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From Cllr David Chung to the Leader of the Council

Could the Cabinet Member update me on the plans to build a new secondary school in South Wimbledon?

Reply

The requirement to open Harris Wimbledon for September 2018 is essential as we will have an additional 250 children leaving LB Merton Primary Schools next summer requiring a secondary school place. Harris Wimbledon Academy is advertised to open in September 2018 for two years at Whatley with the new school building at High Path, South Wimbledon to be open in September 2020.

The council is working hard to provide a clear site at High Path so that the ESFA can build the permanent school on time including the progression of a complex land assembly. This involves finalising the relocation of the High Path Day Centre, the purchase of the Domex industrial unit and exchanging one freehold site for an equivalent to support the relocation of Elim Church. Members will be aware that Merton Hall on Kingston Road SW19 is the only viable location following extensive research by external consultants and the EFA. Following concerns raised by the planning committee, officers have worked hard with their design consultants to ensure that a revised scheme can meet the initial concerns of the planning committee and have received a 'green' rating from the independent design review panel regarding the revised design. We also have clear assurance from Elim that the building will remain open for community use lettings when not required by the church

The ESFA are now working with two preferred contractors on the design of the new school at High Path and we expect, subject to the Planning Committee's decision on 21 September, that there will be a community consultation on the permanent new school design in November or December 2017.

From Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities:

Please can the Cabinet Member provide details of all unauthorised traveller encampments in Merton over the past 2 years together with the costs incurred in dealing with these by both the council and the police (including officer time as well as property damage and clean up operations)?

Reply

Sixteen unauthorised traveller encampments were recorded in Merton since September 2015 but I cannot guarantee knowledge of all unauthorised traveller encampments as some may have taken place on private land and council officers may not have received notification. In addition I have no information on the private landowners costs or police costs. Council officers do not log their time and in the time available it has not been possible to obtain costs from the MPS for their time and effort in dealing with these nor the cost of clearance. Further detail will be provided if and when available.

- September 2015. Segas Site, Western Road, Mitcham. Private site.

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- February 2016. Rear of Pets at Home, Bushey Road, Shannon Corner. Private Site.
- August 2016. Morden Park Playing Fields.
- August 2016. Halfords Car Park, Streatham Road, Mitcham. Private site.
- August 2016. Cricket Green, Mitcham.
- August 2016. Land adjoining Vestry Hall, Mitcham.
- September 2016. Car Park adjoining Hillcross Depot, Hillcross Road, Morden.
- September 2016. Figges Marsh, Streatham Road, Mitcham.
- October 2016. Pitch 9, Brickfield Road Traveller Site, Wimbledon.
- November 2016. Halfords Site, Streatham Road, Mitcham. Private site.
- January 2017. Ruach City Church, Turle Road, Streatham. Private Site.
- February 2017. Rear of former Nurdin and Peacock building, Bushey Road, Shannon Corner. Private site.
- June 2017. Cannon Hill Common, Cannon Hill Lane, Morden.
- July 2017. Rear of White Hart Public House, London Road, Mitcham. Private site.
- August 2017. Cranmer Green, Cranmer Road, Mitcham.
- August 2017. Cannon Hill Common, Cannon Hill Lane, Morden.

From Cllr Dennis Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Education

Could the cabinet member outline how we work with our schools to improve performance?

Reply

The Council has a School Improvement Strategy which it has agreed with schools. The strategy sets out the Local Authority's (LA's) principles, aims, priorities and mechanisms to ensure that all Merton schools are supported and challenged to continue to improve and to provide the best possible education for the children and young people in their care.

The Council has a range of services working within the strategy, led by the School Improvement team, providing the support and challenge required to secure the best outcomes. The School Improvement team comprises inspectors and advisors who both work in schools and provide universal, central support, (mostly through continuing professional development opportunities). Other officers from a variety of teams provide support for behaviour, IT, Looked After Children, safeguarding, governors, attendance, exclusions, traveller pupils, admissions and data analysis.

All schools are linked to an inspector, and receive at least two visits a year. During these visits, inspectors seek to work as closely as possible with school leaders in the individual context of each school, focusing on the areas covered by the Ofsted framework, including safeguarding. Advisory support is also available for all schools from the MSI team.

