Striding back to school

Climate change emergency declared

Win a pair of tickets for Curtains at New Wimbledon Theatre
Even though my kids are now grown up, I still get that little flurry of anticipation as the new school year begins. Although I don’t go as far as buying them a new pencil case, the approach of autumn is still a time for thinking about our children and the future they will have.

Earlier this summer the council declared a Climate Emergency, see page 10, as the planet faces unprecedented levels of warming. Our aim is to achieve carbon neutrality at the council within 12 years, and I’m looking forward to working with colleagues to reach this.

Meanwhile, across the borough, our new refuse service has led to an increase in recycling, by making it easier for everyone to do their bit and reduce waste.

Merton is a great place for families, but poor air quality also affects growing children with their developing lungs and brains. So we also need to look at ways to cut car emissions and improve air quality in the borough. I know that won’t be easy, but we know we need to do more to discourage car journeys where public transport is available instead.

I urge you to put World Car Free Day on 22 September in your diary. Take to your feet – although don’t forget an umbrella just in case! – or apply for your neighbourhood to have a Play Street, to remove traffic from a residential street so kids can kick around a football, or you and your neighbours can have a street party.

So, whether or not you still had to buy new school uniforms, I look forward to us all working together this autumn to making Merton a healthier place now and for generations to come.

Part of a new housing development has been named in tribute to one of Merton’s most popular councillors. Three years after Labour councillor Maxi Martin sadly passed away, Haig Housing, which provides homes for veterans and their families, has launched Maxi Martin Court. The development, with 68 energy efficient new homes, is in St Helier ward which Cllr Martin served for 18 years.

The Leader of Merton Council, Councillor Stephen Alambritis, said: “It is a fitting tribute to Maxi’s tireless work for the community, particularly children and young people and members of the armed forces and their families.”

Cllr Martin was appointed the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services in 2010 and served as Mayor of Merton from 2003 until 2004. The councillor was a frequent visitor to Haig Housing headquarters which is located in the ward she represented.

Haig Housing Chief Executive, Brigadier James Richardson said: “This special commemorative opening, pays tribute to a much-loved local councillor who was both the Borough’s Armed Forces Champion and a special friend of our residents and the trust.”

Councillor Martin died peacefully in her sleep during the evening of 6 April 2016 following an illness.
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It’s all go for new cycle and walking route

A traffic-free route for people to enjoy walking and cycling between Merton and Kingston was officially opened at a fun day.

The new 1.2km tree-lined path has made the journey between Raynes Park Recreation Ground and New Malden Railway Station faster, safer and far more attractive. The project has also created a ‘green corridor’ for people to enjoy the environment and wildlife along the route. The new path, which runs parallel to a railway line on land owned by Thames Water, passes under the A3 Kingston bypass.

Merton Council collaborated on the new route, which is part of Kingston Council’s Go Cycle network, funded by Transport for London. National cycling charity Sustrans, which worked on the design and delivery of the project, described the link between the two boroughs as a ‘jewel in the crown’ of the Go Cycle network.

£1m funding for community projects

The council has agreed to allocate nearly £1m from its Neighbourhood Fund to 14 projects. Merton’s Neighbourhood Fund comes from the charges the council makes to developers for infrastructure or community facilities needed to support new homes and businesses in the borough.

A key component of awarding funding was ensuring that projects would contribute to Merton’s community plans and priorities. More than £405,000 of funding has been earmarked for projects that help address income, health, and skills gaps between the east and west of the borough. These include supporting Commonside Community Development Trust’s projects for residents on the Pollards Hill estate and in east Mitcham, as well as a project to make improvements to the Bramcote Avenue shopping parade in Mitcham.

A number of projects will also help support the demands that Wimbledon Stadium development in Plough Lane will place on the borough, including one to renovate Haydons Road shopping parade.

World-class Merton parks

Six Merton parks have kept their prestigious Green Flag awards. The award flags up that an open space boasts the highest possible environmental standards, is beautifully maintained and has excellent visitor facilities. Merton is one of the greenest boroughs in London and autumn is a great season for families to make the most of all its open spaces. The parks awarded the internationally-recognised Green Flag accolade are Abbey Recreation Ground, Colliers Wood Recreation Ground, Dundonald Recreation Ground, John Innes Park, Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field and South Park Gardens.
Love your neighbourhood

There are more than 850 registered voluntary and community organisations, and hundreds more informal groups in Merton, which are all working to enhance the quality of life for all those who live or work in the borough.

A recent survey found 12 per cent of Merton residents volunteered in the past year and many more would love the chance to get involved with their local community.

This year will see the launch of a new Community Plan for Merton outlining the council’s ambitions for 2025 to promote greater participation in community life. An interactive map is to be created and everyone is invited to flag up the voluntary groups and activities they love across Merton.

So don’t delay share your views by emailing policy@merton.gov.uk.

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Battle for hospital services

The Leader of Merton Council, Councillor Stephen Alambritis, has vowed to continue to fight for St Helier Hospital to retain all its services.

Cllr Alambritis voiced his concern for the future of the hospital, following the submission of the latest Improving Healthcare Together document to NHS England.

The document ranks three options for the future of the Trust, with downgrading both St Helier and Epsom Hospitals and building a new hospital in Sutton coming out on top.

Cllr Alambritis said: “We have a long-standing commitment to ensure that residents of Merton have access to a full range of NHS acute services on the St Helier Hospital site, including a blue light A&E and consultant-led maternity service.”

He said: “Attempts to relocate acute services away from St Helier in favour of a more affluent area, such as Belmont or the Royal Marsden site, would be incompatible with the statutory duty on the Clinical Commissioning Group, which is about tackling health inequalities.”

Thousands of teenagers and their teachers were praised for their hard work and achievements as the results of exams were revealed.

Secondary schools in Merton have continued to perform very well despite the tougher new grading system introduced for GCSEs this year.

The eagerly awaited A level results revealed 77.5% of Merton students achieved A*-C grades, which is above the national average. 72.8% of Merton pupils have achieved grades 9-4 for their GCSEs in both English and maths.

Merton Council’s Cabinet Member for Schools, Councillor Eleanor Stringer, who visited Ricards Lodge High School in Wimbledon, said: “It was a privilege to be invited to see pupils finding out their GCSE results and congratulate them on all their hard work.

“I also enjoyed meeting some of the dedicated teaching staff, whose hard work has helped to ensure that all our secondary schools have been rated as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.”

Celebrating exam success
Keeping Merton informed

Settled status for EU nationals

Merton Council is advising European Union (EU) nationals to keep aware of developments regarding the country’s exit from the EU, and to ensure they apply for settled status.

Up-to-date guidance on the requirements for applications to the EU Nationals Settlement Scheme will be posted on Merton Council’s website.

The council is working to ensure all its EU nationals continue to feel welcome and supported in the borough. EU nationals who live or work in Merton can also contact Citizens Advice Merton and Lambeth (CAML) and access their free EU Settlement Scheme support.

Under the Government’s scheme, all EU nationals must apply for UK immigration status, even if they were born here or have been living in the country for many years.

The original deadline for applications for settled status was 30 June 2021. However, if the country leaves the EU without making an exit deal, the deadline for applications will be 31 December 2020.

EU nationals must have settled status to be able to continue to live and work in the UK.

To contact specialist advisers at CAML, email eusettlement@caml.org.uk or call 020 8687 9297.

