

Mitcham Community Forum 5 October 2016 Chair's Report

The meeting was held at Age UK, and chaired by Councillor Ian Munn. 25 residents attended, as well as five other Councillors, and officers of the council and its partners. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Canons Heritage Project update

Anne Jones, Community Engagement Officer for the Canons Project provided an update on progress made towards submitting the second stage bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). A new project team, including Anne, began in April 2016 and has increased the pace of development work. HLF has recently conducted a review of the project and said that whilst they were pleased with the work completed there was more to do. The deadline for the second stage application is 31 December but it is possible this might be extended until February 2017. This would not impact on the overall project timetable as HLF would still be making their final decision in June 2017.

The Canons House is a major part of the plan. With no obvious future the business plan must show sustainability with sufficient income to meet on-going maintenance. The business plan is nearly complete and includes a new café, kiosk and toilet; and improved play space near Madeira Hall. You can find more details about the plan and provide feedback at:

<http://www.canonspartnership.org.uk/>

In response to questions Anne said that uses for Canons House were still be considered but currently the plans envisage using the ground and first floors as office and studio space with community use in the basement. The heritage sections would also be open to the public and a new lift would make the building accessible. Several options for leisure activities in the park have been considered including a skate park, but Anne would check if reinstalling a putting has been considered. Any income from the building would only be used for to maintain the Canons site. The project team are liaising with the Park Place development and would be happy to reference the London Bloom success in the bid. If the bid was successful the works on the house would take more than a year.

Recycling

Mariana Sadler and Wilhelmina Lutterodt Schandorf provided an overview of recycling services in the borough and then invited residents to take part in a recycling quiz. Details of recycling services can be found at

<https://beta.merton.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/bins-bags-and-collection-services>

The quiz is available on the Mitcham Community Forum webpage:

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

In response to questions Mariana said that food caddies could be made secured from foxes by lowering the handles but some residents have had success with using Scoot as a deterrent. General waste and recycling waste are collected separately by different crews so residents should not see them being mixed. A specific report that this happened will be followed up on.

Rediscover Mitcham update

James Geeson from the Future Merton team, Merton Council, updated the meeting on the works in Mitcham Town Centre.

Three Kings Pond - The works were completed on schedule and the geese and ducks have returned. There are also some terrapins in the pond despite their removal. Litter in the screen has been collected and is the responsibility of the Green Spaces team so will be reported to them. Following feedback from residents a small water feature was included and this should help stop stagnation of the pond.

Fair Green - There has been a delay in installing the lighting including the tree lights. Works should be starting shortly and will improve the level of lighting at night.

Majestic Way - Civil works have been completed but the lighting is still waiting on the contractor.

Bus Street - Construction is on schedule despite a number of problems found in excavation. Phase 3 works outside of Iceland are nearly complete and will reach Greggs next week. A loading bay will be suspended but all the businesses have been able to ensure rear access. Works should be completed in January/February as planned. London Road closure is planned for overnight on 12 and 13 December with vehicles on diversion. New street lighting on the bus street is being installed and a wall between the green and the road will discourage anyone from running out into the road.

Other works – The mural has been repainted. The bus stop has been moved nearer to the town centre but road markings have been left in case they are needed before the end of the project. Trees blocking the new bus stop will need to be cut back to improve visibility for passengers.

In response to a question about the Dunblane Memorial tree James said that the contractors had been briefed about the need to protect the trees but had acknowledge they made an error. The tree has now been protected and no damage had been done. Some shrubs have been lost but this is not unusual in a new urban planting session. James agreed to look into concerns about blight affecting the shrubs. Traffic is being monitored on the perimeter road and so far low speeds are being observed but a 10mph restriction could be an option.

Leader of the Council update

Councillor Stephen Alambritis thanked the many volunteers who contributed to life in Merton including those involved with local community groups, Mitcham Common, and Tooting and Mitcham Football Club. Stephen was pleased to report AFC Wimbledon would also be playing in the borough. On schools Stephen said that Merton schools were the third most improved in the country, and 20 primary schools expanded to create 21 new forms of entry. In addition solar panels are being installed on all primary schools.

Not only were all Merton's libraries staying open but a new library in Colliers Wood will open in 2017. Work is also beginning on the new family leisure centre in Morden with a new habitat being created for crested newts. The campaign to protect St Helier continues with new plans under the Sustainable Transformation Plan (STP) for South West London once again considering reconfiguring local hospitals.

Stephen has recently attended a magistrate's where two fly tippers received fines of £350 and £1000. New powers to issue fines of £400 without going to court have already been used by the Council. Increased enforcement training for frontline staff has generated more than 100 cases a month for further investigation. More than 6000 fines for littering have been issued in the last two years. More publicity for successful prosecutions is a priority.

The Council has frozen council tax since 2010 as well as not cutting support for low income households. We are now consulting on whether to continue the freeze as planned, or to increase council tax to either protect just adult social care or all services. You can complete the consultation form in My Merton or go to www.merton.gov.uk/consultations

In response to questions Stephen said the Council was working with Merton Clinical Commissioning Group on their plans for the Wilson Hospital site. More consultation with the local community would be taking place soon. In addition any funding received through the Better Care Fund would be spent in accordance with the plans developed by the Health and Well Being Board. Stephen was happy to support residents and councillors in the campaign against the closure of Tescos in Mitcham and has been working with Siobhain McDonagh MP to prevent the closure of the White Lion of Mortimer pub. Stephen has written to Newsquest, owners of the local Guardian papers to ask they maintain strong local identity for the papers with local reporters who know their patch.

Stephen agreed with residents who felt the proposals for parliamentary boundaries from the Boundary Commission for England would be of detriment to Mitcham. Residents were encouraged to share their views and can do so at <https://www.bce2018.org.uk/>

Soapbox

For background on the council tax consultation a report by Healthwatch Merton on the impact of reductions in adult social care was made available at

the meeting. The report can be found at http://www.healthwatchmerton.co.uk/sites/default/files/hwm_asc_focus_group_s_write_up_report.pdf

A resident raised questions about the storage of new wheelie bins. In response Cormac Stokes, Head of Street Scene and Waste, explained that whilst standardisation would be the general rule residents would be able to make a case for being an exception. In the Lavender pilot scheme around 1% of households were provided with an alternative. Disabled residents would still be able to access assisted collection.

Speeding on Rowan Road was raised. Police have already been involved in the issue and this would need to be addressed by the relevant officers.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 14 March 2017 at 7.15pm, in Vestry Hall.