

MERTON PARK WARD RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Meeting Tuesday 4th February 2025 8pm by Zoom

Present Mariam Ali-Puttergill, Hubert Child, Dese Child, Councillor Edward Foley, Councillor Stephen Mercer, David Merriman, Bryan Anderson, Peter Southgate, Pauline Lightfoot, Ian Garbett, Fred Rayner, Chris Stutt, Stephen Johnson

1.0 Minutes of the last meeting

There were no matters arising from the last meeting in December and the Minutes were agreed and signed. The Minutes will be available on the website and the meetings are recorded.

Dickie Wilkinson has helped the Association with a security issue on the website and Thomas Kemp has volunteered to help with the website.

M A-P asked for more volunteers to help with the delivery of Forum, plus any articles for Forum to be sent to Pauline Lightfoot. A Planning subcommittee is being set up within the Association.

2.0 Councillor Edward Foley's Report

Councillor Foley reported the sad news that Ian Smith has died and his funeral is 14th February at NE Surrey crematorium. Ian was instrumental in the Wimbledon Chase tidy up. He got the graffiti cleaned off the railway bridge and seats and trees planted along the road. He also got Councillor Foley involved with the Association.

There was an incident in John Innes Park on 16th January at 7.20am when a female member of IDVerde staff was punched in the stomach by a man. Later that morning a female dog walker told Councillor Foley that she had just been harassed by 3 males in balaclavas, on electric bikes. Councillor Foley called the Police on 999 but was told they would not attend a minor incident. When Councillor Foley said he would sort it out - they sent the Police around. As it happened, a Police team were on their way to interview the lady who had been assaulted, plus a couple of detectives were also in attendance, together with Police cars & dogs. One lad was caught and a small bag of cannabis found on him. He was given a community protection order and he has to leave the area and not come back. The 2 lads that got away then came back and were caught and they were all Rutlish students. As they were under 18 and the amount of cannabis they had was small - they were given warnings. To date the man who assaulted the female staff member has not been caught. Councillor Foley explained that the Police will not make any announcements unless there is a good reason. They do not make announcements because they do not want to scare the perpetrators away, or scare the public or it might encourage the public to take the law into their own hands - with potentially disastrous consequences.

A resident complained that an e bike rider hit their car, did a lot of damage and rode off. Operation Hessian by the Police - led by Kevin Chambers - had 39 arrest warrants over 3 days and arrested 32 people. They seized 14 blades, 1 firearm, £850,000 in goods and property. 18 people who were wanted in Merton were arrested, including one person who assaulted an old lady in Mitcham.

Holocaust Memorial event was held in the Council Chamber and there was a full Council meeting the week before. Our Councillors supported 3 Lib Dem motions about Council tax

but they were voted down by Labour. There was also one Conservative motion about people paying a small amount of Council tax even if they were on benefits, but this was also rejected by Labour.

21A house inside John Innes Park gates - lease has been renewed

Dorset Road & Tram stop

There is a new Executive Director at the Council Caroline Bruce, so hopefully after last year's delays, there will be some progress on getting access to the Tram stop from Dorset Road. CB has all the information, including drone photos.

There are new yellow lines in Watery Lane because some people parked there and got issued with parking tickets (which was subsequently cancelled) but this led to new yellow lines being painted.

Q A street light had failed and I reported it two months ago ago on Fix my street app, but nothing was done. I asked Councillor Foley to get it fixed and it was mended in a couple of days so thank you.

A Councillor Foley said that when they went to repair the street light, they did not have the correct part and so the repair fell off the system, which is why it was not done.

Councillor Foley reported that he was on the Mayor's charity committee and that there were two events coming up - the first on Tuesday, the 25th of February a meal sent Cent Anni costing £40 in Wimbledon Village 7.30 start and secondly the Mayor's Charity Ball on the 22nd of March costing £100 and it will be a black tie event.

Q I have recently moved into Kenley Road and I want to know who owns the access road from Kenley to London Road? It is full of rubbish and I want to know who to complain to.

Also the rear fence of my property -does it belong to TfL or Sainsbury's?

A Councillor Mercer will cover this in his report, but in relation to Peel House access road, which lots of residents are concerned about, this was discussed at November's meeting as I had written to Leonie Cooper on 16th October and attached screenshot showing the road was not owned by LBM and confirmed it was TfL. I also covered the issue at the Morden Community Forum in December.

3.0 Councillor Stephen Mercer's report.

Welcome to all and Happy New Year

It has been a little while since I last saw you all so there have been a few things going on.

Rough sleeper in Kendor Gardens –

- Council not able to tackle his/her encampment during the night
- Council not able to take apart someones accommodation if they are rough sleepers and they are still using it
- If serious ASB or criminal damage, the police can get involved, otherwise not.
- There was an injunction in relation to camping in Merton, but that is no longer effective.

- I looked at the venue with Fred and Fred and David Merriman have checked very recently and it looks like the homeless person may have moved on.

I have been asked to help in Daybrook Road, so saw Fred again then, because of dangerous parking. Width of the road is a problem— I met there with the relevant officer and he explained that the Fire Service require 7.5m width in order for cars to be parked on both sides of the road. Since the road is only 6m wide in various places, parking on both sides will stop emergency vehicles getting access to the road so that double yellow lines will have to be added to ensure parking on only one side. As with all such changes, there will be a consultation first, which will give residents a chance to express any grounds for opposition.

I had a meeting with Jon Green at Merton Guild in Morden who is trying to bring together all the different volunteers and supportive organisations (apart from the Council) which operate mainly in Morden (focused in on the wards around the Town Centre: Merton Park, Cannon Hill, St Helier and Ravensbury). He has already created a 'Morden Directory' and is now starting a second iteration. There are quite a few groups but many are not aware of one another and he is talking about bringing them together and perhaps have a meeting once per quarter. I told him that I support his efforts and am happy to lend a hand, if he needs one.

