



MITCHAM SOCIETY

Web: www.mitchamsociety.org.uk
Email: TheMitchamSociety@gmail.com
Twitter: @MitchamSociety



Mitcham Carnival consultation

Mitcham Society comments

March 2022

Merton Council ran a public consultation on the future of Mitcham Carnival between 14 February and 27 March 2022. This is our submission to that consultation.

1. Mitcham Carnival is a long established annual event. The hiatus caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has given Merton Council an opportunity to reflect on the future of this event. We welcome that reflection and the consultation exercise.
2. In recent years up to and including the last Carnival we have noted a steady decline in attendance. We put this down to a number of factors which contribute to a reduction in the attractiveness of the offer for local people including:
 - a. A decline in the range and standard of stalls and activities on offer.
 - b. A loss of focus on the community cynosure of the carnival, including:
 - i. A decline in the number of community organisations taking stalls, and in particular a decline in the number of smaller community organisations present
 - ii. An over-emphasis on food stalls
 - iii. A lack of things for people to see, do, participate in, be inspired by and learn from
3. All of these factors combine to make the Mitcham Carnival predictable and thus less attractive year on year.
4. With these comments in mind, we propose a number of ways Mitcham Carnival can be enhanced:

- a. Reinstate the procession. We have heard several different reasons that it was stopped, primarily that the police would no longer support a streets-based procession. If this is the case, the procession should take place around the perimeter of Three Kings Piece, culminating in the arena around the stage / performance arena.
- b. Community stalls have been the focus of the Carnival and rightly so. This should not change. But the range of stalls has decreased significantly in recent years. Action must be taken to widen the range and increase the number of community stalls. Key to this will be broadening the inclusivity of the offer of a stall using these strategies:
 - i. Proactively reach out to community organisations including very small, very local ones, and offer them stalls.
 - ii. Offer free stalls to all those groups and organisations which are unfunded, volunteer led (i.e. without any paid staff), or not-for-profit.
 - iii. Provide a marquee for the smallest organisations which may be unable to staff a stall for the full period of the carnival, may lack materials, or for other reasons may be unwilling or unable to take a stall. Make using this marquee free.
- c. Encourage local makers, artists, artisans and others to take stalls, thereby supporting local businesses. Mitcham has people with a wide range of skills, and businesses which could benefit from a selling or information based stand at the Carnival.
- d. Consider having a “business district” marquee where service companies such as accountants, solicitors and so on, can have a presence, or simply make leaflets about themselves available.
- e. Offer low cost stalls to the small retail businesses of Mitcham Village, including food outlets, so that they can benefit financially on the day and promote their offer to customers. Find a way to ensure they are branded as local businesses, in a “support your local business” initiative.
- f. Run a full programme of talks and activities in small marquees equipped with audio visual facilities. The talks offered at the Heritage Discovery Days run by Merton Council are always extremely popular and there may be other topics or themes that might suit a talks and activities programme. Advertise the timetable well in advance, and widely.
- g. Have a “story time” marquee with sessions shared by the library service and local authors. Allow local authors an opportunity to promote their work.
- h. The CCG / health offer needs a significant refresh. Its marquee has become bland, dull and predictable. In the last few years it drew very small numbers of people.

Reimagine this so that health messages and important information can be delivered more successfully.

5. The consultation asks where people would like to see the Mitcham Carnival held offering a choice between Figges Marsh, Three Kings Piece, Pollards Hill or “other”. We believe Mitcham Carnival should continue to be on Three Kings Piece.
 - a. This is a large area offering plenty of open space for the carnival to use. It does not currently use the entire space, so there is room for expansion. It could also expand onto the very large grassed area by the newly refurbished all-purpose track opposite.
 - b. It is also close to the newly refurbished Canons House and associated public spaces, making the location a great attractor for local people.
 - c. Three Kings Piece is very accessible to Mitcham Village with its many bus routes, and is near the other public transport services of tram and rail from Mitcham, Mitcham Junction and Mitcham Eastfields.
 - d. With the current emphasis on promoting our local centres and on “twenty minute neighbourhoods” the Carnival is a great opportunity to promote Mitcham Village, including our suggestion above relating to offering low cost stalls to Mitcham Village businesses.
 - e. An updated Mitcham Carnival on Three Kings piece will add a new chapter to the extensive history of Mitcham Carnival in and around this site.
 - f. We do understand that the other venues mentioned in the consultation might benefit from events. We suggest the establishment of events throughout the year for these locations separate from the Carnival and with their own identities.
6. The Mitcham Carnival should be run on a break even basis, with the emphasis on financial accessibility of stalls, breadth of the offer, and bringing together Mitcham’s vibrant social capital rather than profit making.