

Cllr Abigail Jones to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Will the cabinet member update council on when he expects a further consultation on Crossrail 2 and Wimbledon?

Reply

Transport for London has been reviewing the business case for Crossrail2, details of which were submitted to the Department of Transport and HM Treasury earlier this calendar year. It is hoped that further government project support will be forthcoming in the coming months, but there is no fixed date for the consideration of the business case or for any consultation that might follow. Additional information is available at crossrail2.co.uk

We have been clear as a council that the original proposals for Wimbledon are unacceptable, and that any revised scheme needs to enhance business and retail in the town centre. On a cross-party basis representations were made on the need for changes and on the need to ensure that any revised scheme does not cause economic detriment to the borough.

The council have also strongly supported a station at Tooting Broadway instead of Balham as it will improve transport accessibility from the Mitcham and Colliers Wood area to central London along with providing relief to the Northern Line. It will also provide economic opportunities for the east of the borough by supporting business and helping to bring jobs to the borough

An update on Crossrail 2 is included within the Strategic Theme Report - Sustainable Travel item 2.5 to this meeting.

Supplementary

I thank the Cabinet Member for his answer to my question. Can he outline how we are working with local businesses on Crossrail 2 proposals to protect areas affected?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Abigail Jones for her supplementary question. We are working very closely with business in the Town Centre, both with the Chamber of Commerce and LoveWimbledon. I've also met with the Leader of Close Brothers of who are a major employer in the Town Centre and will be impacted by Crossrail 2. I think its important that business needs certainty and I think the current level of uncertainty is not helpful at all for the Town Centre people, because we want business to thrive, and I believe as a result of Crossrail 2 it will allow businesses to grow and attract businesses to the town centre. As I've said before many times at Council the original proposals were unacceptable they do need to change. I'd also like to add that we have met with business owners at Weir Road who again will be impacted by Crossrail 2. Business is a key component in the borough we have on may occasions been recognised as a Small Business Friendly Borough and we have a track record of working closely with business, it is something we will continue to do.

Crossrail 2 has many many benefits for businesses but it is also important that we do keep jobs in the borough and we have a strong business rates base.

From Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking:

Can the Cabinet Member please tell me a) how many electric vehicle charging points there now are in Merton; b) how that figure compares with all other London boroughs; c) what the total capital cost was of the installation of these charging points; d) what the estimated revenue to the Council is due to be from electric vehicles; and e) how many residents' parking permits have been issued in total for electric vehicles in Merton since the start of 2017?

Reply

The Council has facilitated the delivery of 19 (fast) on-street charging points at nine locations, with one location still subject to statutory public consultation. Once complete the council intends to work with SourceLondon to install a further batch of around 20 electric vehicle charging point bays during 2017/18. SourceLondon provide a useful map of electric charge points across London: www.sourcelondon.net/stations which shows how we compare.

Installations are provided at no charge to the council. From these charging points there will be an annual income of approximately £6,200 to the council. The use of electric vehicles is significantly higher across central and inner London boroughs, which translates in greater requirement for charging infrastructure. This has perhaps been motivated by free entry to the central London Congestion Charge Zone, which offers significant financial savings for car owners.

Separately we are also working with Transport for London to facilitate up to 10 rapid charge points, including dedicated taxi charge points. The Council has not issued any electric vehicle parking permits since the start of 2017.

Supplementary

I thank the Cabinet Member for his answer. How much and with what regularity have the new electric charging points been used since they went live in February, what positive measures is he taking to encourage residents both to switch to electric vehicles but also to ensure that any future costs incurred by the Council apart from this initiative are properly recovered?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Simpson for his supplementary. I can provide that information at a later stage to you and am quite happy to do so. I would like to mention that as part of the Diesel levy, we are also looking to reduce the permits for residents that have electric vehicles to £25 to encourage the uptake of electric vehicle users in our borough.

From Cllr John Dehaney to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking

Would the cabinet member outline the action Merton Council is taking to reduce vehicle emissions?

