Join your community
to support those in need this winter
It’s a huge privilege to write to you for the first time as Leader of the Council, having taken over from Councillor Stephen Alambritis, who has set such a high standard over the last decade.

I’m looking forward to starting conversations with communities and families across the borough – in person, when possible, and through social media and My Merton – to understand how life has changed for you and what you think the council’s priorities should be after Covid. This will help shape where we spend our limited funds in the years ahead, so that we can keep improving our borough.

Right now, we are focused on keeping Merton safe this winter and continuing to protect our most vulnerable residents during the pandemic. If you or someone you know is struggling, support is available for residents and businesses at merton.gov.uk/coronavirus. You can apply for isolation payments and other financial support, and find out more about the dozens of amazing voluntary groups who are there to help – and I want to use this opportunity to say thank you for the dedication of all Merton’s volunteers, some of whose amazing work I’ve seen first-hand at the foodbank where I help each week.

The council’s priority is to support residents when you need us, and to run the council in a business-like way to help bring jobs and opportunities to Merton. This has included helping the return of AFC Wimbledon to the borough, to their brand new stadium in Plough Lane, where they played their first home game last month.

Their teamwork reflects the hard work of everyone in the borough during the pandemic – I couldn’t be prouder of everyone in Merton, so please stay safe and my very best wishes for the festive season.

Councillor Mark Allison
Leader of Merton Council

Councillor Mark Allison was born in St Helier Hospital and grew up within half a mile of it, before moving to Colliers Wood, where he still lives with his wife Jenny, a welfare advisor at a charity in Mitcham, and their son Nathan, who is a primary school teacher.

Mark was first elected to Merton Council in 2002 as a Labour councillor for Lavender Fields Ward – one of his first jobs was launching My Merton in 2003. He has been responsible for Merton’s finances since 2010, ensuring they remained stable, and that the council could fund a new leisure centre in Morden, expand good and excellent schools across the borough and continue delivering services efficiently. Mark’s priority has been to support those who need it most, for instance by delivering council tax rebates for low income households.

At the start of the pandemic, Mark and Jenny managed Wimbledon Foodbank’s satellite centre in Pollards Hill, where they were distributing food to 1,200 residents a month, before opening a new Fresh Foodbank, with friends and support from the Dons Local Action Group.

Away from the council, Mark loves football and is a fan of both QPR and – since attending their first game at Sutton United in 2002 – AFC Wimbledon.
Contents

Join us and bring MERTON TOGETHER

News

4

Features

MBE for Cllr Alambritis
Leader steps down after a decade 8

Warm and well 12

A season of goodwill 13

Protecting children at risk from harm 16

Keep Merton Safe 17

Adult education 20

Shop local at Christmas 21

Preparing for Brexit 23

Climate Change Action 24

Walking and cycling 25

Dons come home 27

History 29

Community safety 30

5 minutes with
Elisabeth Chapple BCU
Commander South West Met Police 31

Plus your pullout Recycling News

Do it online
For information about council services or to report it, pay it or apply for it online, visit merton.gov.uk

Keep up to date with the latest news in our newsroom: merton.gov.uk/news

Find out what’s on and post your own event on our events calendar: merton.gov.uk/events

Follow us
Subscribe to receive our email news
Be the first to hear about the latest news, events and services, plus emergency alerts and updates.
Sign-up: merton.gov.uk/newsletter

@MertonCouncil
@Merton_Council
@whatsoninmerton

Whenever you see this logo that means there’s a volunteering opportunity to get involved in.

mymerton
is published quarterly and is distributed to 86,000 households in the borough.

For details about advertising and editorial deadlines, please visit merton.gov.uk/mymerton

The London Borough of Merton does not accept responsibility for or endorse any products or services offered by advertisers.

My Merton costs only 62p a copy to produce. The magazine is printed on fully recyclable paper, which is accredited by the PEFC Council (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes). This edition of My Merton is distributed from 3 December 2020.

When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.
**Why buy when you can borrow?**

Need to repair something, but don’t want to buy tools that you won’t use very often? You will soon be able to borrow them from the Library of Things, which is due to open in Morden Library in January. So, if you find yourself in need of a hedge cutter, a drill, a carpet cleaner, a gazebo or maybe an ice-cream maker check out the new Library of Things.

Residents will be able to borrow items for as little as £1 a day, before returning them for someone else to use.

The council and Sustainable Merton have teamed up with social enterprise the Library of Things to offer the service to residents to help them save money on things like tools, which are only occasionally needed, but take up valuable storage space.

**World class parks**

Six parks have retained their Green Flag Awards this year, are: Abbey Recreation Ground; Colliers Wood Recreation Ground; Dundonald Recreation Ground; John Innes Park; Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields and South Park Gardens.

The Green Flag Award is an international quality mark, recognising that a park or open space boasts the highest possible environmental standards, is well maintained and has excellent facilities.

**Action to clamp down on anti-social behaviour**

A new Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) has been introduced in Mitcham to tackle anti-social behaviour linked to people drinking alcohol in public places. The new PSPO, which came into force in October, replaced the former borough-wide one which expired on 20 October.

The order gives authorised council and police officers the power to ask someone to stop drinking and confiscate their alcohol if they are causing, or likely to cause, anti-social behaviour. Anyone who does not comply will be issued with a fixed penalty notice of £100, which must be paid within 14 days – no early discount fee will apply. If non-payment of fines is pursued to court, offenders face a fine of up to £500. Failure to give a correct name or address can, if taken to court, lead to a fine of £1,000.

The council reviewed the evidence on street drinking and associated anti-social behaviour and held a six-week public consultation during the summer. Persistent problems from people drinking alcohol in public in Mitcham were found to be having a significant impact on the quality of life for people who live and work in the area.

In response to views expressed in the consultation, the council is investigating if issues with anti-social behaviour are significant enough to warrant bringing street drinking bans into other areas of the borough, including Morden town centre, Wimbledon town centre and the wards of Abbey, Trinity, Pollards Hill and St. Helier.
New Mayor

Councillor Sally Kenny was unanimously elected to serve as the Mayor of Merton at the full council meeting in September.

The new Mayor took over the role from Wimbledon Park councillor, Janice Howard, who served as Mayor of Merton for the past year.

Cllr Kenny, who represents Lower Morden, was elected to Merton Council in 2014 and she has served as the chair of the council’s Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

The mum-of-two has lived in Merton for most of her life and during her teaching career she worked in several of the borough’s schools. As a passionate advocate for young people, Cllr Kenny has chosen Morden Little League as one of the two charities she is supporting. The charity brings children together from diverse backgrounds to share sporting opportunities. The new mayor’s other chosen charity is the Merton and Morden Guild of Social Service, which provides much needed support for the borough’s carers.

Councillor Kenny will be supported by Deputy Mayor, Councillor John Dehaney and her consort, daughter, Amanda Woodman.

Planning permission granted for new Bishopsford Road Bridge

Merton Council’s Planning Committee granted permission for a new bridge to be built over the River Wandle in Bishopsford Road, Mitcham, at a meeting held on 22 October.

The new bridge will replace the previous structure, which had to be demolished for safety reasons earlier this year, after partially collapsing in June 2019, following heavy rainfall. Replacing the bridge is a particularly complex task because it influences river flow and has a range of utilities running through its structure. The council has been working closely with gas, electricity, water and broadband providers as well as the Environment Agency, to reduce the risk of flooding.

The river crossing, along the A217, will be wider than the previous bridge, to include a northbound segregated cycle lane and a wider shared southbound pavement and cycle space. The new design, which has a single span, rather than three arches like the old bridge, was developed following a public consultation earlier this year. Railings will replace the brick wall along Ravensbury Park, opening up views from the bridge and 26 new trees will be planted. The wooden footbridge crossing will remain.

The plans will also help to promote biodiversity in the river and on its banks, which border Watermeads Nature Reserve, and include bat boxes and a ledge for otters. Work on rebuilding the bridge is due to begin next month and is expected to open in 2021.

An artist’s impression of the new bridge

Investing £1.5m in the community

A popular city farm and a hub to support our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, received a share of the council’s £1.5million Neighbourhood Fund. Following a competitive bid, 18 projects submitted by residents, community groups and businesses were awarded funding.

The fund comes from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – money that developers are required to pay to mitigate the impact of their development on the area. Extra funding was given to some previously funded projects including Polka Theatre and £150,000 was allocated for neighbourhood projects.