Windrush tribute

Schoolchildren entertained with music and song at an event to honour the outstanding contribution made by the Caribbean community to the borough and the UK as a whole. Merton Council hosted a three-day event for Windrush Day, which marks the day in 1948 when the first 500 migrants from the West Indies arrived on MV Empire Windrush. The celebration, on Saturday 22 June, featured performances from community steel band, Panash, and history workshops.

WIN TICKETS to see Harry Hill at Wimbledon BookFest

Harry Hill opens the Festival site on Wimbledon Common on Friday 4th October.

For your chance to win a family ticket for 4 with lunch/dinner at the Light on the Common simply answer the following question.

What job did TV Harry Hill do before he became a comedian and TV presenter?

A) Doctor  B) Postman  C) Bus Driver

Email your answer with contact details to competition@wimbledonbookfest.org
(Deadline: Fri 21 September).

For full line-up and to buy tickets visit wimbledonbookfest.org

Settled status for EU nationals

Windrush tribute

WIN TICKETS to see Harry Hill at Wimbledon BookFest
Keeping Merton informed

Merton salutes the Armed Forces

Crowds turned out to show their appreciation of the Armed Forces community. The Armed Forces Day Parade marched through the streets of Morden on Saturday 29 June, following a dedicated service and flag raising ceremony at the war memorial outside Merton Civic Centre. The parade was inspected by The Mayor of Merton, Councillor Janice Howard, and the Queen’s Representative Deputy Lieutenant, Clare Whelan OBE. Councillor Dennis Pearce, the council’s Armed Forces champion, said: “Our event was held to recognise and celebrate the greatly valued contribution made by the Armed Forces community.”

Thanks to 500 library volunteers

Merton’s award-winning libraries celebrated Volunteers’ Week by saying thank you to their volunteers for the fantastic contribution they make towards making Merton a great place for families.

More than 500 volunteers have contributed their time to one of the borough’s seven libraries in the last year, notching up 27,000 hours of work. An awards ceremony was held over the summer to recognise the valuable contribution made.

Cabinet member for Commerce, Leisure and Culture, Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah said: “Our volunteers come from all walks of life and bring a broad range of experience to their roles. People volunteer for a variety of reasons, it might be to meet new people, improve their skills or to give something back and make a difference to their local community.”

To find out about the opportunities available, visit: merton.gov.uk/libraries or pop into one of the seven libraries.

£240k for migration service support

The council successfully bid for funding for two projects from the Government.

The first project, to provide additional social work support for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and recruit local foster carers, has been awarded £92,113. The project also aims to increase the children’s engagement in community activities.

Merton’s ‘migrant rough sleeper integration project’ has been awarded £150,000 to help provide assistance, including temporary accommodation and English language classes, as well as advice on job searching and benefits. The goal is to secure long-term housing solutions for rough sleepers.

School leads refugee support project

Merton Council and the Merton branch of Citizens UK have teamed up to promote community sponsorship schemes to welcome refugee families into the borough.

St Marks Academy Mitcham, which is working with other schools in the borough, has become the first state school in the country to lead a community sponsorship project. The schoolchildren have already begun raising the £9,000 needed for their scheme.

The community sponsorship scheme, co-designed by the Government, has been pioneered in Merton by Raynes Park Community Church and Wimbledon Synagogue.

The Leader of Merton Council, Councillor Stephen Alambritis said: “It is wonderful that school children in Merton have embraced the community sponsorship scheme to welcome and support refugees. We are hugely proud that Merton organisations are leading the way in this great initiative to ensure refugees are warmly welcomed into the community from the moment they arrive in our borough.”
Budding tennis stars got the chance to enjoy some free training with top coaches including Judy Murray.

Hundreds attended the first Middle Sunday Community Tennis Festival, held in Wimbledon Park tennis courts during the Wimbledon Championships. Residents of all ages and sporting abilities picked up a racket and joined in a range of fun tennis themed activities.

Andy Murray’s mum, Judy, delivered some fun coaching sessions specifically to encourage young girls and teenagers to take up tennis. The other guest coaches offering free sessions included Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) Fed coach Anne Keothavong and Davis Cup captain Leon Smith. Top British tennis players including Harriet Dart, Jay Clarke, Dom Inglot and Jonny O’Mara also attended.

The event was organised by the All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC), which hosts The Wimbledon Championships, in partnership with the LTA, iVerde, who manage the borough’s tennis courts, and Merton Council. The community festival was held on the traditional day the Wimbledon Championships give its grass courts the greatly needed time to rest before the competition’s final rounds.
Starting a new academic year

Families come and live in Merton because our schools provide a great education for their children. As the autumn term begins, My Merton studies the first-class learning opportunities the council is offering.

Apply for your child’s school place now

While pupils across the borough are getting back into the school routine, September means thinking a year ahead for many families. If your child is due to start reception class or secondary school in September 2020, applications for school places are now open on our website: merton.gov.uk/admissions.

Choosing a new school can be a daunting prospect – but it needn’t be. All Merton secondary schools are rated good or outstanding, with some among the best performing in the country for student progress. Plus, more than 85% of children were offered a place in one of their top three preferred secondary schools this year. At primary level too, 93% of schools are good or outstanding and 95% of parents received one of their preferences.

If you’re getting ready to make your application, here are five tips from the council’s school admissions team:

1. Maximise your chances of getting a school you’re happy with by using all six of your preferences.
2. Read the application booklets carefully, paying attention to the schools’ individual criteria. Be aware of how places were offered in the past – if you live 700m from a school and it’s never been offered beyond 400m, you’re unlikely to get a place.
3. Use your preferences as a wish list but make sure that some are realistic. If you don’t get one of your higher preferences, you automatically go on the waiting list.
4. Visit all your local schools and attend open days – don’t rely on Ofsted and league tables or listen to what other families are saying.
5. Remember that you must apply for a place by the deadline, regardless of whether your child has siblings at your preferred school or attends nursery there.

Back to school...for adults

September also means a new term for Merton’s adult education courses. Every year 2,000 residents enrol on more than 3,500 courses; from painting and clothes making to guitar and public speaking. There are also specific courses for people with learning difficulties, aimed at helping participants to live independently, find employment, make friends and develop hobbies. Find out more at merton.gov.uk/adultlearning.

Get Sugar Smart

It is well documented that eating too much sugar is bad for children’s health, leading to serious diseases such as diabetes – and to tooth decay. But for parents, keeping school lunchboxes and snacks healthy can be a real challenge.

Merton Council has signed up to the national Sugar Smart campaign, aimed at helping families take control of their sugar consumption – by understanding the hidden sugars in everyday foods and making simple, healthy swaps. Visit sugarsmartuk.org or nhs.uk/change4life for tips and recipes for healthy lunchbox staples.

- Soft drinks make up a huge proportion of many children’s sugar intake, so swap for water, plain milk or sugar free drinks.
- Add fresh fruit to plain yoghurt instead of buying sweetened ones.
- Download the Change4Life Sugar Smart app to see how much sugar is in your favourite foods.

New term – check their vaccinations

Unfortunately, cases of measles and mumps are on the rise in London. These extremely infectious diseases can be serious, so please take time to check whether your children have had two doses of the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccination and their pre-school booster. It is also worth checking if you have had MMR vaccine yourself, especially if you are planning a pregnancy. To find out, check your child’s Red Book, contact your GP or health visitor or go to nhs.uk/mmr

Fight the flu this autumn

All primary school-aged, and pre-school children aged two and three, are now eligible for free flu vaccinations, offered as a nasal spray. Parents of pre-school children should contact their GP, while the older group will be offered the vaccine at school. Find out more at nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/
2019 has certainly been the year when people sat up and took notice of the threat global warming poses to our environment. The films of David Attenborough, the words of Greta Thunberg and the actions of high profile protesters all got people talking about the need to act on climate change.

