

RAYNES PARK COMMUNITY FORUM
22 MARCH 2022

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Stephen Crowe (in the Chair),

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 1)

The meeting was held via Zoom and chaired by Councillor Stephen Crowe with Tony Edwards from the Raynes Park Association (RPA). 16 residents and four councillors attended on Zoom with 132 additional views on YouTube. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained how the meeting would work.

2 OPEN FORUM (Agenda Item 2)

A resident asked about safety, theft and anti-social behaviour in the area. They wanted to know if there were any plans for CCTV in the area or other responses. Cllr Adam Bush said that there have been two incidents in the last couple of months, one with a group of young people being arrested, the other involving theft. Cllr Bush has been in contact with the police, and they are aware of issues. Cllr Bush has asked for cameras but told funding is not available, he hopes that the new lease at sports ground will improve security. Cllr Crowe said police have increased rotation of night-time patrol cars in the area. The resident said it would be helpful to have clear guidance from the police on what residents can do.

A resident had asked about travellers on Manuplastics site on Kingston. Cllr Crowe said Merton Council and Met Police are aware and developer, who owns the land, has gone to High Court to seek an injunction and have the travellers removed. A resident said that on the 12 December 2018 Merton Council obtained a court order at the High Court to protect Merton Council land from travellers, allowing them to move them on easier than without it. Notices were placed on parks, and other council open spaces around the borough but this ran out in December 2021. More information can be found on Merton Council's [Unauthorised Encampment Protocol](#).

A resident had asked what was being done to improve cycling and walking in Raynes Park.

Cllr Crowe said Cllrs have applied to Ward Allocation fund to spend on improving cycle lane markings.

3 UPDATE FROM THE MP FOR WIMBLEDON (Agenda Item 3)

Stephen Hammond MP was detained by votes in the House of Commons so will be invited to the next meeting.

4 WARM AND WELL (Agenda Item 4)

Olivia McKay, Winter Warmth Engagement Officer for Wimbledon Guild, gave an update on the [Warm and Well Project](#). The project started in 2019 and is a partnership between Merton Council, Age UK Merton and Thinking Works.

Thinking Works is a free service in operating across five south west London boroughs that provides home energy assessments and assess eligibility for additional utility support. Thinking Works also provide a starter pack to residents that can help improve water and energy efficiency. Wimbledon Guild provides also provides referrals to Thinking Works for fuel vouchers. To be eligible you must be a Merton resident, and either over 65, have a long-term health condition or on a low income.

Wimbledon Guild also provide a handy person service, a free service for older people or those with long term health conditions, to do those small jobs that do not need technical qualifications and excludes gardening or decorating.

The Warm and Well project also provides outreach to share information and can refer to other Guild services.

Cllr Adam Bush asked how we can raise awareness of the service. Olivia said she can supply information packs. A resident asked if there was charge for the handy-person service, and Olivia said it was free.

For more information, please email Olivia omckay@wimbledonguild.co.uk

5 HIGH STREET TASK GROUP (Agenda Item 5)

Councillor Peter Southgate said that the Repurposing the High Street Task Group began in June 2020 and has taken a long time to complete. At the same time Your Merton and Merton 2030 funding has begun to take shape. Cllr Southgate said that the final report went to [Cabinet on 21 March](#) and Cabinet has formed a working group to implement the recommendations.

The findings included the importance of arts/cultural events; funding for town centre managers to provide a link to businesses; online/digital offer to promote local high streets; attract entrepreneurs who want to move to local spaces rather commute to central London; and link the high streets with nearby green spaces and create more greenery on high streets. The Task Group also acknowledged that each high street has a different history and culture, and this can be used to link communities to these spaces.

Cllr Southgate said the RPA has been effective in bringing residents and businesses together and this is not the case in other areas. Officers will begin to develop plans for each of the high streets. Cllr Southgate thanked everyone who had contributed to the review, including Cllr Bush, and the RPA.

Cllr Bush thanked Cllr Southgate for chairing the group effectively and hoped the report would create the momentum

Tony Edwards asked if Merton Council could apply to Govt High Street fund for additional support. Cllr Southgate said funds were being made available from Merton 2030, but if external funds could be leveraged that should be pursued so will raise this with officers. A resident said business rates had been an issue deterring new businesses, Cllr Southgate said one option is making smaller spaces but the whole system does need significant reform. A resident said government funding had supported parklets in Raynes Park and there is green space near Raynes Park High Street.