Winning bids

- Age UK Elmwood Centre refurbishment £65,000
- BAME Voice Community Hub to support residents from our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities £24,803
- Colliers Wood Recreation Ground table tennis table £10,000
- Community Fridge Network £50,730
- Deen City Farm £36,616
- Durnsford Recreation Ground facilities £32,000
- Emergency Active Travel Fund £100,000
- Figgies Marsh Parkrun £4,000
- Green Arts performance space at Cricket Green School £49,975
- Growing Together planting at London Road Fields £29,619
- Hartfield Walk public space £125,000
- Merton Digital Local Network at Wimbledon Library £35,000
- Polka Theatre £150,000
- Pollards Hill Estate lighting £100,000
- School Streetscapes work at five Mitcham schools £50,263
- Towards employment support for 16 to 25-year-olds £53,235
- Uptown Youth Services £30,000
- Wimbledon Windmill Museum improvements £20,000
Merton’s big autumn clean-up

Litter picks were held by councillors and residents across the borough in support of the Great British September Clean. The council provided gloves and litter pickers for Keep Britain Tidy’s annual event, which was postponed from the spring, due to the pandemic. The Mayor of Merton, Councillor Sally Kenny organised clean-up events in Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden town centres and others were held by groups including the Friends of Mitcham Common.

Merton Council scooped a prestigious national industry award for pioneering the world’s first low emission zone for construction. The Air Quality team from Merton’s Regulatory Services Partnership won the Environmental Services category of the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards at a virtual award ceremony held in October. The Cleaner Construction for London project has improved air quality on construction and demolition sites, increasing compliance in London’s Low Emission Zone, while promoting behaviour change and championing good practice. Merton Council was also a finalist in the Public Health category of the LGC Awards for its work on diabetes. Our public health team worked with the Merton Health and Wellbeing Board on an initiative called the Diabetes Truth Programme, which used people’s experiences of living with the condition to develop services tailored to support them.

Merton Digital Hub

A new network has been launched to help local businesses, start-ups, freelancers and entrepreneurs to connect and collaborate with businesses across Merton. The Merton Digital Hub, run by Wimbletech, gives members the opportunity to:

- make connections and create networks with businesses
- seek advice and support during this challenging time
- share best practice, knowledge and skills through online events
- enjoy a range of wider discounts and benefits

Local membership of Merton Digital Hub costs £15 plus VAT a month. Start-ups, entrepreneurs, freelancers, retailers and businesses of all sizes are welcome to join. Visit: www.wimbletech.com/digital-hub/merton

Community forums

Discussions about a range of topics will be held at these free community meetings and issues raised will be followed up by the relevant organisations. Venues are subject to Covid-19 restrictions and meetings may be held online.

**Morden Community Forum**
Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, Wednesday 24 February, 7.15pm.

**Mitcham Community Forum**
Vestry Hall, 336 London Road, Mitcham, Thursday 25 February, 7.15pm.

Local Plan

The council is creating a new Local Plan to provide a sound basis for planning decisions. Residents, businesses and anyone interested in the borough are invited to share their views. The council is keen to hear what people would like to see improved or protected in their neighbourhoods. Good planning decisions are vital for the quality of life of residents, and to attract new businesses and enterprises to sustain a buoyant long-term economy.

Many people have spent more time than ever in their local area this year, which has heightened awareness of the importance of having a good quality environment to live, work and relax in. Views can be shared via our online survey until Monday 1 February 2021. [Find out more](merton.gov.uk/localplan)

Community forums

Discussions about a range of topics will be held at these free community meetings and issues raised will be followed up by the relevant organisations. Venues are subject to Covid-19 restrictions and meetings may be held online.

**Morden Community Forum**
Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, Wednesday 24 February, 7.15pm.

**Mitcham Community Forum**
Vestry Hall, 336 London Road, Mitcham, Thursday 25 February, 7.15pm.

[Find out more](merton.gov.uk/communityforums)
Keeping Merton informed

New cabinet announced

New council Leader Councillor Mark Allison has unveiled his cabinet, who took up their portfolios with immediate effect from the full council meeting on 18 November. The ten cabinet members are:

- **Councillor Mark Allison**
  - Leader of the Council and the Chair of Cabinet

- **Councillor Eleanor Stringer**
  - Joint Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Education

- **Councillor Owen Pritchard**
  - Joint Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance, Recovery and the Local Economy

- **Councillor Natasha Irons**
  - Cabinet Member for Local Environment and Green Spaces

- **Councillor Marsie Skeete**
  - Cabinet Member for Women and Equalities

- **Councillor Martin Whelton**
  - Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency

- **Councillor Rebecca Lanning**
  - Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

- **Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah**
  - Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Skills

- **Councillor Agatha Akyigyina**
  - Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Public Safety and Tackling Crime

- **Councillor Tobin Byers**
  - Cabinet Member for Finance

Harris Academy Wimbledon building opens its doors

A flagship school building has opened its doors to pupils, as part of the council’s long-term strategy to improve education across the borough. With state of the art facilities, Harris Academy Wimbledon is one of the most modern academies in the capital and will eventually provide 900 places for 11 to 16-year-olds, plus a sixth form for 250 students.

The school opened two years ago on a temporary site at Whatley Avenue, leased by the council, to meet the demand for school places. The council was responsible for securing the new site at High Path in Wimbledon, including the complex purchase of two pieces of land which were not owned by the authority. The council then helped to re-house those tenants – moving the Day Centre to Leyton Road and Elim Church to Merton Hall.

Once this was completed, the Department for Education built the school premises.

The Harris Academy is designed to support the ongoing improvements in education in Merton, which have seen all secondary schools rated as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted in recent years.

Council praised by Ofsted

The national watchdog for schools and children’s services has praised the council for the quality of its work to keep local children safe during the pandemic.

Ofsted inspectors carried out a two-day focused inspection in October, to review the way the council adapted to ensure all children continued to be protected, since Covid-19 forced changes to the way services were delivered.

The council has maintained all its vital services for vulnerable children throughout the pandemic, ensuring initial support meetings could still go ahead, and introducing new ways of providing support for parents during lockdowns and restrictions.

The Ofsted report noted: “Dedicated and skilled children’s services staff have gone to great lengths to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on children and families in Merton. In turn, staff have been very well supported by senior leaders and managers.”
Councillors from all groups on Merton Council have paid tribute to the borough’s longest serving council Leader, Councillor Stephen Alambritis, who stood down at November’s council meeting.

Councillor Alambritis became the first Cypriot council Leader in Britain when he first won election to the role in 2010, and had led the authority for longer than any previous Leader since the council was formed in 1965.

As recognition for his work, he was awarded an MBE in the Queen’s Birthday Honours in October for services to local government in South London.

Despite stepping down as Leader, Councillor Alambritis will remain a backbench councillor, representing Ravensbury Ward, which he has served since 2003.

The leaders of all the political groups on the council have paid tribute to Councillor Alambritis’s public service.

Leader of the Conservative Group, Councillor Nick McLean, said: “Councillor Alambritis has always shown his dedication to public service and a commitment to the London Borough of Merton. It was entirely fitting that this decade of service to the borough was recently rewarded with a MBE.”

Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Anthony Fairclough, said: “I want to offer thanks from the Liberal Democrat group for Councillor Alambritis’s 17 years of public service. Particularly, I want to thank him for those times his administration has been willing to work with others.”

The Leader of the Merton Park Ward Independent Residents’ Group, Councillor Peter Southgate said: “While I haven’t agreed with every decision he’s made, our relationship has always remained open and courteous. Indeed much of the effectiveness of cross-party relationships in Merton is down to his informal and approachable personality, and his ready sense of humour.”

As Leader, Cllr Alambritis aimed to run the council in a more business-like way, with particular emphasis on supporting the most vulnerable and improving services for families. During the last decade, a state of the art leisure centre was built in Morden and a new library building opened in Colliers Wood. A learning disability centre was also developed in Abbey Ward and a brand new secondary school building in South Wimbledon welcomed its first pupils this term.

He also led the council’s support for local football club AFC Wimbledon to achieve their goal of returning home to Plough Lane in a brand new stadium, which is part of a development of more than 600 much-needed homes.

Councillor Alambritis said: “It has been a great honour to serve Merton as council Leader for the last decade. Partnership is the key to achieving more for everyone who calls our borough home.

“It has been an absolute privilege to work closely with teams of dedicated council staff and councillors from across the political spectrum, as well as all the community organisations, voluntary groups, businesses and other public services which are dedicated to supporting Merton.”

Longest-serving council Leader honoured by Queen

Councillor Stephen Alambritis was made MBE in the Queen’s Birthday Honours for services to local government, before stepping down after a decade leading the council.
Give a gift of kindness this Christmas

Care ❤️ TOGETHER
Donate ❤️ TOGETHER
Volunteer ❤️ TOGETHER

Turn the page and find out how to bring...

merton.gov.uk/Together
Join us to bring Merton Together this Christmas

As the season of goodwill approaches, the council is joining forces with the borough’s charities and voluntary organisations to help promote ways residents can come together to help those in need during Christmas and throughout the winter. My Merton finds out about the Merton Together campaign and how you can be part of it.

