Outstanding Ofsted report for Rutlish School

Construction starts on Morden leisure centre

Historic Mitcham building to be restored with grant
We did:

We know how important good local schools are to families in Merton, and how much they help attract new people to live in the borough. The numbers of children being educated in Merton continues to increase and we want to make sure they have the best opportunities at the beginning of their lives. To help achieve this:

- We have campaigned to make sure the Government’s new funding formula for schools does not disadvantage children in Merton.
- We have seen results improve across the maintained schools in Merton, at Key Stage 2 SATs, GCSEs and at A level.
- We have created more than 4,000 new primary school places in Merton since 2007.
- We made sure that this year every child who applied was offered a primary school place, with more than 94% of children going to one of their parents’ preferred choices.
- We are supporting the Harris Federation to open a new secondary school in South Wimbledon to meet the continuing increase in demand for school places.

“"You said""

Eight of every 10 parents of children in primary school said those schools were good or very good; whilst only 3% thought they were poor. This compares to 77% when the same question was asked in 2014 and is the highest ever rating in our residents’ survey. Around two thirds (62%) of parents of pupils in secondary schools rated those schools good or very good, with 17% saying they were poor or very poor. This is higher than any time before 2012.

The Leader of Merton Council, Councillor Stephen Alambritis, writes for My Merton.

I’m a bit long in the tooth to have done GCSE’s – it was CSEs and O levels back in my day! But I still remember that stomach churning feeling on results morning. So it’s wonderful that Merton’s excellent schools mean so many of our young people woke up to top marks in the summer.

We’ve worked hard to support our schools by building new classrooms, assembly halls and sports facilities and improving standards. I’m delighted Rutlish is the latest of our schools to have achieved Outstanding status.

The council also got top marks over the summer. I was humbled by the results of our residents’ survey which showed the best ever levels of satisfaction with the council. Record numbers of residents rated us as efficient and well run.

With so many families choosing Merton as a great place to bring up their kids, we’ve also prioritised improving local facilities such as a new leisure centre for Morden, a new library for Colliers Wood and a new stadium for Wimbledon. We’ve continued to offer free pitches to our Little Leagues and, despite cuts from central government, we’ve kept all our paddling pools open.

We’re also continuing the fight to keep our local hospital at St Helier open. Yet again, the local NHS is putting forward plans to downgrade or close the hospital, or moving it to Belmont in Surrey. We know how important consultant-led maternity and accident and emergency services are to local families and we will fight to retain these services locally. To back our campaign see page 23.

With great schools, parks, libraries and leisure facilities, and top marks from local residents for how we run services, I know Merton will continue to be a vibrant borough where families want to bring up their children and give them the best start in life.
Community

News
The latest news from around the borough

Features

Cleaner, greener
Recycling – it’s worth it

Electric cars
Environmentally-friendly motoring

Merton Arts Space
The borough’s newest arts venue

5 minutes with
Bilal Patel, Imam at Morden Islamic Community Centre (MICC)

Regulars

Working life
Our team of Neighbourhood Client Officers

What’s on
Your guide to all that’s going on in Merton this autumn

Outstanding Ofsted report for Rutlish school
Celebrating Mitcham’s heritage
Making a splash in Morden

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

contact us

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Council tax: 020 8274 4904
Waste collection services:
020 8274 4902
Benefits advice:
020 8545 4178
Parking: 020 8545 4661
Libraries: 020 8545 3783
Anti-social behaviour hotline: 020 8274 4907
Switchboard: 020 8274 4901
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merton.gov.uk/mymerton

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Fill in the online events form at: merton.gov.uk/eventscalendar

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£1m support for looked after children

Looked after children in Merton will benefit from a £1 million fund from the Department for Education.

The council is one of six London boroughs in the South London Commissioning Programme to receive a share of the innovation funding to improve the supply of affordable, high-quality accommodation for looked after children, including those in fostering placements.

The programme has pioneered work to meet the needs of children and young people in the care of local authorities, involving them in developing services designed to support them.

Merton tops LGBT index

Merton is the top London local authority and 13th overall out of the 39 local authorities in the Stonewall Education Equality Index. This is the sixth year that Merton has completed the index to demonstrate its commitment to tackling homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in schools. Activities have included the LGBT+ Health and Wellbeing conference; presentations and primary school workshops delivered by students from Ricards Lodge School in Wimbledon; plus a new LGBT+ youth group in Morden, funded by the Merton LGBT+ forum. The mental health of LGBT+ young people will continue to be a priority during the next year.

Paying in cash for parking?

From 11 September, parking meters across the borough will only accept the new £1 coins. After that date, the old-style coins will need to be taken to a bank to be exchanged.
Students and teachers in Merton maintained schools celebrated a set of A level results which are above the national average. In a year which has seen some significant changes nationally, the proportion of A*–E grades achieved by Merton students was 99%, above the national percentage of 98%.

Merton schools have also demonstrated strong GCSE performance again with 72% of pupils achieving grades 4–9 in both English and maths. In comparison with the proportion achieving grades A*–C last year, this is an increase of 2%, and well above the national average for 2016.

Merton Council has received an overall “good” Ofsted rating for its Children’s Services, putting the local authority among the top performers in the country. Merton Safeguarding Children Board is one of just five in the country to be rated “outstanding” by Ofsted.

Ofsted has given Merton Council’s children’s services an outstanding for leadership, management and governance; adoption performance and Merton Safeguarding Children Board as well as a good rating for experiences and progress of care leavers; children who need help and protection and children looked after and achieving permanence.

The report, published last month, said: “Children in Merton benefit from services which are dynamic, ambitious and successful. Exceptional leadership and governance and strong frontline management ensure that children’s services are consistently good. All children receive a good service and some receive an outstanding service. Staff are very good at improving outcomes for children.”

Residents are being asked whether the current rules that dog walkers must obey to keep the borough clean and safe are adequate or should be extended. A consultation is seeking views on issues including if we should continue to impose penalties on dog walkers who do not clear up fouling and whether the council and police should have the authority to instruct owners to put their dog on a lead. With increasing numbers of professional dog walkers using the borough’s parks, the consultation is also asking if the number of dogs one person can walk at any one time should be limited to four.

Residents’ views will inform a set of powers being drawn up as part of the new borough-wide Public Space Protection Order, which will replace existing laws on dog control.

Merton Park is already a popular entertainment venue, which includes hosting a bonfire and fireworks event each November.
RideLondon

Thousands of amateur and professional cyclists taking part in RideLondon rode through Raynes Park and Wimbledon on 30 July. The council worked closely with event organisers and the police to minimise inconvenience to residents as spectators lined the streets to cheer on the riders.

Local Democracy Week

School children from across the borough will be learning about how the council works during Local Democracy Week. Throughout the week, from 9–15 October, we will be running tours of the Civic Centre for local primary schools, which will include a viewing of the Council Chamber and a visit to the Mayor’s Parlour for a talk and refreshments.

The borough’s two MPs are getting involved too. Mitcham and Morden MP Siobhain McDonagh, for the tenth year running, will be hosting a visit to the Houses of Parliament for a group of 100 schoolchildren. Meanwhile, Wimbledon MP Stephen Hammond will be visiting schools in the area to talk about politics and democracy, as he has done in previous years.

