

COLLIERS WOOD AND NE MITCHAM COMMUNITY FORUM
20 OCTOBER 2021

(7.15 pm - 8.30 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor John Dehaney (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held via Zoom, and chaired by Councillor John Dehaney. Eight residents and four councillors attended on Zoom with 45 additional views on YouTube. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained how the meeting would work.

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

Councillor Mark Allison gave the annual report he provides to all of the community forums. Councillor Mark Allison, Leader of the Council, thanked the chair for the invitation. Mark thanked the Council staff for their hard work in response to COVID. Mark has been a Cllr for nearly 20 years and is proud of his connection with the local area. He was born locally in St Helier Hospital and grew up in St Helier area before moving to Mitcham. Mark said that Merton is a great community but there are huge challenges. Mitcham and Colliers Wood are more disadvantaged areas within Merton and over the last decade huge progress through improving schools, a vital element in improving life chances, a new leisure centre and maintaining full council tax support. A lot of this progress has been undone by the impact of the COVID pandemic has hitting areas like Colliers Wood and Mitcham harder than other places.

As part of a mixed race family Mark said he is passionate about fairness and being inclusive, including appointing the most diverse cabinet in Merton's history. As Leader he plans to celebrate Merton's diversity, as with Black History Month currently.

Mark has been Leader since November so has only experienced the role during the COVID pandemic. Mark launched Merton Together to recognise how many in the community wanted to step up and help their neighbours. Mark thanked everyone who got involved in responding to COVID as their efforts have made a huge difference. Merton Council has worked with the NHS and other partners to help keep people safe but of course many families have lost love ones or had their circumstances changed and their lives may never be the same again. Supporting these households through this will be a major priority.

As a result of the major changes for many we launched the Your Merton engagement exercise to listen to residents about what they value and what their ambitions are for the borough. We are still analysing the results but it is clear that residents value their community, their local open spaces, and were much more conscious of their local area, especially their local high streets. Mark said he is still in listening mode and wants to hear what people have to say. Three of the issues have come out of the listening exercise we have started to address:

- Concerns about the cost of living – which is why we will not be raising parking charges as we had previously planned to.
- The need for better homes – being isolated in poor housing has had a huge impact on some so the council will be investing in development of affordable homes. This was reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny on 19 October and agreed to.
- People want to feel safe – although Merton is a low crime area people want to feel safe. £1m upgrade in CCTV coverage

Mark said he knows that there are other local issues that will need addressing and wants to work together, as we did during the pandemic, to tackle the challenges ahead. Mark said he was proud of Merton and Merton's community and how it has come together to support each other.

A resident asked about the progress on Air Quality. Mark replied that Merton has more school streets than any other London borough, and have introduced new Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. There have also been changes in car ownership with 15% going to lower emission vehicles. Pollution remains a significant issue in parts Colliers Wood.

3 LONDON ASSEMBLY UPDATE (Agenda Item 3)

Leonie Cooper, Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth gave an update on her work. Leonie said she is happy to attend local meetings on Zoom and can be contacted by [email](#).

The Assembly is still looking at COVID issues, and is worried about how difficult it is to get people to wear masks on public transport. Please encourage people to wear masks, especially on the Underground. It is also important to get booster and flu jabs if eligible.

A [new report](#) by Imperial College London commissioned by the Mayor of London showed strong links between air pollution and greater risk of COVID hospitalisation in addition to the previously established links to ethnicity and deprivation. The Ultra-Low Emission Zone is being expanded to South Circular on 25 October. The current zone has reduced NO₂ by 44% and we expect the expanded zone to have a similar impact

on encouraging people to change their vehicle. You can check if your vehicle is affected at [TfL's website](#).

The Mayor and London boroughs have offered to help resettle refugees from Afghanistan. Mayor has offered Help to Buy Back fund to LAS to source homes for refugees. Set up London Refugee Response to coordinate donations and have been overwhelmed by the response.

The Mayor has launched a £400k fund to tackle hate and racism going to community groups. Following the murder of Sir David Amess the Assembly is reviewing security at both the current assembly and the new building in Newham.

The Mayor is providing a package of £11m to support Londoners into work including Creative Enterprise Zones to support Londoners who are unemployed or in low paid work. This funding includes the last support from European Social Fund. There is also £5m for Academies Hub to address skills gaps in key sectors like construction.

The Assembly recently questioned the Mayor and TfL on the funding deal with Government, as the current funding deal runs out in December and TfL needs a long term solution. The Elizabeth Line trials are going well, so after many delays we hope it will open in first half of 2022.

The Assembly has recently passed motions for the £20 uplift to Universal Credit to stay; increased pay for police; solutions to supply issues; access for London to the national Clean Air Fund. The Mayor is funding social housing that will be environmentally sustainable and Cllr Allison has met with Deputy Mayor Tom Copley to look at opportunities for Merton.

Police and Crime Committee looking at issues created by unconscious bias in the police. There is a need to build trust in the police amongst black Londoners and Women.

A resident asked if it is possible to provide updates to the Colliers Wood Residents Association. Both Leonie and Cllr Allison said they were happy to do so.

A resident asked about enforcing mask wearing. Leonie said it is difficult but there is not enough enforcement. It would be easier if the wider context was that mask wearing was still normalised.