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted every aspect of our lives, but, throughout 2020, Merton has seen some incredible examples of community action, bringing our borough together to ensure we support those who need us the most.

- Providing free deliveries of essential supplies to those shielding at home.
- Volunteers kept isolated people company with phone calls.
- Schools remained open to provide childcare for key workers.
- The council provided business rates holidays and rent relief for local businesses.
- AFC Wimbledon, through its Dons Local Action Group, joined forces with our other foodbanks to play their role in protecting and helping the vulnerable.
- Together, we raised over £200,000 through Merton Giving to make up for local charities’ lost income.
- Council staff were redeployed into emergency roles and in support of the Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC) to staff the fantastic Community Hub.

Give a gift of kindness

Merton is coming together again this festive season, and this time we are asking residents to join us alongside our partners in the borough, from voluntary organisations and charities to foodbanks and sports clubs, to help those in need during Christmas and throughout the winter.

There are so many ways you can support the borough and join the campaign, from shopping locally to volunteering your time, donating money and food supplies to our local voluntary organisations, or showing your support online for #MertonTogether.

I WILL VOLUNTEER...

time to help people who are isolated and vulnerable and support charities like:

- Merton Community Response Hub
- Dons Local Action Group
- Age UK Merton

I WILL DONATE...

- to ‘Food for All’ Merton Giving’s fundraiser for people experiencing food insecurity.
- a shoe-box hamper to Merton Giving’s ‘Gift for All’ campaign to support vulnerable residents.
- to Commonside Community Development Trust, which works to improve the lives of residents.

Organisations bringing
In just three easy steps you can be part of this community campaign, which will bring MERTON TOGETHER for Christmas.

1 Visit merton.gov.uk/Together for more information and a list of charities and organisations that need your support this winter.
2 Sign up to our My Merton e-newsletter and keep updated on the latest campaign news: merton.gov.uk/newsletter
3 Download a pledge card from our website and share your acts of kindness on social media using #MertonTogether.

This is an incredibly difficult time for everyone in Merton, across London, in the country, and around the world. It’s only by working together that our community can get through the challenges that lie ahead.

The following pages are packed with information from some of the borough’s charities and voluntary organisations, giving details on projects they are running this winter to support those who need it most. Read more >

I WILL SUPPORT...

- my local businesses, so that they can survive through this difficult time.
- the ‘Keep Kids Connected’ project, through the Dons Local Action Group, which provides laptops to children who need access to online learning.

I WILL CARE...

- for the environment around me and be part of litter picks and community gardening, supported by Sustainable Merton.
- for my community and become a Covid-19 Community Champion, informing my friends, family and networks of the latest coronavirus guidance.
Making sure Merton’s older residents are kept warm and well as temperatures dip is one way the council is helping to bridge the gap between residents who have less than their more affluent neighbours.

However, this year it will be even more challenging for older people to keep healthy and active as they face spending more time indoors due to restrictions to try and prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Merton’s Warm & Well campaign to support older people over the winter months will continue and everyone can help by promoting the support and advice on offer.

Warm & Well in Merton can help older residents with energy bills advice, benefit checks and small grants, including those for heating and insulation. The campaign also promotes the activities offered by Age UK Merton and Wimbledon Guild to enhance the lives of older people.

Weathering the winter

- Get your heating system serviced annually by a qualified and registered engineer.
- Contact Age UK to see if you are entitled to help with paying energy bills.
- Keep fit by walking as much as possible, either outside or in your home, and eat healthily.
- Look after your mental health by staying in contact with family and friends online or via telephone if you are unable to see them face-to-face. Try to do an activity you enjoy each day and get plenty of sleep.
- Reduce the risk of falls – use a mixture of salt and sand to put on steps or paths in icy weather. If you have a disability, contact Merton’s Occupational Therapy team for an assessment of your mobility equipment needs. Call 020 8545 4477/4428 on weekdays between 9.30am and 12.30pm or email ssotduty@merton.gov.uk
- The campaign highlights that older people must avoid exposure to extreme cold, as this can lead to a rise in blood pressure and increase the risk of a heart attack or stroke.

Find out more

www.warmandwellinmerton.co.uk or call Age UK on 020 8648 5792

Coping during cold weather

- Keep moving – don’t sit still for more than an hour at a time
- Eat at least one hot meal a day and have lots of hot drinks
- Wear multiple thin layers of clothing
- Wear boots with non-slip soles and a warm lining, or thermal socks, when out and about
- Ask your family or friends to keep in touch more frequently to check you have everything you need
A season of goodwill

Christmas is going to be different this year, but, there is no shortage of festive spirit for those in need of a little seasonal sparkle.

Three more fridges to open

Three more community fridges will open in Merton, to stop good food from going to waste. The council’s Neighbourhood Fund is enabling environmental charity Sustainable Merton to expand the number of Merton’s Community Fridges from one to four. The fridges are filled with donations of surplus fruit and vegetables, harvested from Phipps Bridge Community Garden and Mitcham Community Orchard and Gardens as part of a community growers project, also run by Sustainable Merton.

In the six months since the first community fridge opened in May, almost 5,600kg of food has been distributed to residents. All four fridges are set to become community hubs, providing food workshops and demonstrations.

find out more www.sustainablemerton.org

Hundreds helped by Covid-19 hub

The Covid-19 Merton Community Response Hub is still offering support for vulnerable residents. Get in touch if you, or someone you know, needs help with:

- delivery of shopping or basic supplies
- prescription or medication collection
- telephone befriending
- advice on how to stay active
- support to stay independent at home.

The hub, which was set up in partnership with the council, is now jointly run by Merton Voluntary Service Council, Age UK Merton and Wimbledon Guild.

Between March and September, more than 800 volunteers got involved and responded to 2,000 requests for help from isolated households and residents most at risk from Covid-19. The hub delivered more than 600 care packages. Around 200 residents were supported by the Merton Social Prescribing team to get access to prescriptions and medication.

For support, email help@mvsc.co.uk or call 020 8685 2272 on weekdays from 10am until 4pm. If you would like to add your name to the volunteer waiting list, please email volunteer@mvsc.co.uk

Foodbank’s Christmas appeal

The Wimbledon Foodbank has launched its Christmas appeal for funds, following a tenfold rise in families facing food poverty. At the height of the lockdown in May, the foodbank supplied food for 582 households in one week – providing 20,000 meals, which helped to feed 2,113 residents. This is ten times more than in January, when the foodbank, based in Elim Pentecostal Church in Wimbledon, supported an average of 50 households a week, providing food for around 200 residents. Due to the pandemic and its impact on jobs, there are fears that many more residents could be struggling to feed themselves and their families this Christmas.

find out more www.wimbledon.foodbank.org.uk
The champions helping to keep everyone safe

Merton’s Covid-19 Community Champion scheme is ensuring all residents get the information they need to do their bit to help prevent the spread of the virus.

An army of champions are stepping forward to help protect Merton’s diverse communities, neighbourhoods and workplaces from the spread of Covid-19.

The council launched its Covid-19 Community Champion scheme in September, which was set up as part of its Covid-19 Outbreak Control Plan. The scheme helps to share important health information from trusted sources, including the NHS and Public Health England in a range of languages and formats.

The council holds regular briefings with the champions and provides them with all the campaign materials on the latest Covid-19 guidelines via email, text and at weekly virtual drop-in meetings. The champions then share this information with their communities, family, friends and colleagues via the channels they feel are most appropriate. This is helping to bridge the gap between public services and hard to reach groups and the champions feed back the issues their communities are facing.

The aim is to have community champions reaching out to everyone in the borough, including to faith groups, sports and social clubs and workplaces. Anyone who lives or works in Merton can become a Covid-19 Community Champion.

The virtual weekly drop-in meetings take place every Wednesday from noon until 1pm and from 7pm until 8pm.

Find out more Visit: merton.gov.uk/covid19-champions or email public.health@merton.gov.uk

Sarah Burrell has brought her passion and dedication to promoting inclusion to her role as a Covid-19 Community Champion. The Mitcham resident, who runs consultancy Sarah Burrell Inclusion, tells My Merton why she stepped up to take on the volunteer role.

Sarah said: “I really want to help with the Covid-19 response work to make sure everyone gets the information on what they can and can’t do to keep safe – as people’s lives are at risk. It’s so important that everyone gets the information on what is happening in a way they feel comfortable with, so no one is excluded. The champions provide a great way for me to speak out on behalf of people who feel they are not getting the safety information to meet their particular needs. It means I can feed back if health messages need to be modified to ensure the needs of people with disabilities are remembered – we can all work together to make the response work as inclusive as possible.

