Merton Together
Get support with the cost of living

Keep it Clean
Residents shape future waste services
As winter arrives, the rising cost of living is at the forefront of all our minds. Merton was one of the first councils to declare a cost of living emergency and we have launched a dedicated £2 million fund to help our residents who will be hardest hit by soaring energy prices and increasing bills this winter. The council is partnering with a number of community organisations to help them to fund extra support for our most vulnerable residents, including emergency assistance; home improvements to make properties more energy efficient; and the distribution of surplus food to those who need it. Together, we have organised five cost of living events for people to receive specialist support, ahead of a difficult winter. The council is also funding direct grants for residents in receipt of council tax support and providing warm spaces in our seven libraries.

The way we all look out for one another in our community makes me proud to live in Merton. We’ve seen this throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and now through the cost of living crisis. Our community spirit is what is great about our borough and we want to harness this civic pride by investing in a number of projects through our two new civic pride funding schemes. One fund will distribute money to initiatives run by voluntary and community organisations and the other fund will be used to pay for neighbourhood projects which create sporting opportunities, help to build a sustainable future or nurture civic pride.

Civic pride and a strong sense of community are a big part of the reason why people enjoy living where they do. Another important factor is clean streets. Our recycling and rubbish collections and street cleaning are some of the council’s most visible services. We recently decided not to renew our current contract with Veolia when it ends in 2025 and instead to rebuild the service in a way which is based on the needs of our community. We have been consulting with residents on the best way to do this that meets the environmental challenges we face and keeps Merton clean.

I want everyone to take pride in living here and we want more people to make their home in Merton. We have set an ambitious target to deliver 400 affordable homes on council-owned land by 2026 and have identified four locations for the first 93 homes, which already have planning permission.

Our green spaces attract people to the borough and over the winter months, we will be upgrading some of the sports facilities in our parks to encourage us all to make being more active a resolution for 2023 in our great borough of sport.

To keep up to date with council news, please sign up to receive the weekly My Merton e-newsletter at merton.gov.uk/newsletter

Councillor Ross Garrod, Leader of Merton Council, writes for My Merton

Councillor Ross Garrod
Leader of Merton Council
Annette Sime (left in pink top) and Christine Matlock (grey hoodie) at the New Horizon Centre in Pollards Hill. Photographer Paul Tanner.

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is published quarterly and is distributed to 86,000 households in the borough.
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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 17 November 2022.

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Health and wellbeing zones

Health and wellbeing zones will be launched in all seven of our libraries as part of Mind Space, a new project which will provide residents with an innovative range of health and wellbeing services via our public libraries. Services include specialist health and wellbeing books and information, along with technology, to assist residents to better manage their health, including massage chairs to support with relaxation and weight, height and blood pressure monitors. We have also partnered with Nuffield Health who will be delivering 21 free fitness events and specialist health talks across our libraries every month. A launch event will be held at Morden Library on Thursday 24 November between 11am and 2pm.

Hate crime awareness

The theme for this year’s National Hate Crime Awareness Week, held in October, was preventing hate crime against people from South East Asian communities. Our Deputy Leader, Councillor Eleanor Stringer, visited the Baitul Futuh Mosque in Morden to help raise awareness of hate crime and the support available for anyone who has experienced it.

Health and wellbeing zones

find out more merton.gov.uk/hatecrime

Young People’s Takeover Day

We welcomed a group of young people from Merton’s Youth Parliament to Merton Civic Centre for our first Young People’s Takeover Day in October. The initiative, which was started by the Children’s Commissioner, puts young people in decision making positions and enables them to share their views, suggest new ideas, develop new skills and experience the world of work by shadowing council staff for the day.

Merton Dementia Hub

The borough of sport was the theme of a visit to Merton Dementia Hub by Council Leader, Councillor Ross Garrod, and the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care, Councillor Peter McCabe, where they saw some of the activities on offer to people living with dementia. The hub, in Whitfield Gardens, Mitcham, provides a range of support and information for people with dementia and those who care for them. It is part of the dementia community support service that the council commissions the Alzheimer’s Society to run.

find out more Drop in Monday to Friday 9am-5pm or call 020 8687 0922
Car park reopened

The lower deck of Peel House car park, behind Sainsbury’s in Morden, has reopened to drivers, although the upper deck remains closed for further work.

After a thorough inspection, our maintenance contractor, FM Conway, has provided us with a detailed report on the condition of Peel House car park. This includes the results of site investigation and survey works, and an assessment of the upper floor’s load-carrying capacity. The upper deck is set to remain closed until next summer. In order to be brought back into use, it requires a significant amount of remedial work, and we are exploring our options around this in the context of the amount of parking spaces required in Morden town centre and the long-term future of the building.

Our top priority throughout this entire process has been public safety, and this remains the case whilst we make decisions over the upper deck.

New parking machines

Since mid-September, we’ve been continuing with the modernisation of the Pay and Display machines in our car parks.

The new machines allow for debit card and contactless payment, as well as the standard coin payment and RingGo cashless parking options. Guidance on how to use the machines will be available in the car parks and where possible our staff will be on hand to assist. New Pay and Display machines are also being installed in the busiest on-street locations across the borough. All machines will take coin payment and RingGo cashless pay by phone will still be available at all locations.

Libraries win award

Our libraries have scooped a Book Industry Communication Technology Excellence in Libraries Award for the fifth year running.

This award is given to any organisation in the book industry which provides high levels of digital access and quality in their cataloguing and presentation of stock.

Only 20 organisations were successful this year and less than 10 were local authorities.

Police commendation

Zoe Gallen, who is Safer Merton’s lead on domestic abuse and violence against women and girls, received a commendation in October from Chief Superintendent Lis Chapple, Basic Command Unit Commander for South West London Police, for her work on a domestic abuse case.

The council’s work alongside the Metropolitan Police investigation helped to secure the arrest and conviction of a perpetrator of domestic violence, demonstrating how partnership across the two organisations helps to support victims and survivors of domestic violence and abuse.

Zoe has 17 years of experience in the field and also works hard training staff and working with partners to ensure the best outcome for survivors of domestic abuse.

Long Service Awards

Dedicated council staff who are marking a work milestone this year have clocked up more than 4,345 years of service to the borough. Their commitment to Merton was recognised at the Long Service Awards, held at Merton Register Office and hosted by the Mayor, Councillor Joan Henry, Council Leader, Councillor Ross Garrod and Chief Executive Hannah Doody.
Honours for long-serving councillors

Two former leaders of Merton Council were honoured with the Freedom of the Borough, while a further nine former councillors were made Aldermen and Alderwomen at a special council meeting in September, which was convened to give thanks to long-serving representatives who left the council at the last election.

Former councillors Mark Allison (who led the council from 2020–22) and David Tyrie Williams MBE JP (who led the council from 2006–10) were awarded the Freedom of the Borough, which is the highest honour which the council can award. As well as their stints in charge of the council, they accumulated 20 and 45 years of service as councillors respectively.

Alongside the Freedom of the Borough honours, 11 former councillors were made Honorary Aldermen or Alderwomen of the borough. This title is bestowed upon any former councillor who dedicated 15 or more cumulative years to the council. The former councillors who were given the honour were: Mark Allison, David Williams MBE JP, David Dean, John Dehaney, Nick Draper, James Holmes, Russell Makin, Oonagh Moulton, David Simpson CBE, Peter Southgate and Geraldine Stanford.

Reception class school places

If your child is due to start reception class in September 2023, you can apply for a school place now. You must apply for a reception place, even if your child currently attends a school nursery, however places in the reception class are not guaranteed. Parents are encouraged to consider schools closest to their home, to check the admissions criteria carefully and to use all six preference options. The closing date for applications is 15 January 2023. 🔄 find out more merton.gov.uk/admissions

Exam success for GCSE students

Pupils across the borough celebrated a strong set of GCSE results, despite having their studies disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, 57% of pupils achieved a 5+ in English and maths – above the England average of 50%. The progress Merton pupils made, compared with pupils nationally who had similar outcomes at the end of primary school, is the third highest of all England local authorities.

