

## Report of the Council group Merton Liberal Democrats AGM, 25 November 2020

I want to thank my councillor-colleagues and Ruth, our head of office, for their work in 2020. I know it's not always easy to be a councillor but I enjoy working with you all, your humour and support. And Ruth has to put up with all of us – thank you for your patience and calm wisdom.

I'd also particularly like to thank Tamara and Richard P for their (volunteer) campaigns work, making sure our message travels beyond the doors of the civic centre.

- Councillors work to hold the Council administration to account and to try to encourage liberal change. There are a number of mechanisms, from formal set-piece meetings, to informal (soft-power) conversations with council officers and other councillors
- We also act to make the Council machinery more responsive to people's needs, by helping 'oil the wheels' of complaints and disputes residents have about and with Council services, and those provided by many other bodies (like utilities, transport, developers etc)
- The Covid crisis has impacted a lot of the year, with Council services and meetings being restricted. Many of the formal meetings were suspended, and scrutiny of the emergency response was initially through a weekly meeting with the CEO until some level of scrutiny committee meetings were restored. Ultimately all Council meetings have now moved online.
- In terms of substantive issues dealt with: January saw us try to overturn the Council's rejection of our proposal to set up a scheme for donates to a new education fund. There were battles around the saving Wimbledon Police Station and also the Council's budget in February and March. May saw us setting out [a response](#) to the recovery after Covid, and Summer saw us successfully shame Labour into starting working out how to pay care workers the London Living Wage. We identified the need for someone to take a lead on the Council's climate emergency response in September, and sadly our battles to close loopholes allowing incredibly tall buildings and to establish both a tree and a biodiversity strategy were lost in November. We did however, succeed in bringing a focus to Merton's low levels of vaccinations, which will hopefully see greater effort in understanding the reasons for this – to help take pressure of NHS services and put us in a better place when a Covid vaccine arrives.
- You can find out more on the website here [www.mertonlibdems.org.uk](http://www.mertonlibdems.org.uk) and there is info about the Council group here [https://www.mertonlibdems.org.uk/local\\_councillors](https://www.mertonlibdems.org.uk/local_councillors)