

Let's get together

A Community Plan for Merton 2020-2026



Foreword



Merton has undergone many changes in the last 20 years. We now have better schools, libraries, leisure facilities and shopping parades. We have a more diverse borough than ever before, with residents from different cultural backgrounds living together and looking after one another. I am proud to have been able to witness all these changes and contribute to shaping our local communities on a daily basis.

I am also delighted to acknowledge that the council could not have done any of the above without the Merton Partnership, a close-knit group of faith, voluntary, and public organisations as well as local businesses who provide vital services to our communities and are at the heart of our community planning.

The new Community Plan has eight thematic priorities and an overarching priority to increase social capital in communities and neighbourhoods experiencing the poorest outcomes. This follows extensive research on social capital in Merton, detailed needs analysis and engagement with residents. The new Community Plan aims to inspire our residents to create robust social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. Increasing in social capital will strengthen the social fabric of our communities and revitalise human relationships among neighbours and across communities. Partners, residents and businesses will need to work together to develop the social infrastructure to achieve the priorities set out in this plan and enable social capital to flourish across the borough.

A great example of social capital in action is provided by the emergency response that our local communities have put into place to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Local people working

alongside a range of partners from across the public, private, voluntary and faith sectors have been supporting vulnerable residents and key workers. Merton Council and our partners have provided the framework and the resources for the local emergency response, but our residents were the human capital who have made the emergency response possible and successful. This way of working symbolises the spirit of the Merton Partnership upon which the new Community Plan is built.

The new Community Plan has given me the chance of getting to know some of our residents who dedicate their lives to serve Merton communities. They are the pillars of the borough's social infrastructure which have been developed over the years across the borough or have originated as a result of the pandemic. I am grateful to them for their daily commitment and dedication, but also for agreeing to feature as case studies in the Plan.

I would also like to thank everyone who has contributed to developing the Plan for all the energy and time that they have dedicated to creating an inspiring framework which will guide the council and partners' actions for many years to come. My thanks go to our former Fire Brigade Borough Commander Darren Tulley and Police Chief Superintendent Sally Benatar who have both led on the development of the Plan, and the many local organisations who make up the Merton Partnership and help our communities to thrive.

Finally, I am proud to say that the new Community Plan will sit on the Merton Partnership website, for communities to view, update and enrich throughout the Plan's lifespan. Now let's get together and bring about change.

Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Chair of the Merton Partnership and Leader of Merton Council

Let's get together



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1. Overview

The Merton Community Plan sets out the Merton Partnership's long-term ambitions for the borough and the overall direction and priorities that the Partnership will focus on. The Community Plan sets out the key priorities that the members of the Merton Partnership want to work on together.

The overarching priority for the Community Plan is to increase community participation in Merton as a driver to improving resilience and wellbeing, focussing on those parts of the borough with the poorest outcomes. The Plan highlights how adopting a collective approach can help to better achieve the ambitions of the people that live and work in the borough. Throughout the Plan there are a number of examples of activity showcased that highlights the way in which people in the community are already contributing to making Merton a better place in which to live and work.

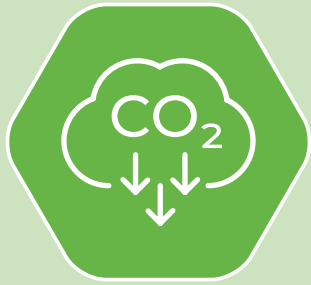
Merton has an active and vibrant voluntary and community sector that already provides a wide range of valuable services, and that makes a positive contribution to the lives of many in the borough. The Community Plan wants to further strengthen the ability of these groups to have a positive impact on the borough, through better co-ordination and joining up of the public and voluntary sectors on a collective set of priorities. Most importantly the Community Plan wants to encourage actions that mobilise and involve our local communities, so that they become active partners in helping us to meet the growing and changing needs of our population.

The Community Plan has nine priorities. The first priority is an overarching priority to increase social capital in communities and neighbourhoods experiencing the worst outcomes in terms of the recently updated Index of Multiple Deprivation, and then eight thematic priorities. There is a clear correlation between social capital and socio-economic outcomes. By increasing social capital in those neighbourhoods with the poorest outcomes we can contribute to bridging the gap in outcomes between communities in the east and west of the borough.

The Plan sets out actions for how partners can work collectively with our communities to deliver the priorities. This includes identifying and highlighting the assets in our communities, both physical spaces, as well as people and groups with skills and knowledge that can help strengthen and grow community-led activities. The emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic has generated very successful networks of residents, businesses, and partners working together to support the most vulnerable residents and key workers across the borough. These networks can contribute to achieving the Plan's priorities in a post-pandemic world.

The eight thematic priorities were proposed by each of the Merton Partnership's four Thematic Networks. These are not entirely new priorities but they are based on the most recent strategies agreed by each Thematic Network. They follow extensive research on social capital in Merton, detailed needs analysis and engagement with residents. They have been chosen because they can only be delivered by partners, residents and businesses working collectively together. They are also quite specific and focused priorities rather than broad and high level because we believe this will help to ensure that activity is directly linked to achieving the priorities.

The eight thematic priorities are:



Reducing carbon emissions to tackle climate change



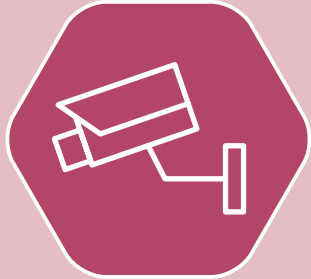
Protecting and enhancing the local environment



Tackling diabetes and creating a healthy place



Creating Healthy Workplaces across Merton



Reducing serious violence



Enforcing action against anti-social behaviour



Getting involved and having a say – promoting the voice of children and young people



Making Merton a place where children and young people feel they belong and thrive

We want the Community Plan to be a helpful tool for everyone living and working in Merton. It aims to give the local community a clear articulation of the Merton Partnership's long-term aspirations for the borough as well as setting out the ways in which they can get involved in communal activities to help to achieve them.

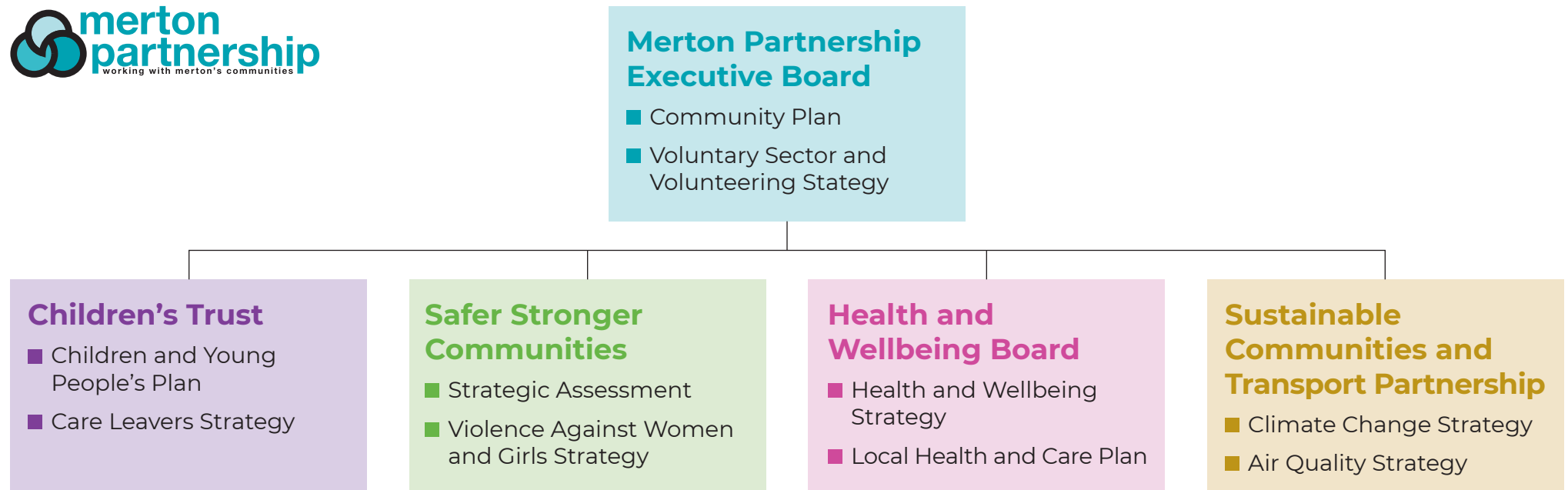
2. The Merton Partnership

The Merton Partnership brings together a range of key partners from the public, private and community and voluntary sectors in Merton. Its aim is to provide leadership and to co-ordinate joined up responses to issues where there is real benefit to different groups working together to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of those that live and work in the borough.

Within the Partnership there are four thematic networks that co-ordinate activities and that will ensure that the actions in the Community Plan are being carried out. As well as delivering the

Community Plan, these thematic networks are also responsible for developing and implementing a number of key partnerships plans – see diagram below.

The Merton Partnership Executive Board provides oversight and a forum for the executive leads from each network to come together to review progress and problem solve. As set out above, the priorities in the Community Plan are drawn from the key partnership strategies and collectively the Merton Partnership will deliver the overarching priority to increase social capital in those communities and neighbourhoods experiencing the worst outcomes.



Children's Trust

Merton's Children's Trust brings together partners involved in providing services to children and families in Merton. The Board encompasses a wide range of different groups and partnerships, overseeing their performance and activities. The Children's Trust is designed to deliver the outcomes set out in Merton's Children & Young People Plan which includes improving outcomes for those subject to the effects of disadvantage, safeguarding children and young people and closing the gap in educational outcomes and opportunity.

Safer Stronger Communities

Incorporating the statutory Community Safety Partnership, the subgroup is responsible for overseeing the strategic direction for community safety and the community cohesion agenda in the borough. The Community Safety Partnership has a statutory duty to undertake an annual strategic assessment to inform and shape the boroughs approach to addressing crime and disorder issues. Key themes for the Community Safety Partnership include; reducing crime and the fear of crime and reducing alcohol related violence in a sustainable manner whilst supporting those who are affected by alcohol dependency. The Community Safety Partnership also works to address anti-social behaviour and its effects on communities as well as individuals.

Health and Wellbeing Board

The Board brings together the Council, Clinical Commissioning Group, HealthWatch and the voluntary and community sector to provide local strategic leadership on health and wellbeing. The focus of the Board is to make Merton a healthy place, by creating the physical and social conditions for all people to thrive and to complement the provision of holistic health and care services. This approach and key outcomes are set out in the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-24 – A Healthy Place for Healthy Lives together with the Board's way of working including a commitment involve communities and specifically to include the voice of children and young people.

Sustainable Communities and Transport Partnership

Established to create a more sustainable borough, one which is less reliant on fossil fuel and which reduces its negative impact on the environment and climate change, the Partnership aims to balance the different social, economic and environmental components of the community to meet the needs of existing and future generations. The Partnership promotes investment into the borough in order to create new jobs, improve the skills and capacity of residents, and to improve the condition and supply of housing including affordable housing. The Partnership also works to promote the development of sustainable transport including cycling and walking, as well as public transport in and around Merton.

3. Review of the previous Community Plan

Merton's previous Community Plan was published in 2013 and set out a series of aims that the Plan would set out to achieve. This section provides a summary of the key achievements and an assurance that as a Partnership we deliver on our commitments.

Children's Trust

We said: All our schools will be good or better

 **We delivered:**

- 88 per cent of primary schools and 100 per cent of secondary and special schools rated "Good" or better by Ofsted for Overall Effectiveness
- 74 per cent of all pupils and 64 per cent of children eligible for Free School Meals are achieving a "Good Level of Development" at Early Years Foundation Stage
- 69 per cent of all pupils and 56 per cent of disadvantaged pupils are reaching the expected standard in reading, writing, and maths at Key Stage 2
- The gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has narrowed in the Progress 8 Indicator at Key Stage 4
- Delivering over 20 school expansions to provide sufficient Primary School places for Merton's rapidly growing school age population
- New Harris Academy Wimbledon secondary school under construction in South Wimbledon



Leader of Merton Council, Cllr Stephen Alambritis and Cabinet Member for Education, Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah congratulating A' level students



88 per cent of primary schools and **100 per cent** of secondary and special schools rated "**Good**" or **better** by Ofsted for Overall Effectiveness

We said: We would focus on Children at Risk

We delivered:

- According to the latest Ofsted inspections, 100 per cent of Merton's children's centres are rated "Good" or "Outstanding" and now deliver additional services in areas of the borough with high levels of deprivation
- Community Health Services staff are now co-located in five children's centres to enable stronger collaborative working
- In 2018, 434 families achieved significant and sustained progress under the Troubled (Transforming) Families programme
- A Multiagency Risk Vulnerability and Exploitation Protocol and Panel has been established (2018) to strengthen and integrate the response to adolescents at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation, serious youth violence or harmful sexual behaviour

We said: We would prevent, deter, and divert young people from criminal behaviour

We delivered:

- Have sustained a strong youth justice performance on First-Time Entrants with a reduction from 88 in 2013-14 to 34 in 2018-19
- The Youth Justice Team, in collaboration with Safer Merton and Police, have delivered bespoke responses to rises in crime; Bike Call In for those arrested for moped offences and a Theft group involving shop lifting victims, resulting in reduction of these crimes
- A Liaison and Diversion service has been established to provide an early screening and sign-posting service at first point of entry into the criminal justice system to ensure that appropriate interventions are available to meet identified needs and that the "health offer" underpins the justice response

Health and Wellbeing Board

We said: We would support people to manage their own health and wellbeing

We delivered:

- Social Prescribing was piloted across a number of GP practices in the borough, leading to an increase in self-reported health gains and a significant reduction in GP visits. Recent investment agreed by Merton Clinical Commissioning Group has now expanded the programme to all practices in the borough
- A range of self-care support has been developed and promoted through the One You Merton and Good Thinking websites
- The Wilson Health & Wellbeing Campus is being designed to integrate health and wellbeing services at a new site to meet the needs of residents
- The Diabetes Truth Programme was developed to connect Health and Wellbeing Board members with residents who have a lived experience of diabetes. The findings helped develop the Tackling Diabetes Action Plan and Merton Mile
- Established a Befriending Service, Exercise for Life and Handyman Service to support older people to live more independently
- Merton received formal accreditation from the Alzheimer's Society, that we were 'working towards being dementia friendly', in July 2018. The Council Tax team are working with the Alzheimer's Society to make Council Tax reductions for people living with dementia easier to apply for – one of the first London boroughs to do so