Heritage Discovery Day

Hundreds of residents attended Merton’s annual Heritage Discovery Day at Morden Library in August.

A varied programme, including stalls from heritage and community groups, arts and crafts, talks and film screenings, enabled visitors to learn more about our borough’s fascinating history.

Community Forums

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

- Wimbledon - Wednesday 30 November at 7:15pm at Wimbledon Library
- Raynes Park - Wednesday 7 December at 7:15pm at Raynes Park Library
- Mitcham - Tuesday 21 February, at 7:15pm. Venue TBC.
- Morden - Wednesday 22 February at 7:15pm. Council Chamber, Merton Civic Centre.

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A varied programme, including stalls from heritage and community groups, arts and crafts, talks and film screenings, enabled visitors to learn more about our borough’s fascinating history.
The decision follows a review of the contract by the council, which was also undertaken by the three other boroughs in the South London Waste Partnership – Croydon, Kingston and Sutton. All current street cleaning and collection services will continue unaffected.

Councillor Ross Garrod Leader of Merton Council said: “Following the elections, this new administration took office with the aim of building pride in Merton. That starts with clean streets, which is a top priority for us. “While progress has been made in some areas, the current contract has not performed as expected and street cleanliness has not met the high standards that we all want for our community.

“However, the current contract has not met the standards expected by both the council and Veolia, and we must now take this opportunity to change it. “Now that we are ending the current contract, we want to rebuild a service that is based on the needs of our community, that meets the environmental challenges we face and that keeps Merton clean.”

Following Cabinet’s decision on 10 October, the council launched a six-week engagement programme asking people to give their views on the current street cleaning and waste collection service and what they thought should come next for the service. The Keep it Clean consultation closes on Tuesday 22 November, and has so far received thousands of responses. A series of pop-up roadshows, public online meetings and resident meetings also took place at the beginning of November, giving people more opportunities to share their views. We hope that the culmination of everyone’s feedback will lead to the biggest response the council has had to a waste service engagement programme.

Residents can have their say by completing the Keep it Clean online survey until Tuesday 22 November. After that, the full results and feedback will be analysed and available on our website in January.

To complete the survey and read more about Cabinet’s decision not to renew the street cleaning and waste collection contract, visit merton.gov.uk/wasteservice

We want to rebuild a service that is based on the needs of our community

“The decision Cabinet took on 10 October marks the beginning of building a waste service that works for our residents and businesses, and ensures cleaner streets across Merton.”

Councillor Natasha Irons, Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change, said: “This service is a top priority for everyone in Merton. Along with the introduction of wheeled bins, the current contract has helped us to achieve the seventh highest recycling rate in London, and the extra investment that both the council and Veolia have made through things like our night-time economy crews and new mechanical sweepers have begun to make an impact.

New waste service to start in 2025

The council will develop a new service for street cleaning and waste collections, after agreeing not to renew the current contract with Veolia when it ends in 2025.
Get help with the cost of living

We are setting aside millions of pounds to support our residents through the cost-of-living crisis.

With double-digit inflation, driven largely by the huge increase in the price of heating and powering our homes, we know that many residents across the borough are worried about the cost of living. We are determined to support our residents through these difficult times. In June we were one of the first councils to declare a cost-of-living emergency and set up a £2 million fund to help the people of Merton through this crisis. Since then, we have either carried out or agreed a range of measures to help those most at risk as a result of price rises.

As well as these emergency measures, we also continue to support our residents with our day-to-day services, whether that’s through housing support, benefit advice, or inviting people into our libraries to save on heating bills at home.

Additionally, we’ve gathered together a wide range of local organisations and online resources that can help you through financial hardship onto one cost-of-living webpage.

How we are supporting residents

- We have committed £654,000 to fund direct grants of £60 to the approximately 10,000 residents who receive Council Tax Support.
- We’ve agreed to spend £630,000 on free school meals for children from low-income households until March 2023, including vouchers to cover school holidays.
- We are setting aside £100,000 for an application-based grant system, administered by Wimbledon Guild, to support those on the verge of crisis.
- We will spend a further £400,000 to help low-income households become more energy efficient. The money will be used to fund organisations, such as Thinking Works, that support our Warm & Well initiatives to fund small home improvements, which will keep households warm, reduce their energy bills, and help the environment all at the same time.
- We have agreed to give Citizens Advice Merton £200,000 to increase their capacity to support Merton residents.
- We will be giving £100,000 to voluntary sector partners who offer emergency assistance relating to the cost of living, such as vouchers, grants and foodbanks, to help residents through the immediate winter period and beyond.
- We have allocated a further £100,000 to Sustainable Merton and the Community Fridge Network partners to ensure surplus food supply is redistributed where needed across the borough.
- We have already run five cost-of-living events in our libraries, where around 15 teams from across the council, charities and other local organisations have gathered to offer a range of information and advice to residents. Each household who has attended has also been offered a £10 supermarket voucher.
- Our next event will focus on energy efficiency and how to cut your gas and electricity bills, and it will be held on 26 November between 10.30am-1.30pm at Merton Civic Centre. Watch out for future events.

If you’re not sure who to ask for help, this is a great place to start: merton.gov.uk/CostOfLiving
Everyone is welcome at our warm spaces

Nobody should be forced to stay in a cold home each day. If you’re concerned that you won’t be able to afford to keep your home warm, you are welcome to visit one of our seven libraries. All of our buildings are heated and free to enter. With a variety of events planned every month, each branch has something for everyone – whether it’s family-friendly film screenings, musical jam sessions, history talks or book clubs.

There is also a range of support available, including information on services like debt advice, help with benefits, energy saving, and assistance getting online.

Of course, if the events aren’t for you, you’re welcome to simply come and read, study or use one of our computers.

Whatever it is you would like to use your local library for, please don’t hesitate to come and stay warm with us.

HAF a merry Christmas!

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is free for children and young people in Merton on free school meals. There will be HAF projects all over the borough during the Christmas holidays with lots of activities to choose from including football, drama, dance, multi-sports, arts and crafts, and even Brazilian Capoeira – a mix of music, dance and martial arts. There will also be trips out to the local pantomimes at the Polka Theatre and Wimbledon Theatre as part of the programme.

Business support

Council Leader, Councillor Ross Garrod, joined business leaders from across the borough to discuss the cost of living crisis. The September event, hosted by Merton Chamber of Commerce, was a great chance for businesses to hear from Cllr Garrod on what the council is doing to support our small and medium sized enterprises, and it was also a great forum for them to share ideas with each other on how they can make it through these challenging times.
Community support

There are a range of charities and community organisations ready to support you through the winter.

Debt, housing and welfare

- Citizens Advice Merton & Lambeth – Provides information and advice on money and debt, benefits and taxes, housing, Universal Credit, employment and more. Specialist advice is also available for the disability welfare benefits service and for L&Q Housing residents.

- South West London Law Centres – Offers a money advice service, free money webinars and a housing advice helpline, as well as other legal advice.

- Spring Hill Advice and Law Centre – Provides specialist advice and legal casework for debt, welfare benefits, housing and community care-related issues, prioritising patients of the South West London Mental Health NHS Trust.

- dealPLUS – Offers information and advice on benefits, housing, debt and employment for deaf and hard of hearing people, including in British Sign Language.

- Association for Polish Family PYZA – Provides information, advice and support to Polish and Eastern European communities in Merton, including Ukrainian arrivals.

- Commonside Community Development Trust – Offers support with applying for benefits, housing advice and for families or adults in need.

- Age UK Merton – Provides information and advice to residents of state pension age and over, including on benefits, housing, pensions and retirement.

- Wimbledon Guild – Offers financial help with one-off grants for eligible residents to pay for things like food, gas and electricity. They’ll also make sure that you’re getting all the benefits you’re entitled to.

