

Public Questions to Council 1 February 2023

From Ian Regan

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

There are a large number of council-owned commercial properties not currently trading right across the borough. Some have been closed for years. What is being done about this? I'm a local resident, I want to establish my business within the borough and help serve my local community

Reply

Whilst there are a number of vacant commercial properties which are not currently trading, very few are owned by the council. Any properties that do become available at the end of a lease will be marketed and details placed on the council's website: [Rent or buy council land or property | Merton Council](#)

From Chris Larkman

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

At Raynes Park Station there are 2 pieces of land which are being transferred from Network Rail to the Council. Building work commenced 2 months ago with a completion target of 2 months. However, the site remains an unsightly building site. When will this work be completed?

Reply

Merton have submitted all documentation to Network Rail as requested, there have been delays due to changes in approval forms required by Network Rail resulting in resubmission of all design forms, and changes requested by Network Rail regarding the type of retaining wall required for the southside section of the project.

This has resulted in redesign of the retaining wall and revisions to the Risk Assessment Method Statement required for all footway and fencing works on the embankment and working safely next to live rails.

Network Rail have confirmed that following our latest submission they expect to send confirmation of their acceptance of all submissions week commencing 30th January 2023. The Council anticipate following their approval, the works are likely to be undertaken in conjunction with other scheduled roadworks planned within Raynes Park in the coming months. We understand that the delays to the project caused by Network Rail have been a source of frustration locally and we hope to conclude the works this quarter.

From Bill Petch

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

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I am sure you are aware of the mess outside the South side of Raynes Park station. This is I believe two sites transferred from Network Rail. Could you explain the lack of effort to clean them up.

Reply

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From Chris Edge

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

For several years, the RPA has been lobbying to have the small parcel of land, South of Raynes Park station, opened up to provide better pedestrian access. We are appalled by the bureaucracy between NR/LBM; the project has again stalled. What will the Council do to make this happen quickly.

Reply

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From Tony Edwards

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

Two small pieces of spare NR land are shown on the RP enhancement plan for the last 12 years. Yet again the transfer has stalled. How long does the community have to wait for a result?

Reply

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From George MacGillivray

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

Why is it taking so long to complete to work opposite the south side entrance to Raynes Park station? I understand that you are extending the pavement at that corner; this is surely straightforward and the project has been planned for years,

Reply

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Park in the coming months. We understand that the delays to the project caused by Network Rail have been a source of frustration locally and we hope to conclude the works this quarter.

From Jerry Cuthbert

To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

The land by Raynes Park Station was supposed to be transferred from NR to LBM years ago, to improve pedestrian access and safety along Approach Road. It has been dogged by bureaucracy. The temporary fencing is an eyesore. Will Merton please take action to expedite this?

Reply

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From Malcolm Green

To the Cabinet Member for Transport

The Council has committed to installing traffic sensors around the East Hillside area (see answer to Council question on 7 July 2021): will he please now give a date by which these long-overdue sensors will be installed and operational?

Reply

In December 2022, Merton Council approved an allocation of s106 funding to support the installation of additional VivaCity traffic sensors around the borough. The funding will allow for 45 new traffic sensors in Merton.

Council officers have met with VivaCity in January 2023 to agree positions for cameras, including those for the East Hillside area as a priority in the programme. VivaCity will be testing the proposed camera locations in February for visibility and to ensure that the cameras will pick up the data required in the desired locations. Following this assessment Merton Council Highways will provide the electrical

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connections on lamp-columns for the cameras. We hope to have the traffic sensors installed in March 2023.

From Craig Bullen

To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change

How will the council commit to improving domestic waste and recycling collections specifically in relation to missed collections and the council allowing false information regarding calling and waste not present to be published?

Reply

Over the last 12 months we have seen a sustainable improvement in the waste and recycling collections with 95% of all missed kerbside collections rectified within the required performance standard.

The service measures the actual performance based on the number of missed collections per 100k collections. The table below illustrates the current standard being achieved last month.

Collection Service	Missed per 100,000
Refuse Collection	54/100k
Recycling Collection	34/100k
Paper / Card Collection	81/100k
Food waste Collection	41/100k

Following Cabinet's decision to end Merton's contract with the current contractor, we are in the process of reviewing our waste and recycling collection service. Options for the future of this service will be presented to Cabinet at the end of February and will include the results from our recent resident consultation

Regarding your specific concerns of missed collections and reported 'Not Presented' if you are able to share your address, I will request officers to investigate this matter and ensure that any service issues are resolved.

