

## **From Councillor Dennis Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Education**

With the recent news that Harris Academy Morden has become the latest in a long line of schools in Morden being rated Outstanding by Ofsted, can the Cabinet member guarantee that this focus on improving the borough's schools will be maintained?

### **Reply**

The Local Authority continues its rigorous and relentless focus to ensure that the Borough's schools continue to improve. The ambition is for all schools to be good or better and to increase the proportion judged to be outstanding. The Education Division has plans and mechanisms in place to enable this to happen, including its refreshed School Improvement Strategy and 'Support and Challenge' groups for schools where matters are of concern.

The capacity for school improvement is limited, as it is in all local authorities. This in the context of national policy, whereby resources for this function are no longer directed to the same extent towards local authorities.

## **From Councillor Nick McLean to the Cabinet Member for Finance:**

How would the Cabinet Member for Finance rate the Council's ability to collect Council Tax from residents?

### **Reply**

The Council tax team have had continued improvements over the last 5 years or more and at the end of 2017-2018 we achieved our highest ever rate of collection for Council tax, collecting 97.69%.

At the end of July, 4 months into the financial year we collected 39.91% of the Council tax due. If we continue at this rate, we are forecast to exceed our target the rate we achieved last year. I am confident in our ability to collect the majority of council tax due to the authority.

## **From Councillor Russell Makin to Cabinet member for Children's Services:**

How is the council meeting the increase in demand for Early Years childcare in the borough?

### **Reply**

There have been recent, new duties to secure sufficient childcare/early education for eligible families for 30 hours of funded (free) childcare and education. To date there appears to be sufficient provision across the borough for Merton families to access this new entitlement. 962 children took up a 30 hour funded place in the summer term.

Between March 2016 and March 2018 there has been an increase of 100 Ofsted registered childcare places (Ofsted published data). The estimated under 5s population during this period has been stable and predicted to slightly decrease over the next 5 years.

**From Councillor Andrew Howard to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport**

Does the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport believe that Merton Council treats motorists fairly?

**Reply**

Yes, I do. Firstly, we maintain our highways excellently and in comparison with the rest of London our highway condition and levels of investment compare well ensuring motorists can move safely and smoothly through the borough. Secondly, we manage congestion hot spots and enforce against those who breach moving traffic regulations thereby keeping traffic moving. Thirdly, we manage parking providing an efficient controlled parking zone service and the efficient enforcement of highway and off street parking. Our parking charges are fair, transparent and reasonable and in comparison with the rest of London below average.

**From Cllr Hina Bokhari to the Leader**

In the last month we have seen some shockingly Islamophobic and Antisemitic statements made by leading politicians that have worried many people. Will the Leader of the Council take this opportunity to make a clear statement to reassure all Merton residents that as a Council we will stand firmly against Antisemitism and Islamophobia and work for a more open and inclusive borough?

**Reply**

Merton is a proudly diverse borough. Many people are uncertain about their place in society after the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union. Ethnic and faith communities have reported anxiety about a climate of hostility targeted at them. Hate crime has no place in our communities, in our society, in Merton. Our borough succeeds and thrives when the community is united, and it's a big part of what makes Merton a wonderful place to call home, and we should continue to strive to make the borough welcoming to all.

Our Hate Crime Strategy sets out our zero tolerance approach to Islamophobia, Antisemitism and any other hate crime, and ensures that it underpins all the work of the council. As Leader of Merton, I reaffirm my commitment to ensuring the council looks after everyone, and that we all work together for an open and inclusive borough.

**From Councillor Pauline Cowper to the Cabinet member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities:**

Merton is leading the way in London for Community Sponsorship – what are the ambitions of the Council to expand the programme?

**Reply**

Merton is proud that through the work of the Faith and Belief Forum the Raynes Park Salvation Army successfully sponsored a Syrian refugee family in February 2017. After the arrival of the family the Salvation Army held a workshop to share their experience of Community Sponsorship with other Faith and Belief and Voluntary organisations. As a result the Wimbledon Synagogue successfully pursued an

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application to the Home Office to participate in the scheme and will shortly welcome another refugee family into the borough.

The scheme is dependent upon voluntary organisations committing to sponsoring a refugee family and the council aims to continue to encourage local groups to consider Community Sponsorship.

### **From Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport:**

Will the Cabinet Member please explain why opposite South Merton Station vehicles are allowed unrestricted parking right up to the bollards on the bridge, thus causing extreme difficulties for buses and the many large lorries travelling from Morden to Bushey Road?

### **Reply**

The Council relies on road users to report obstructive parking. Upon receiving a complaint, the Council investigates and undertakes the statutory consultation for the introduction of the appropriate waiting and loading restrictions if deemed necessary. We recently received one complaint regarding this location and a consultation is programmed. Although it is suggested that at times buses cannot pass due to obstructive parking, London Buses have not raised this point with us and thus far we have only received one complaint which we are acting upon.

Residents can also now report illegal parking via <https://www2.merton.gov.uk/transport-streets/parking/illegal-parking.htm>

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