Merton adult education

Learn a new skill or take up a new hobby on a Merton Adult Education course starting this term. Choose from a range of general interest courses including arts, crafts, baking, languages and yoga. Other courses are available to help equip residents with the skills they need to find a job and enable others to gain qualifications to develop their careers. These include bookkeeping graphic design, counselling, and computing as well as workshops on CV writing, interviews and job skills. There are also courses for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities as well as family learning for children and their carers together.

-find out more merton.gov.uk/learning/adulteducation

Two new Merton GP hubs

For evening and weekend appointments

Urgent same day evening and weekend appointments are available at our new local hubs.

To get an appointment at a hub you will need to book in advance through your GP practice or call 111.

Please note the hub is only available for patients registered with a Merton GP practice and is not a walk-in service.

The Death of Ivan Ilyich

An Intimate and Intoxicating One Man Show

OCTOBER 6–29 AT MERTON ARTS SPACE, WIMBLEDON LIBRARY

Tickets: attictheatrecompany.com 0208 940 8600 or in person at Wimbledon Library
Rutlish School has been rated ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted, making it one of the top performing schools in Merton.

Head teacher Alex Williamson said: “It’s a fantastic achievement and a great reflection of everyone at the school. We have consistently maintained these high standards over a number of years and that is acknowledged by this report.”

Inspectors, who sat in on lessons, spoke to students and met teaching staff, governors and the local authority, noted that GCSE results for every year since the previous inspection in 2013 exceeded the national average.

Pupils were praised for ‘excellent attitudes to learning’ and ‘impeccable manners’ under the ‘uncompromising leadership of the head teacher and his senior leaders.’

Merton’s response to Grenfell Tower fire

Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in North Kensington, council officers met representatives from Clarion Housing Group, who own and manage most of the social housing in Merton.

They provided reassurance that residents living in their housing stock are safe.

They confirmed their tall buildings in Merton are free from cladding containing aluminium composite material and that they were carrying out a detailed review of other fire risks. The council also wrote to the other 20 housing associations who provide social housing in Merton, seeking the same reassurances.

At the Council meeting in July, the Mayor of Merton presented an award to firefighters from Red Watch at Wimbledon Fire Station for their rapid response to the Grenfell Tower fire. Council staff volunteered at the Grenfell Tower Assistance Centre to support survivors of the fire and also at rest centres in Camden where residents living in tower blocks were evacuated as a precaution while cladding on the buildings was replaced.

New Arts Space in Mitcham Library

A new arts space for teenagers is now open in Mitcham Library.

An exciting range of creative workshops, led by professional artists, will take place over the coming months as part of a literacy, arts and cultural programme called My Library.

Funded by a £142,000 grant from the Arts Council, the initiative, for 11 to 18-year-olds, will include performances, screenings and exhibitions of work and a reading competition for younger participants.

My Library aims to introduce art and culture to a new generation of audiences with input from younger people.

Councillor awarded OBE

A volunteer and Merton councillor was awarded an OBE in the Queen’s Birthday Honours.

Cllr Agatha Akyigyina, has been volunteering for more than 30 years and has represented Figge’s Marsh ward for a decade.

Her first volunteer role was supporting young parents with babies as part of Home Start and several of the mothers went on to become volunteers themselves.

The former Mayor of Merton has also been a school governor, a committee member of North East Mitcham Community Centre, a support worker with St Mark’s Family Centre and a street pastor.

New councillor elected

Kelly Braund of the Labour Party was elected St Helier’s new ward councillor with 74% of the vote. A by-election was held in July following the resignation of Councillor Imran Uddin, who represented the Labour Party.
Merton Council joined the UK-wide events in June to thank the country’s armed forces for their bravery and dedicated service.

An Armed Forces Day parade was held in Morden, beginning with a ceremony and the raising of the Armed Forces flag outside the Civic Centre in the presence of the Mayor of Merton, Councillor Marsie Skeete. The parade then marched to the bandstand in Morden Park, cheered by residents who turned out to line the route.

The Wimbledon Foundation, the charity of The All England Lawn Tennis Club, is offering one lucky winner the chance to enjoy afternoon tea with up to three guests in the Wingfield Café. The Wimbledon Foundation makes a valuable contribution to meeting social needs and reducing inequalities in Merton and Wandsworth by awarding grants totalling over £350,000 a year to charities and community organisations.

The Wimbledon Junior Tennis Initiative (WJTI) visits two local primary schools every week and has so far introduced over 190,000 children to tennis.

For your chance to win, simply answer the following question:

Who won the 2017 Ladies’ Singles Final?

a) Venus Williams  
b) Garbine Muguruza  
c) Johanna Konta

In your answer, you must include the following: name, email address, phone number and postal address. You can email your answer to communications@merton.gov.uk or send it to: My Merton, 7th floor, Civic Centre, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX.

The competition is to win afternoon tea for a maximum of four people at the Wingfield Café, The All England Lawn Tennis Club, Church Road, Wimbledon SW19 5AE. The Wingfield Café is open daily except between 18 June 2018 and 21 July 2018.

The prize cannot be exchanged or used in conjunction with any other offer. There are no cash alternatives, accommodation or travel included in this prize.

The closing date for entries is 31 October 2017.

For more information, visit wimbledon.com/foundation or follow @WimbledonFDN.

Children across the borough have been challenged by Animal Agents to read six books or more during the school summer holidays. Merton libraries are supporting the Summer Reading Challenge, an initiative run by national charity the Reading Agency for children aged between four and 11. This year’s theme is Animal Agents – about a band of furry, slippery and feathered friends who are specially trained to use their skills and natural instincts to unravel mysteries, with a huge helping of fun along the way. Children have until 9 September to complete the challenge.

The Get Set, Get Active Fund has awarded grants totalling £33,000 to projects helping improve fitness levels of Merton residents. These include dance classes, health walks and yoga for older people at risk of isolation and golf for people with disabilities.

Foundation Manager Helen Parker said: “Our aim is not only to increase fitness levels but also improve people’s mental wellbeing by learning a new skill, meeting new people and making communities stronger.”
Lottery win for historic house

Celebrating our heritage

One of the borough’s most historic buildings will be restored and transformed into a community hub with a £4 million National Lottery grant.

The Canons in Mitcham and its grounds will be opened up to a new, wider range of visitors from the local area and further afield.

One of the borough’s hidden gems, the Grade II* listed Canons House was built in 1680, but its grounds are much older, most likely dating from the 12th century, when they were part of church estates. Canons House remained in the same family, the Cranmers, until it was bought by the local authority in 1939.

The grant, from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund’s Parks for People programme, will fund restoration of Canons House, including its beautiful staircase and other interior features. Once the improvements are complete, two floors of the house will become office space, while the basement will become a community hub, including a café for events and meetings by local groups.

An area will be dedicated to celebrating the site’s fascinating history, which was home to renowned botanist Rev William Herbert and a training ground for the runner Dorothy Tyler, silver-medallist in the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

The pond will be cleaned to create a wildlife haven and there are also plans for a walled, sensory garden and a playground.

Externally, the 15th century Dovecote, which is the oldest building in Merton, will be restored, along with the obelisk. The pond will be cleaned to create a wildlife haven and there are also plans for a walled, sensory garden and a playground. There will be a range of landscape improvements as well as areas for community food production, drawing on the site’s horticultural past.