The champions are wonderful because they include such a wide range of people, who are getting the important messages out in lots of different ways. My personal style is to communicate with people in a friendly, personable way via my social media network and local Facebook groups.”

Sarah, who has been shielding, has also been running a weekly online Covid-19 support group called Let’s Stay Connected, to provide a safe space for people in difficult circumstances.
Giving Merton’s children a better start in life

Merton is a great place for families and our children’s centres make a huge contribution to this by giving children the good start in life they deserve. Staff worked hard to keep centres open during the spring lockdown for vital services, and supported families online and via the telephone. My Merton caught up with children’s centre worker Angelin Bhura to find out more.

Angelin Bhura is a childcare engagement officer who is currently based at Newminster Children’s Centre in Morden. Angelin, who has worked for Merton Children’s Centre Services for three-and-a-half years, and has 12 years’ experience of early years work, said: “I am really passionate about working with the under-fives, and helping them along their developmental milestones. I just love to see them develop in leaps and bounds from babies into children who are confident to start nursery or school.”

Merton has a network of children’s centres around the borough, which are helping to bridge the gap between the most deprived children and their peers. The centres provide happy, relaxed places for parents and carers, as well as mums-to-be, to drop in, receive any support they need and socialise with other local families. Due to the pandemic, the Children’s Centres Services are currently offering a mix of face-to-face and online support services and activities.

Angelin said: “We offer services for children aged zero to five, as well as support for pregnant mums. We offer a whole range of activities, such as the Baby Early Learning Together programme, which incorporates baby massage – a great way to support first time mums and help them bond with their babies. It also provides an opportunity for parents to make new friends and develop a support network close to where they live.

“Children learn and develop so much in their early years. Our programmes help them develop their speech and language and learn while playing. We can give parents support for things like potty training and other milestones to help their children get ready for nursery. We also support families to access childcare, if they are eligible for the Government-funded childcare places for two-year-olds.

“We also work with parents to give them some tactics and strategies to address any concerns they have around their child’s behaviour or development – seeing the positive impact these can have is very empowering for parents. A benefit of a child attending one of our centres is that we can pick up at an early stage if they are likely to require any additional support, which could be vital for their future achievements.”

Children’s centres also provide a support hub for any wider issues families might be facing and host children’s health and midwifery services. During lockdown, the centre’s team and the Early Years Facilities Management team worked tirelessly to keep the centres open. More than 400 families received vital health services or childcare support at the centres between April and June. From the start of the spring lockdown, staff maintained contact with the most vulnerable families, providing a vital lifeline.

Angelin said: “We immediately got in contact with the families we were working with. So many parents expressed how much getting a call from us meant to them. Lots of families really welcomed having someone to talk to about how their children were getting on. We also set up a Facebook page with lots of free, or low cost, fun and inspiring things for families to do.

Lockdown was extremely challenging for lots of families, particularly those in small flats with no gardens. It was a great way to reach out to families and we got a lot of really positive feedback.”

Summing up the role of children’s centres, she added: “They are just so important to a child and their families on so many levels and Merton’s centres really are outstanding.”

find out more
merton.gov.uk/childrenscentres
Children’s social workers are based in six Merton secondary schools to provide children who are at risk of harm with the support they need. These social workers work closely with teachers, children and their families at schools. The pilot scheme, rolled out in September, follows the council’s successful bid to join the Social Workers in Schools initiative, run by the national What Works Centre for Children’s Social Care.

Schools play a key part in keeping children safe. The thinking behind the pilot is that more collaborative working between social workers and schools will increase awareness of safeguarding.

Merton is a great place for families and work across the borough to keep children and young people safe outside their homes is also expanding. This work is called contextual safeguarding, and the council has been successful in a bid to be part of the Scale Up research project, supported by Bedfordshire University.

Contextual safeguarding recognises that children are influenced by a whole range of environments and people, beyond the control of their families or carers. As young people grow and develop, some may face risks of abuse and exploitation in their neighbourhoods, online or from their peer groups. The harm can include sexual or criminal grooming and young people who go missing from home are particularly vulnerable to this type of abuse and exploitation.

The council focused on an area in the borough where concern about anti-social behaviour and violence was expressed by young people and the police.

A community engagement team, funded by an Early Intervention Youth grant, engaged young people, residents and businesses to understand the issues and draw up a plan to make the area safer. The action included physical changes, such as fixing street lights and extending the reach of CCTV cameras. The pilot also identified ways the community could work together to create a more positive environment in the area. As part of the work, residents along with business owners and youth workers were given training to provide supervision for young people.

Bystander training was also provided to help people intervene safely in incidents.

Merton’s Safeguarding Children Partnership is developing a Contextual Safeguarding Strategy, as part of its commitment to keep all Merton’s children and young people safe from harm.

As young people grow and develop, some may face risks of abuse and exploitation in their neighbourhoods, online or from their peer groups.
Thank you for recycling

It has been a year like no other. However, thanks to the combined efforts of residents, council staff and Veolia, we have been able to minimise the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on your recycling and rubbish collections.

During the height of the spring lockdown, we received lots of messages from residents, expressing their thanks to these key workers for their extraordinary efforts. In turn, we used the thank you for recycling theme of this year’s Recycle Week in September as an opportunity to thank residents for continuing to recycle during the pandemic.

As we continue to live alongside the coronavirus, please carry on supporting your hardworking collection crews in the following ways:

- Minimise the amount you throw away and separate your rubbish before putting it out. Use the guide on the next two pages to help you recycle as much of your household waste as possible.
- Keep disposable paper face coverings out of your paper and card recycling bin. Put them – and disposable gloves – into your general waste bin and tie the bag securely.
- Help to keep yourself and your collection crews safe by wiping the handles of bins and recycling boxes when you put them out for collection. Wash your hands thoroughly before and after you touch the containers.
- Before visiting Garth Road Household Reuse and Recycling Centre in Morden, please visit our website to check what arrangements are in place: merton.gov.uk/recycling

Waste disposal for self-isolating households

It is vital that households who are self-isolating because of a confirmed or a suspected case of coronavirus follow the government’s advice, which states:

- Store personal waste, such as used tissues and disposable cleaning cloths, in disposable rubbish bags.
- Place these bags into a second bag, tie securely and keep separate from other waste.
- These bags should be put aside for at least 72 hours before being put into your usual external general waste bin.

Don’t write off your paper and card recycling

Around 5,550 tonnes of paper and card is collected for recycling every year from homes across Merton. Houses and some flats have a dedicated, blue-lidded, wheeled bin for paper and card to keep it clean and dry until it can be recycled into high quality, paper based products. Recently, there has been an increase in contamination – things including disposable face masks, drinks cartons and food-soiled pizza boxes have been put into the paper and card bin. If this happens, your collection crew may leave a tag requesting that the wrong items are removed before the bin can be emptied. Residents in flats with communal bins should put paper and card in the mixed recycling bin.
### Houses and converted flats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Collection Frequency</th>
<th>Example Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food waste</strong></td>
<td>Yes please</td>
<td>All cooked and uncooked food, Dairy products: cheese and eggs, Fruit waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paper &amp; card</strong></td>
<td>Yes please</td>
<td>Newspapers and magazines, Card and cardboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plastics, glass, cans and cartons</strong></td>
<td>Yes please</td>
<td>Plastic bottles, Plastic pots, tubs, trays etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rubbish</strong></td>
<td>Yes please</td>
<td>Non-recyclable rubbish, Dirty cardboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Textiles &amp; shoes</strong></td>
<td>Yes please</td>
<td>Clothes and linen, Shoes (tied together)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Batteries</strong></td>
<td>Yes please</td>
<td>Household batteries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Flatten down large cardboard boxes before putting them in the bin.
- Empty and rinse all containers. Squash plastic bottles. Remove film lids from plastic pots.
- Only rubbish placed in this wheelie bin (with the lid closed) will be collected.
- Line your indoor kitchen caddy with compostable liners or old newspaper (no plastic bags).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>at-a-glance guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No thanks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Plastic bags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Packaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Oil or liquids</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No thanks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Paper face masks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(place in your rubbish bin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dirty cardboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g. pizza boxes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shredded paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(unless placed in a paper bag or envelope)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tissues &amp; paper towels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Food &amp; drink cartons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(place in your recycling box)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No thanks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Plastic bags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Plastic film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Crisp packets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hard plastics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Toys etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Polystyrene</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No thanks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Anything recyclable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Electrical items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hazardous waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• DIY waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gas bottles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Batteries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communal flats</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collected every week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food waste</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recycling</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rubbish</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘Tis the season to be green

Living in one of London’s greenest boroughs has made Merton a particularly great place for families this year. Many of us have reconnected with the environment during 2020 and we can take our renewed appreciation of the natural world from lockdown into the festive season by using these top tips for having an eco-friendly Christmas.

