

Mitcham Community Forum
18 October 2017
Chair's Report

The meeting was held at Mitcham Library, and chaired by Councillor Ian Munn. 20 residents attended, as well as four other Councillors, and officers of the council and its partners. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Leonie Cooper Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth

Leonie Cooper, London Assembly Member, provided an update on the work of the Assembly. There are 25 Assembly Members covering 13 super constituencies, including Merton and Wandsworth. The Assembly's role is to hold the Mayor of London to account and provide scrutiny of the Greater London Authority bodies including Transport for London, the Metropolitan Police and London Fire Brigade.

A number of key strategies are currently in development:
Transport Strategy – consultation closed 2 October
Environment Strategy – consultation open until 17 November
Housing Strategy – consultation open until 7 December 2017
Health Inequalities strategy – consultation open until 30 November
In addition a draft London Plan is due out soon.

Further information can be found at <https://www.london.gov.uk/get-involved/mayor-london-draft-strategies-and-consultations>

In response to questions Ms Cooper said that Assembly Members are not involved in planning applications directly but the Mayor does have powers to call-in some types of applications from the local borough. The Mayor has indicated a willingness to take over planning decision where the provision of affordable housing is insufficient, for example recently in Wandsworth. Any local developments, including Benedict Wharf, would need to consider this issue carefully and take into account the new London Plan.

Energy Recovery Facilities like the one half built at Beddington Lane are a considerable improvement on previous technologies with considerably less emissions. Any HGV traffic would need to be managed carefully but improvements in HGV engine technologies are happening quickly with zero emission capable vehicles likely to be available soon.

Problems with buses can be taken up with Transport for London to speak with the relevant bus company. It is helpful to be specific about the route, the time and the location of any incidents and any images or recordings are useful to.

Residents wishing to contact Leonie directly can do so via leonie.cooper@london.gov.uk

Leader of Merton Council, Councillor Stephen Alambritis

Councillor Alambritis gave a presentation on the challenges the council faces, recent achievements and the vision for 2020. The presentation can be found at:

<http://www2.merton.gov.uk/community-living/communityforums/mitchamcommunityforum.htm>.

In response to questions Councillor Alambritis said that elsewhere in the country wheelie bins have been proven to help reduce litter, increase recycling and improve efficiency. Wheelie bins will not be forced on households where they would not be appropriate and supported collections for those with disabilities would remain available. Due to financial pressure the council has to balance the aesthetic impact of the means with the efficiencies they provide, which would have an impact on other services. The details of the service are still being considered including lids for recycling boxes. There are no plans to install electronic chips in the wheelie bins.

The current level of street cleaning provided by Veolia is not good enough. Officers are working with hard with Veolia to resolve problems but under the contract penalties can be applied.

Stephen confirmed the 3% adult social care precept is worth around £2.5million and an additional £9million has been added to the adult social care budget.

A question was asked about the transfer of Merton Hall to Elim Pentecostal Church and concerns about the homophobic views of that faith. Councillor Alambritis responded that the council has a duty to provide sufficient school places; there is a need for an additional secondary school in the South Wimbledon area, and the site on High Path that currently includes the Elim building has been identified as the best site available. The Elim site has considerable value so as part of the deal to swap freehold it is necessary to compensate the church and upgrade the facilities at Merton Hall. Stephen said he did not recognise the description of the local Elim church and in his experience it is welcoming to all.

East Merton Model of Health and Wellbeing

Dr Doug Hing, a GP in Merton and the Merton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) clinical lead for the East Merton model of Health and Wellbeing, and Dave Curtis, seconded from Healthwatch Merton to support the development of the model, provided an update on local plans.

Doug said that despite years of work locally the health inequalities between the west and the east of the borough remain and more needs to be done to address this. In particular there is a need to improve diagnosis and early access to services. The new services at the Wilson Hospital site will include a range of diagnostic equipment like ECG, Xray, ultrasound and phlebotomy. There will also be a focus on major conditions including complex diabetes, mental health and children's health. This is expected to be available around 2021. The model being developed in East Merton is inspired by work in Bromley-by-Bow and the focus on Wellbeing makes it more than a new health facility at the Wilson.

Dave said that alongside the health services at the Wilson there will be new community services including social-prescribing, voluntary sector organisations, advice and services to help tackle issues like isolation and loneliness. A Wellbeing work stream will be putting together the package of non-clinical services. This work will involve local groups and they will be meeting later in the autumn before the wider public are also invited to get involved.

In response to questions Dr Hing said there are issues with waiting times for routine GP appointments in some areas due to a shortage of doctors. The patients that previously went to the Wilson were successfully distributed to other surgeries and there has not been an

increase in A&E attendance as a result. Councillor Brenda Fraser explained that plans for a permanent site for the temporary GP surgery on Rowan Road are being progressed.

Rediscover Mitcham update

James Geeson from the Future Merton team, Merton Council, updated the meeting on the works in Mitcham Town Centre. Construction continues with a target for completion in December 2017 and final snagging in January 2018. The bus lane now open and all junctions have been linked electronically. New signals will be in place from mid-November.

In response to questions James said that:

- Christmas lights will be on the main streets with the tree lights now on all year round. There will not be a formal switch-on event in Mitcham due to the works
- The scheme has a balanced approach to moving pedestrians, cyclists, buses and other vehicles. At all junctions the time for pedestrians to cross is either the same or longer than before and in some cases the distance to cross has been reduced.
- In some areas pedestrians and cyclists will need time to get used to the new priorities
- The right turn for buses at Fair Green has been tested and has sufficient space.
- There will be speed surveys on the bus lane to analyse movements.
- There are a number of temporary arrangements still in place so residents have not yet seen the final set up.
- There will be a review after six months of operation to see if any changes are needed.
- There is only space for two buses at the St Marks stand.
- Toilet access remains an issue and options to improve this are being explored.

Kris Witherington, Community Engagement Manager, from Merton Council agreed to find out the latest arrangements for the Community Toilet Scheme in Mitcham.

UPDATE: The Mitcham businesses currently participating in the Community Toilet Scheme are the Kings Arms Pub and Cravings Café. For new applicants like Age UK the Town Centre Business Support Officer will visit the premises to assess the viability of their joining the Scheme.

Councillor Munn thanked residents for attending and closed the meeting.

Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 23 January at 7.15pm, in Mitcham Library

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