Emergency food and fuel

- Merton Community Hub – If you need support with paying for bills or shopping, Merton Community Hub can provide a free foodbank voucher or an emergency food parcel.

- Merton’s Community Fridge – Redistributes surplus fresh food in food parcels to those in need.

- Wimbledon Foodbank (Trussell Trust Network) – Emergency food support, with foodbanks located in Wimbledon, Mitcham, Morden and Pollards Hill. A voucher is required.

- Dons Local Action Group – Provides emergency food parcels to households, as well as bulk food deliveries to other food support organisations.

- Merton Growbaby – Working through Wimbledon Foodbank to support parents with children under five-years-old with items like milk formula, wipes, nappies and toiletries.

Energy advice

- Priority Services Register – A free support service run by every energy supplier and network operator to help people in vulnerable situations. Get in touch to agree a payment plan for your energy bills.

- Thinking Works – Thinking Works provides Winter Warmth home visits and telephone advice services for residents aged 65 or over, or those with a long-term health condition or disability, or those on a low income. They can also check your eligibility for grants for insulation.

- Sustainable Merton – Offers a wide range of advice on reducing your energy consumption and saving money.

Funding for organisations

- Merton Giving Fund – Offers grants for organisations to support residents with financial wellbeing and resilience, food insecurity, health and wellbeing.

Keeping connected

A group of 18 charities have joined forces to help ensure that people aged over 50 get the support they need with the cost of living crisis.

There are estimated to be around 64,000 people aged 50 and over in the borough and the network aims to keep them stay active and connected by providing a range of support, including exercise classes, social activities, a warm meal and financial advice. Many of the organisations in the network are directly funded by the council or already work with us to support residents.

Peter Hutchison of Merton Connected said: “We know people in our community are struggling with the cost of living. This can have knock-on effects on their mental health. As a group of charities, we have services and support to help with all these things, and we want to make sure it’s as easy as possible for people who need our help to get in touch.”

For more information on all these services and more, visit merton.gov.uk/CostOfLiving

To volunteer, register at www.mertonconnected.co.uk

☎ find out more call 020 8066 4086, merton.gov.uk/adultsupport.

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Stay healthy this winter

The Warm & Well campaign is a partnership between Wimbledon Guild, Merton Council, Age UK and Thinking Works that provides free advice to Merton residents. We spoke to Warm & Well in Merton Project Manager Olivia McKay about how the campaign can help people stay well in colder weather as the cost of living crisis bites.

Can you tell us a bit more about Warm & Well and how it started?
Warm & Well is a council-funded initiative that was established in 2018. We want to emphasise the importance of staying healthy and active all year round. With older or more vulnerable individuals, we want to reduce winter-related illnesses and hospital admissions, and we’ve now widened the programme to include tips on how to save money on energy bills.

What’s your role in the campaign?
I’m the Warm & Well project manager and I’m responsible for referrals, networking, promotion, building external relationships and working with partner organisations.

What steps can people take to reduce their energy bills and cost of living generally?
If you have the thermostat set to 22°C, try turning it down a degree or two and you could save more than £200; you could also upgrade an old boiler for a new A-rated condensing unit; take shorter showers instead of baths; wash full loads of clothes at 30°C instead of half loads at 40°C; wash up in a bowl rather than under running water; and use draught excluders. We offer a handy free kit with carbon-monoxide monitor, energy-saving showerhead, LED lightbulbs and reflective panels for radiators.

Is there any financial support available for people struggling to pay their bills this winter? If so, how do they access this support?
Warm & Well helps Merton residents to find the discounts they’re eligible for. The Government has recently announced that it will support people who can’t afford their energy bills. This winter, most households will receive a £400 discount on their electricity bills. If you’re a pensioner who receives winter fuel payments, you could be eligible for a top-up of £300; if you receive means-tested benefits, you could get a payment of £650 to go towards your cost of living; and if you receive certain disability benefits, you could get an extra £150 payment. Local councils are also obliged to offer owners of homes in bands A to D a £150 rebate.

What advice can you give to people about staying healthy in colder weather?
If you’re older or are susceptible to flu or COVID-19, you should make sure you’re up to date with your jabs. You could wear an extra layer of clothing and keep your feet up at home where the air is warmer. A hot-water bottle and a blanket will also help. If you spend a lot of time outside, wear a scarf, gloves and several thin layers of underclothes that will trap your body heat. You could also take vitamin D supplements to keep your bones healthy and try to eat at least one hot meal a day. Hot drinks will also help, but only fill the kettle with the right amount of water to save power.
Funding approved for community projects

Council will give more money than ever before to our voluntary and community sector for essential services that support our residents, as well as investing in local projects that rebuild pride in Merton.

Merton Council agreed this autumn to create a new funding model that will support the promotion of civic pride in the borough, including increased funding for the voluntary and community sectors (VCS).

The new Civic Pride Fund – Investing in Neighbourhoods will replace the previous Neighbourhoods Fund and will make funding decisions based on three guiding principles: that projects nurture civic pride; build towards a sustainable future; and help to create a borough of sport.

Projects that have benefited from the levy include: neighbourhood shopping parade improvements; the Library of Things; the Community Fridge; enhancements at recreation grounds across the borough; the redevelopment of Polka Theatre; and a community arts venue at Cricket Green School, among others.

Cabinet also approved the creation of the Civic Pride – Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector programme under the umbrella of the new fund. This will replace the current Strategic Partner Programme and will reflect Merton’s commitment to investing in VCS infrastructure to support our local communities.

Merton is looking forward to investing in a wide range of projects and organisations through the new civic pride funds and is delighted to be giving more money than ever before to the voluntary and community sector for essential services that support residents, as well as investing in local projects that rebuild pride in Merton.

This funding will include support for initiatives that help build a sustainable future and achieve the council’s ambitions to be a borough of sport.

The fund will distribute Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy Funding (NCIL), which will be around £750,000 this year, and applications closed in November.

The levy has been collected by the council since 2014 and is a community funding programme that uses money from developers. Because there has been a lower level of housing starts this year, the fund for 2022 is lower than is hoped for in normal years.

Merton has already received £6.3 million which has been earmarked for neighbourhood projects, with almost 90% of this funding approved or spent under the previous Neighbourhood Fund and the Ward Allocation Scheme.
Since 2018, the council has been collecting a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for Merton for infrastructure and other projects to support the demands that development places on our neighbourhoods, previously as the Neighbourhood Fund and now under its new banner.

Priority has historically been given to bids that contribute to community plans, especially those which helped to tackle inequality across the borough, particularly in the most deprived wards to the east and south.

Since the fund was first launched in 2018 we have invested in projects delivered directly by the council, notably public realm improvements to parks and town centres, and have supported community groups and organisations, mainly through grants for delivering actual things such as improvements to facilities.

Some of the key projects have included:
- £2,000 for a Welcome to South Mitcham Community Association sign.
- £125,000 for livening up the public realm at Hartfield Walk, Wimbledon.
- £68,500 for improvements to the New Horizon Centre in Pollards Hill including café, toilets and landscaping.
- £36,616 for various improvements to Deen City Farm including pathway enhancements.
- £7,000 to Morden Baptist Church for an open to all community garden (from an allocation of £300,000 for improvements in Morden Town Centre).
- £31,288 for Merton Garden Streets 2022 community planting which has funded resources including plants and materials, plus project management.

We have also funded a limited number of activity-based projects delivered by organisations including Towards Employment, Community Champions, and The Wheel and activities run by Uptown Youth, Commonside Community Development Trust and the Attic Theatre.

Civic Pride – Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector

Previously named the Strategic Partner Programme, this has three key aims:
- To invest in and support Merton’s local voluntary and community infrastructure.
- To nurture a strong sense of community and reduce inequalities.
- To bring together preventative services that provide information, advice and support in the community to strengthen Merton residents’ physical, social, emotional, and economic resilience.

