy countries.

3.2 This modelling approach combines credit ratings, credit Watches and credit Outlooks in a weighted scoring system which is then combined with an overlay of CDS spreads for which the end product is a series of colour coded bands which indicate the relative creditworthiness of counterparties. These colour codes are used by the Council to determine the suggested duration for investments. The Council will therefore use counterparties within the following durational bands:

Y	Pi1	Pi2	P	B	O	R	G	N/C
1	1.25	1.5	2	3	4	5	6	7
Up to 5yrs	Up to 5yrs	Up to 5yrs	Up to 2yrs	Up to 1yr	Up to 1yr	Up to 6mths	Up to 100days	No Colour

	Colour (and long term rating where applicable)	Money Limit	Time Limit
Banks	yellow	£25m	5yrs
Banks	purple	£25m	2 yrs
Banks	orange	£25m	1 yr
Banks – part nationalised	blue	£25m	1 yr
Banks	red	£10m	6 mths
Banks	green	£5m	100 days
Banks	No colour	Not to be used	
Other institutions limit	-	£5m	1yrs
Government (DMADF)		unlimited	6 months
Local authorities	Yellow	£35m	5yrs
	Fund rating	Money Limit	Time Limit
Money market funds (maximum 5 Funds, £20m per Fund)	AAA	£100m	Instant
Ultra-Short Dated Bond funds with a credit score of 1.25	Dark pink / AAA	£25m	Instant
Ultra-Short Dated Bond funds with a credit score of 1.5	Light pink / AAA	£10m	Instant

4. CAPITAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2022/23 – 2025/26

- 4.1 The Council is required to calculate various indicators for the next three years. The aim of prudential indicators is to ensure that the Council's capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable. The prudential indicators are calculated for the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) period and are linked to the CIPFA Prudential Code and TM Code of Practice. The indicators relate to capital expenditure, external debt and treasury management.
- 4.2 The Council will monitor performance against the indicators and prepare indicators based on the Statement of Accounts (SoA) at year end. Actuals are calculated from the SoAs with estimates based on the Capital programme.

Capital Expenditure

- 4.3 The Council's capital expenditure plans are fundamental to its treasury management activity. The output of the capital expenditure plans are reflected in prudential indicators, which are designed to provide Council members an overview and confirm the impact of capital expenditure plans.
- 4.4 This indicator is a summary of the Council's capital expenditure plans, both those agreed previously, and those forming part of this budget cycle as reported in the MTFS. Environment and Regeneration figures include projects relating to Public Health programmes. However these are fully funded and have no impact on the Council's net financing need for the year or borrowing requirement

Please find below the capital expenditure forecast (as at September 2022).

Capital Forecast	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	20245/26
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Corporate Services	2,260	4,358	16,658	8,502	11,538
Community & Housing	1,275	812	782	2228.008	1302.882
Children Schools & Families	6,682	7,010	8,380	8,449	3,751
Environment & Regeneration	11,559	11,371	10,879	6,802	20,301
Total	21,776	23,552	36,698	25,982	36,893

- 4.5 The above financing need excludes other long-term liabilities, such as PFI and leasing arrangements which already include borrowing instruments.

4.6 The table below shows how the capital expenditure plans are being financed by revenue or capital resources. A shortfall of resources means a borrowing need. The capital programme expenditure figures used in calculating the financing costs have been adjusted for slippage in the programme as at September 2022.

Capital Expenditure	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	Estimate £'000	Estimate £'000	Estimate £'000	Estimate £'000	Estimate £'000
Capital Budget*	21,776	32,428	39,847	22,761	40,066
Slippage	0	(8,876)	(3,149)	3,221	(3,173)
Leasing Budgets	0	0	0	(600)	0
Total Capital Expenditure	21,776	23,552	36,698	25,382	36,893
Financed by:					
Capital Receipts	3,448	900	900	900	500
Capital Grants & Contributions	14,860	13,868	24,979	14,930	6,163
Capital Reserves	0	0	0	0	0
Revenue Provisions	3,469	270	188	24	4
Other Financing Sources	0	0	0	0	0
Net financing need for the year (a)	0	8,514	10,631	9,528	30,226

* Includes finance lease expenditure table in Treasury Management Strategy which excludes this expenditure.

