

Minutes of Merton Park Ward Residents' Association Open Committee Meeting

5th November 2019

1. Hubert Child, Chairman, opened the meeting and passed on apologies from Chris Strutt, Councillor Dickie Wilkinson Krysia Williams and Stephen Mercer.
2. The Chairman sought confirmation that the minutes of the previous meeting were correct before signing these. There were no matters arising.
3. The Chairman introduced two guest speakers, John Haynes, Communications Adviser for the South London Waste Partnership (SLWP) and Charles Baker, LBM Strategy Commissioning Manager. The title of the presentation (largely delivered by John Haynes) was **"What Happens to Your Recycling?"**

John began by outlining the origins of the SLWP. It was established in 2003 as a partnership between four councils, Kingston, Croydon, Sutton and Merton who jointly signed a contract for the disposal of waste in their areas. This waste was taken to a site at Beddington Lane and disposed of in landfill. Following subsequent concerns about the emission of methane from landfill at national level the Government introduced a policy to encourage local authorities to reduce the quantity of waste disposed of via landfill by charging for this. Over the following years charges increased significantly until it became prohibitively expensive so that alternatives were sought. In 2012 the same four councils signed a new 25-year contract with SLWP to recover and treat waste at the Beddington site i.e. to recycle as much of the waste as possible and reduce landfill. This was cheaper and better environmentally, with the added bonus that energy could be produced from treated waste.

The four councils then decided to award another contract jointly and in 2017 an environmental services contract was signed with Veolia. Its aim was to improve recycling rates in their respective boroughs and provide a high-quality service. The new service was rolled out across the 4 boroughs over the next two years, despite some challenges. Under the service Merton's recycling rate has increased by 8% points from 37% to 45% and food waste recycling has risen to 76%. Residual waste has fallen by 16% and these achievements are a real success for Merton Council (and its residents of course). However, the aim is to improve rates even more and for this to happen **trust** is key. Residents are making more effort to sort waste because they feel confident that it will be recycled as can be seen by figures showing that now only 19% of residents in Merton have concerns about whether recyclable waste is actually all recycled.

John then played a 5-minute video to show what happens to waste after collection. Shorter versions of this can be found on the SLWP website and only 6 weeks after its launch the longer video has been viewed 2,500 times there. The video first showed what happens to food waste. This is taken to Kingston or Sutton and then on to an anaerobic food digester that converts it to fertiliser sold on to farmers, while the gas emitted during processing generates energy. Paper is washed and mixed with glue etc. to produce a slurry used to produce new paper. Cans and bottles end up in Rainham for sorting and recycling before being sold on to users. There are many types of plastic

and some of these are melted into pellets for use in manufacturing in the UK while others (of a different quality) are sent to Europe. Unfortunately, currently not all plastic can be recycled so some is burnt at very high temperatures, but on a positive note this process generates energy (electricity). The SLWP website address is www.slwp.org.uk.

The Beddington Energy Recovery Facility is operated by Viridor and waste sent there initially goes into a bunker. Cranes mix the waste before it goes into a combustion chamber where it is heated to 850 degrees. The hot gasses given off go to a boiler and the steam produced drives a turbine that creates energy – essentially the same process by which coal produces energy. The emissions produced are captured and cleaned and filtered before release into the environment. The residue from filtering is taken away to be re-used wherever possible. This residue represents a 75% reduction in the volume of the waste arriving at the facility. Emissions are controlled by permits issued by the Environment Agency and the data is published monthly.

A question and answer session then followed and at this point Charles Baker stepped in to answer some of the questions too.

Q. Can “soft” plastic such as freezer bags and cling film be recycled?

A. Technically yes but currently difficult to programme machines to do it. Hope to collect it from kerbside in future.

Q. How many times can plastic be recycled?

A. It varies and details will be provided at a later date (they were not to hand).

Q. Can more detailed advice regarding what can and cannot be recycled be provided?

A. Evidence is that people like it to be kept simple with fewer options. Official advice is, if in doubt, don't put out for recycling.

Q. Can black plastic trays be recycled?

A. This is an issue in that black plastic is not often “recognised” by the machines that process these and so there needs to be better liaison between retailers and waste disposal. There are steps in the right direction, however, with more retailers switching to using a black plastic polymer that machines are able to detect visually.

Q. Was there a fire at Beddington?

A. Yes, but while close by, it was not actually at the ERF. The cause of the fire is under investigation by the Fire Service and other agencies.

Q. This was a comment rather than a question- shared bins in flats are problematic because people are confused as to who collects the waste (is it all done by Merton/Veolia?) and so not all of them recycle.

Q – Another comment rather than a question- some batteries are not collected and then kept separate, instead they are collected separately but then mixed in with other rubbish. John Haynes confirmed that refuse collection vehicles do have cages inside to keep batteries separate after collection but as this appears not always to be done it will

be followed up.