1. Your collection days will change over the festive season. Check on the back cover of My Merton when your recycling and rubbish will be collected.

2. Plan what Christmas gifts and food you need in advance and buy things with less packaging to help you to save money and waste less.

3. If you’re having your online Christmas shopping delivered, flatten and recycle the cardboard boxes in your blue-lidded wheelie bin.

4. Rather than buying a gift, make your own – bake some Christmas cookies or create a natural Christmas decoration from foliage like holly or mistletoe.

5. If you scrunch your wrapping paper and it stays in a ball, it can be recycled. Please remove ribbons and bows before putting it in your blue-lidded wheelie bin.

6. If you choose a real Christmas tree, we will collect it free of charge in January – see the back cover of My Merton for details. Or you could plant it in the garden.

7. If you are planning to spend more time in the garden next year, consider subscribing to our garden waste collection service. With more than 10,000 homes already signed up, the service is more popular than ever. Visit: merton.gov.uk/gardenwaste

8. Please avoid having a Christmas clear out, as, like Santa, this is the busiest time of the year for our hardworking recycling and rubbish collection crews.

9. Use up your festive food – don’t let your leftovers go to waste. Most foods can be frozen if the use by date has not passed. For delicious recipe ideas and tips for storing different types of foods to make them last longer, visit www.lovefoodhatewaste.com

10. Make it a New Year’s resolution in 2021 to reduce, reuse and recycle more. Pull out and keep this recycling guide to check what to put in each container and download the bespoke collection calendar for your property from our website.

'Tis the season to be green
Staying well this winter

The pandemic has made prioritising our health even more vital. *My Merton* looks at the support available to help the whole family to stay fit and healthy this winter and reduce the risk of developing severe Covid-19.

**Making healthier choices**

**Eat a balanced diet**
Maintaining a healthy weight is important. Extra weight makes it difficult for the body to fight heart disease, cancer and Covid-19.

**Keep active**
Aim to do some exercise every day, as this is beneficial for both your physical and mental health.

**Free online fitness classes**, including tap dancing, yoga and Pilates, are being offered to residents aged 50 and over. Funded by the council, in partnership with Wimbledon Guild, sessions include keep fit, and a circuit class with Chelsea Football Club. There are also exercise classes for people who have had a stroke and the instructors from Dancing with Parkinson’s group have moved online. www.wimbledonguild.co.uk/how-we-help/activities

**Mental wellbeing**
Take care of your mental health in these anxious times. For free one-to-one support, contact Merton Uplift on 020 353 5888 or visit: www.mertonuplift.nhs.uk and www.good-thinking.uk

**Quit smoking**
Smoking damages your lungs and weakens your immune system, making it harder to fight off respiratory infections, such as Covid-19.

**Substance misuse**
WDP Merton provides support for residents who are affected by drugs and alcohol problems. Call 0300 303 4610 or visit www.wdp.org.uk

**Is your child up to date with their vaccinations?**

Fewer children in Merton than across the country have been vaccinated against measles, mumps, rubella, meningitis, diphtheria and whooping cough. This is of huge concern as children can become seriously ill from these extremely infectious and sometimes life-threatening diseases, which are all preventable.

GPs are continuing to offer routine vaccinations for babies and pre-school children at their surgeries – these are all free of charge. Parents and carers should be reassured that doctor’s surgeries are stringently conforming to the latest Covid-19 guidelines.

Check your child’s Red Book or contact your doctor’s surgery to make sure your child is up to date with all their immunisations, including two doses of the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccination and their pre-school booster.

Babies need their first injections at eight weeks, then 12 weeks, 16 weeks and one year. The flu nasal spray vaccine being offered for two to three-year-olds at the GP is safe to be given at the same time as other vaccinations.

**Get your flu jab**
The free flu vaccination programme has been expanded this year to help ease winter pressures on the NHS. Flu can make some people seriously ill and, sadly, some die each year from complications caused by the condition.

Adults who are susceptible to flu are also most at risk of becoming very ill if they catch Covid-19, which means getting the flu vaccine is even more important this year.

Ask your pharmacist or GP if you’re eligible for a free flu vaccine.

**JUST THE FLU?**

The free flu vaccination programme has been expanded this year to help ease winter pressures on the NHS. Flu can make some people seriously ill and, sadly, some die each year from complications caused by the condition.

Adults who are susceptible to flu are also most at risk of becoming very ill if they catch Covid-19, which means getting the flu vaccine is even more important this year.

Ask your pharmacist or GP if you’re eligible for a free flu vaccine.

**Is your child up to date with their vaccinations?**

Fewer children in Merton than across the country have been vaccinated against measles, mumps, rubella, meningitis, diphtheria and whooping cough. This is of huge concern as children can become seriously ill from these extremely infectious and sometimes life-threatening diseases, which are all preventable.

GPs are continuing to offer routine vaccinations for babies and pre-school children at their surgeries – these are all free of charge. Parents and carers should be reassured that doctor’s surgeries are stringently conforming to the latest Covid-19 guidelines.

Check your child’s Red Book or contact your doctor’s surgery to make sure your child is up to date with all their immunisations, including two doses of the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccination and their pre-school booster.

Babies need their first injections at eight weeks, then 12 weeks, 16 weeks and one year. The flu nasal spray vaccine being offered for two to three-year-olds at the GP is safe to be given at the same time as other vaccinations.
Protect those you love

The NHS Test and Trace Covid-19 app has been designed to give everyone a simple way to help protect themselves, their loved ones and their community from the spread of Covid-19. It can be easily downloaded from the Google and Apple app store. Using the app is the fastest way people can see if they are at risk from the virus, which means they can act quickly to protect others.

Six benefits

- **Trace**: find out if you’ve been near app users who have tested positive for Covid-19.
- **Alert**: tells you the Covid-19 risk in your postcode area.
- **Check-in**: lets you know if you’ve visited a venue where you may have come into contact with someone who has the virus.
- **Symptoms**: check if you have Covid-19 symptoms.
- **Test**: helps you order a test if needed.
- **Isolate**: keeps track of your self-isolation countdown and gives advice.

The Covid-19 NHS App works as you move around. It does not use details, such as your name and address, nor does it access personal information held on your mobile.

-find out more [www.covid19.nhs.uk](http://www.covid19.nhs.uk)

Test and Trace


- While you wait for the results of your test, you must remain isolated. Anyone else in your household should self-isolate for 14 days.
- If the test comes back negative, you and other members of your household no longer need to self-isolate.
- If you test positive for the virus, you must continue to self-isolate for ten days from when your symptoms started. Members of your household must complete 14 days of self-isolation, from when you first showed symptoms.
- NHS Test and Trace will advise by text or email how to share details of the people you have been in close contact with. These include those you live with and people you have been within two metres of, for more than 15 minutes.
- If you are told that you’ve been in contact with a person who has coronavirus, you will need to self-isolate 14 days from the day you were last in contact with the person.
- People you live with do not need to self-isolate if you do not have symptoms.

Managing your medicines

GP practices and community pharmacies are working hard to keep patients safe, and to ensure medicines are available for all those who need them. Check what you have at home before you place your order, and only request supplies for up to one month at a time to avoid creating shortages. Order online via your GP practice website or via an app such as NHS App or Patient Access 10 days in advance, to allow time for your order to be completed. If you are self-isolating or clinically extremely vulnerable ask a friend, relative or neighbour to collect your medicines for you.

Community pharmacies will still be available to offer health advice but do check their opening hours. To find out where your nearest pharmacy is, visit: [nhs.uk/find-a-pharmacy](http://nhs.uk/find-a-pharmacy)

Merton Young Inspector Martin Miranda, a university student from Pollards Hill, who has been helping to encourage residents to download the app.

-Merton Safe

Protect your loved ones.
Get the app.
If you receive a call from Sue Davison or one of her team, to tell you must self-isolate immediately because you or one of your contacts has tested positive for Covid-19, it is vital that you do so, by law, even if it is difficult.

Sue said: “I am always really aware some of the people I am contacting could be in really bad circumstances, due to the pandemic. They may be feeling scared at what testing positive will mean for their lives, and need some reassurance. Understandably, some people are reluctant to share information about their lives and so it’s vital that we work hard to build up trust. When we call residents, we give our names, and we are assigned cases so people are not contacted by multiple callers. Residents tend to see the council as a public service which is there for them, so they have the comfort of knowing where we are calling from.”

Since local authorities took on new responsibilities in the summer, Merton Council has been working to complement the efforts of the national NHS Test and Trace service.