We said: We would give each child a healthy start

✓ We delivered:

- The Early Years Hub has improved outcomes for children by increasing take-up of free early education and improving the quality of early years provision
- The Child Healthy Weight Action Plan has trained 378 school staff to raise awareness of childhood obesity and aligned the Healthy Schools London programme with Merton School Sports Partnership to support schools to achieve Healthy School status
- A Daily Mile has been introduced in Merton schools, aimed at getting children to run or jog for 15 minutes daily
- Educational outcomes have improved with a 3% rise in children with Special Education Needs who achieved a “good level of development” at the Early Years Foundation Stage



A **Daily Mile** has been introduced in Merton schools, aimed at getting children to **run or jog** for **15 minutes daily**



Safer Stronger Partnership

We said: We would focus on Youth Violence

✓ We delivered:

- Merton has utilised MOPAC funding to develop and deliver work in schools and youth clubs with the Rhyme & Reason music mentoring project and Gym Box engaging known gang members and those at risk of Serious Youth Violence and gang activity
- Targeted interventions delivered by specialist gangs and serious youth violence workers have seen reductions in serious incidents between specific groups and at specific locations over the last three years
- A Serious Youth Violence Protocol was established between the Youth Justice Team, Police and Transforming Families Team to support workers and partners with recognising early indicators and high risk factors

We said: We would focus on domestic crime

✓ We delivered:

- Secured MHCLG funding for a full time Independent Domestic Violence Advisor who looks after cases with complex needs and access to refuge space for victims
- 100 per cent of licensed premises in Wimbledon are signed up to Ask Angela, where customers can give a code word to staff if they feel unsafe or threatened, with 95 per cent in the borough overall
- A Domestic Violence & Abuse One Stop Shop is run on a weekly basis and has been for eight years

We said: We aim to prevent and reduce overall crime, including theft, ASB and misuse of drugs and alcohol

✓ We delivered:

- To reduce burglary, programmes such as Met Trace and Super Cocooning have been rolled out within the borough for the first time
- Merton was successful in its application to become a phase two Local Alcohol Action Areas (LAAA), which uses partnership work to prevent alcohol related crime and disorder and reduce alcohol-related harm. The LAAA areas in Merton are focused around Wimbledon and Mitcham Town Centres
- To reduce theft of motor vehicles, the met-wide Operation Venice has been rolled out. Intelligence-led patrols are based in hotspot areas and bike locks distributed, leading to a 43 per cent reduction in offences in Merton
- According to the latest residents' survey, 98 per cent of residents feel safe during the day, and 84 per cent feel safe at night

According to the latest residents' survey, **98 per cent** of residents **feel safe during the day**, and **84 per cent feel safe at night**



Sustainable Communities and Transport Partnership

We said: Meet the needs of local businesses and offer a range of plans to increase jobs and skills.

✓ We delivered:

- Local employability Schemes last year supporting 72 residents into work. In particular, the “Towards Employment” programme created 30 plus job starts and 5 apprenticeship starts between September and December 2018. The remaining 37 residents found work through employability programmes offered by partners
- “Take One Initiative” has provided more than 100 apprenticeships for 150 young people over the last two years
- Successful programmes to support young people not in education, employment or training have ensured Merton sits in the top quintile in London. My Futures, Transforming Families, YOT, Towards Employment, and University Programmes have played a crucial role over the years to support young people access education/work opportunities

Six kilometres of new cycle routes have been created across the borough over the **last six years**



We said: Improve physical infrastructure and a vibrant cultural offering.

✓ We delivered:

- Completion of regeneration schemes for Colliers Wood Tower and High Street
- Development of a new football stadium for AFC Wimbledon, 600 homes, squash and fitness facilities, a crèche and a supermarket on the former Wimbledon greyhound stadium site
- From a derelict site, Mitcham Community Orchard and Gardens turned into a community resource with the development of an orchard of fruit trees and a wildflower meadow
- Regeneration of three estates: High Path, Eastfields and Ravensbury remain in progress. The investment will involve more than £1bn over the next 12 years by replacing over 1,000 existing homes and building an additional 1,800
- Rediscover Mitcham has entered its final phase: adding the bus lane to the town centre to bring footfall back to the pedestrianised street
- The New Morden Leisure Centre opened in November 2018
- Merton currently has 101 publicly accessible electric fast chargers operating, with another 36 expected to be installed by the end of 2019. Merton is among the top boroughs in London for this expansion
- Merton Council is ranked joint second in London and among the top authorities across the country by Friends of the Earth for its climate change action
- Six kilometres of new cycle routes and 651 more cycle parking spaces have been created across the borough over the last six years



4. Social Capital – what it is, why it is important to grow it and how it will help deliver the priorities of the Community Plan

The overarching goal of the Community Plan is to build social capital in Merton to improve the resilience and wellbeing of our communities and neighbourhoods. Social capital is about creating a shared sense of responsibility and the ways in which communal activity can benefit everyone. It is about shared values and co-operation, building trust and reciprocity.

Merton continues to have a thriving voluntary and community sector and a long history of partnership working across the public, voluntary and private sectors. There are already many of examples of social capital in action highlighted throughout this plan, which showcase the types of activity that the Community Plan is looking to build on and strengthen.

As well as more structured groups and activity, social capital can include more informal examples of sociability, for example the extent to which residents interact with one another on a day to day basis in their community, or how much people know, or feel like they could rely on their neighbours if they needed them. An area with low social capital might mean that people don't talk to, or know their neighbours, leading them to feel more isolated.

Evidence suggests a strong link between high social capital and better outcomes, be it lower crime rates, a reduced reliance on services, better physical and mental health and wellbeing, lower levels of loneliness and isolation, and stronger community cohesion. An area with high levels of social capital is likely to be a place where people take time to volunteer, has high levels of civic engagement such as turning out to vote and has lots of different places where people can meet.

To support the development of the Community Plan, an evidence base has been developed to measure the existing levels of social capital on a ward-by-ward basis and to give the Merton Partnership a baseline from which to work. This will enable the identification of areas with high social capital; existing community assets and good practice that can be tapped into as well as areas with lower social capital; places where the Merton Partnership can be proactive at trying to strengthen existing assets as well as developing new projects.

The evidence base uses 24 ward-based indicators which have been aggregated to give a score for each ward across five domains of social capital.

For each ward a series of outcome measures, such as educational attainment, employment rate, life expectancy and crime rates was also produced and compared against the level of social capital in each ward. This highlighted that the lowest scoring wards for both levels of social capital and positive outcomes are in the east of the borough in Mitcham and Morden, emphasising the need to build social capital in these areas and bridge the gap in outcomes between the east and west of the borough. However, scoring wards in this way also enables us to recognise that different areas have different strengths on which to build and reveals that even in the most deprived wards social capital can flourish. For example, Cricket Green ward in Mitcham has one of the highest scores for informal sociability in the borough.



Merton Giving helps businesses back local voluntary sector



Merton's business community is playing its part in backing the work of the local voluntary sector and helping reduce inequality through the [Merton Giving](#) charitable venture.

Since it was set up by Merton Chamber of Commerce and Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC) in 2018, Merton Giving has been a focal point to enable

local businesses and the voluntary sector to work together to mutually benefit the community.

It raises money by encouraging businesses in the borough to take part in a variety of initiatives, including its Merton Giving Week in December, which saw dozens of local businesses hold a wide range of fundraising activities.

In July last year, the Merton Giving Fund allocated its first round of grant funding, which benefited 20 local voluntary sector organisations tackling a range of issues including poverty, exclusion, mental health, loneliness and isolation.

These included Mitcham-based Inner Strength Network CIC, which provides coaching and training to women and girls and their families to overcome difficult moments in their lives.

The charity had identified a number of vulnerable 10-15-year-old girls who were in need of extra support and through Merton Giving funding, it was able to run a series of empowerment sessions for them. These girls were given the opportunity to develop their self-confidence with a focus on self-esteem, body confidence, staying safe online, healthy relationships and leadership skills.

A standout moment from the sessions was a 10-year-old girl having concerns about loneliness. It was her fear that other girls her age would also feel lonely.

Maureen Bailey, CEO at Inner Strength Network, wanted to create a safe space for all ethnicities to express their concerns without judgement or fear: "Our team continues to find a platform to enable young girls to find their voice in the community we serve. There is a need to continue to nurture and inspire leadership even at a young age in a safe environment, without judgment," she said. By the end of these sessions, the young girls were empowered, confident, assertive and ready to be leaders. This project did so much to help families who have been placed at a disadvantage, have been discriminated against or faced injustice.

At the end of 2019 Merton Giving secured five years of funding from City Bridge Trust to enable it, through lead partner MVSC, to continue to change lives in the community.

In January, 11 local organisations were told they will have a share of Merton Giving's £10,000 Winter Grant Fund pot. Grants, ranging in value from £500 – £1,000, have gone to groups helping address isolation and loneliness in Merton.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Merton Giving launched a fundraising campaign for a specific Coronavirus Fund to help affected organisations. When everyone has faced challenges that were unimaginable just a few short weeks beforehand, collaboration has never been so important.

Its Coronavirus Fund attracted donations from the Wimbledon Foundation, Clarion Futures, the Moat Foundation/Pollards Hill Community Committee and Merton Council. Donations from the community also helped raise more than £20,000.

After six weeks of funding rounds, 44 organisations affected by the pandemic had received grants totalling more than £98,000.

5. Social Capital in action for emergency response: COVID-19

‘Disasters destroy physical and human capital; social capital is less tangible, but it is the only form of capital which is renewed and enhanced during the emergency period. It is social capital that serves as the primary basis for a community response...’

When the first cases of a novel coronavirus were detected in some Chinese provinces, no one thought that a pandemic would have accelerated and reshaped the history of the entire world in a matter of a few months. Most countries were forced to introduce lock down measures, travel bans, testing and contact tracing systems to fight against the virus and to prevent health care systems from being overwhelmed.

Along with the economic recession, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought health inequalities into sharp focus. People facing the greatest deprivation and health inequalities are experiencing a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 as well as increased likelihood of death. The wider governmental and societal measures to control the spread of the virus (including the lockdown and social distancing) also have a greater impact on those already experiencing inequality. The pandemic is, therefore, exposing the structural disadvantage and discrimination faced by certain vulnerable groups, including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, elderly and disabled people.

In Merton, the first COVID-19 case was confirmed at the beginning of March when Wimbledon College took the decision to close as a number of staff were self-isolating due to being close contacts of that confirmed case. Since then some of our residents have fallen seriously ill and some others have sadly died both within the community and care homes. Merton Council and our partners have supported both a cohort of very vulnerable people identified on the basis of pre-existing medical conditions and households hit by financial hardship. Merton Council together with BAME Voice are undertaking a joint project to speak to local

people to better understand the ‘Lived Experience’ and the local impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities and other vulnerable groups. The information gained and recommendations made will be used to better inform future decisions aimed at reducing health and wider inequalities and the impact of the virus.

But the council and partners couldn’t have mitigated the local impact of COVID-19 without the collaboration and commitment of our residents. Thousands of volunteers of all ages and backgrounds have worked tirelessly alongside the council, the NHS, and the charity and voluntary sector to deliver food parcels and keep in touch with our most vulnerable residents. These grassroots and informal networks have increased social capital across the borough with potentially long-lasting benefits for health and equality. These networks feature in the new Community Plan because we want to see them flourish in the post-pandemic world.

Although the curve of the virus has flattened in most countries, fresh outbreaks seem to appear again. Local communities will play an instrumental role in the next months and years in defeating the coronavirus. Residents will have to work together and be resilient to avoid future outbreaks and enhance recovery at the same time. Our own ability to survive is intertwined and depends on our neighbours now more than ever, and social infrastructure will be needed to meaningfully bring down barriers and eliminate inequalities. The new Community Plan is a call for businesses and individuals to engage with any existing social infrastructure, or create new ones, to bring people together throughout the pandemic and afterwards, and increase social capital across the borough as a whole. Partners and Merton Council couldn’t achieve this without our residents, and the pandemic has confirmed this.

¹ Dynes, Russell. “Social Capital: Dealing with Community Emergencies.” Homeland Security Affairs 2, Article 5 (July 2006). <https://www.hsaj.org/articles/168>

Tackling food poverty with Merton's Community Fridge Network



The COVID-19 pandemic left many people in the borough struggling to buy or access food, but the Merton Community Fridge Network harnessed a range of organisations to distribute surplus or donated food to those in need.

A food distribution hub was quickly established by Merton Council and Merton College at the college's site in Morden, where it has bulk storage facilities as well as freezers and fridges.

Food was brought to the hub, which was staffed by Merton Council employees, by the London Food Alliance (LFA) for distribution

across the borough. The LFA was a partnership between London's three biggest food redistribution charities (City Harvest, FareShare and The Felix Project), to provide an emergency response service for the capital during the coronavirus crisis.

The food came from surplus stock, donated by wholesalers, manufacturers, restaurants, supermarkets and other businesses.

A variety of local organisations worked together to distribute the food, including Sustainable Merton, Wimbledon Foodbank, The Wimbledon Guild, The Dons Local Action Group, Kommunity Kitchen, the Salvation Army, Commonsides Development Trust, Friends in St. Helier, the Polish Family Association (PYZA) and Tooting and Mitcham Football Club.

The co-ordination of Merton's Community Fridge Network was led by the council's Public Health Team working with Adult Social Care, Environmental Health and Leisure, MVSC and local Clinical Commissioning Groups.

It actually 'borrowed' the name from environmental charity Sustainable Merton, which launched its Merton Community Fridge project in May as a long-term initiative to tackle food poverty and waste in the borough.

As part of the distribution network, Sustainable Merton opened Merton's Community Fridge at Morden Baptist Church for residents living in food poverty to collect food parcels each week. Volunteer Fridge Friends also delivered parcels to those who were shielding or self-isolating.

Diana Sterck, CEO of Sustainable Merton, said: "This has been a very fast moving project and the partners have coordinated their approach to make sure food got to those who were most in need. I was delighted that the 'Merton's Community Fridge' name was used as it is so important that we ensure a long term sustainable approach to tackling food poverty and reducing food waste".