Human activity has led global temperatures to rise by 1°C since pre-industrial times. Scientists have warned that a rise of 2°C would have a catastrophic impact on the planet, but carry on as we are, and global temperatures could rise by as much as 3°C. Even keeping the rise in temperature to a global target of 1.5°C requires drastic and urgent action.

Here in Merton, government data shows that residents and businesses in the borough produced over half a million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions last year. The gas and electricity used to heat, light and power homes and other buildings, along with petrol and diesel vehicles, produce the most emissions.

The council has responded to the crisis by joining 90 other local authorities across the UK, including the London Assembly, in declaring a climate emergency. Cabinet member with responsibility for the environment, Cllr Tobin Byers put the motion to the council on 10 July, when it received unanimous, cross-party support.

For the council, declaring a climate emergency means aiming to ensure council buildings, vehicles and procured services are carbon neutral by 2030. We will also work with residents and businesses towards making the whole borough carbon neutral by 2050. This will involve supporting people to make the individual choices that together could add up to a big reduction in carbon emissions; by making their homes and businesses more energy efficient, switching to a green energy supplier, choosing to walk, cycle or use public transport instead of driving and replacing a petrol or diesel vehicle with an electric one.

Residents can get involved now, initially by taking part in a survey on the council’s website. Your views will contribute to the council’s carbon neutral action plan, which will be announced early next year. Cllr Byers said: “Our climate strategy, which has been in place since 2014, has already delivered many changes. We are taking a fresh look and will invigorate our efforts. The declaration of a climate emergency is the first major step to accelerating change.”

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
Improving air quality

Many actions that tackle climate change will also reduce toxic pollution locally and make the air cleaner in Merton. With almost 10,000 deaths across London attributed to air pollution each year, we have made it a top priority to work with residents to find local solutions.

As reported in past issues of My Merton, these have included walking and cycling initiatives, monitoring and action to improve the air outside schools, more electric car charging points and the diesel levy to discourage the most polluting vehicles.

We’ve also held Air Quality Days in some schools, with advice about harmful pollutants and healthy walking routes to reduce car use and congestion on nearby roads.

In June, the council marked national Clean Air Day with an event in Wimbledon Piazza to showcase the actions people can take to reduce their impact on local air pollution, such as walking, cycling and switching from petrol or diesel to electric cars. Many people came along to make clean air pledges, including to walk and cycle to work.

Cycling

To encourage cycling, the council provides free Bikeability training for children and adults, aimed at everyone, from total beginner to commuter level. Last year we trained 712 adults and 2,611 children as well as providing public Dr Bike maintenance sessions.

Play Streets for World Car Free Day

The council is backing World Car Free Day on Sunday 22 September and everyone can join in by ditching the car for the day. It’s a great opportunity for a party, and to encourage groups of neighbours to organise Play Street events the council waived the fee for road closures. Around 20 roads are set to close on the day so children can play safely and freely in them. Everyone can help celebrate World Car Free Day by taking journeys on foot, by bike or via public transport. merton.gov.uk/playstreets

Electric cars

We want to make it easier for residents to swap petrol and diesel cars for an electric vehicle, so we have already installed over 100 electric vehicle points and plan to add many more over coming years, including in residential areas.

We’ve supported the establishment of electric car clubs for people who only need a car occasionally and we’ve reduced the cost of residents’ permits to £20 a year for electric vehicles.

find out more

To find out more about the council’s response to the climate change emergency visit merton.gov.uk/climatechange
For free cycle training visit cyclinginstructor.com
COMPETITION

Win two tickets to Curtains at New Wimbledon Theatre

A musical ‘whodunnit’ from the creators of Chicago and Cabaret which has audiences laughing and guessing to the final curtain. The entire cast and crew are suspects in this Tony award-winning backstage murder mystery. Jason Manford, famed for his role in the Chitty Chitty Bang Bang musical, plays local detective and huge musical theatre fan, Frank Cioffi. The show also features Strictly Come Dancing star and television presenter Ore Oduba, who plays Aaron Fox, and renowned musical theatre actress Carley Stenson.

To win two tickets to see Curtains, visit merton.gov.uk/mymerton to enter and answer the following question.

Jason Manford played inventor Caractus Potts in which musical about a famous flying car?

a) Chitty Chitty Bang Bang  
b) Back to the Future  
c) Blade Runner

Closing date for entries: Friday 25 October 2019.

Terms and conditions: The tickets are non-transferable. There are no cash alternatives, accommodation or travel included in the prize. The competition is for two tickets to see Curtains at New Wimbledon Theatre, valid on Tuesday 14 January 2020.

Courses for work, life and wellbeing

Distance Learning Courses

FREE short courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications which you can study in your own time.

We have a range of short distance learning courses from the awarding body NCFE, which can be completed in 4 – 8 weeks. These are fully funded, meaning there is no cost to the learner. On completion you will gain a nationally recognised Level 2 qualification.

Courses on offer include:
• Understand Specific Learning Difficulties
• Understanding Autism
• Understanding Behaviour that Challenges
• Understanding Children and Young People’s Mental Health
• Understanding Common Childhood Illnesses
• Understanding Nutrition and Health
• Understanding Safeguarding and Prevent
• Equality and Diversity

Eligibility

Lived in the EU for three years and aged 19+. You will need to be confident with written English in order to meet the required standards. For further information about the courses or enrolling, please contact martina.collett@stcg.ac.uk (020 8408 6620) or book your assessment via the website at merton.ac.uk/distance-learning

Merton Adult Education

Learn something new with one of our exciting Adult Education courses.

A wide range of subject areas are on offer, including:
• Business
• Cake Decorating and Cookery
• Childcare and Health Care
• Computing and IT
• Creative Arts
• Hair and Complementary Therapy
• Languages
• Music
• Musical Instrument Making and Repair
• Teaching and Training
• Training for Work
• Wellbeing

Courses that fit around your lifestyle and working day, including Saturday courses. The quickest way to enrol is online, but you can also enrol by phone or in person. Whichever way you enrol you will need to show proof of your identity to complete your enrolment. Suitable ID includes a passport, birth certificate, driving licence or Freedom Pass. For the latest course information, check our website merton.ac.uk.

Merton College, London Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 5QX
Tel: 020 8918 7777
Helping SEND youngsters achieve their ambitions

Ensuring every child has a great start in life is a key priority for Merton Council. *My Merton* caught up with Conor McCormack, who supports children and young people with special educational needs to help them achieve their ambitions.

Conor McCormack is one of Merton’s Senior Case Officers within the Special Educational Needs Team. Conor carries out education, health and care need assessments of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Conor also oversees the implementation of their Education, Health and Care Plans, which set out the additional support they need to thrive in school or college. Every case is different, and the reasons why children and young people require an Education, Health and Care plan varies greatly.

Conor said: “Our service works with children from birth to 25. I have children in my caseload as young as two, as well as people up to the age of 23.”

“Post-16, we focus on preparing young people for adulthood. It’s not just about education, but also employment.

“The focus, with all our work, is on the young person themselves; we’re guided by their ambitions and where they want to be in future.”

For Conor, the highlight of the job is being able to support families, who may initially find it difficult to navigate the sometimes complex world of SEND support and the statutory processes.

