

LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON	
	<u>NOTES OF MEETING</u>
	Subject: Morden Community Forum
	Date: 24th January 2018 Time: 19.15
Action Needed By:	
	<p>1. <u>Welcome and Introductions</u></p> <p>1.1 Cllr. Philip Jones welcomed everybody to the meeting.</p> <p>1.2 Approximately 24 residents attended, as well as 6 councillors, and officers from the council and its partners.</p>
	<p>2. <u>Leonie Cooper – London Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth</u></p> <p>2.1 Leonie Cooper gave an update on her work for the London Assembly – a scrutiny body, holding the Mayor to account - where she acts as a representative for Londoners and is the Chair of the Environment Committee. She also sits on the Housing Committee, which looks at how the Mayor’s housing plans will be rolled out, and on the Budget and Performance Committee.</p> <p>2.2 Ms Cooper explained that individual investigations can be carried out by the Assembly, called ‘rapporteurships’. She has just completed one on biodiversity in the Mayor’s new housing developments, to ensure that biodiversity is included in new developments. Many of the recommendations from the investigation were approved e.g. an ‘urban greening factor’, which ensures some green space in all developments.</p> <p>2.3 Most of the work that is completed through the Assembly’s scrutiny committees results in a letter and recommendations to the Mayor, who must respond to any recommendations within a certain timeframe.</p> <p>2.4 The Mayor and other stakeholders can also be summonsed by the Assembly to answer questions about subjects the Assembly is investigating, e.g. the previous Mayor, Boris Johnson, has been summonsed by the Oversight Committee to answer questions about the scrapped Garden Bridge project, on which £40m was spent. Members of the public can sit in the public gallery to listen to this.</p> <p>2.5 A report into plastic bottles was completed by the Assembly’s Environment committee and sent to the Mayor, who has now put £750,000 aside in his draft budget to address the environmental issue of plastic bottles.</p>

LC	<p>2.6 A resident asked if the Mayor could require that take-away restaurants stop using plastic and polystyrene containers and install more water fountains in London. Ms Cooper said that these matters are being considered in the Mayor's draft environment strategy and water refill stations were recommended in her biodiversity report. There is a plan to install these in public transport stations. Meanwhile, scientific research is being done into alternative packaging to plastic and there will hopefully be a big movement around what happens about the use of plastic as a whole – in supermarket products, water bottles and take-aways. However, it is a complex area.</p> <p>2.7 Councillor Peter Southgate asked how the 223% increase in housing that London is expected to provide could be reconciled with the need to ensure green space. Ms Cooper explained that if density is going to be increased, transport connections will also need to be improved, and then densification could be carried out around the transport hubs, to allow for good growth and to protect parks and open spaces. She suggested TfL could include more greenery in their transport plans too and that biodiversity needs to be made as strong as possible in the London Plan.</p> <p>2.8 A resident asked how pressures on public transport, through densification and intensification, will be dealt with. Ms Cooper explained that it is being explored to see if trains can run more frequently, and that she felt it is important that Crossrail 2 takes place. Bus frequency could also be increased, along with cycle lanes.</p> <p>2.9 A resident stated that TfL's ownership of many buildings in Morden meant that it was difficult to address certain problems, such as parking and maintaining buildings, and asked if Ms Cooper could assist in talking to TfL about such issues. Ms Cooper explained that these matters are a priority and she can put them to TfL; however, TfL take a long time to reply, even to Assembly Members, and they do not always give the reply hoped for, for example on parking spaces. Ms Cooper undertook to raise new concerns from residents with TfL, including concern about an unused shop in TfL's Morden station building.</p> <p>2.10 Paul McGarry from futureMerton expressed concern that the water bill for installing water refill stations could be high for councils. He suggested that City Hall might use its leverage with Thames Water to ensure the water from the fountains is free. Ms Cooper replied that she is hopeful Thames Water will allow for free water fountains, which she felt Londoners deserve.</p>
	<p>3. <u>Morden Leisure Centre update</u></p> <p>3.1 Christine Parsloe, Leisure & Culture Development Manager at the council, gave a presentation, updating residents on the new</p>

