

Agenda Item 3

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COUNCIL
6 JULY 2022

(7.15 pm - 10.04 pm)

PRESENT (in the Chair), Councillor Joan Henry,
Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina,
Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Councillor Laxmi Attawar,
Councillor Thomas Barlow, Councillor Hina Bokhari,
Councillor Michael Brunt, Councillor Billy Christie,
Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah,
Councillor Anthony Fairclough, Councillor Edward Foley,
Councillor Brenda Fraser, Councillor Jenifer Gould,
Councillor Joan Henry, Councillor Daniel Holden,
Councillor Andrew Howard, Councillor Natasha Irons,
Councillor Linda Kirby, Councillor Paul Kohler,
Councillor Edith Macauley, Councillor Peter McCabe,
Councillor Simon McGrath, Councillor Nick McLean,
Councillor Aidan Mundy, Councillor Dennis Pearce,
Councillor Marsie Skeete, Councillor Eleanor Stringer,
Councillor Martin Whelton, Councillor Helena Dollimore,
Councillor James Williscroft, Councillor John Braithwaite,
Councillor Michael Butcher, Councillor Caroline Charles,
Councillor Eleanor Cox, Councillor Klaar Dresselaers,
Councillor Chessie Flack, Councillor Kirsten Galea,
Councillor Ross Garrod, Councillor Jil Hall,
Councillor Billy Hayes, Councillor Susie Hicks,
Councillor Dan Johnston, Councillor Andrew Judge, Councillor
Sally Kenny, Councillor Usaama Kaweesa,
Councillor Samantha MacArthur, Councillor Gill Manly,
Councillor Stephen Mercer, Councillor Stuart Neaverson,
Councillor John Oliver, Councillor Robert Page,
Councillor Michael Paterson, Councillor Tony Reiss,
Councillor Slawek Szczepanski, Councillor Matthew Willis,
Councillor Max Austin and Councillor Victoria Wilson

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sheri-Ann Bhim.

Councillors Simon McGrath and Daniel Holden attended remotely.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2022 are agreed as an accurate record.

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE MAYOR, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Agenda Item 4)

The Council observed a minutes' silence following the death of former Councillor and Freeman of the Borough Allan Jones. Councillor Brunt and Councillor McLean spoke about his life.

The Leader spoke on the upcoming Cost of Living Event and on the TV screen at the Canons Leisure Centre which would be screening the Wimbledon Tennis Championship.

Councillors Macauley and Foley spoke to congratulate Councillor Kirby on receiving her MBE.

Councillors Irons, Kohler and Judge spoke on the recent retirement of Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration.

There were no announcements from the Chief Executive.

The Mayor then provided an update on her recent and upcoming events and activities.

5 PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS (Agenda Item 5)

The responses to the written public questions were circulated prior to the meeting. The Mayor then invited each of the questioners in turn to ask (if they wished) a further question to the Cabinet Member. A copy of the supplementary questions and responses will be included in the 'public questions to Cabinet Members' published document.

6 COUNCILLORS' ORDINARY PRIORITY QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS (Agenda Item 6)

The responses to the written member ordinary priority questions were circulated prior to the meeting. The Mayor then invited each of the members in turn to ask (if they wished) a further question to the Cabinet Member. A copy of the supplementary questions and responses will be included in the 'member ordinary priority questions to Cabinet Members' published document.

7a STRATEGIC THEME: MAIN REPORT (Agenda Item 7a)

The Strategic Theme report on Supporting residents who are most in need and promoting the safety and wellbeing of all our communities with an emphasis on Health inequalities was moved by Councillor McCabe and seconded by Councillor Charles.

Councillor Austin also spoke on the item.

The Liberal Democrat amendment to the Strategic Theme Report was moved by Councillor Gould and seconded by Councillor Hicks. Councillor McCabe also spoke on the amendment.

The Liberal Democrat amendment was put to a vote and carried unanimously.

The Strategic Theme report as amended was agreed.

RESOLVED:

A. That the Council notes the progress in relation to the contents of this report

Council also:

b) requests a report be sent to Cabinet within the next 12 months setting out a comprehensive engagement plan, with targets and deadlines for improvement aimed at:

- Increasing uptake of Breast cancer screening services by women across the borough;
- Increasing uptake of Childhood immunisations, particularly pre-school boosters and MMR vaccinations;
- Reducing the incidence of self-harming by young people.

c) requests Cabinet to undertake a review of the borough's cycling and walking infrastructure aimed at increasing the number of children cycling and walking thereby reducing school-related traffic congestion and resulting air pollution.

7b STRATEGIC THEME: COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS (Agenda Item 7b)

The responses to the written member strategic theme priority questions were circulated prior to the meeting. The Mayor then invited each of the members in turn to ask (if they wished) a further question to the Cabinet Member. A copy of the supplementary questions and responses will be included in the 'member strategic theme priority questions to Cabinet Members' published document.

It was also noted that a copy of the remaining Member questions and responses will be published after the meeting, in line with Constitutional requirements.

7c STRATEGIC THEME: LABOUR MOTION (Agenda Item 7c)

The motion was moved by Councillor Dollimore and seconded by Councillor Williscroft.