He said: “It can sometimes be difficult for families. This is likely to be the first time they are going through the process. Some parents are just becoming aware that their child has additional needs.

“One of the things I enjoy is building up that relationship; seeing them understand more about their child’s needs and having a positive pathway. It may not be the path they anticipated, but they can see hope, I think that’s my favourite part.”

If parents have concerns about a child, whether health or education-related, Conor’s advice is to keep an open dialogue with the relevant professionals or contact the council’s SEND team.

He said: “Every child is unique and there are always options out there, so don’t feel like you’re in the dark. Speak to your child’s GP, their class teacher, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator or us. We’ll work with you to support what you’re already doing – looking out for the best interests of your child.”

Did you know about the M-Card?

If your child has special educational needs or a disability, contact us now to get hold of the M-Card. This concession card, issued by the council, is accepted at museums, theme parks, football clubs and many more venues and offers discounted admissions and assistance. Families can apply online at merton.gov.uk/localoffer – eligibility criteria apply.
Supporting residents to have healthy and enjoyable lives is a top priority for Merton Council all year round. This is why we are supporting a campaign to keep the borough’s older residents warm and well over the winter months.

The weather may still be mild, but, with autumn on the way, Merton Council is supporting a campaign aimed at helping older people stay warm and well this winter.

It’s estimated that, nationally, an extra 50,000 people die during the winter months – with the majority aged over 75. The chance of being admitted to hospital following a fall is much higher in winter too.

The council is working with local organisations, Wimbledon Guild and Age UK Merton, to help people prepare for winter; sharing advice about keeping warm, being healthy and staying out of hospital.

The campaign started last winter and we are now busy planning for the coming winter to make sure more Merton residents stay warm and well as the weather starts to get colder.

As part of the campaign, local residents are receiving a Warm and Well pack. The pack has details of organisations in the borough offering lunch clubs, social activities and friendship.

It also includes the Winter Wrapped Up guide from Age UK, full of useful tips for keeping yourself and your home warm when temperatures plummet.
Five things you can do now to prepare for winter

1. Make sure you have a flu jab
Flu jabs are free for people over 65, if you have certain long-term health conditions or are a carer. Flu is an unpleasant illness, which could see you laid low for a week or more. As you get older, catching flu becomes more risky, with the chance that it may develop into pneumonia. Flu viruses change each year, so it’s important to have your jab annually, and as early as possible. You can get your flu jab now from your GP or many local pharmacies.

Ask your GP about the pneumo jab too. This one-off vaccination helps protect you against pneumonia, meningitis and septicaemia.

2. Get your home winter-ready
Getting your heating system serviced every year ensures it is running safely and efficiently – always use a qualified Gas Safe-registered engineer. If you’re renting, your landlord should check your gas heating system and appliances at least once a year too.

Extra tip – avoid burst pipes, in particularly cold weather, by making sure you can turn off your water if needed. Find your stopcock (the main tap controlling your water supply) and check that it is easy to turn. If it’s jammed, you may need to replace it.

3. Join Merton’s Mascot Telecare service
The service, for older people and those with disabilities, brings 24-hour assistance at the touch of a button, whenever you need it, for a monthly fee. It provides reassurance for you and your loved ones that help is on hand, should you have a fall or feel anxious about something. An enhanced service includes visits from a mobile response team and access to a free handyperson.

4. Find out if you’re entitled to help with your heating bills
If you’re reluctant to turn up the heating because of the cost, you may be entitled to help with your bills. Contact Age UK for a benefits check and to find out if you may be eligible for any other financial support. Merton residents struggling to afford to keep warm may also qualify for help from Wimbledon Guild.

5. Reduce the risk of a fall
A grab rail to at your front or back door could prevent a fall in icy weather. Rails inside your home – in your shower and along your stairs – could be a big help too. Contact Age UK Merton for advice about installation. Keeping a mixture of salt and sand handy to put on steps or paths in icy weather is also a good idea – ask a friend or relative to get some from a DIY store.

When the cold weather hits...
It’s really important to look after yourself and stay warm. Exposure to extreme cold, even for a short time, can raise your blood pressure, putting you at risk of a heart attack or stroke.

Make sure you:
• Keep moving – don’t sit still for more than an hour at a time.
• Eat at least one hot meal a day and drink several hot drinks.
• Wear lots of thin layers of clothing, which keep you cosy by trapping warm air between them.
• Choose boots with non-slip soles and a warm lining, or wear thermal socks when you’re out and about.
• Ask your family or friends if they could call or visit more often during a period of cold weather.

Warm & Well in Merton

Warm and Well packs are available from Merton libraries
For Wimbledon Guild visit wimbledonguild.co.uk or call 020 8946 0735
For Mascot visit mascot-telecare.org.uk or call 020 8274 5940
For Age UK Merton visit ageuk.org.uk/merton or call 020 8648 5792

find out more

(feature)
Supporting residents
Join our campaign to beat the fly-tippers

Fly-tipping can impact negatively on everyone’s quality of life. Read on to find out how everyone can play their part in making Merton’s streets cleaner.

We know that, as residents, you take a pride in your borough and that fly-tipping is major cause of annoyance. Clearing up litter and dumped rubbish also costs Merton Council taxpayers millions of pounds a year. Fly-tipping is criminal activity, and we are taking a zero tolerance approach to tackling it; using CCTV surveillance and information from residents to bring prosecutions wherever possible. To help us, there are five things you can do now:

1. Report any fly-tipping, dumped rubbish or items of furniture left in your local area by visiting merton.gov.uk/flytipping

2. Be responsible with your own waste – if you dump bags of rubbish beside a litter bin or outside a closed charity shop, this counts as fly-tipping and could lead to a £400 fine. If a litter bin is full, please take your rubbish home. You can also help us by only using litter bins for small items of rubbish – never force bags of household waste into them.

3. Become a Street Champion – be the eyes and ears of your community, telling us about fly-tipping and other local issues. We also help Street Champions organise regular litter picking events. Visit merton.gov.uk/streetchampions

4. If you’re having building work done – make sure that anyone who removes your building waste is licensed to do so. If someone is offering to take your waste at a bargain price, chances are it will end up tipped on council or private land. Should this happen, you could be held responsible and face a hefty fine and a criminal record.

5. You can dispose of your bulky waste, furniture and a host of other items at our recycling centre, Garth Road in Morden. If you can’t get to the recycling centre, book a bulky waste collection at a cost of £30 for up to three items, or £50 for four to six items – visit merton.gov.uk/waste.

Fly-tippers we are watching you
Enforcement in action

**Zero tolerance**

**Rogue trader finally behind bars**

A rogue builder who sought to evade justice by leaving the county has been jailed for more than four years, following a prosecution led by Merton Council’s trading standards officers.

Cold-calling Joseph Horner conned homeowners, on their own doorsteps, into paying hundreds of pounds for building works, many of which were unnecessary or carried out to an inadequate standard. The fraudster led a group who targeted elderly and vulnerable residents across Merton, Wandsworth and Slough over a five-month period in 2012. He was arrested in August 2012 and bailed to attend a crown court but failed to appear. Horner left the country, however, he was arrested when he returned in May this year.

Horner pleaded guilty to Fraud Act offences at Kingston Crown Court on Friday 23 August and was sentenced to three years and nine months in prison. The 51-year-old, from Slough was also given a six month sentence for a Bail Act offence which is to be served consecutively.

**Tackling anti-social behaviour**

The council is also using the courts to take action against other forms of criminal behaviour which impact on local people. When residents complained to the council about nuisance from a particular property – large numbers of men loitering and visiting at all hours, as well as noise and disruption, we believed the premises to be operating as a brothel and used our powers under the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2014 to close it down.

