

Council – 22 October 2020

Item 7b. Questions on Ward Issues from Council 30 July 2020

1. Question from Councillor I.T.E. Harvey –

Regarding the Lendy Memorial

- Who exactly at the Council engaged this expert?
- Who is this expert? What qualifications does he or she have?
- Is this expert sufficiently knowledgeable about west African and southern African 19th century history so as to be able to make a valid judgement on the Lendy Memorial?

Response from the Leader, Councillor J.R. Boughtflower:

“Thank you for your question Councillor Harvey. Deborah Ashman and Karen Sinclair, Joint Community Heads of Community Wellbeing are responsible for contracting an appropriately qualified expert. As this question was not responded to at the July meeting, this response reflects the most up to date position on this matter.

The Council committed to review all historical information of Council owned monuments following the issues identified by the recent “Black Lives Matters” protests. The Lendy Memorial Lion which is a statue in the Walled Garden in Sunbury was identified by the campaign as a statue of concern and is one of 29 Council owned monuments.

In order to undertake this exercise and to enable Councillors and residents to be informed of the full historical background of all the monuments, it was identified that there was a need to employ the services of an appropriately qualified, impartial historian, who has experience in this type of research.. Discussions initially took place with an expert who work in a London University and has a BA Honours in English Literature and History, as well as a Masters in Historical Research (specialising in social and cultural history). This expert also has a PhD from the University of London (Institute of Historical Research). Officers contacted other academics to establish that the cost and timetable for this exercise are reasonable for the work to be undertaken.

After extensive discussions between officers and relevant experts it was identified that the cost for them to undertake the review was prohibitive (a quote was received of £28,000 for research on Lendy alone).

After an approach by Council officers, Mr Alan Doyle a long-time resident of Sunbury who is an investigative journalist by profession kindly agreed to assist the Council without charge and draft a report on the historical background to the memorial. It was decided Councillors could then consider this information and decide if any action would be necessary. Mr Doyle has

been researching the Lendy family periodically for 30 years. The evidence which has been used by the "Topple the Racists" website to justify their call for the Lendy Memorial to be taken down is a brief article on a website which credits Alan Doyle as a source of research, although the article only quotes partial and selective elements of the summary written by him some 10 years ago.

I am able to advise that Mr Doyle has now completed his report and due to the detail and complexity of the information this contains, I think it only appropriate to refer the report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee so that a full and proper review can be undertaken by a cross party group of Councillors."

Question from Councillor D. Saliagopoulos

"I would like to make Council aware that the Riverside area within my Ward needs some attention please. There is a stretch of River walk which runs from Penton Hook Lock towards Staines Town. For those of you who know, we also have the large grassed area called "Silvery Sands" which has housing fronting this large open area.

Until the unfortunate onset of the Virus Pandemic, this area was clean, free of dog fouling (thanks to the fabulous campaign organised by Councillor Joe Sexton a couple of years ago) and the bins never overflowed. Now, people leave plastic bags of litter, litter has been left on the grass and riverside area. One weekend there were hundreds of empty beer cans, all cleared up by local residents.

I have to recognise the work that my fellow Councillor, Michelle Gibson, who lives on the river, does every day to keep the area clean. Many residents are also doing this.

Every day there have been gatherings of people, all enjoying the River and it has been nice to see children out in the fresh air enjoying themselves.

However, there's always a but isn't there? The area is now blighted by empty legal hi canisters, little small silver phials about the length of a cigarette. The users of these drugs must surely come from the nightly hoards of young people who congregate at Silvery Sands. I actually feel very sorry for those residents whose properties face directly onto this lovely area. Some have actually taken to putting up high fences and I have even heard of complete strangers walking through residents' gardens.

Crime is also on the rise with several properties being broken into. Litter, as I have mentioned and dog fouling is on the increase. Inconsiderate parking is rife. Two roads in particular, Penton Hook Road and parts of Wheatsheaf Lane are actually Private Roads - the residents pay for the upkeep of these roads, independently from the County Council. Visitors to the River In their cars were not respecting this.

The biggest complaint I hear from residents is regarding cyclists. Why are these cyclists not understanding that Pelatons do not have right of way over pedestrians. There have been many near misses, dogs being hit, and many complaints about the general attitude of cyclists. So far I have personally witnessed 2 accidents. Cyclists should at least slow down for pedestrians and give way. At the weekend you might be mistaken for thinking that 'would be' entrants to the Tour de France were out practising!

I therefore would like to hear from the Council how they will give some extra help to this area. What measures can be taken to put a stop to the continuous drug taking and loud noise at night? Are the Council willing to consider a zero tolerance policy towards youngsters doing this? Can we enforce a policy so that cyclists respect the River path and pedestrians? The Litter Campaign suggested by Councillors Rybinski and Sexton should start here! Finally, I want to make it clear. I am not against young people having a good time. As I mentioned earlier it is nice to see young people out and about enjoying themselves. What I am extremely concerned about, especially for the residents of Riverside & Laleham is that their day to day lives are being seriously disrupted and it is just not fair. I am sure Councillor Gibson would agree with me that we need to focus on our Riverside area to make it as nice as the River Areas in Lower Sunbury and Shepperton.”

Response from Councillor R. Barratt

“The area from Penton Hook Lock towards Staines Town, which includes Silvery Sands, is under the management and responsibility of the Environment Agency (EA). At the request of Cllr Gibson officers have recently been in contact with the EA about two areas in particular; Penton Island and Silvery Sands, and have provided costs to empty the bins and clear litter. The EA have not yet accepted or agreed to pay those costs.

The issues related to drug taking are a police issue. Similarly, noise generated in such public places could only be dealt with by the police under their powers to deal with public disorder or anti-social behaviour, with support as necessary from the Council’s Environmental Health and Community Safety teams as part of a multi-agency approach.

Given that these are police issues, this would need to be taken up with Surrey Police, but of course any action they could take would be subject to their resources at the time of the incident. The Council is not in a position to consider or enforce a zero tolerance policy for an issue that is not within its control.

In relation to the cyclists, any actions or enforcement along this stretch of the river would need to be undertaken by the EA as this area is their responsibility to manage.

Given your concerns, we will ensure that the points you have raised are on the agenda of the next Tasking & Co-ordinating Group meeting at which various bodies, including the police and council officers, discuss areas of concern within the borough. Where appropriate, subject to resources, we may be able to schedule some patrols. An invitation to this meeting will also be extended to the Environment Agency to discuss the specific points raised in relation to the areas managed by them.”