Reply

The council is currently finalising a new Air Quality Action Plan for 2017-22, this contains a number of measures the council can take to help reduce pollution. Specifically with regards to vehicle emissions, this includes;

- Delivery vehicles re-timing trial, specifically around focus areas to try to mitigate the impact of delivery vehicles on the road network.
- Review procurement contract for outsourced transport services.
- Detailed assessment of traffic management solutions for Focus Areas and air quality 'hotspots' to ensure that we identify areas that can be improved.
- As legislation is changing there is an opportunity to look at the possibility of 'Mini 'Ultra-Low Emission Zones' for AQ Focus Areas and pollution 'hotspots' in Merton.
- Formalise proposed anti- idling enforcement arrangements.
- Continued provision and expansion of EV charge infrastructure
- We will look at free or discounted parking charges at existing parking meters for zero emission cars.
- Continue and review the diesel emissions based parking levy for residential and business parking permits in Merton.
- Continue to provide and expand infrastructure to support walking and cycling across the borough.
- Supporting our colleagues in the GLA in proposed changes to extend the ULEZ for polluting vehicles.

Supplementary

I thank the Cabinet Member for his response to my question. Would he agree that our children's health can't be sacrificed for political point scoring, and that now is the time to take action on air pollution?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Dehaney for his supplementary. The simple answer is yes, the time is now to take action and I am glad that people in higher offices than we hold in Merton Council are now getting on board with the actual issue of air pollution, that is really bad for our young children but also vulnerable adults who are disproportionately affected by poor air quality. I think it is a testament to this borough that we are leading with the introduction of the Diesel Levy to help improve air quality in this borough.

From Cllr Abdul Latif to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:

Residents of Trinity ward have complained once again to the Council about the potential danger to pedestrians from cyclists and motorbike riders speeding along the Wandle Trail in Wandle Meadow Nature Park.

In addition, a 15metre long section of its wooden fence along Chaucer Way has been removed while its other sections remain damaged and broken.

Can the Cabinet Member explain why public safety in the park is being compromised and ignored?

Reply

We are not aware of any recent substantial issues with motorcycle activity in Wandle Meadow Nature Park. Assuming that this does occur then this would be an issue for police intervention and action; I would therefore encourage residents to report any incidents to the police using the 101 service.

Following consultation with the Trinity ward councillors it was agreed that the pathway through the park between Haydons Road Rec and the path to Chaucer Way be designated a joint footpath and London network cycle quietway. Cyclists will be expected to respect other park users as is the case with all quietways through London parks. Whilst physical interventions, such as gates and barriers, can impede both motorcyclists and cyclists, these measures also reduce access for other park users, particularly those using wheel chairs or mobility scooters.

I am aware that some of the fencing around the nature park, installed over 30 years ago, is in poor repair. Our intention is to remove or replace it over time, budgets permitting. The site is not intended to be entirely fenced so not all fencing is replaced unless it is required to keep the public safe. The fencing around the park is often surveyed by the Greenspaces team and our contractor *idverde*, and if there is a risk to the public then appropriate measures are considered and are introduced.

Supplementary

I thank the Cabinet Member for his answer. Barriers have been used in the borough to slow down cyclists and motorbike riders speeding on public paths. Can the Cabinet Member consider installing barriers in Wandle Park to slow down speeding cyclists?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Latif for his question. I can't guarantee to do that, there was a consultation which you took part in I believe and it didn't mention any such barriers. We will look at it again, that is a promise, and if it proves to be the case that making changes to the barriers would help then we will look at it.

From Councillor Peter Southgate to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment, and Housing

In the light of growing concern about air pollution in Merton and in particular its effects on the health of our most vulnerable residents, what plans does the Cabinet member have to monitor air quality in the immediate vicinity of our schools – especially primary schools?

Reply

Since January of this year and as a demonstration of Merton's commitment to Air Quality, we have increased our Nitrous Dioxide diffusion tube network from 20 sites to 52 to give us a better picture of pollution in our borough.

One of the measures in our new Air Quality Action Plan is to undertake Air Quality audits of schools in areas of poor air quality. This is to identify measures that both the council and schools may need to take to protect our children.

These measures could possibly include:

- Enforce no engine idling schemes around schools
- Impose changes to local roads to restrict polluting vehicles around schools
- Pedestrianisation of roads near school entrances
- Introduce green infrastructure around schools to absorb/disrupt pollutant dispersion
- Formalise walking buses for large numbers of children, by funding a paid walking bus 'conductor' similar to the school crossing supervisor.

We are also engaging with schools to provide greater awareness about air pollution , to encourage sustainable travel plans and to encourage parents to transport children to school in more sustainable / less polluting ways.

Supplementary

I would like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response. This is wholly encouraging and I'm very pleased to see the practical measures that are set out. I wonder if he would join me in commending work of the Sustainable Communities Task Group who investigated air pollution and further underline his commitment to scrutiny by asking his Cabinet colleagues to take place in the annual scrutiny survey tabled this evening and to join me in encouraging all members to complete this survey.

