

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:

Civic Pride

- 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

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
- 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.