Win a family ticket to see Babe, The Sheep-Pig – page 14

Have your say on council tax and council spending

New secondary school a step closer

Meet Duke of Edinburgh Awards manager Carol Curtis
We asked residents to tell us their concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour issues. We worked with the police and other agencies to use this information to help prioritise our services.

"You said"

In our 2014 crime and anti-social behaviour survey, the anti-social behaviour residents were most concerned about was litter and fly-tipping, with 63% saying this was a very big or fairly big problem. The crimes that residents said were the biggest problems were burglary and motor vehicle crimes.

We did:

We are proud of the partnership work we have undertaken with Merton Police and our partners to tackle and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in the borough, but we know there is still more to do. As a result of what you have told us, we have changed how we tackle the issues that matter to you:

- We introduced a new Cumulative Impact Zone in Mitcham to make it harder for more licensed premises to open
- We are working with Merton Police to encourage retailers to be more responsible when it comes to sale of alcohol
- We have held joint operations with Merton Police to tackle illegal waste carriers
- Our CCTV team has over 200 permanent cameras and has supported Merton Police in dealing with live incidents and in carrying out investigations
- We introduced a borough wide Controlled Drinking Zone. This gives the police extra powers to deal with anti-social behaviour involving alcohol and has resulted in arrests for some of the most prolific street drinkers

What you can do to help:

- Report crime and anti-social behaviour. Call 999 if it is an emergency, 101 if there is no emergency or our anti-social behaviour team on 020 8274 4907
- Get involved in your local Neighbourhood Watch. See www.mertonnhw.co.uk for details
- Take part in our 2016 crime and community safety survey by going to merton.gov.uk/safermertonconsultation

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

My kids are grown up now and I’m grateful we no longer have the annual ‘back to school’ drama. Discovering they’d grown out of their uniforms after just six weeks holiday was always a strain! In Merton we’ve taken some of the stress away by ensuring we can offer a good local school place to all of our primary school children. Merton is attracting more and more young couples as it’s such a good place to bring up a family, so since 2010 we’ve created more than 4,000 additional primary places along with new classrooms, assembly halls and play areas.

Now it’s the turn of our secondary schools. We’ve already agreed to expand Harris Merton, based in Mitcham, to cater for need in the east of the borough. Our next step is to build a new secondary school in south Wimbledon. You can read about this on page 9. We’re pleased our young people will be able to continue their education in the borough, where our maintained secondary schools were recently judged in the country’s top three for pupil attainment.

At a time when local councils have seen their Government funding cut by more than 40% it’s been a challenge to deliver a school place for every child. We’ve achieved this by carefully managing the council’s finances so we can invest where it’s needed. However this is becoming more difficult as cuts to our Government funding continue to bite. Because we’re financially business-like, we’re one of only a handful of councils who have been able to freeze council tax every year since 2010. But now some people have suggested increasing council tax to reduce the impact of the Government’s cuts and we’re asking for your opinion on page 15. I would encourage everyone to respond so we can make decisions about council tax and services based on what residents want.

We might not all be out-growing our uniforms but we are a growing borough, and a good place for families to live, with increasing numbers of youngsters in our great schools and more older people living longer, healthier lives in our community. The council won’t be able to do some of the things that we used to be able to do when funding wasn’t so scarce. But we will continue to make sure we do the best we can for the people who need it the most.
Community News
The latest news from around the borough

Features
Health
What would help you lead a healthier life?

Cleaner, greener
Wheelie bins thumbs up

Community safety
Your say on crime

5 minutes with Darren Tulley, Merton Borough Commander for the London Fire Brigade

Regulars
Working life
Carol Curtis, who runs Merton Council’s Duke of Edinburgh awards

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

Consultation
Have your say on council tax and council spending

New secondary school a step closer

Wimbledon force
Why was Merton so special to William Wilberforce?

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

Merton schools will get a taste of local politics during Local Democracy Week this October as the council and local MPs lay on events to demonstrate democracy in action.

Pupils will be given tours of the Civic Centre, which will include the council chamber to see where local decisions are made and a talk by the Mayor of Merton, Councillor Brenda Fraser in her parlour.

Weather permitting, a quick stop on the roof of the Civic Centre will allow children to identify key London landmarks.

MP Siobhain McDonagh will be hosting tours of the Houses of Parliament for the ninth consecutive year for schools in Mitcham and Morden, whilst Wimbledon’s MP Stephen Hammond is pleased to visit and speak at any schools in his constituency on the Monday or Friday mornings of Local Democracy Week.

Interested schools should contact Mr Hammond’s office directly.

Local Democracy Week aims to increase democratic participation at a local level, encouraging young people to get involved.

Find your way in Wimbledon with new landmarks trail

Whether it is basement Turkish baths, the home of an immaculately dressed ghost, two fat ladies or the place Henry VIII nearly died, discover Wimbledon’s landmarks on a new footpath.

Produced by Merton Council, Love Wimbledon and Merton Chamber of Commerce, the 2.012 km long Wimbledon Way route is marked out with circular discs sunk into the pavement.

Among the highlights are the original site of the All England Croquet Club (the Lawn Tennis element was added later), the birthplace of fictional Tomb Raider character Lara Croft, a haunted Victorian mansion and spectacular viewpoints over London.

The project, which began in 2012, was supported by Merton Council and a £45,000 Heritage Lottery Fund grant.

An interactive map can be found on the Wimbledon Way website, which allows walkers to add their own memories, stories and photographs to the online route.

The Big Friendly Read

More children than ever have participated in this year’s Summer Reading Challenge with more than 14,000 children in Merton pledging to read six books this summer.

Dedicated young readers are in line for some top prizes including a Kindle Fire and Lego set, two tickets to see Gangsta Granny at the New Wimbledon Theatre and shopping vouchers.

Merton Libraries has teamed up with Chipotle Mexican Grill in Wimbledon to give every child who completes the challenge a free meal.

The theme this year celebrates the 100th anniversary of Roald Dahl’s birth and will feature some of the author’s best-loved characters. An awards ceremony will take place at Raynes Park Library on October 6.

Merton Council Leader Stephen Alambritis and Diana Strock (Merton Chamber of Commerce)

Mitcham mural celebrates local trade

A hand-painted mural is brightening up Mitcham town centre after weeks of painstaking restoration work.

The colourful red, white and blue design adorning the wall of Lavender Parade, between London Road and Fair Green, took artist Rose Pomeroy two weeks to carefully hand paint using hard-wearing masonry paint.

The design celebrates some of the trades and businesses that have been present in the parade. Merton Council commissioned Rose to paint the Lavender Parade mural to spruce up the area. Originally designed by Crispin Finn Ltd, the artwork was previously made of vinyl which had suffered from vandalism and was peeled away.
Work to start on family leisure centre

Work is due to start this autumn on a brand new family leisure centre in Morden after Merton Council’s planning committee gave it the green light in June. Following feedback from residents and current Morden Park Pool users, the new, affordable leisure centre will offer a 25 metre, six-lane main pool, a 15 metre by 13 metre pool with moveable floor to accommodate swimming, water-based exercise and diving, a 100-station fitness suite, a large studio/community room and café. The council has planned the construction so that the current ageing Morden Park Pool will only be demolished once the new leisure centre is up and running. Residents will always have sports facilities throughout the works. Once the new centre is ready in early 2018, the site of Morden Park Pool will be returned to open green space. The council has already budgeted for the new, modern leisure centre, which will be better value to Merton’s council tax payers as it will cost less to maintain in the long-run.

