School's back
Love your library
Find out how you can volunteer in your local community

Update on housing regeneration plans
Every year we ask 1000 local residents about what issues most concern them.

We did:

We understand that how our streets and town centres look is important to residents. We want to work with our residents to make Merton a cleaner and greener place but we will not shy away from taking action against the small minority who spoil it for everyone else. The steps we have taken include:

- Joining with the local community for Big Merton Spring Clean Day in April 2014
- Issuing over 2,000 fixed penalty notices since the end of April 2014 to those who drop litter
- Introduced 25 new solar powered smart bins in our parks
- Installing nearly 200 of the special gum and cigarette bins
- Introducing a smartphone app – Love Clean Streets – to make it easier to report litter and fly-tipping
- Making over 10,000 bulky waste collections, free of charge, since 2011
- Introducing Mega Recycle prizes to encourage residents to recycle more of their waste

What you can do to help:

- Always dispose of your litter responsibly
- If a public bin is full, please take your litter home with you
- When you see litter or fly-tipping report it to us (see page 13)
- Use the food caddies we provide to recycle food waste rather than putting it in rubbish bags that attract foxes
- Become one of our Street Champions – see page 11 for details

We're delighted that satisfaction with our refuse collection is up to 72% and that we have reduced litter on the streets by half since 2010. However residents remain concerned about people dropping litter on the street, with 30% mentioning it as a top concern.

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

I remember I didn’t always look forward to going back to school after the long summer holidays when I was a child. After weeks playing outside, I didn’t fancy returning to grotty old classrooms! So I’m delighted that, due to the council’s long term investment in our schools, many of our children have started their new terms in newly built classrooms, school halls and play spaces.

It’s taken a lot of planning and hard work but over the last few years the council has created 2,000 extra places in good and excellent local primary schools. And we are on track to build another 2,000 over the coming years. With so many areas of London struggling to find school places for local children this is an achievement we can all be proud of.

We’ve been able to do this due to our good financial management. As a businessman myself, I’ve worked to make the council more efficient so that we can invest in our young people’s future.

Our next challenge is ensuring there are enough places at our good and excellent secondary schools. This isn’t a problem yet as there are enough places now, but the growing birth rate means it’s something we need to plan for. We will again focus on expanding good and excellent schools, although it also looks like we may need a new secondary school in the Wimbledon area.

We’ll keep you up to date on plans as they develop.

But it’s not just about hard work and studying for our children. We want them to have fun too, fit and healthy in body as well as mind. So this issue of My Merton includes an update on our plans to rebuild Morden Pool as a family friendly leisure centre that generations of young people can enjoy. It’s great that residents have backed our vision for the new centre and now we will get down to the business of designing and building it.

So, even if summer is over, Merton continues to be a great place for young people to grow up. Let’s keep it that way.

PS: We’re still fighting hard to ensure St Helier hospital A&E and maternity remains open and we’ll have a further update for you in the next edition.

PPS: We clear over 100 tonnes of fallen leaves each autumn. We clean every street on a schedule and will get to all areas in the coming weeks, but if you notice a build up, call 020 8274 4902 and we’ll get it cleared.

Follow the Leader’s blog at merton.gov.uk/leadersblog
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When you see this logo that means there’s a volunteering opportunity to get involved in

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Don’t forget to visit our website!
merton.gov.uk/mymerton
You can also follow us on:

Facebook
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YouTube
www.youtube.com/mertoncouncil

Volunteering
Lend a helping hand in your community

Back to school – making Merton schools better

My Merton costs only 12p a copy to produce

When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

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Benefits advice: 020 8545 4178
Libraries: 020 8545 3783
Parking: 020 8545 4661
Registering to vote: 020 8545 3407
Waste collection services: 020 8274 4902

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www.youtube.com/mertoncouncil
First ever bowls competition for Merton schools

Merton’s school children battled it out to become bowls champion in the borough’s first inter-schools tournament. Children from four Merton primary schools went head-to-head with guidance from experienced bowls coaches, with Wimbledon Park Primary coming first.

A month of preparation and training from coaches at Mitcham, Merton Park and Wimbledon Park bowls clubs set the players up well, and they enjoyed the final of the tournament over the summer.

