

Colliers Wood & NE Mitcham Community Forum
5 October 2017
Chair's Report

The meeting was held at St Joseph's Church Hall, and chaired by Councillor John Dehaney. Six residents attended, as well as two other Merton Councillors. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Alambritis

Councillor Alambritis gave a presentation on the challenges the council faces, recent achievements and the vision for 2020. The presentation can be found at:

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/council-and-local-democracy/community-forums/colliers-wood-and-north-east-mitcham-community-forum>

In response to questions Councillor Alambritis said that the residents survey had used a standard random sampling approach which meant we could be confident the results were representative of the wider population of the borough. Councillor Alambritis also explained that freezing council tax was a manifesto commitment in 2010 and 2014 as he views council tax as a regressive tax that hits the poorest hardest.

In response to questions about street cleaning and waste collection Councillor Alambritis said that the council is working hard with Veolia to improve the service, that enforcement action will continue and that the introduction of wheelie bins in October 2018 will reduce the litter from ripped black sacks.

A large number of questions and points were made in relation to Merton Hall and the decision of the Planning Applications Committee on 21 September. These are set out below with the response from Councillor Alambritis.

Point raised	Response
Why spend more than £3m on the new site for Elim Church	Merton Council has a statutory duty to meet demand for school places and research has shown the need for a new secondary school was in South Wimbledon. In order to achieve this, the Council needed to agree a land swap with Elim Church and Merton Hall was the most appropriate location. Elim Church will continue to make the hall available to hire to the local community.
Elim Church teaches that homosexuality is wrong and will therefore not be inclusive landlords of a community facility	Elim Church is welcoming to all, as shown by its hosting of the Wimbledon Foodbank
The site in High Path is not appropriate for a new school.	A full report on the research carried out should the demand was in South Wimbledon.
Why did the Leader and Cabinet Member for Education visit Elim shortly before the planning meeting.	Councillors attend many religious groups and neither the Leader nor Cabinet are involved in deciding planning applications.
What would be the impact of an application	The Council would note any decision by

to Historic England for listing of Merton Hall?	Historic England but the site is not listed.
Why the land for the school is being paid for by Merton and not the EFA?	The project is a partnership between the Council, EFA and Harris Federation. The EFA are contributing a considerable sum.
Who made the final decision on the land swap with Elim Church?	The Cabinet

Policing Update

PC Mark Cockburn from the Colliers Wood Safer Neighbourhood team provided an update on policing issues in the area. Some the most recent activities include:

- Two brothels on London Road closed down
- Regular weapons sweeps, including finding knives and a shot gun
- Section 59 warning issued to motorcycles on pavements
- Aggressive beggar given a Community Protection Notice
- Supporting a vulnerable local resident whose property was being used for criminal activity
- Arrested a suspect in several sexual assault
- Driving license of an aggressive driver revoked
- Working with Merton Council to identify fly-tippers

Other regular local issues include shoplifting in the Tandem Centre, shed burglary, moped crime, and bike thefts. A prolific bike thief was recently arrested and residents can get their bikes marked at the police station.

All officers in Merton now fitted with Body Worn Cameras. This is helpful in gathering evidence, and in some cases changing the behaviour of some individuals. The footage is deleted after 31 days unless it has evidential value. Under the Data Protection Act it is possible to apply to see footage of yourself if it has been retained.

Colliers Wood Library

Anthony Hopkins, Head of Library & Heritage Services, from Merton Council provided an update on the building of the new library in Colliers Wood. The new site is starting to take shape following some delays in the construction work. The work should be completed in December and then will open in late January or early February. The new library will include a coffee shop, three rooms for community use, more IT equipment and Wi-Fi, as well as new furniture and fittings.

In response to questions Anthony said there are around 60 flats above the library, all of which have been sold. The name Wimbledon Reach has been dropped by the developer and they have returned to using Colliers Wood. There will be no net increase in library staff but staff will be reallocated to Colliers Wood from other sites. The community facilities will be used by Adult Education, and children's activities as well as being available for hire. Merton has a successful Library service with the highest level of usage per capita in London and has been held as an example of good practice by the national Library Task Force. Merton also provides advice to other boroughs, including Hounslow recently. 35% of residents in Merton are regular users of the library and 80% are members. Merton has an automatic enrolment scheme for primary school pupils and is planning to extend this to secondary schools.

Soapbox

Nell Allen provided an update on the No to Wheelies Campaign. A petition with more than 1100 signatures has been submitted to the council but signatures are still being collected. The proposed alternative to fortnightly collection involves using newly designed bell-orb bins collected through a slave bins method. Nell said that there was need to separate paper/card from glass and plastics collections due to contamination issues.

Close of meeting

Councillor Dehaney thanked residents for attending and closed the meeting.