The programme is divided into four themes which align with Merton Council’s new Working Better With Communities framework. They are specifically focused around areas where people may find help and support in Merton and organisations are able to apply for funding against one or more themes.

- **Services that provide help**: those that provide emergency assistance to people in crisis and direct help to adults in need.
- **Services that grow strengths and capabilities**: those that provide good quality information, support and non-accredited advice, accredited advice and casework and specialist and/or legal representation where necessary.
- **Active, supportive communities**: services that co-design support and solutions with people and communities to help grow their relationships and connections and increase their level of activity. This will include low level preventative activities and Healthwatch Merton.
- **An enabling system and place**: services that help to support an enabling system and place. This will include voluntary and community sector infrastructure support and the provision of small grants.
If you're into musical comedy, why not head to the New Wimbledon Theatre this November? The infamous Rocky Horror Show comes to town for six nights from Monday 21 so dust off your dancing shoes and prepare to belt out classics like the timeless Time Warp. Then, throughout December, you can enjoy Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. For more information about these and other shows, visit newwimbledontheatre.net.

Every Saturday since 2000, Wimbledon Farmers' Market in Havana Road has drawn shoppers to stalls selling organic meat, seasonal game, milk and cheese, a huge range of fruit and vegetables, plus pies and cakes, fresh flowers, fabulous fungi, gins and jams, and all manner of moreish drinks. The market is open from 9am until 1pm. Please bring your own bags to help us reduce, re-use and recycle. More information about the stalls can be found at www.lfm.org.uk/markets/wimbledon.

MED Coffee & Movement is a coffee shop in Merton Abbey Mills that champions healthy eating, drinking and living. They serve locally roasted coffee, a range of pastries and light bites, and delightful plant-based alternatives. Standing for mind, energy and determination, MED can help you detox with a fresh organic juice and then guide you through a light workout in the gym. Or you could simply indulge yourself with a triple-chocolate muffin. For more information about MED, visit www.medcafe.io.

Beer & Beyond recently opened its doors in the heart of Wimbledon Village. This craft beer and gin shop stocks beers from Germany, Belgian ales and organic cider, and IPAs and stouts from independent British breweries. If you live near the shop in Ridgway and place a minimum order, they will aim to deliver the same day, free of charge. For more information, visit www.beerandbeyond.co.uk.

If you need to work off some of the festive food and drink, why not try a session or two with JV Dance Fitness at the Lantern Arts Centre in Raynes Park? They will help assess your fitness, strength and endurance in personalised sessions so that you can improve your coordination and physical and mental health in a fun and interactive setting. They even offer classes for kids and teenagers. For more information, visit www.jvdancefitness.co.uk.

A cheeseboard is a delicious way to end a festive meal. Local Cheese Cave is a delivery service that sources the finest local cheeses from smaller dairies and brings them straight to your door. Delivery is free if you live in the Wimbledon area. If you’d like to become a curd nerd, why not head to the Wimbledon Brewery on 15 December at 7pm to join a beer and cheese pairing evening? For more information about this event, visit localcheesecave.com.

Ezápé Naturals is a small family-run business based in Mitcham that hand makes skincare products in small batches. Pamper yourself with body oils, body butters, balms and bath salts that are packed with certified organic, nutrient-rich, unrefined and cold-pressed ingredients. Best of all, you can save 10% on all products bought through the Merton Local app. You can find out more about them at: www.ezapenaturals.co.uk.

Let’s go local!

It’s more important than ever to support local businesses this winter and we’ve picked out seven of the best. From arts and entertainment to food, drink and dance, you’ll find everything you need for festive family fun on the Merton Local app.
**BEST BUSINESS AWARDS**

We were proud to be a headline sponsor for the Merton Best Business Awards on 28 September. The event was a great way to recognise businesses that have not only survived the events of the past year, but have shown resilience, excellence, innovation and best practice in the borough. Many fantastic businesses were nominated for the 16 awards that were up for grabs, but the coveted Best Business in Merton award went to Rainbow Productions, who are leaders in manufacturing bespoke mascots. The judges were impressed by their ability to bring joy daily to thousands of people – bringing a continued commitment to using locally trained Merton performers.

**IT’S A WRAP!**

We’ve got Christmas wrapped up this year with festive cheer across the borough, so why not sing carols, enjoy a mince pie and glass of mulled wine and head over to Colliers Wood to watch the lights being switched on? The festive fun starts on Friday 25 November in Colliers Wood on the plaza next to the entrance to the Tube station. There will be performances from local schools, a children’s entertainer and Santa’s grotto. The lights will be switched on at 5.15pm, but make sure you get there early to enjoy all the festivities.

To find out more about events happening in Merton this Christmas, visit merton.gov.uk/christmas.

**SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY**

This year, Small Business Saturday falls on 3 December and Council Leader Councillor Ross Garrod would like to encourage everyone in the borough to support the more than 6,000 local businesses and family-run firms. Many were forced to close during the pandemic and we would like to do everything we can to help get them back on their feet. With energy prices rising and the cost of living also increasing, family budgets will be stretched this winter but our high streets will need more help than ever. If you’re planning on doing your Christmas shopping in the coming weeks, why not give the local economy a boost by buying your food and presents from local retailers instead of shopping online? You could also donate any extra food to the local foodbanks, which will be helping those less fortunate this festive season.
We’re ready for the cold

Plans have been made well in advance of this year’s cold snap to ensure the borough keeps moving during the winter.

When icy weather or snow is forecast, we use grit (rock salt) to treat roads and pavements around town centres, schools, train stations and local shops. We also clear ice and snow. Merton Council has 2,000 tonnes of salt to grit roads across the borough and we have been planning ahead to ensure Merton has sufficient stocks to keep our streets clear of ice and safe for residents.

During the winter period, we have a duty officer on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to make decisions on gritting activity, based on weather forecasts and road surface temperatures.

Routes
We usually grit roads during late evening or early morning, depending on when icy conditions are predicted to occur.

Priority routes: We grit these routes before the air and road surface temperatures drop below zero to reduce the risk of ice forming. This is called precautionary gritting.

- All classified roads
- Bus routes
- Roads leading to fire stations and hospitals
- Other hazardous locations

We aim to complete all precautionary gritting of the priority network within three hours of commencing.

Additional roads and locations: When snow or widespread ice is forecast, additional roads will be gritted to make sure access to schools, residential care and other facilities is maintained.

In the event of heavy snowfall, additional locations, requested by residents, will be added to a list and we will attempt to treat these in priority order, after our main network of roads have been treated.

Pavements: Selected busy pavements are pre-gritted when widespread ice or snow is forecast. Gritting of other pavements will be carried out on a priority basis, should snow accumulate.

Repeat gritting: In the event of snow settling, grit may not melt all the snow. If this occurs, we will repeat the gritting of priority and additional roads.

Doing your own gritting, and snow and ice clearance
You can clear snow and ice from pavements yourself. Guidance on how to do this is available at: www.gov.uk/clear-snow-road-path-cycleway.

To see the latest gritting updates on Twitter use the hashtag #GritMerton
We recently carried out a detailed analysis of the rubbish and recycling that is collected from households across Merton.

The key finding was that more than half (54.4%) of the items that are in a typical Merton rubbish bin could have been recycled using the council’s free doorstep recycling collection service. Food waste was the biggest culprit, making up more than a quarter (26.4%) of the average bin.

A further 6.2% of the waste, such as wood, rubble and scrap metal, could have been recycled at the Household Reuse and Recycling Centre in Morden and another 10.1% was plastic film that could have been recycled via collection points in local shops.

Merton may be one of the best boroughs in London for recycling (with a recycling rate of 40.8%), but the results of this study shows how much more could be done.

How does your bin compare? Could you be doing more to reduce the amount of recyclable items that end up in your rubbish bin? Turn the page to find out how to use your recycling collection service to its full potential.

And don’t forget that recycling doesn’t stop in the kitchen! Please remember to recycle items from around the home.

