Investing in our great sporting borough

Galpin's Road update
We were devastated by the tragic news of the death of four-year-old Sahara Salman after a gas explosion in Galpin’s Road last month. Our thoughts remain with Sahara’s family and everyone who was affected by the incident early on the morning of Monday 8 August.

The response to the tragedy from residents and community groups has been incredible as we all try to come to terms with what has happened. Within hours of the explosion, the council had opened an evacuation centre at the New Horizon Centre in Pollards Hill to support around 500 residents who were evacuated from 200 properties. During the last few weeks, hundreds of council staff have worked around the clock alongside volunteers from organisations including the Commonside Trust and the British Red Cross to organise accommodation for everyone, as well as providing a range of practical assistance and linking residents with specialist support. The residents who were able to return to their homes all received support packages to help them settle in. A full police investigation is underway to find out exactly what happened on that terrible day.

The strong sense of community in Merton that we have seen during the emergency response is why I am proud to call this borough home. I grew up here and I am committed to serving this community as the leader of your council.

Since I was elected, 100 days ago, nurturing a sense of civic pride has been one of my top priorities. I want to make Merton a place that we are all proud to call home. Another of my top priorities is to create more opportunities for residents to be more active in our great sporting borough. This includes improving sports provision in our many parks and open spaces which make Merton one of London’s greenest boroughs. I want residents to take pride in our local environment and cleaning up our streets is an immediate priority. The council is working closely with our contractor to ensure that the action plan of improvements that we requested from them is carried out and we are also stepping up enforcement against those who litter and fly-tip.

Merton is full of potential and I’m looking forward to working with you all to make our borough a place where we are all proud to live.

Councillor Ross Garrod
Leader of Merton Council
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is published quarterly and is distributed to 86,000 households in the borough.

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Designed by Domino4

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Printed and delivered by

Cliffe Enterprise Print Partnership

0845 601 9478

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www.cliffe-enterprise.com

My Merton costs only 12p 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 1 September 2022.

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Council successfully campaigns for law change

The Government has introduced legislation that will allow councils to exit contracts with firms such as the Russian energy giant Gazprom on ethical grounds, a change which Merton Council called for in March.

At the time of the invasion of Ukraine, the council had been due to enter into a £1 million contract with Gazprom, which has extensive links to the Russian state, but was able to cancel the contract before it was set to start at the beginning of April without any legal implications. We wrote to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities calling for the law to be changed so that councils could reject bids from companies such as Russian-owned firms.

Exam success after COVID

The first group of students to start their A levels and Applied General and Technical courses during the pandemic celebrated exam success.

Early figures show that 32% of students in Merton schools received the top grades of A/A* and 61% at A*-B. On Applied General courses, the average point score for students was 38.69, and above the national and Merton 2019 outcomes.

Their achievements were all the more remarkable as their studies were affected by lockdowns and other COVID restrictions during the last two years.

Funding to develop civic pride

The opening of a fund for investing in neighbourhoods to help to nurture civic pride is being considered for the autumn.

The money comes from the Community Infrastructure Levy that developers are required to pay to support demands that developments place on our neighbourhoods.

We are also planning a dedicated fund for voluntary groups to bid for money to support community initiatives, which is due to be launched in October.

Details and the deadlines for applications will be published on our website.

Adventure Playground

The Acacia Adventure Playground in Mitcham celebrated National Play Day in August by opening two new play structures – a Tango Swing and a Net Tower – which have been built in partnership with Clarion Futures and Travis Perkins.
Keeping Merton informed

Emergency response

The council is doing everything it can to continue to support the residents affected by the gas explosion in Galpin’s Road in Pollards Hill.

Early on the morning of Monday 8 August, there was a gas explosion in Galpin’s Road in Pollards Hill, which tragically took the life of four-year-old Sahara Salman and seriously injured three other residents. The thoughts of everyone at the council are with their families.

Emergency services quickly arrived at the scene and within hours the council had set up an evacuation centre in the New Horizon Centre to provide help for all the residents who had been forced to leave their homes.

The following day, the Health and Safety Executive carried out an inspection and, as a result of this, the cordon around the site of the explosion was extended as a safety precaution. This meant that more residents had to be evacuated – more than 500 in total from around 200 properties. While some residents arranged to stay with family or friends, most of them were found accommodation by council officers in hotels. Their pets were also relocated, some to police kennels to be looked after until they could return home with their owners.

The New Horizon Centre quickly became a hub for those affected by the incident to come for assistance. Meals were served, financial assistance and advice was provided and residents were connected with other organisations for specialist support.

A week after the explosion, after gas company SGN had confirmed that Galpin’s Road was gas safe and had carried out gas safety checks on properties at the northern end of Galpin’s Road, residents from those properties were allowed to return home.

To help then settle back in as quickly as possible, every resident was offered a package of support including supermarket vouchers, assistance from professional cleaners and extra rubbish collections.

The police investigation is incredibly complex and it will take some time for officers to establish exactly what happened. As the police have sealed off the centre of Galpin’s Road, at the time of going to press the council was constructing a temporary access road from Commonside East, across Mitcham Common to the southern end of Galpin’s Road to enable residents to drive in and out of their homes and to ensure that they have emergency access.

This has been done with permission from the Mitcham Common Conservators and when Galpin’s Road has been opened, the access road will be removed and the common returned to its natural state.

Sadly, some residents will be unable to return to their homes and the council will do everything we can to continue to support these residents during the coming weeks and months.
Keeping Merton informed

Applications open for school places

Thousands of children across the borough will be starting school this week. Merton Council has been able to offer 84% of school children a place at their first preference primary school – an increase of 2% on last year. Every Merton family that applied for a primary school place, starting this September, has received an offer. A total of 94% of Merton children were offered a place in one of their top three preferred primary schools and almost 96% received a place at one of their six preferences.

If your child is due to start reception class or move to secondary school in September 2023, you can apply for a school place now.

▶ find out more merton.gov.uk/admissions

Praise for school social worker pilot scheme

Social workers and school staff from across the borough gathered at Morden Harris Academy for a visit from the then Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi, who had come to witness firsthand the results of a national scheme being piloted in Merton.

The Social Workers in Schools (SWIS) programme was launched in the borough in 2020 as part of the second phase of a national pilot, and sees social workers placed directly in secondary schools where they work alongside teachers and with students.

Women’s night safety charter

Merton Council has signed up to the Mayor of London’s Women’s Night Safety Charter, as we believe that every woman has the right to feel safe when travelling, working or going out at night. We’re helping to create a safer environment for women at night and we encourage women to report incidents they experience or witness.

