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## COUNCIL

1 FEBRUARY 2023

(7.15 pm - 10.14 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 Joan Henry, 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 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 Chessie Flack, Councillor Kirsten Galea,  
Councillor Ross Garrod, Councillor Jil Hall,  
Councillor Susie Hicks, Councillor Dan Johnston,  
Councillor Andrew Judge, Councillor Usaama Kaweesa,  
Councillor Samantha MacArthur, Councillor Gill Manly,  
Councillor Stephen Mercer, 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)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hayes, Hicks and Pearce.

Councillor 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 16 November 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 updates on Holocaust Memorial Day, LGBT+ History Month, Galpins Road and that Merton Council was now a Living Wage accredited employer.

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. There were no supplementary questions.

#### 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 "To ensure a clean and environmentally sustainable Borough with inclusive open spaces where people can come together and enjoy a variety of natural life" was moved by Councillor Irons and seconded by Councillor Alambritis.

The Liberal Democrat amendment to the report was moved by Councillor MacArthur and seconded by Councillor Hall.

The Conservative amendment to the report was moved by Councillor Austin and seconded by Councillor Paterson.

Councillors MacArthur, Gould, Galea, Wilson, Howard, Charles and Neaverson also spoke on the item.

The Liberal Democrat amendment was put to the vote and fell: Votes for – 25, Against – 28, Abstentions – 0.

The Conservative amendment was put to the vote and fell: Votes for – 25, Against – 28, Abstentions – 0.

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)

There were no Strategic Theme motions submitted.

8 REPORTS FROM WIMBLEDON COMMUNITY FORUM: 30 NOVEMBER 2022 (Agenda Item 8)

Councillor Kohler presented the report which was received by the Council.

9 REPORT FROM COMMUNITY FORUM: RAYNES PARK 7 DECEMBER 2022 (Agenda Item 9)

Councillor Oliver presented the report which was received by the Council.

10 NOTICE OF MOTION - LIBERAL DEMOCRAT MOTION (Agenda Item 10)

The motion was moved by Councillor Flack and seconded by Councillor Gould.

Councillors Cooper-Marbiah, Dollimore and Cox spoke on the item.

RESOLVED:

1. Council notes that: a. In June 2022, a Plan International UK survey found that nearly one in four girls in London were unable to afford period products since the start of the year, which was higher than the national rate. b. The charity found that girls across the country were cutting down on food and school supplies in order to afford period products. c. Surrey County Council, Oxford City Council and Southwark Council have all set up or agreed to schemes to provide free period products. d. In a YouGov survey undertaken last year two thirds of Britons supported making it a legal requirement for local authorities to provide free period products.

2. Council believes that:

a. No-one should experience period poverty.

3. Council resolves to:

a. Ask Cabinet to look at ways to provide free, and where possible sustainable, period products in all the council's public accessible toilets and buildings including the civic centre, libraries and community centres.

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

The Mayor announced a change to the agenda order and advised that Item 11 would be taken at the end of the agenda.

Prior to this agenda item being heard, it was agreed that the item would be taken in closed session. The public were therefore excluded from this item under Paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as it was likely that the debate would involve reference to commercially sensitive information.

The minutes for this item are therefore detailed within the exempt minute.

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

The motion was moved by Councillor Christie and seconded by Councillor Stringer.

The Liberal Democrat amendment as set out in agenda item 19 was moved by Councillor Fairclough and seconded by Councillor Flack.

Councillors McLean and Whelton also spoke on the item.

The Liberal Democrat amendment was put to the vote and fell: Votes for – 23, Against – 28, Abstentions – 2.

The substantive motion was then put to the vote and carried: Votes for – 28, Against – 23, Abstentions – 2.

RESOLVED:

Council notes that:

- The Conservative government crashed the UK economy, and they now want to make Merton residents pay for it by forcing councils to consider drastic savings and cuts to crucial services that residents rely on to pay for Conservative incompetence.
- Twelve years of Conservative austerity, supported by the Liberal Democrats in coalition, has decimated funding for local councils – with the real terms equivalent of 60p out of every £1 being slashed from council budgets since 2010.
- Despite the cuts which have been imposed on us by central government over the last twelve years, our fantastic and hardworking council staff, working together with our partners and our incredible Voluntary and Community Sector, have remained

completely committed to delivering for the residents of Merton and helping the most vulnerable.

- When Labour took control of Merton in 2010 the council faced an immediate budget gap of £70 million, and the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition took away half of our grant funding. Despite twelve years of austerity, sound financial management from Labour has allowed this council to pass a balanced budget each year, and kept council tax lower than all of our neighbouring outer-London boroughs.
- Conservative economic mismanagement, soaring energy costs, rising bills and inflation reaching a 41 year high, mean Merton is now under unprecedented pressure to balance our budget. This is on top of a significant loss of income from fees and charges since the pandemic, and yet another real-terms cut in funding by the Conservative government.
- The cross-party Local Government Association has long highlighted that council tax rises, particularly the adult social care precept, have never been the solution to the long term pressures faced by councils.