5.0 ECONOMIC UPDATE ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1 The second quarter of 2022/23 saw:

- GDP revised upwards in Q1 2022/23 to +0.2% q/q from -0.1%, which means the UK economy has avoided recession for the time being;
- Signs of economic activity losing momentum as production fell due to rising energy prices;
- CPI inflation ease to 9.9% y/y in August, having been 9.0% in April, but domestic price pressures showing little sign of abating in the near-term;
- The unemployment rate fall to a 48-year low of 3.6% due to a large shortfall in labour supply;
 - Bank Rate rise by 100bps over the quarter, taking Bank Rate to 2.25% with further rises to come;
 - Gilt yields surge and sterling fall following the “fiscal event” of the new Prime Minister and Chancellor on 23rd September.

- 5.2 The UK economy grew by 0.2% q/q in Q1 2022/23, though revisions to historic data left it below pre-pandemic levels.
- 5.3 There are signs of higher energy prices creating more persistent downward effects in economic activity. Both industrial production (-0.3% m/m) and construction output (-0.8% m/m) fell in July 2022 for a second month in a row. Although some of this was probably due to the heat wave at the time, manufacturing output fell in some of the most energy intensive sectors (e.g., chemicals), pointing to signs of higher energy prices weighing on production. With the drag on real activity from high inflation having grown in recent months, GDP is at risk of contracting through the autumn and winter months.
- 5.4 The fall in the composite PMI from 49.6 in August to a 20-month low preliminary reading of 48.4 in September points to a fall in GDP of around 0.2% q/q in Q3 and consumer confidence is at a record low. Retail sales volumes fell by 1.6% m/m in August, which was the ninth fall in 10 months. That left sales volumes in August just 0.5% above their pre-Covid level and 3.3% below their level at the start of the year. There are also signs that households are spending their excess savings in response to high prices. Indeed, cash in households' bank accounts rose by £3.2bn in August, which was below the £3.9bn rise in July and much smaller than the 2019 average monthly rate of £4.6bn.
- 5.5 The labour market remained exceptionally tight. Data for July and August provided further evidence that the weaker economy is leading to a cooling in labour demand. Labour Force Survey (LFS) employment rose by 40,000 in the three months to July (the smallest rise since February). But a renewed rise in inactivity of 154,000 over the same period meant that the unemployment rate fell from 3.8% in June to a new 48-year low of 3.6%. The single-month data showed that inactivity rose by 354,000 in July itself and there are now 904,000 more inactive people aged 16+ compared to before the pandemic in February 2020. The number of vacancies has started to level off from recent record highs but there have been few signs of a slowing in the upward momentum on wage growth. Indeed, in July, the 3my/y rate of average earnings growth rose from 5.2% in June to 5.5%.
- 5.6 CPI inflation eased from 10.1% in July to 9.9% in August, though inflation has not peaked yet. The easing in August was mainly due to a decline in fuel prices reducing fuel inflation from 43.7% to 32.1%. And with the oil price now just below \$90pb, we would expect to see fuel prices fall further in the coming months.
- 5.7 However, utility price inflation is expected to add 0.7% to CPI inflation in October when the Ofgem unit price cap increases to, typically, £2,500 per household (prior to any benefit payments). But, as the government has frozen utility prices at that level for two years, energy price inflation will fall sharply after October and have a big downward influence on CPI inflation.
- 5.8 Nonetheless, the rise in services CPI inflation from 5.7% y/y in July to a 30-year high of 5.9% y/y in August suggests that domestic price pressures are showing little sign of abating. A lot of that is being driven by the tight labour market and strong wage growth. CPI inflation is expected to peak close to 10.4% in November and, with the supply of workers set to remain unusually low, the tight labour market will keep underlying inflationary pressures strong until early next year.
- 5.9 During H1 2022, there has been a change of both Prime Minister and Chancellor. The new team have made a step change in government policy. The government's huge fiscal loosening from its proposed significant tax cuts will add to existing domestic inflationary pressures and will potentially leave a legacy of higher interest rates and public debt. Whilst the government's utility price freeze, which could cost up to £150bn (5.7% of GDP) over 2

years, will reduce peak inflation from 14.5% in January next year to 10.4% in November this year, the long list of tax measures announced at the “fiscal event” adds up to a loosening in fiscal policy relative to the previous government’s plans of £44.8bn (1.8% of GDP) by 2026/27. These included the reversal of April’s national insurance tax on 6th November, the cut in the basic rate of income tax from 20p to 19p in April 2023, the cancellation of next April’s corporation tax rise, the cut to stamp duty and the removal of the 45p tax rate, although the 45p tax rate cut announcement has already been reversed.