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Where schools are evaluating themselves to be less than good, or where the Local Authority has concerns about performance, support from the inspector increases. Advisors also provide targeted support for these schools.

Schools where significant concerns are identified also work with the LA through the mechanism of Support and Challenge Groups. These groups, chaired by the Head of School Improvement, challenge and hold the school to account for improvements required in line with the school's action plan/development plan, and ensure that support for the school is effectively co-ordinated, and broker additional support where needed.

From Councillor Janice Howard to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture:

Can the Cabinet Member update me on the popularity of the borough's paddling pools with residents this summer?

Reply

The attraction of these facilities is generally very weather-dependent and the general impression of officers in Greenspaces is that overall numbers were down on 2016 due to the fact that the weather was not especially favourable during the core weeks of the summer this year. On those days when the sun shone and the ambient temperatures were in the 20-30 degrees range then attendances, most especially at the more popular venues at Wimbledon Park, Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields and at Tamworth Recreation Ground, were good and typically measured in the hundreds per day. Obviously on days of inclement weather the sites are less popular and can be entirely empty

From John Sargeant to the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture

The Eastern Electrics event which was held in Morden Park on 5 August was hailed as a success by local news organisations. We would support the council seeking opportunities to raise the profile of Morden and to raise funds from appropriate outdoor events where the financial risk is borne by external organisations.

While we welcome the fact that council officers are preparing a report to learn lessons from the event, can the Cabinet Member tell us how many people attended, whether any arrests were made in the vicinity of the event and how many complaints were received from members of the public?

Reply

Teams across the Council worked hard to ensure the Eastern Electrics event at Morden Park was safe and secure. They worked closely with the police and the event organisers to carefully manage noise pollution, food hygiene, litter and anti-social behaviour associated with large crowds. The event was subject to close scrutiny by the Licensing Committee and restrictions were put on the event to limit its numbers to 17,000 and reduce the times at which loud music could be played. Our enforcement officers ensured these limits were adhered to and we appreciate the

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efforts of the event organisers to follow these restrictions as well as manage the behaviour of the crowds. Overall the event was a success and proved popular. However, in line with best practice, our officers are of course reviewing the event and identifying lessons to be learned to ensure the safety and success of any future events.

The official attendance figure for the event was 15,995, of which no arrests were made.

The number of complaints received by the Council subsequent to the event was 16

From Cllr Pauline Cowper to the Leader of the Council

Could the Leader comment on whether he has met with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime regarding their Public Access and Engagement consultation.

Reply

I can confirm to Cllr Cowper that I did indeed meet with MOPAC and the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, Sophie Linden in June regarding their current consultation. The Deputy Mayor outlined to me the severe pressures the Met is under with a significant cut in their government funding. They are in a similar position to the council with huge losses in funding meaning difficult decisions need to be considered in order to protect front line services, which for the police means protecting frontline police officer numbers. However I am very clear that in Merton we need both our police stations, in Wimbledon and in Mitcham, and I strongly believe that London deserves sufficient government funding to protect police stations as well as "bobbies on the beat."

From Councillor James Holmes to the Cabinet Member for Education:

Can the Cabinet Member update me on the expansion of secondary schools in Merton including funds deployed to date and the planned construction at school sites?

Reply

The administration's strategy for school expansion is to expand schools in the east as needed to meet demand, and to facilitate the Harris Wimbledon Academy in the South Wimbledon area. I have updated Cllr Chung with regard to the detail on the new school but the expenditure to 31 August 2017 is £6.71 million, largely on the purchase of the Domex site at High Path in the last financial year. Local parents are very supportive of the new school which will offer their children more opportunities to attend a good quality state funded local secondary school at a time of increased demand. As part of the land assembly for the new schools we are also moving the High Path Day Centre to an improved site, with service users and carers involved in the plans for what the new centre will offer. The Elim church is planning to move to Merton Hall as part of the scheme and I am pleased this excellent local faith group will be continuing their work in the local community, (subject to planning consent) including running the Wimbledon Food Bank from the new site.

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The other mainstream secondary school expansion currently in process is the expansion of Harris Academy Merton. The capital project is almost completed and the scheme expenditure up to 31 August 2017 is £2.23 million.