The regeneration will provide excellent opportunities for schoolchildren to learn about the site’s history through an education programme, developed in partnership with local organisations including the Mitcham Schools Cluster.

Building work will start in the autumn after two years’ work on drawing up the proposals. The Canons Partnership, led by Merton Council and including Friends of the Canons, Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage, the Mitcham Schools Cluster and the Mitcham Society, submitted comprehensive plans celebrating the site’s heritage and mapping out its future use as a busy hub for community activities and events.

The Canons circa 1833. Photo: Merton Memories

The Canons circa 1958. Photo: Merton Memories

The Canons in Mitcham today
Make art, not food waste

A new campaign is being launched this month to encourage residents to reduce the amount of food which is wasted, promote healthy and sustainable eating and recycle unavoidable food waste.

Merton Council has been awarded a grant of 50,000 euros by the Transforming City Food Habits for Life (TRiFOCAL) project, led by Resource London. Merton and eight other London boroughs are participating in this exciting new programme.

Merton Council is launching the programme with an invitation to all residents to get involved. Enter our photography competition called Merton Raw Food Art. Send us your pictures of fruit or vegetables for the chance to have them enlarged and displayed around the borough.

Nominate a grandparent, relative or neighbour to join our Grand Panel, who can share tasty recipes for leftovers and tips on how to use ingredients in creative ways to prepare delicious meals and snacks, reducing food waste.

Did you know that instead of using natural resources, all the UK’s newsprint is now made from 100% recycled paper?

Lots of everyday items are now made purely from recycled materials. Did you know that instead of using natural resources, all the UK’s newsprint is now made from 100% recycled paper? Or that more than 80% of the glass collected for recycling is used to make new bottles and jars? There is an increasing range of products being made from recycled materials – plastic milk containers are being turned into picnic tables and old trainers are being used to make running tracks. Find out more about what happens to your recycling on the website www.recycleforlondon.com

But being greener in your approach isn’t just about feeling good – reusing and recycling really can make you better off too. The more you recycle, the less the council pays in landfill taxes – savings we can invest in other services or keep council tax increases down.

Money can be made by selling things you no longer need on eBay or at car boot sales, or donate them to charity shops to benefit good causes. Merton has just hosted a jumble trail where neighbours sold their unwanted items from their front gardens – look out for more events like this or organise your own via www.jumbletrail.com.

Rather than spending money on the latest fashion, why not hunt through your wardrobe for things you haven’t worn in a while and give them a new lease of life. Learn to sew and have a go at upcycling to start your own new trends.

If you’re buying household items, you don’t need to go for new – check out charity furniture shops for bargains or try www.freecycle.org where you might find what you need for nothing.

During Recycle Week, we will be working with residents to make recycling easier on estates in Mitcham. Information on recycling will be displayed in the Civic Centre, Morden.

 Recycling – it’s worth it

Recycling – it’s worth it is the message of this year’s Recycle Week, which runs from 25 September until 1 October.

Videos from Recycle for London will showcase the difference that recycling can make for all of us.

Did you know that instead of using natural resources, all the UK’s newsprint is now made from 100% recycled paper?

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Residents are being encouraged to sign up for and use our food waste recycling scheme to reduce the amount of rubbish sent to landfill.

The scheme is an easy way to divert your teabags, vegetable peelings and egg shells away from landfill, where they produce harmful methane gas. Instead, your food waste is taken to a processing plant known as an anaerobic digester, where it’s broken down to create a fertiliser for crops and a bio gas used to generate electricity, which is fed back into the National Grid.

Currently half of Merton households use the service and we are encouraging even more homes to join the scheme.

Currently half of Merton households use the service and we are encouraging even more homes to join the scheme before the new wheelie bin collections start from October 2018. From then, recycling and food waste will continue to be collected every week and general household waste will be collected on alternate weeks.

We anticipate lots more people joining the scheme at this point, so why not beat the rush and sign up today? Visit merton.gov.uk/foodwaste or call 020 8274 4902 for a free food waste bin and kitchen caddy.

To line your caddy, you can buy compostable liners, which are available for around £2.50 per pack at most supermarkets, or use old newspaper for free.

Use it to recycle:
- fruit and vegetable peelings
- tea bags and coffee grounds
- bread and pastries
- egg shells
- fish and meat, including bones
- plate scrapings
- dairy items

While using the food waste service is great for unavoidable waste such as coffee grounds and fish bones, it is a good opportunity to waste less food. Visit www.lovefoodhatewaste.com

Keep litter bins clean

Merton’s town centre litter bins are scheduled to be deep cleaned four times a year. However, if you notice a dirty or damaged bin, please report it to us at merton.gov.uk/report-it

New school eco-sessions

This term, we are running an education programme for the borough’s primary schools about recycling. This will include assemblies about the difference recycling makes and classroom activities. The aim of the eco-sessions is to raise awareness of the importance of recycling among pupils and get them to encourage their families to do more recycling at home.
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*TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY. SEE CLUB FOR MORE DETAILS.
Construction work starts on Morden’s new leisure centre

Construction work has begun on a brand new leisure centre which will serve families, schools and swimming clubs for generations to come. The new building will have a 25-metre, six-lane main pool, plus a second pool with a moveable-floor, fitness suite, a studio and a café.

The contract to build the Morden Leisure Centre was signed in June and the contractor, Pellikaan Construction, started work in July. The new building is scheduled to open its doors in autumn 2018.

The aim of the project has always been to gain maximum benefits on a relatively small site, within a limited budget and residents have been consulted on the plans every step of the way. The new leisure centre will cost less to maintain in the long term than Morden Park Pool, giving council tax payers better value.

The council has planned the construction timetable so that Morden Park Pool will stay open until the new leisure centre is complete. This means residents will have access to local sports facilities throughout the building work. Once the new leisure centre is ready, Morden Park Pool will be demolished and the site will be returned to green space.

Local ecology has been central to the plans and an improved habitat has been created for the great crested newts, which live in Morden Park. The colony of newts, which are a protected species, has been breeding this year in the park’s main pond.

Half a century ago
Morden Park Pool was opened by Everest mountaineer Lord Hunt

2017 marks the 50th anniversary of Morden Park Swimming Pool. The brainchild of local councillor, Alderman Cyril Marsh, the building was constructed on former land from the Morden Park House estate. The fine glass and metal structure was designed by Messrs George Lowe and Partners and was officially opened on 2 May 1967 by Lord Hunt, leader of the successful 1953 expedition to conquer Mount Everest.

When the pool first opened, adults paid 2 shillings (10p in modern money) for a 45 minute swim, whilst children enjoyed half price admission. Today the facility is managed by Greenwich Leisure Ltd in partnership with Merton Council.

Signing of the leisure centre contract with Council Leader Stephen Alambritis (far left) and Councillor Nick Draper, Cabinet Member for Community and Culture (far right)

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Signing of the leisure centre contract with Council Leader Stephen Alambritis (far left) and Councillor Nick Draper, Cabinet Member for Community and Culture (far right)
If September sees your child heading off to university or moving out, you might find life becomes a bit quiet. So why not use your years of parenting experience and your spare room to help a local teenager by becoming a foster carer?