- 5.10 Fears that the government has no fiscal anchor on the back of these announcements has meant that the pound has weakened again, adding further upward pressure to interest rates. Whilst the pound fell to a record low of \$1.035 on the Monday following the government’s “fiscal event”, it has since recovered to around \$1.12. That is due to hopes that the Bank of England will deliver a very big rise in interest rates at the policy meeting on 3rd November and the government will lay out a credible medium-term plan in the near term. This was originally expected as part of the fiscal statement on 23rd November but has subsequently been moved forward to an expected release date in October. Nevertheless, with concerns over a global recession growing, there are downside risks to the pound.
- 5.11 The MPC has now increased interest rates seven times in as many meetings in 2022 and has raised rates to their highest level since the Global Financial Crisis. Even so, coming after the Fed and ECB raised rates by 75 basis points (bps) in their most recent meetings, the Bank of England’s latest 50 basis points hike looks relatively dovish. However, the UK’s status as a large importer of commodities, which have jumped in price, means that households in the UK are now facing a much larger squeeze on their real incomes.
- 5.12 Since the fiscal event on 23rd September, we now expect the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to increase interest rates further and faster, from 2.25% currently to a peak of 5.00% in February 2023. The combination of the government’s fiscal loosening, the tight labour market and sticky inflation expectations means we expect the MPC to raise interest rates by 100bps at the policy meetings in November (to 3.25%) and 75 basis points in December (to 4%) followed by further 50 basis point hikes in February and March (to 5.00%). Market expectations for what the MPC will do are volatile. If Bank Rate climbs to these levels the housing market looks very vulnerable, which is one reason why the peak in our forecast is lower than the peak of 5.50% - 5.75% priced into the financial markets at present.
- 5.13 Throughout 2022/23, gilt yields have been on an upward trend. They were initially caught up in the global surge in bond yields triggered by the surprisingly strong rise in CPI inflation in the US in May. The rises in two-year gilt yields (to a peak of 2.37% on 21st June) and 10-year yields (to a peak of 2.62%) took them to their highest level since 2008 and 2014 respectively. However, the upward trend was exceptionally sharply at the end of September as investors demanded a higher risk premium and expected faster and higher interest rate rises to offset the government’s extraordinary fiscal stimulus plans. The 30-year gilt yield rose from 3.60% to 5.10% following the “fiscal event”, which threatened financial stability by forcing pension funds to sell assets into a falling market to meet cash collateral requirements. In response, the Bank did two things. First, it postponed its plans to start selling some of its quantitative easing (QE) gilt holdings until 31st October. Second, it committed to buy up to £65bn of long-term gilts to “restore orderly market conditions” until 14th October. In other words, the Bank is restarting QE, although for financial stability reasons rather than monetary policy reasons.
- 5.14 Since the Bank’s announcement on 28th September, the 30-year gilt yield has fallen back from 5.10% to 3.83%. The 2-year gilt yield dropped from 4.70% to 4.30% and the 10-year yield fell back from 4.55% to 4.09%.

- 5.15 There is a possibility that the Bank continues with QE at the long-end beyond 14th October or it decides to delay quantitative tightening beyond 31st October, even as it raises interest rates. So far at least, investors seem to have taken the Bank at its word that this is not a change in the direction of monetary policy nor a step towards monetary financing of the government's deficit. But instead, that it is a temporary intervention with financial stability in mind.
- 5.16 After a shaky start to the year, the S&P 500 and FTSE 100 climbed in the first half of Q2 2022/23 before falling to their lowest levels since November 2020 and July 2021 respectively. The S&P 500 is 7.2% below its level at the start of the quarter, whilst the FTSE 100 is 5.2% below it as the fall in the pound has boosted the value of overseas earnings in the index. The decline has, in part, been driven by the rise in global real yields and the resulting downward pressure on equity valuations as well as concerns over economic growth leading to a deterioration in investor risk appetite.

6.0 Interest rate forecasts

- 6.1 The Council has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisors and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012.
- 6.2 The latest forecast on 27th September sets out a view that both short and long-dated interest rates will be elevated for some little while, as the Bank of England seeks to squeeze inflation out of the economy, whilst the government is providing a package of fiscal loosening to try and protect households and businesses from the ravages of ultra-high wholesale gas and electricity prices.
- 6.3 The increase in PWLB rates reflects a broad sell-off in sovereign bonds internationally but more so the disaffection investors have with the position of the UK public finances after September's "fiscal event". To that end, the MPC has tightened short-term interest rates with a view to trying to slow the economy sufficiently to keep the secondary effects of inflation – as measured by wage rises – under control, but its job is that much harder now.
- 6.4 Our PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps, calculated as gilts plus 80bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012.