From Richard Poole

To the Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage

Tennis for Free is a voluntary group providing free tennis for children every Saturday helping to keep children fit and active. Does the Council believe that it would be unfair to charge tennis coaches a court fee which will be passed onto parents struggling with the cost of living crisis thus potentially ending "tennis for free"?

Reply

Merton council actively supports charitable organisations and grassroots sports activities that provide free access to participants. We have an ambition to have healthier and active communities. The use of our tennis courts by children to develop a passion for lifelong tennis helps to deliver on this ambition. Tennis for Free are a nationwide charitable operation and operate out of our facilities located at Joseph Hood Recreation Ground. It is my understanding that the Tennis for Free coaching sessions primarily take place on a Saturday morning at 10am and we will continue to support this session without charge.

In terms of charging tennis coaching sessions, I would like to be clear that our intention is to ensure that commercially operating businesses that use the council owned and maintained facilities are charged fairly to ensure we can develop and maintain these valued assets for our current and future users.

Income received from commercial tennis coaching will be used to fund our annual maintenance programmes thus improving our facilities for all residents who wish to access our free to use courts.

**From Laura Paine
To the Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage**

Joseph Hood Recreation Ground car park floods and needs resurfacing. Now the Council is promoting Merton as a “Borough of sport” when will this be prioritised as it is restricting the playing of team matches and the use of the sports facilities there.

Reply

Officers in the Parks and Greenspaces team are aware of the current condition of the Joseph Hood Recreation Ground car park and the periodic flooding experienced at times of high rainfall events

In recent years the council has installed a drain in the centre of the carpark at Joseph Hood Recreation Ground that collects the runoff from the main field. The drain, during periods of high rainfall, can become blocked and causes localised pooling, but the Greenspaces team are working on resolving this issue.

In the short term, we are currently working with our facilities management team to arrange the installation of an interceptor to the car park drain to ensure that the fine materials collected do not block the drain and in periods of high rainfall the water should flow back out to the main road, Martin Way, and would hope to have this infrastructure installed by March 2023.

In the medium to long term, the team have secured funding to look at the field drainage and infrastructure on a number of strategic sports sites across Merton. This programme will include works to improve the field drainage at Joseph Hood Recreation Ground and plans are currently being designed for a project in 2023 which will include improvement to drainage on the sports pitches as well as swales

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and bunds to offer protection and storm water attenuation which will improve localised flooding impacts.

From Michael Marks
To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

When is the area with temporary fencing, opposite the south entrance to Raynes Park Station on the corner of Approach Road, going to be completed? It is unsightly and not very secure

Reply

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From Barry Smith
To the Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development

How much has the Council spent so far in this financial year obtaining legal advice on the AELTC application to build on Wimbledon Golf Course and what was the budget for this item for 2022/23 and what is in the provisional budget for 2023/24?

Reply

There will be no cost to the Council for legal advice sought for the live planning application submitted by AELTC as an agreement has been reached with the applicant that our legal fees will be reimbursed by them.

From Christine Peace
To the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change

Does the council have any plans to reinstate the graffiti removal team (disbanded in 2017) and if not, what steps is the council taking to help residents in areas where there is a lot of graffiti - for example on buildings along the railway line between Wimbledon and Raynes Park?

Reply

Graffiti is a prominent issue that impacts on the quality of our lives. Although we have seen a significant reduction in graffiti incidents since 2017, we have maintained services across the borough to remove and address graffiti on public property. Since 2017, the Council commissioned Veolia Environmental Services UK to undertake our street cleansing services in which they have continued to provide a dedicated graffiti removal team to undertake the removal of graffiti from public sites, including a rapid response team for any offensive graffiti incidents.

It is important to note however that the Council is not authorised to remove graffiti from private property as this is the responsibility of the owner. However, when the graffiti incident is of an offensive nature, we will take prompt action with the owner to remove the offending graffiti but there may be a charge for these services.

Officers within the Public Space Team are happy to work with you, along with private landowners such as Network Rail, to ensure that this specific area is addressed.

**From Sam Seager
To the Cabinet Member for Transport**

Why does the Council think it is resource intensive to change the parking restrictions in CPZ H1 from

8.30am – 8pm everyday to

8.30am – 6.30pm Monday to Friday and
9.30am – 9.30pm on match and events days?