➔ **If you want to volunteer or donate fresh food please visit their website <https://www.sustainablemerton.org/community-fridge> or email them at communityfridge@sustainablemerton.org**

Meet the inspirational teenager behind Merton Mutual Aid



Zak Dada delivering food for a vulnerable resident

When Zak Dada's A-Levels were cancelled as the nation went into lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, he decided to use his new-found spare time to help Merton residents in need.

Eighteen-year-old Zak should have been preparing for examinations in English Literature, History and Politics, but instead he founded Merton Mutual Aid, a grassroots network of nearly 3,000 volunteers supporting those isolated or vulnerable during the coronavirus crisis.

His story was particularly inspirational because for a month of his volunteering work, his Muslim faith meant he was fasting during daylight hours for Ramadan.

The community network linked volunteers with those in need, under the banner of 'neighbours helping neighbours'. It also worked with other local organisations, including Wimbledon Foodbank and the Dons Local Action group.

Zak's role at Merton Mutual Aid involved him:

- Overseeing more than 70 WhatsApp messaging groups, managing requests for support and helping manage the social media channels along with a team

- Managing teams behind hundreds of collections each week for Wimbledon Foodbank, hospitals and care homes.
- Managing a Funds & Grants team, looking after seven local groups in need of funding and securing more than £10,000 in just one week.
- Helping the Dons Local Action group by finding them more volunteers, supporting their Keep Kids Connected campaign against digital poverty for children by contacting schools and groups for donations of laptops and tablets and sourcing thousands of products from companies wanting to donate to South West London hospitals.

Zak's story was particularly inspirational because for a month of his volunteering work, his Muslim faith meant he was fasting during daylight hours for Ramadan

Zak, who lives in Wimbledon, said: "I was meant to be completing my examinations, but when they were cancelled I decided to use my time for good. It was made increasingly difficult when I was partaking in Ramadan fasting as a member of the Muslim faith.

"We help people whether they are a fit 20-year-old or an elderly person with underlying health conditions, espousing the belief of 'today you, tomorrow me.' I have been amazed at how much we have been able to achieve."



A volunteer logo

A typical day at the height of the pandemic could see Zak personally delivering cooked food to vulnerable residents alongside his administrative work. Those meals were made by a range of chefs,

including volunteers at the Shree Ghanapathy Temple in Wimbledon, the Old Wimbledonians Association and Senthil (pictured), an elder in the local Tamil community.



Senthil, an elder in the local Tamil community, who made food for the NHS, key workers and people in need

Other work has been more varied: One day an NHS staff member asked Zak to organise a van to collect pallets of donations from Lush cosmetics to deliver to St George's Hospital. He organised a large delivery van to deliver the donations for free the following day, as well as overseeing their collection and distribution.

Zak sourced thousands of travel-size shampoo and conditioners for local hospitals, as well as 11,000 cans of Kombucha tea. Merton Mutual Aid funding was also used to buy large hand sanitiser containers, which a volunteer in Morden decanted into smaller bottles to go into food parcels.

The hundreds of local people helped by Merton Mutual Aid included Brian, who said: "I would be totally lost without Merton Mutual Aid and the food they bring is amazing!"

➔ You can contact Merton Mutual Aid at support@mertonmutualaid.co.uk. For further details please visit their website www.mertonmutualaid.co.uk

Providing food, tech and more with the Dons Local Action Group

A group of AFC Wimbledon fans with time on their hands when football matches were cancelled at the start of the UK coronavirus crisis set up a couple of food collection stalls in Wimbledon, with the aim of distributing the donations to local people in need.

Little did they know that within two months, the Dons Local Action Group would amass a remarkable army of 1,000 volunteers, manning 22 collection points across three boroughs, delivering 2,500 food parcels a week, as well as more than 300 laptops and tablets for children without an electronic device of their own.



Usaama Kaweesa at the Dons Local Action Group stall in Morden

Spokesman Xavier Wiggins said at the launch of the initiative: "We're just ordinary football fans who want to reach people who are housebound, or simply too frightened to open their front doors. We want them to know there are friends out there they can depend on."

"Coronavirus has forced matches to be cancelled across the country. With no games to go to, this feels like a really positive way of spending the spare time many of us have all suddenly got."

The Dons Local Action Group, working with the AFC Wimbledon Foundation, soon involved supporters and members of other local sports clubs, including the Old Rutlishians Association, Tooting and Mitcham Football Club, Wimbledon Rugby Club and the Old Wimbledonians Association.

Many of the volunteers were not interested in football, but just wanted to help their community out in a time of need – including 30-year-old Usaama Kaweesa, who lives in Phipps Bridge. Despite working full-time as a recruitment officer for an education charity, he helped at weekend food collection stalls in Mitcham and Morden.

He said: “I don’t follow football and thought it amazing that football supporters were doing this. I’m no stranger to volunteering and I heard about the Dons Local Action Group when I was looking into how I could help out during the crisis.

“I’ve been really humbled by the generosity of the people donating. It’s not just been what they don’t want, but high quality products. Overall it’s been an effective and impressive community campaign.” Usaama has given further backing to coronavirus support work in the borough by completing a 30k three-day run fundraiser around his 30th birthday. He ran 10km a day for his daily exercise and raised just over £1,000 for Merton Giving, which launched a Coronavirus Fund to help affected local organisations.

“With no games to go to, this feels like a really positive way of spending the spare time many of us have all suddenly got.”

There are many other volunteers working with the Dons Local Action Group with similar stories to tell. Xavier said: “People across Merton pulled together – not just Wimbledon fans, we picked up plenty of others on the way. Some got involved because of our club, but it grew quickly as there are so many good people in the area.



We’re a fan-owned football club soon to move into a fantastic stadium, and it’s right that we’re taking action at the heart of our community.

“It’s not all been selfless for the volunteers though as you find that you are helping yourself by helping others. It gave a real purpose for those with no work during the pandemic, so it has been good for the soul as well as helping society.

“It wouldn’t have been possible without the generosity of the shoppers as well as donations from kind-hearted businesses. Merton Council also helped by not bogging us down in red tape and just letting us get on with it.”



To contact the Dons Local Action Group, email dla@afcwimbledonfoundation.org.uk

Strength in numbers with the Merton Community Response Hub



Rhiannon Larkman,
Operations Manager at
Age UK Merton

Days before Prime Minister Boris Johnson put the nation into lockdown at the start of the coronavirus crisis in mid-March, a volunteer taskforce to help isolated households and those at risk from COVID-19 was being swiftly mobilised in Merton.

So by the time we were all under orders to stay at home, with the vulnerable shielded from the outside world, a heroic display of teamwork from the voluntary, community and faith sector organisations across the borough

meant the Merton Community Response Hub was ready to offer vital support to local people in need.

Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC), the umbrella body for voluntary and charity groups in the borough, set up the Community Response Hub with the backing of key partners – Merton Council, Healthwatch and Merton Clinical Commissioning Group, as well as a cross-section of local voluntary organisations.

By the end of May, more than 800 vulnerable residents had directly approached the Hub for support and nearly 600 concerned individuals had requested help for isolated parents, neighbours and/or friends. The Hub had also delivered 479 emergency care parcels to local households and nearly 700 volunteers had offered to help others.

Many of those who put themselves forward as volunteers were partnered with key charity groups, including Age UK Merton, Wimbledon Guild, the Commonside Trust, Merton and Morden Guild and Friends In St Helier (FISH).



Commonside Trust volunteers in action

Volunteering was also coordinated more widely with Merton Mutual Aid and other local organisations who mobilised volunteers at speed to support residents in need of help.

Volunteers were assigned to supporting people in their community through tasks such as shopping, prescription/ medication collection, dog walking, posting letters, topping up pre-payment cards or just making a friendly phone call.

Rhiannon Larkman, Operations Manager at Age UK Merton, was one of the people from a range of organisations involved in setting up the Community Response Hub.

Rhiannon said: "It has been incredibly rewarding, especially at its busiest time. Most of the call handlers and Hub managers have been council staff, mainly from the library service, as well as some volunteers. We've all found it so worthwhile just to be able to help and reassure people."

People contacting the Community Response Hub for help, or to request it for someone else, were usually referred to the appropriate local charity to get the right support for their needs following their call or email.

Rhiannon describes one memorable call to the Hub: “It has been a very worrying time for some people and one Saturday a woman in her 70s rang up in tears. She was self-isolating with her husband, but they needed help with getting prescriptions and food.


“I was able to reassure her that we could help and I referred her for on-going support. She was so relieved that she wasn’t on her own and said that we had ‘made her day’. I felt it was wonderful to have made such a difference.”

Simon Shimmens, CEO of MVSC, paid tribute to the combined strength of the organisations involved in the running of the Hub. He said: “It has been a brilliant team effort and everyone adopted the principle of – ‘the answer is yes, now what is the question?’.

“It has demonstrated that we have proper partnership working in Merton, and we’ll continue to be there for people who need our support.”

Following the success of the Community Response Hub, Merton Council wants to continue the model of a single point of contact within the community to support vulnerable or isolated residents.

The council aims to commission a pilot ‘like for like’ service to be run by the voluntary sector. Once set up, further work will be undertaken with the wider voluntary sector to help shape and design the future service.

 **If you are isolated and need support, or know someone that does, please email help@mvsc.co.uk or ring 020 8685 2272.**



A Wimbledon Guild volunteer making a delivery



Commonside Trust volunteers at work in the kitchen

6. Delivery of the Merton Community Plan

The Community Plan aims to inspire a collective approach to achieving its priorities that will continue to make Merton a great place to live and work. Achieving the priorities of the Plan will be driven by the four thematic boards, overseen and held to account by the Merton Partnership Executive Board.

Each of the priorities has its own delivery plan, setting out the actions that members of the Merton Partnership will be taking to achieve them as well as ways in which the community can get involved as part of a collective approach. The delivery plans will look to align resources to support residents who want to develop ideas and projects to deliver the priorities set out in plan such as making bids for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding or Merton Giving – Merton’s community giving scheme.

The Merton Partnership commissioned M.E.L Research to undertake research with ‘seldom listened to’ groups to ensure that the voice of our more marginalised communities, who sometimes get overlooked by traditional engagement methods, was heard when we were developing the Community Plan. M.E.L Research held a number of focus groups in the community to collect insight and better understand the challenges and opportunities to increase active participation in the borough. Focus groups were held with members of a number of different organisations to ensure that a wide spectrum of voices were heard. These included: Age UK, BAME Voice, Merton Centre for Independent Living, Merton Mencap, Muslim Women of Merton, Polish Family Association, Sustainable Merton and Merton’s Youth Parliament and Young Advisers.

The feedback from these sessions and other engagement carried out highlighted a number of consistent themes and recommendations for change that the Merton Partnership has looked to address in the development of the Community Plan. The key points are summarised below and opposite, and how we are taking them forward is set out in italics.

There was desire for more support from the groups that make up the Merton Partnership to help unlock potential. There was awareness of a reduction in resources across the public sector, but financial support was still highlighted by groups as being important to helping them grow, and to be in a better position to be able to do more.

In response bids to improve and nurture social capital will be encouraged to guide local projects to build social infrastructure using Community Infrastructure Levy money and the allocation of funding from Merton Giving.



The delivery plans will look to align resources to support residents who want to develop ideas and projects to deliver the priorities set out in the plan

A key theme identified was the need for people to be made more aware of the importance of getting involved in the community, potentially looking at showcasing the individual impact of current volunteers and groups.

Throughout the Community Plan, examples and case studies about existing community-led projects have been included to help inform and inspire people to see what can be achieved when people get involved in communal activities.

Feedback from residents was that they needed to know where to access information about volunteering activities, and that having resources such as volunteer matching services held in a central place that is regularly maintained would be helpful.

The Community Plan has brought together a number of online tools, links and resources into a single place that will help people to find out about what's going on near them and communal activities that they can get involved in. The Partnership will work with one of its key members, Merton Voluntary Service Council, to utilise its central directory of voluntary groups in the borough.

Trying to change the perception of volunteering in the community could be worked upon, making it more of a social norm and trying to remove the barriers. A number of people identified time as a barrier such as time from being able to get involved in communal activities or to volunteer.

For each of the thematic priorities of the Community Plan, some of the ways that people can get involved to help achieve them has been highlighted. These have been included to show the variety of different ways in which people can get involved, emphasising the different levels of commitment that people are able to offer, and how all are equally vital and worthwhile contributions.

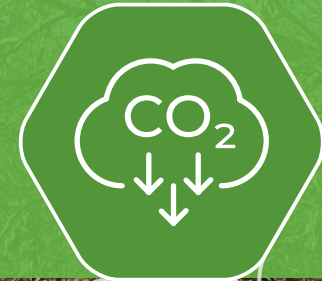
There was concern about some of the differences in the borough in the existing levels of social infrastructure and the impact that this has on positive outcomes in these areas.

The overarching priority of the Community Plan is to improve social capital in communities and neighbourhoods with the poorest outcomes as identified in the evidence base put together to support the Plan and in terms of the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation. The data collected on which neighbourhoods are stronger when it comes to social capital and which places are weaker will enable the Merton Partnership to be proactive at trying to strengthen the existing assets of an area as well as where the developing of new projects should take place.

7. Our priorities for action

Priority 1

Reducing carbon emissions to tackle climate change



Sustainable Communities

Objectives

- To work towards becoming a carbon neutral borough by 2050 in order to reduce Merton's contribution to global warming and protect our planet for current and future generations.
- To empower local residents and businesses to reduce their carbon footprint.

Call to action

Damaging climate impacts are already being felt today; these include an increased frequency of extreme weather events, damage to sensitive ecosystems, changing patterns of water availability and associated impacts on crop yields.

In October 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a Special Report which concluded that global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions need to reach net zero around 2050 to keep global temperature rise below 1.5°C in order to minimise damaging climate impacts on human and natural systems.

On 27th June 2019, the UK became the first major economy in the world to commit to having net-zero GHG emissions by 2050. On 10th July 2019, Merton Council declared a Climate Emergency and committed to working towards making the borough of Merton a carbon neutral borough by 2050, and to make Merton Council carbon neutral by 2030. As a large proportion of emissions within the borough come from the buildings we work in and the vehicles we drive, the majority of which are outside the Council's direct control, everyone has a crucial role to play in decarbonising Merton.

What happens if we do nothing?

The IPCC found that continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems. We will likely see continued sea level rise, increased extreme weather events and species extinction, reduced water and food security, and increased ill-health, conflict and inequality. The risks of abrupt or irreversible changes will increase as the magnitude of the warming increases.