Councillors Fairclough and Barlow spoke on the item.

The motion was then put to a vote and was carried – votes in favour: 47, votes against: 6, abstentions: 1.

RESOLVED:

This Council notes the enormous health inequalities, exacerbated by inequalities in access to healthcare, between the East and West of the borough.

Council notes that according to Public Health Outcomes Framework data, the slope index of inequality (an overarching measure of the life expectancy inequality gap which represents the gap in years of life expectancy at birth between the most deprived and least deprived communities), from 2018 to 2020 in Merton the gap was 5 years for females (95% CI 3.3-6.6) and 7.7 for males (95% CI 6-9.4).

Council notes the proposal to move services to Belmont will increase these inequalities and reduce access to healthcare for the people of Merton.

Council notes the cuts to funding and delays to the programme of hospital-building in Belmont that have already been seen, and believes them to be a matter of concern to people throughout South West London.

This Council has a long-standing commitment to ensuring that the residents of Merton have access to a full range of NHS acute services on the St Helier Hospital site, including a blue light A&E and consultant-led maternity service. Any attempt to relocate acute services away from an area of relative deprivation in St Helier in favour of a more affluent area such as Belmont would be incompatible with the statutory duty on the Merton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to have regard to the need to tackle health inequalities because it would make accessing acute health services significantly more difficult for those in our population who suffer the greatest level of inequality. Instead, council supports the previous strategy to re-build St Helier hospital on its current site with its full range of services intact.

It is the firm belief of this Council that the retention of all services at St Helier is the very best way to ensure equality of healthcare provision for the residents of Merton, and ensure that those in the east do not further lose out.

The Council notes that the Leader of the Council has written on 15th June 2022 to the Chief Executive Officer designate for the South West London ICS to ask for an explanation of any reassurances she has received that the hospital-building programme in South West London will not suffer from further delays or cuts to funding. Council calls on the CCG to publish the new business plan and explain the reason behind residents not being consulted on it, and for information about the business of the Strategic Executive Group and the Strategic Oversight Group.

Council resolves to:

Write a letter to the CCG and other affected local authorities requesting that, in the ongoing spirit of cooperation identified by an independent review panel to the Secretary of State in October 2020 as essential to identifying the best possible outcomes for the whole population being served, they support the retention of all services at St Helier.

8 REPORTS OF THE MITCHAM COMMUNITY FORUM: 22 FEBRUARY 2022
(Agenda Item 8)

Councillor Mundy presented the report which was received by the Council.

9 REPORT OF THE MORDEN COMMUNITY FORUM: 23 FEBRUARY 2022
(Agenda Item 9)

Councillor Charles presented the report which was received by the Council.

10 REPORT OF THE RAYNES PARK COMMUNITY FORUM: 22 MARCH 2022
(Agenda Item 10)

Councillor Bokhari presented the report which was received by the Council.

11 REPORT OF THE WIMBLEDON COMMUNITY FORUM: 23 MARCH 2022
(Agenda Item 11)

Councillor Kohler presented the report which was received by the Council.

12 REPORT OF THE WIMBLEDON COMMUNITY FORUM: 15 JUNE 2022
(Agenda Item 12)

Councillor Kohler presented the report which was received by the Council.

Councillor Kohler moved a motion submitted on behalf of the Community Forum. The motion was seconded by Councillor Stringer.

Councillor Austin spoke on the motion.

The motion was put to a vote and carried – votes in favour: 47, against: 6, abstentions: 1.

RESOLVED:

The Wimbledon Community Forum notes that some roads in Wimbledon are named after former residents who were slave owners.

The Forum calls on Merton Council to:

- consider including historical information in the vicinity of such road signs including the fact they are named after slave owners.

13 NOTICE OF MOTION: LIBERAL DEMOCRAT MOTION (Agenda Item 13)

The motion was moved by Councillor McGrath and seconded by Councillor Hall.

The Labour amendment as set out in agenda item 21 was moved by Councillor Christie and seconded by Councillor Hayes.

Councillor Howard spoke on the item.

The Labour amendment was put to a vote and was carried – votes in favour: 37, votes against: 16, abstentions: 1.

The substantive motion (as amended) was then put to a vote and was agreed.

RESOLVED:

Council Notes:

- 1) That low pay still affects many people in Merton and that the Cost-of-Living crisis is making their situation worse
- 2) That Merton Council is a London Living Wage direct employer

3) The amendment to the Budget resolution passed by Council in March 2021:

"G) welcoming the provision in the MTFS for increased contract costs/LLW for contracts due to be re-let in 2022/23 onwards, requests Cabinet make real movement towards paying the London Living Wage to care workers employed by outside contractors as and when each contract comes up for retendering and/or renegotiation."

- 3) The ongoing work to negotiate new contracts with service providers who pay the London Living Wage, most recently (27th June) Cabinet approving a contract for Supported Living Services for Adults with a Learning Disability which pays London Living Wage to its staff

Council requests that Cabinet present a paper to on the costs, implications and timescale for Merton being accredited by the Living Wage Foundation in recognition of its status as a Living Wage Employer.