Merton Council helps AFC Wimbledon celebrate League One promotion

The new Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has overturned the previous London mayor’s decision to “call in” Merton council’s decision to grant planning permission for the AFC Wimbledon stadium development. Merton’s planning committee will now formally note the mayor’s decision at a meeting in September and the plans can then be progressed. The council’s cross party planning committee unanimously approved the stadium development, which includes much needed additional housing and community facilities in December 2015.

Merton Council also joined in celebrations with cheering fans who lined the streets of Wimbledon to celebrate AFC Wimbledon’s promotion to League One.

An open top bus carrying the first team squad, club’s management, the Mayor of Merton and Merton Council’s Leader Stephen Alambritis paraded through the packed streets of Wimbledon on Sunday, July 3, where they were met with a sea of blue and yellow.

The victory parade, organised in partnership between Merton Council and AFC Wimbledon, was followed by the launch of the club’s new kit in Centre Court Shopping Centre.

Mayor of Merton honours school governors

Councillor Brenda Fraser held a special celebration in the Mayor’s parlour in recognition of the contribution school governors make to school life in Merton.

Twenty-seven primary, secondary and special educational needs schools in Merton each put forward one governor to be honoured for excellence in their work over the academic year 2015/16.

The nominees received a pin badge of the Merton crest in recognition of their voluntary work in the local community.

First Maxi Martin award for Abbotsbury

Abbotsbury Primary School in Morden held their special end of year prize-giving assembly to recognise their pupils’ hard work.

Cabinet member for children’s services, Councillor Katy Neep, presented the school’s first Maxi Martin Award to Gaya Manorajh and Yoana Georgieva, both ten.

The award is in memory of the late cabinet member for children’s services and St Helier ward councillor who passed away earlier this year. 180 pupils heard a special pre-recorded message from director of Children, Schools and Families Yvette Stanley, congratulating the winner and speaking of Councillor Martin’s commitment to the borough’s children and of the work she did to make Merton a borough of opportunity for all its children.
**Pedal power for charity**

It was a case of sheer pedal power for thousands of riders including Merton Council staff who raised a significant amount of money for charity by cycling 100 miles in RideLondon. The impressive 100 mile route went from the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford to Buckingham Palace via the Surrey hills and through Merton, Wandsworth and Kensington and Chelsea. Merton Council’s very own riders raised hundreds of pounds for a range of charities by taking to two wheels in July. The Mayor of Merton’s rider, senior lawyer Guy Bishop raised about £650 for the Mayor’s charities Age UK Merton and the Avanti Club (a mental health support group). He made it round in eight hours and 39 minutes. Sadly the route claimed the life of cancer survivor Robin Chard, 48, from Bicester, and a crash or two put paid to some people’s races, with diversions in place meaning some later riders had no choice but to miss out Box Hill and Leith Hill. The council once again worked with organisers and Merton Police to minimise disruption to residents and ensure the success of the world-class event.

**Merton’s spectacular Armed Forces Day parade**

Crowds turned out for Merton’s Armed Forces Day parade to celebrate the work and bravery of the UK’s armed forces and emergency services.

For the first time in the history of the parade in Merton, the borough’s mayor, Councillor Brenda Fraser, and the Queen’s Deputy Lieutenant, Clare Whelan OBE, inspected the parade before it processed through Morden to St Lawrence’s Church for a special service.

In another first, military vehicles from Stonecot Hill, home to the reservists from the 151 Regiment the Royal Logistics Corps, formed part of the parade. Members of the Gurkha community, invited guests and schoolchildren from local schools also took part in the event on 25 June.

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**SUPPORTING THE BOROUGH’S UNSUNG HEROES.**

I have been very proud to champion the amazing work that members of the Merton community do for the borough.

Almost every day at the Wimbledon Guardian, we hear about people working tirelessly, and often without recognition, to improve the lives of others, raise money for charity or go out of their way to help people less fortunate than themselves.

This unsung army of local heroes deserve recognition for what they do, which is why the Merton Community Awards are so important.

This is our fourth annual awards since launching in 2013 in partnership with the council. Thanks to the many nominations we have received from across the borough over the past few months we will, on September 28, shine a light on a selection of the many wonderful people and organisations who make Merton.

Nicholas Hitchens
Deputy Managing Group Editor, Newsquest South London

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**Our proud sponsors for 2016**
Improved A Level results

Council maintained schools in Merton are celebrating a significant improvement in A Level results, with many exceeding the national average for results this year.

A total of 86% of A Level students in the borough achieved at least three passes — way above the national average in 2015 of 78.7%, and more than the 71.2% Merton achieved last year.

Every single student in the borough’s council maintained schools who took A Level exams achieved at least one pass. Overall, 81.4% of Merton’s pupils achieved an A* to C grade, which again topped the national average of 77.6%.

77.7% of Raynes Park High School, 87.7% of RR6 (Ricards Lodge and Rutlish combined sixth form) and 91% of Ursuline High School pupils achieved A* to C grades, all three an improvement on 2015. 70.8% of Wimbledon College pupils also achieved A* to C grades.

New fire cadets scheme to launch

A new fire cadet scheme for budding young firefighters will launch for the first time in the borough, thanks to funding from Merton Council.

The exciting new youth engagement programme will mean young people can learn about the London Fire Brigade and gain a qualification and life skills for the workplace.

It was made possible thanks to a £54,000 grant from Merton Council.

The cadet programme for young people aged from 14 to 17 years-old is due to launch in September, the first time such a scheme has been seen in the borough.

Cadets will be based at the new Mitcham fire station in London Road, Mitcham.

The London Fire Brigade is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year.

Read an interview with Merton’s Borough Commander Darren Tulley on the back page.

Merton pupil improvement among best in country

A new league table published by the Education Policy Institute ranks Merton Council’s maintained secondary schools among the best for pupil improvement in England.

Ranking third out of all councils and academy trusts in England, Merton’s pupils are benefiting from the borough’s dedicated teachers who always get the best out of their students. All Merton Council’s maintained secondary schools, Rutlish School, Ricards Lodge High School, Raynes Park High School, Ursuline High School and Wimbledon College, are Ofsted-rated outstanding or good and have seen some of the fastest improving GCSE results in the country in recent years. See page 9 for more on schools.

Recognising local heroes

Local heroes will be honoured by Merton Council and the Wimbledon Guardian this month as part of the Merton Community Awards 2016. The lucky people shortlisted for the awards are being invited to an event at the Taste restaurant in South Thames College where a glittering ceremony will reveal the winners and runners-up. The event, organised by the council and the Wimbledon Guardian, and sponsored by local businesses, will be held on Wednesday 28 September.

Find out more

www.wimbledon guardian.co.uk/mca

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Find out more

www.london-fire.gov.uk/firecadets.asp

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Find out more

www.wimbledon guardian.co.uk/mca
Merton youngsters excel at London Youth Games

This year has been a memorable one for Merton in the Balfour Beatty London Youth Games.

Making the finals in cricket, winning a bronze in Year 7 male Hockey and winning individual events are just some of the borough’s achievements.

Pitched against 32 other boroughs, Merton had more than 150 children taking part in 24 different events between November and July.

Among those on the podium was Samuel Petgrave (16), pictured right, who attends Harris Academy Merton. He won a gold medal in the under 75kg category in Judo. He represents England in the England Judo Squad.