There is a shortage of foster carers for teenagers and sibling groups in the borough, which could be down to misunderstanding. While a common misconception is that young people come into foster care because of their behaviour, the reality is that more often it is because of difficult circumstances at home.

By offering a teenager a foster home, you will be helping them to fulfil their potential at a critical stage in their life.

Anyone can apply to foster, whatever their background, marital status or sexual orientation. You don’t need to have had children of your own, just a spare bedroom, however some childcare experience is desirable.

Fostering will not prevent you from working, as long as you can be flexible, and you have a supportive network of friends or family. If you are on benefits, fostering will not affect these.

Elaine Atkinson is a foster carer who specialises in looking after young people aged between 12 and 18. “I enjoy seeing them blossom,” she said. “Some of the children have gone through so many unpleasant things, but as a foster parent you can take them on to the next stage and help prepare them for the world.”

Merton Council provides comprehensive support for foster carers. This includes a three-and-a-half-day training course, which forms part of the application process. Once approved as a Merton foster carer, you will receive up to £507 per week for each child you foster and be assigned your own social worker for ongoing support.

Foster information meetings

Find out what fostering involves, the assessment process, the impact on family life, support, training, payments and much more at an information meeting at Morden Baptist Church, Crown Lane, Morden.

- 21 September at 6.30pm
- 4 October at 10.30am
- 25 October at 6.30pm
- 8 November at 10.30am

Visit merton.gov.uk/fostering or call 020 8545 4070 or 0800 073 0874 or email: fostering@merton.gov.uk

Foster a teen and fill your empty nest!
You might have noticed some of the nippy red Bluecity cars around the borough. If you sign up to the scheme by the end of December you can enjoy a year’s free membership plus 10 hours of free driving, together worth £160.

Using vehicles powered entirely by renewable energy, Bluecity is London’s first 100% electric point-to-point car sharing service, and is being launched in Merton, Hounslow and Hammersmith with five electric cars available to use in the borough. Operating in a similar way to the Santander cycle scheme, Bluecity allows you to pick up and drop off cars from 21 charging points around the borough. This number is set to grow to 50 by the start of 2018. You can drive the cars anywhere within the M25, but need to drop them back at any compatible Source London charge point across the city.

The scheme is part of Merton Council’s efforts to improve air quality around the borough. Often people in London have a second car, or even their main car, sitting on a driveway because they only need them for occasional journeys, such as for shopping, and this is expensive. One way of helping people give up these vehicles is by providing a realistic alternative for those journeys which cannot be made by public transport – a car club offers you flexible access to a car, when you need it.

Anyone living or working in Merton, with a UK driving licence, can subscribe to the scheme via the Bluecity website – use the code EARLYBIRDO to redeem a year’s free membership (usually £5 per month) and 10 hours of free driving (usually 17p per minute – minimum charge of £3.40). Find out more www.blue-city.co.uk or download the app.

Merton set to have 50 charging points by 2018.

For the past few months Merton residents have been among a select group of Londoners with exclusive access to a new electric car club.
community safety
Keeping Merton safe

Stand up to hate crime

As Hate Crime Awareness Week approaches, residents are urged to report attacks and intimidation driven by prejudice – whether because of your race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. The police will take all reports seriously and will offer you support, while pursuing the perpetrators.

In Merton, reported incidents of hate crime is proportionally higher than in similar boroughs – an encouraging sign that residents feel able to come forward. While reporting of homophobic and transgender hate crimes have historically been low, more people are coming to the police with these complaints than ever before.

Tyrone Ashby, chair of the Merton LGBT+ Forum, said: “I know people who have been victims of crimes, but who contacted me rather than the police, which is why I’ve been working with the police to encourage victims to speak out. The help is out there, you just need to come forward. Talking to Victim Support can really help too.”

Hate Crime Awareness Week runs from 14 to 21 October.

Remember, remember
Stay safe during the Halloween and Guy Fawkes night celebrations.

- Go to an organised bonfire and fireworks display. Merton Council will host four – two in Wimbledon Park on Saturday 4 November and two in Morden Park on Sunday 5 November.
- Never throw fireworks, never put fireworks in your pocket and never return to a firework which has been lit. It is illegal for anyone under 18, to buy fireworks.
- Please contact the council or your social housing landlord if you see waste being piled up to make bonfires.

Neighbourhood watch
Merton’s Neighbourhood Watch Schemes aim to reduce crime and fear of crime while building a sense of community. The schemes currently cover more than a third of the borough, however the council and the police would like as many streets as possible to join. If you are interested in finding out more or setting up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme of your own, please email Lee Roberts: lee.roberts@met.police.uk

Domestic violence one-stop shop
The One Stop Shop is a confidential service for people experiencing domestic violence or abuse in Merton. Drop in on Mondays between 9.30am and midday at Morden Baptist Church, Crown Lane, Morden.

If it is an emergency, always call the police on 999. merton.gov.uk/domesticviolence

- Don’t let your children go trick or treating without an adult.
- Please don’t knock on doors if there is a No Trick or Treat sign.
- Keep candles well away from items which could catch fire, including fancy dress costumes.

For fireworks displays and to book, visit: merton.gov.uk/fireworks
Six months ago, two specialist companies began working on behalf of Merton Council to provide waste collection, street cleaning, Parks and grounds maintenance services. Instead of the council running these services directly, Veolia now collects rubbish and recycling, while landscape firm idverde maintains parks and cemeteries. This saves the council an estimated £2 million a year, when government cuts mean we have to find new ways of delivering services at a lower cost.

Claire, part of the council’s new three-strong Neighbourhood Client Team, keeps a check on how the contractors are performing, along with her colleagues Jeremy and Claire.

Claire said: “We are committed to ensuring Veolia and idverde provide a high standard of service that residents rightly expect and that we expect too, so that everyone can enjoy our beautiful green borough.

“We meet contractors regularly and monitor progress closely. We are also in touch with the council’s customer contact centre and are out and about in the community talking to people. This means that we are made aware of any issues as they arise, addressing them in partnership with the contractor and other relevant teams.”

Claire said that teamwork and problem solving are key parts of the role: “As with any big service change, there have been some initial teething problems, but we’ve been working closely with our contractors to ensure the transition has been as smooth as possible, so that council tax payers get best value for money.

“For us, one of the best things about the job is working with residents to investigate problems and find solutions. We want to be able to resolve things properly and sometimes the answer is really simple. For example, we had a complaint about an area of a local park, that was not being cleared of litter to the standard we were happy with, so we worked with the contractor and this is now much better.

My Merton caught up with Claire, part of the council’s new Neighbourhood Client Team.

£5m spent on clearing up litter every year

“We know most people love their street and their local park. They want to keep them clean and tidy. Sadly, there are some people who drop litter, which we then have to clear up. We spend over £5 million every year picking up the rubbish people drop. At the council, we want everyone to love their street and their park and take pride in Merton.”

We can all do our bit to keep Merton clean by:
- not dropping litter and using a litter bin for litter and dog waste
- taking any bulky household waste which cannot be collected from outside your home to our Recycling Centre in Garth Road, Morden
- ensuring your waste is presented correctly by 6am on your day of collection
- reporting any fly-tipping, and, if possible, fly-tippers, noting times, dates and vehicle registration numbers, plus any street cleaning issues in your neighbourhood.