I also met with the new Morden Town Centre manager. It is exciting to get someone like her to liven up the area and help coordinate businesses and the voluntary sector together. She has previous experience in a similar role in Runnymede in Surrey where I think there are 3 different centres that she was responsible for. We agreed to keep in regular contact and I am meeting her again next week.

I met with the new coordinator of the Community Toilet Scheme. She has been mapping the extent of toilets in the Borough – most of which are restricted to customers – and supporting the opening up of facilities in local authority premises. Toilets should now be available to anyone visiting a library and the officer is hoping the same will apply to all the Authority's premises fairly soon. This way a low-key relaunch of the Scheme can take place and private enterprises can join in later on. A lot of work has been done on an online map of loos that anyone can check but it will be a few months till it is ready to release.

I have been supporting the British Toilet Association as part of the preparation for meeting the minister, Alex Norris, later this month to discuss public toilet provision at a national level. Closer to home, I pointed out to the Mayor that the last full Council meeting went on for 3 hours without a toilet break or reference to the need for one. For people who want to avoid the embarrassment of leaving during the meeting, there can be dehydration and discomfort. My bladder is reasonably robust but not everyone's is, and people up on the dias cannot simply get up and go to the toilet if they feel the need. I think the current situation is unkind and discriminatory and I have said so. We shall see what is decided.

A number of residents have complained about the Council's treatment of our street trees, as I mentioned in the last meeting. I have been pressing the relevant officers to improve the communication about trees to be felled and replaced. The current situation, by statute and stated in the Borough's Tree Strategy, is that there is an obligation on the Council to consult in relation to trees due to be felled. However, the Council only consults 'when the resident..can have a genuine impact on ..decision making'. So what does this mean if the Council and their contractors consider that the tree must definitely be felled? Obviously it means that no-one is told about it. This does not help residents participate in the decision, or prepare themselves for the removal of a tree that might have been there for decades. If the reason for removal is disease, it also does not involve any communication with residents who might have grounds to be concerned for trees on their property. Ed and I have questioned this approach and called for improved communication. To be fair the relevant lead officer, Andrew Kaufmann, has acknowledged that communication could be better and has told me that there are some more funds going into this area, but I have received no details so far.

I have also looked at local planting of new trees – lots in some places and none in other areas – and maintenance of the existing street trees and am in touch with Andrew Kaufmann to clarify the Councils

policy with regard to both. To be fair to the Street Tree team, they have struggled with insufficient resource in the past but that has been the excuse for years now. I shall tell you if I make any progress on this.

Do you remember the problems we had when the Peel House car park was closed a year or more ago? The car park is half open now, just the lower floor, awaiting repair works. There is a budget for repair works but looking at the most recent figures I have seen, I don't see anything happening before 26-27. Perhaps Ed knows the reason for the delay but I don't. Anyway, around the time of the closure people started parking along the service road. As the land of the service road belongs to TfL, the Council does not have the responsibility to maintain it or the right to enforce parking controls. So 2 things are happening. The side of the road is suffering from flytipping and the road itself is regularly blocked with parked cars. Sainsburys have been forced to employ someone to ensure that the road is clear enough to enable their delivery vehicles can get in and out of the shop. Anyway, the current situation is that TfL have not accepted that they are responsible for the road. With assistance from officers I have put together some documentation to show that the land belongs to TfL and sent it to Leonie Cooper – our London Assembly member, and to Paul Kohler, as our local MP, so that they can both argue our case and hopefully get some movement from TfL. Again I shall tell you next time if we get any positive response. If you live in the area eg in Kenley Road and you want to write to either Leonie or Paul, please do. The more the merrier. Update from today – TfL have accepted responsibility to paint the yellow lines, but nothing else! This could go on and on! I have asked for Merton's legal team to give a definitive answer on the situation.

I have been trying to help some residents in Watery Lane with enforcement of the restrictions inherent in the Conservation Area. Sometimes developers don't pay much attention if planning applications are refused, so we are doing what we can to ensure that the law is enforced, with some small success. However, this might also take some time to resolve.

A couple of notices:

- a) There has been a consultation about introducing a new zebra crossing on Martin Way next to the South Merton train station. There have been no objections so it is going to be installed from 17th February and will take 2 weeks to be installed. Expect delays! As an aside, how much do you think that a zebra crossing costs? I was surprised to learn that they cost £50,000! That is partly down to having to supply power for the bellisha beacons etc. Other countries have simpler crossings which cost less to install.
- b) The esteemed London Welsh Male Voice Choir will be performing for one of our local charities, Faith in Action, in May - tickets available from Faith in Action.

4.0 Any other business

A resident raised the question of where the Council's pension fund was invested and the fact that some investments cause distress to people. It was explained that this was not a discussion for this meeting which deals with Merton Park issues, not international political issues. It was suggested that a petition could be raised and presented to the Council and MP.

It was noted that cars parking on the corners of roads make driving dangerous. However when parking officers were alerted via an App, they arrived at Daybrook Road quickly and issued tickets - which got people to move their cars quickly.

DM noted that he and FR went to the tent in Kendor Gardens to see if they could talk to the rough sleeper. No one was there and they informed the Council - who cleared the debris. Streetlink will not go to rough sleepers in a variety of places at night because it is too risky.

Ken Hawes has kindly given the Association a Public Address system which we will use at the next meeting.

5.0 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 4th March at Merton Park Primary School at 8pm