

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 the consultation process for the Local Plan and as a result building on the Broadway is kept small.

A resident asked if 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