This can be done online: merton.gov.uk/report-it.
Parents are advised to apply online at merton.gov.uk/admissions
Closing date for applications is 31 October 2017
Sewing the seeds of learning...

This year marks 330 years since the death of William Rutlish. He rose from humble beginnings, to become a servant of the Crown and his generosity ultimately helped generations of Merton youngsters to receive a first rate education. *My Merton* finds out more.

When William was 11-years-old, his father died. A few years later, his mother also passed away. Little is known about his school days but it is possible that he received some basic teaching from a local craftsman and may also have had simple lessons at the local parish church of St. Mary’s, Merton.

While still a young boy, William became an apprentice embroiderer. In Stuart England, the leading members of society liked ostentatious fashion. Heavily embroidered clothes were an important means of demonstrating their wealth and social status. After a seven-year apprenticeship, William is thought to have joined a professional embroiderer’s workshop in the City of London.

In 1661, William Rutlish was appointed Embroiderer to King Charles II. This was a huge honour and came with an annual salary of £340 per year, plus a further £160 for embroidering the heavily decorated coats of 250 Royal Yeomen. Today this would equate to a payment of nearly £86,000. Not surprisingly, William soon amassed a sizeable fortune, which he used to purchase land in the Merton area. In 1666 he married Mary Robinson. The couple lived somewhere near Merton Rush, an area now occupied by the Nelson Health Centre in Kingston Road.

William died in March 1687, aged 82 and was buried in the churchyard of St. Mary’s, Merton. William’s gravestone described him as “eminent both for his piety and charity.” In his will, he bequeathed £400 (more than £80,000 in today’s currency) for the apprenticeship of poor boys and girls in the parish of Merton, specifying that his money should “go to the worthiest and most suitable objects of charity.”

A board of trustees administered the Rutlish bequest and the fund continued to increase in value over the centuries. By the late Victorian period, a lack of local apprentices led charity commissioners to view education as a more appropriate means to support poor Merton children. In 1885, property developer John Innes became Chair of the Rutlish Charity and put considerable effort into the foundation of the new Rutlish Science School. This opened on 26 September 1895 near the junction of Kingston and Station Road (now Rutlish Road) in Merton Park.

Lessons ranged from religious instruction, English grammar and literature, to mathematics, languages, chemistry, physics, vocal music, Classics, bookkeeping, rifle shooting and drill. The school cadet force also nurtured generations of recruits to the Officer Training Corps – men who showed great heroism during both the World Wars.

The original building was destroyed by enemy bombing during World War II and a new Rutlish School was eventually opened at Watery Lane in 1957. As this year marks its 60th anniversary, students still honour the memory of the man whose generosity made their education possible. Each year, representatives of Years 7 and 8 attend a Commemoration Day service at St. Mary’s Church and the Head Boy lays a wreath on the tomb of William Rutlish.
10 MAGICAL DAYS ON WIMBLEDON COMMON

EVENTS FOR ALL TASTES: MUSIC • COMEDY • FICTION • POETRY • POLITICS • HISTORY • SPORT • CHILDREN

WIMBLEDON BOOKFEST 2017

5TH - 15TH OCTOBER

Tickets on sale from July 2017
Priority early booking discounts for Friends
wimbledonbookfest.org

Win four tickets to see Spamalot at the New Wimbledon Theatre in November
Funnier than the black death!

Lovingly ripped off from the hugely successful 1975 film, Monty Python and the Holy Grail, Spamalot is a riotous comedy full of misfit knights, killer rabbits, dancing nuns and ferocious Frenchmen. Join King Arthur as he travels with his hapless Knights of the Round Table on a divine mission to locate the elusive Holy Grail – with uproarious consequences.

Spamalot is 'Lovingly ripped off' from which classic film?
b) Citizen Kane
c) Monty Python and the Holy Grail
a) Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade

In your answer, you must include the following: name, email address, phone number and postal address. You can email your answer to communications@merton.gov.uk or post your entry to: My Merton, 7th Floor, Civic Centre, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX. Closing date for entries is 31 October 2017.

Terms and conditions: Tickets are non-transferable. No cash alternatives, accommodation included in the prize. The competition is for one group ticket (four tickets) to see Spamalot at New Wimbledon Theatre on the opening night, Tuesday 21 November 2017.
Merton Arts Space launched last autumn in splendid style with SoDaDa, an artist-led week of multimedia events for people with learning disabilities. Since then the council-run arts venue, funded by a £62 million grant from the Arts Council, has played host to a range of gigs, theatre and exhibitions.

Last autumn, Bookfest presented a talk by best-selling author of *The Miniaturist*, Jessie Burton, and Attic Theatre Company performed an intimate production of *Great Expectations* before Christmas. The summer saw May Project Gardens present *Come We Grow* – an eclectic mix of hip-hop and… gardening.

And all of this has been going on at the heart of the borough’s busiest library!

One high point of the year was a performance by Jah Wobble and the Invaders of the Heart. This sell-out show brought together music, drama and magic. A Wimbledon College of Arts student created the set, while Attic Theatre brought Jah Lydon’s band Public Image Ltd, brought together music, drama and magic. A Wimbledon College of Arts student created the set, while Attic Theatre brought Jah Wobble’s original script to life, in a true spirit of local cooperation.

Jah Wobble, who is a London library ambassador, said: “This was a special show that gave me and the band an opportunity to try something different for a warm and receptive audience. We really enjoyed the event and the support from the library service has been brilliant.”

Highlights going forward include the launch of this year’s Bookfest on 5 October – this time featuring a talk by celebrated novelist Ali Smith.

Attic Theatre Company will be back in October, with *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* by Leo Tolstoy and Baseless Fabric will present two David Mamet plays, *Dark Pony* and *Reunion*. For a younger audience, Colour House Children’s Theatre will be putting on *Hansel and Gretel* every Sunday until 12 November.

Listen out for SoundSpace, an evening of creative new music curated by classically-trained musician and composer Phil Durant on 23 September. There will be an exhibition of work by local artists as part of Merton Arts Festival from 15 to 23 September.
Mental ill health is in the news a lot these days, with celebrities, politicians and even princes speaking out about the stigma still associated with what is a very widespread issue.

With an estimated two million Londoners experiencing mental illness each year, this summer saw the launch of Thrive LDN – a city-wide movement which aims to improve residents’ wellbeing.

Led by the London Health Board and backed by the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, Thrive LDN aims to start a big conversation about mental health. The movement hopes to increase understanding of mental health issues and tackle stigma and discrimination against people living with mental health problems.

There will be events to explore solutions, with a view to improving services, reducing suicides and encouraging us all to look after our own and others’ mental health.

As children get ready to start school or nursery, parents are being urged to ensure their child’s routine jabs are up-to-date. Some children in Merton are missing out on important vaccinations for the under-fives, including the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) and pre-school booster against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio.

Do you know how many units of alcohol you drink each week?

A new initiative called Drink Checker has been launched by One You Merton, the borough’s health campaign, to help you keep track of how much alcohol you are drinking and what this means for your health, your pocket and your waistline.

