

MITCHAM COMMUNITY FORUM
8 OCTOBER 2020

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors (in the Chair), Councillor David Chung

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held via Zoom, and chaired by Councillor David Chung. Four residents and five councillors attended on Zoom with 95 additional views on YouTube. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained how the meeting would work.

2 UPDATE FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (Agenda Item 2)

Councillor Stephen Alambritis gave the annual report he provides to all of the community forums.

Sadly 205 people in Merton have died from COVID-19, and Stephen offered his condolences. 38 of these died in care homes, and Merton Council is working closely with care homes to support them. Merton is still on lower end of infection scales at 40 cases per 100,000 but this is going up. We are working with all the leaders across London as it is important to work together.

Merton is also researching in the issues behind inequality of BAME residents in relation to COVID. In Merton more than 7000 residents were shielded, all of whom were contacted and offered support. Merton redeployed staff to help with the crisis, for example the Bailiffs team were tasked with distributing food parcels.

The local community also came together to support residents and Stephen highlighted the work of Merton Mutual Aid, Dons Local Action Group, Commonsense Trust, and foodbanks, as well as paying tribute to the many volunteers who contributed.

Merton is joining Croydon to nominate Patrick Hutchinson for a bravery award following his rescuing of a rival protester in London.

Services are reopening with Garth Road no longer needing booking at weekends, but booking required Monday – Friday. Merton was the 3rd quickest in London in getting government grants out to local businesses. Helped 2000+ SME businesses. Merton also waived rents as a landlord.

Merton has an [Emergency transport strategy](#) including 26 school streets. We have used and Experimental Management Order as we were asked by government to move quickly. Also 52 rough sleepers were helped into accommodation during lockdown, with 8 refusing the offer of help. We hope the Government will provide support to help find long term solutions. COVID has had a significant Impact on Merton Council finances, with both extra spending on COVID-19, and a loss of income. Stephen called on government to support all local government.

AFC Wimbledon's new stadium is nearly finished, with the first match due to be played behind closed doors on 3 November. This will help regenerate Plough Lane area, including more than 800 new housing units.

Stephen welcomed the £500m investment in the Epsom and St Helier Trust but believe it should be used to keep services at St Helier. We have referred the proposals to downgrade St Helier Hospital to the Secretary of State for Health, and he has asked the independent reconfiguration panel to review the decision taken by the Clinical Commissioning Group.

Merton has a new Mayor, Councillor Sally Kenny has taken on this very important role. Stephen also welcomed Elisabeth Chapple as the new Commander for the Met Police South West Command Unit.

Stephen said that Merton Cabinet has approved a Climate Emergency Action plan. This will involve the Council being zero emissions by 2030 at an estimated cost of £80m by 2030, and the whole borough by 2050 at a cost of £3billion. This will need support from government.

Stephen was asked when fans would have access to the new AFC Wimbledon Stadium. Stephen responded that due to COVID restrictions this would be difficult but the club is posting photos on their website.

A resident asked for an update on the Mitcham Bridge on Bishopford Road. Stephen said there had been a pause for the planning application to be considered. This will go to committee this month and we hope to let contact in November, and the new bridge then built by spring 2021.

A residents asked about arrangements for Remembrance Sunday this year. Stephen said we want to continue to acknowledge Remembrance Sunday so we taking advice from Government on how this will be done. We expect a scaled down event, including laying wreaths in a safe way.

3 COVID-19 UPDATE (Agenda Item 3)

Barry Causer, Head of Strategic Commission, Public Health gave a presentation on the current situation with COVID, and the presentation is attached to this report.

The key message is that positive cases are increasing across London and in Merton. There is now additional testing capacity in London but tests should only be requested if you are symptomatic, are taking part in a government pilot project or if asked to by the NHS before having surgery or another procedure.

Community action is vital, in order to prevent outbreaks and reducing the health harms. In particular residents are asked to:

- Prevent transmission through the rule of 6, regular handwashing and using face-coverings.
- Get tested if symptomatic
- Respond and follow the advice of NHSTest and Trace
- Be aware of potential fraud
- NHS is open
- Get COVID fit to reduce the risk of complications e.g. stop smoking
- Manage long-term conditions
- Get support for mental health
- Get your flu jabs

COVID-19 Community Champions have been set up in Merton. Anyone who lives or works in Merton and is able to share key messages and information. 50 volunteers so far, with drop in sessions on Wednesdays. You can register [online](#).

A question was asked about the impact of reopening of schools. Barry said that the risk to children of becoming severely ill is low and there are negative impacts of being out of school. Schools have done a huge amount of work to reduce the risk of transmission and have risk assessments in place. When schools have had small outbreaks they have been supported by Public Health and CSF to manage them.

A residents asked where the test centre in Merton is based. Barry said the test centre is at South Thames College but is not a walk-in centre so tests must be [booked in advance](#).

Cllr Brenda Fraser asked about enforcing the use of masks on public transport, Barry said he would raise the concerns with colleagues across London and work with Communications to see how we can encourage use. Cllr Fraser also asked about how self-isolation is monitored, Barry said that he will check and get back to you. Barry was pleased to hear some positive feedback on the use of the Mitcham Mile at Figges Marsh.

