

RAYNES PARK COMMUNITY FORUM
7 DECEMBER 2022

(7.15 pm - 9.15 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor John Oliver (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held in Raynes Park Library and chaired by Councillor John Oliver with Tony Edwards from the Raynes Park Association (RPA). Around 20 residents and four councillors attended. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 2)

Traffic safety was raised by resident in several locations. The resident asked if prevention barriers could be installed either side of Lower Downs Road Bridge to prevent further collisions. Chris Larkman from the RPA said Network Rail have looked at options in the past and ruled out barriers, however replacing a missing sign would be helpful. Councillors can raise this with Network Rail. Another resident said an option would be to close Lower Downs Road to through traffic.

The resident also raised the need for a pedestrian crossing at the junction between Kingston Road and Burstow Road due to the dangers caused by cars turning. This would be raised with the highways team. The resident also said the traffic on Grand Drive causes congestion all the way to the station and that parking meters have confusing signage on Approach Road.

A resident said that Raynes Park Library was closed last Monday, including access to toilets and the hall, despite having a group scheduled. It would have been better if notification had been given to the users and volunteers. In addition, a leak in roof was being repaired by engineers. The resident said volunteers needed an emergency number to call and some were considering reviving a Friends Group to work better with the Library staff. Cllr Stringer said this has been raised and some actions have been put in place like giving volunteers emergency contact details. The closure was due to staff sickness.

A resident asked about the Wimbledon Chase station planning application. This has gone to the Design Review Panel.

A resident asked about [Merton Local App](#) take up.

3 WEST BARNES UPDATE (Agenda Item 3)

Cllr Oliver said that the train timetable changing at Mostpur Park, reducing number of trains to London from six to four an hour. Cllr Oliver also said that he was collecting food donations on behalf of the [Community Fridge](#). Cllr Oliver said there would be a Carol service on Sunday at 2.30pm in the Crematorium

Cllr Flack said she had been in touch with Merton Council officers to make sure everyone sleeping rough was receiving support and had been told plans were in place. Cllr Flack said Bushey Road is now a 30mph road and whilst the road has painted signs some of the old 20MPH signs have yet to be changed over. There would be a litter pick at 2pm on Sunday, meeting by the Christmas tree.

Cllr Wilson said she had chased Thames Water about leaks in the area and whilst some have been fixed the one on Durham Road was proving to be more complicated. The work on Trinity place had been paused due to supply issues. There will be a consultation on parking on Kingston Road from mid-Jan to introduce restrictions wherever there are not parking spaces. The Council will be bidding for funding to provide a crossing on Bushey Road.

4 POLICE UPDATE (Agenda Item 4)

The police were not able to attend the meeting.

5 RAILWAY EMBANKMENT (Agenda Item 5)

Elizabeth Lane from the RPA provided an update on the area opposite Boots on the North side of railway. Network Rail (NR) has responded this week to give agreement to access the land. A risk assessment was completed and has been signed off. Elizabeth is getting a community licence to form a group and then will need to provide a Health and Safety briefing for all volunteers and NR will be sending in a team to clear some rubble. Elizabeth said she hoped to be able to move forward with the plan in January or February. Elizabeth has also applied to South Western Railway to adopt the station which has been approved. This means becoming part of the Community Rail Network. An initial grant of £250 will be used for planters on the platform, hopefully in the spring. Elizabeth also hopes to replace the shelves for the community book swap and run a weekly volunteering session to run alongside the embankment scheme.

Future options for the Community Rail Network could include Station in Bloom Awards, celebrating the coronation on 6 May, and the 125th anniversary of Waterloo station in July, to help bring community together. Once these small steps are completed, Elizabeth wants to look bigger projects.

6 GENERAL UPDATES (Agenda Item 6)

Chris Larkman and Tony Edwards gave an update on local issues.

Kiss and Ride – Stephen Hammond has met with Workspace but no further progress
The transfer of land south of the station is stuck between NR and Merton Council

The Parklet – some small damage needs repairing

Tree Strategy – a consultation on a draft strategy has been extended to end of November, the Tree Wardens group and the RPA have made responses. There are more than 31,000 trees to be looked after in Merton. Policies on trees not managed by Merton Council are to follow.

Flooding – the gully sensors are working well, and Thames Water have cleared silt so there was less flooding during recent heavy rainfall. Thames Water are doing a 6-month study on potential solutions including options like rain gardens. Funding has been agreed for this and should report back in July.

A resident said they were disappointed that Merton Council was chopping down trees for Christmas.

7 UPDATE FROM KINGSTON HOSPITAL CHARITY (Agenda Item 7)

Tracey Shaw from [Kingston Hospital Charity](#) gave a presentation on the work of the charity. They are attached to Kingston Hospital and provide benefits to patients over and above NHS services. The charity raises £1-1.5m each year, which is used to help developments for example a new facility for children with cancer. The funding helps the hospital to drive innovation, for example new 3D printing facility for items like hearing aids, and titanium limbs. Currently the charity is raising funds for secure bike storage for staff.

On 5 July 2023 the NHS will be celebrating its 75th anniversary and the charity will be organising celebrations alongside other community organisations. Please [get in touch](#) if you want to be involved.

8 PLANNING UPDATE (Agenda Item 8)

Jon Dingle, Planning Consultant for Access Self-storage gave a presentation on plans for [the Manoplastics site](#). Jon said he had been involved in the site since 2010 and the site has been empty for 10 years. There is planning permission for both self-storage and for accommodation on the site but the new scheme is different.