The tournament was held at Merton Park Bowls Club, with children from Cranmer, Joseph Hood, Poplar and Wimbledon Park primary schools taking part.

Local Democracy Week

Merton schools will get a taste of local politics during Local Democracy Week this October. Pupils will be given tours of the Civic Centre and sit in the council chamber to see where local decisions are made. They will also visit the Mayor of Merton, Councillor Agatha Akyigina in her parlour. Local MPs will give some lucky kids a tour of the Houses of Parliament.

Councillors will visit Merton Children’s Council annual general meeting to give a talk on local democracy in Merton and will take part in a question and answer session afterwards.

London Youth Games

Well done to everyone who took part in this year’s London Youth Games. Merton had a great year, with new teams in archery, weightlifting and girls’ hockey. There were a number of medals, with a total of seven golds for events including sailing, angling, diving and athletics, two silvers for kayaking and mini swimming and a bronze for BMX.

If you are interested in competing next year, please visit merton.gov.uk/youthgames
First Mega Recycle winner

Beatriz Garcia-Martinez from Wimbledon (pictured right) is the first winner of Merton Mega Recycle’s top prize of £250. To join the 3,000 people who are already involved, all you need to do is sign up on the Merton Mega Recycle website and get recycling. You will also have an opportunity to nominate a primary school for a cash prize. Everyone who enters will go into a monthly draw. Eleven households are randomly selected each month: one winning £250 and the other ten will win £100. Residents living in estates are also in with a chance of winning up to £10,000 for their whole estate and the same goes for those living in blocks of flats, who can win up to £3,000 to spend on things to benefit their block. [find out more](merton.gov.uk/megarecycle)

Merton Remembers WW1

Thanks to everyone who came to commemorate 100 years since Britain joined the First World War at a special event in Morden Park this summer.

The event was attended by over 100 residents, Mayor of Merton, Councillor Agatha Akyigyina and local councillors. Professional narrators brought to life the mood of Britain during 1914 as the country went to war with music provided by the critically acclaimed Regent Brass and community choirs. Merton Council also turned all the lights off at the Civic Centre from 10-11pm on August 4 as a mark of respect. [find out more](merton.gov.uk/mertonremembers)

Merton shortlisted for flagship food borough

Merton Council made it to the final three outer London boroughs in the GLA’s Flagship Food programme which encourages councils to help residents eat healthily. One of these projects involves Merton primary schools. By having their own kitchens they are able to serve freshly prepared, healthy food every day. This helps tackle obesity and other health related conditions caused by a poor diet. The shortlisting highlights the work being done to improve healthy eating in schools. To find out more read pages 16 and 17.

West Barnes Library consultation

Merton Council is progressing plans to redevelop and improve West Barnes Library following initial positive feedback from local residents. The council is carrying out further consultation with the local community on what facilities they would like to see in a new improved West Barnes library on the same site as the existing library. The consultation will take place from 12 September to 24 October 2014. Residents can give their feedback on the council website or by filling out a questionnaire available at West Barnes Library.

Carried out over the last three years, the initial consultation formed part of the council’s broader Sites & Policies Development Plan and a number of positive comments were received from local residents in support of a new improved library including a community hall, public toilets and a larger library floor. [find out more](merton.gov.uk/consultation)
Nominate your community champion

Residents have until 23 September to put forward their nominations for the Merton Community Champion awards. The awards recognise members of the community who work for or with public organisations that go the extra mile to make Merton a better place. This could include a member of the police, fire brigade, NHS or a volunteer who supports the council in their spare time.

www.merton.gov.uk/communitychampion

Save on energy bills

The Big London Energy Switch offers an easy way of switching energy company by grouping together with other consumers wanting to switch to increase their collective bargaining power. Purchasing energy collectively can mean getting a better price than going it alone. This year, the average realised savings made by residents is £250 per year thanks to the Big London Energy Switch. The next auction is taking place on 14 October. To register, go to www.biglondonenergyswitch.org.uk or call Merton Council on 020 8274 4901.