There have been substantial improvements at the Harris schools since they were introduced, with GCSE grades increased significantly since 2006 and the new Harris Primary recently rated Outstanding by Ofsted. I would like to thank Lord Harris and his team led by Dan Moynihan for their efforts in the borough.

From Cllr Brenda Fraser to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Could the Cabinet Member comment on how we have focused on improving outcomes in adoption and fostering?

Reply

In 2012 Ofsted found our work in adoption and fostering to both be "Good". Fostering is now no longer inspected separately but I am delighted that Children's Services received an overall "Good" judgement again this year and that our Adoption Services were found to be "outstanding". Continuous improvement is our stated ambition for all our children's services and I'm delighted that Ofsted concluded: "Exceptional leadership and governance and strong frontline management ensure that children's services are consistently good. All children receive a good service and some receive an outstanding service. Inspectors saw that significant and sustained improvements have been achieved since the last inspection in 2012." The Director and her team have maintained this continuous improvement through a robust approach to quality assurance and regular self-evaluation with service improvement plans for key services to ensure that we continue to press for further improvements to deliver our ambitions for our children and for their improved outcomes. With regard to fostering and adoption specifically we have continued to recruit and retain excellent foster carers and to ensure we have robust and timely plans to achieve permanence for our children. Year on year we have improved our performance on a range of adoption performance indicators and I am particularly proud that the report noted..." Adoption performance is outstanding, with all children requiring adoption currently being placed and no children waiting."

From Councillor Michael Bull to the Cabinet Member for For Adult Social Care And Health

Over the summer, has the Council been undertaking any activity to ensure that residents take appropriate protective action during periods of hot weather and that those who are vulnerable to heat are protected?

Reply

In the event of particularly hot or cold temperatures we write to our care providers advising them to take appropriate action to protect those that they care for. In the case of hot weather, this includes ensuring that the care for person is in a comfortable environment and has ready access to water. If they have concerns about someone, carers alert health as appropriate.

From Cllr Sally Kenny to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health
With “bridging the gap” a core strategic aim of the council, what measurements are used to determine progress with bridging the gap in public health services in Merton

Reply

With “bridging the gap” a core strategic aim of the council, what measurements are used to determine progress with bridging the gap in public health services in Merton.

The Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF) is the overarching set of indicators which public health uses to help us to understand how well public health is being improved and protected in the borough. Where possible, we look at this data at sub-borough level, to tell us how we are doing on closing the gap between the most deprived and the least deprived areas in Merton, for instance looking at differences in life expectancy between east and west over time.

Closing the gap in health inequalities in Merton is the overarching aim of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2018, and includes a number of metrics that monitor the differences between east and west Merton, for instance:

- Gap between the percentage of 10-11 year olds who are obese between east and west
- Gap in alcohol-related harm between east and west

The Public Health team commissions a number of services covering children and young people (e.g. Health Visiting and School Nursing) through to adults and older people (e.g. Substance Misuse services, Befriending services). Commissioning is based on an assessment of need (through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) process), including looking at where the inequalities are in access to services and in health outcomes, and provider performance is then monitored through metrics such as service activity and health outcomes, broken down by factors such as age, sex and where service users live, to assess whether services are meeting need.

However, it must be recognised that the public health budget is relatively small compared to council spending and that of other partners such as the NHS, and the evidence tells us that the influence of the ‘broader determinants of health’ (such as where people live, their socioeconomic status, their access to education, employment and training, etc) are more important than health services in ensuring a healthy population. Therefore delivery of public health services on their own will not close the gap; more influential is a ‘Health in All Policies’ approach, so the Public Health team are also working cross-council and with partners to ensure that the impact of broader public sector spend is health-promoting and appropriately targeted to need.

The Director of Public Health has a statutory duty to produce an independent Annual Public Health Report (APHR). Tackling health inequalities is selected as the focus for the 2017/18 report – it will analyse the trends in health inequalities in Merton (between the 30% most and 30% least deprived wards in Merton), and look at the

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potential closing the gap through focusing specifically on the broader determinants of health. This year's APHR will provide the baseline for the refresh of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, informing priority setting to achieve increasing impact at scale. The APHR will be published towards the end of the financial year 2017/18.

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