Find out what happens to your recycling, where it’s taken and what it’s turned into, visit: slwp.org.uk/destination-recycling
### Kerbside collection service at a glance

#### FOOD WASTE
- Collected every week
  - Yes please
  - All cooked and uncooked food
  - Dairy products: cheese and eggs
  - Fruit and vegetable peelings

#### PAPER & CARD
- Collected alternate weeks
  - Yes please
  - Newspapers and magazines
  - Card and cardboard
  - Toilet and kitchen roll tubes

#### PLASTICS, GLASS, CANS & CARTONS
- Collected alternate weeks
  - Yes please
  - Plastic bottles
  - Plastic pots, tubs, trays etc.
  - Glass jars and bottles

#### RUBBISH
- Collected every two weeks
  - Yes please
  - Non-recyclable rubbish
  - Dirty cardboard
  - Plastic bags and film

#### TEXTILES & SHOES
- Collected every week
  - Yes please
  - Clothes and linen. Shoes (tied together)

#### BATTERIES
- Collected every week
  - Yes please
  - Household batteries

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Line your indoor kitchen caddy with compostable liners or old newspaper (no plastic bags).

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, tubs, trays etc.

Only rubbish placed in this wheelie bin (with the lid closed) will be collected.

Place in a tied plastic carrier bag next to or on top of your bins.

Place in an untied plastic carrier bag.
## at a glance

### COMMUNAL FLATS

**Collected every week**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOOD WASTE</th>
<th>RECYCLING</th>
<th>RUBBISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No thanks</td>
<td>No thanks</td>
<td>No thanks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Tea bags and coffee grounds**
- **Meat and fish bones**
- **Egg boxes**
- **Junk mail and catalogues**
- **Cans, tins, aerosols and tin foil**
- **Food and drinks cartons**
- **Polystyrene**
- **Nappies (in a tied bag)**

### Your personalised 2023 calendar

Visit the council website to view and download your personalised 2023 collection calendar using the postcode search tool. You can also report a missed collection and find detailed information about your collection service, including a full list of what you can and can’t recycle. Visit merton.gov.uk/recycling

### A helping hand

The council’s website is full of useful information.

So, if you’re not sure how to book to visit our Household Reuse and Recycling Centre in Garth Road, Morden, report a missed bin collection, let us know about dumped rubbish or an overflowing bin, visit merton.gov.uk/LoveMerton
’Tis the season to recycle

Christmas is a time of year when we tend to generate more waste than usual. But with a little planning, there are lots of ways to reduce your environmental impact without missing out on any fun. Here are a few top tips (and a festive playlist) to help you have a green Christmas:

- **WEEE three kings** – New electronics are popular at Christmas, but make sure any old waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) is disposed of correctly at our Household Reuse and Recycling Centre in Morden, rather than in your general waste bin, which could cause fires.

- **Chestnuts roasting** – Go cold turkey on putting food waste in your rubbish bin this Christmas. Remember to recycle all of your meat and fish bones, vegetable peelings, plate scrapings (and chestnut shells) using your weekly food waste collection service.

- **Make a list and check it twice** – Plan what Christmas gifts and food you need in advance and only buy what you need to help reduce unnecessary waste. Put leftovers to good use by getting creative in the kitchen. For inspiration, visit lovefoodhatewaste.com

- **The very next day, you gave it away** – We all receive unwanted gifts at times, so why not donate them to a charity shop, or to people in your local community using a free online service such as Freecycle: ilovefreecycle.org

- **All we want for Christmas... is for you to recycle** – At this time of year, try to choose recyclable wrapping paper – try the scrunch test! If scrunched paper keeps its shape then it can be recycled. If it bounces back or has glitter on, it needs to go in the rubbish bin.

Finally, make it a New Year’s resolution to recycle more and waste less in 2023.

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**Christmas tree disposal**

**Free kerbside collection:**
Put your tree out by 6am on Monday 9 January 2023 and it will be collected as soon as possible. We aim to recycle as many trees as possible.
- Remove all decorations, pots etc.
- Place it close to the front boundary of your property, visible to collection crews but not blocking the pavement. If you live in a flat, put your tree outside your bin store but don’t block access.
- Alternatively, you can leave your tree next to your rubbish bin on your collection day. However, it will not be recycled.

**Free recycling service:**
To guarantee your tree is recycled, take it to the Household Reuse and Recycling Centre in Garth Road, Morden and place it in the garden waste container.
Alternatively, chop it up to create a winter shelter for animals in your garden or add it to your compost heap.
What Merton is doing to combat fly-tipping

Keeping Merton’s streets clean is a top priority for the council. Over the last five years, we have seen the level of fly-tipping almost double, with an estimated cost of £1million to the public purse.

Earlier this year, the council used its resources to clear the dumped rubbish along Willow Lane in Mitcham. This type of work takes time and money – money we would rather be spending on services that benefit the whole borough, such as our parks and open spaces.

The work on the Willow Lane site took a full fortnight to complete. First, a road closure was undertaken to clear the easy-to-reach items, with our service teams from idverde clearing over two tonnes of fly-tipped material on the first day alone.

A second closure was then required for specialist lifting equipment and vehicles to remove harder-to-reach contaminated waste. The waste was disposed of at the Beddington Lane waste-transfer facility daily, using an eight-wheel grab lorry.

A fence has been erected along Willow Lane to ensure no further fly-tipping takes place now that the clearance is complete.

In total, our teams cleared circa 23 tonnes of dumped rubbish, with the total costs coming to over £17,000.

We know it is only a small minority of people dumping rubbish in Merton and we have a number of CCTV cameras across the borough to catch those involved. But we need the help of our residents to identify these culprits.

Residents can tune in to our monthly Wall of Shame episodes on YouTube, where we post footage of people illegally dumping rubbish on our streets. If you live in Merton, take a look and help catch these criminals.

You can also help us to bring the fly-tippers who blight our borough to justice by reporting information about a fly-tip or fly-tipper anonymously on our website. Watch Wall of Shame videos youtube.com/MertonCouncil.

NITROUS OXIDE CANISTERS ARE NO LAUGHING MATTER

A public information campaign is about to launch across south London to raise awareness of nitrous oxide canisters and their impact on waste management. The campaign is being run by Viridor, the company that operates the Beddington Energy Recovery Facility (ERF), where non-recyclable rubbish from across the borough is taken for treatment.

In recent months thousands of ‘creamer canisters’ have ended up at the Beddington ERF, mixed in with household rubbish. The nitrous oxide, or laughing gas, they contain is intended for use in the catering industry but is also increasingly being used for recreational purposes. Aside from the serious health risks of taking laughing gas, the canisters it is stored in can also cause major damage to waste treatment facilities, present a potential safety risk to staff and have the potential to cause disruption to local waste collection services. Viridor’s Leave it Out campaign, featuring Noxie the naughty nitrous oxide canister, will raise awareness of the issues.
Merton’s residents are more active than the national average, with more than two thirds of adults doing enough exercise to benefit their health. However, 30,000 of the borough’s adults are classed as inactive because they don’t exercise – even moderately – for half an hour each week. And only half the young people in the borough do the recommended minimum amount of exercise.

To promote the health benefits of keeping fit and active, the council is investing in its facilities. Work will be done on Wimbledon Park Athletics Track over the winter and early spring with funding from the council and its partners England Athletics and the Hercules Wimbledon Athletic Club.

The Multi-Use Sports Area (MUSA) at Haydon’s Road Recreation Ground has already been upgraded, and Morden Recreation Ground and Colliers Wood will soon follow suit after receiving investment worth £200,000 from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Up to £175,000 from the CIL is also going towards improving the drainage and other essential work at council-owned facilities such as the Sir Joseph Hood Recreation Ground. Wimbledon Park was allocated more than £200,000 by the Environment Agency so that a new open channel through Ashen Grove and the public park could be completed. This project created additional storage for floodwater and will help improve the area’s biodiversity.