Making the streets safer

A multi-borough partnership including Merton Council has received almost £200,000 from the Home Office’s Safer Streets funding initiative to continue its innovative work in tackling violence against women and girls in Southwest London.

The partnership, made up of Merton, Kingston, Richmond and Wandsworth councils, and the Metropolitan Police, will adopt a whole-system approach to tackling the issue, building on years of work by council officers in the borough.

This includes delivering training to night-time economy businesses on safeguarding within their spaces, breaking down barriers to seeking support by raising awareness of local and national services, and providing bystander training and education.

Award winners

The council has won the Sustainable City Award for London’s Public Sector Organisational Changemaker of the Year for our ground-breaking work on the Cleaner Construction for London project. The initiative, which is being implemented by the borough’s Clean Air team, is delivering the world’s first Low Emission Zones for Construction on behalf of all London boroughs and The Mayor of London. Since 2016, the Cleaner Construction for London team have inspected more than 8,000 machines on over 2,500 sites across all 32 London boroughs. This has led to the reduction of approximately 1,650 tonnes of nitrogen dioxide, and 72 tonnes of particulate matter.
New Mayor of Merton

The new Mayor of Merton has dedicated her year in office to Community Togetherness and Empowerment. Councillor Joan Henry was elected as Mayor for the 2022/23 municipal year by the Council in May.

Her chosen charities are the Dons Local Action Group and the Jimmy Asher Foundation, which supports young people from diverse backgrounds to make positive life choices.

Councillor Henry was first elected to the council in 2014 and represents Pollards Hill Ward in Mitcham.

She will be assisted in her role as Mayor by her consort, Floyd Blake, and her chaplain will be the Reverend Kenneth Scott from the New Testament Church of God Dayspring in Pollards Hill.

The Deputy Mayor for 2022/23 is Councillor Agatha Akyigiyma OBE, who represents Figges Marsh Ward in Mitcham. Her consort is Jennifer Christie.

Pedal power

As part of the Clean Air Villages 4 (CAV4) programme, Love Wimbledon, Merton Council and Cross River Partnership have launched a free cargo bike and delivery service for local businesses near Wimbledon Town Centre.

This service, which is provided by XeroE, is available to book via an online platform, with a dedicated rider and a set number of pre-paid hours available for businesses to use. The scheme aims to show businesses the ease of switching to cargo bikes for deliveries, ultimately reducing local air pollution and saving money.

Merton stands united against hate crimes

Dozens of residents, Merton council staff, councillors and police turned out to mark the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) outside the Civic Centre in Morden in May.

Working at The Workary

Merton’s newest co-working space, The Workary Mitcham, is now open for business above the library in London Road.

There are hot desks, work spaces for up to 12 people, plus meeting rooms. The Workary was set up by Wimbletech, in partnership with the council, to give hybrid workers and entrepreneurs desk space closer to home and to help boost the local economy. Try out the facilities with a free day pass before becoming a member.

Community forums

These are free meetings where you can discuss a range of issues, which will then be followed up by relevant organisations.

Raynes Park – Tuesday 20 September at 7.15pm in Raynes Park Library Hall.

Wimbledon – Wednesday 21 September at 7.15pm in Wimbledon Arts Space.

Mitcham – Thursday 6 October at 7.15pm. Venue TBC.

Colliers Wood – Tuesday 11 October at 7.15pm. Venue TBC.

Morden – Wednesday 19 October at 7.15pm – Council Chamber.

find out more merton.gov.uk/communityforums
**Quality mark for adult education**

Merton Adult Learning service has been awarded a Quality Mark as part of the Mayor of London's Skill Academies in Digital Skills, recognising its excellence in education provision and training.

The Quality Mark identifies and celebrates high-quality skills provision and is part of a London-wide programme to help cement the economic recovery across the capital. The application process took place in the spring and was independently run by the Association for Accredited Learning.

Merton Adult Learning had to show that its skills-training provision was industry relevant, was closely aligned with employers’ needs and promoted and supported the creation of good work opportunities.

It also needed to demonstrate positive learner journeys through the service and show evidence of recognition of existing markers of quality in skills provision.

Merton Adult Learning is one of the first tranche of providers to be awarded the Quality Mark, out of just 25 organisations recognised.

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**Zero-tolerance to hate crime**

The council has underlined its zero-tolerance approach to hate crime by approving a four-year hate-crime strategy. This was drawn up in partnership with community groups and the voluntary sector and informed by the results of the residents' survey and two other public consultations carried out last year. The strategy has four aims – to prevent hate crime; protect the victim; to support people who have experienced hate crime and those close to them; and to tackle perpetrators.

During 2021, the borough saw a 5% annual increase in hate-crime offences – with four-fifths of them racially motivated – and it's believed that crimes involving groups such as the disabled community are under-reported.

[››find out more merton.gov.uk/hatecrime]

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**Proud to support Pride**

Merton Council marked Pride Month in June by raising the flag outside the Civic Centre.

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**Remembrance Services**

**Armistice Day – Friday 11 November**

10.50am at Merton Civic Centre in Morden. Attended by the Deputy Mayor of Merton, Councillor Agatha Akyigiya OBE.
10.50am at Mitcham War Memorial. Attended by the Mayor of Merton, Councillor Joan Henry.

**Remembrance Sunday – 13 November**

9am at the Nelson Health Centre, Kingston Road, Wimbledon. Attended by the Mayor of Merton, Royal British Legion and civic representatives.
10.40am at Mitcham War Memorial, Lower Green West, Mitcham. Attended by the Mayor of Merton, Deputy Lieutenant, Chris Cotton, members of the Mitcham Branch of the Royal British Legion and civic representatives. Assemble outside the British Legion Hall in Mitcham.
10.40am at Wimbledon War Memorial in Wimbledon Village. Attended by the Deputy Mayor of Merton, members of the Wimbledon Branch of the Royal British Legion and the 210 Transport Squadron and civic representatives.
Rat-infested cafe closed down

The council’s food and safety staff closed down a restaurant in South Wimbledon that had a large rat infestation, putting customers at risk of food poisoning and infection by bacteria, that can cause salmonella and Weil’s disease. Environmental health officers visited Brazucas Point Café on Merton High Street on 18 May after receiving a complaint from a neighbour about the build-up of rubbish in the rear yard of the premises, which sold foods prepared on site including salads, meat and rice dishes.

