

LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON	
	<u>NOTES OF MEETING</u>
	Subject: Morden Community Forum
	Date: 12th October 2017 Time: 19.15
Action Needed By:	
	<p>1. <u>Welcome and Introductions</u> 1.1 Cllr. Philip Jones welcomed everybody to the meeting.</p> <p>1.2 Approximately 28 residents attended, as well as 9 councillors, and officers from the council and its partners.</p>
CP	<p>2. <u>Morden Leisure Centre update and London Borough of Culture Bid</u> 2.1 Christine Parsloe, Leisure & Culture Development Manager at the council, updated residents on the new leisure centre development and provided a presentation. Construction has started and the project is on target, on time and on budget.</p> <p>2.2 The café will have an outside area with seating, which it will be possible to access without entering the leisure centre sports facilities.</p> <p>2.3 The Friends of Morden Park requested a viewing window through the hoardings. CP agreed to speak to the constructor about the feasibility of this.</p> <p>2.4 It was noted that the construction work will not obstruct the use of the existing pool.</p> <p>2.5 Merton is submitting a bid to the Mayor and GLA to be the London Borough of Culture 2019. If successful, the borough would be granted funds of £1.1m for a year-long programme of culture in 2019. The deadline for the bid is 1st December, whilst a decision will be made in February 2018. Residents who would like to find out more can contact CP, or search for #mylocalculture or #Mertonculture online.</p>
	<p>3. <u>Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Mark Allison</u> 3.1 Councillor Allison gave a presentation on key issues within the council and Merton's vision for 2020.</p> <p>3.2 A large number of questions and points were made in relation to Merton Hall and the decision of the Planning Applications Committee on 21 September. These are set out below, with the responses from Councillor Allison:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elim Church teaches that homosexuality is wrong and will

	<p>therefore not be inclusive landlords of a community facility. Should it be given a community asset? Elim Church is welcoming to all, as shown by its hosting of the Wimbledon Foodbank. The entire congregation cannot be seen as being homophobic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An applied to Historic England has been made to have Merton Hall listed. Shouldn't the council re-think its planning consent in light of this? The parts of the building that were locally listed were considered by the Planning Committee when deciding on the planning application. Any future decision made by Historic England will be noted by the council. • The council should consider locating the church elsewhere – on a site that needs redevelopment and with a leasehold with covenants. Over three thousand residents have petitioned to save Merton Hall; they deserve to be heard. The council did listen to residents' objections and also took Equalities assessments into account; a decision was made according to Equalities and based on planning regulations and guidelines. • Could the church be moved to the Virgin Active site on Battle Close, given the gym is closing? Virgin Active approached the council only very recently about selling its leasehold for the land to Merton; as such, the council has not yet had the opportunity to consider the purchase or comment on what the site could be used for. Timescales also mean that work on the school has to start very soon as places are already being accepted for 2018. It is a shame that Virgin wish to close the gym. The site was considered some years ago as a possible location for a new school but the Education Funding Agency, Merton council and parents wanted a new school in South Wimbledon. • Why can't the school be built elsewhere? The council has been consulting for a number of years about the new school and many people are excited about it opening in South Wimbledon. Lots of local people currently have to send their children to schools quite far away. This site is in an area with the greatest need for a secondary school and it has good public transport links. It is the preferred option. Further information on why the council chose the site can be found on its website.
	<p>4. <u>Dog Controls consultation</u> 4.1 Doug Napier, Leisure and Culture Greenspaces Manager at the council, informed residents that, in light of changes in government legislation, a consultation is taking place on introducing new dog control orders. Residents are encouraged to participate and give their thoughts before the consultation closes on 30th October.</p>

	<p>4.2 Four orders are being considered: owners must clean up after their dogs (a pre-existing order which would be continued under the new legislation); dog exclusion areas (a pre-existing order); dogs must be put on a lead if ordered to do so (a new order); and the maximum number of dogs that one person can walk at any time is four (a new order).</p> <p>4.3 A councillor and a local resident both felt that the consultation is too online-focused. DN explained that whilst the consultation is primarily online, paper copies are available upon request. Residents without online access at home or those who require assistance with using computers can also visit their local library to respond to the consultation.</p> <p>4.4 Councillor Kenny asked that exemptions be made for the disabled and the elderly. She also expressed her support for a limit on the number of dogs that can be walked, but argued there is a value in dog walkers. It was explained that guide dogs would be exempt from most of the orders and that the council encourages dog walking and well-behaved dogs.</p> <p>4.5 The consultation is not restricted to Merton residents as it is recognised that people from outside the borough also use our parks; however, the survey does ask where respondents are from.</p> <p>4.6 A resident asked what the agreement is with ID Verde for opening park gates as there is a problem with Haydons Road Recreation Ground being opened. DN explained that agreements vary in different areas: some parks are opened by local residents or residents' groups and some are opened by ID Verde. The contract is not specific for each park but captures the pre-existing arrangements for opening parks. There is a group of local key holders for Haydons Road Rec, organised through the park's friends group.</p>
	<p>5. <u>Eastern Electrics event feedback</u></p> <p>5.1 The Eastern Electrics festival took place on Saturday 5th August and was a major event for Merton. The council was deeply involved and worked hard with the promoters and partners, including the police, to facilitate the event and make it safe and secure. Almost 16,000 people attended and the festival was generally peaceful and successful.</p> <p>5.2 Permission for the festival to go ahead was granted by the Licencing Committee in May 2017, with 153 conditions, for example, a 10pm finish time rather than the requested 11pm finish, and a reduced capacity of 17,000 rather than 20,000. There were also conditions concerning waste, water, crowd management, and</p>