Reply

Can I just thank the work of scrutiny over the last year in terms of scrutinising this issue; you make a considerable contribution to the Council, you've chaired that Committee for 11 years now, it is something that we take extremely seriously as a borough, reducing air pollution has to happen, part of that I believe will be from the introduction of the Diesel Levy but also as well through taking a number of different measures.

From Cllr Dennis Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

How will the mayor's housing zone for Morden and the plans to build over 1,000 residential units be supported by transport improvements?

Reply

In 2015 the council successfully bid to Transport for London's Major Schemes fund to consider transport improvements in Morden town centre associated with Morden's housing zone. Although Morden has excellent public transport access – with an underground station, many bus routes and a nearby train and tram stop – an important part of the MoreMorden proposals are to make the town centre more attractive and less like only a transport interchange. Transport for London are undertaking traffic modelling and other assessments and these results and the potential for transport and public realm improvements will be shared during the next MoreMorden consultation. We are also working with Transport for London on the consideration of tramlink between Morden and Sutton and we will also benefit in due course from increased capacity on the Northern Line. For more information, please see our regular newsletters and updates to the council's website: www.merton.gov.uk/moremorden

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his reply, could he outline what work in action is being taken to improve the Town Centre layout?

Reply

This is something that we are working closely with TFL in terms of looking at the layout of the Town Centre, I don't know about colleagues here, but when you walk out of Morden Tube Station and see a whole row of buses in front of it, it is extremely uninviting so we would obviously like changes to happen in terms of where the buses are in Morden. Also as well looking at the Town Centre as well, the one way system; it is TFL roads but we can work as a partner because we want to regenerate Morden, the housing zone I believe, will bring many additional people into it as well, but also act as a catalyst for supporting and regenerating the Town Centre but also as well improving the local environment. So I look forward to working with Councillors in Morden in improving the look and feel of Morden and we hope that they can be brought forward over the next few years as part of the Morden Housing Zone and Regeneration scheme which I have set out.

From Councillor Daniel Holden to the Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking:

What action is the Cabinet Member taking to reduce pollution from moving or static vehicles?

Reply

See answer to Question from Councillor Dehaney

Supplementary

Thank you to the Cabinet Member for his response. Why has he now decided to introduce anti-idle legislation when I asked for this previously outside South Wimbledon Station and outside such sites like Schools in my ward. Why is he going ahead with it now and talking about air quality when he didn't before?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Holden for his supplementary. I can only speak for since I've been a Cabinet Member and I don't recall seeing any of your representations about the anti-idleing. What I would say is that as a Council we are committed to improving air quality and we will look at every measure to further that aim, and in due course an air quality action plan will be published by this Council and it will incorporate a whole host of avenues that we can explore.

From Cllr Agatha Akyigyina to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment and Housing

Can the cabinet member update council on what action the council is taking to improve road safety outside schools?

Reply

The Council works closely with schools on School Travel Plans to help address safety issues. In recent years, the Council has worked closely with Merton's schools to:

- Develop and review School Travel Plans with the council's dedicated School Travel Plan officer to establish safe access to and from school for all users, by all means of transport.
- Work closely with schools to deliver road safety education / training to children, both off road (in the playground) and then on-road, for example to teach pedestrian safety to primary schoolchildren
www.merton.gov.uk/kerbcraft and using memorable mascots such as Debra the Zebra www.merton.gov.uk/debra
- We have also introduced physical measures where necessary such as traffic calming measures, controlled crossing points, school beacons and appropriate road markings associated with a 20mph speed limits within the vicinity of schools.
- Use school crossing patrol officers or lollipop as they are affectionately known, to help children cross and reinforce good driver behaviour
www.merton.gov.uk/schoolcrossingpatrols
- Council officers will continue to work closely with traffic police and the schools to address any serious incidences.

Supplementary

I'd like to thank the Cabinet Member for his response and I'd like to ask him does he think that it is right that we prioritise childrens' safety outside of Schools?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Akyigyina for her supplementary. It is completely right that we do prioritise safety of children outside schools. As a Council we work closely I know with a number of Councillors in this Chamber in terms of safety measures; 20mph zones outside of schools, traffic calming, but ensuring the environment as well is safe. I think one of the things that I certainly myself pick up is the concern that people have about people parking on double yellow lines outside schools and I know the Council has taken action. But it is also important as well that children are safe, that we make an environment to actually encourage children to walk to School, I know many parents do walk their children to school and I hope a lot more do walk their children to school because we have got less correspondence from local residents about cars now. She is right, we do take Road Safety extremely seriously and we do as well work very closely with a number of Schools throughout the borough in terms of road safety and it continues to be a priority for this administration.