Officers found rat droppings throughout the food preparation area and also discovered that the company was not registered with the council as a business that served food.

A Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notice was served, forcing the company to stop trading immediately, a decision that was ratified at Wimbledon Magistrates’ Court the following week.

**Grief support service extended**

A grief support service is now offering evening appointments for residents who were bereaved during the pandemic.

The council gave Wimbledon Guild £23,000 to offer extended hours to support residents who have been bereaved since the start of the pandemic. Many residents have been unable to grieve fully during the last couple of years, as, at times, COVID-19 restrictions prevented people from being with their loved ones at the end, being able to meet friends or relatives they didn’t live with or being able to attend funerals.

The funding will enable the free and confidential service to offer evening appointments on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays in Mitcham and in Wimbledon, in addition to normal office hours.

**Adult learner and tutor scoop awards**

A mum with an autistic son studied for a qualification in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools to help other parents who were facing similar challenges.

Janet Zelenak enrolled on the course, run by Merton Adult Learning, after being away from education for 15 years, and with support from her tutor, Debra Valentine, she excelled in her studies.

Janet won a Best Learner Award and Debra a Best Teacher Award from the Committee of South London Principals, which were presented at an awards ceremony held at the House of Lords in July.

**Tuned in**

Music and wellbeing group Tuned In have launched music production and songwriting sessions, as they finish their forthcoming album, which will be released by Cherry Red Records. Hosted by John Wardle (Jah Wobble) and Jon Klein, these sessions will take place in the newly installed recording studio at Merton Arts Space and are an opportunity for participants to develop their own musical skills. Sessions are held on Tuesdays from 7pm to 9pm.

**Fireworks**

Early bird tickets go on sale this month for some of the biggest and most popular fireworks displays in London. Fireworks will be choreographed to music during the two displays per night, which will be held on Friday 4 November in Wimbledon Park and on Saturday 5 November in Morden Park. The earlier show is aimed at young children and families, followed by a later one for adults.

**Find out more**

merton.gov.uk/fireworks

**Find out more and enrol**

merton.gov.uk/adulteducation

**Find out more**

wimbledonguild.co.uk

**Find out more and register**

merton.gov.uk/tunedin
Liyisenga ‘Bibi’ Nsaba was her sister’s back-up carer in Merton and she used to step in for her whenever she was on holiday. She found the experience so rewarding that she decided to become a foster carer herself. “I was still living with my daughter but my son had gone to university,” she explains, “so we had enough space to take in three teenage foster children. They stayed for two or three years before leaving and finding work of their own.”

Foster carers need a good support network of friends and family, and they need to be able to work with a team of social care professionals, teachers and birth parents. If you can help the foster child feel welcome, safe and comfortable in your home, you will have met the main requirements for becoming a foster parent. “It’s so rewarding to see how your efforts can change a child’s life for the better and help prepare them for the wider world,” Bibi continues. “One of the children who came to me had already been with three foster families but they couldn’t cope with his physical and emotional needs. We immediately developed a close relationship and he became much more stable at school. He also gave up smoking, passed his driving test and went to college. This was such a satisfying outcome for someone who might otherwise have been lost in the system. And it was always nice for me to have the extra company around the house.”

Merton Council now supports its carers using the Mockingbird model. This has been shown to bring significant benefits to foster children and their extended families. You will receive ongoing training and a generous allowance of up to £514 per week for each child. This covers their clothing, food, travel, pocket money and any special equipment they may need.

If you would like to be a foster carer, you will need to be over the age of 21 and live in Merton or one of the neighbouring boroughs. You must also be able to work in the UK, have a spare bedroom, and have the time to care for a foster child.

We host two fostering information sessions each month. To find out more about becoming a foster parent in Merton, call 020 8545 4070 and visit merton.gov.uk/fostering.
The council’s children’s services team have been ranked among the best in the country by Ofsted, which gave them an outstanding rating. Ofsted’s report was published in May, following a rigorous inspection in February and March, which scrutinised the work of the team since their last inspection five years ago. Ofsted recognised how staff went above and beyond the call of duty during the pandemic to provide excellent services despite the disruption.

Of the four key judgements made by inspectors, Merton was rated outstanding in the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families; the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers; and overall effectiveness. The council achieved a Good rating for the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection. Ofsted also paid tribute to Merton’s senior leaders by saying that “highly aspirational and committed senior managers and political leaders placed children and their families at the centre of their decision-making”. They also noted that the leadership team had “strengthened and built on the impressive work” observed at the previous inspection in 2017, and that there was “evidence of continuous thoughtful and innovative creative work that has enhanced the quality of social work practice across all teams.

“As a corporate parent, the council does all it can to give every child the best start in life.”

Ofsted found that there was strong evidence of successful multi-agency working between the council and its partners to support our most vulnerable children.

The report noted that, “although now reducing, a substantial increase in the numbers of children on child protection plans during the pandemic created additional pressures on staff, but this has been managed well”. It found that despite the challenges of COVID-19, there has been an “unrelenting focus” on putting children and families at the centre of decision making by leaders who have “a collective determination to provide high-quality services”. The report said “children’s voices are listened to, acted upon and used to inform plans. Care is taken to understand parental and family histories, cultural heritage and each child’s unique and diverse needs”. 

Outstanding Ofsted

Merton’s Children’s Services team has been confirmed as one of the best in the country by an Outstanding Ofsted rating.
Our great sporting borough

With world-class venues, popular clubs, an abundance of green spaces and a state-of-the-art leisure centre in Morden, Merton is on the map as a borough of sport. The council has just appointed its first ever dedicated cabinet member role to improving sports development, so that everyone can be more active.

Home to the only Grand Slam tennis tournament to be played on grass, the oldest cricket club in the world and the setting for the most inspiring story in football, that of AFC Wimbledon, Merton is synonymous with sport. There is also a thriving grassroots movement to help find the next generation of sports stars. Fans of Isthmian League football will doubtless have watched Tooting & Mitcham United at Imperial Fields but many won't know about the pioneering educational work being undertaken by CEO Jackie Watkins and first-team manager Ashley Bosah.

With many young people not staying at school beyond the age of 16, Tooting & Mitcham United started running sixth-form classes to help players achieve qualifications they might otherwise have missed out on. “We felt that too many kids didn't want to go back to school because they were confused about what they wanted from life,” Jackie says. “We try to give these kids a direction and to explain that if they can't fulfil their dreams of becoming a professional footballer, they will always have something to fall back on.”