Phoebe Walder (16) who attends Wimbledon High competed in the senior slalom kayaking event and won a silver medal and was less than a second away from getting gold.

The hockey team, coached at the Wimbledon Club, won bronze and 13-year-olds playing at the Old Rutlishians Cricket Club were finalists in the qualifying rounds which took them to the world-famous Lord’s Cricket Ground.

Anyone interested in getting involved in local sport should email leisure@merton.gov.uk

Council listens

Lonesome Primary School in Grove Road, Mitcham is delighted with its new bin, one of three provided by Merton Council. A second has been put in Mitcham’s Recreation Way and a third in Bishopsford Road, Morden. Calls for the rubbish bins, which accept dog waste, gum and general litter, were made to the council after problem areas were identified by members of the public.

Councillor Ross Garrod, Cabinet Member for Environmental Cleanliness and Parking

Fly-tippers and those who pay fly-tippers

The residents of Merton and Merton Council are always on the look out and regularly report offenders. You may have already been seen and reported and could receive an unlimited fine and/or imprisonment.

If you see fly-tipping report the offence online at:
merton.gov.uk/flytipping
New secondary school gets a step closer

Having created thousands of extra school places for our growing primary school population, Merton is now planning for the extra places needed when these children move to secondary school. My Merton looks at the council’s plans and what has been achieved so far.

With a significant increase in young people in the borough, the council is committed to building a brand new secondary school to cater for growing demand. It’s been announced that the new secondary school will be built in south Wimbledon, in the middle of the borough, and well placed to cater for the areas of highest demand. The decision follows negotiations by the council over the past year to purchase a suitable site.

The school will be run by the Harris Federation, which has an established track record of providing secondary education in the borough. It will welcome its first year 7 pupils in September 2018. While the school is being constructed, students will be taught in the former Merton Adult Education centre in Whatley Avenue for two years before the permanent site is ready in 2020.

In order to ensure a school place for every child as a result of a big increase in school aged children, Merton has invested £80m in a primary schools expansion programme, creating 4,000 new primary school places in the borough, adding extra classrooms, assembly halls and playground space to some of our most popular schools. The primary expansion programme will be completed this autumn as work on the final schools, Dundonald and Singlelegate, finishes.

As our primary age children grow up we need to look at ensuring we have enough places in our secondary schools. In the east of the borough, extra places will be created by expanding Harris Academy Merton. The additional new secondary school in south Wimbledon will bring much-needed extra capacity in the west of the borough.

At the same time, standards in our schools have improved so that 88% of our primaries are good or outstanding. As a borough we are one of the top performers in England for pupil improvement. Merton Council’s secondary schools now rank in the top three for pupil improvement in England.

All of our maintained secondary schools are rated good or outstanding, and are third best in the country for pupil improvement.

For children starting secondary school in September 2017 there are still places in the borough’s secondary schools, which are now all good or outstanding and have seen some of the fastest improving GCSE results in the country in recent years.

Apply on time
If your child is due to move to secondary or start reception in September 2017, you can apply for a school place now. Visit the admissions pages on the council website for more information but be sure to get your application in on time and use all of your six preferences.

Visit merton.gov.uk/admissions to apply for a school place. The deadline for secondary school admissions is 31 October 2016. See page 22 for a list of open days. Apply for a primary school place by 15 January.

New adult education service
There are changes for adult learners too this autumn as the council launches its partnership with South Thames College and Groundwork London to deliver an exciting new course programme – everything from graphic design to painting or GCSE English to Tai Chi, so check out the options now.
Help boost the borough’s health

What would help you or your family live a healthier life? We are asking you to tell us what you think.

We’re always being told that there’s an obesity crisis, a ticking time bomb that will see half the population seriously overweight by the year 2050. Many of us know we need to improve our health – to eat less sugar, be more active and to make sure our kids do the same. But keeping up the shift to a healthier lifestyle isn’t always easy, especially when messages are confusing and the amounts of sugar and salt in ready-prepared food are so large.

Merton Council has targets for tackling obesity, particularly in children. But we realise that bombarding parents with health warnings can be a turn-off. So instead we’re asking what you think. We’ll be out and about this autumn hearing your views, or you can join the debate by completing our online survey.

We want to know if you’re concerned about your own and your children’s weight, and what would help you make changes – whether, for example, your child’s school could do more to encourage healthy eating and whether better food and drink options should be available in leisure centres. Would access to simple, tasty recipes make changing your diet easier?

Meanwhile, with a third of 11-year-olds thought to be overweight, we’ve put together two programmes to help families called Family Change4Life and Confident YOU. The programmes help children, teenagers and their families take control of their weight. Delivered by nutritionists and dietitians, they include talking therapies and diet planning, alongside activity sessions that build self-esteem and motivation.

We’re also encouraging schools to sign up to the Healthy Schools London programme. The scheme offers bronze, silver and gold awards to schools for promoting activity and healthy choices. Some schools in Mitcham are already involved, successfully running projects including gardening and cooking schemes, healthy breakfast clubs, mindfulness and yoga.

find out more
Give your views about the healthy weight debate at merton.gov.uk/consultations
For more about our programmes for children and teenagers go to www.live-well.org.uk/merton or call 020 8973 3545.
For Sports Blast go to merton.gov.uk/sportsblast

Sports Blast... is a fun activity programme to get more young people active. It runs free sports courses for 14 to 25-year-olds who live in the east of the borough. You can take part in football, BMX, netball, tennis and fitness sessions.
A force to be reckoned with

Did you know that William Wilberforce, a key figure in the campaign to abolish slavery, lived in Wimbledon Village?

Wilberforce was born in Hull in 1759 to a merchant family. His father died when he was nine and he went to live with an uncle and aunt at Lauriston House, on Southside near Wimbledon Common. This was a substantial property with murals by the famous artist, Angelica Kauffman adorning its great hall and staircase. Wilberforce was much influenced by his aunt Hannah, a staunch Methodist, with strong evangelical views.

Educated at Cambridge University, William had no interest in joining the family firm and opted instead for a career in politics. He paid the £9,000 required to secure enough votes and took up his seat in Parliament aged 21.

Following the death of his uncle, Wilberforce inherited Lauriston House. He regarded it as his country retreat and made it the venue for grand, often raucous parties with high-profile visitors, such as future Prime Minister, William Pitt. This may not have gone down well with his neighbours. However he played his part in local affairs, becoming treasurer for the nearby charity school.

As was the custom in the 18th century, Wilberforce took the Grand Tour in 1784, visiting Italy and Switzerland with his friend, the preacher, Isaac Milner. Their religious discussions were a turning point for Wilberforce, who sold his Wimbledon estate and pledged to dedicate himself to social reform.

He joined the campaign to abolish slavery and began lobbying Parliament. Using evidence provided by abolitionist, Thomas Clarkson, he revealed the appalling conditions aboard slave ships.

The Napoleonic wars helped Wilberforce’s campaign. The new government included opponents of slavery and Merton resident, Admiral Lord Nelson, secured a momentous victory at Trafalgar. This enabled the British Navy to enforce new laws at sea, and in 1807 an act was passed to prevent the trading of slaves in the British colonies.

The act did not free existing slaves and Wilberforce continued to campaign for full emancipation, as well as championing a number of other causes – for instance he founded what is now the RSPCA.