In late 2022 and into 2023, Merton Council will refurbish the six paddling pools and splash pads in the borough’s parks and open spaces. An investment of £270,000 has already allowed the Greenspaces Team to upgrade the paddling pools at Colliers Wood Recreation Ground, King George’s Park and Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields, after which they will turn their attention to giving the remaining pools at Rowan Road Recreation Ground, Morden Park and Sir Joseph Hood Recreation Ground a complete refurbishment.
Be more active this winter

With the record-breaking summer heat a distant memory and winter well underway, many people cut back on exercising outdoors and then put on a few pounds over the festive season. If you’d like to stay fit and healthy over Christmas and into the New Year, there are plenty of options across the borough.

Every Saturday at 9am on Wimbledon Common near the Windmill pub, you’ll find a friendly group of people waiting to start a 5k fun run. Whether you rate yourself as an Olympic hopeful or this is your first time running, there’s no expectation of setting personal bests and beating everyone else. It’s simply a free run around the common followed by coffee in the Windmill Café. Do remember that if you don’t think you’re up to a 5k, you can always sign up as a volunteer marshal.

If you prefer your action indoors, the gym is a good place to start. There are three council-owned leisure centres managed by Greenwich Leisure Limited: Morden Leisure Centre, with its popular café; Wimbledon Leisure Centre; and Canons Leisure Centre next to the new playground with its renovated track and new café. The popular ‘kids swim for a quid’ initiative introduced in the summer has been extended and will run throughout the winter.

For those determined to brave the outdoors even in the dead of winter, why not wrap up in something warm and head to the Wimbledon Park Watersports and Outdoor Centre on the lake? Adult sailing and powerboating courses run all year round. If you have a group of three people over the age of 18, you can arrange a date and time to suit your instructor in an offer that’s available from September to April.

Merton Abbey Fitness Centre is only a few minutes’ walk from Colliers Wood tube station and offers a huge variety of classes – from full-body workouts and cycling on a stationary bike to Pilates and Zumba dance sessions – as well as a luxurious swimming pool, sauna/steam room and creche.

For more information about all the activities available in Merton this winter, visit merton.gov.uk/active

Where will you watch the 2022 FIFA World Cup?

In November and December, Qatar will host the 22nd football World Cup. England had been progressing nicely since Gareth Southgate took over but recent performances in the Nations League suggest the side has a lot of work to do to reach the latter stages this time out.

For information about where you can watch the tournament, visit merton.gov.uk or follow us on Facebook (@MertonCouncil), Twitter (@Merton_Council) or Instagram (@whatsoninmerton).
Ambitious targets for new house building

Plans are being developed to build 400 affordable new homes on council land by 2026.

Merton Council committed at a Cabinet meeting in October to an ambitious affordable house-building target by 2026, identifying six further sites across the borough for potential housing development to bring the number of new affordable homes on council-owned land to around 400.

The new sites are at: Chaucer Centre, Morden; Gifford House, Morden; Worsfold House, Mitcham; Battle Close, South Wimbledon; Sibthorpe Road, Mitcham; and Hallowfield Way. All sites are allocated in Merton’s Local Plan for housing development.

These are in addition to four council-owned sites already earmarked in August for building more than 90 affordable homes on. It was agreed to set aside £300,000 to update plans on these sites, bringing them up to current building regulations and standards. These sites are: Elm Nursery Car Park, Mitcham (21 homes); Raleigh Gardens Car Park, Mitcham (36 homes); Land at Canons, Madeira Road, Mitcham (18 homes); and Farm Road Church, Morden (18 homes).

Championing tenants

The council wants to ensure that residents have access to decent housing and is taking a range of actions to improve standards in both private rented and housing association homes. The cabinet has agreed to launch consultations about setting up selective and additional licensing schemes, which would require landlords who rent out properties with multiple tenancies to comply with a set of guidelines to ensure that their tenants have a decent home.

This follows a series of visits by Council Leader, Councillor Ross Garrod to estates across the borough managed by Clarion and other housing associations. Tenants from Sadlers Close in Mitcham town centre; Armfield Crescent, Mitcham; Edinburgh Court, Lower Morden; and Brecon Close in Pollards Hill, showed councillors and housing officers outstanding repairs and reported various issues, including anti-social behaviour.
Deputy mayor visits Merton sites

Merton welcomed London’s Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development, Tom Copley, as he toured council-owned sites that have been earmarked for building affordable homes on. He was accompanied by Council Leader Councillor Ross Garrod and Councillor Andrew Judge, Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development.

In his role at City Hall, which he was appointed to by Mayor Sadiq Khan in 2020, Mr Copley is leading an ambitious approach to tackling the housing crisis, including the direct funding of council housing across the capital for the first time.

An artist’s impression of new homes at Raleigh Gardens, Mitcham

Update on estate regeneration

Clarion and the council’s £1.3bn regeneration project in Merton continues to move forward, with progress being made across all three estates. The landmark project is delivering 2,700 high-quality new homes and 9,000 square metres of community and commercial space in the borough.

High Path residents continue to move into their brand-new homes following the completion of the first phase, with preparation work ahead of phase two now underway. Planning permission to build the first 200 new homes at Eastfields was granted in May, while it’s hoped new homes in the second phase at Ravensbury will be ready to move into next summer.

In October, close to 20 residents living in new homes at High Path took part in a spring bulb planting event. This was part of a balcony greening project supported by Sustainable Merton, and followed a successful pilot earlier in the year.
ULEZ may be on its way to Merton

This summer, Transport for London (TfL) ran a consultation on the proposed expansion of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) into areas including Merton from August 2023.

ULEZ was introduced in 2019 in an effort to clean up the capital’s air. Its aim is to discourage older, more polluting vehicles from entering the zone by applying a daily charge of £12.50. Since its introduction, the ULEZ has reduced harmful roadside nitrogen dioxide by almost half in central London.

If the expansion goes ahead, the ULEZ will cover the Low Emission Zone – an area that covers the vast majority of Greater London. This would mean that Merton is within the ULEZ for the first time. However, the majority of motorists in the borough would be unaffected, as TfL estimate that 82% of vehicles in outer London are already ULEZ compliant.

In Merton, we have a big problem with air pollution, especially in proximity to busy traffic routes. This disproportionately affects the most vulnerable in society including children, older people, and anyone with long-term health conditions. With 60% of our borough’s nitrogen oxide being produced by road traffic, the ULEZ would undoubtedly be a step forward for clean air and improved health outcomes for everyone in Merton.

In their response to TfL’s consultation, the council made clear that – whilst it is vitally important to tackle toxic air pollution – TfL must also take the cost-of-living crisis into account. Therefore, should the expansion go ahead, those with non-compliant vehicles must receive support to switch to a newer, less polluting vehicle. Some support has previously been available in the form of a scrappage scheme for low-income and disabled Londoners, but the council has called for this to be enhanced to help more residents, particularly key workers and people living in areas which are not well served by public transport. A decision from the Mayor of London and TfL is expected later this year.

Are you eligible for free Warmer Homes improvements?

Residents who own their own homes or rent privately may be eligible for a Warmer Homes grant. If your residual income (after housing costs) is £20k a year or less or you receive a means tested benefit and/or have children receiving the Pupil Premium, you could end up with a warmer home and lower energy bills at no expense to you*.

The Mayor of London’s Warmer Homes programme offers grants of between £5,000 and £25,000 for heating, insulation and ventilation improvements for low-income Londoners who own their homes or rent privately and live in an EPC D–G rated property.

The programme is closing soon, so find out more now: merton.gov.uk/energy-efficiency-grants

*Landlords must consent to works and contribute one third of the cost.

