

06: Non ST Questions

From **Councillor Jerome Neil** to the **Leader**

Would the leader join me in congratulating both of our local MPs on their recent re-election?

Reply

I would certainly like to congratulate Siobhain McDonagh MP on her well deserved re-election in Mitcham and Morden with an increased majority which now stands at almost 21,500. She is an extraordinarily hard working and tenacious representative for her constituency. I also congratulate my own MP Stephen Hammond on his re-election in Wimbledon, albeit with his majority slashed by more than half to 5,500 votes. I am sure he will continue to serve his constituents to the best of his ability.

From **Councillor Abdul Latif** to the **Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking**:

Merton Council has issued nearly 1,000 permits for diesel vehicles since introducing its diesel levy at the start of April 2017. The council estimates it will raise over £250,000 in the first year.

Can the Cabinet Member give an undertaking that some of the funds thus raised will be invested in purchasing new Air Quality Monitoring Equipment to reliably monitor Oxides of Nitrogen (NOx) and Particulate Matter (PM10 and PM2.5)?

Reply

By law, any revenue generated from parking must be spent on transport related schemes. These include but are not limited to, traffic management and control schemes, road and infrastructure schemes and Concessionary Fares (ie the Freedom Pass).

With regards to air quality monitoring; I can confirm that air quality monitoring is taken very seriously. The problems relating to the older monitoring equipment are being addressed and the Pollution Team has successfully secured council funding for new equipment. The Pollution Team has also doubled the number of diffusion tubes in the borough to get a better assessment of air quality.

From **Councillor Mike Brunt** to the **Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance**

Could the Cabinet Member update us on the results of the Residents survey?

Reply

The most recent residents survey took place in February and March 2017 and as in previous year involved face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of more than 1000 adults.

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The results of the survey show a record number of residents think Merton Council is efficient and well run (76%). The survey also reports record satisfaction rates among residents who agree the council is doing a good job, responds quickly when asked for help and involves residents when making decisions.

Over 90% of Merton residents are satisfied with the local area as a place to live, which is significantly better than the national figure (80%). Most residents (96%) feel safe during the day and after dark (85%).

Nearly two thirds of residents agree the council provides value for money (65%), well above the national figure (47%). Seventy-five percent agree the council acts on the concerns of local residents and 81% were in agreement that the council kept them informed about services and benefits.

Significantly more residents said they were satisfied with the leisure and sport facilities compared with when the council asked residents in 2014.

Resident satisfaction with all council services outweighed dissatisfaction. However, the survey will help us plan for improvements, as it highlights areas where high levels of satisfaction can still be improved upon. For instance, when asked how much of a problem litter was in their local area, 63% of residents said they did not think it was a problem and 37% said it was a fairly big or very big problem. We believe that even this good result can be improved upon, but recognise that the continued use of black bin bags in our refuse collection service constrains our ability to improve these satisfaction levels.

From **Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender** to the **Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking**:

Can the Cabinet Member tell me:

- a) How many elderly and disabled residents and those in receipt of qualifying state benefits were using the garden waste service on 1st April 2017 and have therefore lost their discount?
- b) How many of these residents have cancelled their garden waste collection since being informed they would lose the concessionary rate as from 1st April 2017?
- c) How much revenue has been lost as a result of residents cancelling the service since 1st April 2017 thereby offsetting any additional revenue due to be generated by the council as a result of the abolition of the concessionary rate?
- d) What assumptions were made about the cancellation rate that would result from the withdrawal of the concessionary rate when the decision on this was being taken by the administration?

Reply

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- A) The chargeable garden waste service was introduced in 2011 with an annual subscription of £65. The fee has been fixed since 2011 with no inflationary increases. As of May 2017 we have 7,755 garden waste customers. 2,996 (38%) of these customers would have originally qualified for the concessionary rate.
- B) The garden waste service always experiences natural turnover of customers as residents move or their circumstances change. We have not carried out an analysis of how many customers joining or leaving the service fall into the different customer types. However, the overall number of customers continues to grow.
- C) We are not aware of any loss of revenue overall.
- D) It was assumed that this change would not result in cancellation levels that could not be offset against the continued growth of our customer base overall and a charging mechanism which offsets the operational cost of providing this non statutory service.

From **Councillor Abigail Jones** to **Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

Could the cabinet member update us on the AFC Wimbledon application?

Reply

The applicants are concluding their development agreement between each other and once this is concluded it will expedite signing the Section 106 agreement. Meanwhile the applicants have been undertaking other matters to ensure development can start swiftly such as engaging with Thames Water on drainage in the area and reviewing their road safety audits with council officers. Once the Section 106 agreement is signed, it will be uploaded on the council's website.