In August 1833, three days before Wilberforce died, Parliament finally passed an act freeing slaves throughout the British Empire.

Fighting far from home...

As part of the Carved in Stone project, Merton Heritage Service is keen to talk to residents whose ancestors fought in the First World War, or contributed to the war effort – whether through industry, charitable work, or as medical staff. Between 11am and 4pm on Saturday 29 October, the heritage team and members of Age Exchange will be staging a special collection day at Morden Library. If you have family war stories, photographs or memorabilia that you would like to share, they would love to hear from you. Staff are particularly keen to hear from local residents whose ancestors travelled from overseas to fight for the Allied cause.

Thousands of servicemen and volunteers from Africa, India, the Caribbean, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Newfoundland fought alongside British troops during the war. They travelled half way across the world to fight for King and Empire; many made the ultimate sacrifice and lie buried in military cemeteries far from their family and homeland. To broaden our knowledge of wartime history, Heritage staff would like to hear from residents, particularly those from the black and ethnic minority communities, whose relatives fought on both sides of the conflict.

The collection day will also feature a range of activities from talks and displays, to archive film and the chance to handle genuine wartime objects.

If you would be interested in this event, or have family stories that you would like to record for posterity, please contact Merton Heritage Centre. Telephone: 020 8545 3339/4038 or email local.studies@merton.gov.uk.

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Cleaner, greener autumn update

The Unusual suspects
National Recycling Week is nearly upon us and this year it’s all about the Unusual Suspects, those cheeky bits of recycling that find their way into your household waste, ending up in landfill. We’re talking about bathroom items such as shampoo bottles, toilet roll tubes and toothpaste boxes, plus cereal packs, juice cartons and dishwasher tab packets from the kitchen.

As a reminder we’ll be posting their mugshots on the side of refuse trucks and we’ll have an information stall in the Civic Centre to help you out.

Flat out
We’ve talked in previous issues about our campaign to boost recycling among residents of housing estates. If you live in a flat and haven’t seen one of our roadshows yet, look out for us coming to your estate soon. In the meantime you can help by putting all your cans, bottles, plastic and paper in your communal bins.

Bag that poo
Any bin will do
Dog bins
Just a quick reminder for dog owners – you can now dispose of dog mess in any Merton litter bin except for those specifically for recycling. Anyone caught not clearing up after their dog will be issued with a fixed penalty notice of £80.

Thanks for your help
During the summer Merton residents rolled up their sleeves and worked with the council on a series of Saturday morning tidy ups, picking up litter at a number of hot spots in Merton. We had a great turn out and local volunteers collected up to ten bags of litter each time. If you’d like to arrange your own area clean up, please get in touch and the council can provide you with sacks, litter pickers and gloves. You can also help us by making sure that litter doesn’t build up in the first place and by reporting any issues in your area.

- Don’t drop litter – as well as making a mess it could land you with an £80 fixed penalty fine.
- Be waste wise – even a couple of bags of rubbish dumped beside a litter bin is considered fly-tipping. New legislation means we can issue £400 fines without having to take those responsible to court. Be careful too if you’re paying someone to remove your waste, you could be prosecuted if it’s dumped illegally, landing you with a criminal record.

Food waste – all is revealed
With weekly collections and compostable liners free from libraries, Merton’s food waste service is a brilliant way to divert your teabags, vegetable peelings and banana skins away from landfill, where they produce harmful methane gas.

But have you ever wondered what happens when they’re collected? Your food waste is taken to a processing plant known as an anaerobic digester. There it’s placed in enclosed tanks and broken down by tiny organisms to create liquid fertiliser for crops and bio gas, which is fed back into the National Grid. It’s amazing to think that just one lorry load of food waste can keep 20,000 TV sets running for an hour.

While using the service is great for peelings, the average UK family wastes £700 a year throwing away food that could have been eaten. Find tips on meal planning, being a savvy shopper and getting the most from your freezer at www.lovefoodhatewaste.com
Wheelie bins get the thumbs up

Households across the borough could have wheelie bins for their recycling and household waste following the overwhelming success of a pilot scheme in the Lavender Fields ward.

The six month trial of 1,000 homes saw 89% of people happy with the wheelie bin services and 81% agreeing that the streets looked cleaner. Recycling rates were up too, as the enclosed bins protected material from wet weather, improving its quality.

The council has been looking at affordable ways of introducing wheelie bins in order to reduce the problem of rubbish from split black sacks. We have been working with our neighbouring boroughs of Sutton, Kingston and Croydon to combine our waste collection services in order to save money and provide a better service. The boroughs have agreed to recommend Veolia as the preferred bidder for the new four borough service. The council expects to save on average £2 million every year over the 24 years of the contract, much needed savings at a time when our funding is being reduced by central government.

As part of the new service, residents will receive two wheelie bins, one for general rubbish and one for card and paper recycling. Food waste and recycling will continue to be collected every week, with paper and card one week and tins, bottles and plastics the next. Non-recyclable rubbish will be collected on alternate weeks.

The council is also looking to save money by agreeing a joint contract with Sutton Council for the management of parks and green spaces. The Landscape Group, a specialist horticultural company, has been agreed as the preferred bidder. A final decision on both contracts will be made in December.
COMPETITION

Win a family ticket* to see
Babe, the Sheep-Pig
at Polka Theatre

Meet the little pig with big dreams this winter, in a heart-warming tale of friendship, adventure and bravery.

When Babe arrives at Hogget’s Farm he is taken in by the trusty sheep-dog Fly and discovers a talent for herding. With the help of his adopted mum, our polite piglet soon wins over the most suspicious of sheep. But can a small pig make it in a dog’s world and when his farmyard friends are in trouble can Babe save the day?

Join us for an enchanting family favourite, as the classic children’s novel which inspired the Oscar-winning film comes alive with plenty of laughter, thrills, stunning puppetry and original music.

Babe, the Sheep-Pig comes to Polka Theatre from Friday 25 November 2016 to Saturday 5 February 2017. Visit www.polkatheatre.com to find out more.

For your chance to win one of two family tickets (four tickets each winner), simply answer the following question:

Who wrote the book The Sheep-Pig?

a) Shirley Hughes  b) Enid Blyton  c) Dick King-Smith

In your answer, you must include the following: name, email address, phone number and postal address. You can email your answer to competition@polkatheatre.com. Closing date for entries is Friday 7 October 2016.

Terms and conditions: *The competition is to win one of two family tickets (four tickets each winner) to see Babe, the Sheep-Pig at Polka Theatre, 240 The Broadway, Wimbledon SW19 1SB. Tickets can be redeemed between 25 November 2016 and 5 February 2017. Cannot be exchanged or used in conjunction with any other offer, subject to availability. There are no cash alternatives, accommodation or travel included in this prize. Performance is for children aged between five and 11 years-old. The Polka Theatre’s age policy can be viewed on their website.

A FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS & CULTURE

WIMBLEDON BOOKFEST 2016

29th SEPT - 9th OCT

10 MAGICAL DAYS ON WIMBLEDON COMMON

‘An impressive and varied line-up’ THE GUARDIAN

BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW
WIMBLEDONBOOKFEST.ORG

2016 LINE-UP INCLUDES:

JEREMY PAXMAN
ROSE TREMAIN • ANDY HAMILTON
NICK CLEGG
SIR RANULPH FIENNES
MUSIC: DAVID BOWIE NIGHT

DELICIOUSLY ELLA

MICHAEL MORPURGO
RADIO X’S JOHN KENNEDY • CAROL ANN DUFFY

COMEDY ON THE COMMON WITH MARCUS BRIGSTOCKE

ROB BIDULPH • PETER FRANKOPAN • OLIVER JAMES

KATE ATKINSON • JO MALONE

JENNIFER MURRAY • PADDY ASHDOWN

AFC WIMBLEDON

BRIAN MOORE’S RUGBY NIGHT • LAURA BATES • GIG NIGHT

BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW
WIMBLEDONBOOKFEST.ORG
Have your say on council tax and council spending
Merton Council has frozen your council tax since 2010 and has promised to do so until March 2019. However, council services are coming under increasing financial pressure. The funding we receive from the government to provide local services has been cut significantly, while demand has increased.

This means that on top of the savings we’ve been forced to make so far, we are now facing an additional £20m of cuts over the next few years.

The local NHS also has a number of funding issues and have told us they will not be able to sustain the funding they give us if we do not raise council tax. Although we would still need to make cuts, increasing your council tax by 2% could reduce the estimated £20m of cuts to around £18m, for example.

Up until now, the council has ensured that adult social care and children’s services have received less of a share of the cuts than other areas.

We want to know what you think. Would you be willing to pay extra council tax in 2017/18 and 2018/19? If so, how much extra? Would you prefer any additional council tax to help reduce the cuts to just one council service (adult social care), or all areas?

These are all questions we want answers to from you.

We hope as many residents as possible will fill in and return the survey overleaf by the deadline of November 4. We want to hear what council taxpayers think so that the important decisions we make about your council tax and your services are based on what you want.

You can also fill in the survey online at www.merton.gov.uk/consultation.

Since 2010 the government funding received by councils has reduced by more than 40%. In Merton we have tightened our belts and reduced our spending in all service areas so that we can live within our means. We have also raised charges where we can, and will continue to use our reserves where available to slow down some of the impact of the cuts.

We have frozen council tax since 2010, and promise to do so until March 2019. However by 2020 we will need to make further savings of £20million, each and every year.

Last year the government allowed councils to increase council tax by up to 1.99% without a referendum of local residents, and in addition to increase council tax by up to another 2%, that can only be used to fund social care for adults. Increasing council tax by 2% would raise an additional £1.5million, so it would not remove the need for cuts, but it would mean fewer cuts than the £20million we are facing.

We want to know what you think about the challenge we face and what choices we should be making.
Section 1 Priorities
In July 2011 we agreed a set of principles that we use to guide the decisions we make about our services despite reduced funding. These were
- Continue to provide everything that is statutory.
- Maintain services – within limits – to the vulnerable and elderly.
- Maintain clean streets and keep council tax low.
- Keep Merton as a good place for young people to go to school and grow up.
- Be the best it can for the local environment.
- All the rest should be open for discussion.

Q1 Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with our priorities
- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don’t Know

Q2 Please tell us if you think there are any other priorities we should consider

Q3 We provide a wide range of services that cost us money to provide. From the list below please tell us which areas you think we should protect MOST of all.

Please select up to three areas:
- Care services for older or disabled people including homecare and residential care
- Rubbish collections, street sweeping, litter and fly-tip removal
- Protecting vulnerable children and young people including support for children with disabilities
- Parks and open spaces
- Libraries
- Leisure centres, playgrounds and sports facilities
- Activities for young people
- Repairs and improvements to roads and pavements

Q4 Which services do you think we should protect LEAST of all?

Please select up to three areas:
- Care services for older or disabled people including homecare and residential care
- Rubbish collections, street sweeping, litter and fly-tip removal

Q5 Do you have any suggestions for how we can reduce spending and/or increase income across our services?

Section 2 Council tax

Q6 What do you think would be the best choice for Merton’s overall council tax in 2017/18 and 2018/19?
- Continue to freeze my council tax so I pay Merton the same as last year
- Increase my council tax by 1.99%
- Increase my council tax by 2% to spend on adult social care only
- Increase my council tax by 3.99%

Q7 Please tell us if you have any comments about what should happen with council tax in Merton

Please tell us your postcode (without a valid postcode we will not be able to consider your response).

You do not have to answer the following questions but doing so helps us see how representative the responses to the survey are. What you tell us is strictly confidential and will not be used for any purpose other than analysing this survey.

Are you Male ☐ Female ☐

Please tell us your age __________

How would you describe your ethnicity __________

Do you consider yourself to have a disability Yes ☐ No ☐
To give us your views, complete the questions overleaf and return to us for free - no stamp is required. Fold along the lines, as per the instructions below and put it in the post.

Council Tax and Council Spending Consultation,
Consultation Team,
7th Floor
Civic Centre,
London Road,
Morden,
SM4 5DX.
Now in its 60th year, the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award (DofE) is the UK’s top youth achievement scheme, helping young people from all backgrounds stretch themselves through volunteering, physical challenge and expeditions.

At Merton Council, Carol Curtis has managed the scheme for 18 years, during which time she’s seen hundreds of teenagers complete awards at bronze, silver and gold levels. “It helps young people develop different skills, aside from academic work,” she explains. “They contribute to society by volunteering on a regular basis. Many continue to volunteer after they’ve achieved their award.”

But it’s the expedition element for which the DofE is probably best known. For a lot of young people these trips are their first real experience of self-reliance in the great outdoors. “They have to navigate across country using a map and a compass and really work with their team; assessing risk, making collective decisions and challenging themselves physically.”

Carol works with all the borough’s secondary schools, including special schools, where she gives presentations and offers advice and support to teachers. She approves awards at bronze and silver level, and makes recommendations for gold awards. She runs the Open Awards Centre at the John Innes Youth Centre, south Wimbledon, where young people prepare for expeditions and try new activities including learning to sing, helping people and managing events.

Carol accompanies young people on expeditions and does have one confession: “I love meeting young people, getting out in the countryside, helping them on the campsite but actually sleeping in the tent is a downside for me.”

What Carol loves about the job is seeing young people achieve things they never thought possible. “I always say to them ‘you can do it’. Some go through blisters and aching feet, but when they push themselves and realise they can do something they never thought they could, that’s a light going on for them.”

My Merton talks to Carol Curtis, who has seen hundreds of young people complete awards in her 18 years managing the Duke of Edinburgh Awards for the council.

