

Merton Park Ward Residents Association Meeting

Tuesday 3rd March 2026 at Old Rutlishians Club Centre Poplar Road at 7:45 pm

Present David Merriman (Chair), Fred Rayner, Hubert Child, Dese Child, Pauline Southgate, Ingrid Holtz, Ian Garbett, Councillor Edward Foley, Counsellor Stephen Mercer, Stephen Johnson, Chris Stutt, Neaz Ahmed, Peter Southgate, Bryan Anderson

Apologies

Greg Bryant, Krysia Williams, Jolanta Novak, Brenda Richards, Zasis Arlt, Sheila De'Arth, Tom Kemp

1.0 Special General Meeting

We hold an SGM every four years to elect candidates to put forward for the local Council elections in May. We have had Independent Resident Councillor's representing the Ward for 36 years. We are the only Ward out of 20 in the Borough that have continuously had Independent Resident Councillors. The bulk of the work done by the Councillors is hidden from view, but our two Councillors do work continuously for the good of the Ward and the Borough as a whole.

1.1 Councillor/candidate Edward Foley's talk

Councillor Foley said that this was the third time he would be standing for election. He moved here in 1999 and has been working in the property industry and felt that it was right to give back something to his local community. In 2012 at the Jubilee celebrations for the Queen's 60th anniversary Councillor Foley sponsored the event and paid for a brass band. He has been Governor at Ricards Lodge for 14 years, the last five years being the Chair of Governors. He is on two Community Safety committees and on the Council Planning Applications committee and he is Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny committee. He oversaw the sale of CHAS - the health and safety inspection department that was sold by the Council for £186 million. Sadly, in 2021 Councillor Foley was widowed. His children attended Ricards Lodge and Rutlish School and Councillor Foley has been a rugby coach and referee.

1.2 Councillor/candidate Stephen Mercer's talk.

Councillor Mercer said he was grateful for the opportunity to represent the Ward for the next four years. He said that he had trained as a lawyer and done an MBA and now runs his own business from premises in Plough Lane next to the Dons Stadium. He works four days a week at his business and one day on Residents Association & Council work. He also coaches rugby and plays football and enjoys hiking. He has an eclectic mix of transport ranging from a Jaguar, electric bike to motorbike. He has enjoyed being a Councillor for the previous four years. He has worked with Peter Southgate tirelessly to get more public toilet provision, especially toilets at Morden Tube station, which he lives near. He has campaign about the height of the proposed hotel in Morden because a seven storey building next to a two storey house is too much. He is not against progress but it has to be realistic. He said that money will be spent on Morden regeneration. There is talk of £30 million, but no indication as to how, where, when or what will be done? Local parks, daffodil planting and green spaces are all vital to the area. Councillor Mercer has been trying to get a water supply to Kendor Gardens to help the volunteers with their work there. Better visibility of the school street signs has been achieved by painting the post yellow which reducing the number of fines issued. Councillor Mercer is happy to keep working for the Residents and our special community.

1.3 Resolution

To adopt Edward Foley and Stephen Mercer as our Independent Resident candidates for the Council elections on the 7th of May - was put to the vote and agreed to unanimously.

1.4 Resolution

To appoint Fred Rayner as Agent and to transfer funds, up to the limit of the allowances for candidates expenditure, into the campaign account - was voted in unanimously.

2.0 Bus Stops

Hubert Child said that the bus stops which were put up around the Ward advertising the local elections and our candidates names, were a vital part of our campaign to get our Councillors elected. He said that more sites were needed - please contact us if you were willing to allow a bus stop to be put in your front garden.

End of Special General Meeting

3.0 Police report.

PC James.... PC Alina Neacsu PC Andy PCSO Paula Besleaga PCSO Dave Haywood attended the meeting.

The Police have been concentrating on shoplifting and 18 arrests have been made after a plain clothes campaign.

Q Do you use cameras ?

A Yes but not saying where they are located.

Q Has the brothel remained closed ?

A Yes it was closed last summer and has not opened again.

Q Will Wimbledon Police station closure affect you ?

A No we still have a base to work from. The Police stations in Sutton and Kingston are still open.

PCSO Dave Haywood urged people to sign up to Met Engage e mails which update people on what the Police have been doing recently.

Q How do the Met Engage surgeries work ?

A We hold the Cuppa with a Coppa and also on line sessions now

Q With the closure of Police stations where should we hand lost property in to ?