The club makes sure that the players complete their academic studies each day before they're allowed to take the field. “We’re also hoping to introduce a Merton Council initiative whereby the players can train as engineers to work on the railways,” Jackie continues. “We run employment workshops to unearth their potential, boosting their confidence and helping them to access different pathways in life.”

Ashley has always wanted to work with young people and he knows that sport challenges them, so he's developed a football and education scholarship. “Very few young people become professional footballers, so we try to educate the kids about social mobility to help them engage with the wider world,” he explains.

“We've been lucky enough to produce two top-class players, Michail Antonio at West Ham and Isaiah Jones at Middlesbrough, but they are the exception. We can help the other players find careers in sports physiology or even team management, and we want to show them how they can use sport to deliver change for people in the borough. Many of the kids go home to difficult environments, so we’re also hoping to develop stronger relationships with their parents.”

Jackie knows it’s hard to change people’s minds about sport and education, but she's trying to bring local schools on board. “Due to Ashley's efforts during and after the pandemic, we had a 100% pass rate for the boys taking their BTEC 3 in sports science. Half of them have now been offered places at university, so this model clearly has great potential.”

To find out more about the work being done at Tooting & Mitcham United, visit: www.tmunited.org.

Libraries across Merton are now allowing people to borrow footballs for free. You’ll only need your library card to sign one out. There’s also a specialist football library at Tooting & Mitcham United that allows anyone to borrow Alive and Kicking charity balls free of charge. In partnership with Sport England, Better and the Postcode Lottery, Alive and Kicking now has more than 250 football libraries in community organisations and sports clubs across the UK. To find your nearest library, visit: www.aliveandkicking.org/libraryball.

Tooting and Mitcham footballers (L–R) Kuba Chylarecki, Zedan Gustave Denton, Karlos Weetom, Kevin Ageyman and Tiolu Asagba completing their studies in Mitcham Library, where library members can borrow a football as well as a book
Let’s get moving

Whether you want to step up your workouts, or are moving off from a standing start, there are plenty of activities to choose from. Healthcare professionals recommend getting at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of more vigorous activities like running, tennis or football each week. Exercise has a range of mental as well as physical health benefits and the trick is to find an activity that you enjoy.

Try 22 in 2022

The council’s Merton Can initiative invites residents to try 22 activities during 2022. For the one in four people in Merton who aren’t physically active for at least half an hour a week, this could be a great opportunity to start living more healthily.

Walk and Talk

Walk and Talk is funded by the council for residents of all ages that takes place in Colliers Wood, Wimbledon Park, Canons House and Morden Hall Park every Saturday from 10.30am.

Pitch up to the leisure centre

There are fun activities for all the family at our leisure centres in Morden, Wimbledon and The Canons, Mitcham. If you were inspired to take up tennis in the summer or want to team up with friends for a game of rugby, beach volleyball, softball or lacrosse, there are public pitches across the borough.

Mindspace

All of Merton’s libraries have dedicated health and wellbeing zones with a programme of events running throughout the year. From this autumn, they will also be equipped with specialist equipment to help monitor your own health better.

Wimbledon in Mitcham

Tennis fans enjoyed watching the second week of the Championships on a big screen at the Canons, which was set up by the council in partnership with the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club. In July the big screen returned to broadcast the final of the Women’s European Championships between England and Germany. Football fans watched live as the Lionesses brought football home by scoring two goals during an historic match.

Get up and Go Merton

The Get up and Go Merton programme by Everyone Health is running a range of exercise activities for older residents across Morden and Mitcham. It includes walks, tennis, bowls, circuit training, yoga and Tai Chi.

Merton Moves

Merton Moves is run by Wimbledon Guild and offers older people six weeks of one-to-one coaching to find an activity they enjoy.
Merton declares cost-of-living emergency

Merton was one of the first London boroughs to declare a cost-of-living emergency and announced a fund of £2 million to help residents hardest hit by price rises. As inflation continues to soar, people across the borough are facing tough choices this autumn.

No-one should have to choose between eating and heating their home, but that will be the reality for many residents after the energy-price-cap hike in October. Added to the increasing cost of petrol and basic groceries, this will leave residents who are already struggling to make ends meet unable to put food on the table.

The council has recognised this by becoming one of the first London boroughs to declare a cost-of-living emergency. The unanimous vote at the meeting in July followed an announcement by Council Leader, Councillor Ross Garrod of a £2 million cost-of-living support fund to support the residents being hardest hit by the cost-of-living crisis. The money will also be distributed to voluntary organisations and community groups that provide specialist support. In July, the council organised three well-attended events, in Morden, Mitcham and Wimbledon libraries, for residents to find out about the support available with the cost of living from the council and its partners. Throughout the summer holidays, the council continued to provide free nutritious meals to children who have free school meals during term time and will continue to pay the vouchers during the October half term.

This is all on top of Merton’s Council Tax Support scheme, which is one of the most generous in London.
Helping to make ends meet

Turning down your thermostat by a single degree could save up to £250 a year and if you have a smart thermostat, you can heat only the rooms that you are using when you need them. Try taking shorter showers instead of baths; wash full loads of clothes at 30°C instead of half loads at 40°C and then hang them up to dry; wash up in a bowl rather than under running water; use draught excluders; turn all electrical goods off at the wall rather than leaving them on standby; only boil the right amount of water in the kettle; and use energy-saver LED lightbulbs around the home.

Walk or cycle on short journeys instead of taking the car. If you have to drive, ensure the tyres are at the correct pressure and avoid sharp braking or acceleration to conserve fuel. If your car has economy mode, make sure it’s enabled so that the engine automatically cuts out when you’re stationary.

If you are facing tough times, there is support available.

Foodbanks

If you can, please consider buying a couple of extra items when you are shopping for groceries and donate them to your local foodbank. If you have reached crisis point and need help, contact Wimbledon Foodbank. Visit their website, wimbledon.foodbank.org.uk or call 0808 2082138 for free (open Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm).

Community fridge

Merton’s Community Fridge is a long-term initiative to address food poverty and reduce the amount of food that could be eaten but is wasted. The fridge is at the back of Morden Baptist Church on Crown Lane. Together with the other outlets in the network, it complements the borough’s existing foodbanks by redistributing excess fresh produce to those who need it most. You can contact your local Fridge Friends by emailing communityfridge@sustainablemerton.org.

Cost-of-living payments

You may be able to get a £650 payment to help with the cost of living if you’re getting certain benefits or tax credits, including Universal Credit, Income-Based Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), Income-Related Employment & Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit and Pension Credit.