You can begin your bronze award training at 14, silver at 15 and gold at 16. Financial help towards fees and kit may be available to families on low incomes. To get started ask at your school, visit merton.gov.uk/dofe or drop in at 61 Kingston Road between 7pm and 9pm any Tuesday in term time.
Now open in Wimbledon Library
A new multi-function arts and cultural space that can hold up to 300 people. Upcoming events include theatre, comedy nights, live music, dance and talks.
Your say on crime issues

Tackling domestic violence also figures in the Safer Merton Partnership’s priorities for the next six months, along with house burglaries and anti-social behaviour. These priorities are part of the borough’s annual strategy, developed by the council, police and other agencies that make up the partnership. The priorities are informed by the information you give us in our regular surveys of resident opinion. You can take part in this year’s survey by completing a short online questionnaire at merton.gov.uk/safermertonconsultation

Remember, remember

Halloween and bonfire night are great fun but bring with them a fair few dangers and annoyances. To make sure you have a good time while staying safe:

- Head for an organised display on fireworks night. Merton Council will host shows at Wimbledon Park on Thursday 3 November and at Morden Park on Saturday 5 November.
- Never throw fireworks or put them in your pocket and don’t return to a firework once lit. If you’re under 18, you will be breaking the law if you try to buy fireworks.
- Don’t let your children go trick or treating without an adult and never knock on doors if there’s a No Trick or Treat sign.
- For safety advice visit the London Fire Brigade website www.london-fire.gov.uk
- For firework displays and to book go to merton.gov.uk/fireworks

Neighbourhood watch

As the nights draw in, burglaries generally start to rise, so now is a good time to think about joining a neighbourhood watch scheme. If you’d like to find out more email mertonnhw@met.police.uk and we can tell you if there’s a scheme operating in your area, and if not, give you the help and support you need to set one up.
Parents are advised to apply online at www.merton.gov.uk/admissions.
Closing date for applications is 31 October 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
<th>Open Evening</th>
<th>Open Morning</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harris Academy Merton</td>
<td>Wide Way, Mitcham CR4 1BP</td>
<td>020 8623 1000</td>
<td>21 September, 5–7.30pm</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raynes Park High School</td>
<td>Bushey Road, London SW20 0JL</td>
<td>020 8946 4112</td>
<td>22 September, 5–8pm</td>
<td>3 to 7 October, 9.30am – no appointment necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutlish School</td>
<td>Watery Lane, Merton SW20 9AD</td>
<td>020 8542 1212</td>
<td>20 September, 6–8.30pm</td>
<td>22 and 23 September, 9–10.30am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ursuline High School Wimbledon</td>
<td>Crescent Road, Wimbledon SW20 8HA</td>
<td>020 8255 2688</td>
<td>21 September, 6.30–8.30pm</td>
<td>26–30 September, 9 and 11am by appointment only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris Academy Morden</td>
<td>Lilleshall Road, Morden SM4 6DU</td>
<td>020 8687 1157</td>
<td>27 September, 5.30–8pm,</td>
<td>22 September, 4, 12, 20 October, all 9–10.30am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricards Lodge High School</td>
<td>Lake Road, Wimbledon SW19 7HB</td>
<td>020 8946 2208</td>
<td>20 September, 5.30–8pm</td>
<td>27 and 28 September, 9am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Mark’s Academy</td>
<td>Acacia Road, Mitcham CR4 1SF</td>
<td>020 8648 6627</td>
<td>15 September, 5pm onwards</td>
<td>every Wednesday at 9am from 21 September to 19 October</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wimbledon College</td>
<td>Edge Hill, London SW19 4NS</td>
<td>020 8879 9355</td>
<td>29 September 5.30–8.30pm</td>
<td>3 and 4 October by appointment only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Celebrating 100 shows

A Merton institution and hidden gem, the Colour House Children’s Theatre will perform its 100th show this autumn - a musical retelling of Peter Pan.

In the 21 years that the Colour House Theatre has operated from Merton Abbey Mills in Colliers Wood, more than 150,000 theatregoers have enjoyed its lively productions.

The secret, according to artistic director and founder Peter Wallder, is “the innovative way we approach each show, the vast majority of which are musical adaptations of famous fairy tales. Our goal is to be open to all the family with a real emphasis on entertainment and enjoyment.”

The Colour House is proud of the way it nurtures talent, with many graduate actors making their professional debut here. It also gives opportunities to students from local schools to gain work experience as technicians, backstage and front of house.

Capitalise on Culture

Culture and green spaces

Opportunities for everyone

Prestigious Green Flag awarded to five Merton parks

National environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy has awarded five of Merton’s parks with a Green Flag, the UK-wide award for the best public and community parks and green spaces in the country.

The borough’s award-winning parks this year are Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields, Colliers Wood Recreation Ground, South Park Gardens, John Innes Park and Dundonald Recreation Ground.

The green flag, which will fly above all five parks, recognises the best parks and green spaces across the country and is a sign to the public that the space boasts the highest possible standards, is well maintained and has excellent facilities.

Merton Council cabinet member for community and culture Councillor Nick Draper said: “It’s great news that five of our parks have been recognised by Keep Britain Tidy.

“Congratulations must go to our professional parks teams who work so hard to keep these parks looking great, and to the devotion of friends’ groups who work so conscientiously beside them.

“Our parks and green spaces are hugely popular, especially in the warmer months. We have installed outdoor green gyms and play areas and we’ve also put in solar powered smart bins which let us know when they need emptying. We’ll continue to improve our fantastic parks across the borough.”

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Catch the show each Saturday and Sunday until 6 November: 2pm and 4pm. Peter Pan is presented with permission from Great Ormond Street Hospital Children’s Charity, which owns the rights to the story and will receive a small percentage of ticket sales.

Visit www.colourhousetheatre.co.uk.
MERTON COUNCIL

Musical Fireworks Displays

Wimbledon Park
Thu 3 November
Morden Park
Sat 5 November

Gates open at 5.15pm
Bonfires lit at 6.30pm and 8.15pm
First show starts at
6.45pm
More suitable for young children
Second show starts at
8.30pm

Funfair, stalls and refreshments open until 10.00pm.

Tickets will be available to purchase online from September 2016.

#mertonfireworks
merton.gov.uk/fireworks

Please note: The public are not permitted to bring any fireworks, alcohol or dogs into the parks.
Services of remembrance

Friday 11 November
- Mitcham War Memorial, Lower Green West, 10.50am.
- Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, 10.50am.

Sunday 13 November
- Neilson Health Centre, Kingston Road, Wimbledon, 9am.
Attended by the Mayor of Merton, Councillor Brenda Fraser, civic representatives and the Royal British Legion.
- Wimbledon War Memorial, Wimbledon Village, 10.40am.
Attended by the Deputy Mayor of Merton, Councillor Stan Anderson and civic representatives, 210 Transport Squadron, the Royal Logistic Corps and the Royal British Legion.
- St Lawrence’s Church, London Road, Morden, 10.30am.

Attended by members of the Morden and District Branch of the Royal British Legion and cadets from Morden 43F Air Training Corps.
- Mitcham War Memorial, Lower Green West, Mitcham, 10.40am.
Attended by the Mayor of Merton, Councillor Brenda Fraser, Mayor of Merton, Councillor Brenda Fraser, civic representatives and members of organisations in the borough.

Please note: For the Mitcham service, contingents will march from the Canons Leisure Centre at about 10.30am, onto Madeira Road into Cricket Green, turning right onto London Road and left onto the one-way system for the service in front of the War Memorial at 10.40am. Afterwards, the parade will march back to the Canons Leisure Centre.

Arts and entertainment

Singing course

Tuesday 13 September to Saturday 26 November, 7.30–8.45pm
Cost £110, Raynes Park. Focus on your singing over nine weekly sessions in a fun, dynamic group. Build confidence and experience and learn group and solo vocal skills. Course includes a show night opportunity: perform in a public venue with a live accompanist. Styles include jazz, pop and gospel. As much or as little solo singing as you wish. All levels/ages over 16 years.

katriona@katrionataylor.com or 07773 127 922; www.katrionataylor.com

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

Ghost the Musical

Thursday 1 to Saturday 10 September, 7.30pm, Saturday and Wednesday matinees, 2.30pm
This autumn Bill Kenwright will stage a new production of the timeless story of love, despair and hope: Ghost – The Musical. Taking its inspiration from the classic film, this innovative reimagining will feature new music and original staging.