4 EMISSIONS BASED PARKING CHARGES CONSULTATION (Agenda Item 4)

Cath James, Assistant Director of Public Protection, introduced the item and explained why Merton is consulting on changes to charges and why now. Introducing emissions based charging was always planned, but in the last consultation the proposed changes did not include emissions as the technology to deliver it was not available.

Covid-19 has meant that public transport not available so during the lockdown we saw a move nationally to encourage much more active travel. In outer London car use now at 150% of previous levels so this is an issue that still needs addressing. We have delayed this consultation due to lock down, as the proposal was originally agreed to go out to consultation in the spring.

The proposed approach builds on the previous consultation. We do not have control over vehicles passing through the borough so we know the proposals do not take into account movement of vehicles. However, it is important to take a proportionate approach to the tools we have.

Ben Stephens, Head of Parking Services gave a presentation on the details of the proposals and the presentation is attached to this report. Ben explained that more than half of London boroughs either have or are introducing some form of emissions based charging. It is proposed that a supplementary charge based on the approach in the London ULEZ scheme will replace the current diesel levy. The consultation will remain open until 23 October 2020.

FOLLOWING THE MEETING: the consultation was extended to 26 October.

Cllr Daniel asked how many residents are going to be impacted in Mitcham and Wimbledon. Ben said that there 19,500 residents permits sold across Merton, the majority in Wimbledon, with many also in Colliers Wood and Raynes Park. There are fewer controlled zones in Mitcham. Cllr Holden also asked how the new charges compare to the rest of London. Ben said this is difficult to compare, as our rates vary and many boroughs are also reviewing their scales to take into account emissions.

A resident asked if this just going to penalise poor or elderly residents who cannot afford to buy newer cars. Cath James said we conducted a Equalities Impact Assessment before the consultation. We are currently consulting with key groups like Age UK, Citizens Advice to get their feedback. Emissions based is fairer and should nudge behaviour. There are no changes to blue badge or carers and discounted season tickets in car parks will stay.

A resident asked about charging cars parked on driveways and asking cyclists to contribute to the costs of active travel investment. Merton Council has limited powers, so can only address where we charge. We want to work with TfL to address through

traffic but we do not currently have the powers. We are looking to invest in active travel but please add any other ideas to your response to the consultations.

A resident asked why were Civil Enforcement Officers considered essential working during lockdown. Ben replied that it was essential to keeping traffic flow so CEOs prioritised safety, disabled bays, and busy CPZs where space was needed for essential visitors.

Cll Joan Henry asked about enforcement of illegal pavement parking. Ben said if there is a problem in your road please let us know, contact details are available on our [website](#).

5 CANONS HERITAGE PROJECT (Agenda Item 5)

Amy Keen, Community Engagement Officer for the Canons NLHF Project gave a presentation on the latest steps of the project, and this is attached to this report. Amy joined the Council in August and it has been a busy time since then with significant works taking place on the site and an opportunity to meet local residents at the Heritage Day.

Works are taking place in the Canons House, with the contractor, Buxton, due to complete in Spring 2021. The new café will be leased to an external company. The landscaping work is being undertaken by Tilhill and they aim to complete these by January 2021. These works include restoring the old running track and building a new playground that has been designed by local school children.

Amy is working on updating the Activity Plan for the new facilities to ensure they are adapted for COVID but she still expects there to be lots of opportunities to volunteer. Amy will be updating the [website](#) and producing a newsletter. To receive the newsletter please email info@thecanonsmitcham.co.uk.

Councillor Henry said she had visited the site recently and was impressed by the works to date. A resident asked why the wall near the Obelisk had been removed, Amy explained that this wall was a more recent addition, in the 1960s so the plan was to remove it and replace with more sympathetic planting. A resident asked about the repairs to the Dovecote, Amy said that the materials would be arriving soon and had been matched to make sure this was a sympathetic restoration.

6 LOCAL UPDATES (Agenda Item 6)

Wilson Hospital:

South West London Clinical Commissioning Group is continuing to work with NHS Property Services and Merton Council colleagues to ensure we have a deliverable

project that best serves local people. We will provide a more detailed update at the next forum.

Rowan Community Facility:

From James McGinley, Assistant Director for Sustainable Communities - Crest Homes has submitted a planning application (a minor amendments application) for some design changes to the doctor's surgery, chemist and community space. This is to reflect the final design and operational requirements for the surgery and to come in within budget.

James is seeking a programme from Crest on their build programme and will send this on in due course, but they are, subject to approval of the minor amendments, aiming for a start on site in January/February. They will confirm the anticipated construction timetable with me shortly.

Boundary Review:

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has announced their final proposals for new ward boundaries. These are available on their website <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/>. The proposals will now be put before parliament and should be in place for the 2022 local elections.

7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 7)

Councillor Chung thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting. The next meeting will take place on Thursday 25 February 2021 at 7.15pm.