On average, the national service successfully contacts 85% of Covid-19 cases in Merton. The new local service uses a local London number, rather than the national 0300 0135 000 number, which some people have mistaken for a cold caller and not answered.

Sue said: “If the national service is unable to contact a resident who has tested positive for Covid-19, we pick up the case and follow it through. As we are working locally, if we can’t get in touch with someone via the telephone, we can go round and see them. It’s not about chastising people – it’s about making sure they are aware they need to self-isolate, and giving them the information they need to keep themselves and their families safe. It’s also about finding out about the challenges they are facing and offering them support, if they need it.”

Sue’s team can put residents in touch with a range of support available in the borough, some of which you can find details of in this edition of My Merton. Some residents may qualify for financial support for lost earnings while they are self-isolating.

Sue previously worked as a call handler for the emergency services and for the national NHS Test and Trace service. Summing up her role for the council, Sue said: “It’s a challenging work which requires resilience and empathy on a day-to-day basis, but enormously rewarding, as we have a really sense of being part of borough’s overall work to help support residents through the pandemic.”

For information on financial support available for people who are self-isolating, visit: www.gov.uk
On course for the future

Some of the first students on adult learning courses, created in response to the pandemic, have spoken about the benefits of learning new skills for their future employment prospects and on their wellbeing.

Merton Council successfully bid for funding from the Greater London Authority, for adult learning courses to support residents most affected by Covid-19. The investment, of nearly £450,000, has enabled residents to continue to access courses and training opportunities to be significantly expanded. The funding, awarded in August, is set to support more than 900 online and face-to-face places on adult education courses over the next two years.

The courses being delivered by Merton College include fast-track preparation for both GCSE English and Maths, Functional Skills in English and Maths Level 2, Award in Health and Social Care, First Aid for Adults and Inspiration to Design.

It is not only residents who have been made redundant or been furloughed or are eligible for the Job Support Scheme, who are benefitting from the courses to update their work skills and learn the new ones required to seek an alternative type of employment. These learning opportunities are also helping to bridge the gap between residents living in some of the most deprived parts of Merton and more affluent areas of the borough. Some of the funding was invested in computer equipment to lend to residents who didn’t have the resources to purchase their own.

A series of webinars to help residents apply for jobs, funded by the council and offered by training provider GSS, have received excellent feedback. The webinars include Skills for Applications, Career Confidence, Civil Service Success and Resilience and Wellbeing.

One participant, who has been out of work for a while, said: “Attending the courses gave me motivation and improved my confidence to search for a job. It also helped me get into a routine, as you can lose your focus. I know I am not the only person out of work, but I was spending a lot of time on my own and found it beneficial to interact with other people for a couple of hours.”

The continuation of leisure courses, from violin making to watercolour painting, has boosted the wellbeing of many residents. Within a few days of the lockdown, tutors at Merton College had transformed ongoing courses into online lessons on platforms including Zoom, YouTube, Instagram and Moodle.

A hand embroidery student said: “It has been great to see familiar faces each week and to be given these mini projects to do. They have really motivated us and given an extra focus during what for some of us has been quite a long period of, otherwise, isolation.”

find out more
merton.gov.uk/adultlearning
Shop local – shop safe this Christmas

At what would normally be the busiest trading time of the year, many businesses across the borough are facing a very uncertain future. My Merton looks at ways you can show your support and help local firms to get through these tough times.

The national restrictions have been devastating for many of the 6,000 businesses in Merton, many of which are small businesses, family firms and local companies. Since emerging from the spring lockdown, they quickly adapted the way they trade, including setting up online, and pulled out all the stops to make their premises Covid-secure. The council’s Regulatory Services Partnership has been supporting companies to follow the latest Government guidance and provide a safe environment for shoppers. Now, during the run up to Christmas, our businesses need your custom more than ever.

Ways to support your local businesses:
- Shop online – many small local businesses have started trading online this year
- Order a takeaway from your local restaurant or pop into your favourite café
- Leave good reviews online and share content from local companies on social media
- Reschedule missed appointments for a future date

Boosting businesses

Merton Council officers are among the contributors to Merton Chamber of Commerce’s Reach Out and Connect free, online webinars, which encourage businesses to share their experiences and ideas. Sign up here: www.mertonchamber.co.uk/events

The chamber is a representative for the Kickstart scheme, which aims to give unemployed young people a future by creating Government subsidised jobs. Under the scheme, employers can offer six month work placements to young people aged 16–24 who are claiming Universal Credit. For more information, email: info@mertonchamber.co.uk

Christmas sparkle

Christmas trees will be put up by the council in Colliers Wood, Raynes Park, Mitcham, Morden and South Wimbledon. Other organisations, which usually host festive events, will be adding their own decorations to the council’s lights, which will bring some sparkle to shopping areas. Look out for Love Wimbledon’s eight reindeer installations in the town centre. Visit lovewimbledon.org

Real Christmas trees Visit Pines and Needles Christmas store in Wimbledon Park to select the perfect tree for you. Take away on the day or arrange a delivery. To order online, visit: www.pinesandneedles.com
EU citizens
Merton residents

Supporting our EU citizens to apply for settled status
merton.gov.uk/euss
Preparing for Brexit

The UK left the European Union (EU) in January and the transition or implementation period is due to end on 31 December. *My Merton* looks at the changes this will bring in the New Year, and how residents and businesses can get ready.

At the end of the year, the UK will be leaving the EU single market and customs union. The free movement of workers between the UK and the EU countries, and the associated rights to the same working conditions, social security and health services, will also end.

The council is reminding residents, businesses and voluntary organisations to take the necessary steps to prepare for the new rules, which come into effect on 1 January 2021.

Residents planning to travel to EU countries in 2021 will need to make sure they fulfil the new passport and healthcare requirements. Visas are not required for short trips to EU countries, but they will be required for all stays lasting for 90 days or more.

The Check, Change, Go online tool at [gov.uk/transition](http://gov.uk/transition) can be used to identify the necessary next steps businesses and residents need to take to get ready for 1 January 2021.

**Businesses**

Merton Council is working with Merton Chamber of Commerce to provide tailored support for businesses. Comprehensive Government guidance is also available on how the new rules apply for each type of business. Businesses will need to take action to prepare the changes, even if they do not trade with or do business in the EU. The rules will vary for different industries but are likely to impact on workforce, data protection and contracts.

It is advisable for businesses to plan for any future staff and skill shortages due to the loss of workers from the EU. It will be important for employers to check the new-point immigration system if they want to employ workers from outside the UK from the 1 January.

Many businesses will also need to review their supply chain to ensure their suppliers have prepared for the end of the transition period.

**Voluntary sector**

Merton’s charities and voluntary groups should also review their supply chains and the impact the end of the transition phase will have on their workforce. In recognition of the challenges voluntary groups have faced due to Covid-19, the council is offering support, and in some cases funding, to ensure they can continue to deliver their vital services.

---

**European Union Settled Status (EUSS)**

EU nationals have made a significant contribution to the borough, and are valued members of our communities. Merton Council has been working hard to encourage all residents from EU countries, and eligible non-European Economic Area (EEA) residents to apply for settled status if they would like to stay. It is important that these residents get settled status to keep their rights to remain in the country, vote, get free medical care and welfare benefits.

The latest quarterly EUSS statistics, published in June, revealed 12,410 applications from Merton were received, of which 10,460 were successfully concluded. As a business-like council, we have commissioned specialist services to help residents make successful EUSS applications. Citizens Advice Merton and Lambeth, South West London Law Centres and the Association for Polish Family are continuing to provide support.

The deadline to apply for EUSS is 30 June 2021.

[find out more](http://gov.uk/eusettlementscheme, merton.gov.uk/euss and merton.gov.uk/brexit)
Help us to tackle climate change

My Merton looks at the action plan to achieve net-zero greenhouse emissions from the council's operations by 2030 and the borough by 2050.

In November, Merton’s Climate Strategy and Action Plan was approved by the council. The plan, created by the borough’s Climate Emergency Group, sets out the key sources of the borough’s greenhouse emissions and the actions needed to reduce them.

Last July, Merton Council unanimously agreed to step up its commitment to reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, by declaring a climate emergency. The declaration was in response to the rising concern about global warming, due to greenhouse gases produced by human activity.

Extreme weather conditions are becoming more common around the world, and a rise in temperatures could be catastrophic for our planet.

The hard work and enthusiasm of the volunteer members of our Climate Emergency Group, made a valuable contribution to the development of the strategy and the action plan.

The next step is to set up a new Climate Action Group and the council will be inviting residents, businesses and organisations from across the borough to help implement the plan by sharing their interest in and knowledge of ways to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The aim is to have groups dedicated to the different themes in the plan. These include the shift towards low carbon buildings and energy, the transition to more sustainable forms of travel, the change towards a green economy and making Merton greener.