Reply

During September 2020 the Council carried out an informal consultation to extend the operational period of the zone in response to a petition from the residents. A further consultation in the form of a statutory consultation was carried out in February 2021. The changes / current operational periods were introduced as a direct result of majority support in the neighbourhood. The reports that are available on the website sets out the outcome of the consultations. <https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/parking/consultations/cpz/h1-cpz-kohat-road-area>

To change the hours again, an informal consultation would need to be carried out to seek the views of all those within the zone. If there is majority support then a statutory consultation would be carried out. This is lengthy process which requires the engineer to prepare documents for consultation; schedules; assess all feedback received; respond to enquiries; prepare reports; publications and Notices etc

The current restrictions were introduced as a direct result of majority support from the residents who responded to the informal and statutory consultation. The restrictions are to safeguard residents not just during match days but also from other events and activities that the stadium might hold, as well as to protect parking provision in H1 from the residential part of the stadium development.

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To apply the temporary restrictions every time there is an event is extremely resource intensive and expensive in terms of officer resource. The Council would be required to install and manage all the temporary traffic and parking management prior to and after each event and have full enforcement in place. This is not something that is practical or that the Council is in a position to fund and manage.

The current CPZ arrangement is considered to be the best manageable and viable option.

From Bridget Clemson To the Cabinet Member for Transport

Why does the council think it is resource intensive to change the parking restrictions in CPZ H1 From 8am to 8.30pm To new time of 8.30 to 6.30pm Monday to Friday and to 9.30am to 9.30pm on football and events days.

Reply

During September 2020 the Council carried out an informal consultation to extend the operational period of the zone in response to a petition from the residents. A further consultation in the form of a statutory consultation was carried out in February 2021. The changes / current operational periods were introduced as a direct result of majority support in the neighbourhood. The reports that are available on the website sets out the outcome of the consultations. <https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/parking/consultations/cpz/h1-cpz-kohat-road-area>

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From William Woodward
To the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services

Could you please tell me how old the civic centre's current boiler, hot water and heating system are, whether they meet the council's ambitions for net zero and what the plans are for replacing them?

Reply

Thank you for your question. The Civic Centre's main boilers were installed in approximately 1980 and are therefore roughly 42 years old, with the associated heat distribution equipment being original to the building. This system provides the majority of the heating and hot water to the building, with some smaller areas being heated through smaller more modern localised heating systems. All of these boilers run on gas and therefore are not currently within the council's ambitions for net zero carbon emissions, however, we have recently been successful in a bid to the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, which will provide the majority of the funding needed to decarbonise the heating in the building. This will enable us to replace the heating system with a modern low carbon electric heating system over the next two years, getting us closer to the council's net zero carbon 2030 goal.

From Zarak Pasha
To the Cabinet Member for Transport

Why does the Council think it is resource intensive to change the parking restrictions in CPZ H1 from 8.30am – 8pm everyday to:

8.30am – 6.30pm Monday to Friday and
9.30am – 9.30pm on match and events days?

This would be a much more practical solution and make the lives of residents better.

Reply

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From Kerry Davies To the Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

When is the council going to invest in improving the shopping parade in Green Lane, Morden, as with the Central Morden shopping parades? The recycling bank causes mess and dumping. The shops have tenants, but over half of them are not open and are sublet for living accommodation.

Reply

Part of Civic Pride is being proud of how your area looks, and we know how important our local shopping parades are to local residents.

All commercial units in the Green Lane parade are currently leased out. However, the Property Management team are aware that some of the units are not trading and we are considering the options to address this and investigate the issue of subletting.

The Council has a programme of shopping parade improvement works funded by Community Infrastructure Levy, which are funds raised from developers when their projects commence. We are currently reviewing which shopping parades are most in need of development, and will consider Green Lane for future year's programmes subject to available resources.

The recycling banks on Green Lane are a valued asset to our local residents who live above the shops and nearby housing estates. Our service provider undertakes 3 collection per week following which our Public Space Team undertake daily inspections and all fly tip material is inspected and where appropriate the enforcement team have issued Fix Penalty Notices to those who dump items around the bins.

From Rae Davies To the Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

Can anything be done to improve postal services in SW20 8DZ, where we received only 2 letter deliveries in the whole month of December?

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Reply

The Council understands that due to staff shortages and industrial action that postal services have been disrupted in several areas across the borough. Industrial action is, whilst disruptive, a legitimate action taken by postal workers to ensure better working conditions and pay; especially during the current cost of living emergency.

The Council will write to the local postal service representatives to highlight concerns expressed by residents in SW20 and other affected areas.