Q. What happens if households do not follow the rules?

A. There is a system of escalation. The first time a household deposits contaminated waste it is tagged and returned. Repeat behaviour triggers a letter and ultimately a visit to the offending household. This is a new system being rolled out with the worst offenders targeted first.

Q. What happened to in-house workers when waste collection was contracted out? Were any made redundant and, if their employment was transferred, what happened to workers' original terms and conditions?

A. In Merton the original terms and conditions were transferred with employees, including pension rights, and these will continue for the whole period of employment with the new employer. There were no redundancies so all employees transferred to the new employer, unless they chose not to do so and found an alternative job instead. Subsequently some employees who transferred at the time have chosen to terminate their employment.

A brief general discussion on the relative merits of recycling versus avoiding buying/using plastic in the first place concluded that the latter was preferable, although recycling of those plastics in circulation was better than no action at all. John Haynes quoted some statistics to show the high level of food that is wasted by being purchased but never consumed, and simply thrown away, possibly because it has been left until it becomes inedible. We can all do our bit to avoid this particular form of waste. This lively discussion had to be concluded when the Chairman announced that we had run out of time and he thanked our speakers for their detailed talk and equally detailed responses to detailed questions.

4. There was no police report at the meeting, following the pattern of previous recent meetings. It was suggested that the reason for this was the increased pressures on officers who were now having to do other things that were of a higher priority and so could not spare time to attend the meeting.
5. 100 Club prize draw: Councillor Foley drew the tickets and the winners were as follows: Janet Best (ticket 91) won 3rd prize of £20, Maureen Paulin (ticket 21) won second prize of £30 and Arthur and Mary Harman (ticket 73) won first prize of £50. Hubert followed this up by making a plea for people to join MPWRA and also to join the 100 Club, while the meeting adjourned for refreshments.
6. Councillors' reports and question time was the next item on the agenda but before moving to this the Chairman made two announcements. The first was to say that Harry Spence had died a few days ago, only a few months after his wife had died. He was one of the founding members and many at the meeting had known him and so he would be sadly missed. The second announcement concerned ex -councillor John Sergeant. He had recently suffered from heart problems and had collapsed. His wife, Judy, performed CPR on him until an ambulance arrived to take him to hospital.

While in the hospital he had a couple more such events and so has been fitted with a defibrillator. He is now out of hospital and Ian Garbett commented that he had seen John out and about in Wimbledon Village, which is very good news.

Councillor Peter Southgate then gave his report.

He prefaced this with a footnote to the speakers' presentation. He said that the council's website shows that there was 2,887 tons less waste this year than in the same 5 months last year, equivalent to a 14% reduction. A rough calculation indicated that this could be compared to the weight of a very large number of hippos!

The Council's budget for the next year will be finalised in March as it cannot be done sooner because of the current uncertainty with regard to the Government's Budget (caused by the forthcoming General Election etc.). However, it is very likely that council tax will rise by the 2% maximum permitted as will the Adult Social Care Precept. A major contributor to budgetary pressure has been the rapid expansion of EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plans) commissioned by the council's Children's Department. These are very expensive to produce and so £9.7m has had to be factored in to cover the anticipated shortfall in the council's education budget. Some money will be taken from reserves to contribute to this but such action can only be undertaken on a one-off basis. 43% of the extra money will need to come from residents and the council is looking at ways of increasing revenue and cutting costs. Garden waste collection charges are very likely to increase.

The council will be going into purdah at the end of the week although the work of the Scrutiny Panel will continue.

The allocation of £5,000 funding available for improvements in Merton. The results of the residents' consultation will be in the next issue of FORUM but, in brief, an option that gained one of the highest levels of support was for bulb planting. Mostyn Gardens and Kendor Gardens were the two locations that were nominated most frequently and the council has now identified good spots in those locations to plant some spring bulbs. Some railings will also be painted.

Traffic and parking – The last piece of the jigsaw is now falling into place with the extension of MP2 to Kenley Road, Circle Gardens and Windermere Avenue. This will leave only Aylward Road not in a CPZ.

If the proposed closure of part of Merton Road near South Wimbledon goes ahead traffic will be affected quite significantly in the local area and would last for about three months.

Proposed footpath from Dorset Road to Morden Road tram stop- it had been hoped that TFL would fund, or jointly fund this, but it is clear that TFL do not regard it as a priority and has linked it to the proposed extension of the tram to Sutton. When and if the Sutton extension will happen is in doubt and so Merton Council has decided that it cannot wait for possible funding from TFL and will fund it instead.

Councillor Edward Foley then gave his report.

Blue Badge holders and Parking- some abuse of this system takes place and so Merton Council has introduced a system of random checks on those residents who hold one of these badges. Council staff have been trained in how to conduct these checks. If anyone has been checked and has concerns over their treatment as part of these checks please ask them to get in touch with Councillor Foley.