Walking back to their apartment late one night a tragic encounter sees Sam murdered and his beloved girlfriend Molly alone, in despair and utterly lost. But with the help of a phony storefront psychic, Sam, trapped between this world and the next, tries to communicate with Molly in the hope of saving her from grave danger.

Dirty Dancing

Monday 26 September to Saturday 1 October, 7.30pm, Friday 30 September, 5.30 and 8.30pm
Have the time of your life with the ultimate live experience: Dirty Dancing – The Classic Story on Stage. Full of passion and romance, heart-pounding music and sensationally sexy dancing, the record-breaking musical is even better than before in this all new production.

Dirty Dancing features all of the hit songs from the 1980s, including ‘Hey! Baby’, ‘Hungry Eyes’, ‘Love Me?’ and the heart stopping ‘(I’ve Had) The Time of My Life’.

Dirty Dancing

THE CLASSIC STORY ON STAGE
REMINDED IN ALL ITS 80’S GLORY

KEEP DANCING

With dazzling costumes, breath-taking choreography, Dirty Dancing is guaranteed to have you dancing in to the night and having a FAB-U-LOUS time.

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KEEP DANCING

With dazzling costumes, breath-taking choreography, Dirty Dancing is guaranteed to have you dancing in to the night and having a FAB-U-LOUS time.
staying in? Here’s a selection of what’s new in Merton’s libraries:

**MY MERTON’S BOOK CHOICE**

**Pushing Up Daisies** by M.C. Beaton

M.C. Beaton’s 27th book featuring sleuth Agatha Raisin. Lord Bellingham has enraged locals by saying he is going to sell off their allotments to make way for a new housing development. So when he turns up dead nobody mourns his passing. On another fine summer’s day Agatha visits the allotments where everything looks peaceful. But as Harry starts to shovel through the weeds and grass, his spade comes across the body of Peta Currie, a newcomer to the village – but who would want to murder her?

Other books:
- *Snowflakes in the Wind* – Rita Bradshaw
- *A Voice in the Night* – Andrea Camilleri
- *Pirate* – Clive Cussler
- *Triple Crown* – Felix Frances
- *Lessons I’ve Learned* – Davina McCall

**NEW DVDS: MY MERTON RECOMMENDS**

**Captain America: Civil War**

Chris Evans, Robert Downey Jr and Scarlett Johansson star in this action adventure sequel based on the Marvel Comics series. In this instalment, set after *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015), an incident resulting in a law to regulate the activity of the Avengers causes a divide between the group of superheroes. The Avengers become split into two opposing factions, headed by Captain America (Evans) and Iron Man (Downey Jr), while a new villain threatens the safety of the world. Will the superheroes be able to defeat their common enemy and repair the schism?

Other DVDs:
- *A hologram for the king*
- *Love & Friendship*
- *Our kind of traitor*

Merton Libraries also have more than 300 eMagazines available that can be downloaded to be read via your computer, tablet or mobile device.

**Arts and entertainment continued**

- **Rachmaninoff ‘Vespers’**
  Thursday 22 September, 8pm
  Sacred Heart Church, Edge Hill, Wimbledon SW19 4LU. A concert by Sonoro, a new professional choir conducted by Neil Ferris. Tickets: £10 to £26. [find out more](www.sonoromusic.com)

- **Morden Park Choral Society presents in Praise of Laughter**
  Saturday 22 October, 7.30pm
  St John the Divine Church, High Path, Wimbledon. Tickets £5 or £4 including glass of wine or soft drink. [find out more](020 8648 6445 for tickets)

- **Making the local papers: Papermaking and Sculptural Bookbinding**
  Friday 16 to Sunday 18 September, 10am–4pm
  The Long Shop, Watermill Way, Colliers Wood. A three day workshop with artist Jane Ponsford. Make paper from locally sourced cotton textiles (from charity shops or supplied by participants) to create sculptural books. Cost: Adults £185, students £145. [find out more](facebook.com/objectbook)

- **Love Wimbledon’s Autumn Arts and Crafts Market**
  Saturday 17 to Sunday 18 September, 11am–6pm
  The Piazza, Wimbledon. Free. Alongside the market, there will be workshops and activities to promote art, live music to entertain, and deckchairs if the weather allows. A selection of local artists will be displaying and selling their work, featuring lovely lifestyle products and gorgeous accessories for your home including pictures, vases and a variety of crafts. There will also be lots of activities on offer. [find out more](lovewimbledon.org)
Brain Waves, Polka’s first Festival of Childhood, will bring together theatre-makers, artists and world-leading childhood neuroscientists to present an extraordinary programme of events about how children and young people’s brains work.

Wednesday 21 September to Sunday 16 October
● Shake, Rattle and Roll
As your baby looks and learns, have you ever wondered what they’re thinking? Exploring how babies interact with and respond to their surroundings, scientists from Birkbeck University’s world-renowned Baby Lab have teamed up with acclaimed children’s theatre director Sarah Argent to create a fun, lively show inspired by their latest research. Ages 6–18 months.

Saturday 1 October, 7pm for adults
● Animating the Brain
Theatre-Rites’ puppeteers become scientists for the day, watch as they set out to develop a brain from scratch, and see what happens when they receive a rather unexpected and top-secret package from the Department of Artificial Body Constructs. Ages 8+. Free, but advance booking recommended.

Saturday 8 October, 2.30pm
● Comedy Club 4 Kids
Comedy Club 4 Kids get the best stand-ups and sketch acts from the comedy circuit. It’s just like a normal comedy club (without the rude bits), but it’s on during the day, and as everyone knows, kids are much better at heckling than adults. Ages 6+.

Thursday 13 to Sunday 30 October
● New International Encounter Around the World in 80 Days
Four continents, five trains, six ships and just 80 days to get back home! Join Phileas Fogg in his audacious plan.

Tickets £12–13.50, concessions and previews £9–10. See website for details. £1.50 transaction charge per booking.

With a pocket watch, a bag full of money and a wager to win, Fogg embarks on the most celebrated literary journey of all time. Ages 6–11.

Wednesday 26 October to Sunday 26 February 2017
● How to Hide a Lion
When a lion is chased out of town, a young girl helps him find somewhere to hide. It’s not easy – lions are big, fluffy and heavy! Join Iris on a mission to squeeze and squash her furry new friend into a variety of sneaky spots, as Helen Stephens’ magical book comes to life with playful humour, dazzling puppetry and original songs. Ages 3–6 (plus special toddler performances for ages 1–2).

Tickets £12–13.50, concessions and previews £9–10. See website for details. £1.50 transaction charge per booking.

● Morden Park Pretty Muddy 5K
Sunday 18 September, various times
Morden Park, London Road, Morden, SM4 5QU. Women only. Entry for women aged 16 plus costs £19.99. Girls aged 13 to 15 cost £10. Race for Life Pretty Muddy is Cancer Research UK’s 5k muddy obstacle course where you can show cancer that hell hath no fury like a woman in pink. You must be over 13 years old to take part. Bring a change of clothes and a towel to wipe off the worst of the mud; remember there are no showers or lockers, but there will be a bag drop area.

● Free trial ballet lessons
Various times
Christ Church Hall, 58 Christchurch Road, Colliers Wood. Free. Classical Ballet is set to capture the children of Colliers Wood and ignite the magic and sparkle of ballerina fever in SW19 and beyond. Children can explore the delights of classical ballet every Saturday morning with Motion Arts Dance Academy. Free trial classes throughout the year for dancers aged 2.5 years plus.