Men and women are advised not to drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week and to spread this out rather than having one or two big drinking sessions. Cutting back on drinking and having some alcohol-free days every week can help to reduce your risk of developing cancers of the mouth, throat, bowel and breast, as well as heart disease and cirrhosis of the liver.

Drink Checker helps you keep tabs of how much you are spending on your usual tipple and shows how many units and calories are in your favourite drinks. Alcohol is high in empty calories which contributes to weight gain without any health benefits.

Answer a few quick questions and Drink Checker will provide a tailored profile of your alcohol consumption and information about the benefits of drinking less, including better-quality sleep and reduced risk of accidents.

Drink Checker also offers tips and support for anyone who is trying to cut down on the amount of alcohol they are consuming.

As children get ready to start school or nursery, parents are being urged to ensure their child’s routine jabs are up-to-date. Some children in Merton are missing out on important vaccinations for the under-fives, including the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) and pre-school booster against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio.
For the fifth time in 18 years, there is yet another engagement on the future of St Helier hospital taking place and our hospital is once again at risk of downgrading or closure. The Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust is asking for views on its report Providing high quality healthcare services 2020 to 2030. Although this is not a formal consultation, the Trust proposes to take forward three options for further analysis of where specialist acute healthcare would be based.

Despite being situated in a well-populated area with greater health needs, just one of these three options would keep St Helier fully open with a full range of services. Past consultations have indicated the preferred outcome is for emergency medical care and consultant-led maternity services to move to Belmont. This could mark the beginning of the end for St Helier as a fully functioning general hospital.

Merton Council is calling on residents to respond to the consultation making clear that we support retaining all consultant-led A&E and maternity service at the current site at St Helier Hospital. Cllr Stephen Alambritis, Leader of Merton Council, said: “£40m of taxpayers money has already been wasted trying to get us to agree to close St Helier Hospital. When will they learn that no amount of consultation will force residents to settle for a “hospital” that doesn’t have a blue light A&E and doesn’t have a consultant-led maternity unit. That’s not my idea of a hospital and I think residents agree.”

The council is urging residents to respond to the proposals before 30 September and support our campaign to keep St Helier Hospital open on its current site with a full “blue light” accident and emergency department and consultant-led maternity unit.

You can respond to the proposals here: esth2020-2030@nhs.uk. The official consultation deadline is 30 September. If you are reading this after that date, please do still ensure your views are heard by replying urgently.

Fighting for the future of St Helier Hospital

Merton primary school children in Reception up to Year 4, and pre-school children aged two and three are now eligible for free flu vaccinations, offered as a nasal spray. Parents and carers of pre-school children aged two and three should contact their GP practice, while pupils in Reception to Year 4 will be offered the vaccine at school.

People aged 65 and over, pregnant women, carers and people with a long-term health condition also receive the vaccine free from their GP or pharmacy, and are urged to book an appointment soon.

© www.dreamstime.com/Monkey Business Images

Fight the flu this autumn

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© www.dreamstime.com/Monkey Business Images
**Merton – proud to be a Fairtrade borough**

**The Siegeris School of Dance**
Wimbledon, Wimbledon Park, South Wimbledon, Raynes Park, Mitcham, Tooting

Dance classes for ages between / Boys, Girls and Adults
Monday - Saturday

* Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) Ballet
* ISTD Modern & Tap
* Street Dance & Musical Theatre

siegerisdance.com
info@siegerisdance.com
07730536499

**CAVENDISH HOUSE**

**LAUNCHING SOON**

1, 2 & 3 Bedroom Apartments
Available to buy through Shared Ownership* minutes from Colliers Wood Station

To find out more or register your interest

* 0203 535 2555
* mhosales@metropolitan.org.uk
* mho.co.uk
* @flythenest

*Eligibility criteria apply

**MERTON COUNCIL**

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

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

**GATES OPEN 5:15PM | FIRST SHOW 6:30PM**
**SECOND SHOW 8:15PM | FUNFAIR, STALLS & REFRESHMENTS OPEN TILL 10:00PM**

Wimbledon Park
Sat 4 November

Morden Park
Sun 5 November

#mertonfireworks

**Musical Fireworks Displays**

**Wimbledon Park**
**Morden Park**

Sat 4 November
Sun 5 November

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*MORE SUITABLE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

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*MORE SUITABLE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

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*Eligibility criteria apply
New Wimbledon Theatre
93 The Broadway, Wimbledon, SW19 1QG
Book online www.atgtickets.com/wimbledon
Telephone booking 0844 871 7646
Group bookings 0844 871 7696
Access bookings 0844 871 7677 (no booking fees apply)

● Merton Arts Festival
Saturday 14–Tuesday 17 October
This event will bring together choirs from across the borough for four performances, including a celebration of choirs, cabaret, a gospel workshop and a school choir event run by Merton Music Foundation. find out more www.mertonartsfestival.org

● Cabaret
Thursday 21–Saturday 30 September
Show-stopping choreography, dazzling costumes and some of the most iconic songs in musical theatre.

● Flashdance
Monday 2–Saturday 7 October
The story of 18-year-old Alex, who is a welder by day and flashdancer by night. She dreams of going to the prestigious Shipley Dance Academy and becoming a professional dancer.

● Cilla, The Musical
Tuesday 7–Saturday 11 November
The story of the teenage girl from Liverpool whose dreams of stardom lead to her becoming one of Britain’s best-loved entertainers of all time.

● Bring it On
Monday 9–Saturday 14 October
Dive into a high-octane thrill ride where the cut-throat world of competitive cheerleading meets high school politics and teenage romance.

Arts and entertainment
see, buy or commission all kinds of art. There will also be talks and workshops. find out more www.mertonartsfestival.org

● Merton Arts Festival
Saturday 16–Sunday 17 and Saturday 23–Sunday 24 September
Held over two weekends at venues across the borough, including Merton Arts Space in Wimbledon Library. Around 70 artists will be taking part and there will be a chance to

Services of Remembrance
Armistice Day
Friday 10 November
● Mitcham War Memorial, Lower Green West, to commence at 10.50am.
● Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, to commence at 10.50am.

Remembrance Sunday
Sunday 12 November
● Nelson Health Centre, Kingston Road, Wimbledon, at 9am.
● Wimbledon War Memorial, Wimbledon Village, at 10.40am.
● Mitcham War Memorial, Lower Green West, Mitcham, at 10.40am.
Please note, the parade assembles outside the British Legion Hall, in St Mark’s Road, Mitcham.
find out more merton.gov.uk/remembrance
**MY MERTON’S BOOK CHOICE**

**Fiction:** *Origin* by Dan Brown
The fifth book by Dan Brown featuring Robert Langdon, who attends the unveiling of a discovery that “will change the face of science forever”.

The evening’s host is his friend and former student, Edmond Kirsch, a tech magnate whose dazzling inventions and audacious predictions have made him a controversial figure around the world. This evening is to be no exception: he claims he will reveal an astonishing scientific breakthrough to challenge the fundamentals of human existence.

**Other fiction titles:**
- *Last Breath* – Karin Slaughter
- *The Worst Case Scenario Cookery Club* – Chris Manby
- *A Question of Trust* – Penny Vincenzi
- *The Waterway Girls* – Milly Adams

**Non-fiction:** *This is Going to Hurt: Secret Diaries of a Junior Doctor* by Adam Kay
Adam Kay was a junior doctor from 2004 until 2010, before a devastating experience on a ward caused him to reconsider his future. He kept a diary throughout his training, and *This is Going to Hurt* intersperses tales from the front line of the NHS with reflections on the current crisis. The result is a first-hand account of life as a junior doctor in all its joy, pain, sacrifice and maddening bureaucracy, and a love letter to those who might at any moment be holding our lives in their hands.