Some people will also be entitled to a one-off £50 payment if they’re claiming PIP, DLA or Attendance Allowance. If you’re eligible, you won’t need to apply and you’ll be paid in the same way you usually get your benefits or tax credits. To find out more, visit www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment.

If you need help paying your bills, buying food or clothes, or replacing essential household appliances, Wimbledon Guild offers one-off grants to local residents. For more information, email welfare@wimbledonguild.co.uk.

To find out how to claim an extra £300 winter fuel payment, cold weather grant or warm home discount, visit merton.gov.uk/costofliving

The Mayor of London’s Warmer Homes Grant helps Londoners to stay warm and save on energy bills by providing free heating, insulation and ventilation improvements. If you’re a homeowner or private tenant on benefits or a low income, you could be eligible for a grant of up to £25,000 to improve your home’s energy efficiency.

 ✓ find out more and apply: london.gov.uk/warmerhomes
Residents from across the borough went to the polls in May to vote for the councillors who will serve the borough for the next four years. Boundary changes, which were introduced ahead of the election to ensure that each councillor represents an equal proportion of the borough’s population, saw a new ward created - Wandle Ward - and the number of councillors in Merton Park and Hillside wards reduced from three to two. There are a total of 20 wards and 57 councillors on Merton Council. Find out who was elected to represent your area on this map.

Check your voter details
Residents are being reminded to make sure their voter registration details are up to date. If you have recently moved home, either into another property in Merton or into the borough, and haven’t done so already, you will need to register to vote at your new address.

The council is required by law to check every year that residents’ details are correct and has already contacted everyone by email or post. You must respond to these communications if:

- you are asked to by the council
- if any of the information the council has recorded for you is wrong
- there are people living at your address who are eligible to register to vote but are not included in the communication

We are sending reminders to anyone who has not yet replied and encourage people to respond promptly to avoid the need for home visits by electoral services staff.

Find out more merton.gov.uk/voting
Your councillors

11 Merton Park ward
Edward Foley Merton Park Independent
Stephen Mercer Merton Park Independent

12 Pollards Hill ward
Joan Henry Labour
Aidan Mundy Labour
Martin Whelton Labour

13 Ravensbury ward
Stephen Alambritis MBE Labour
Caroline Charles Labour
Peter McCabe Labour

14 Raynes Park ward
Chessie Flack Liberal Democrat
Matthew Willis Liberal Democrat
Victoria Wilson Liberal Democrat

15 St Helier ward
Helena Dollimore Labour
Andrew Judge Labour
Dennis Pearce Labour

16 Village ward
Max Austin Conservative
Thomas Barlow Conservative
Andrew Howard Conservative

17 Wandle ward
Kirsten Galea Liberal Democrat
Eleanor Stringer Labour

18 West Barnes ward
Hina Bokhari Liberal Democrat
John Oliver Liberal Democrat
Robert Page Liberal Democrat

19 Wimbledon Park ward
Jil Hall Liberal Democrat
Samantha MacArthur Liberal Democrat
Tony Reiss Liberal Democrat

20 Wimbledon Town and Dundonald ward
Anthony Fairclough Liberal Democrat
Paul Kohler Liberal Democrat
Simon McGrath Liberal Democrat
Meet your cabinet

Following the council elections in May, a new Council Leader, Councillor Ross Garrod, was elected. At the first full council meeting later that month, he appointed a cabinet of nine councillors who are responsible for specific portfolio areas. So, who are the people making the decisions about our borough? My Merton asked our cabinet members to introduce themselves and tell us what they hope to achieve for Merton.

Councillor Ross Garrod

Leader of the Council

What do you enjoy most about being a councillor?
It’s incredible being given the opportunity to make a difference to people’s lives.

What is your top priority?
I have ambitious plans to help fulfil Merton’s huge potential and at the centre of this is nurturing a sense of pride in our borough by helping to make Merton a place that we are all proud to call home.

What makes you proud to live in Merton?
I am proud that I have been able to call Merton home for the best part of my life. It’s a brilliant borough with an amazing history, vibrant communities and loads of green spaces in which to get out and about and active.

What sport do you enjoy watching and which sport do you enjoy playing?
I enjoy watching football and as a boy used to play in Morden Park.

Councillor Eleanor Stringer

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

What do you enjoy most about being a councillor?
I love having a say in decisions that affect my community. In my cabinet roles I’ve had the opportunity to work with inspirational people – from charities, council teams, businesses – all working hard for our residents.

What is your top priority in your portfolio area?
To support our high streets, to make sure people feel safe and have pride in our borough, and to make sure our wonderful cultural and voluntary organisations continue to thrive.

What makes you proud to live in Merton?
That everything is on our doorstep – brilliant culture, beautiful parks, amazing places to eat, drink and shop. And how committed our residents are to looking after our area.

What sport do you enjoy watching and which sport do you enjoy playing?
I watch tennis, cycling and women’s football. I am currently training for a 10k race.
This summer, we premiered a series of short films about our cabinet members talking about why they decided to become councillors and what they hope to achieve for Merton. Watch at merton.gov.uk/meetthecabinet
feature
Being a councillor

Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah
Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage
What do you enjoy most about being a councillor?
It is a privilege and an honour to be elected by my neighbours. Through my representation, their voices are heard, and their views are considered in the decision-making process of the council.

What is your top priority in your portfolio area?
My top priorities include, making Merton the Home of Sport, maximising the use of our library buildings, and increasing business opportunities in heritage and tourism.

What makes you proud to live in Merton?
Merton has a diverse community that co-exist in harmony. It is a very leafy borough with many beautiful parks and open spaces. The people are friendly and community spirited.

What sport do you enjoy watching and which sport do you enjoy playing?
I enjoy watching all types of sports, including football, F1 and tennis, and I regularly run for exercise. I also enjoy playing table tennis in the park.

Councillor Andrew Judge
Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development
What do you enjoy most about being a councillor?
The opportunity to be creative, to add public value and make a difference on things that matter.

What is your top priority in your portfolio area?
Building beautiful homes of excellent design quality that are truly affordable for residents and set an example for energy efficiency and low environmental impact.

What makes you proud to live in Merton?
The large numbers of people that make a contribution to their local community in so many ways in every part of the borough.

What sport do you enjoy watching and which sport do you enjoy playing?
I enjoy watching football and playing tennis.

Councillor Brenda Fraser
Cabinet Member for Children’s Services
What do you enjoy most about being a councillor?
I enjoy being a voice for my constituents. It is a privilege working with them and council officers to make a difference to the quality of their lives and prospects.