From left: Merton Conservatives Leader, Councillor Nick McLean, Merton Council Leader, Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Merton Liberal Democrat Group Leader, Councillor Anthony Fairclough and Merton Park Ward Independent Residents Group Leader, Councillor Peter Southgate

What would it look and feel like if we succeed?

As well as avoiding a number of substantial climate risks, taking action now to reduce our emissions will also enable a number of co-benefits for our health and well-being, resilience and local economy.

Among other things, we envisage a carbon-neutral Merton to have good public transport and active travel links for walking and cycling, energy-efficient and well-ventilated homes and offices, a significant proportion of locally generated electricity from solar panels installed on our rooftops, and increased tree coverage and green spaces.

Everyone will need to work together to make adjustments to their daily lives in order to secure a better future for all

What have you said

A climate survey, designed for Merton residents, organisations, businesses and young residents, was issued in October 2019 to inform the development of Merton's Climate Action Plan. From over 600, there was overwhelming support for strong action to reduce the impact of climate change, with around 90% feeling that their actions can make a difference as part of a wider community effort. Community engagement and action was a key theme in all areas, including 74% of respondents saying they would be willing to volunteer to plant more trees and strong support to empower communities to create car-free areas where communities can thrive. Many highlighted the challenges of accessing the right information and support for such projects, as well as the high costs of going green.

We aim to

To reduce carbon emissions in the borough, and work towards making the borough of Merton a carbon neutral borough by 2050, we will:

- **Develop a Climate Action Plan** which will set out a roadmap to achieving our carbon reduction targets for the Council and the borough. Responses to the Climate Change consultation, and advice from the Climate Emergency Working Group, have identified 125 potential actions to be considered for the plan. Key themes include: reducing energy consumption and switching to green energy sources; tipping public spaces away from private car use and towards walking, cycling and public transport; increasing green cover; and making responsible choices about the purchase of goods, financial investments and minimising waste.



- **Lead by example by making Merton Council carbon neutral by 2030.** We have taken important steps towards reducing carbon emissions from our building stock over the last decade and we will build on this work towards our new target.

What can you do?



Everyone will need to work together to make adjustments to their daily lives in order to secure a better future for all. The following sets out some of the key ways you can play your part in decarbonising the borough of Merton.

Buildings and energy – You can help by:

- Reducing your energy consumption by making your home or business more energy efficient.
- Finding out whether your home is suitable for efficient electric heating such as a heat pump – you may be eligible for payments through the Government’s Renewable Heat Incentive.
- Switching your power supply to a 100% green tariff or green energy supplier.
- Installing solar panels on your home or business to generate renewable energy locally – you could get paid for any low-carbon electricity you export to the grid, with the National Government’s Smart Export Guarantee.
- Developing community energy projects with funding from the London Mayor’s Community Energy Fund.

Transport – You can help by:

- Avoiding using your car or replacing your petrol/ diesel vehicle with a low carbon alternative. For short journeys, try leaving your car at home. Walking and cycling improves health and reduces your carbon footprint. Given that climate change is a global challenge, you should also consider how you travel outside the borough (e.g. take the train as a low carbon alternative to flying).



The opening of the Go Cycle route between Merton and Kingston



What can you do? continued

Waste and products – You can help by:

- Following the principles of the waste hierarchy and avoiding waste wherever possible. Among other things, you can also buy locally, reduce your meat/ dairy consumption, and collect food waste.

Financial investments – You can help by:

- Investing in sustainable products and services. Promote low carbon activities by ensuring that your pension fund, the money in your bank account, and any other personal investments are sustainable investments.

Green spaces – You can help by:

- Planting trees on your property and encouraging others to do so. Please contact the Council if you are willing to become involved in a neighbourhood tree planting and maintenance effort or to use your property for tree planting.



Merton Climate Emergency Working Group

A climate emergency was declared in Merton in 2019, when a target was also set to make the borough carbon neutral by 2050. To help meet this ambitious declaration, a Climate Emergency Working Group has been put in place to develop a Climate Action Plan.

The Working Group is formed of a range of individuals who have offered their time, experience and specific knowledge of climate change issues to make up a diverse panel covering residents, businesses and services in the borough.

Among the 14 members is Tom Walsh, who lives in Colliers Wood and co-founded the Sustainable Merton environmental charity in 2007. Now aged 64, he has been a green campaigner for most of his adult life and says it is a “massive relief” that the world is finally taking action on climate change.

“If the world fails to change in the next 10 to 12 years, then events will occur that are not returnable – such as the loss of ice around Antarctica and Greenland which will see water and sea levels rising, threatening 800 million coastal dwellers around the globe.



Tom Walsh (right) and helpers at Mitcham Community Orchard

“I trained in applied biology and when I was at college, our tutors said climate change wouldn’t affect us in our lifetime. But they were wrong and we have lost a lot of time,” he said.

A former Green Party candidate, Tom co-founded Sustainable Merton when he felt unable to make an impact on local environmental issues through political means.

At Sustainable Merton, Tom has worked with residents and groups across the borough discussing all aspects of climate change and has been involved with numerous environmental projects. These include working with 15 Merton schools showing young residents where their food comes from and how to grow their own, and helping run the Dig Merton scheme where vacant green spaces were planted with fruit, vegetables and flowers.

He also highlighted the on-going success of Sustainable Merton’s Mitcham Community Orchard, where 200 residents and 12 partner organisations have worked together to transform a derelict area of spare land in Field Gate Lane into an award-winning orchard with 30 different varieties of fruit trees, seven raised beds, ponds, soft-fruits and a wild garden.

Tom’s wealth of experience as an environmental pioneer will help shape the forthcoming Climate Action Plan for Merton now being prepared by the Working Group. They have agreed to structure tasks under the following themes:

- **Buildings and Energy**
- **Transport**
- **Products and Waste**
- **Finance**
- **Green Spaces**
- **Behaviour Change and Engagement**

As co-ordinator of the Products and Waste theme, Tom says a strategy is currently being finalised. Merton Council is aiming to become carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030, with the borough as a whole to follow 20 years later.

“The amazing national response to coronavirus shows what can be done when necessary. It is my belief that the same sort of response is needed for climate change,” Tom added.

SwopItUp

Teenager Zaqiya Cajee has become an environmental activist after setting up her 'SwopItUp' clothing exchange for young people, which not only gives them the chance to update their wardrobe for free, but enables them to understand how their choices impact the environment.

SwopItUp, run in schools by teenagers and for teenagers, sees clothes dropped off by pupils during a 'DropToSwop' week in return for tokens which they exchange for clothing pre-loved by fellow students at a school SwopItUp event.

Zaqiya, aged 17 and from Mitcham, was inspired to create the SwopItUp concept following a family holiday when she spent less than £30 on a new wardrobe at an Italian market filled with stalls piled high with pre-loved clothes.

She said: "Before then I found myself regularly buying new clothes, trapped by the cycle of fast fashion, which made it cheap and easy to buy new things. Going to this market showed me there are alternative ways to shop. Not only is it cheaper, but buying pre-loved clothes is good for the environment as it reduces waste.

"This whole experience turned me into an advocate for pre-loved fashion. When I got home, however, I realised that there was nothing really aimed at my age group. It made me determined to give my peers an easy way to get pre-loved clothes and also help the environment."

SwopItUp has other goals, including linking the project to different curriculum subjects such as geography, business, design, media, photography, technology, textiles and maths.

The skills the project team develop by being a part of SwopItUp can help provide them with a great start for employment, as well

as understand more about the type of work activities that might appeal to them.

SwopItUp events have taken place at Ricards Lodge High School, Wimbledon. The concept has also been running in neighbouring Wandsworth, and is expanding to other secondary schools with support from the RSA and the London Community Foundation.



SwopItUp founder Zaqiya Cajee

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when schools were closed, Zaqiya developed an online action plan – the Creator's Programme. This gave pupils chance to get involved while school was out.

Those who signed up became "SwopItUp Creators" who created social media and web content to promote the concept as well as assembly materials to be used when schools re-opened.

Zaqiya said: "My goal is to have 25 schools on board by the end of 2021 and become a national, or even international, scheme. SwopItUp is not just a clothing exchange, it is a concept that empowers youth to take real action.

"Since coming up with the idea for SwopItUp I feel I can call myself an environmental activist. I have taken action not only to reduce my own carbon footprint but to also provide others with a way to reduce theirs too. Once people start to take small steps they are more likely to take the bigger steps."



Find out more at: <https://www.swopitup.org/>
email team@swopitup.org or check [@swopitup](#) on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn

Priority 2

Protecting and enhancing the local environment



Sustainable Communities

Objectives

- To reduce the volume of fly-tipped waste.
- To increase the recycling rate in the borough.
- To improve air quality across the borough by reducing emissions from road transport and buildings.
- To improve the quality and increase the enjoyment of our local parks and green spaces.

Call to action

In line with the National trend we have been handling a sustained increase in the volume of fly-tipped waste incidents across the borough. On average we are clearing in excess of 1,000 fly tip incidents per month. Our intention is to prevent litter in the first place and satisfy the demands of our residents as litter is now the number one concern of our residents.

Although residents recycle and participate in food waste composting more, our current recycling rate is 42% which is well below our commitment as part of the Mayor of London waste plan to achieve a 50% recycling performance by 2030.

With reference to air quality, air pollution is recognised as a major contributor to poor health with more than 40,000 premature deaths attributed to poor air quality across the UK each year, with over 9000 attributed to poor air quality in London. There is also often a strong correlation with equalities issues, because areas with poor air quality are often less affluent. Public Health estimate that 6.5% of mortality in Merton is attributable to poor air quality.

Merton continues to breach the legally binding air quality limits for both nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM₁₀) at a number of locations across the borough including Colliers Wood, Morden, Tooting and South Wimbledon. In some locations the NO₂ concentration is also likely to be in excess of the UK 1-hour air quality objective (200µg/m³ not to be exceeded more than 18 times per year) which indicates a risk not only to people living in that area but also for those working or visiting the area. New powers for Local Authorities to further reduce air pollution



Keep Merton Clean campaign



from key areas such as transport, the home, farming and industry will follow in the new Environment Bill and associated clean air legislation.

Merton is a relatively green metropolitan borough that enjoys over 116 parks and open spaces, with 99.6% of the borough within less than 400m distance from a publicly accessible open space. 18% of the borough is open space, compared to a London average of 10%.

81% of park users recorded as satisfied or very satisfied with their condition/facilities in the most recent borough residents' survey and considerable practical input and support from the local community in the guise of 36 separate "Friends of Parks" and similar stakeholder groups.

Merton is a relatively green metropolitan borough that enjoys over 116 parks and open spaces, with 99.6% of the borough within less than 400m distance from a publicly accessible open space

What happens if we do nothing?

If no proactive action is undertaken the level of street litter and fly tipping incidents will continue to increase and the level of resident satisfaction of the service and the Council will decline. In addition to this, significant operational resource will be required to meet this demand adding financial pressure on both our waste / street cleansing budgets and our disposal budgets. Also, the overall image of the Public Realm will be tarnished leading to an increase in anti-social behaviour and reduced support from our residents in our ability to increase our recycling rate.

People will continue to die prematurely due to poor air quality if we fail to act. Road transport emissions will not decrease. Roads will remain congested and kerbside/roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations will continue to exceed the UK Air Quality Standards. In addition, buildings will continue to be heated by fossil fuels and be environmentally inefficient if we do nothing.

Failure to invest in the development and improvement of our green spaces and its infrastructure will undoubtedly undermine the health of the community by, for example discouraging exercise, such as walking and running, and outdoor social activities. Uncared for and under-utilised green spaces will encourage vandalism, graffiti and anti-social behaviour and may diminish their value to the extent that their facilities are closed or lost, and the site becomes derelict and abandoned.



What would it look and feel like if we succeed?

Zero waste to landfill and reduced waste processed via our energy from Waste facility would generate both financial benefits through reduced operational cost and improved recycling. Our street will be cleaner and attract positive wellbeing among our communities in which our residents will feel valued and actively help shape the future design of our service.

Reduced emissions from road transport and buildings will reduce air pollution, therefore, improve health and mortality of our residents, visitors and businesses. Reduced air pollution will also allow the Council to achieve its carbon reduction targets by 2050.

Attractive urban green spaces contribute significantly and positively to the social, economic and environmental well-being of the borough, including community health benefits, in mitigating air pollution and promoting biodiversity. Parks are used and enjoyed by borough residents of all ages in many rewarding ways, ranging from quiet contemplation and nature study to active leisure and recreational pursuits, including sporting activities and for children's play.

Attractive urban green spaces contribute significantly and positively to the social, economic and environmental well-being of the borough

What have you said

An independent survey to ask our residents about the new recycling and rubbish collection service revealed that 40% of households had experienced a service related issue such as missed collection or non-deliver of containers. In addition, 45% of the respondents to the 2019 residents survey said that the cleanliness of streets and town centres is one of the three things that most needs improving in the borough, second only to affordable housing. Similarly, engagement work with children and young people revealed that 31% of young respondents rate litter/dirt in the street as their second major concern in Merton.

With reference to air quality, the recent resident's survey suggests that air pollution is a serious problem in Merton. Traffic has been considered by both young and older respondents to the latest surveys as what most needs improving about Merton. 52% children and young people who have been consulted said that cleanliness of the air is a problem/ big problem in the borough. Likewise, the 2019 Residents Survey revealed that only 8% of respondents consider the overall air quality in the borough very good.



Public satisfaction with the borough's parks and open spaces remains extremely positive showing an increasing upward trend year on year; having raised 2% since 2017 from 79% up to 81%. There are however peripheral issues that are indirectly linked to parks such as graffiti and fly tips which show relatively low satisfaction levels.

We aim to

To prevent litter and satisfy the demands of our residents, we will:

- Continue to invest in anti-litter campaigns to educate the public.
- Continue to provide litter bins with ash trays and many gum and butt bins across our town centres.
- Implement our Cleaner Merton Programme, including our Fly Tipping strategy to reduce the level of fly tipping and litter.

