

06: Non ST Questions

From **Councillor Kelly Braund** to the **Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

One of the four recommendations from our Ofsted report was to ensure that 'staying put' is made available to all care leavers who would benefit from this. Can the Cabinet Member update us on progress of this?

Reply

At the time of the inspection Merton had two young people who were in Staying Put arrangements with their Foster Carer and we were in the process of updating and refreshing our Staying Put Policy. At the time of writing we now have five young people in SP arrangements and we are likely to have more so in the future. These arrangements can be better for our young people and can be less costly than semi-independent provision. There are potentially a further six young people who are 18 before April 2018, currently expressing an interest in Staying Put. It is recognised that increasing the number of young people staying put places extra demand on existing foster care provision and therefore increases the importance of continuing to recruit new foster carers.

From **Councillor Linda Taylor** to the **Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**:

There have been significant traffic problems in Trinity/Wimbledon Park wards along Haydons Road. When will the council investigate measures to reduce this traffic congestion problem?

Reply

Haydons Road is a local distributor road and a main traffic link between Merton & Wandsworth with a major junction at Durnsford Rd.

In March 2017, the capacity and the operation of the Haydon's Road / Durnsford junction was fully reviewed by TfL and as part of Merton's congestion relief proposal to remove all the banned movements at that time, the signals were modified to operate at its optimum capacity. The road network in this location is a London distributor road and it is operating better than some other junctions in the Borough. The Council, therefore, has no further plans for this junction at this time and always encourage motorists to consider walking and cycling for short local trips and improving air quality.

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

With increasing demands on housing across London what are we doing in Merton to support our Care Leavers?

Reply

We have just refreshed our Looked after Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy which has been informed by the recent Scrutiny Review of care leavers

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Accommodation. We are busy taking forward the priorities arising from the strategy and the recommendations from the task group. These include: one House of Multiple Occupancy Pilot for five young people, with discussions ongoing regarding a second provision; work with Community and Housing to establish closer links with the Shared Lives programme; full uptake of our annual Housing quota in liaison with Housing Needs; and a review of our current semi-independent offer. This is in addition to our refresh of Staying Put locally.

From **Councillor Oonagh Moulton** to the **Leader of the Council**:

What is the administration's view on external partnerships with private companies, particularly when it comes to housing?

Reply

With regard to housing, Merton Council is a non-stock owning authority following the stock transfer of homes to Clarion Housing Group in 2010. The council has no current proposals to procure any external partnerships with private companies for the delivery of housing save for our exploration of a Joint Venture Delivery vehicle for the development of Morden Town Centre. Such a venture could assist the Council in providing additional capacity and resources to deliver the growth we believe possible at less risk to the Council tax payer.

From **Councillor Mike Brunt** to the **Cabinet Member for Education**

With the Government recently revising GCSE and A level results figures, can the Cabinet Member update us on the standing of Merton's schools?

Reply

Merton's performance in GCSE outcomes has been exceptionally strong this past year. The Borough's schools are ranked first in the country for Progress 8 (one of the key indicators against which schools are judged). The Attainment 8 score is well above the national average, as is the proportion of students achieving grades 9-5 in both English and mathematics.

At KS5, the proportion of students achieving grades A\*-E in the A level examinations have risen in comparison with last year. Schools are also judged in relation to students' performance in Applied General qualifications, where Merton's points score of 41.56 is well above the national average of 35.72. Three schools achieved average grades of starred Distinction in these qualifications (Raynes Park High School, Ursuline School, and the combined 6th form for Rutlish and Ricards). St Mark's Academy achieved an average of Distinction.

From **Councillor Stephen Crowe** to the **Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**:

A Berkeley Homes newsletter said Morley Park would open last September, the Ursuline High School scheduled sports at Morley Park in their curriculum, and local residents formed the Friends of Morley Park. Despite all this, and a formal opening

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of the sports facilities by Clare Balding, the whole park including the sports facilities has remained closed.

What is the reason for this delay and when will the park be open for both the school and the public to enjoy?

Reply

The Ursuline High School and Berkeley Homes did host a celebratory event in September 2017 which marked the completion of the pavilion, which was in line with the original plans to open the site at that stage. However, it was not possible to open the entire site for public use at that time owing to some unresolved issues.

Owing to the complexity of reconstructing and establishing a new, high quality public open space of this nature, there have inevitably been delays in the project. This included resolving significant local flooding issues that occurred during the summer of 2016.

It is important that the Council only accepts the site from Berkeley Homes when the Council are satisfied with the condition of it, which is not yet the case. The Council and Berkeley Homes are still in negotiations regarding some elements of the site and therefore the legal process of transferring the site to the Council has not yet been completed.

On a positive note, there has been important recent progress on the negotiations between the Council and Berkeley Homes and all parties remain committed to opening the park for use by both the school and the public in the very near future, hopefully, during the forthcoming spring season.

From **Councillor David Chung** to the **Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing**

The Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has recently announced accessibility improvements being made to stations across the city. Can the Cabinet Member explain how Merton benefits from this initiative?

Reply

Wimbledon Park has recently been named as one of 13 Tube stations which will become step-free by spring 2022 as part of a £200million investment.

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan announced the major boost to the accessibility of the London Underground network, which is the biggest push for step-free access in the Tube's 155-year history.

The latest raft of investment - part of the Mayor's draft Transport Strategy - will bring the number of step-free Tube stations to more than 100 - or 40 per cent of the network. "These improvements are going to make a big difference in helping Londoners move around our city and show the real progress we are making to improve accessibility right across the capital."

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Merton Council have campaigned for more step-free stations and will continue to lobby for further accessibility improvements particularly around the Thameslink and South Western Railway stations.

From **Councillor Adam Bush** to the **Cabinet Member for Finance**:

Can the Cabinet Member provide me with a breakdown by ward of how many households there are in each council tax band?

Reply

Unfortunately, the council tax register is not required to identify properties based on ward, so the information cannot be extracted from the system. However, please see below the breakdown for the borough:

Band A	1,090
Band B	8,392
Band C	22,961
Band D	27,709
Band E	13,171
Band F	5,461
Band G	4,025
Band H	1,727
Total	84,536

From **Councillor Mary Curtin** to the **Cabinet Member for Community and Culture**

Can the Cabinet Member please update Council on the new Collier's Wood library and how it will benefit the community?

**Reply**

The new library in Colliers Wood Library opened on Monday 5 February 2018. Residents will benefit from a modern, flexible library with more space for books and computers. The library has been designed with three flexible meeting rooms that can be used for a range of community events and a café is available.

The new building provides a sustainable library that will be enjoyed for generations to come. Building on the good work that the library service has been doing there will be a focus on work with children and young people and a broader offer for the rest of our residents including an increased number of events and activities.

Residents have been consulted throughout the building of the new library and have had the opportunity to feed into both the external and internal design elements. Working with the Alzheimer's Society the library has also been designed to be dementia friendly.