Cllr Cooper said skills fund is very important, and asked how quickly it will be available in Merton. Leonie said some strands of funding are available now, others are being delivered through partner organisations with details of the [skills funding](#) schemes available listed online.

4 LOCAL CANCER SERVICES (Agenda Item 4)

Dr Navdeep Alg, South West London Clinical Commissioning Group cancer lead gave a presentation on cancer services in the area. The presentation can be found attached to this report. The pandemic has delayed care and diagnosis in some cancers and there is a need to catch up. This is particularly the case for breast, lung, and urological cancers, mainly due to less screening taking place during the pandemic.

South West London CCG is trying to raise awareness through social media, local press, TV, and non-digital advertising. They are working with an organisation called Community Links to target particular communities and offer information in community languages.

The CCG is also attending public engagement events to have face-to-face contacts. This includes a Cancer Awareness Day at Vestry Hall on 6 November. Dr Alg is happy to attend any community events and asked if anyone has any ideas for events he could attend to email Steven.Nzekwue@swlondon.nhs.uk. Dr Alg also asked attendees to help share the message that services are open and we want to see patients who have symptoms.

Cllr Cooper said the face to face campaign is vital to help residents understand the issues. Who can be contacted to book in an event, for example Black History Month? Dr Alg said he is happy to attend events please email [Navdeep](#) or [Steven](#). Dr Alg said it was important to focus on communities most at risk.

Cllr Kirby said she was happy to share across Graveney networks.

5 COVID AND PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

Barry Causer, Public Health Lead for COVID Resilience, gave a presentation on the latest situation with COVID in Merton. The presentation is attached to this report and covered the latest statistics, and key updates.

The numbers of new infections is 'hovering' but at high levels, mostly driven by schools returning, increased social activity and people returning to work after the summer break. Merton is in the middle of the pack of South West London boroughs, and we need to remain cautious. There are higher numbers of young people, especially secondary school age getting COVID, but there have been breakthrough infections into those people who have been double vaccinated, due to waning immunity levels.

There has been a limited impact of these infections on NHS Indicators, which is different to earlier stages of the pandemic e.g. admissions look stable and the death

rate remains low, due to the success of the vaccination programme. The government has announced two plans:

- Plan A based on vaccinations, test, track and trace
- Plan B explain the increased risk, introduce COVID passes, more working from home and mandatory face coverings

The COVID vaccination programme, is our front line of defence and has four strands:

- Evergreen – 1st and 2nd dose vaccinations for those who have not had a vaccine yet
- Boosters – for those most vulnerable e.g. care home residents, those over 50, front-line health and care staff and those with underlying health conditions
- Third dose – for those immunosuppressed residents
- Single dose for 12-15 year olds in schools

It is important to get your annual flu jab if offered by the NHS and those who aren't eligible for a free flu jab can get a flu vaccine for a few pounds at Community Pharmacies across Merton.

Regular asymptomatic testing remains vital and Lateral Flow Tests are available from assisted test sites in Merton (Wilson Hospital and Centre Court shopping centre) and can be collected from libraries, and community pharmacists for home use.

Better Health Merton is an overarching brand for services that support residents to improve their overall health. To find out more you can sign-up for the [Council COVID newsletter](#), and if you would like to be more involved in supporting your community you can still join the [COVID Champions](#). There is also financial support available to local community groups through [Merton Giving](#).

Cllr Cooper asked about changes to collection to test packs. Barry said the national programme has added an additional stage where you need to apply for a code and then give the code to collect. However in Merton you do not need a code to collect from our libraries or some community pharmacies.

Cllr Allison said so much has happened in the last 12 months and said the Public Health team has been an amazing resource in Merton. Cllr Allison asked Barry to please pass on thanks from Cllrs to team.

6 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 6)

A resident asked what was the view of the councillors on the state of our streets in Colliers Wood and Mitcham and whether the council is delivering on clean streets and waste contract enforcement. Cllr Allison said that more spending time at home has increased volume of waste plus there has been an increase in fly tipping of 50% nationally. Merton has given out a significant number of fines but will continue to

increase education and enforcement. It would help to have additional powers and resources from central Government to tackle this issue.

Northern Line Closure – from 15 January to May 2022 Transport for London will be carrying out improvement work at Bank station. As a result there will be no trains between Kennington and Mordene on the Bank branch of the Northern Line. All services from to and from Morden will use the Charing Cross branch and Transport for London expect services on this line to be busier than usual. More information is available at <https://tfl.gov.uk/travel-information/improvements-and-projects/bank-and-monument>

A resident asked about fly tipping at the top of Caithness Rd and Park Avenue Mews largely from the flats that have no bins. When approached, some fly-tippers explain they have been told to leave their bins on the street by their landlord. What steps could be made to ensure the landlords either provide bins or arrange a separate chargeable collection service? The fines need to be increased for repeat offenders. Kris said he has raised this with the Public Spaces team and will get an update from them as soon as possible. Cllr Kirby said she had met with officers and the council had agreed to remove 6 street bins as they were attracting fly tipping and then write to all households. Kingdom will increase enforcement in the area.

Councillor Dehaney thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.