14 NOTICE OF MOTION: LABOUR MOTION (Agenda Item 14)

The motion was moved by Councillor Stringer and seconded by Councillor Kaweesa.

The Liberal Democrat amendment as set out in agenda item 21 was moved by Councillor Fairclough and seconded by Councillor Kohler.

The Liberal Democrat amendment was put to a vote and fell – votes in favour: 24, votes against: 29, abstentions: 1.

The Conservative amendment as set out in agenda item 21 was moved by Councillor McLean and seconded by Councillor Howard.

The Conservative amendment was put to a vote and fell – votes in favour: 8, votes against: 29, abstentions: 17

As six members of the Council requested that a recorded vote be taken on the vote on the substantive motion, a roll call was taken and the votes were as follows:

Votes in favour (54): Councillors Alambritis, Attawar, Austin, Barlow, Bokhari, Braithwaite, Brunt, Butcher, Charles, Christie, Cooper-Marbiah, Cox, Dollimore, Dresselaers, Fairclough, Flack, Foley, Fraser, Galea, Garrod, Gould, Hall, Hayes, Hicks, Howard, Irons, Johnston, Judge, Kaweesa, Kenny, Kirby, Kohler, MacArthur, Macauley, Manly, McCabe, McLean, Mercer, Mundy, Neaverson, Oliver, Page, Paterson, Pearce, Reiss, Skeete, Stringer, Szczepanski, Whelton, Willis, Williscroft, Wilson, Deputy Mayor Councillor Akyigyina and the Mayor Councillor Henry.

Votes against: (0)

Not Voting: (0)

The Motion was therefore unanimously agreed and it was

RESOLVED:

This Council notes that:

- The Royal College of Psychiatrists has reported that the cost-of-living crisis “poses a threat of pandemic proportions” to the nation’s mental health.
- On 1st April 2022, Ofgem increased the energy cap by 54%. For a typical household paying by direct debit it's now £1,971/year – up by a massive £693/year, from its previous level. Those on prepay, the price cap has also increased by 54%, from £1,309/year to £2,017/year on typical use – a rise of £708/year.
- Workers have seen their National Insurance contributions increased from 12% to 13.25% on 6 April to fund the response to the Covid NHS backlog and new investment in adult social care.
- Additionally – and in this same timeframe – food prices and fuel are rising caused by global inflation post-pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine.

This Council recognises the unprecedented financial pressures that all our residents will face in the coming year, and notes with serious concern, that for those with low or insecure income, these pressures could prove overwhelming.

The Council, therefore, declares a ‘Cost of Living Emergency’. Recognising that it has a part to play in response, this Council has:

- Established a £2 million Cost of Living Emergency Fund to target support to residents and voluntary organisations to alleviate the financial burden facing our residents.
- Set up a series of Cost of Living events across the borough to reach those most in need to inform them of resources and support available

- Maintained one of the country's most generous Council Tax Support schemes for residents on low incomes
- Created a 'Cost of Living' Hub on our website to help residents find services that can support them through financial difficulty
- Pledged to continue provision of Free School meals to those eligible throughout the school summer holidays

In addition, this Council will:

- Build on its status as a London Living Wage employer to ensure Merton becomes a London Living Wage Borough
 - Appoint a London Living Wage Champion to drive forward this work
- Convene a summit of voluntary organisations to discuss how best to provide support to those most in need The work of alleviating the Cost of Living crisis is not the Council's alone.

Therefore, this Council calls on the Government to:

- Continue funding the provision of Free School Meals during school holidays
- Extend support to schools and sporting facilities to mitigate against the increase in energy prices, so that children and families will not miss out on crucial education and exercise opportunities
- Extend to Merton the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) pilot which joins up the mental health sector with debt advice services for people in mental health crisis to avoid spiralling debt.

15 UPDATE ON PLANNING ENFORCEMENT (Agenda Item 15)

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

16 UPDATE ON MOTIONS AND AMENDMENTS FROM COUNCIL 2021-22 (Agenda Item 16)

The report was moved by Councillor Garrod and seconded by Councillor Stringer.

RESOLVED:

A. That Council notes the updates within the report on motions and amendments passed at Council during the previous municipal year

17 CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND RELATED MATTERS (Agenda Item 17)

The report was moved by Councillor Garrod and seconded by Councillor Stringer and Councillor Kohler spoke on the item.

RESOLVED:

That the Council:

1. Notes the changes to the membership of Committees that were approved under delegated authority since the last meeting of the Council.

18 PETITIONS (Agenda Item 18)

The report was moved by Councillor Garrod and seconded by Councillor Stringer.

There were no petitions received.

RESOLVED

That Council

1. Notes the update on the petitions received at the last meeting,

19 BUSINESS FOR THE NEXT ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
(Agenda Item 19)

That the Strategic Theme for the next ordinary meeting of the Council, being held on 14 September 2022, shall be “Work to make Merton a fairer, more equal borough and support those on lower income by tackling poverty and fighting for quality affordable housing – with a particular focus on housing, homelessness and support for renters – both in the private rented and social housing sector.”

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