Although there are limited measures we can take as an authority to directly influence polluting traffic, we will use any powers available to us to tackle this problem. We will:

- Establish and maintain an effective air quality group to ensure that the implementation of the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) measures is coordinated effectively between relevant Council services;
- Encourage the uptake of low emission vehicles and review and consider the introduction of an emissions-based parking levy, and review the effectiveness of such a measure over the next two years;
- Identify the key causes of traffic congestion within our Air Quality Focus Areas and pollution 'hotspots' and to determine effective measures for improving traffic flow through those areas using detailed air quality and traffic management modelling tools;
- Evaluate the air quality benefits and feasibility of introducing 'mini' Ultra-Low Emission Zones in the areas of the borough identified as having the poorest air quality;
- Provide guidance to developers on the impact of development on air quality and ensure that approved schemes include effective mitigation and maximise the opportunity to improve infrastructure for sustainable transport options;



We aim to continued

- Formalise anti-idling enforcement in order to minimise emission from vehicles around key locations such as schools, taxi-ranks, Air Quality Focus Areas and hotspots;
- Continue to work with schools, parents and students to improve awareness of AQ and to optimise parents' and children's desire and opportunity to adopt sustainable travel options;
- Review Merton's air quality monitoring network to ensure that it effectively identifies areas of poor air quality and provides accurate data to enable us to evaluate air quality trends and the impact of AQAP measures.

Our approach in respect of green spaces will comprise a range of measures and initiatives, including:

- Direct investment in the quality assets and opportunities offered by green spaces to improve their quality and broad appeal, including their green infrastructure
- Promote local parks and open spaces as destinations to enjoy a range of rewarding activities and experiences, including health related opportunities
- Encourage community participation in efforts to clean-up and directly invest in the management of their local environment
- Build and develop the network and capabilities of parks friends groups within the borough
- Protect and enhance the biodiversity interests of the borough and the opportunities for local people to enjoy and engage with nature
- Seek and encourage community input on future developments and services offered within the borough's parks and open spaces
- Deploy and encourage energy efficient and environmentally-friendly measures and materials within our greenspaces, including composting of green waste, minimal use of pesticides, etc.



Fieldgate Lane makeover



What can you do?



There are lots of things that you can do to protect and enhance the local environment in the borough.

Waste Services – You can help by:

- Participating in our services and supporting the council in their recycling behaviours in the home.
- Lobbying Central Government for new legislation and policy's holding the manufactures and producers accountable for the disposal of the material they use.

Air Quality – You can help by:

- Walking or cycling more. For those people with long-standing respiratory or heart conditions, your doctor can advise how poor air quality can affect medical conditions. For more information on walking visit:
<https://www.merton.gov.uk/healthy-living/sport-and-healthy-living/walk-4life>
- For more information on cycling visits:
<https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/cycling>
- Signing up for an air quality forecasting system such as airTEXT so that you can take steps to protect your health. To sign up for free air pollution alerts visit:
<http://www.airtext.info/signup>
- Using car clubs which provide you with a cleaner and greener way of using a car when you need one, without the cost of hassle of owning one. For more information visit:
<https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/parking/car-clubs>
- Switching to a cleaner vehicle if you need a private vehicle. For information on existing electric vehicle charging infrastructure in Merton visit:
<https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/electric-vehicle-charging-points>



Residents and council staff ahead of the 2017 Merton Big Community Clean Up



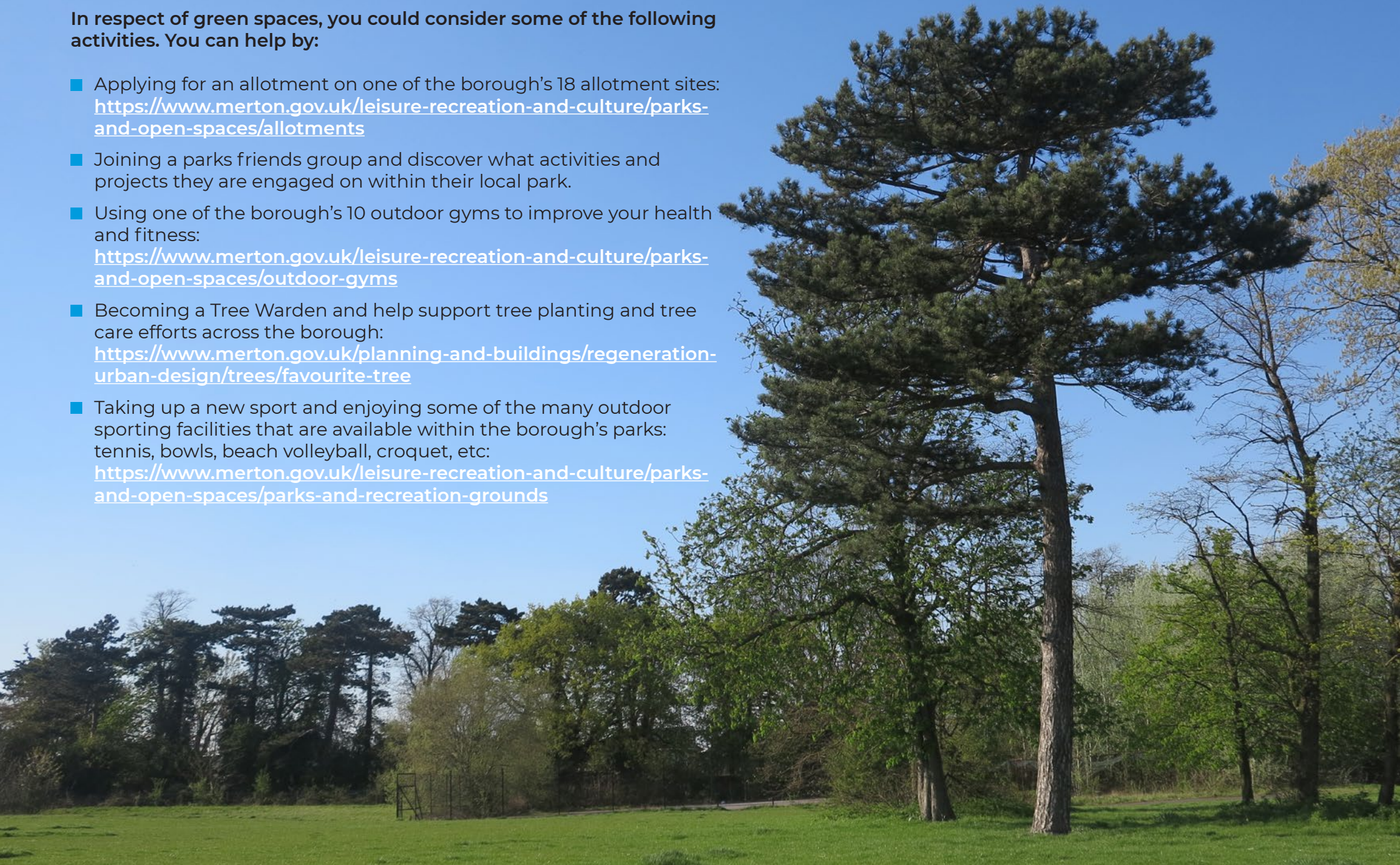
What can you do? continued

- Turning off your engine and restarting it after a minute or longer causes less pollution than keeping the engine idling and uses less fuel. Idling is also an offence, so if you see vehicles idling somewhere on a regular basis please let us know so that we can build a picture of idling hot spots in the borough to tackle. Email us at pollution@merton.gov.uk with the location, type of vehicle and time of day. You can also pledge your support for anti-idling and volunteer at idling events in your area. For more information visit: <https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/pollution/air-quality-and-air-pollution/tackling-idling>
- Setting up a play street to allow you to temporarily close your street to traffic so that children can play safely. For more information visit: <https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/streets-and-pavements/play-streets>
- Supporting your local School Safety Zone, so roads outside schools are closed at opening and closing times to improve air quality, and encourage walking and cycling to school. For more information visit: <https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/school-safety-zones>
- Improving energy efficiency in your home. Find out more at: <https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/sustainability-and-climate-change/what-you-can-do>

Turning off your engine
and restarting it after
a minute or longer
causes less pollution
than keeping the engine
idling and uses less fuel

In respect of green spaces, you could consider some of the following activities. You can help by:

- Applying for an allotment on one of the borough's 18 allotment sites:
<https://www.merton.gov.uk/leisure-recreation-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/allotments>
- Joining a parks friends group and discover what activities and projects they are engaged on within their local park.
- Using one of the borough's 10 outdoor gyms to improve your health and fitness:
<https://www.merton.gov.uk/leisure-recreation-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/outdoor-gyms>
- Becoming a Tree Warden and help support tree planting and tree care efforts across the borough:
<https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/regeneration-urban-design/trees/favourite-tree>
- Taking up a new sport and enjoying some of the many outdoor sporting facilities that are available within the borough's parks: tennis, bowls, beach volleyball, croquet, etc:
<https://www.merton.gov.uk/leisure-recreation-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/parks-and-recreation-grounds>



Community Champions

Merton has an ever-growing team of local people who are passionate about improving the borough's environment and want to make a positive, united, difference in their communities.

They are the Community Champions, set up by environmental charity, Sustainable Merton. Each has their own reasons for wanting to see Merton a greener, cleaner and healthier place, and they are all people prepared to take action to do something about it.

Raynes Park mother Ellie Smallshaw became a Community Champion because she wanted to make a difference to the area in which her young children – Zachary and Marcus – are growing up.

She said: "I wanted to make sure they are growing up in an area that is cared for, and I saw being a Community Champion as an opportunity to make my own difference to our local environment."

As a Community Champion, Ellie has helped man a stall at the annual Abundance Fruit Day in Wimbledon, where the community gathers to celebrate the abundance of fruit growing



around the town and to see how to make fantastic food from edible resources that would otherwise be wasted.

She has also taken part in community litter picks and attended Morden Hall's BioBlitz event – in which volunteers help experts identify different species of animal, plant and fungus – to promote Sustainable Merton as well as encourage people to make environmental pledges, promote the Plastic Free Merton campaign, educate on food recycling and to give out waste caddies.



Community Champion Ellie Smallshaw

Ellie said she is now far more aware of how to improve the environmental impact of her own life, and has made her own pledges to reduce plastic waste at home as part of the global Plastic Free Challenge campaign.

She said: "There is a lot that people can do to help the environment in their daily lives and, as a Community Champion, I am involved in spreading the word and inspiring others.

"Taking part in events like the local litter picking can give you a feeling of real fulfilment. It's amazing how a team of around ten people can make a visible difference in just a short space of time. There's a sense of community spirit and it's great to be doing something positive with like-minded people."



To find out more about Sustainable Merton's Community Champions, click on this link:

<https://www.sustainablemerton.org/our-champions>

School Superzones

Healthy spaces and neighbourhoods are vital to give children the best start in life as well as boosting their wellbeing.

Unhealthy environments can cause a lasting impact on children's mental health, obesity, educational achievement and long-term conditions.

But health and education partners in Merton have come together to pilot a 'School Superzone' project, aiming to create healthier and safer spaces for local children and young people to live, learn and play.

Merton Abbey Primary School on High Path in South Wimbledon was chosen for the pilot scheme, with borough council and school staff working together to improve the urban environment – including air quality – within 400 metres (5-10 minutes' walk) of the school.

Before developing a plan to improve the local environment around the school, three workshops were held to understand people's positive and negative experiences of the area, followed by a communal 'walk home', asking participants to take photos of the environment and talk about how it impacts on their wellbeing.

Issues raised included traffic congestion around school gates at drop off and pick up times, air quality, safety concerns on walking routes due to poor lighting, under-use of green assets, litter, as well as lack of public art and community ownership of public spaces.

Their views helped shape the action plan – which focussed on travel and transport, the local public space and community safety, and has since been built into the school curriculum.

The drive to improve local air quality and encourage active travel included promotion of a campaign to reduce car engine idling

outside the school, with council officers holding an assembly and lesson with Year 4 pupils to reinforce the message.

A 'kiss and drop scheme', where parents drop their children off for school in an area less congested than outside the gates, is being considered. It is hoped this would reduce car fumes as well as improve traffic safety outside the school.



Merton Councillors supporting the anti-idling campaign

The action plan also included the school helping improve local green spaces by allowing it to take 'ownership' of nearby Nelson Gardens as well as a council review of the placement of street lighting.

Michael Bradley, Headteacher at Merton Abbey Primary School, said: "We want our children to become active members of their own community, who make positive changes to their local area. The Superzones project has great potential to help us in that work."

Merton was one of 13 London boroughs to take part in the School Superzones pilot project, which is set to be rolled out across the capital. It has been such a success at Merton Abbey that at least two more schools in the borough will be taking part in 2020.

Unhealthy environments can cause a lasting impact on children's mental health, obesity, educational achievement and long-term conditions

Priority 3

Tackling diabetes and creating a healthy place



Health and Wellbeing Board

Objectives

Diabetes is a key priority for Merton Health and Wellbeing Board. We have launched a new Health and Wellbeing Strategy and are keeping a focus on tackling diabetes. Whilst good work is taking place and our whole systems approach and Diabetes Truth Programme have been cited as good practice, it is important to maintain momentum, specifically through developing:

- Clinical oversight and service improvement
- Holistic individual care
- Healthy places

Call to action

Approximately 6% (11,160) of the registered adult population within Merton Clinical Commissioning Group are diagnosed with diabetes; a further 2% (2,585) are estimated to be undiagnosed, and 11% (18,450) have non-diabetic hyperglycaemia (pre-diabetes).

As part of a life-course approach, tackling diabetes links closely with the child healthy weight with nearly 35% of Year 6 having excess weight. In East Merton this figure rises to 40% and compares to just over 26% in the West.

Merton Health and Wellbeing Board takes a 'whole system approach' to tackling diabetes, across the life course, developing holistic care hand in hand with creating a healthy place. Both involve a strong focus on understanding what most matters to local people and actively engaging all partners across Merton.

What happens if we do nothing?

If nothing changes, it is estimated that the total diabetes prevalence will rise by 5,000 to over 18,000 or 9% of Merton's population over the next 10 years. Diabetes currently consumes approximately 10% of the overall NHS budget, and this, too, is projected to rise. The Annual Public Health Report provides additional facts and figures.



Wimbledon Guild Volunteers in action



What would it look and feel like if we succeed?

The Tackling Diabetes Action Plan aims to create a healthy place where clinical services and prevention work effectively together to provide truly holistic care. Partners working proactively to address wider issues, including mental health and healthy environments, and collaboratively to ensure real ownership by the community.