We have since used these powers to close three further brothels in the past year. We were concerned that sex workers at the premises may have been trafficked to the UK or held against their will – these women were referred to safeguarding services and others to drug and alcohol services.

There are many ways in which we can use enforcement action and anti-social behaviour legislation to address issues in local areas, so please contact us about concerns you have – you can email us on asbu@merton.gov.uk.

**Landlord operating unlicensed HMO ordered to pay nearly £4,000**

The council has successfully prosecuted a landlord for flouting the law that protects the health and safety of private tenants.

Fouad Ahmad, from Streatham pleaded guilty to failing to register a house in multiple occupancy, known as an HMO, at Lavender Hill Magistrates Court in Battersea on Tuesday 6 August. The 48-year-old was handed a fine of £1,965 for the breach of Section 72(1) of the Housing Act 2004 and was ordered to pick up the council’s bill for costs which was £1,750, in addition to a surcharge of £196.

Following a tip off expressing concerns over a two-storey house in Beecholme Avenue in Mitcham, an investigation was launched by Merton Council’s Housing Enforcement Officers.

The officers discovered that despite the fact more than five unrelated housemates were sharing bathroom and kitchen facilities at the terraced house, Mr Ahmed had not applied for an HMO licence. Mr Ahmed was prosecuted under updated terms of The Housing Act 2004 – which since last October have stipulated that all HMO’s in the borough with five or more people making up two or more households must be registered as an HMO.

Previously the requirement for a HMO licence only applied to houses of three storeys or more.

The council hopes this prosecution sends out a strong message that it will take tough action on any landlords operating illegally in Merton. The council is also working towards introducing a landlord licensing scheme.

**Recent prosecutions**

In the year to July 2019, 1,267 people received £350 fines of for dropping litter in the street – including cigarette butts. During the same period, 38 fines, of £400 each, were issued for incidents of small-scale fly-tipping, such as waste dumped by litter bins.

We have also prosecuted nine people for larger-scale fly-tipping. They each received fines of £1,200 and a criminal record. During our operations, we seized vehicles linked to fly-tipping in the borough – three of these vehicles were destroyed.
“Why do you visit Wimbledon Guild?”

“They helped me through the hard times”
Mysterious Merton

Halloween is an autumn highlight – the chance to revel in tales of hauntings and unexplained events. Merton has its share of spooky legends so, if you love a ghost story, read on for tales to give you the shivers – or, if you’re of a nervous disposition, turn the page now.

Wimbledon Theatre, which opened on Boxing Day 1910, is possibly our most haunted building. Its original owner, JB Mulholland, died in 1925, but his ghost has been sighted ever since, treading the boards or watching from his favourite seat – B27.

Other apparitions to frequent the theatre include a black form witnessed by several audience members and a grey lady, seen in the gallery and even the ladies’ toilet. With only her head and torso visible, she has been known to walk through walls, uttering a menacing cackle.

Woodside in Wimbledon is also claimed to have been the site of poltergeist activity during the 1930s, when unexplained noises were heard – and housemaids reported being locked in rooms.

During the 1980s, the White House on Wimbledon Hill Road was occupied by an insurance firm. Members of staff spoke of a room which remained strangely cold, despite attempts to heat it and reported seeing the ghost of a friendly, well-dressed gentleman. The spirit in question is believed to have been Mr Edward-Jones QC, who lived in the house before the Second World War.

Mitcham paranormal researcher, James Clark has written about many local events, including the strange case of a cottage on Commonside East during the 1960s. The occupants and builders working on the property were spooked by faces appearing on a wall. The faces, of women, young children and men, including cavaliers, grenadiers and even the builder’s father, appeared after wallpaper was removed from the living-room wall.

James has also documented a spooky event on Mitcham Common in 1990. An IT worker heading home, late at night, saw the apparition of a young boy, soundlessly riding a bicycle. The boy turned and stared with an unnaturally fixed gaze, before cycling across the surface of Seven Islands Pond. It is believed the figure was that of 10-year-old Leonard Lascelles, who had drowned in the pond 70 years previously.
Recycle Week is coming up from 23 to 29 September with the theme (Recycling) it’s in our own hands. With plastic and its impact on the environment rarely out of the news, the week is a chance to get people talking about cutting their own plastic footprint, by ditching single use items and reusing and recycling where possible.

You can’t currently recycle

- Crisp and sweet packets or wrappers
- Film lids from the pots or trays
- Laminated pouches
- Plastic toys
- Medicine packs (headache pills, etc)
- Toothpaste tubes.
- Plastic bottles containing hazardous chemicals – visit merton.gov.uk/hazardouswaste to find out more
- Polystyrene food trays

Make sure you give food packaging a quick rinse, as food residue can contaminate other recyclables. Squash them up too, if you can. Lids may be included in your recycling.

If you’re running out of space in your green boxes, you can order additional ones from the council. Our new green boxes each come with a lid. Visit merton.gov.uk/recycling and click on get a new bin.

Cans, glass bottles, jars, cartons, and foil go in your green boxes too – but no paper. All paper and card must go in your blue-lidded wheelie bin. However, flats with communal recycling bins can mix their cans, glass, plastic and cartons with their paper and card in their communal bins.

When you’re collecting your recycling, remember to include things from every room of the house – bathroom items, such as shampoo bottles and toothpaste boxes, sometimes get missed. Don’t just recycle at home, make sure you use recycling facilities at work if you have them.
own hands

What happens to plastic recycling?
The plastic bottles, tubs, pots and trays, which you place in your Merton recycling bin go to one of three special plants where they are sorted by hand, then by colour and type using lasers. Plastic is then shredded, melted down and reformed into pellets, which are used to make new and useful items – from fleeces and football tops to toys and even picnic benches.

Say NO to plastic
While recycling your plastics is an undeniably good thing, reducing consumption in the first place is even better. Since the plastic bag tax was introduced in 2015, single use of plastic carriers has fallen dramatically. The same is starting to happen with water bottles, takeaway coffee cups and plastic straws too. Here are a few more ideas:

✔ Choose loose fruit and vegetables at the supermarket – or shop at markets instead
✔ Invest in reusable food covers instead of single use cling film
✔ Go for glass or aluminium containers when buying items such as ketchup, mayonnaise, peanut butter or syrup
✔ Go back to using a bar of soap over hand washes and shower gels
✔ Buy meat, fish and deli items from the counter in supermarkets or independent shops, taking your own reusable containers with you

Bags of recycling
Merton’s recycling collections don’t currently include plastic bags, but did you know that you can take your old bags to larger branches of major supermarkets? This includes shopping bags, which are no longer usable, but also: bread bags; fruit bags; cereal liners; shrink wrap from multipacks of cans; dry cleaning bags; magazine wrappers; bubblewrap.

You can’t recycle crisp packets, salad bags or cling film at these facilities.

If you receive online shopping deliveries, ask for a bag-free delivery or hand your unwanted bags back to the driver for recycling.

Textile and battery recycling
Remember, we now collect textiles and batteries each week. Place these items in bags alongside your household waste or recycling and we will pick them up.

Garden recycling
Spend more time in your garden and less time at the local tip. Did you know Merton Council offers a garden waste collection service for residents? Have your garden waste collected from your home every two weeks for £75 per year (that’s just £2.88 per collection). The collected waste is composted.