**Other non-fiction titles:**
- *Claws: Confessions of a Cat Groomer* – Anita Kelsey
- *The Diary of a Wartime Affair* – Doreen Bates

**eMagazines**
Merton libraries have over 300 eMagazine titles that can be downloaded to be read via your computer, tablet or mobile device.

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**Polka Theatre**

240, The Broadway, Wimbledon, SW19 1SB
Box office: 020 8543 4888
www.polkatheatre.com

![Polka Theatre](image)

**Child of the Divide**
Friday 29 September – Sunday 15 October, main stage, performance times vary

Summer 1947 and 16 million people are on the move between India and the newly-formed Pakistan. Amid the upheaval, young Pali’s fingers slip from his father’s hand, and his destiny changes forever. Taken in by a Muslim family, he is given a new name, a new faith and a new life. But when his real father returns to claim him, Pali must decide who he is. Ages seven to 14. Tickets £13.50; previews and concessions £10.

**In a Nutshell**
Friday 6–Sunday 8 October, Adventure Theatre, performance times vary

Little Acorn wakes up too early to find that it is always winter, never spring. In a quest to find breakfast for his friend, Robin, Acorn embarks on an adventure. Ages three to six. Tickets £12.50; concessions £9.

**Friends for All**
Friday 20–Sunday 22 October, main stage, performance times vary

Eight-year-old Lexi doesn’t make friends as easily as some. If only her school would allow a non-school uniform day then she could be herself, and find others like her. Inspired by Grandad’s hippy stories from the swinging 60s, she decides to fight the powers that be and the class bully, Suzy. Ages five to 11. Tickets £13.50; concessions £10.

**Little Red Riding Hood**
Wednesday 25–Sunday 29 October, main stage, performance times vary

A he-wolf and a girl, or a she-wolf and a boy? Both are possible! Join two performers as they retrace Red Riding Hood’s path in the shadowy woods, constantly swapping characters – as if playing a game. But of course, they are really vying to be The Wolf! Ages three to eight. Tickets £13.50; concessions and previews £10.

**Why the Whales Came**
by Michael Morpurgo
Thursday 2–Sunday 5 November, main stage, performance times vary

Gracie and Daniel have been forbidden to go near the mysterious Birdman, but clues intrigue them. After being lost at sea and stranded on his tiny island, they begin to unravel the Birdman’s secrets to learn why the whales came to the island. Ages seven to 12. Tickets £13.50; concessions and previews £10.

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**Family**

- **Rapunzel**
The Colour House Theatre at Merton Abbey Mills in Colliers Wood is staging the popular fairytale Rapunzel every Saturday and Sunday from 2 September until 5 November at 2pm and 4pm. Tickets: Adults £12; children £10. [find out more](www.colourhouse.theatre.co.uk)

- **Apple Day Weekend**
Saturday 30 September–Sunday 1 October, 11am–4pm
Morden Hall Park, Morden. Celebrate the humble apple and join us in tasting local Merton varieties of apples. We will also be pressing apples and have apple themed crafts and activities for the kids. Free. [find out more](www.nationaltrust.org.uk/morden-hall-park/whats-on)

**Arts and entertainment continued**

- **Lunchtime recitals and Remembrance Sunday concert**
Friday 15 September, 1pm; 29 September, 1pm; 13 October, 1pm and 27 October, 1pm
Enjoy music performed by local professional musicians at St John’s Church, Spencer Hill, Wimbledon. On Sunday 12 November at 7.30pm, there will be a Remembrance Sunday performance of Faure’s Requiem. [find out more](www.stjohnswimbledon.co.uk)

- **Hill Singers Chamber Choir**
Tuesday 19 September, 7.30pm
Lantern Methodist Church, Raynes Park. (The entrance is in Tolverne Road). The Hill Singers Chamber Choir begin their new season with an invitation to potential new members to join them to sing through some of the music chosen for their December concert. Their regular rehearsal time is on Tuesdays at 7.30pm. [find out more](www.hillsingers.co.uk)

- **Morden Park Choral Society autumn concert**
Saturday 14 October, 7.30pm
Meddlers from the musicals at St John the Divine, High Path, Merton. Adults £6, concessions £4. Includes wine or soft drink. [find out more](020 8648 6445 or www.choralsocietymerton.org.uk)

- **Wimbledon Library, Compton Road, Wimbledon**
Find out more: merton.gov.uk/artsspace

- **The Colour House Children’s Theatre will stage Hansel and Gretel every Sunday for 10 weeks, between Sunday 10 September and Sunday 12 November, between noon and 1pm.**

- **Sound Space** by Phil Durrant presents an evening of creative new music on Saturday 23 September at 8pm.

- **Wimbledon Bookfest** launch on Thursday 5 October. [www.wimbledonbookfest.org](http://www.wimbledonbookfest.org)

- **Attic Theatre presents The Death of Ivan Ilyich** by Leo Tolstoy, adapted by Stephen Sharkey and directed by Jonathan Humphreys, between Friday 6 October and Sunday 29 October.

- **Baseless Fabric presents David Mamet plays** on Thursday 12, Friday 13 and Saturday 14 October at 7.30pm.

- **Spread the Word: City of Stories**
Celebration event, Thursday 9 November, 7.30pm–9.30pm in Mitcham Library.

- **Autumn Arts**
Saturday 23–Sunday 24 September and Saturday 30 September–Sunday 1 October
A packed programme of art and crafts activities for all the family over two weekends on Wimbledon Piazza. [find out more](www.lovewimbledon.org)
Family continued

- **Morden Little League Anniversary**
  Saturday 7 October
  King George’s Playing Fields, Tudor Drive, Morden. The Morden Little League is preparing to mark its 50th anniversary. It is estimated that three quarters of all Merton residents have had a family member involved in little league football since 1968. The league is trying to track down its original 84 players to join the half-century celebration.
  [find out more](www.mordenlittleleague.com)

- **Pumpkin carving**
  Monday 23–Friday 27 October, 11am–4pm
  Morden Hall Park, Morden Hall Road, Morden. It’s all about pumpkins this October half-term. Join a pumpkin trail in the park and then make pumpkin and harvest themed crafts to take home. If you bring along your own pumpkin, we’ll lend you all the kit you need to carve it. £4 per child, pumpkin carving free with your own pumpkin.