Link Group Interest Rate View 27.09.22												
	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25
BANK RATE	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.75	3.25	3.00	2.75	2.75	2.50
3 month ave earnings	4.50	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.80	3.30	3.00	2.80	2.80	2.50
6 month ave earnings	4.70	5.20	5.10	5.00	4.60	4.10	3.90	3.40	3.10	3.00	2.90	2.60
12 month ave earnings	5.30	5.30	5.20	5.00	4.70	4.20	4.00	3.50	3.20	3.10	3.00	2.70
5 yr PWLB	5.00	4.90	4.70	4.50	4.20	3.90	3.70	3.50	3.40	3.30	3.20	3.20
10 yr PWLB	4.90	4.70	4.60	4.30	4.10	3.80	3.60	3.50	3.40	3.30	3.20	3.20
25 yr PWLB	5.10	4.90	4.80	4.50	4.30	4.10	3.90	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.50	3.40
50 yr PWLB	4.80	4.60	4.50	4.20	4.00	3.80	3.60	3.40	3.30	3.30	3.20	3.10

- 7. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**
Regular discussion with Treasury consultants and peer group.
- 8. TIMETABLE**
Throughout the year
- 9. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**
Covered in the main report.
- 10. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**
There are no legal implications arising out of the contents of the report and Recommendation B is permissible under Section 9E of the Local Government Act 2000.
- 11. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATION**
none
- 12. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**
none
- 13. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**
None
- 14. APPENDICES-**
None

Committee: Council

Date: 16 November 2022

Subject: Appointment of an Independent Person

Lead officer: Louise Round, Monitoring Officer

Lead member: Councillor Mike Brunt, Chair, Standards and General Purposes Committee

Contact officer: Amy Dumitrescu, Democracy Services Manager, 0208 545 3357

Recommendations:

- A. That Council agrees to appoint Katy Willison for a further three year period as an Independent Person for the purposes of Chapter 7 of the Localism Act. The Independent Person will be invited to attend meetings of the Standards and General Purposes Committee in that capacity.
 - B. That the appointment is made for a period of three years from 6 February 2023.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report seeks the Council's approval of the appointment of one Independent Person which we are required to appoint under Chapter 7 of the 2011 Localism Act.
- 1.2. The appointment was agreed by the Standards and General Purposes Committee at its meeting on 13 October 2022.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. Independent Persons are appointed for a maximum of two terms of three years. Katy Willison was appointed as an Independent Person in February 2020, with her term due to end on 6 February 2023.
- 2.2. Following confirmation from Ms Willison in discussion with the Monitoring Officer that she wishes to serve for a further term, the recommendation to approve this appointment for another three years was agreed at the Standards and General Purposes Committee meeting on 13 October 2022.
- 2.3. The functions of the Independent Person, set out in the Council's constitution are:
 - The Independent Person must be consulted and views taken into account before the authority takes a decision on any allegation it has decided to investigate;
 - The Independent Person may be consulted by the authority in circumstances where the authority is not taking a decision whether to investigate the allegation;
 - The Independent Person may be consulted by a member of the authority against whom an allegation has been made.
- 2.4. The Independent Person will also be invited to attend meetings of the Standards and General Purposes Committee in that capacity.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1. The Council must appoint at least one Independent Person.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. None.

5 TIMETABLE

5.1. The appointment, if agreed, would be made by Council on 16 November 2022 and will take effect on 6 February 2023 when the current term ends for a period of three years, allowing the two terms to run consecutively.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. Independent Persons are paid £100 per meeting. The recommendations in this report will not lead to any increase in the overall budget for allowances.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. See body of the report.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. None specific to this report.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None specific to this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. None.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

11.1. None.

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. None.

Committee: Council

Date: 16 November 2022

Subject: Changes to Membership of Committees and related matters

Lead officer: Hannah Doody, Chief Executive

Contact officer: Amy Dumitrescu, Democracy Services Manager

Recommendations:

That the Council:

1. Notes the changes to the membership of Committees that were approved under delegated authority since the last meeting of the Council.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report asks Council to note the changes made to committee memberships under delegated authority since the publication of the agenda for the last ordinary Council meeting on 21 September 2022 (originally scheduled for 14 September 2022).

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. The following membership changes have been made by the Chief Executive under their delegated authority in accordance with section 1.4 of part 3F of the Constitution:

2.2.

Committee	Member resigning	Replaced by	Date
Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel	Cllr Thomas Barlow	Cllr Max Austin	5 September 2022

3 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 3.1 None for the purposes of this report.

4 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. None for the purposes of this report.