What is your top priority in your portfolio area?
My top priority is to ensure that the Ofsted inspection recommendations are addressed, as well as working in partnership with managers and the team for the benefit of children’s services.

What makes you proud to live in Merton?
Merton is multicultural and a great place to live and raise a family. The schools are good to outstanding. It is also safe with excellent cultural facilities. Something for all!

What sport do you enjoy watching and which sport do you enjoy playing?
I enjoy watching tennis but am not presently involved in any sports.

Councillor Stephen Alambris MBE
Cabinet Member for Transport
What do you enjoy most about being a councillor?
It gives me the opportunity to help people and to make things happen that are positive to them individually and/or as a community. For example, bringing back AFC Wimbledon to Merton has brought happiness to many people.

What is your top priority in your portfolio area?
To promote active travel; to reduce traffic congestion; to roll out electric vehicle charging points; and work towards step-free access at all our stations.

What makes you proud to live in Merton?
Every borough’s reputation is measured by how it looks after its children. In Merton, Ofsted has just determined that we are Outstanding in that regard.

What sport do you enjoy watching and which sport do you enjoy playing?
I am a former Football Association registered football referee (Class One) officiating on Merton’s playing fields in the 1980s and 1990s and so I enjoy watching football and follow Fulham FC.
Safer Merton shuts down premises after reports of anti-social behaviour

When the local anti-social behaviour team get a tip off from a member of the public or local business about loud music late at night, drug-dealing in their area, alcohol-related criminal behaviour or vandalism, verbal abuse, or even abandoned vehicles, they firstly ensure that the information is dealt with sensitively and confidentially.

Having taken statements from everyone who’s raised their concerns, the team will adopt a preventative approach, contacting the property owner to discuss the allegations, in case they weren’t aware there was a problem.

The second phase is intervention, whereby the ASB team investigate the premises and carry out a risk assessment. If the issues can’t be resolved at this stage, their evidence is then passed on to the police and the council’s legal representatives, the South London Legal Partnership. If the complaint is upheld, the courts can act by granting and enforcing closure orders.

The council offers mediation where appropriate and can even refer residents to Victim Support. There is also a rehabilitation element, whereby perpetrators of ASB are educated about how ASB negatively affects residents and then supported so that they don’t re-offend.

Earlier this year, the Safer Merton team acted on complaints from locals about illegal house parties being held at 265 Commonside East and, based on evidence from the landlord and other residents, the team secured a premises closure less than three weeks later.

In April, staff responded to reports of parties and ASB at 25 Radnor Close. Despite sending several warning letters to the property’s landlord and tenants, the noise continued. Using evidence collected by residents and the police, the ASB team took the case to Wimbledon Magistrates Court and a Premises Closure Order was granted.

Safer Merton also supported police over the closure of 8 Dunster Avenue. The property had been a nuisance for residents since late 2021 but, with ASB at the address increasing, the Lower Morden Safer Neighbourhood Team and Environmental Health joined the police and Safer Merton to investigate. As well as persistent ASB, they found evidence of ‘cuckooing’ (where unwanted people take over a person’s home) and issued a three-month closure order.

If you have experienced and would like to report anti-social behaviour, Safer Merton’s ASB team can be contacted on 020 8274 4901 or emailed at asbu@merton.gov.uk
Parents are advised to apply online at merton.gov.uk/admissions.
Closing date for applications is 31 October 2022.
Could your children walk, cycle or scoot to school?

Walking, cycling or scooting to school is a great way to encourage children to lead more active lives, promote sustainability and tackle climate change. To make sure roads outside schools are safer for children arriving on foot or by bicycle or scooter, Merton Council is expanding its School Streets scheme, an initiative that transforms roads outside schools into temporary pedestrian and cycling zones.

On Tuesday 20 September at 7pm, Merton’s Climate Action Group is hosting a walking and cycling bus webinar for parents. Speakers from the council and experts in establishing walking and cycling buses will explain what it takes to organise a bus in their local area.

For more information about the webinar, visit www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-walking-cycling-bus-webinar-for-parents-tickets-328840820747.

To find out more about the council’s work promoting safer travel to school, as well as healthy and active journeys on foot or by bicycle, go to merton.gov.uk/schoolstreets.

Become a greener school
The Green Schools Project is now recruiting schools to join its Zero Carbon Schools programme. The free initiative explores the causes and effects of the climate crisis, analyses each school’s carbon footprint, and designs projects to reduce the school’s carbon emissions to help inspire the wider community. The programme starts after the October half term and will run until the end of the school year.

Schools will receive 26 session plans and resources for Years 4–8; half-termly Zoom calls to guide teachers leading the programme; support to calculate their school’s carbon footprint; and teacher-training sessions to get all staff involved. To find out more and start your school’s journey to net zero, visit greenschoolsproject.org.uk or contact beth.newman@greenschoolsproject.org.uk.

Energy champions
Merton Council is working with four local schools and Merton’s Climate Action Group to deliver an Energy Matters module. Designed by the Centre for Sustainable Energy, the scheme raises awareness about the issues we face surrounding energy use, the cost-of-living crisis and climate change. It also aims to create student energy champions who can help drive behavioural change in each school. If the pilot is successful, the council will consider how to roll the modules out across Merton’s primary schools.
Committed to improving street cleanliness

New machinery, expanded services and increased enforcement show the council’s commitment to improving the cleanliness of the borough’s streets. But they need your help to go further. *My Merton* finds out more.

We are acting to improve the cleanliness of the borough’s streets and over the last few months have made changes to our street-cleaning services. We have:

- Increased the number of enforcement officers on the streets. These officers have issued over 3000 fixed penalty notices for littering and fly-tipping since January.
- Deployed mobile CCTV in hotspot areas.
- Purchased two new state-of-the-art mechanical pavement sweepers.
- Expanded the deep-clean service on roads across the borough.
- Introduced a new night-time response crew, who focus on cleaning town centres and shopping parades at the weekend.
- Introduced the Fix My Street app, a quick and easy way to report fly-tipping.
- Launched an appeal for information on fly-tippers via our monthly Wall of Shame CCTV appeal series.