A Please hand finds in locally because that is where people will look for their lost property. If you find something on the Tube hand it in to lost property at the station. If you find a bank card - phone the number on the back of the card and they will deal with it. If you find cash you can hand it into Kingston station or phone 101 and ask what to do.

4.0 NHS Drone Trial Nelson Medical Practice to St George's Hospital

Simon Brewer MD of SW London Pathology

Alec Jackson Head of Policy & Public Affairs APIAN

Dr Hammad Jeilani Co-Founder & Medical Director APIAN

Quintin Browell Senior Director Inline Policy - on behalf of WING

SB explained that about 20,000 samples a day were currently being processed, with 1000 collections from about 50 GP surgeries. There are a number of urgent, or time critical, samples. There are a series of vans which do the collections but they are subject to various traffic problems. The use of drones to take urgent samples quickly to the labs has been trialled by Guys and St Thomas hospitals. We have learnt from their work.

We could also treat people at home to save them being taken into hospital.

We have a duty to engage with the community about flying drones overhead.

Currently we are trialling flights 9am to 5pm each hour, so 8 flights a day. The drones hover at the Nelson Medical Practice and land at St George's hospital. The flights are safe, tracked, secure and confidential. Aimed at urgent samples, not large volumes of samples.

AJ The Civil Aviation Authority, CAA, regulates all aerial activity and asks for community comments. The drones are safe and there will be a controlled landing if there are problems. There is a trauma heli pad at St George's which must not be interfered with. We can track the samples and prepare ahead for their arrival. The electric drones are 22 times more efficient than the vans.

The NHS has a 10 year plan - patients are tested locally and go home, not waiting in hospital. Demand on the NHS is increasing so it needs to be more efficient. Robots are doing some jobs, but more jobs are being created and people are being upskilled.

QB The drones are light - 5kg and are made of styrofoam. They have 2 forward propellers and 12 hover props. They travel at 100km/hour and fly at a height of 100m. They hover at 7m and lower the cargo on a rope. The samples are in a metal flask inside a cardboard container. The drones have a low resolution camera for navigation - there is no live feed. There is a pilot in charge of all the drones.

The noise is at ambient levels for where it is flying. There was feedback about noise in Australia and the propellers were altered to make them quieter.

Q Like AI cars -who is flying these drones ?

A They are automated. The software sets the route Nelson to St George's, with a pilot in Kings Cross.

Q Are the drones visible to CAA radar?

A Yes they are

Q How will the drones avoid other craft in the air ?

A Other craft will have to ask to use our airspace

Q Is this system more efficient ?

A Sample tracking is per sample - it was per box of samples. Need to make sure the atmosphere does not affect samples. Processing times will be reduced.

NHS Pathology is welcoming the initiative- it is more efficient and saves costs. The NHS has invested in the company so will not be subject to large costs to use the service.

Q What happens if there is jamming & drones have problems?

A There are 3 secondary landing sites on building roofs

Q The boxes look flimsy ?

A They are cardboard, single use & recyclable, but are waterproof and secure. There have been about 1m flights worldwide so they are well designed.

Q Data - how many samples ?

A Validation flights only now - will have to present data to the Board. If one lab cannot process sample it can be flown to another lab in 2-9 minutes whereas now it would take 2 hours to reroute the sample. This is critical in heart attacks for example. The Doctors need to know whether a patient has had a heart attack and treat quickly. In one hospital spinal fluid samples were not taken after midday because the results would not be back from the lab that day - and would be too old to process the next day.

Q What are the economics of the use of drones. How many urgent samples - mean and peak figures please ?

A At the Nelson there are 440 urgent samples a month baseline. Aiming to reduce carbon footprint to net zero. Drones create noise but take 1 minute to load and with 8 flights a day that is 8 minutes when drones can be heard. The drones are optimised to be quiet not for longer battery life.

Q With climate change how will the drones cope with extremes of wind, rain and temperatures?

A The drones have been flown in the heat in Australia and cold in Finland and rain in Ireland & London. If it is very windy they do not fly. The drones can fly 90% of the time.

Q How many samples can the drone carry ?

A 18 samples. It will be able to lift 1kg eventually

Q What happens after the 6 months trial ?

A Need to make a business case to the Trust. We have a 6 month licence from CAA

Q How do we send feedback ?

A E mail us at community@apian.health

Slides will be available on MPWRA website and we will get a progress report

5.0 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 7th April at Old Rutlishians Club Poplar Road 8pm