EHCPs take up to 6 months to generate and can take over a year. They are undertaken by agencies outside the borough. This is a problem because children need to be in a school suitable for their needs as soon as possible rather than have to wait for such a long time.

Uneven paving stones outside Waffle Jack's diner – there had been a battle with the council to get this dealt with and, unfortunately, the pavement tiles have lifted again. Three elderly ladies have tripped over these and fallen, with one having to go to hospital. Cllr Foley took up the case and within 24 hours Conway fixed the tiles. It is only a temporary repair though while a better, longer term solution is investigated.

Some recent engagements as Deputy Mayor:

Silver Sunday- Mayor invited a number of elderly residents for tea and cakes and this year it was held at the Wimbledon Club.

Queen's visit to Haig House, Morden- this provides housing for ex-forces families and the purpose of the visit was to officially open 68 new properties on the site. It was a lovely occasion and, despite her advancing age, the Queen stopped to collect all the flowers presented to her by the children.

Cllr Foley has also given some **diverse talks** in his role as Deputy Mayor and these include a talk on mental health awareness and the relevant support offered by Merton Uplift as well as a talk to celebrate the first black English rugby player.

Jack Petchey Achievement Awards are for Young People 11-25 across London and Essex and the 2019 Ceremony was held in October in Battersea to recognise those who have gone above and beyond. Cllr Foley was delighted that students at two of Merton's schools, Rutlish and Ricards Lodge, received some of these awards.

The East Surrey Poppy Appeal was launched this year in the Mosque in Morden. There were 400 people in the audience, (the largest number ever) and there were some military vehicles on display. One volunteer is to be commended for raising £43,000 by selling poppies at London Bridge!

Morden Foster Carers Lunch – this was a long, but very enjoyable, afternoon meeting With foster parents and the children they look after.

Pan-African Peace Symposium – this colourful event was held at Morden Mosque and

over 800 delegates from Africa attended.

Citizenship Ceremonies - Cllr Foley has attended 6 of these with 2 more to do next week. Each event is attended by 25 people who are celebrating becoming British citizens.

Cllr Foley ended his report by reminding the audience that anyone who has not yet collected their free bottle of Smart Water to label valuables is encouraged to do so.

Councillor Dickie Wilkinson sent his apologies as he could not be present and so Cllr Southgate said that his intended report about Morden Regeneration would be given at the next meeting (additionally Dickie has written about this in the Autumn edition of Forum, due out soon). The briefing given to Council last week showed that things are much as they were before, with no progress of note. The current hope is to appoint a development partner by spring 2021 with work commencing in 2023. This has gone on for over 10 years.... Funding has been approved by GLA of £54m for the purposes of land assembly and Merton has pledged to contribute £10m, while TFL will contribute £20m.

Remembrance Day ceremonies- Councillors will attend a ceremony at 8:45am on Sunday 10th November, after which Cllr Foley will go on to Mitcham for a ceremony beginning at 10:30am while Cllr Southgate will go to a ceremony at Wimbledon Village. Traffic is stopped for these events and so they become quite an occasion. There will also be a short service in Church Lane at 11am.

In the absence of a police report, Brian Anderson gave an update on crime. There have recently been seven burglaries, some criminal damage, seven thefts from cars plus some other thefts. Bryan got his statistics from Neighbourhood Watch and he advised that anyone who wanted such statistics could ask this organisation for them.

An **open question** session then followed:

Q. What has happened to the planning application for the old GP surgery in Church Lane? Work has already commenced to clear up and there is work going on inside.

A. Cllr Southgate said that the application has not yet been decided so there is no permission to start development. Indeed, the deadline for submissions is in 2 days' time on Thursday 7th November so there is still time to object. Cllr Southgate will follow this up.

Q. **"Next Door" website** - this was more of a comment than a question. The website purports to be a community website but it's really more for individuals and getting messages out. While it has its uses, e.g. selling on unwanted items, it does contain a fair amount of unpleasantness that residents need to be aware of.

Vote of thanks proposed by David Merriman: This is the first meeting since the **30 - year Celebration** and it is only right to officially record the hard work done by many to make this such a success, but in particular to acknowledge the major role undertaken by Dickie Wilkinson. Well done and thank you Dickie!

Q. What can be done when private contractors, in the course of building work, remove paving slabs and replace by tarmac instead? Residents have reported this to the council but

the system is very long winded and nothing seems to get done as it seemingly goes into a never-ending loop of acknowledgment of the concern but no action.

A. Send a report to **Regeneration** at Merton Council and copy it to MPWRA so that it can be followed up.

The Chairman concluded the meeting by announcing that Katharine Kiernan, of the Wimbledon Guild will give a talk at the next meeting in December entitled "Living Warm and Well". There will also be seasonal refreshments and Councillors' question time. Desé Child made a plea to contact her if anyone could help out by providing mince pies.

The meeting closed at 10:00pm.