5 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The information regarding membership changes in this report complies with legal and statutory requirements. Council is required to accept nominations made by political groups.
- 5.2. The Housing and Local Government Act 1989 contains provisions relating to the political balance on committees, the duty to allocate seats to political groups and the duty to give effect to allocations.

6 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

6.1. None for the purposes of this report.

7 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

7.1. None for the purposes of this report.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1. N/A

9 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

9.1 None.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Documents from the authorised officer confirming approval of the membership changes agreed under delegated authority.

Committee: Council

Date: 16 November 2022

Subject: Petitions

Lead officer: Louise Round, Interim Executive Director Innovation and Change

Lead member: Leader of the Council, Councillor Ross Garrod

Contact officer: Amy Dumitrescu, Democracy Services Manager

Recommendation:

1. That Council receive petitions (if any) in accordance with Part 4A, paragraph 18.1 of the Council's Constitution.
 2. That Council notes the responses provided to the petitions submitted at the meeting held on 21 September 2022.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report invites Council to receive petitions in accordance with Part 4A, paragraph 18.1 of the Council's Constitution.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. At the meeting held on 21 September 2022, the three petitions listed below were submitted and the responses are set out below. Any petitions received by Council are referred to respective departments with responsible officers asked to advise the presenting member in each case of the way in which the petition is to be progressed.

Petition One

A petition was submitted by Councillor Williscroft which stated "Against Planning App 22/Po440. To Save our Long standing local shops in Grand Drive from disappearing due to unnecessary redevelopment".

Officer Response

The petition has been added to the Planning Application file for this application and will be addressed in the Officer report.

Petition Two

A petition was submitted by Councillor Galea entitled Match Day Parking which stated "Whilst there is a need for extended controlled parking restrictions as a result of the return of AFC Wimbledon to the area, the current restrictions apply even when there are no events on. These restrictions have impacted friends and family visiting, especially during weekends. The current restrictions have also been ineffective during evening events at AFC Wimbledon Stadium.

We the undersigned, call upon Merton Council to change the controlled parking zone H1 from 8.30am – 8pm everyday to 8.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday and 9.30am – 9.30pm on match days."

Officer Response

During September 2020 we carried out an informal consultation to extend the operational period of the zone in response to a petition from the residents. A further consultation in the form of a statutory consultation was carried out in February 2021. The changes / current operational periods were introduced as a direct result of majority support. The reports that are available on the website sets out the outcome of the consultations. <https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/parking/consultations/cpz/h1-cpz-kohat-road-area>

It should be noted that part of the request / reason for the change was to protect the residents not just from the events but from those within the residential units of the development. The Council can programme the petition for an informal consultation to reduce the operational periods but it is not possible to adhere to the request regarding having extended restrictions only during the various events. The Council simply does not have the required resources or the funding that would be required to manage the requested restrictions which are extremely resource intensive in terms of both staff and funding. This was explained to the those few residents who pursued this proposal at the time.

Petition Three

A petition was submitted by Councillor Foley entitled “Better, brighter street lighting and identifying black spots where you feel unsafe in Merton Park”. A number of locations were identified by residents including Dorset Road and the footpath between Morden Station and Kenley Road.

Officer Response

All roads that are maintained by The London Borough of Merton and have associated street lighting are lit to the required standards as outlined in BS5489-1:2020. The minimum lighting class that is acceptable in Merton under this British Standard is P3.

In 2017 and 2018 a number of streets/locations within Merton Park Ward (including Dorset Road and the footpath between Morden Station and Kenley Road) formed part of Merton’s energy and carbon reduction initiative, whereby we installed LED retro-fit modules into existing lantern shells.

Unfortunately, a few failures started to occur after 24 months, this was due to a production fault and therefore meant that these failed lanterns went into a dimming mode where light output was reduced by 50%, this included Dorset Road. However, I can confirm that in August 2022 we have now replaced these failed units with brand new LED lanterns which are operating as expected.

With regards to the trees, I have spoken to our Greenspaces team whom maintain the street trees and they confirmed that they instructed their contractor

to undertake tree works to cut back branches around lampposts in Dorset Road which has been completed. A site visit of the footpath in question will be undertaken and assessed to see if any trees need to be cut back

- 2.6 Members are invited to present petitions at this meeting, and a response will be provided to the next ordinary Council meeting in February 2023.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. None for the purposes of this report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. None for the purpose of this report.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. None for the purpose of this report.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. None for the purpose of this report.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. None for the purpose of this report.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. None for the purpose of this report.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None for the purpose of this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11 APPENDICES

- 11.1. None

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. None.

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