The plan to tackle climate change will build on work already happening to improve air quality and reduce waste across the borough.

Actions to reduce the borough’s greenhouse gases

Buildings and energy account for 81% of Merton’s emissions

Council pledge:
- Require new buildings to be low carbon and resilient to the impacts of climate change. Lobby for tighter regulations and funding for low carbon buildings.

Everyone can work towards:
- Improving the energy efficiency of homes and workplaces.
- Increasing local renewable electricity.
- Replacing gas heating with low carbon alternatives, such as heat pumps.

Transport accounts for 19% of Merton’s emissions

Council pledges include:
- Supporting new cycle paths and wider pavements.
- Working with Transport for London for faster public transport decarbonisation.

Everyone can work towards:
- Reducing car use in favour of walking and cycling.
- Replacing diesel and petrol cars with electric vehicles.

Greening the economy

Council pledges include:
- Encouraging waste reduction.
- Supporting green businesses.
- Enhancing green spaces.

Everyone can work towards:
- Consuming more sustainable and locally produced goods.
- Producing less waste by reusing items and buying products with less packaging.
- Cultivating more plants around homes and in neighbourhoods.

My Merton looks at the action plan to achieve net-zero greenhouse emissions from the council's operations by 2030 and the borough by 2050.

The action

The council is looking to lead the way, working towards converting all its buildings and its transport fleet to net-zero emission fuels by 2030.
Families across the borough welcomed the introduction of 25 new Schools Streets, when children returned to their classrooms in September. These, added to Merton’s three existing schemes, led to the borough having the highest proportion of operational School Streets in London, in figures Healthy Streets Scorecard and Mums for Lungs published in November. Under the scheme, roads are closed around school dropping-off and picking-up times, and temporarily transformed into walking and cycling only zones. The move has created safe places outside school gates, and the space for families to maintain social distancing.

The council is actively encouraging all Merton children and their families to walk, cycle or scoot to school if they can. Merton is a great place for families, and having fewer cars around the schools will reduce air pollution and the potential for traffic accidents.

Children and babies are particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of pollution from vehicle exhausts, so it’s vital that air quality is improved around school gates. Travelling by bike and on foot to school is a great way to encourage children to lead more active, healthier lives.

Five Low Traffic Schemes are also being trialled in the borough, to prevent the use of residential streets as rat runs. The road closures aim to liberate residential roads from being clogged up with polluting and potentially dangerous traffic, and create a pleasant environment for everyone. Reducing traffic in residential streets will create spaces for people of all ages to socialise, play, walk, cycle, shop and use local services. Research shows that low traffic schemes have led to a reduction in car journeys by more than 40 per cent.

Both schemes were introduced as part of the council’s action to promote healthy and safe travel, following our climate change declaration in July 2019 and to enable people to maintain social distancing during the pandemic. Due to the need to avoid public transport at busy times, to control the spread of the virus, there were concerns this would lead to a huge increase in car use.

The council also introduced pop-up cycle lanes and temporary pavement widening schemes across the borough to make cycling and walking safer. All of these schemes were funded by the council’s successful bids to Transport for London. Due to the pandemic, experimental traffic management orders were used to implement temporary School Streets and Low Traffic Zones during the statutory consultation period. This means residents and the council can monitor the impact of the trials during the next six months and submit their views and experiences to the council’s consultations, which run until March or April. This feedback will be used to help the council to decide which schemes will be made permanent within 18 months.

The council is trialling schemes to reduce traffic across the borough as part of its commitment to create safer, healthier neighbourhoods and to support residents making more trips on foot or by bike.
Our Foster Carers change children’s and young people’s lives – could you be one of them?

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

Find out more about fostering with us from your home at one of our Fostering Information Sessions. Check website for updates on whether sessions will be face-to-face or online. Sessions (Wednesdays) on:
- 13 January, 10.30am–noon
- 27 January, 5.30–7pm
- 10 February, 10.30am–noon
- 24 February, 5.30–7pm
- 10 March, 10.30am–noon
- 24 March, 5.30–7pm

Merton urgently needs to find 20 foster families in 2021. Can you help to change a young person’s life?

Call us today on 0800 073 0874/020 8545 4070
Visit merton.gov.uk/fostering
Email fostering@merton.gov.uk
Follow us on Facebook: Merton Fostering

At Merton we support our foster carers using an innovative approach called Mockingbird Family Model (MFM).
The Wombles are back in Wimbledon

Merton Council was part of the team that helped to bring AFC Wimbledon home to Plough Lane. *My Merton* relives the extraordinary journey, spanning almost three decades, to realise a dream that the council shared with football fans.

The biggest fixture of this football season for AFC Wimbledon and its fans was on Tuesday 3 November, when the team played their first match on home turf after 29 years of exile.

The football club, known as The Dons, met Doncaster Rovers in a League One clash at their new stadium in Plough Lane, Wimbledon. The emotional return of the players to Merton attracted national and international news coverage, which recognised the determination of the club, the dedicated support of the fans and the council’s pivotal work to bring AFC Wimbledon back home. Plough Lane was the home of Wimbledon Football Club, from 1912 until 1991, when the club moved its matches to Crystal Palace’s ground in Selhurst Park – a temporary arrangement, which ended up lasting over a decade until 2002, when the club, which won the FA Cup in 1988, relocated to Milton Keynes.

The same year, a group of Wimbledon football fans created AFC Wimbledon. The Buckinghamshire Club became known as Milton Keynes Dons. Back then, the creation of a new stadium would have been hard to imagine for AFC Wimbledon, who were based at Kingsmeadow in Kingston.

Fortunately, Merton Council also shared the goal of bringing the club home and in December 2015 the council’s cross-party planning committee unanimously approved plans by AFC Wimbledon and Galliard Homes to build a new stadium in the centre of a housing development of more than 600 much-needed new homes.

In July 2016, cheering fans lined the streets of Wimbledon to celebrate AFC Wimbledon’s promotion to League One. The same year, the development got the green light from London Mayor Sadiq Khan. By the end of 2017, all legal agreements had been completed and former council Leader, Councillor Stephen Alambritis handed the signed official decision notice to AFC Wimbledon’s former Chief Executive, Erik Samuelson, to build the new stadium on the site of the former Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium.

There are more than 3,000 members of the Dons Trust, which owns 75% of AFC Wimbledon. The club owns the subsidiary that owns the new Plough Lane stadium, which opened with an initial capacity of 9,300. This can be expanded to 20,000 by creating a bowl-shaped arena. Due to restrictions to prevent the spread of Covid-19, crowds were replaced with cardboard cut-outs of some of the fans who had played a part in bringing AFC Wimbledon home.
Don’t miss out
Subscribe to our email news

merton.gov.uk/newsletter
Facebook
Twitter
Instagram
2020 will go down in the history books as a year which we will all remember during festive seasons for many years to come. But, while we are still in these unprecedented times, we can reminisce over some memories of Merton Christmases past.

Many of us have rediscovered our local parks this year and Merton has a long tradition of residents enjoying the borough’s green spaces as much during the winter as they do in the summer. Skating, sledgeing and even curling were popular activities during the Victorian period, when harsh winters led to the creation of snowy slopes and impromptu ice rinks as ponds froze.

Around the 1900s, the snow-covered hillocks of Wimbledon Common became packed with people sledgeing, and some of the wealthier families from Wimbledon Village would even host sledgeing parties there with refreshments.

Equally popular during this period, as temperatures dipped, was skating on Wimbledon Common’s frozen ponds. Residents crowded onto the temporary rinks, despite the obvious dangers. Tragically, some local people lost their lives when the ice broke and they became trapped in the freezing water below.

The game of curling was also regularly played on the common’s frozen ponds and competitions were staged up until the 1930s. The sport, in which players slide stones towards a target, was thought to be introduced to Wimbledon by the London Scottish Regiment.

A designated pond was used for curling close to Kingston Road, with a second rectangular pond near Camp Road. There were ponds on Mitcham Common too. Excavations left by gravel diggers in the 1900s filled with water and became ice rinks in the winter. The area was landscaped during the 1970s and the ponds, including the Seven Islands Ponds, are now favourite locations for anglers.

Many residents will be doing their Christmas shopping locally this year, as they did in 1907 when Wimbledon Broadway was photographed, showing some of the local businesses which had decorated their shops in seasonal style.