- **Harvest pumpkin party**
  Saturday 7 October, 6.30pm
  St Saviour’s Church Hall in Grand Drive. Family event celebrating harvest with home-cooked supper, fancy dress and pumpkin carving in harvest theme competitions, pumpkin drive and more.
  [find out more](stsaviour.net)

- **Fireworks display**
  Friday 3 November, 5.30pm
  The Parent Teacher Association at Aragon Primary School will be holding its first fireworks display at the school in Aragon Road, Morden.
  [find out more](www.pta-events.co.uk/aragon)

- **Merton Mencap**
  Monday 4 December, 10am–2pm
  Room B, Chaucer Centre, Canterbury Road, Morden. Kids First, Merton’s forum for parents of children and young people with special needs, is running a free, practical session on sensory integration and occupational therapy techniques you can use at home with your child. Find out what the occupational therapy service provides, plus information on referrals, waiting lists, assessments and occupational therapy in schools. Booking essential.
  [find out more](www.mertonmencap.org.uk/kidsfirst)

Health and fitness

- **Headway South West London**
  Monthly meetings held on the second Tuesday of the month 7.30pm-9pm
  Drake House, 44 St George’s Road, Wimbledon. Our Wimbledon support group offers adults with a brain injury and those who care for them information, activities and the opportunity to share experiences with others who are facing similar challenges.
  [find out more](www.headwayswlondon.org)

- **Pilates classes**
  until 11 December
  Mondays between 11am and noon at Raynes Park Library, 21 Approach Road, Raynes Park. £5 per class in advance.
  [find out more](www.ldapilates.com)

- **Learn to run on Wimbledon Common**
  Courses for beginners and improvers, plus social runs on Wimbledon Common.
  [find out more](www.commonrunners.co.uk)
Wandle Fortnight

9–24 September 2017

Wandle Valley

Wandle Fortnight
Saturday 9–Sunday 24 September

Enjoy this annual celebration of all things connected to the river which flows through Merton. There is a whole programme of free events and activities for all ages, including walks, talks, arts, open days, visits, craft, nature, heritage, cycling, trees and picnics. Wandle Fortnight is run by Wandle Valley Forum with support from the Living Wandle Landscape Partnership.

Raynes Park Business Breakfast
Tuesday 3 October, 8am
Bar 191, 191 Worple Road, Raynes Park. The council, Merton Chamber of Commerce and the Raynes Park Association have organised this event for local businesses. Tickets £20 plus VAT.

Merton Chamber of Commerce
Workshops running in the autumn include Thinking of Starting a Business: Business Basics on Wednesday 18 October and again on Wednesday 29 November; Emergency first Aid at work on Tuesday 17 October; and Fire Warden Marshal Training on Thursday 9 November.

Wimbledon National Trust Association
Saturday 21 October, 2.15pm
Christ Church Hall, Cottenham Park Road, West Wimbledon. Dr Andrew Gray, a member of the Heraldry Society, will be talking about the Genealogist’s Picture Book, introducing the value of heraldry, particularly in interpreting family history. Members £3; non-members £3.50.

The human face of war
Tuesday 21 November, 10.30am
West Barnes Library, Station Road, Motspur Park. As part of the council’s annual Remembrance programme, Heritage Officer Sarah Gould will reveal more about the life stories of Merton’s First World War combatants. This free, illustrated talk will feature stories of ordinary men, performing acts of extraordinary courage under difficult circumstances.

Fairs and exhibitions

Mitcham Horticultural Society Autumn Show
Saturday 7 October, 2pm
A colourful display of mixed flowers, fruit and vegetables, crafts, floral art and cookery at St Marks Church Hall, St Marks Road, Mitcham.

Abundance Wimbledon
Saturday 16 September, 11am–2pm
St Mark’s Church, St Mark’s Place, Wimbledon. Jams, chutneys, cakes, pies and honey will be on sale and a fruit press will be producing fresh apple juice. Children’s activities plus International Ukulele Orchestra. Free entry.

Community forums

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

Raynes Park
Thursday 14 September, 7.15pm
Raynes Park Library Hall, Approach Road, Raynes Park.

Wimbledon
Thursday 28 September, 7.15pm
Wimbledon Arts Space, Wimbledon Library, Compton Road, Wimbledon.

Colliers Wood
Thursday 5 October, 7.15pm
St Joseph’s Church Hall, Colliers Wood High Street.

Morden
Thursday 12 October, 7.15pm
Council Chamber, Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden.

Mitcham
Wednesday 18 October, 7.15pm
Mitcham Library, London Road, Mitcham.
Fairs and exhibitions cont.

- **Where Do You Think You Are?**
  Wednesday 20 September–Saturday 21 October
  Merton Heritage Centre, second floor, Morden Library. An exhibition of maps, photographs, drawings and records from the archives of the John Innes Society will showcase the heritage of Merton Park, from Gilbert the Norman and Horatio Nelson, to John Innes and the present day.

- **Dogs Trust community event**
  Thursday 21 September, 11am–3pm
  Colliers Wood Recreation Ground. Bring your dog along for free microchipping, a basic health check and health and training advice. Neutering vouchers worth £35 will be available. [find out more](www.dogtrust.org/communityevents)

- **Salvation Army**
  The Wimbledon branch of the Salvation Army celebrates its 130th anniversary this year with a number of events. These include a travelling exhibition which will be in Wimbledon Library from Monday 18 until Saturday 23 September between 11am–4pm and then at Merton Heritage Centre in Morden Library in the Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, from Monday 25 September until Saturday 21 October between 11am and 4pm. This will coincide with a reception at the same venue on Thursday 12 October from 5pm to 7pm. The territorial commander will lead a celebration at the Salvation Army Hall in Kingston Road, Wimbledon, on Saturday 24 September from 10am and there will be an autumn fair in the same location on Saturday 4 November between 10.30am and 2.30pm.

MERTON COUNCIL

**Fostering why Steve thinks you should go for it**

Steve was in foster care at the age of 13 because of a breakdown in the relationship with his mother.

What were you thinking when you first arrived at your foster family?
I felt relieved. I was expecting to have someone like a teacher reading the rules but they made me feel at home. My carer told me about the local area - where to go and not to go and it made me feel like she was looking out for my safety.

Were you made to feel part of the family?
Yes. On my birthday my carers took me out to dinner like I was one of their own children. It’s important that foster children are not treated differently and doing things together as a family really helps. Even the smallest thing like saying I was welcome to help myself to a snack made me feel at home.

What advice would you give to people who want to foster teenagers?
I would say, don’t judge a book by its cover, not all young people fit the stereotypes given to them by society. Try and find a young person’s strengths and guide them down the right path.

If you are interested in fostering for Merton, please contact us:
0800 073 0874
fostering@merton.gov.uk
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Fostering
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www.mascot-telecare.org.uk
mascot@merton.gov.uk
Bilal Patel has been the Imam at Morden Islamic Community Centre (MICC) for seven years, four of them in the centre’s dedicated building.

What happens at the MICC?
The centre caters for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. We have daily prayers, and provide social welfare advice and education. We have a gym which is open to everyone for a small fee.

The centre aims to reach out to the wider community. How are you doing that?
The main way is through our food relief project, which we offer to anyone in difficult circumstances. We worked with the Salvation Army to set it up. People can come and receive food parcels and we offer a delivery service. We also have a food kitchen once a month where people can come for a hot meal, use the internet and have a shower.

We’re planning an open day where the community can come in and see what takes place inside the centre. Schools already come to the centre; they have a lot of questions to ask and are eager to see what a mosque looks like.

The MICC is part of Merton’s Faith and Belief Form, why should different faiths come together?
There are a lot people who don’t know about Islam and equally a lot in the Muslim community who don’t know about other faiths. This can create huge issues as people can feel enmity towards things they don’t know. It’s important that we all get together; to understand one another.