Visit merton.gov.uk/gardenwaste for details on how to sign up or to renew an annual subscription.

Find out more about recycling in Merton at merton.gov.uk/recycling
Your views on community safety count

Although Merton is one of the safest boroughs, the council wants to do all it can to ensure the safety of residents. This is why we have now launched our biggest consultation on crime and anti-social behaviour in five years. Make sure your views are heard.

The Safer Merton Partnership wants to hear your views, concerns and issues around crime and anti-social behaviour in the borough, as part of the biggest consultation to take place on these issues in five years. So, whether you’re concerned about gangs, worried about drug dealing or annoyed by street drinking, we want to hear from you. You can take part by completing a short survey before 13 October 2019 – visit merton.gov.uk/safer-merton-consultation or pick up a hard copy in local libraries. Your views will help shape our priorities for the next five years.

Seasonal safety tips

Happy Halloween
If your family is out celebrating Halloween this year, make sure you do so safely and considerately:

- Don’t knock on doors if there’s a No Trick or Treat poster – stick to houses with pumpkins or decorations to show you’re welcome.
- Look carefully before crossing the road; you may not be visible in a dark costume.
- No tricks please! Throwing eggs or flour is anti-social and could land you in trouble.
- If you feel anxious about unwanted callers at Halloween, download a free No Trick or Treat poster from the Merton neighbourhood watch website mertonnhw.co.uk.

Fireworks
With fireworks night coming up, stay safe by visiting one of the borough’s stunning displays – currently celebrating 50 years since the first event. This year, shows are to be held on Saturday 2 November in Morden Park and on Tuesday 5 November in Wimbledon Park – visit merton.gov.uk/fireworks to book.

If you are holding your own display, remember never to throw fireworks or put them in your pocket and don’t return to a firework once lit. For more safety advice, visit london-fire.gov.uk.

Neighbourhood Watch
Sadly, the darker evenings tend to coincide with an increase in burglaries. If you’re out for the evening, or don’t return from work until after dark, make sure doors are locked securely and leave a light on a timer so it looks like someone’s home.

For anyone concerned about crime, now could be a good time to join a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. Schemes bring neighbours together to report anti-social behaviour and help prevent burglary, while also looking out for vulnerable people. If you’d like to find out more, email mertonnhw@met.police.uk and we can tell you if there’s a scheme operating in your area or give you help and support to set one up.

Knife crime update
While Merton is one of London’s safest boroughs, the impact of knife crime on young people in the capital is a concern for us all. In the last issue of My Merton we reported on a knife crime summit, bringing together residents and businesses with the police, council and other agencies, to work together to find solutions. We asked people to pledge support in many ways, from offering apprenticeships to talking to their children about the dangers of gangs. You can find out more about the summit and how to get involved by emailing safer.merton@merton.gov.uk.

Neighbourhood Watch
If you’re out for the evening, make sure doors are locked securely and leave a light on a timer so it looks like someone’s home.

For anyone concerned about crime, now could be a good time to join a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. Schemes bring neighbours together to report anti-social behaviour and help prevent burglary, while also looking out for vulnerable people. If you’d like to find out more, email mertonnhw@met.police.uk and we can tell you if there’s a scheme operating in your area or give you help and support to set one up.
Parents are advised to apply online at www.merton.gov.uk/admissions.
Closing date for applications is 31 October 2019.

merton.gov.uk
Need help keeping warm this winter?

www.warmandwellinmerton.co.uk

For help or information call us on: 020 8648 5792
Spotlight on...
New Wimbledon Theatre

Calendar Girls
Musical comedy by Gary Barlow and Tim Firth which tells the true story of friends at a Women’s Institute who decide to discreetly pose nude for a calendar, to raise cash for a hospital which cared for one of the group’s late husband.
Tuesday 1–Saturday 5 October

Priscilla, Queen of the Desert
Starring Strictly Come Dancing winner Joe McFadden, this smash-hit iconic show features a dazzling array of stunning costumes and non-stop dance-floor classics including It’s Raining Men and I Will Survive. Based on the Oscar-winning film, Priscilla is the hilarious adventure of three friends who hop aboard a battered old bus on a heart-warming journey story of self-discovery. Great chance to check out the Rainbow Crossing outside the theatre.
Monday 7–Saturday 12 October

Bradley Wiggins – An Evening With
A rare opportunity to see the five-time Olympic Gold medallist and Tour De France winner share tales, prized memorabilia and career highlights in an intimate live setting. ITV’s Matt Barbet will moderate and put questions from the audience to ‘Wiggo’ on the night.
Sunday 6 October

Wimbledon BookFest
Thursday 3 October–Sunday 13 October

Wimbledon BookFest returns for the 13th year, bringing more than 100 events with literary stars, and big names from the worlds of politics, current affairs, sport and the arts. There will also be a host of children’s events in the Big Tent on Wimbledon Common and themed walks. Among the headliners are Poet Laureate Simon Armitage and novelists John Lancaster, Michelle Paver, Tracy Chevalier, Robert Harris, Alexander McCall Smith and Man Booker Prize-winner Ben Okri.
Joanne Harris, author of Chocolat, will discuss her new novel The Strawberry Thief at BookFest’s launch at Merton Arts Space in Wimbledon Library.
The packed children’s programme features Harry Hill, introducing his novel Matt Millz Stands Up!, former SAS soldier turned author Chris Ryan, as well as Sue Hendra and Paul Linnet, the team behind the Supertato series.
Dame Jacqueline Wilson is to talk about her highly anticipated sequel to the Tracy Beaker series We are the Beaker Girls.
The line-up for BookFest’s current affairs strand features BBC’s Kamal Ahmed and Newsnight presenter Emily Maitlis.
Sustainability expert Mike Berners Lee will offer practical advice on how climate calamity can be avoided, drawn from his book There is No Planet B.
The attractions for sports fans include Sir Alastair Cook, England’s all-time most successful batsman discussing his autobiography.
The Festival’s closing event will be British Bake Off star Nadiya Hussain discussing her heartfelt memoir Finding My Voice.
Thursday 3 October–Sunday 13 October
For more information and tickets visit www.wimbledonbookfest.org.

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Thursday 3 October–Sunday 13 October
For more information and tickets visit www.wimbledonbookfest.org.

Thursday 3 October–Sunday 13 October
Merton Arts Festival
Discover the artistic talents of Merton residents and get to see an amazing array of artistic works on your doorstep. Over two weekends, local artists are set to throw open the doors of their houses, studios and other spaces to showcase their latest work. Artists who specialise in a range of mediums, including painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, jewellery, textiles and glass are taking part. The participating artists will also host a range of special demonstrators and workshops. Visitors can plot their own trails using the festival map, which features the artists’ locations – and those who visit five or more can enter a £100 prize draw. Pick up a map from libraries, art shops or from the festival website.

Saturday and Sunday 21–22 and 28–29 September, 11am–5pm. Free entry.

www.mertonartsfestival.org

Mindful photography class
Spend quality time outdoors capturing autumn scenes at this mindfulness-inspired class led by photographer Stefania Boiano in Morden Hall Park. Suitable for all abilities and no expensive equipment required – just bring your phone or tablet.

Morden Hall Road, Morden. Saturday 21 September 3.30–5pm. £15.50.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/events

Mysticism, Ritual and Religion in Drone Metal
An evening with academic Owen Coggins, author of Mysticism, Ritual and Religion in Drone Metal.

Find out about the first ever extensive scholarly study of drone metal music which draws on observations from more than 300 performances as well as interviews.