	<p>leisure centre development, which is both on budget and on time.</p> <p>3.2 A resident asked, if the drainage is not yet in, how the pool, which has been filled with water to test it, would be emptied for tiling. Chris Parsloe explained that the water would be moved to the secondary pool so that the main pool could be tiled. Then the reverse will take place. By then, the drains will be in so the water will be drained.</p> <p>3.3 In response to a resident asking if the café be dog-friendly, Chris Parsloe explained that the café will have an outside seating area for dog owners and their dogs to sit. Café users will not have to pay to enter.</p>
	<p>4. <u>Changes to waste collection</u></p> <p>4.1 Jeremy Gibson, a Neighbourhood Client officer gave a presentation on the changes to waste collection that are to be rolled out across the borough for October. Also present to answer questions were: Claire Secord, Neighbourhood Client Officer; Charlie Baker, Waste Strategy and Commissioning Manager; Will Graham from Veolia; and Graeme Kane Assistant Director Public Space, Contracting and Commissioning.</p> <p>4.2 A resident expressed scepticism over recycling rates going up, questioning whether having to sort waste into many more containers will put people off recycling. Will Graham from Veolia said that recycling in Sutton has gone up by 17% in nine months since the new waste collection system has been introduced in the borough. Going fortnightly has been proven to improve recycling.</p> <p>4.3 Asked whether the bin men will return emptied bins to their correct place, the team said that talks on bin presentation will be given regularly to the waste operatives, to highlight the importance of returning bins to their correct place.</p> <p>4.4 In response to a question about how people who don't have space for bins and/or can't physically move them will be accommodated, Charlie Baker explained that the presentation given at the forum was based on a standard service for the borough, but assisted collections for households that cannot manage wheelie bins will still be provided where appropriate. Furthermore, a policy on exemptions for wheelie bins based on house type will be drawn up.</p> <p>4.5 A resident asked how the new process will be cleaner with fortnightly collections, as it means rubbish bags will be outside for longer. Jeremy Gibson explained that bags will be contained in wheelie bins, with a smaller proportion of residents not using wheelies. Will Graham added that the service for flats – which are not served by wheelie bins - will remain weekly.</p>

4.6 A resident expressed concerns about nappies if collections are changing to fortnightly, as these will now need to be wrapped in even more plastic bags. Graeme Kane agreed that this is a disadvantage of the new system, but overall the process will be cleaner.

4.7 Asked if there would be changes in street sweeping as this is currently a problem in Merton, Will Graham said that street cleansing is carried out based on need. Outside of the town centres, streets are visited, on average, fortnightly, but some are visited more often and some less.

4.8 Councillor Curtin thanked Veolia for their excellent service in picking up Christmas trees this year.

4.9 Councillor Southgate said most people in Merton Park already have wheelie bins and asked if a waterproof sticker could be placed on them to identify them as Merton bins, rather than them being thrown away when the new bins are introduced. Will Graham said that standardisation is required so residents' existing bins cannot be used for the new service, but residents would be encouraged to reuse their bins for other purposes.

4.10 A resident expressed concerns about security, commenting that if bins are left outside on paths all day, it would highlight if a property is empty. Charlie Baker said that the proposal is for bins to be left at the edge of the property, not on pavements, therefore there should not be visible signs that a property may be empty.

4.11 A resident questioned whether lidless boxes for recycling paper and cardboard were appropriate as the contents could be spoiled in the rain. Will Graham said that the quality of paper that can be delivered, even when exposed to the elements, is still high and Veolia are confident that they would be able to get a rebate for it.

4.12 A resident expressed concern about the change in collections from weekly to fortnightly and about more plastic being used with the introduction of plastic wheelie bins. He asked if the new system has been trialled in the borough to gauge residents' reactions. Graeme Kane explained that wheelie bin usage is common throughout the UK and is safer, cleaner and cheaper to operate. Results have proven that people adapt to it and whilst there is an embedded carbon factor in the wheelie bins, they will last decades, so a lot of use will be gotten out of them. Charlie Baker added that the methodology was trialled in Lavender Fields in 2015 and it showed an increase in recycling as well as improvements in the cleanliness of streets. Leonie Cooper added that the London Assembly's Environment Committee has looked at all of the

	<p>collection methodologies across the whole of London and it's been shown that if people start to separate their food waste, they generally start to reduce the amount of waste they produce.</p> <p>4.13 A resident asked that the council reconsider the recycling container for paper and card, as contents may blow out of a lidless container. Graeme Kane explained that plastic can also blow out, so a balance is being sought. The resident also commended the council on its educational campaign on recycling.</p> <p>4.14 A resident stated concern about the choice of colour and size of wheelie bins, suggesting that households be able to choose the size of bin they need. Graeme Kane said that the colour of the bin will be grey-black, but with different lid colours to help residents identify which bin to use. Standard bins will be 180l, but after a certain trial period, residents will be able to request a slimmer one of 140l if they prefer, or increase to a 240l if they have a larger household and meet the Council's criteria for a bigger bin.</p>
	<p>5. <u>Morden Regeneration</u></p> <p>5.1 Paul McGarry, the Head of futureMerton, Kate O'Donnell, Regeneration Planner, and Eben van der Westhuizen, Policy Planner, gave an update on the Morden Regeneration plans, the Local Plan and TfL funding bids.</p> <p>5.2 Many consultations on the regeneration of Morden have taken place over the years and the intention is to make more of the town, as currently, the town centre offer does not match the demographics and what people want; it is tired and needs investment.</p> <p>5.3 There is also a requirement to provide more housing – the first and second rungs of the housing ladder (flats) are missing, and the council believes that the town centre can accommodate this. This would have the added benefit of helping businesses in Morden as there'll be more footfall and customers.</p> <p>5.4 A number of projects are being worked on with TfL, looking at a range of topics including regenerating the town centre and air quality.</p> <p>5.5 A consultation was recently carried out on a new Local Plan to replace the 2011 plan. In response to the consultation, close to 1,100 responses were received, with 156 of these being in relation to Morden, raising questions about traffic, the location of bus stops, modernisation, shops, businesses and restaurants, improving the public realm and making the town centre more attractive. These responses will now all be collated before another consultation will take place on an updated draft of the Local Plan.</p>