World Car Free Day

We celebrated World Car Free Day on 22 September with town centre events featuring free bike repairs, information on how to monitor and reduce air pollution, and even a cycle-powered cinema. But don’t forget: cutting carbon and cleaning up the air isn’t just for one day, it’s a year-round commitment.
There’s More to Morden

Morden is home to more than 40,000 people, Merton Civic Centre, a transport hub and one of the UK’s largest mosques, but how much do you know about the area? Merton’s Heritage team is highlighting the district’s colourful past through a local history project.

In ancient times, Morden was on the important Roman trade route, Stane Street. Between 1554 and 1872, much of the area belonged to the Garths, a family with links to the Chancery and the government of India. By 1806, Morden was home to leading financier, Abraham Goldsmid, a key figure in securing freedoms for London’s Jewish community.

Victorian Morden boasted dairy and pig farms, a brickworks, allotments and a thriving snuff mill run by the Hatfield family – later owners of Morden Hall. During World War I this house, plus another Hatfield property, The Grange, served as military hospitals nursing wounded combatants.

Morden grew rapidly during the interwar years, following construction of the Underground station and the vast St. Helier estate. There were new homes, schools and entertainment venues, including an Odeon cinema, on the site now occupied by Iceland.

After World War II, Morden Hall Park hosted annual Film Star Garden parties, where 20,000 people queued to meet screen idols such as John Mills and Margaret Lockwood. From the 1960s onwards, R G Jones’ recording studios attracted music stars from the Yardbirds and the Rolling Stones, to David Bowie and ‘80s icons A-Ha.

Morden town centre evolved from tiny shops flanking the Tube station. By the 1960s and 1970s, local stores sold everything from clothing and food, to furniture, household goods, DIY materials and motoring goods. Shoppers also flocked to Caters supermarket and the multi-floor RACS department store.

Since 1985, Morden has been the headquarters for Merton Council, which occupies the former Crown House office block, built in 1960. The area now has a diverse population including members of the Windrush Generation, employed by London Transport and St. Helier Hospital, plus a large Ahmadiyya Muslim community who worship at the vast Baitul Futul Mosque, opened in 2003.

You can discover more from Merton Heritage Service, where staff and volunteers are currently working on There’s More to Morden, a local neighbourhood project. In the coming weeks you will see displays about Morden history appearing in local shops, including recently digitised images showing how the town centre has changed.

As part of the project, local residents and schools have been submitting entries for the Picturing Morden photographic competition. An exhibition of these beautiful images will take place at Merton Civic Centre from 17 November to 1 December.

You can also discover more about the people, places and events that have shaped Morden, by joining a series of guided walks devised by project volunteers. Starting in November, the full programme will be listed at merton.gov.uk/heritage. There’s More to Morden heritage trails can also be downloaded from IZI.travel and the Merton Memories website, which will also have a dedicated project page from December.
After the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, millions of refugees left the country and moved west to European countries, with hundreds of thousands arriving in the UK from the following month.

On March 18, the Government launched the Homes for Ukraine scheme, through which refugees were matched with British families who had registered on the scheme.

Nationally, more than 137,000 Ukrainians have been issued visas through the scheme by October, with more than 360 refugees coming to Merton to stay with around 240 families.

A similar number of people came through the Friends & Family scheme launched at the same time, meaning that there are now around 800 Ukrainian refugees in the borough.

Around 200 Ukrainian children are now on roll at local schools, and refugees have begun working and studying in the borough and outside of it.

Merton families who enrolled on the scheme were offered a £350 a month ‘thank you’ payment by the national authorities, and locally the council and a host of partners such as Wimbledon Guild and Age UK have been on hand to provide hosts with support as they welcome refugee families into their homes.

Hosts have now completed the initial six-month period that they committed to and we are encouraging them to continue hosting their refugee family, if they can. However, due to a variety of unavoidable reasons, some people are no longer able to continue hosting families of refugees. This means that the council needs to find new hosts for Ukrainian families to prevent them from becoming homeless.

Government funding continues around the thank you payments and guests are entitled to benefits and free health care and education, plus there is a host of services and support that the council can help hosts with.

If you’re interested in hosting a family, or would like to find out about support we can give you to continue with your current placement, you can find out more at merton.gov.uk/ukraine or email us at refugee.support@merton.gov.uk

Could you offer a home to Ukrainian refugees?

New hosts are needed to welcome Ukrainian refugee families into their homes.

Ukrainian families attend an event at the New Horizon Centre in Pollards Hill

Merton supports Ukraine

Feature
Homes for Ukrainians
A healthy mind and body

There are many things you could do to benefit your own and your family's physical and mental health, through this winter and beyond.

YOU:

**Active travel** When taking public transport, get off a stop early and walk the rest of the way. Walk or cycle on short journeys, rather than driving. Download the Couch to 5k app or Active 10 app and track your progress.

**If you are pregnant, try and stay moderately active.** Take a stroll with Wimbledon Walking Club, the Walk and Talk Movement or check out the NHS Start for Life exercising in pregnancy webpages.

**Find time each day to wind down** and do something that makes you feel good. Get a personalised plan to improve your mental wellbeing from Every Mind Matters; talk to Merton Uplift, or find self-care ideas at Thrive LDN.

**Quit smoking** Contact One You Merton on 020 8973 3545 to get free support and download the NHS Quit Smoking app.

**Are you worried about your own or someone else's drug or alcohol use?** If so, call the Westminster Drug Project in Merton. Young people aged under 24 can refer themselves to Catch 22 for support to reduce the use of substances and promote sexual health and positive health choices.

YOUR CHILDREN:

**Introduce active changes to the school run**
Walk or cycle, instead of driving.

**Get your child to do at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day.** Play an active game, run or walk in the park or go swimming at one of our leisure centres.

**Encourage your child to make healthy swaps when snacking.** Use the fun NHS Food Scanner app to help get you started.

IF YOU ARE OLDER:

**Sign up for the Get Up and Go project**, run by Everyone Health, this aims to keep frail people independent, activities include walking, tennis, bowls, chair-based exercises and dancing. Alternatively, Age UK in Merton have yoga and dance classes, plus a walking club.

**If you have dementia or care for someone living with dementia,** you can get support from the Alzheimer’s Society in Merton.

**If you feel lonely,** join Merton’s befriending scheme, run by Age UK and Wimbledon Guild, which will match you with a volunteer for a weekly visit; or open to all ages are the Tuned In sessions at Wimbledon Library for some loneliness busting music sessions.

**Women aged 50-71** are urged to attend your breast cancer screening appointment as soon as you are invited.

VACCINATIONS:

**COVID-19 autumn boosters and flu jabs** Check if you are eligible to receive COVID-19 and flu vaccines. This is particularly important if you are vulnerable, because more people are likely to get flu this winter and you’re more likely to be seriously ill if you get flu and COVID-19 at the same time. If you are not eligible for a free flu vaccine, you can pay to have one at a pharmacy.

**Polio** The NHS is offering all children aged one to nine in London an additional polio vaccination. If your child is aged between one and four they will be offered an appointment at their GP practice and if your child is aged between five and nine, you can book their polio vaccine appointment at a vaccination clinic.

Find out more about all the organisations mentioned in this article merton.gov.uk/healthier, or scan this QR code:
Mourning Her Majesty

Like all government organisations, the council had a specific role to play during the official period of mourning which began on the day that Her Majesty’s death was announced and lasted until the day after her funeral.

People from across Merton paid their respects and shared their memories of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who passed away on 8 September, aged 96.

Leading the tributes, the Mayor of Merton, Councillor Joan Henry, said: “We were deeply saddened to hear of the death of Her Majesty the Queen. We join together with the rest of the capital, the country, the Commonwealth and the world in paying tribute to her lifetime of service and duty as Britain’s longest reigning monarch.”

As soon as the sad news was announced, the flag outside Merton Civic Centre was immediately lowered to half mast, as a mark of respect.

Books of condolence were opened in Merton Civic Centre and in six libraries across the borough, as well as an online book, for people to sign during the ten-day official mourning period. A letter of condolence was sent to the Royal Family by the Council Leader, Councillor Ross Garrod, on behalf of the borough. Council meetings scheduled during the official period of mourning were also postponed as a mark of respect.