alcohol management. All of these conditions were met to the satisfaction of the Safety Advisory Group.

5.3 The council monitored the event on the day, including aspects such as food safety and noise. Street pastors supported the festival and the police were present on the day.

5.4 Noise levels were a concern before the event but limits were not exceeded during the event.

5.5 Three complaints were received on the day about noise and others were received about people urinating in public, despite extra toilets being provided. Although there was some low level usage of 'legal highs', there were no arrests on the day and no medical incidents.

5.6 Overall the event was seen as a success with no major concerns and the organisers are interested in returning; however, if they did, there are lessons that have been learnt, for example taxi pick-ups outside the venue needs to be controlled more at the end of the evening and greater advanced communication is needed with residents about the event.

5.7 Because the event was a commercial one, the organisers incurred all of the costs for arranging it and there were no significant costs to the council.

5.8 A resident voiced concerns that the event had been more of a rave than a festival, that drinking outside of the venue had not been controlled, that residents had not been adequately consulted and that noise from the festival had been too loud. DN responded that any future events would be subject to a new licence application, which residents would have the opportunity to object to. Noise levels were measured throughout the day and remained within the licence conditions – in fact, they were 10 decibels below the limits set by the licence. In terms of alcohol consumption, there were limits to the controls that could reasonably be applied by the organisers outside of the licenced event area. It was acknowledged that communications about the event could have been better but with a longer planning period and with the experience gained during 2017, that is anticipated to occur, assuming that the event returns.

5.9 A resident asked if there is a maximum number of days that a commercial letting can continue for on publicly owned land. DN explained that he is not aware of a maximum but even so, the council would not seek to allow an event to take over a whole park and would look to allow parks to remain open for other uses/public access at the same time wherever possible. The only time a whole park is closed to the public is when the council sets up for its annual fireworks display and this takes only about one hour per annum.

	<p>5.10 The council receives a fee from the organisers of commercial events that advertise their activities through posters and banners erected around the borough. There is some concern within the council about the current levels of fly-posting and the size of some banners. The council is actively seeking to affect greater control and compliance in respect of such advertising.</p>
	<p>6. <u>Soapbox</u></p> <p>6.1 Bob Whitfield suggested that revenue from the Eastern Electrics festival could be used to maintain or increase council services to the wider community. He also said he felt there had been unnecessary noise from the event, which particularly affected the elderly.</p> <p>6.2 Nell Allen informed residents of her 'No Wheelies' campaign against the introduction of wheelie bins in the borough. She is collecting signatures for a petition asking for an alternative to the bins and is arguing for weekly collections to be maintained rather than the proposed move to fortnightly collections. Further information can be found on her website.</p> <p>6.3 Elspeth Clarke voiced concern about a perceived lack of communication between council departments and asked what processes are in place for them to talk to one another, especially regarding planning matters. DN replied that in his experience there is a lot of communication between key people in departments.</p> <p>6.4 Gillian Clarke asked about regulations and restrictions on when building work on houses can take place. Councillor Jones said that there are standard planning conditions on sites in residential areas (7am – 6pm on weekdays; Saturday mornings), but there are no regulations as to when work on houses and housing extensions can be carried out without planning permission. The scope of such 'permitted development' has recently been enlarged by government.</p> <p>6.5 Ray Leyden said that road safety for cyclists is a big issue and high-vis clothing is essential. He also voiced concerns about pedestrians being injured by cyclists and asked whether the council can do anything to tackle this. Councillor Jones said that the question would need to be put to the Cabinet member responsible.</p> <p>6.6 It was suggested that the Soapbox be moved to the start of the agenda at future Morden forum meetings, to allow all residents the opportunity to have their say before the meeting finishes.</p>

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