What have you said

The Diabetes Truth Programme involved each, individual Health and Wellbeing Board member 'buddying up' with a Merton resident who had a lived experience of diabetes. Through a series of one to one conversations we gained an insight into the life and challenges that people at risk of, living with or caring for someone with diabetes face on a daily basis. Issues raised included:

- Type 1 diabetes is really different to Type 2 and we need to be clear on this.
- Diabetes is not just a physical illness – it also requires mental health resilience and support.
- Food choices are often influenced by factors in our environment.
- There is plenty of information but we need to make better connections between those who produce the information and those who need to use it.
- Physical activity is important to help prevent and manage Type 2 diabetes – we need to promote the assets we have including parks and open spaces.
- Peer and community support have a huge role to play.
- Pressures relating to lifestyle, working hours and lack of sleep mean that just knowing the causes and risks of diabetes is not enough to change behaviour. Instead, healthier choices need to become easier choices.



Café Canedo signed up for the Healthier Catering Commitment



Further work with young people (Children and Young People's survey 2018) also identified issues making it harder for them to lead healthy lives in their area as:

- Too many fast food outlets (52%)
- Too much advertising of unhealthy food (52%)
- The cost of healthy food and drink (54%)

This insight helped us identify the most important areas to focus on and together with data analysis and a review of the evidence has helped inform the Tackling Diabetes Action Plan. This innovative approach taken in Merton has been shortlisted for an award and cited as good practice.



Wimbledon Farmers' Market. Every Saturday morning.

We aim to

The Tackling Diabetes Action Plan sets out high-level actions. It contains a small number of high value actions that, when delivered together, are expected to have the most impact in Merton. Good progress against each of the three themes has been seen over the last six months, with key highlights including:

- A number of new services, including those for key communities e.g. Tamil and African Caribbean communities.
- An increase in uptake of the National Diabetes Prevention Programme, Merton having the highest number of first appointments (285) across South London within 2019.
- Council approval of a revised advertising policy to introduce restrictions on unhealthy food and drink.
- Development of the Merton schools super zone SNAP (Schools Neighbourhood Approach Pilot).



What can you do?



There are a variety of actions that partners and residents can take to keep the momentum on tackling diabetes.

You can help by:

- Gathering patients' feedback on services and release the potential that community groups can have in Merton.
- Raising awareness around diabetes and child healthy weight through a commitment to supporting World Diabetes Day and the #MertonCan www.merton.gov.uk/mertoncan physical activity campaign.
- Promoting 'Think Diabetes' in the workplace <https://healthinnovationnetwork.com/projects/think-diabetes-in-the-workplace/>
- Volunteering to take part in the development of the Merton network of Diabetes Champions.
- Supporting Sugar Smart Merton by, for example, signing up to our Fizz Free campaigns and using the #GoFizzFree hashtag on Twitter.
- Working with Merton Voluntary Service Council to explore how people from South Asian and BAME backgrounds are coping with diabetes.



Social Prescribing

It's estimated that 20% of people who visit their GP have a non-medical problem – be it bereavement, isolation or unemployment.

Instead of a traditional prescription, they might need to meet others, learn new skills, try different activities, make a few lifestyle changes or simply get out and about more often to improve their health and wellbeing. Now adult patients across Merton can be referred by their GP to a Social Prescribing Coordinator, who will help them access non-medical options that can work alongside existing treatments to help them feel better faster as well as making life more enjoyable.

Ray Hautot is Merton Social Prescribing Team Lead and he explained: "There are lots of community services in Merton that people can access which will benefit their health, but patients often don't know what's out there, and we are here to help."

After an appointment with a Social Prescribing Coordinator, some of the community services people have been informed about or referred to have included:

- **Support groups (e.g., diabetes)**
- **Where to get benefits advice**
- **Budgeting**
- **Befriending**
- **Bereavement support**
- **Employability support programmes**
- **Exercise sessions**
- **Health walks**
- **Informal carers support**
- **Social activities**
- **Transport (e.g., dial-a-ride)**
- **Volunteering**

Ray said: "Some of the patients are pre-diabetic and while we are not medical professionals, we will talk about diet and activity levels."

Following the initial appointment, patients will have two further follow-up sessions with their Social Prescribing Coordinator to chat about how things are improving and their progress will be measured.

Ray added: "Once people start seeing an improvement for themselves, they are usually motivated to carry on with the changes. I've seen patients make significant improvements, with some losing weight which helps their overall health."

Three quarters of the patients seen by Social Prescribing Coordinators reported better health and wellbeing. As well as patient benefits, the service has seen a reduction of GP appointments by 33% and a reduction in A&E attendance by 50%.

One patient said: "I knew I should exercise more, but it's hard to motivate yourself on your own and I hate the gym. The Social Prescribing Coordinator gave me information on health walks and a friendly beginners' running club. I am finding it easier to get motivated."

Merton's Social Prescribing Service is a project of Merton Voluntary Service Council working in partnership with the Merton Clinical Commissioning Group, Merton Council, Merton GP practices and the voluntary and community sector.

 **To find out more go to:**
<https://www.mvsc.co.uk/SocialPrescribing>

"There are lots of community services in Merton that people can access which will benefit their health, but patients often don't know what's out there, and we are here to help."

The Diabetes Truth Programme

The Diabetes Truth Programme, launched in April 2019 by the Merton Health and Wellbeing Board, is a new approach to working with the community to help tackle the growing problem of diabetes.

This involved each Board member being paired up – or “buddied” – with a Merton resident living with, at risk of, or caring for, someone with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes. Each Board member met their buddy over the following three months for a series of one-to-one conversations.

Fred Springer, who had been at risk of Type 2 diabetes, buddied with Merton Council’s Director of Community and Housing, Hannah Doody. What emerged was a real insight into the challenges that people living with diabetes face on a daily basis.

Evidence from the Diabetes Truth Programme then helped shape Merton’s Tackling Diabetes Action Plan. Fred and other Diabetes Truth volunteers also shared their experience of living with diabetes when they helped launch the Action Plan.



Merton Health and Wellbeing Board and Expert Witnesses listening and learning together about diabetes

Fred, a 79-year-old retired welding engineering lecturer who lives in Morden, had discovered he was pre-diabetic, despite feeling he was in “pretty good health” and playing regular cricket for Surrey Seniors.

Here’s his story in his own words...

“I attended my doctor’s surgery at Central Road Medical Centre to get my usual yearly over 70s check-up – as I call it, Human Medical Overall Test (MOT). When I went back for my results, the doctor told me I was in good health, but my glucose blood count was a bit high and close to diabetic level.

“The doctor suggested I go to the Pre-Diabetic Programme, which is 26 classes spread over weeks, held at Wimbledon YMCA. I am pleased this course was offered, and I found it to be very useful and informative. I’m grateful for what I learnt about diabetes.

“Many on the course made improvements, and it spurs you on when the doctor says are out of the ‘Red Zone’. The lifestyle changes and adjustments I had to make were not that great at all. Firstly, I observed that the time of my blood test was in the ‘off’ cricket season. In that period I slack off from physical exercise and was more likely to put on weight, and that was exactly what took place.

“I later found out my Dad had diabetes and my second older brother was pre-diabetic too. I was also very surprised to hear when, talking to other family members and friends, how many of them had known people who had been diabetic.

“I had genuinely thought beforehand that only unwell, obese, and unfit people suffered from diabetes - how wrong I was! I was shocked to then discover how common this condition was – and it is worldwide.”

He also said he appreciated the chance to have his voice heard through the Diabetes Truth Programme, and was pleased to see action being taken on what he and others taking part had said.

Here are Fred's tips:

I set myself constructive, achievable, exercise targets.

Good balanced diets are the key for me in keeping blood count down and – especially for me – being active, playing cricket and occasionally table tennis.

Regular walks – making sure I dress warmly and have worked a good sweat – you feel so much better with your body.

Most of our food comes from shops and supermarkets, these are well packed and labelled, including colour-coded and measured portions. We can read the calorie count, volume, weight and the ingredients for ourselves.

➔ For more information see www.merton.gov.uk/mertoncan



Priority 4

Developing Healthy Workplaces across Merton



Health and Wellbeing Board

Objectives

- To promote positive mental health at work.
- To promote active travel to work, with a specific focus on co-benefits for climate change.
- To support the development of healthy workplaces across Merton by encouraging commitment to the London Healthy Workplace Award.

Call to action

The rationale for choosing Healthy Workplace across Merton as a priority is based on a strong evidence of need – the rate of working days lost across Merton due to sickness absence is greater than in London or England as a whole. (Percentage of working days which are taken off for sickness is 1.3, 2015-17 PHOF).

Healthy Workplaces is also a strategic priority for Merton Health and Care Together and South West London Health and Care Partnership providing many opportunities to scale this up with partners and there is a growing awareness of the scale of issues relating to mental health throughout society, including the workplace, and the opportunity to build on existing support.

Healthy Workplaces aligns with other Merton goals such as action being taken in response to the recently declared Climate Change Emergency.

The London Healthy Workplace Award (LHWA) is an accreditation scheme led by the Mayor of London's Office and supported by Public Health England. It acts as a template for good practice and recognises London employers who invest in employee health and wellbeing. More information is available [here](#).

What happens if we do nothing?

Not making time for stress relief at work can lead to a self-perpetuating problem – people become more and more stressed or even burnout, both of which can reduce productivity further. If we do nothing to improve workplace health we can expect to see increasing sickness absence rates and a less productive workforce in Merton.



Long Service Award and Thank You Cleaner Day

What happens if we do nothing? continued

The Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 setting a target for Merton to be Carbon neutral by 2050 – if we do not increase our level of active travel, and we do not start working towards this now we will not meet this target. Active travel is a proven way for people to increase physical activity in their daily lives and improve health outcomes, neglecting this priority would be missing an opportunity to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities in the borough.

What would it look and feel like if we succeed?

Working together we aim to create working environments where making the healthier and more sustainable choice is easy, from the food we eat to how we choose to travel from one place to another. We want to use workplaces to put in place interventions which will influence a large number of individual's behaviours. This in turn will create a more productive workforce and save costs for employers. Success will also mean more Merton organisations working towards the London Healthy Workplace Award.

What have you said

As part of the engagement programme on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy there was widespread stakeholder support for a focus on healthy settings and outcomes that can be delivered through healthy workplaces. For example:

- Organisations to create conditions in their organisations where mental health is understood and discussed
- Focus on increasing active travel in the borough, reducing car use and implementing Healthy Streets Approach
- Ensuring that air quality in the borough is improved

We aim to

To support healthy workplaces across Merton we will:

- Encourage widespread achievement of the London Healthy Workplace Award Across Merton by supporting businesses, sharing learning and championing the Healthy setting approach.
- Raise awareness of mental health resources such as 'Good thinking' and 'Able Futures'.

Working together we aim to create working environments where making the healthier and more sustainable choice is easy, from the food we eat to how we choose to travel from one place to another



- Procure Mental Health First Aid Training to be available for Community Groups
- Seek stakeholder support for a Merton Active Travel Awards scheme to celebrate excellent and innovation amongst Merton employers for initiatives that reduce car use.
- Continue to offer suicide awareness, mental health workplace champions and mental health first aiders training to Merton business and voluntary sector organisations
- Develop a Healthy Workplaces training day with all Merton GPs.
- Collaborate with the Climate Emergency Working Group Transport Study Stream and the Active Travel and Transport Subgroup of the Sustainable Communities and Transport Partnership.
- Include active travel in health promotion campaigns such a #MertonCan (Merton Year of Physical Activity)
- Introduce Merton Active Travel Award in the Merton Business Awards 2020 (subject to confirmation of sponsorship).



Housing Needs Team, Merton Council

What can you do?



You can help by:

- For business owners/Merton Staff and Managers to sign up to the LHWA.
- Raising awareness and use of the [“Good Thinking” website](#) and resources it points users towards
- Undertaking training to become a mental health first aider.
- Support for a Merton Active Travel Awards scheme.



The Healthy Workplaces Programme

One in four UK employees report having a physical health condition and of them, one-fifth have a mental health condition. Two out of five UK employees with a health condition feel their health affects their work.

But local businesses in Merton have plenty of support to help them become great employers who promote health and wellbeing in their workplaces through the borough's Healthy Workplaces programme.

For the Gina Conway Salon in Wimbledon town centre, the health and wellbeing of their employees is a passion for the business, with HR Manager Melissa Harris saying they want to create a positive work environment which is also a "sanctuary" for their team.

"We pride ourselves on personal service for our guests and we want our team to be supported so there is a positive atmosphere. We want to create an environment that people will enjoy when they are working," she said.

The business, which has a salon within Elys on Wimbledon Hill Road, has been one of number of local firms taking part in the Healthy Workplaces programme commissioned by Merton Council, backed by Merton Chamber of Commerce and the One You Merton health advice campaign.

The programme, delivered by Healthy Dialogues, included mini-health MOTs for employees as well as customised workplace wellness workshops, healthy workplace assessments and guidance.

Healthy Dialogues have provided stress management workshops to around 40 Gina Conway employees exploring mental wellbeing at work, including activities on recognising and managing stress, with goals set for stress self-care.

Melissa Harris, who has worked for Gina Conway for eight years, said the company has always been supportive of the wellbeing of the 100 employees it has working across three branches.


"Our stylists and therapists need to be bright and bubbly all day, no matter how they feel. The managers are encouraged to support their team, and especially to look out for mental health issues.

"We are also conscious of work/life balance and will arrange staff schedules around what suits them. People tell us they love the working environment here, and we have a high retention of staff with an average length of service of eight years."

She pointed out that the work can also be quite physical, such as pressure on the shoulders of the stylists, but the company provides physiotherapy sessions and a 50% gym membership discount as well as yoga, reiki and massage. Healthy eating is also encouraged, and a nutritionist has talked to staff about diets.

The company's team spirit is boosted by charity work, including haircuts for the homeless and refugees, massages for cancer patients and fundraising events.

"We nurture our staff because they give so much to our guests, so it's important we invest in the wellbeing of our team", Melissa added.

 **Further information is available from the Public Health Team Public.Health@merton.gov.uk or direct from the Mayor's London Healthy Workplace Award.**

One in four UK employees report having a physical health condition and of them, one-fifth have a mental health condition. Two out of five UK employees with a health condition feel their health affects their work

A Healthy Workplace

Wellbeing in the workplace is an important part of office life at Hartley Fowler chartered accountants in Wimbledon town centre where healthy activities have boosted team spirit, helped staff lose weight and raised money for charity.