Book in at Bookfest

An exciting line-up is planned for the eighth Wimbledon Bookfest this year, 3–12 October. Headliners include TV presenter Clare Balding, actress Juliet Stevenson and comedian Paul Merton. There will be 10 days of live music, talks and film screenings as well as art and writing workshops available for children.

www.wimbledonbookfest.org

Merton provides free ‘on road’ cycle training for children age 10+ at Merton schools during school term, and Easter and summer holidays. Further details and application form available on: merton.gov.uk/roadsafety

Adult Cycle Training

Free adult cycle training for beginners, refreshers and commuters from March to November on Saturday mornings in Morden. We can even provide a cycle for you to use if you haven’t got your own.

Further details and application form available on: merton.gov.uk/roadsafety

Bikesafe / Scootersafe

A FREE training day with police class 1 motorcycle cycle riders. For experienced full motorcycle / motor scooter licence holders only.

Application forms and further details available on: merton.gov.uk/roadsafety

MERTON COUNCIL

Basic Cycle Maintenance Training for Adults

Half day basic level sessions held once a month at local venues.

For more information please contact: road.safety@merton.gov.uk

Please type Cycle Maintenance in the subject heading.

Pre-learner driving skills course

For 17-24 year olds with a provisional car driving license. Free 3 hour theory session followed by 3 free driving lessons.

Application form available on: www.merton.gov.uk/roadsafety

Be A Brighter Biker

Thinking of getting a moped or scooter? FREE classroom session and CBT.

Further details and application form available on: merton.gov.uk/roadsafety

Children’s Cycle Training

Merton provides free ‘on road’ cycle training for children age 10+ at Merton schools during school term, and Easter and summer holidays. Further details and application form available on: merton.gov.uk/roadsafety

All events and training are funded in conjunction with Transport for London and are available to those who live, work or study in the London Borough of Merton.

Alternatively, please contact us for more information:

Contact: Future Merton, London Borough of Merton, 12th Floor, Civic Centre, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX

Telephone: 020 8545 3205 / 06

Email: road.safety@merton.gov.uk

Web: merton.gov.uk/roadsafety

www.merton.gov.uk/roadsafety
Merton Council’s Acacia Children’s Centre has been rated ‘outstanding’ following an Ofsted inspection earlier this summer.

The centre in Mitcham was praised by Ofsted for working closely with both adults and children. In particular, preparing children for nursery was highlighted as a success. The centre’s work with adults on language and parenting skills was also highly commended.

To watch the video, visit Youtube and type ‘Disability & Me’ into the search engine.

Congratulations to Merton’s library users who completed this year’s Six Book Challenge. The scheme challenges over 16s to read six books over the summer, helping to improve literacy. A special ceremony was held at Mitcham Library where participants were awarded certificates. Out of the 109 participants in the challenge this year, some had never used the library service before, so it was great to see people new to the library getting involved.

Five Merton parks have retained their Green Flag status, the national award for the best public and community parks and green spaces. Colliers Wood Rec, Dundonald Rec, John Innes Park, Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields and South Park Gardens have all been awarded the Green Flag. The award, handed out by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, recognises and rewards the best parks and green spaces across the country. A Green Flag flying overhead is a sign to the public that the space boasts the highest possible standards, is beautifully maintained and has excellent facilities.

To watch the video, visit Youtube and type ‘Disability & Me’ into the search engine.

Residents have say on Morden Park Pool plans

Results from a consultation on Morden Park Pool have shown residents support a new family leisure centre to replace the existing facility which is showing its age.

To ensure the project is cost effective, the consultation used a model developed by Sport England, which includes a sports hall, a six-lane swimming pool and a health and fitness centre, with a gym and studios.

When asked what extra facilities people wanted within the £10m budget, top of the list was a moveable pool floor for diving. More swimming pool space for leisure swimmers, a sports hall, climbing wall and a café were some of the other things people would like to see.

To view the results visit www.leisureformorden.com

Young people from Merton teamed up to make a short film illustrating what it is like to have a disability in an effort to dispel myths and deter bullying. The group, Your Shout, worked with youth charity Fixers, to make the video which was premiered at the Polka Theatre, Wimbledon and was attended by Mayor of Merton, Councillor Agatha Akyigyina. Some of the issues touched on in the film include learning disabilities, sensory impairments, autism and mental health.