From **Councillor Brian Lewis-Lavender** to the **Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**:

There has finally been consultation undertaken with residents and park users on the administration's proposals to introduce parking charges at Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields. In view of the fact that:

- The original parking meter that the council put in place without consultation will now have to be changed to take the new pound coins;
- The white lines will need painting on parking bays;
- Money will need to be collected from the meter on a regular basis;
- The whole scheme will need policing; and
- The park risks being laid open to possible vandalism as a result of the money in the parking machines;

Can the Cabinet member put a price on how much this scheme will cost Merton to run each year in view of the relatively small amount of revenue it is likely to generate?

Reply

As the Councillor will no doubt be aware, there is an increasing problem of commuters parking their cars in car parks meant for users of our local parks and green spaces whilst they commute to work in central London. This ties up parking spaces all day that are meant for local residents who want to use our parks for a few hours to use our sporting facilities, walk the dog or just enjoy the fresh air. The introduction of parking charges at Joseph Hood is therefore intended to advantage ordinary park users who want to use the car park for an hour or two over commuters who want to use it all day.

Many of the issues the Councillor raises in his question apply to the parks and their car parks irrespective of whether or not there is pay-and-display parking present. The white lines in the car park at Sir Joseph Hood MPF have been repainted at regular intervals in the past, for example, and so this is not a new requirement. The income from the parking scheme will obviously assist and support the work of the Greenspaces team and provide an additional income stream to support our parks infrastructure, even if that is not the primary purpose of the scheme.

The scheme has involved several Council teams in its planning stages: Greenspaces, Parking Services and Traffic and Highways and their combined knowledge and experience has been pooled in its production and in order to ensure that it is both effective and cost-efficient.

The parking meters, for example, are solar-powered and their running costs are therefore minimal beyond their initial purchase price. Parking Services' Civil Enforcement Officer will be policing the scheme within parks as a small additional component of their very much wider parking control remit across the borough and, similarly, the cash collection needs will simply be absorbed within a pre-existing borough-wide contract that services a number of venues and facilities, including the borough's parking meters. All-in-all, the additional cost of each individual additional machine will be extremely small in this context. But of course the most beneficial aspect of the scheme is that it will discourage commuters from taking up car park spaces all day and allow residents to enjoy our local parks and greenspaces.

From Councillor Sally Kenny to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

Would the cabinet member update us on plans to regenerate Morden?

Reply

Morden town centre is this administration's regeneration priority and good progress has been made this year. The FutureMerton team have recently completed the restoration of the Morden Court Parade using funding from the Mayor of London. This scheme is a marked change in quality and the perception of Morden, where the project has revealed the art-deco detailing and created new shop fronts and signage. The project wasn't without its challenges as it involved council officers working with 65 different land owners. The council has received positive feedback on this project which shows that we're off to a good start with Morden.

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The wider regeneration scheme is complex and time-consuming. The Council is working in partnership with TFL to develop a strategy for how both the Council and TFL will form a partnership to deliver a comprehensive regeneration project in Morden. This month, we have appointed consultants to advise LBM and TFL on the best form of partnership and the best procurement process so that we can jointly appoint a development partner to lead on the delivery of Morden.

There is a lot of work underway in the background and we will be providing regular updates at the Overview and Scrutiny Panel prior to any decision making on Morden's Regeneration.

Our vision for MoreMorden has been refreshed and received great support from Mayor Sadiq Khan and Val Shawcross, GLA Member for Transport. The Council is also finalising the first phase of design work and traffic modelling work to determine the scope for removing Morden's one-way system, viable options for relocating the bus stands and the creation of a new public space at Morden Station.

Keep updated at www.merton.gov.uk/moreMorden

From **Councillor Jill West** to the **Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking**:

Can the Cabinet Member tell me:

- a) How many people have been successfully fined and prosecuted for fly tipping in Merton since the new powers came in on 9th May 2016 enabling councils to issue on the spot fines of up to £400?
- b) What percentage of these fines has so far been paid?

Reply

- a) A total of 28 fixed penalty notices (FPN) of £400 each have been issued since 9th May 2016 to current date.
- b) Payment has been received on 43% of these FPNs. We have at least 5 FPNs currently going through the payment timescale to pay.

From **Councillor Brenda Fraser** to the **Cabinet Member for Street Cleanliness and Parking**

Could the cabinet member give details of when the council last reviewed its policy on crossovers?

Reply

TO BE ANSWERED BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION,
ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING

Merton Council last undertook a full review of the Council's Crossover Policy in June 2007 with minor amendments in 2013. A Sustainable Communities Overview &

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Scrutiny Task Group has been established to review Merton 's policy in comparison with neighbouring boroughs. We are mindful of seeking to strike the right balance between accommodating parking needs and the visual and environmental impact on the front gardens and Merton's street scene.