The new scheme is for a mix of self-storage trade counters, and offices. The building would be set back 8m from road, with space for landscaping and pavements, and 30m away from the Church. There would be one building but in two forms, lower at front, larger to rear. There would be two vehicle access points, self-storage on the left, and trade counters on right. The design will need to make sure that the site can accommodate all the vehicle access needed and this is still a work in progress.

On first floor there would be small studios and workshops for light industry. There would be offices on 2nd and 3rd floors on the front to Kingston Road. The height would be the same as residential plans previously agreed. The small offices would be for local start-ups and Small and Medium Enterprises. The self-storage behind the offices will go up to five floors. The front portion will hide storage facility and add interest to an attractive frontage.

They plan to finalise scheme by early 2023, then submit planning application in late January or early February and then, all being well, start on site in about a year's time. This scheme is more valuable than previously agreed schemes. There is high demand for self-storage and the other uses.

A resident said there are a lot of empty offices and shops in Raynes Park so queried if there really was a demand for additional office space. The resident also said they were concerned about appearance as it does not reflect an Edwardian suburb and should reflect brick-built area. Jon said the debate about design is legitimate, but it is an industrial building and the developer decided it should look like what it is. Access Self-storage is confident in take up of offices, based on demand for their existing supply. As they are new and serviced but affordable and let on a month-by-month basis so more flexible for SMEs than other sites would be.

A resident asked about the housing shortage and the need for more homes, and Jon replied that a private company owns site and wants to maximise their returns. A resident expressed concern about size and bulk of the design and Jon said that the scheme was aligned with the previously approved residential scheme, with same at size at front but not as big at the rear.

A resident asked about the impact on traffic and Jon explained that on an average day there would be around 300 vehicles, cars or small vans. The site would also be designed to be able to take HGVs, but it is likely to be no more than one a week.

A resident said that the signage needs to be discreet, and Jon said that attractive signage is integrated with the building and as the frontage is extremely important there is likely to be signage on the flank walls.

A resident asked about environmental standards including water harvesting, and solar panels. Jon said energy conservation and sustainability will be important but

cannot develop these until we have a basic design to work from. These aspects will be included in the Planning Application.

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

- The LESSA site application has been called in by Secretary of State in October. We do not have a timetable for this process as yet.
- The 'Zero' flats at bottom of Edna Road are nearing completion. There has been some pre-application advice on two sites on Kingston Road.
- There are 11 planning enforcement cases in Raynes Park at the moment, five in relation to not following conditions of granted permission, six involve conducting work without appropriate permission.

9 LONDON ASSEMBLY UPDATE (Agenda Item 9)

Leonie Cooper, Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth, provided an update on the work of the Assembly. The Assembly scrutinises GLA family of organisation including the Metropolitan Police, London Fire Brigade, and Transport for London

Leonie said the leadership of the Met Police has changed from Cressida Dick to Mark Rowley, with the new Commissioner tasked with dealing with the problems of culture with some Met officers.

The new London Fire Brigade commissioner oversaw an [independent review of culture](#) in the Brigade, and this was recently published. The review found the Brigade to be institutionally racist and sexist. The Brigade has also changed policies on tall buildings post Grenfell and has brought new kit including 32m ladders. There are also using drones with thermal imaging.

Transport for London held two major consultations over the summer, expansion of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone and changes bus routes in central London. The result of the bus route is that only three routes will be cut, others merged, and there are no changes in Merton and Wandsworth. The ULEZ consultation had a lot of responses from outside of London. The Assembly met to change the Mayor's Transport Strategy to allow for vehicle charging in the future and extending the ULEZ from August 2023. The plans also included a [new scrappage scheme](#) worth £110m and extended exemptions or retrofitting. Leonie said it is more difficult to travel in outer London so more work to do to improve public transport.

A resident said that traffic problems on Bushey Road crossing with Grand Drive created an air quality issue and asked if air quality on the bus stop could be monitored. Leonie said residents can get hold of diffusion tubes from other groups

like [Breath London](#), whilst TfL does do some Air Quality monitoring it might be quicker to do some citizen science.

A resident asked about the new premises for the Assembly. Leonie said that the journey there is much worse and felt the Assembly should still be in heart of London. However, the new building is more sustainable and is owned by the GLA.

A resident asked about the impact of strikes and Leonie said that London is a very expensive place to live, and that a lot of public sector final salary schemes have closed. Many have not had a pay rise since 2010 but the cost of living has increased for interest rates, food, and fuel. There are lots of vacancies in public services like social care. There is a better relationship with the new Transport Secretary but the main conversation is about the deal with TfL rather than wider train problems.

Cllr Flack asked about the cost of rents, and Leonie said the Mayor has called for powers to be devolved to allow rents to be set or controlled. The Assembly has also called for reforms to Local Housing Allowance, but the Government was reluctant to agree. The Private Rented Sector was not rent controlled and often in poor condition with low energy efficiency.

Tony Edwards asked about sales of properties to overseas investors and Leonie said that many of the tall buildings along river are being marketed to people in Singapore and other overseas locations and then left empty. This should be constrained and the Mayor has used the London Plan to encourage developers to stick to higher standards but this is only relevant to larger schemes. Any change would need to be to national policy.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 10)

Cllr Oliver thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting

Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 25 April 2023, at 7.15pm in Raynes Park Library

Any issues or questions can be emailed to getinvolved@merton.gov.uk