Bridging the gap between those less fortunate and wealthier residents remains an important part of the season of goodwill. During the 1950s, Mitcham Rotary Club funded a Christmas tree in Fair Green in Mitcham as part of their campaign to raise funds for the poor and elderly. In 1958, Jack the donkey accompanied the fundraisers as they walked through Mitcham collecting donations.
**Prevent crime at Christmas**

It’s not just residents getting into the festive spirit. Beware of the thieves and scammers after a Christmas bonus and stay safe this winter.

**A decade of support for abuse survivors**

The council’s One Stop Shop marked 10 years of offering support and advice to survivors of domestic abuse.

During the past decade, the service has given hundreds of residents the chance to speak out about the abuse they face with confidence and get the specialist help they need, including for housing and legal issues.

One survivor said: “I felt lost, afraid and lonely. For years I lived this life. I attended the One Stop Shop and was greeted by a warm smile of reassurance, a cup of tea and treated with compassion. Thank you.”

Domestic abuse can take many forms, including physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and financial. Men, as well as women, can be subjected to abuse.

Contact Merton Independent Domestic Violence Advisors, by calling 020 7801 1777 or visit [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk).
For information on the Rape Crisis Live Chat Helpline visit: [www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk). Always call 999 if you are in danger.

**A time for giving – but not to scammers**

Our trading standards officers warn that scams are increasing, so don’t let your festive spirit put you at risk.

- **Online shopping** Always check who you are buying from and use a protected method of payment, such as PayPal, or a credit card. Check there is a padlock in the address bar and never use public wifi to make purchases.
- **Dangerous goods** Watch out for street traders and door sellers offering cheap alcohol or electrical goods. The alcohol could contain dangerous chemicals and the goods might not comply with safety requirements.
- **Charities** Christmas is a time for giving, but double-check who you are giving money to.
- **Telephone calls** Watch out for callers posing as the bank, the police or HM Revenue and Customs asking about recent transactions. Do not divulge any information to the person on the telephone. Instead, hang up and take five minutes to think. If in doubt look up the organisation’s number from the internet or a bill and telephone them to check. Call a family member or friend first to make sure the line is clear. Remember, the bank or police will never ask for your bank details over the phone.
- **Deliveries** Beware of unusual delivery slips put through the door asking you to ring a premium rate number (09) to reschedule a delivery.

[Contact Consumer Advice on 0808 223 1133](tel:08082231133)

**Don’t present an opportunity to thieves**

The festive season can bring a spike in burglaries and thefts, so keep your valuables safe.

- Don’t advertise expensive gifts by leaving boxes outside, and don’t leave curtains open to show off presents.
- If you’re going out, make sure doors are locked securely and leave a light on, so it looks like someone’s home.
- If you are going away, cancel deliveries and ask a neighbour to collect post.
- Register new bikes, tech and other valuables with a service such as [immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com).
- Be careful with your belongings in shops, bars and restaurants. Don’t take more money or cards than you need and be wary at cashpoints.

Zoe Gallen
supporting a survivor

Zoe Gallen
supporting a survivor

Our trading standards officers warn that scams are increasing, so don’t let your festive spirit put you at risk.

- **Online shopping** Always check who you are buying from and use a protected method of payment, such as PayPal, or a credit card. Check there is a padlock in the address bar and never use public wifi to make purchases.
- **Dangerous goods** Watch out for street traders and door sellers offering cheap alcohol or electrical goods. The alcohol could contain dangerous chemicals and the goods might not comply with safety requirements.
- **Charities** Christmas is a time for giving, but double-check who you are giving money to.
- **Telephone calls** Watch out for callers posing as the bank, the police or HM Revenue and Customs asking about recent transactions. Do not divulge any information to the person on the telephone. Instead, hang up and take five minutes to think. If in doubt look up the organisation’s number from the internet or a bill and telephone them to check. Call a family member or friend first to make sure the line is clear. Remember, the bank or police will never ask for your bank details over the phone.
- **Deliveries** Beware of unusual delivery slips put through the door asking you to ring a premium rate number (09) to reschedule a delivery.

Find out more
Call Consumer Advice on 0808 223 1133

**Don’t present an opportunity to thieves**

The festive season can bring a spike in burglaries and thefts, so keep your valuables safe.

- Don’t advertise expensive gifts by leaving boxes outside, and don’t leave curtains open to show off presents.
- If you’re going out, make sure doors are locked securely and leave a light on, so it looks like someone’s home.
- If you are going away, cancel deliveries and ask a neighbour to collect post.
- Register new bikes, tech and other valuables with a service such as [immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com).
- Be careful with your belongings in shops, bars and restaurants. Don’t take more money or cards than you need and be wary at cashpoints.
Tell us about your top priorities for policing in Merton.
It’s important to me that the police and community work together. This could be through schemes such as Neighbourhood Watch, the Community Speed Watch, or just by sharing local information. I also want to make sure that we have lots of opportunities to listen to different communities, particularly our young people. This is vital if the community is to trust us. I want us to use stop and search appropriately and explain how we are policing and why. In Merton, we will continue to focus on reducing violence and also on crimes that can be more hidden, such as domestic abuse.

Is the Met Police a place people from all backgrounds can thrive?
The Met has been very welcoming and really does feel like a big family, with people from very different backgrounds. Leaders value people for who they are and the skills they have. There are lots of different staff associations and clubs where people with shared interests can get together and support each other.

What inspired you to join the police?
I grew up watching Juliet Bravo on the television and wanted to be a police officer, however, somehow it didn’t happen and I went to work for a professional services firm. I volunteered as a Special Constable from 2009 to 2013 in the run up to the London Olympics and my interest in policing was ignited again. I joined The Met permanently in 2014 and have known I am in the right place ever since. Policing is a fantastic mix of helping people and excitement – every day is different.

Would you encourage residents to embark on a career with the police?
To be effective, the police must reflect the communities we serve. I would love Merton residents to join us. I have had a number of different jobs and policing in the Met is the best by far. If people aren’t sure, they can also volunteer with us or they can come and talk to us and watch police officers work and see if it could be a career for them.

What do residents need to know about policing in Merton?
Police officers and staff in Merton are fantastic and want to make a positive difference in the borough. Please do speak to your local police teams, about your priorities and anything that is troubling you. If the police and community work hand in hand, we will keep Merton safe.
Your Christmas recycling, rubbish and garden waste* collections

Recycling and rubbish collections will change during the weeks commencing 21 December 2020, 28 December 2020, 4 January 2021 and 11 January 2021. Please note, your collections will take place up to four days LATER than usual.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usual collection day</th>
<th>Revised collection day</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday 25 December 2020</td>
<td>Tuesday 29 December 2020</td>
<td>Four days later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 28 December 2020</td>
<td>Wednesday 30 December 2020</td>
<td>Two days later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 29 December 2020</td>
<td>Thursday 31 December 2020</td>
<td>Two days later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 30 December 2020</td>
<td>Saturday 2 January 2021</td>
<td>Three days later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 31 December 2020</td>
<td>Monday 4 January 2021</td>
<td>Four days later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 1 January 2021</td>
<td>Tuesday 5 January 2021</td>
<td>Four days later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 4 January 2021</td>
<td>Wednesday 6 January 2021</td>
<td>Two days later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 5 January 2021</td>
<td>Thursday 7 January 2021</td>
<td>Two days later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 6 January 2021</td>
<td>Friday 8 January 2021</td>
<td>Two days later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 7 January 2021</td>
<td>Saturday 9 January 2021</td>
<td>Two days later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 8 January 2021</td>
<td>Monday 11 January 2021</td>
<td>Three days later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 11 January 2021</td>
<td>Tuesday 12 January 2021</td>
<td>One day later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 12 January 2021</td>
<td>Wednesday 13 January 2021</td>
<td>One day later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 13 January 2021</td>
<td>Thursday 14 January 2021</td>
<td>One day later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 14 January 2021</td>
<td>Friday 15 January 2021</td>
<td>One day later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 15 January 2021</td>
<td>Saturday 16 January 2021</td>
<td>One day later</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please remember to put your recycling and rubbish out by 6am on the day of your collection.

*Garden waste is a chargeable collection service. To sign up, visit merton.gov.uk/gardenwaste

Collections will return to normal from Monday 18 January 2021

Real Christmas trees will be collected free of charge. After you have removed all the decorations, place your tree as close to the boundary of your property as possible, making sure it is visible from the kerbside without blocking access or the pavement. All trees must be out by 6am on Monday 18 January, or they will not be collected. Alternatively, you can cut up your tree and put it in your garden waste wheelie bin, if you are a subscriber to the service. Or you can take it to the Household Reuse and Recycling Centre in Morden (SM4 4AX).

The centre, in Garth Road, will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year’s Day. On Christmas Eve, opening hours are 8am-midday. On all other days, opening hours are 8am-4pm. Advance booking is essential for weekday visits, via our website:
merton.gov.uk/recycling