6 CORONAVIRUS BUSINESS SUPPORT GRANTS (Agenda Item 6)

Tony Edwards said Merton Council had £4.7m from government so support businesses who had not received funding from previous schemes. The support is in the form of business rates discount. The deadline is on 30 March 2022. Criteria can be found on the website <https://www.merton.gov.uk/coronavirus/business/grants/carf>

7 UPDATE ON LIBRARY CHANGES PILOT (Agenda Item 7)

Danny McDonald, manager of Raynes Park Library. Danny said there was a pilot in four libraries, including Raynes Park, to introduce electronic access using library cards. There have been some technical issues but otherwise customers have responded well. This will enable the library to open for longer but without staff on site, from 4 April. There is no reduction in library staff, but the security staff will be moved around other sites.

Health and well-being services, funding has been supporting Mind-space events including yoga, exercise introduction of health monitors on site. No social distancing and mask requirements but have been continuing to clean books and monitor air flow. Events returning with more participation than pre-pandemic. Will include ballroom dancing lessons as part of Jane Austen month. The library is handling bookings through [Eventbrite](#).

A resident asked about older people managing the access and if the pilot showed some people struggled. Danny said residents did struggle and will still need to scan 9.30am-1.30pm but there should be staff on hand to support on most occasions. A

resident said the business plan made it clear the pilot was to implement staff-less provision, Danny said that some of the time the library would be non-staffed but would check with the Head of Service about the business plan. A resident asked if volunteers would be available. Danny said adult volunteers would be welcome. A resident asked about access to the toilets, Danny said the toilets would be locked when the library was not staffed in case any accidents occurred. Cllr Crowe asked about extending opening hours into the evening. Danny said evening and Wednesday opening were being considered depending how the initial extension of opening hours goes. A resident asked what numbers of visitors were usually, outside of the pandemic. Danny said the number of visitors had been on decline which is why the library is focusing on becoming more of a community hub.

8 DISPOSAL OF RAYNES PARK SPORTS GROUND (Agenda Item 8)

Tony Edwards said that the new lease is being agreed and the lease will take into account the comments received by Merton Council. Jacquie Denton said concerns about footpaths and cycle ways have been raised but they will not be affected. Comments open until Thursday. Cllr Crowe asked about drainage issues and Jacquie said she can raise the issue with the tenants.

9 GENERAL UPDATES (Agenda Item 9)

Chris Larkman and Tony Edwards gave an update on local issues.

Land transfer has been completed to expand space for pedestrians on the south side.

National Rail are putting in gate to allow volunteers to access the railway embankment in order to support clearing and planting on north side.

There are still no parking restrictions on the kiss & ride so will be meeting with Workspace alongside Stephen Hammond

Parklet at Lyme and Thyme taken out temporarily due to Thames Water works.

Proposal for new public realm space - there is room for more space on the south side of the Skew Arch. Thames Water were keen to see more rain gardens in the area. Merton was turned down for £300k but will be reapplying in April to a new fund. RPA will be trying to coordinate these activities to improve the area. A resident asked about the possibility of a green wall by the AstroTurf. Tony said this is a good idea NR generally do not like things being added to their structures.

Flooding:

The best way to report flooding is via the “[Thames Water flooding questionnaire](#)” and reading the [Thames Water sewer flooding guide](#) which gives residents guidance on how to claim money off their Thames Water bill on the second last page. Both are available via the Thames Water flooding page [Flooding | Emergencies | Help | Thames Water](#)”

Tree Strategy Kris Witherington said that the Tree Strategy consultation had received more than 500 responses which were now being analysed. The team hoped to put together a draft strategy which will go out for consultation in around May.

10 COMMUNITY FORUM REVIEW (Agenda Item 10)

Kris Witherington, Engagement and Consultation Manager at Merton Council, gave a presentation on the review of the Community Forum meetings currently taking place. The presentation is attached to this report.

Merton Council is asking residents to provide feedback on their experience of the community forums, what they think works, and what they think could be improved. Kris has looked at what other types of engagement is taking place across London and ran through seven other models for engaging with residents.

Chris Larkman said the Forum is going well in Raynes Park and will need to adjust to new ward boundaries. The return of business breakfasts in Raynes Park will help improve the link with businesses. A resident said that having meetings on Zoom has had benefits and it would be better to keep the meetings as a hybrid of online and in person. A resident said they thought it would help to advertise the forum more prominently on social media.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda Item 11)

Cllr Crowe thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda Item 12)

Future meeting:

Thursday 30 June 2022 at 7.15pm in Raynes Park Library

Any issues or questions can be emailed to getinvolved@merton.gov.uk

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