**To help us to go further, we need residents and businesses to help**

- Always use litter bins or take your rubbish home.
- Report dumped rubbish via our website or on the Fix My Street app.
- Make the most of your kerbside recycling and rubbish-collection service or book a visit to the Household Reuse and Recycling Centre in Morden.
- Arrange to have large items collected from your home using our bulky-waste-collection service.
- Tune into our monthly Wall of Shame series and let us know if you recognise any of the culprits.
- Sell or donate unwanted items via charity shops, eBay, Gumtree, TRADE, Freecycle or social media community groups. Take old electrical items to certain shops to be recycled.
- Remember that leaving items outside a closed charity shop is fly-tipping.

To help us to go further, we need residents and businesses to help

To stay up-to-date on all things clean and green, visit our social media channels or sign-up to our weekly e-newsletter merton.gov.uk/newsletter

**LEAVING NO LEAF UNTURNED THIS AUTUMN**

Autumn is here and the leaves are starting to fall, which means Merton’s clean teams are out clearing the build-up of leaves on streets around the borough.

There are more than 220,000 street trees in Merton and teams will have swept up over 100 tonnes of leaves by the end of the season – that’s the weight of eight London buses!

Residents with compost bins can do their bit by collecting leaves from outside their homes and composting them for their garden. People can also help by not sweeping leaves from their gardens, drives or pavements into the road, as this may block the gullies and could cause flooding.
Award-winning parks and open spaces

With more than 100 parks and open spaces across the borough, there’s always somewhere to explore. *My Merton* takes a look at the borough’s award-winning parks, refurbished play area and the council’s commitment to create a cleaner, greener borough.

**KEEPING GREEN FLAGS FLYING IN MERTON**

We were delighted to announce, back in July, that six of our well-loved parks and open spaces will once again be flying their prestigious Green Flags with pride this year.

The award, judged and given annually, is a sign that a park or open space boasts the highest possible environmental standards, is well maintained and has excellent facilities.

The six parks and open spaces, that have been re-awarded 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.

**COLLIERS WOOD REC PLAYGROUND GETS A NEW LOOK**

Set in the heart of Colliers Wood, the town’s recreation ground (the Rec) received a revamp in July with the installation of new equipment – including a Basket Swing and Climbing Dome that will provide children with a challenging and stimulating play experience.

This well-used park is shared with Singlegate Primary School and gives children aged nine and over a fun but challenging playtime.

The play equipment and space, accessible to children of all abilities, were developed with the help of Playforce, idverde’s playground provider.

**HIGHWAYS HAVE BECOME ‘WILDWAYS’ TO BOOST LOCAL BIODIVERSITY**

The council is committed to creating a cleaner, greener borough. To help boost local biodiversity, we have started trialling a new management method to encourage greater diversity and abundance of vegetation on our roadside verges.

During this year, the grass on pilot verges will be allowed to grow longer, reducing the cutting frequency from 12 per year to one conservation cut per year. This means 11% of the total highway grass managed by the council will be a WildWay. Less mowing will help to reduce carbon emissions and support the council’s ambition to be more sustainable.

The new plants and wildflowers will provide a great source of forage for pollinating insects such as butterflies and will also support local bumblebee populations.

[Find out more merton.gov.uk/wildways](http://merton.gov.uk/wildways)
REPORT DUMPED RUBBISH QUICKLY AND EASILY merton.gov.uk/fly-tipping

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
• English, ESOL and Maths
• Hairdressing
• Languages
• Music
• Musical Instrument
• Making and Repair
• Photography
• Pilates
• 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. 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 stcg.ac.uk/merton

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:
• Understanding 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
• Creating a Business Start-up
• Level 1 Award in Employability

See website for the full list of courses

Eligibility
You need to have lived in the EU for three years and be aged 19+. You will need to be confident with written English in order to meet the required standards.

For further information please contact martina.collett@stcg.ac.uk

Merton College, London Road, Morden, SM4 5JX
020 8918 7777

@AdultEdMerton /adulteducationmerton

Courses for Work, Life and Wellbeing
Merton residents were quick to open their doors to host Ukrainian refugees who were forced to flee from their country after the Russian invasion in February. *My Merton* spoke to Osman Mansaray and Abdullahi Yakubu, Homes for Ukraine Visiting Officers, about their role in welcoming refugee families to the borough.

Merton has welcomed more than four hundred Ukrainians, around half through the Homes for Ukraine scheme, which enables residents to offer refugees spare rooms in their homes.

“All sponsors hoping to host refugees apply through the UK Government website,” Osman explained. “After an initial check by the Home Office, we carry out an inspection of the property to make sure it’s fit for purpose. We then explain the process to the potential host and perform a DBS check. If the sponsor is approved, they can apply for a thank you payment of £350 per month.”

The visiting officers provide any support that hosts need to help their guests register with a GP, enrol their children in local schools, contact social services and apply for Universal Credit or look for work, so that they can achieve financial independence.

Abdullahi’s role is primarily based around welfare, so he introduces the guests to community organisations that give them a sense of belonging. “The Polish Family Association provides additional support and can help families complete all the applications and other paperwork they may be faced with when trying to access education or benefits,” he explained. “The Commonside Trust, Wimbledon Guild and the Chamber of Commerce also arrange support into employment and meet-the-employer sessions so that adults arriving in the UK can make the transition into the workforce.”

If you have any questions about the Homes for Ukraine scheme or would like to sign up to become a sponsor, email refugee.support@merton.gov.uk or call the Merton Community Hub on 020 8066 4086.
Boost your protection against viruses

Now is a key time to check that all the family are up to date with their vaccinations, as we learn to live with COVID-19 and prepare for winter viruses.

COVID-19
Despite the vast majority of the population being vaccinated, COVID-19 is still circulating in the community. While it has always been a mild illness for most people, and previous infection and vaccination also help protect against severe illness, contracting COVID-19 can still be an unpleasant experience. Washing your hands regularly and wearing a mask in crowded places can help to reduce your chances of catching COVID-19, but if you do contract the virus, please stay at home and wait for symptoms to pass. Rates of transmission usually increase in the winter so, if you haven’t been fully vaccinated, please come forward and get your first, second or booster dose. The Government has announced plans for a further booster programme to be rolled out this autumn for certain groups of people. For the latest updates, sign up for our e-newsletter at merton.gov.uk/newsletter and keep an eye on our Twitter and Facebook pages.

Flu
With the flu season almost upon us, it’s important for the elderly and those whose underlying health conditions may make them vulnerable to the virus to get vaccinated. If you aren’t eligible for a free flu jab, you can pay for one at your local pharmacy.

Children
Check that your child’s immunisations are up to date before they start nursery or go back to school this term. Children can become seriously ill with infectious illnesses like measles, mumps and diphtheria, which are all preventable.