On 14 September, the Mayor and Leader of the council joined a commemorative event, held at the AFC Wimbledon stadium, Plough Lane.

Floral tributes were left by the war memorial outside the civic centre and the council’s social media accounts were used to share residents’ stories of meeting the Queen.

During her reign, the Queen honoured Merton with a number of royal visits. She attended the Wimbledon tennis championships in 1957, 1962, 1972 and 2010. In 2012 she visited St. Mark’s Academy, Mitcham, as part of her Diamond Jubilee celebrations; then in 2019 Her Majesty opened a new 70 home development for the Haig Housing Trust, Morden.

As well as mourning the late Queen, Merton staged an official event, marking the accession of King Charles III. Red, white and blue flowers were planted outside the civic centre before the Mayor read the local proclamation to the assembled crowd. The national anthem was then sung, followed by three cheers for His Majesty.

Like all government organisations, the council had a specific role to play during the official period of mourning which began on the day that Her Majesty’s death was announced and lasted until the day after her funeral.
A royal commission

Forty years ago, Australian artist June Mendoza was asked to paint Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. This portrait now hangs in Merton Civic Centre and following the Queen’s death in September, we invited June to be reunited with her painting for the first time.

June Mendoza started drawing as a child and soon realised she had a gift for getting a good likeness of her subjects. However she accepts that this doesn’t make you a great artist, explaining that “You need to be adept at learning painting technique until you’re comfortable with the design and form of compositions, including people’s body language in portraits. You also need to nail the little things that make the likeness accurate.”

June accompanied her husband, Keith Mackrell, on two overseas postings and they lived in the Philippines for five years. In 1965, Keith decided that they should move to Wimbledon, a place June immediately fell in love with, particularly the tennis, the arts centre, theatre and symphony orchestra.

June’s portrait of the Queen came about unexpectedly. She’d been working on two official paintings when the Queen’s secretary asked if she would be happy to work on two more, with the queen wearing different outfits and with different backgrounds. “Instead of having half a dozen sittings for each picture, I was able to transfer a certain amount between the paintings,” June says. “The Queen was lovely and very cooperative but she only had time to sit for an hour (instead of two) each time, so I had to break my own rule and occasionally work from a photograph. The Queen doesn’t comment on the finished work, so the only thing that’s relevant is if you get asked back.”

June clearly had a good rapport with the Royal Family because she was asked by the Duke of Edinburgh to do a portrait of his young son, Prince Edward. “He was being very good, but he needed a break and we were playing with some of my son’s toys when the Queen came in. She said we were having much more fun than her, because she was sitting for a serious portrait at the time.”

June’s first portrait of the Queen was painted for the Institute of Chartered Surveyors. Her Majesty was wearing a coat dress and June depicted her standing on a circular staircase with an intricate rail. “I felt it necessary to lengthen the dress,” she says, “but, when we spoke at a later sitting, we agreed that I’d made it look a bit like a dressing gown. I designed a new dress and the Queen suggested we swap it for the original. I took the painting down and repainted the dress, but I don’t think anyone ever noticed.”
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

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 please visit stcg.ac.uk/adult-education

DISTANCE LEARNING COURSES

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

Courses on offer include:

- Understand Specific Learning Difficulties
- Understanding Autism
- Understanding Behaviour that Challenges
- Understanding Children and Young People’s Mental Health
- Understanding Common Childhood Illnesses
- Understanding Nutrition and Health
- Understanding Safeguarding and Prevent
- Equality and Diversity
- 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 elaine.morgan@stcg.ac.uk
Could you foster a child?

Foster carers are needed to provide a stable family life for children who are unable to live at home. Fostering can be just as rewarding for foster carers as it is for the children they look after and there is plenty of support available.

The vice-chair of Merton’s Foster Carer Association has shared her experience of fostering a child to encourage more people to become foster carers. Ancil Adrian-Paul spoke to My Merton about how she became a foster carer.

Ancil has her own home and is a trained teacher and a consultant on women, peace and gender issues. Ancil has lots of young nieces and nephews so she took the skills for fostering course and went through all the background assessments. She was soon paired with an 11-year-old Afghan boy who was living in a refugee house in Greece. “He’s 14 now, so I’m matched with him for the next four years,” Ancil said. “When he arrived, he was still suffering the effects of a traumatic childhood. His mother had died when he was only four and his father had remarried. He couldn’t read or write and he got very upset when I left the house. He also felt unloved and often said he didn’t want to live.”

In Ancil’s care, the boy has settled into school and is now growing into a typical teenager. “He had to be convinced living with a foster carer was the right decision,” Ancil says. “There are challenges, of course, most of which are behavioural because of the cultural differences of living in a male-dominated world during his early years, but he now knows he’s being treated firmly but fairly and with all the love he needs.”

As vice-chair of Merton’s Foster Carer Association, Ancil knows exactly what is required in terms of having a good support network. “My friends, social workers, Merton Fostering’s mental health section, the school and even other foster carers provide all the support I need,” Ancil said. “Merton Council also provides high-quality training that highlights the therapeutic model of working with children.”

The Mockingbird model, which Merton Council uses to support its foster carers, brings important benefits to foster children, foster carers and their wider families. Foster carers will receive ongoing training and an allowance of up to £514 per week per child. This covers their clothing, food, travel, pocket money and any special equipment they need.

If you are interested in becoming 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 and energy to care for a foster child.

We host two fostering information sessions each month. To find out more, call 020 8545 4070 or visit merton.gov.uk/fostering
WORK AT WIMBLEDON 2023

Join us and let's create an unforgettable Wimbledon experience together

GUEST SERVICES | RETAIL | COURT SERVICES
TRANSPORT | PLAYER SERVICES | MEDIA

Various contract lengths available from May to July 2023

Apply now on wimbledon.com/jobs
Funding secured for protection of young women and girls

The council has been successful in its bid for Home Office funding for a specific young women’s worker for the next three years. They will provide support to vulnerable young women and girls who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, gang-related exploitation or abuse. The worker will provided by St Giles Trust, an organisation that has worked with thousands of vulnerable people over many decades.

St Giles’ SOS+ Service will provide gender-specific, trauma-informed 1:1 mentoring support to young women and girls in Merton at risk of, on the periphery of, or entrenched within child criminal exploitation, gangs, county lines, or child sexual exploitation (CSE). Staff in schools will also be trained to increase the awareness and understanding of violence against women and girls. This will be highlighted within the wider context of risk factors such as unhealthy relationships, the overlap between child criminal exploitation and CSE, and girls in gangs.

How to seek help for domestic violence

Christmas is not the season of goodwill for all: there are more opportunities for domestic violence or abuse to occur as people are at home together. Contributing factors for increases in domestic violence are excessive alcohol consumption, and extra financial pressures, all of which can come to the surface at this time of year.

There are a range of council-supported services on offer if you, or anyone you know, are experiencing domestic abuse.

find out more
merton.gov.uk/domesticviolence

Council achieves White Ribbon accreditation

The council received White Ribbon accreditation in October. White Ribbon UK is a charity that engages with men and boys to end violence against women and girls, and accreditation is a public commitment to working towards changing attitudes, and encouraging behaviour change among men and boys.
Your Christmas recycling and rubbish collections

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<tr>
<th>Your usual collection day</th>
<th>Your revised collection day</th>
<th>Change</th>
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<td>Tuesday 27 December</td>
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Please put your bins out by 6am on your collection day
Your collections will return to normal from Monday 16 January 2023.

Household Reuse and Recycling Centre (HRRC) in Morden
The HRRC will be open 8am–4pm, Monday–Sunday over the festive period with the following exceptions: Christmas Eve – 8am–midday. Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day – Closed.
Booking is essential ahead of your visit. Book: merton.gov.uk/amenity

Christmas tree collection and recycling information can be found in your Recycling & Waste News inside.