Council welcomes:

- The work of councillors and officers to identify the necessary savings to bridge the funding gap Merton Council is facing, while protecting service delivery. And that these proposals have been produced in line with our values.
- That the Autumn Statement from government in November last year went some way to plugging budget holes, but not nearly far enough, and lacked the long-term sustainable funding plan local government needed.
- The increase in local government core spending power announced in the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023/24, which will help to alleviate the pressures put on council finances by the government's failure to properly tackle rising inflation, growing demand for social care, and the cost of living emergency. However, this government's funding plans expect councils to raise council tax by the maximum amount permitted without a referendum in order to meet the gaps in funding, effectively forcing councils to raise tax during a cost of living emergency to cover the government's unwillingness to fund councils properly.
- The support this Labour Council is giving Merton residents, including one of the most generous council tax support schemes in the UK, a £60 cost of living voucher for 10,000 residents in receipt of council tax support, paid from the Council's £2 million Cost of Living Fund, and the proposed 1% discount on council tax bills for council taxpayers living in Bands A-D.
- The recommendations of Labour's Commission on the UK's Future, chaired by Gordon Brown, that decisions should be taken as close as meaningfully and practicably possible to the people affected by them and with longer-term financial settlements for local government, in order to provide certainty and move away from the model of ad hoc bidding for central government funding pots.

Council resolves:

- That the Leader of the Council should write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and call on the government to take responsibility for their reckless mismanagement of the economy, to stop taking it out on Merton residents, and to provide the long-term sustainable funding that councils so desperately need to deliver the vital services and support that people in our communities, especially the most vulnerable, rely on.

- To ensure that measures taken in Merton Council's budget process prioritise the protection of service delivery, in particular those which support the most vulnerable in our communities and support our residents through the cost of living emergency.
- To ensure that Merton maintains comprehensive council tax support provision to assist those households who cannot afford to pay.

### 13 NOTICE OF MOTION - CONSERVATIVE MOTION (Agenda Item 13)

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

The Liberal Democrat amendment as set out in agenda item 19 was moved by Councillor Willis and seconded by Councillor Bokhari.

The Liberal Democrat amendment was put to the vote and fell: Votes for – 17, Against – 35, Abstentions – 1.

The Labour amendment as set out in agenda item 19 was moved by Councillor Kirby and seconded by Councillor Attawar.

The Labour amendment was put to the vote and carried: Votes for – 28, Against – 24, Abstentions – 1.

The substantive motion as amended was then put to the vote and carried: Votes for – 28, Against – 24, Abstentions – 1.

### RESOLVED:

This Council notes:

- That the Mayor of London has led a concerted campaign to tackle toxic air pollution, to protect Londoners, including residents in Merton, from diseases due to air pollution over the next 30 years;
- The Mayor of London's laudable aim to drastically reduce the cost to the NHS and the social care system of air pollution currently running at £10.4 billion;
- The Mayor of London has already taken ground-breaking action with his support for ULEZ in central London and this has reduced harmful pollution levels by almost a half and because of this, 4 million Londoners are now breathing cleaner air; and

Whereas:

- The Mayor of London has listened to Merton Council during the comprehensive consultation over the expansion of ULEZ to outer London and has provided more help for residents during this Cost of Living emergency;
- The Mayor of London has introduced the most generous scrappage scheme yet - £110 million – to support Merton residents on lower incomes, disabled residents, micro businesses and charities to scrap or retrofit their non-compliant vehicles;
- The Mayor of London has repeatedly kept the GLA Assembly, London boroughs, including Merton, and the press informed about the ULEZ consultation and noted that the consultation was hijacked by Fair Fuel UK, a vested interest group using tactics to manipulate the results of a fair consultation;

- 59% of responses to the Mayor's consultation on ULEZ expansion agreed that more needed to be done to tackle toxic air.

Therefore:

This Council calls upon the cabinet to:

- Work with the Mayor of London and TfL so that the ULEZ expansion is supported by a wide-ranging engagement with residents on the detail of the scrappage scheme and on the exemptions for disabled drivers and community transport, meaning no impact from ULEZ as a result of these exemptions until 2025 and 2027 respectively;
- Write to TfL with their suggestions for bus route extensions as part of the Mayor of London's plans, announced in November 2022, for improving the bus network in outer London, with over 1 million kilometres added to the network through planned new routes and improvements.
- Work with TfL to understand any requirements for the installation of any ULEZ infrastructure in outer London;
- Support regular review and monitoring into the operation of the scrappage scheme so that it is sensitive to the impact of the Cost of Living emergency on Merton's residents.

#### 14 COUNCIL CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2023/24 (Agenda Item 14)

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

RESOLVED:

- A. That Council approved the Calendar of Meetings at Appendix A
- B. That Council approved the dates of Council meetings for 2023-2026 in Appendix B

#### 15 CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND RELATED MATTERS (Agenda Item 15)

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

RESOLVED:

That the Council:

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

#### 16 PETITIONS (Agenda Item 16)

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

There were no petitions submitted at the meeting.

RESOLVED

That Council

1. Notes the update on the petitions received at the last meeting,
- 17 BUSINESS FOR THE NEXT ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL  
(Agenda Item 17)

That the Strategic Theme for the next ordinary meeting of the Council, being held on 19 April 2023 shall be Supporting residents who are most in need and promote the safety and wellbeing of all our communities.