Partner Jonathan Askew said they have had positive results all round from being more health conscious, including encouraging cycling to work, offering healthy food options in the office and staff taking part in active fundraising challenges.

“We used to have a lot of biscuits and cakes in the office, including a chocolate tuckbox,” he said. “But we no longer have the tuckbox and only have cakes on birthdays. We offer healthy breakfasts and fruit instead.”

Staff have also taken part in challenging charity events, including a Tough Mudder event, where they ran 10 miles through mud and over 25 obstacles to raise more than £2,000 for local mental health charity, Mind Croydon.

They’ve also completed the 56 mile London to Brighton Bike Ride through the Sussex and Surrey countryside to raise £7,000 for the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

Jonathan said: “The activities create a feel good factor and some of us did lose weight as well. Now we have healthier eating in the office, there’s also more of a team spirit having a healthy breakfast together.”

He added that Hartley Fowler, a Patron Member of Merton Chamber of Commerce, was also conscious of mental health and wellbeing, with staff being offered appropriate courses. They are among the local businesses undertaking the borough’s Healthy Workplaces programme.



Hartley Fowler staff take part in the London-Brighton bike ride

➔ Further information is available from the Public Health Team Public.Health@merton.gov.uk or direct from the Mayor’s London Healthy Workplace Award.

Priority 5

Reducing serious violence



Safer Stronger

Objectives

Serious violence (including knife crime), and the associated links to drugs was identified in the borough's Strategic Assessment as a priority for the Community Safety Partnership in Merton. A partnership programme of work has been established and is monitored via the borough's Locations Board. Every borough has also been asked to monitor knife crime via a MOPAC Knife Crime Plan. Work to achieve the objectives, is ongoing and is regularly monitored by the partnership.

Objectives as set out in the borough Knife Crime Plan:

- Governance around the knife crime work
- Targeting law breakers
- Keeping deadly weapons off our streets
- Protecting and educating young people
- Standing with community's neighbourhoods and families against knife crime
- Supporting victims of knife crime
- Offering ways out of crime

A good start has been made on the borough, but this will be a longer term piece of work that will need to encompass many strands and the expertise of many organisations and people. From 2020/21 the scope of the Knife Crime Plan will broaden to encompass a wider focus on violence.

Call to action

Serious Violence is not only a priority for us in Merton, but across London and across the country. The Mayor's Office in London (MOPAC) as a result has set up a dedicated unit to tackle violence reduction. The unit will seek to reduce all types of violence following the approach used by Public Health which seeks to look at the underlying causes of offending.

Merton is one of the safest boroughs in London in relation to overall crime, however based on the rolling 12 months at the end of November 2019 there had been 244 knife offences in Merton. This was an increase of 16.7% compared to the previous 12 months. There has also been an



Businesses, community groups and residents at the Merton Knife Crime Summit



upward trend in the % of the public who felt that knife crime was a problem (Public Attitude Survey).

There is a need to better understand and tackle the links between drugs and violence both in terms of violent offences being committed by those under the influence of drugs and violence involving drug dealing and gang activity. Building the intelligence picture is key. There is also a need to understand and to protect those most at risk of exploitation and victimisation – from those involved and groomed into gangs, to those who find that their properties become used as a place to store and sell drugs (cuckooing).

Source: <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/data-and-statistics/weapon-enabled-crime-dashboard>

There is a need to better understand and tackle the links between drugs and violence both in terms of violent offences being committed by those under the influence of drugs and violence involving drug dealing and gang activity

What happens if we do nothing?

Serious Violence and the associated links to knife crime and drugs may increase. This will result in more people at risk of harm. Public confidence and reputational risk for partner agencies may be affected and fear of crime, due to increase press coverage and more visible signs of violence and drug dealing, may increase.

What would it look and feel like if we succeed?

Rather than succeed it is more about making steps to address the underlying causes of violence and the links to drugs and knife crime. By doing this it will mean a safer borough for all both in terms of a reduction in the amount of associated crime and a reduction in fear of crime. More people will be safeguarded and the number at risk of exploitation would be reduced.

What have you said

The 2019 Residents Survey assessed how much of a problem is crime in the borough. Only 48% of the respondents feel safe and think that there are low levels of crime in the borough. 20% rated drug dealing and use as a fairly big problem/a very big problem. In comparison to 2017, there has been an increase in residents feeling that people using or dealing drugs is a problem (11% in 2017 to 20% in 2019). Also, only 13% respondents rated safety as one of the best things about living in Merton.



Engagement work with children and young people revealed that crime and drug dealing/use are both linked and the perception of young people in their local areas is that this is the most important issue which needs to be tackled (52% of young respondents said that crime, including drug dealing/use, is the issue that most concerns them). The 2019 survey states that 25% of young people aged 11-17 are personally concerned about gangs.

In August of this year we went out to consultation with our community safety survey. We received 634 responses in total, however, not everyone answered all questions (hence the different sample sizes below).

% who felt it was a fairly or very big problem:

- **47% (n=602) knife crime**
- **39% (n=604) gangs**
- **34% (n=592) violence**
- **39% (n=568) drug use**



Fearless worker Anuoluwapo

We aim to

Through partner strategies and plans we will:

- Support victims of crime, particularly those who are vulnerable.
- Address offending, for example looking at diversionary schemes and offering ways out of crime
- Design out drug related crime through environmental projects
- Working together to protect and educate young people.
- Develop the intelligence picture of serious violence on the borough, to better understand the problems that need to be addressed.
- Develop relevant plans and strategies to monitor activity and share best practise with colleagues across London.



What can you do?



Everyone will need to work together to achieve the objectives set out above.

You can help by:

- Share intelligence with the Safer Merton Partnership
- Signpost victims of crime to appropriate organisations for support (Victim Support)
- Ensure that crime or intelligence is reported to the Police
- Report to Crime Stoppers (if you prefer to notify someone anonymously)
- Take up weapon sweep training
- Take up bystander training
- Work together as communities to create relationships with young people, breaking down barriers to help young people feel safe.



Young Police Cadets attending the Knife Crime Summit

Community weapons sweeps

Residents have joined forces with police and council officers to hold the borough's first community weapons sweeps and play their part in helping Merton remain one of the safest areas in London.

Searches for weapons hidden in and around public open spaces have taken place across Merton, with more planned for 2020.

Each search involved community volunteers who had undergone an introductory training session with a Safer Neighbourhood police officer teaching them how to undertake a weapons sweep.

People who don't want to be caught with weapons – typically knives – in their possession or at home will often try to hide them out of sight in public areas. But they will need to remember where it is, and the volunteers will look for concealed weapons in likely places.

One of the sweeps has taken place in Moreton Green in Morden, where volunteers from the local Neighbourhood Watch and Friends of Moreton Green groups worked together to sweep the park and woodland for weapons.

They were heartened not to find any weapons, and local Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator Bruce Barns said: "The weapons sweeps are a very good idea, although you do need the right numbers and support, especially if it's a big area to sweep. I'm sure they will grow and gain more support as more people become aware of them."

There is already a real sense of community spirit around Moreton Green, where Bruce said the **Friends group** also organises a wide range of activities, which have given the area a place to meet in and enjoy throughout the year. These have included organised woodland walks, summer festivals, litter pick-ups, park maintenance and bulb planting.



Residents teamed up with Safer Merton and Merton Police for a knife sweep in Lavender Park

Safer Merton, a community partnership which aims to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in Merton, is keen for other community groups across the borough to take part in weapons sweeps.



To find out more, email safer.merton@merton.gov.uk or ring 020 8545 4146.

Merton's Re-CET Team (Short-Term Funding)

The Re-CET team have been going to a number of different locations in the borough and engaging with residents in a range of ways, including:

- Detached youth work – taking place in specific areas where there has been anti-social behaviour going on, working in conjunction with Catch 22, who provide intervention and prevention work to combat drug and alcohol use.
- Consultation with young people on contextual safeguarding – identifying areas where they do not feel safe and then working with them to find solutions and engaging stakeholders who can work to make the changes necessary.

In a number of the areas that young people have identified as places they do not feel safe, drugs are of concern.

- Sale of drugs in dark alleyways with no CCTV
- Drug and alcohol debris
- Behaviour of individuals in public spaces whilst under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

Proposals to change the physical layout of particular sites, and engagement with partners on managing the behaviour of known individuals, are all part of the work to tackle these issues. As is engagement with the local community to identify the most prevalent issues in their area and working with them to find long term, embedded solutions.

For example, ReCET have been working on the Phipps Bridge Estate, engaging with young people and the community as to their feelings in relation to safety in the area. The voice of the community has then been fed back into local reports as to how the layout of the space, for example, poor lighting, overgrown shrubbery can impact on overall of safety in the area. This has

helped shine a light on the need to improve the space around the Estate and how to explore long term community engagement.

Funds that have been provided from the Violence Reduction Unit have supported in getting work completed to improve the physical layout of the space, while using locals partners such as the National Trust have helped to ensure community engagement and other longer term volunteering opportunities. Bystander workshops have also been held in the community (and will continue), helping residents to think through ways of responding to violence in a safe way.

Other partners such as AFC Wimbledon have come on board who run weekly football sessions for the young people in the local primary school which will continue beyond the time of ReCET's funding, again, leaving a lasting activity and commitment for young people. Other key partners who have been actively involved and committed to the space are Phipps Bridge local residents and community, Haslemere Primary School, Benedict Primary School, Clarion Housing, Merton Environment and Regeneration Team, Merton Youth Services, Safer Merton, South Mitcham Community Centre, Melrose School (Cobham Court) and MVSC.

The most common feedback received from young people was regarding opportunities available to them to engage in on the estate, therefore by listening to their voice and engaging partners, Re-CET have been able to bring resources into the area, creating more positive opportunities for engagement, in hope to create a safer space.

The Team engages with the local community to identify the most prevalent issues in their area and works with them to find long-term, embedded solutions

The Re-CET Team will hand part of their work over to the Risk and Resilience Service (Detached Youth Work) from 1 April 2020.



Priority 6

Enforcing action against anti-social behaviour



Safer Stronger

Objectives

Take action against non-law abiding citizens and deliver long term solutions for residents by:

- Increasing the number of appropriate ASB reports
- Increasing appropriate enforcement action

Call to action

In order to respond to the borough increase in ASB complaints, both to the Police and the council, there is need to undertake greater enforcement across the borough. Residents, and members, state that ASB is one of their key concerns illustrated by the fact there were 1166 complaints to the council in financial year 2018/19 compared with 787 in 2017/18. We project that these figures will increase further in 2019/20 based on current trends.

What happens if we do nothing?

If the council do not work with communities to address ASB earlier it is likely further incidents will occur. The impacts of ASB, especially over a period of time, can be very detrimental to communities and affect people's health and wellbeing. A strong, structured, co-ordinated response to ASB is essential as we move forward.

What would it look and feel like if we succeed?

Rather than succeed it is about having a positive impact upon the local communities of Merton. By addressing ASB, the aim is to make residents feel safer and increase the trust in partners who are there to help improve their quality of life. If there is less ASB then there is an increased opportunity for increased community cohesion.

What have you said

According the 2019 residents survey, anti-social behaviour is a fairly big problem/a very big problem in all its manifestations:

- **Vehicle crime – 23%**
- **ASB – 20%**
- **People being drunk or rowdy in public spaces – 13%**
- **Groups hanging around the streets – 15%**



Police Drop-in Surgery at Morden Library



Anti-social behaviour is one of our children and young people's major concern, and they most fear bad behaviour (17%) and bullying (14%).

In August of this year we went out to consultation with our community safety survey. We received 634 responses in total however not everyone answered all questions (hence the different sample sizes below).

ASB Categories – % who felt it was a fairly or very big problem:

- **Groups of people loitering (n=592) – 43%**
- **Criminal Damage/ Vandalism (n=590) – 41%**
- **Begging and Vagrancy (n=584) – 41%**
- **Graffiti (n=588) – 36%**
- **Noise Nuisance (n=581) – 31%**
- **Neighbour Nuisance (n=590) – 24%**
- **Intimidation and Harassment (n=583) – 22%**
- **Prostitution and Kerb Crawling (n=583) – 1%**

The impacts of ASB, especially over a period of time, can be very detrimental to communities and affect people's health and wellbeing. A strong, structured, co-ordinated response to ASB is essential as we move forward

We aim to

To increase the number of ASB reports as well as enforcement actions, we will:

- Promote awareness of ASB including how Merton will address complaints, informing residents of how to report and provide evidence of their complaint
- Review and respond to every complaint
- Work with partners to support victims
- Enforce against perpetrators using Civil Injunctions, Criminal Behaviour Orders, Dispersal Powers, Community Protection Notices, Public Space Protection Orders, and Closure Powers as set in legislation via the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. This will be done in conjunction with a range of different partners.



What can you do?



There are a lot of ways for residents and stakeholders to contribute to reducing anti-social behaviour in the borough.

You can help by:

- Reporting ASB to Safer Merton
- Engaging your communities and networks to report ASB
- Being willing to support enforcement action e.g. impact statements
- Providing routes to report promoting the police, council and independent partner details such as Crimestoppers.



ASB Enforcement

Safer Merton's anti-social behaviour (ASB) team deals with a wide range of problems blighting communities across Merton – working with police, private homeowners, private rented premises and businesses to restore order.

In one upmarket area of Wimbledon, not far from the town's police station, a local resident complained to the ASB team that a flat in a converted property in Queens Road was being used as a brothel.

Police were called to the property after reports of a disturbance and found three Chinese women living there, as well as several items inside the flat which indicated it was being used as a brothel.

The following day, Safer Merton's ASB team, along with the police, visited the property and met the owner. After checking the items reported by the police, the ASB officers warned the owner they would be building a case for a Premises Closure Order, which she supported. She had rented the flat to a male tenant, but there was no evidence he was living there himself.

Just a few hours later, police were called again when two Chinese women were pressing all the building's buzzers to be let in. The women told residents they were house-sitting, but they disappeared before police arrived.

The ASB team moved quickly to gather evidence in support of a Premises Closure Order, visiting the following day to speak to other residents in the building.

Eight days later they were in Wimbledon Magistrates' Court to present their findings and a full Premises Closure Order for three months was granted. Thanks to the swift action of the ASB team, the brothel had been closed down within ten days of the first reports.