● Harvest Supper and Race Night
St Saviour Church Hall, Grand Drive, Raynes Park
Saturday 1 October, 6.30–9.30pm
Adults: £7, children £5. Bring your own drinks and glasses. A family fun event of home-cooked supper with races for all.

Merton – proud to be a Fairtrade borough • Merton – proud to be a Fairtrade borough • Merton – proud to be a Fairtrade borough

© Nolte Lourens | Dreamstime.com
Wimbledon Guild
A murder mystery, concert trip to the Royal Albert Hall and a new yoga class are among the highlights of Wimbledon Guild’s autumn events programme.

- **Camden Jewish Museum trip**
  Wednesday 14 September, 10.15am–4pm
  Join Wimbledon Guild for a trip to the Jewish Museum, Camden, and discover the vibrancy of Jewish culture and history in Britain. Depart from Wimbledon Guild, Worple Road. £15 including transport, entrance, tour and talk. Booking required.

- **Living with Prostate Cancer event**
  Thursday 22 September, 1.30–4pm
  Drake House, 44 St Georges Road, Wimbledon. Places are limited. Wimbledon Guild is hosting a free health and wellbeing event for men diagnosed with prostate cancer and their families.

- **Murder Mystery in the Museum of Eccentricities**
  Friday 4 November, 2–4pm
  Drake House Hall, 44 St Georges Road, Wimbledon. £10 including tea and sweet treats. Places are limited.

  **find out more**
  www.wimbledon.guild.co.uk. To book tickets, email info@wimbledon.guild.co.uk or call 020 8946 0735.

Wimbledon Community Chorus
Wimbledon Community Chorus are pleased to announce they are moving into Merton Council’s new arts venue, The Merton Arts Space in Wimbledon Library from 13 September. New members are always welcome. Our repertoire for the new season will include everything from very well-known classic pieces to West End theatre songs.

  **find out more**
  Andy Stonebridge
  07802 183 967

Mayor of Merton Christmas dinner
Join the Mayor of Merton, Councillor Brenda Fraser, for a charity Christmas dinner to be held on Tuesday 29 November 7pm for dinner at 7.30pm. There will be a three course festive menu including a pre-dinner drink. Tickets cost £30, with proceeds going to the Mayor’s charities. To be held at the Taste Restaurant, South Thames College, Morden.

**To book tickets contact the Mayor’s Office**
mayor@merton.gov.uk or 020 8545 3517

Abundance Wimbledon Fruit Day
Saturday 17 September, 11am–2pm
Help pick fruit and make jam with Abundance Wimbledon, who organise fruit picking groups in your local area. This Fruit Day event is at St Mark’s Church hall and garden behind Wimbledon Library. Juices and fruit will be on sale and there will be a range of activities on offer. They are looking to set up fruit picking groups in Merton Park, Dunondon, South Park Gardens and Colliers Wood.

  **find out more**
  abundancewimbledon@gmail.com
  www.abundancewimbledon.com

Merton Arts Festival
Over two consecutive weekends: Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 September and Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 September
Locations across Merton.
Free. There will be a number of events held across the borough for the event formerly known as the Merton Arts Trail, including artists’ open houses and studios and ‘Lost and Found’ themed group exhibitions. Attractions include a special arts celebration at Merton Abbey Mills on Friday 16 September.

  **find out more**
  www.mertonartsfestival.org

Wimbledon Guild
A murder mystery, concert trip to the Royal Albert Hall and a new yoga class are among the highlights of Wimbledon Guild’s autumn events programme.

- **Camden Jewish Museum trip**
  Wednesday 14 September, 10.15am–4pm
  Join Wimbledon Guild for a trip to the Jewish Museum, Camden, and discover the vibrancy of Jewish culture and history in Britain. Depart from Wimbledon Guild, Worple Road. £15 including transport, entrance, tour and talk. Booking required.

- **Living with Prostate Cancer event**
  Thursday 22 September, 1.30–4pm
  Drake House, 44 St Georges Road, Wimbledon. Places are limited. Wimbledon Guild is hosting a free health and wellbeing event for men diagnosed with prostate cancer and their families.

- **Murder Mystery in the Museum of Eccentricities**
  Friday 4 November, 2–4pm
  Drake House Hall, 44 St Georges Road, Wimbledon. £10 including tea and sweet treats. Places are limited.

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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 on by the relevant organisations.

- **Wimbledon**
  Wednesday 21 September, 7.15pm
  The Mansel Road Centre, Trinity United Reformed Church, Mansel Road, Wimbledon, SW19 4AA.

- **Raynes Park**
  Thursday 29 September, 7.15pm
  Raynes Park Library Hall, Approach Road, Raynes Park, SW20 8BA.

- **Mitcham**
  Wednesday 5 October, 7.15pm
  Age UK, 277 London Road, Mitcham, CR4 3NT.

- **Morden**
  Thursday 6 October, 7.15pm
  The Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Morden, SM4 5DX.

- **Colliers Wood and north east Mitcham**
  Wednesday 19 October, 7.15pm
  Merton Vision’s Guardian Centre, 67 Clarendon Road, Colliers Wood, SW19 2DX.

Library Workshops

- **Singalong**
  Thursday 15 September, 4-5pm
  Colliers Wood Library. Teatime singalong with a guitar, tambourines and a ukulele available to play. Bring your favourite song along. All ages welcome.

- **Knit and Natter**
  Monday 19 September, 11am–12.30pm
  Pollards Hill Library. Knitting for all levels and abilities. Please bring your own materials. Refreshments will be provided.

- **CV Surgery and Careers Advice**
  Thursday 22 September, 10am–3pm
  Mitcham Library. Do you need to create or tidy up your CV? Do you want help and advice on a potential career? Book an appointment with our National Careers Service advisor Tracey by calling 0800 100 900.

- **Falun Dafa**
  Tuesday 27 September, 5.15–6.45pm
  Morden Library. Falun Dafa is a traditional Chinese meditative practice that improves mind, body and health. It is a non-strenuous, gentle exercise which increases vitality and brings inner peace. No booking required.
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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Darren Tulley

Darren Tulley is Merton’s Borough Commander for the London Fire Brigade. He has been in the fire service for 21 years and worked for Surrey Fire and Rescue Service before moving to the London Fire Brigade. He joined Merton in May 2016.

Why did you decide to become a firefighter?
I wanted to help people and I wanted to give back to society. I like being part of the solution and this sounded like a fun job.

How do you see the future of the fire service?
The role of the fire service is changing. I have been here for 21 years and it has changed a lot already. We are taking on more, we are doing more fire prevention work and community engagement.

What is the best part of your job?
I like the variety of the job and never knowing what you are going to be doing. The ability to influence the way in which we work and be responsible for it.

What is the most challenging?
I work an unusual shift pattern including nights and weekends and can sometimes work very long hours especially during large incidents. There’s an immense level of responsibility and pressure particularly when in charge of larger operational incidents which can vary hugely in type and complexity.

A new fire cadets scheme is launching this month in partnership with Merton Council. Why will the scheme be beneficial?
It is really important for us as a borough to be able to give something back, with Merton Council, to the young people of Merton.

It is a unique opportunity for them to get an insight into the fire service and to gain a nationally recognised qualification.

find out more
www.london-fire.gov.uk