5.6 The futureMerton team has been working closely with TfL and other partners to look at how to explore opportunities to work together. The market has been tested to see if developers are interested in the town centre, as a development partner is needed. A report went to Scrutiny and then to [Cabinet](#) on 15 January 2018. The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel recognised that there are opportunities in Morden but recommended to Cabinet that the Council should retain an appropriate amount of control of any development. The next steps between now and Autumn 2018, when procurement for a development partner will begin, are due diligence, research into what is needed and entering into negotiations with TfL.

5.7 The council has been applying for funding bids to help to make the regeneration happen. There have been some successes, e.g. £260,000 was granted by the Cabinet Office to look at how more housing developments can be brought to the town centre. This funding will be received in March 2018. Another bid has been put in for the Planning Delivery Fund, to speed up building houses and the delivery of Morden's regeneration. A decision on this is being awaited. A bid was also put in for the Housing Infrastructure Fund – the government is to decide on whether to grant Morden this money. A decision on this is due in March.

5.8 £300,000 has been granted to the council by TfL to look at streets and public spaces and how the town centre's roads and high street can be improved (as part of the 'Healthy Streets' project). This is a three-year project; consultation on street designs will take place soon.

5.9 Morden Court Parade has been improved with the aid of a grant from the Mayor of London's regeneration team. This council-led project has just been nominated for a RIBA award that recognises 'architecture for the common good'.

5.10 Further information is available on the [More Morden](#) website.

5.11 A resident asked what the short-term plan is to improve the town centre and high street, and if any help is available for local businesses. Paul McGarry explained that there is council support for helping businesses and that the council will champion small improvements in the town; however, the roads belong to TfL. He acknowledged that there is frustration for the shops situated by the station, as the building is owned by TfL. Similarly, many shops in Morden are sub-leased, but the council can regain control of these as the regeneration project moves forward.

5.12 Councillor Alambritis thanked futureMerton for its work to improve Morden. He reassured local businesses that they are

appreciated and the council wishes them to prosper in Morden. He then asked if the council is working with the National Trust as well, in order to engage Morden Hall Park in regeneration plans. He also said he would like the council to re-introduce public toilets to Morden Town Centre as part of any regeneration. Paul McGarry said that all major new developments should have public toilets, according to the new Draft London Plan, so this would happen. FutureMerton does engage with the National Trust, which is also looking at improvements. There is a listed wall, which has to be kept, but work is being done to look at opening the park up more.

5.13 A business owner asked how Abbotsbury Road would be affected and expressed concern about being pushed out by the regeneration. Paul McGarry said there were no plans currently as there is no development partner. Many businesses there still have five-year leases, which would mean that imminent change on Abbotsbury Road would be unlikely. The council would like to keep its businesses and support them, so would be working alongside them.

5.14 Asked about timescales for the regeneration plan, Paul McGarry said that the project began in 2008, but halted when the economy collapsed. It has now been resumed but will take time – perhaps an eight-year project, aiming at about 2026. The Healthy Streets project, however, is a three-year project, so would be rolled out in about 2021.

5.15 Asked how a better mix of shops would be attracted to Morden, Paul explained that currently not much can be done about which businesses are here as the council does not own the land, but moving forward, it can promote better shops and businesses in its plans. Publicising the local economic market to businesses and promotion of the demographics/spending power will be done.

5.16 A resident voiced concern about ‘retail gentrification’ and protecting some of the existing shops, which serve the needs of people on lower incomes. Paul McGarry acknowledged that there needs to be a mix and a balance needs to be sought through work with a development partner. Research is being carried out, for example, on whether an affordable business space policy could be introduced.

6. **Soapbox**

6.1 A resident raised concerns about bike and motorbike safety in the borough with respect to the speeds they travel at and the impact upon pedestrians and drivers. He asked whether high-viz clothing could be enforced and asked Leonie Cooper about whether anything could be done. Ms Cooper said that it was critical to train people to ride safely and to educate people to use the roads safely.

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She said that cycling proficiency and then refreshers should be encouraged more and that ensuring people were properly clad and using lights should be encouraged. She offered to take feedback to the transport committee on the matter of cycling safely.