Merton Arts Space, Wimbledon Library, Compton Road. Thursday 24 October from 7pm. Free entry, just turn up.

merton.gov.uk/artsspace

Tuesday free film night
Free film screenings on the big screen at Merton Arts Space on the first Tuesday of each month from 7pm.

Merton Arts Space, Wimbledon Library, Compton Road. merton.gov.uk/artsspace

Nine week singing course with show night
Tuesday nights at Katriona’s Singers Studio close to Wimbledon town centre. This nine week course is to culminate with a show night on Friday 29 November. Repertoire covered includes jazz, pop, gospel and musical theatre.

Tuesday 24 September–Tuesday 26 November. £130 for the whole course.

www.katrionataylor.com

Spotlight on... talented local artists

Worple Group Art Exhibition
Over 200 affordable, contemporary original paintings and prints by 20 local artists will be on show.

The Worple Group’s Exhibitions have become highly anticipated events in Wimbledon, due to the high standard and diversity of the artworks. Expect to see a dazzling variety of styles and subjects in all media. The artists will be present and happy to discuss their work. Entry is free and refreshments will be available.

St Mark’s Church, St Mark’s Place, Wimbledon, SW19 7ND. Saturday 19 October 10am–5.30pm.

www.worplegroup.co.uk

@whatsoninmerton
@whatsoninmerton
@eventsinmerton
Seasonal treats

**Abundance Fruit Day**
Fresh, fruity refreshments, homemade food and lots of music and games. Day to celebrate Abundance Wimbledon’s project to collect fruit from growers with bumper crops and pass it on to other residents to make jam, juice or puddings. Produce from the project is donated to local charities.

**St Mark’s Church Garden,**
**St Mark’s Place, Wimbledon.**
**Saturday 14 September,**
11am–2.30pm. Entry free.
abundancewimbledon@gmail.com

**Autumn at Morden Hall Park**

**Harvest Fest:**
Celebrate autumn and try out some local Merton varieties of apples. The event is to offer a host of harvest goodies, plus lots of tips from experts on growing fruit trees.

**Saturday 28–Sunday 29 September,**
11am–5pm.

**Hay Maze!**
Have fun trying to find your way out of a child-friendly maze, constructed from more than 300 bales of golden straw. Activity suitable for all ages from toddlers to adults.

**Saturday 28 September–**
**Sunday October 27, 11am–3pm.**
Entry £3, no need to book.

**Half term: Pumpkin Carving Fest**
Drop-in event for children to pick and carve a pumpkin and then illuminate with a LED tea light candle.

**Morden Hall Park,**
**Morden Hall Road, Morden.**
**Saturday 19–Wednesday 23 October,**
11am–5pm.
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/events/

**Harvest supper and race night**
Community event featuring a cottage pie supper, followed by hobby horse racing. Bring your own drinks and glasses.

**St Saviour’s Church Hall,**
**Grand Drive, Raynes Park.**
**Saturday 21 September,**
7.30–10.30pm. Tickets £6, must be booked in advance.
www.stsaviour.net

**Early bird reductions for fireworks**
Tickets now available for firework events in Merton this November. Book early to get huge savings on family tickets. Shows on Saturday 2 November in Morden Park and Tuesday 5 November in Wimbledon Park.

**Merton Arts Festival**
21–22 and 29–29 September
Spotlight on...

a stroll on the Common

Waggy Walk
Dogs are welcome, but not required to take part in a fundraising walk across Wimbledon Common, organised by charity Wimbledon Guild, which supports Merton residents in times of need. All ‘waggy walkers’ have the choice of a 4km or 7km picturesque route, starting and finishing at the Hand in Hand pub, Wimbledon Common. A host of free refreshments and goodies provided by local businesses who are sponsoring the event. All dogs go free if owners sign up in advance. Saturday 28 September with check in from 9am. Tickets £10 adult, £5 per child or dog. www.wimbledonguild.co.uk/waggywalk

Discover Merton

Mitcham Heritage Day
Enjoy a day of tours, exhibitions, walks and taster sessions at historic sports clubs at this event to showcase the area’s heritage gems. All events are free. Highlights include a Golden Jubilee Walk to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area, a match at Mitcham Cricket Club and the unveiling of a new garden ornament by the Mayor of Merton to commemorate the 190th anniversary of Mary Tate cottages. Saturday 14 September, 10am–4.30pm. mitchamcricketgreen.org.uk

Wandle Fortnight Walks
Rambler Melanie Nunzet is leading friendly walks showcasing the borough’s heritage. The Mitcham Heritage Day three to four mile route includes a visit to Mitcham Cricket Club and the Canons. Meet at Mitcham Junction Station on Saturday 14 September at 11am. A walk along the Wandle Trail, to explore the hidden paths of Mitcham, includes a guided tour of Merton Priory Chapter House and a visit to Wandle Industrial Museum. Sunday 22 September, 1pm, meet inside the Chapter House, Chapter Way, Colliers Wood. Email: minnunzet@gmail.com or visit www.wandlevalleyforum.org.uk.

Wonderland in the heart of Wimbledon
Polka Theatre’s free storytelling and craft workshops are set to pop up at a host of events and even shopping centres this autumn. Find out more about the 40-year-old theatre’s plans and fundraising for its new building which is set to open in 2020.
www.polkatheatre.com

The Wimbledon Fayre
A two-day event packed with a wide array of attractions from famed horse stuntman Jonathan Marshall to displays from top Italian chefs. The event also features a Festival of Dogs, alongside heavy horse displays, motorbike stunt teams and falconry displays. Entertainments include live musical performances, children’s shows, aerial circus displays and fun wrestling.
Wimbledon Park, Wimbledon. Saturday 21–Sunday 22 September. Adults £8.50, children £3.50, under fives free. classic.festivals.co.uk

Wonderland in the heart of Wimbledon
Polka Theatre’s autumn workshops
Fun Palace
Come along and join us to learn new art, craft and performance skills from people in your community at this free event. Fun Palaces is a national campaign to encourage people to come together and share their secret skills with their neighbours.
Morden Hall Park, Morden Hall Road, Morden. Saturday 5 October from noon.

Want to get involved? Email david.coughlin@nationaltrust.org.uk.

Open Singing Rehearsal
Join a friendly and fun choir at its free to attend weekly rehearsals for its Christmas concert.
The Wesley Room, The Lantern Arts Centre, Tolverne Road, Raynes Park. Every Tuesday from Tuesday 24 September, 7.30pm. www.hillsingers.co.uk

Families

Hands-On Music Workshop
This fun workshop run by Merton Music Foundation is a great way of helping children decide which instrument they would love to learn. Open to children of all ages.
Harris Academy Morden, Llanthony Road entrance. Saturday 14 September, 10am–noon. Fee £5 per child.
www.mmf.org.uk/handsonept19

Get close up to bats, moths and spiders at Morden Hall Park
Nocturnal Nature Walk
Take the chance to enjoy parkland after dark and spot the wildlife, including bats. Suitable for all ages but children must be accompanied by an adult.
Friday 13 September, 7–9pm. Adult £5, child £3, booking essential.

Meet some moths
Discover which moths frequent a park at night by visiting those trapped in jars before they are released. Suitable for all ages.
Saturday 14 September, 10.30–11.30am. Free.