Our health advisors can also help support you to stop smoking and set goals to eat better & drink less alcohol.

Call: 020 8973 3545
E-mail: oneyou.merton@nhs.net
Website: www.oneyoumerton.org

@ONEYOUMERTON
Win, Tie or Wrangle! is the traditional motto of Mitcham Cricket Club, which boasts one of the oldest cricket pitches in the world. My Merton looks back at its history.

Although the earliest club records were destroyed by wartime bombing, cricket is known to have been played on Lower Green, Mitcham, since 1685. By 1730, the local team had enough skilled players to advertise a “Great cricket match between the Gentlemen of London and those of Mecham in Surrey.” The first club headquarters was The Swan, a pub later replaced by the Cricketers Inn.

By the Victorian era, one of the most famous local cricketers was bowler James Southerton, who also played for Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and England. He was landlord of the original Cricketers Inn, which provided dressing rooms for the Mitcham players prior to construction of cricket pavilion in 1904. The match scorer was also positioned on the pub balcony during this period, as it offered the best vantage point from which to observe the game.

Local cricketers of the 1830s wore more formal attire, including tall beaver hats, white cord breeches, silk stockings and buckled shoes. In the mid 19th century, matches were so beset by betting and gangs of bookmakers that both teams were allegedly bribed to lose and play became farcical. Fair play had resumed by the late Victorian period and the club started to welcome international teams, including an Aboriginal XI from Australia.

The Mitcham club now became a training ground for local, county and national players. On occasion, three matches were being played simultaneously, with five marquees catering for the various teams. To accommodate cricket enthusiasts working long hours in local factories, matches started from 7.30am onwards. Famous Mitcham players of this period included Surrey fast bowler Tom Richardson, wicket keeper Herbert Strudwick and batsman Andy Sandham, who continued to score centuries into the 1930s.

Women’s teams played from the 1930s, and international matches were staged during the late 1940s, some featuring Mitcham’s own Hazel Saunders.

Between the 1950s and 1980s, the Mitcham team benefited greatly from Caribbean players, including Barbadian batsman Winston Stafford and Jamaican bowlers Eaton Swaby and Dennis Marriott. In 2013, a plaque honouring Dennis and his 1,000+ wickets as a Mitcham player was added to the Tom Ruff memorial on Cricket Green. This stone cube commemorates a local shoe repairer and great cricket enthusiast who died in 1961 whilst serving as Mayor of Mitcham.

Today, Mitcham Cricket Club boasts a skilled and diverse First XI, which has risen to Division 1 of the Surrey County League. The club has a wide range of youth, men’s and women’s teams and continues to nurture new generations of players.
Help the NHS and social care services by returning unused equipment

If you have items such as a bath lift, shower chair, or perching stool that are no longer needed, please arrange a free collection by Croydon Community Equipment Service, which works in partnership with Merton Council. Your unused equipment will be safety checked and deep cleaned, so that it can be used to help someone else live more independently.

To arrange a free collection, email cesadmin@croydon.gov.uk or call 020 8664 8860

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Musical Fireworks Displays

FUNFAIR | STREET FOOD | CRAFT BEER

Wimbledon Park
Fri 4 November

Morden Park
Sat 5 November

merton.gov.uk/fireworks
Please tell us a bit more about how Homeshare started. My dad suffered from dementia and my mum, who was his main carer, had mobility problems, so they needed extra support. We really wanted someone who was like family to give practical help around the house and provide them with good company. In 2006, this prompted me to start Share and Care, whereby we matched younger sharers with older householders.

Who does the service benefit? Householders simply provide the sharer with a bedroom in their house and, in return, they get friendly company, practical help and the security of someone else living in their home. For those who are old, vulnerable, lonely or suffering from illness or disability, it can be incredibly comforting to have a sharer living with them.

What does Homeshare involve? The householder offers the sharer all of their facilities in return for around ten hours’ help a week, which could include shopping, cooking, gardening or cleaning. The sharer commits to staying at least six nights each week and offers an additional five hours’ companionship, although they aren’t expected to provide full-time care and most have jobs of their own. We find that the sharers are often in their late 20s, 30s and 40s and have settled lives, rather than younger people who like to be out more.

What should householders and sharers know before they commit to living together? The most important consideration is that this is not a job whereby the sharer provides round-the-clock personal care for the householder. Householders and sharers are expected to maintain their normal lives and relationships and they must respect that both need their privacy and personal space.

What safeguards do you have in place to ensure that the householders and sharers are well suited to one another? When matching people with a sharer, we discuss everything with the householder and, if appropriate, their family to find out as much about them as possible. We then interview potential sharers to assess their compatibility. Sharers must have a recent DBS check and references from a minimum of two referees. If the householder and sharer decide they would like to live together, Share and Care draws up a licence agreement and maintains regular contact to ensure the arrangement is working well.

find out more Share and Care Homeshare is a great way to provide older people with the company they crave and the help they need. To find out more about this community service, call 020 3865 3398 or visit www.shareandcare.co.uk.
Merton Local is a brand new app, designed to support our local businesses as we emerge from the pandemic by connecting them with new customers from across the borough.

It’s been a tough couple of years for businesses, as they’ve struggled to survive COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions. Many of Merton’s 6,000 businesses are small companies and family-run firms that have had to adapt the way they trade, including setting up online and making their premises COVID-19 secure.

Meanwhile, spending more time at home has enabled residents to rediscover the businesses in their local area. Last year, as part of Your Merton, the biggest community conversation the council has ever held, residents told us that revitalising local high streets and supporting Merton businesses are two of their top priorities for the future. One of the first actions the council is taking to help the community realise this ambition is to create the Merton Local app, which was developed by bubltown.

Businesses list their profile free of charge and can offer special deals or exclusive discounts to app users. If you run a Merton business, please sign up today – it only takes a few minutes.

Residents can download the app and browse, book and buy from businesses across the borough. Whether you need a restaurant recommendation, a plumber or details about that independent shop you’ve been planning to visit, it is all in Merton Local.

You can book appointments, make reservations and order products online for collection or delivery in seconds, and there is also a chat feature that enables you to communicate directly with businesses who can help with any queries you may have.

Merton Local also has events listings, so if you’re looking for inspiration for a night out, something to do at the weekend, or need a fun activity to entertain the kids, there is plenty to choose from. Stay connected with what’s going on in your area with the live events calendar and easy-to-access information about local attractions.

Find out more www.mertonlocal.co.uk