From Councillor Michael Bull to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing:

What measures has the council taken to encourage cycling over the last year?

Reply

The council introduced a variety of measures to encourage cycling over the last year

In partnership with Transport for London and the Mitcham Common Conservators, the Council introduced a new shared cycle and footway on Croydon Road. This provides an off-road link along a busy highway to help connect Tooting / Streatham through Mitcham to Croydon and Sutton.

We have also been working with Sustrans / TfL to maximise cycle provisions along Quietways and bridge the gap between such routes that falls onto the public highway. We also provide secure cycle parking provision across the borough. Some key details can be found within the Scrutiny Panel's Strategic Theme Report - Sustainable Travel available at this meeting. More information can be viewed on the Council's website www.merton.gov.uk/cyclequietways

As well as the physical measures, we also provide an extensive programme of safety and cycle training for people of all ages who live, work or study in Merton. To help children be safe, confident cyclists we run off-road training programmes at Merton's primary schools for beginners, on-road programmes with schools for children who are improving cyclists and a series of holiday cycle training courses for children: www.merton.gov.uk/cyclingproficiency

We also facilitate three different levels of cycle training for adults, from beginners through to commuter proficiency www.merton.gov.uk/adultcycling to encourage safe cycling.

The cycle training programmes are funded by Transport for London in line with the Mayor's Transport Strategy.

Supplementary

I thank the cabinet member for his response. What progress is the Council making to join up our Cycle network with those in adjoining boroughs and in providing safe storage space to reduce the surge in bike thefts in Wimbledon in particular?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Bull for his supplementary. In terms of reducing thefts in Wimbledon Town Centre in particular I think its about working closely with Police in the Town Centre and I know my colleague Councillor Macauley as the Cabinet Member for Community Safety has raised this issue with me, because theft is something that needs to be taken extremely seriously but its also as well working closely that secure environment for bikes to be stored. In terms of working closely with other boroughs, I know in terms of the cycleway across Croydon Road which falls in my ward that we did work closely with Croydon and I think it's important that we work closely with all Boroughs but ultimately its for them to take the decision. I think I would like to see ultimately the cycle hire scheme be extended to Merton I think it would bring considerable benefits and it is something we will certainly raise with the Cycling Commissioner for the Mayor; it takes a wider approach across London and I would urge all councillors I think its get on a bike and ride.

From Cllr Russell Makin to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration Environment, and Housing

How will the award of the new South West train franchise to First/MTL impact on train services in Merton?

Reply

The new seven-year South West Train franchise between First Group and MTR will start on 20 August 2017. SWT network stations in Merton include Motspur Park, Raynes park and Wimbledon Stations. Aspirations for step free access at these locations remain linked to the delivery of Crossrail 2.

Non- physical improvements include expanded use and flexibility of smart ticketing/mobile services e.g. A new flexible season ticket for passengers working fewer than 5 days a week, better free wifi at stations and on board trains, improved customer compensation scheme and better help for passengers during periods of disruption. Sunday services should also be improved.

Officers are seeking an early meeting with the new franchise to discuss their proposal for the borough on more detail.

Supplementary

Thank you for your answer to my question the Cabinet Member. What is your view on the refusal of the secretary of state to transfer oversight of this service to TFL?

Reply

I'd like to thank Councillor Makin for his supplementary. As I mentioned at the last meeting it was of particular concern that the transport secretary Chris Grayling has abandoned plans to transfer franchises within London to TFL. It had been planned for the Southwestern franchise in 2021 to be transferred to the mayor; that's not going to happen. TFL have a track record of improvements to train services but also as well in terms of reliability and the look and feel of stations. In terms of the new franchise itself, I hope that it does deliver benefits for hard-pressed commuters in this borough. But I do live in hope, because the record of train franchises to date, especially with Southern, has not been particularly good and First and other franchises that they have run which included the First capital connect which is now again Thameslink, they didn't do a particularly good job of that. Commuters in this borough deserve a good service, we know there is a need for more capacity, so I do look forward to working with First and MTR and we will be very robust as an authority standing up for commuters in this Borough.