Spiders aren’t so scary!
Two opportunities to meet some spiders and find out about their lives from nature experts.
Saturday 12 and Saturday 19 October, 5–7pm. Adult £5, child £3. Morden Hall Park, Morden Hall Road, Morden. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/events/

Keeping Kids Safe Online
Talk to experts and get help to keep your children safe online at this event organised in partnership with child protection charity NSPCC.
Bethel United Church, 2A Kohat Road, Wimbledon. Saturday 21 September, 2–3.30pm. Free.
www.bucwimbledon.org

Spotlight on... Remembrance services

Sunday 10 November
Attendees to include Mayor of Merton, Councillor Janice Howard and members of the Morden branch of the Royal British Legion. Nelson Health Centre, Kingston Road, Raynes Park, 9am.

Attendees to include Clare Whelan OBE Deputy Lieutenant, Mayor of Merton, Councillor Janice Howard, members of the Wimbledon Branch of the Royal British Legion and the 210 Transport Squadron. Wimbledon War Memorial, Wimbledon Village, 10.40am.

Attendees to include Deputy Mayor of Merton, Councillor Edward Foley, and members of the Mitcham branch of the Royal British Legion. Mitcham War Memorial, Lower Green West, Mitcham, 10.40am.

Monday 11 November – Armistice Day
Attendees to include Mayor of Merton, Councillor Janice Howard. Mitcham War Memorial, Lower Green West, Mitcham, 10.50am.

Attendees to include Deputy Mayor of Merton, Councillor Edward Foley. Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, 10.50am.

Monday 11 November – Armistice Day
Attendees to include Mayor of Merton, Councillor Janice Howard. Mitcham War Memorial, Lower Green West, Mitcham, 10.50am.

Mayor’s Quiz Night
Join the Mayor of Merton for this fundraising evening. Tickets, which cost £5 per person, include a meal. Friday 11 October, 7–7.30pm.

Mayor’s Christmas Dinner
Early bird discounted tickets for this traditional meal with all the trimmings are due to go on sale from the first week in November. Saturday 30 November.

To book tickets for these events, which are all to be held at The Wimbledon Club, Church Road, Wimbledon, email mayor@merton.gov.uk or call 020 8545 3517.

Silver Sunday
All residents aged 60 and above and their carers are invited to enjoy afternoon tea with the Mayor of Merton, Councillor Janice Howard. Sunday 6 October, 3–4.30pm.

Parent talk on youngsters mental health
Dr Nihara Krause, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, CEO and founder of charity stem4 is to speak at this event to mark World Mental Health Day. Attendees will have an opportunity to hear about the Combined Minds development launch, the new stem4 app for parents and friends on supporting someone with a mental health condition.

Kings College School Hall, Southside, Wimbledon Common, Wimbledon. Thursday 3 October, 7pm. Suggested donation £10 per head, to include a glass of wine. www.stem4.org.uk
Developmental Language Disorder Awareness Day
It is estimated around 15,500 people in Merton have the hidden but common disability Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). Speech and language therapists from Merton’s Language and Learning Support Team are to run an information stand in the foyer of Merton Civic Centre and will be on hand to answer any questions about DLD. Recent research has shown DLD, which impacts on spoken language and reading, can have a serious impact on development of young people and their mental health.

Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden. Friday 18 October, 9am–4pm.

Rough Runner – London South
The obstacle course challenge which combines distance running with a variety of obstacles along the way, each inspired by game shows such as Total Wipeout, Takeshi’s Castle, Gladiators, and Fun House. There is even a special challenge for children.

Morden Park, Morden. Saturday 5–Sunday 6 October, 10.30am–7pm. Book now, prices from £45. www.roughrunner.com

Beginners’ Yoga Course
Five week course run by Good Life Yoga introducing the basics of yoga practice and philosophy. Suitable for all ages and abilities.

Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden. Friday 18 October, 9am-4pm.

Keeping fit

Fairs and markets
Wimbledon Farmers’ Market
Certified farmers’ market held every Saturday morning, featuring a huge selection of produce including freshly caught fish, organic meat, seasonal fruit and vegetables as well as baked goods.

Wimbledon Park First School, Havana Road, off Durnsford Road. 9am–1pm. Free to enter. www.lfm.org.uk

Mum2mum Market
Buy top-quality second-hand baby and children’s clothes, toys books and equipment at this award-winning pop-up market featuring around forty stalls.

Ricards Lodge High School, Lake Road, Wimbledon. Saturday 14 September, 11am–1pm. Admission £2 for adults, children free. www.mum2mummarket.co.uk

Spotlight on... community forums
Anyone with an interest in the local area is invited to attend these free community meetings. Discussions about a range of local topics will be held and the issues raised will be followed up by the relevant organisations.

Raynes Park Library, Approach Road, Raynes Park Thursday 19 September, 7.15pm

Wimbledon Library, 35 Wimbledon Hill Road, Wimbledon Wednesday 25 September, 7.15pm

Colliers Wood Library, 105–109 High Street, Colliers Wood Thursday 3 October, 7.15pm

Vestry Hall, 336–338 London Road, Mitcham Thursday 10 October, 7.15pm

Council Chamber, Merton Civic Centre, 100 London Road, Morden Wednesday 16 October, 7.15pm

merton.gov.uk/communityforums

Wimbledon Farmers’ Market
Every Saturday morning

Beginners’ Yoga Course
11 September–9 October
Merton Council urgently needs foster carers for teenagers, siblings and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Foster for Merton and we can offer you:
✓ On-going comprehensive training
✓ 24 hour support, 365 days per year
✓ An allowance of up to £514 per week, per child

Wimbledon Park
Tue 5 November

Morden Park
Sat 2 November

#mertonfireworks

Open your heart and home to change a child’s life

Call us today on 0800 073 0874 / 020 8545 4070
visit merton.gov.uk/fostering
email fostering@merton.gov.uk for more details

Merton Council

Musical Fireworks Displays

GATES OPEN 5:15PM | FIRST SHOW 6:30PM*
SECOND SHOW 8:15PM | FUNFAIR, STALLS & REFRESHMENTS OPEN TILL 10PM

Big savings when you buy in advance online at: merton.gov.uk/fireworks

*MORE SUITABLE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Please note: The public are not permitted to bring any fireworks, alcohol or dogs to these events.

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Merton Council
Dr Mohan Sekeram is a GP at the Wide Way Medical Centre in the east of the borough. He is also the clinical lead for social prescribing for Merton Clinical Commissioning Group.

Tell us more about social prescribing.
It’s estimated that 20% of patients who see their GP have a non-medical problem. These can be isolation, bereavement or unemployment. The patient often develops physical symptoms; a headache, rash or stress and they find themselves in a GP surgery. GPs have 10 minutes with a patient, so we may only be able to treat the headache or rash, but not the root cause.

What happened in your practice?
We’ve been using social prescribing for two years. It means matching patients with someone called a link worker who is skilled in knowing what services exist in the community. They spend an hour with the patient finding out about their issues, whether housing, relationships or isolation-related, and putting them in touch with services. These could be befriending, exercise or getting out and about volunteering.

Does it work?
It’s certainly gone from strength to strength. Three quarters of the patients reported better health and wellbeing. As well as patient benefits, we’ve seen a reduction of GP appointments by 33% and a reduction in A&E attendance by 50%. It started in two practices; we’re now at 13 and planning to go borough-wide.

You’ve been a Merton GP for 11 years, what’s the best thing about the borough?
It’s very diverse, it’s got a bit of everything, plus I love all the parks – and I’m a big AFC Wimbledon Fan. There’s also a nice vibe in primary care and the voluntary sector in Merton; a good feeling of camaraderie and collaborative working.

You can find out more about social prescribing on the website dontmedicalise.com