➔ To find out more about reporting ASB in Merton go to: <https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/anti-social-behaviour>

Reporting ASB

The Safer Merton service is committed to tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) which affects our communities. It works with private homeowners, private rented premises and businesses to resolve a variety of issues in the most appropriate manner.

The work of the ASB team in one corner of Mitcham restored peace to the neighbourhood after a Premises Closure Order resulted in the boarding up of a private property where all-night parties and rowdy behaviour had been causing constant disturbances.

Complaints from neighbours close to the property in Manor Road centred on all-night loud music, people outside screaming, fighting and smoking drugs, as well as revving cars and constantly beeping horns. Their lives had been turned into a misery.

Comments gathered from local residents as the ASB team investigated the reports included:

"We have just endured another all-night party, and it must have been throwing out time at 05.40am because there are people outside screaming, shouting and arguing, revving cars, beeping horns for prolonged periods of time, blocking the road while they all say their goodbyes. Music is still blaring. Another night of no sleep, which is just what I don't need right now. I have enough to worry myself with, without these selfish, uncaring, good for nothing idiots denying me of a basic human right, sleep!"

"We are decent, hardworking people with children and yet we are terrified in our own home. Surely life isn't supposed to be like this? It's starting to affect our health now, my husband is so stressed I'm worried about him all the time, and me, well, I just cry all the time, probably through lack of sleep and worry."

"I regularly run over Mitcham Common, but I no longer run past the property as I would get noises made at me which made me feel very uncomfortable and intimidated. I have been forced to run in the road as crowds of people would block the public footpath, as well as tyres just dumped all over the place and in the way."

"Not only is this affecting my physical health, but also my mental health. It is not fair that I am regularly woken up by screams, shouting and fights at very early hours of the morning. Young children are out until late without any provision. Cars/vans/lorries often untaxed and dangerously smashed up are parked for weeks outside our homes."

When investigating officers from Merton's ASB unit were let into the property they found 40 empty rum bottles, huge speakers, DJ equipment, a snooker table and a large aquarium complete with stingrays!

The resident, who admitted he had been having parties but had trouble controlling his visitors, was given a formal warning letter explaining what type of behaviour had to end or he could face legal action.

However the complaints from residents continued and within a matter of weeks, legal action was taken to put a short-term Premises Closure Order in place and peace was finally restored to the neighbourhood. The owner has since renovated the property to put new tenants in and the closure order is no longer in place.



To find out more about reporting ASB in Merton go to:
<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/anti-social-behaviour>

Priority 7

Getting involved and having a say – promoting the voice of children and young people



Children's Trust

Objectives

- Promote the voice of children, young people and families using the Participation Promise and 'The Merton Pledge'
- Engage young people in decisions affecting them through regular consultation feedback
- Recognise children and young people's voices as active contributors to services
- Improve access to volunteering and other opportunities
- Ensure user voice feedback is heard and shapes service improvement



Merton Junior Neighbourhood
Warden Watch at Civic Centre

Call to action

Children and young people want to be included more on decisions affecting them. This enables children to become active participants in their communities and schools.

However, we know that we need to do more to ensure that children can play an active part in their communities. For instance, we know that over 67% would like to volunteer in their local community but don't always feel the opportunities are there for them to do so.

What happens if we do nothing?

Merton could become a place where young people feel their views are not important and they feel excluded from being active participants in their community. Long term, young people grow up feeling detached from their communities and as adults feel reluctant to get involved in communal activities. Services for young people are not designed with their input, risking them not achieving what they set out to or failing to improve outcomes for children and young people.

What would it look and feel like if we succeed?

Young people engaged in decisions affecting them and involved in regular consultation and feedback.

Children and young people's voices recognised as active contributors, where they can have a real influence on decisions being taken that effects them, and shape service improvement.



Improved access for children and young people to volunteering and other opportunities.

What have you said

The 2019 Residents Survey asked residents whether they felt involved in the Council's decision-making processes. 47% of the respondents said that they are not at all/not very much involved by Merton Council when making decisions. The same survey states that 26% residents don't think that Merton Council acts on the concerns of local residents very much.

Similarly, children and young people consulted don't know whether they feel supported to make decisions about their future (19%). They also agreed that there is a lack of things for young people to do in the borough (30%), and 66% of them do not take part in any kind of activity or volunteering in Merton (CYP Survey 2018).

We aim to

To promote the voice of children and young people we will:

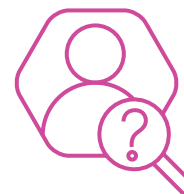
- Continue to engage with children and young people via School Councils and other forums.
- Health in Justice Peer Leaders to embed the working influence / have a voice in the Youth Crime Prevention Executive Board and service delivery.
- Identify and engage children and young people in volunteering opportunities including the Duke of Edinburgh Awards and other identified avenues.
- Recruit parent volunteers to deliver the parent led Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC) programme.
- Build and embed young people's voice in commissioning activities, e.g. via the Young Commissioners Group.

Children and young people want to be included more on decisions affecting them. This enables children to become active participants in their communities and schools



Youth Parliament member Beverley Boateng

What can you do?



If you are working directly with children and young people –
You can help by:

- Introducing processes that ensure children and young people are able to feed back on the services you have provided.
- Introducing structures that ensure children and young people are part of the planning, delivery and/or evaluation of services.

If you are delivering services to any residents in Merton –
You can help by:

- Using young advisors and young inspectors.
- Asking the Youth Parliament to scrutinise issues.

If you are a child or young person – You can help by:

Getting involved with activities run in Merton, including:

- Fire Cadets – BTEC
- Duke of Edinburgh
- Police Cadets
- Scout Groups
- Wood Craft Folk
- Endeavour Youth Club Sea Cadets

Kids First Parent Forum



The parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities or special needs in Merton have their own voice to represent their views through the Kids First Parent Forum; a project of local charity, Merton Mencap.

With more than 600 members, it supports parents and carers of children and young people from birth up to age 25 with all disabilities and special needs by offering them a wealth of information and advice, plus support from other parents via their free workshops and events.

A parent of two teenagers with complex needs, Melanie is one of 11 volunteers on the steering group which drives the business and planning of Kids First and works to get parents' voices heard at local policy-making levels regarding services that affect their children. It makes a real difference to the lives of many families around the borough.

A parent of two teenagers with complex needs, Melanie is one of 11 volunteers on the steering group which drives the business and planning of Kids First and works to get parents' voices heard at local policy-making levels regarding services that affect their children. It makes a real difference to the lives of hundreds of families around the borough.

She said: "I can't emphasise enough how beneficial it is for parents of children with special needs to support each other. The whole family benefits from the help Kids First gives to parents.

"As well as ensuring their voices get heard, Kids First empower parents with up to date information and knowledge via their twice-yearly newsletter, workshops and sessions with local service providers.



Being a parent of a child with special needs can be isolating and Kids First also helps families feel they are valued members of the community. It helps that we all get to know each other – and without Kids First this wouldn't have happened."

Melanie said she joined the steering group as a volunteer to give something back to the community that had supported her. "I can't over-estimate what a positive experience joining Kids First has been – it's been absolutely brilliant," she added.

Kids First is a forum run by Merton Mencap for parents and carers of children and young people who are aged 0 – 25 and live in Merton or go to school/college in the borough and have a disability or special educational need. It is free to join.



You can find out more here:

<http://www.mertonmencap.org.uk/kidsfirst.htm>

You can also call 020 3963 0597 or email

kf.admin@mertonmencap.org.uk

Priority 8

Making Merton a place where children and young people feel they belong and thrive



Children's Trust

Objectives

- Work to support partners to make Merton a place where children and young people feel they belong and thrive
- Work with partners to encourage the involvement of young people in environmental design including the development of youth friendly spaces
- Work with partners to challenge poor air quality surrounding youth friendly spaces and schools

Call to action

Children and young people are mostly positive about their social and community experiences, but air quality and litter needs improving, while traffic was a key issue of concern. Young people reported that access to public transport is a challenge for young people – especially that buses were often over-crowded.

What happens if we do nothing?

The borough becomes a place where children and young people don't feel that they belong and where they feel excluded from communal spaces. Regeneration programs don't consider the needs of young people in their designs, limiting where they can go and not accessing the benefits of getting outside the home and socialising with others.

Failing to address air quality around the areas that children grow up risks an increase in significant health issues like asthma and of them developing long term conditions such as lung cancer and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease as they grow up.

What would it look and feel like if we succeed?

Merton will be a place where children and young people feel they belong and thrive.

Partners across the Children's Trust will be working together to ensure that young people are involved in environmental design, including the development of youth friendly spaces.

Air quality will be improved around youth friendly spaces and schools. Improved access to the Local Offer and a broadened awareness of the range of opportunities available in Merton for Children and Young People.



Dangerous Theatre Group



What have you said

According to the 2018 Children and Young People survey, young residents don't have a strong sense of belonging to their local communities. 36% of the respondents don't know if they feel part of their local communities, and 13% strongly disagree/disagree that they belong to their local community.

21% of young respondents feel they do not have enough places to socialise, and 16% do not know or abstained from the question. Furthermore, most of the young respondents consulted (30%) would not stay in Merton after their education/training, or don't know whether they would do so.

Engagement work with Care Leavers revealed that 23% of Merton Care Leavers have low well-being. (Bright Spots, 2018)

Around a quarter of children and young people surveyed were 'always' or 'sometimes' lonely. (CYPP Consultation, 2019), highlighting the lack of social networks to make them feel that they belong.



We aim to

To make Merton a place where children and young people feel they belong and thrive, we will:

- Implement Contextual Safeguarding through engagement of schools and community sites
- Develop social infrastructure to encourage community engagement specifically for children and young people
- Engage children and families in Mitcham in historical and natural heritage through the Canons Project to foster local pride
- Monitor air quality (including audit work) for all schools in the borough to reduce exposure to toxic pollution levels
- Deliver the Schools Streets Project (Superzones) to restrict vehicle movement outside school entrances
- Promote the use of the Merton Local Offer to families and children with SEN and/or disabilities and to professionals.



What can you do?



If you are working directly with children and young people –
You can help by:

- Introducing processes that ensure children and young people are able to contribute to plans about the lived environment.

If you are delivering services to any residents in Merton –
You can help by:

- Using young advisors and young inspectors.
- Considering asking the Youth Parliament to scrutinise proposals about the lived environment.

If you are a child or young person – **You can help by:**

- Contacting youth parliament to ensure that climate change activities are on the agenda.
- Speaking to your teachers or your school council representative about how the school can get involved in actions that sustain the environment.

Around a quarter of children and young people surveyed were 'always' or 'sometimes' lonely, highlighting the lack of social networks to make them feel that they belong



The Canons House & Grounds project

The Canons House & Grounds project in Mitcham will see the historic house and its glorious surroundings – including pond, dovecote and recreation ground – restored as part of a £5 million National Lottery supported scheme, through funding from The National Lottery Community Fund and The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The ambitious project, featuring a new community heritage interpretation centre, a café next to Madeira Hall, a new playground and comprehensive re-landscaping of the grounds, is due for completion in 2021.

Canons House itself will have its façade restored as well as some of its rooms, with the majority of the interior being converted to office space for local businesses.

The local community has been at the heart of the four-year project, with a range of opportunities for people of all ages to get involved. Events so far have included:

- **Children’s photography workshops**
- **A community archaeological dig**
- **Historical and environmental themed walks**
- **A summer garden party**
- **Community gardening**
- **A reminiscences project**
- **A design workshop for the planned new playground**

Mitcham resident Chelsea, aged 15, took part in the workshop to create ideas for the new playground. She said: “I think the playground is a fab idea, and I’m looking forward to seeing it when it is completed.



Playground design workshop

“There aren’t an awful lot of things for children to do round here, young or old, so a newly-designed playground will be really good for the young ones and families to spend quality time with each other. It is also a good idea as it is close to The Canons Leisure Centre.

“The playground workshops themselves were great as they were very entertaining and fun. The lessons were arty and enjoyable, and I’m glad I was able to take part in the workshops – it has made a lovely memory.”

 **The project is always looking for great ideas for engaging the local community. If you’d like to be involved please email them at info@thecanonsmitcham.co.uk**

Premier League Kicks



Football coach and PCSO
John Joseph

The Kicks programme started with four pilot projects, at Tottenham Hotspur, Manchester City, Fulham and Brentford. It has engaged more than 300,000 young people at hundreds of venues across the country. Sixty-nine professional clubs in the Premier League and English Football League (EFL) are now supported to deliver the programme via the Premier League Charitable Fund.

Here in Merton, Kicks is run by Fulham Foundation, led by Paul Smithers and a great example of how this has benefited the borough is the session that runs on a Monday night at Harris Merton where Police Community Support Officer John Joseph, otherwise known as JJ, is a regular presence. He is the Community Ward Officer for Pollards Hill, and has been awarded the British Empire Medal for using his skills as a football coach to work with vulnerable young people.

The project has led to many positive results that have been of benefit to the young people involved, the community and the Met Police. When asked for his thoughts, JJ went on to say:

“Historically, when out on the streets, youths don’t really want to engage with officers in uniform, but because I have had the opportunity through Kicks to actually work with them and spend some quality time with them, now they just see me as JJ, as someone they can talk to, someone they can trust.”

Premier League Kicks has worked with the police service since it began as a pilot project in 2006. For more about JJ’s work with the project, click on this video link: <https://www.premierleague.com/news/1482806>

By involving officers in the programme as mentors and advisors, Premier League Kicks encourages positive community relations by breaking down barriers between young people and the police.

“Having a police officer attending, it makes everyone feel comfortable,” says one Kicks participant at Pollards Hill.

“It makes young people feel like police officers are human as well. If it wasn’t for Kicks, I would probably be getting in trouble on the streets.”


Fulham FC Foundation runs sessions, such as Kicks, elsewhere in Merton – including Lavender Park Kicks and Girls Raynes Park Kicks. These give young people an opportunity to be off the streets and in a managed, learning and supportive environment for most of the week.

They also run a number of after schools activities across the borough, not only at Pollards Youth Club, but at schools such as Harris Merton, where they run an engagement programme for girls under the Kicks umbrella.

In addition, the PASS/Kicks programme on a Monday is a great example of what happens when partners come together. Here the New Horizon Centre, Fulham Foundation, MOAT Housing and the Met Police work together to effectively create and deliver a project that works.



Laser tag event we held at
Lavender Park

 The Kicks programme is always open to new ideas and referrals, please contact them at kicks@fulhamfc.com

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