Ofsted rates Acacia Centre ‘outstanding’

Ofsted rates Acacia Centre ‘outstanding’

Mum and toddler groups at the Acacia Centre

Find out more
merton.gov.uk/acaciacentre

Polka Theatre premiers disability film

Find out more
merton.gov.uk/parks

Six Book Challenge awards

Find out more
merton.gov.uk/libraries

 Residents have say on Morden Park Pool plans

Find out more
merton.gov.uk/libraries

Find out more
merton.gov.uk/parks

Find out more
merton.gov.uk/acaciacentre
Make sure you’re registered to vote

The way people register to vote has changed this year with the launch of a new national system.
- Under the old system the ‘head of every household’ could register everyone who lived at their address. But now each adult is responsible for registering themselves.
- Everyone over 18 years old can now register online.
- Individuals have to provide their National Insurance number and date of birth. This is to make the electoral register more secure.
- Residents who have been registered at their current address since 10 June 2014, and have not moved will be registered to vote under the new system.
- To be able to exercise the democratic right to vote residents need to sign up to the electoral register. Look out for confirmation from the Merton electoral services office to say if you are registered.

**find out more**
www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

Review of polling places and districts
Merton Council is carrying out a review of polling places and districts to make sure that the places residents vote are as convenient as possible. Residents have submitted their views which will be taken into consideration. The outcome of this consultation will be discussed at a full council meeting on Wednesday 19 November.
Regeneration plans for Merton

Council agrees 10 commitments with Circle Housing Merton Priory

With the owner of three local housing estates consulting on plans to build new high quality homes, outside spaces and community facilities, the council has committed to working with residents to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are met throughout the consultation process. My Merton has the latest on these efforts to keep residents at the heart of the proposals.

The council is working on behalf of residents living on Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury to keep them informed about the future of their neighbourhoods. While this is an opportunity to replace older, poor quality housing with energy efficient homes built to modern specifications, many residents understandably have questions and concerns. The council has been working with Circle Housing Merton Priory and has got them to agree to jointly sign up to a list of 10 commitments to ensure residents get the best out of the proposals.

The commitments to residents (listed on the right), were formally agreed in the summer, and address many of the issues faced by homeowners and Circle Housing Merton Priory tenants. Most significantly CHMP will not make a profit from the development, and if there is a surplus it will go to providing more housing or improving existing neighbourhoods.

In the long-term, the proposed new homes would provide quality housing in attractive landscaped surroundings.

Modern building materials would mean more energy efficient homes over the colder months and better insulation.

But during any major regeneration scheme like this, there would inevitably be disruption. Under the terms of the commitments, CHMP has promised to keep any disruption to a minimum and has promised to provide extra help to older people and those with disabilities. No final decisions on whether the estates will be regenerated have been made yet, as any proposals must be in the interests of the residents who are living in these areas.

CHMP has also promised that existing tenants will keep all their rights and have the same tenancy agreement (including rent levels) in the new neighbourhood as they do now.

1. Circle Housing Merton Priory will consult with residents, consider their interests at all times, and address concerns fairly
2. Current homeowners will be entitled to at least the market value of their home should they wish to take the option to sell their home to Circle Housing Merton Priory
3. Current tenants will be entitled to be rehoused in a new home of appropriate size taking account of the number of people in the household
4. Existing Circle Housing Merton Priory tenants will keep all their rights and have the same tenancy agreement (including rent levels) in the new neighbourhood as they do now
5. All new properties will be more energy efficient and easier to heat than existing properties, helping to keep down residents’ fuel bills
6. Circle Housing Merton Priory will keep disruption to a minimum, and will do all it can to ensure residents only move once if it is necessary to house them temporarily while their new home is being built
7. Circle Housing Merton Priory will offer extra help and support for older people and/or disabled residents throughout the regeneration works
8. Circle Housing Merton Priory will continue to maintain the homes of residents across the three neighbourhoods throughout the planning process until regeneration starts, including ensuring a high quality responsive repairs service
9. Any growth in the number of homes will be in accordance with the council’s Development Plan so that it is considered, responsible and suitable for the area
10. As a not for profit organisation, Circle Housing Merton Priory will not profit from any regeneration and will use any surplus to provide more housing or improve existing neighbourhoods

For details of the regeneration plans and the timescale for consultation visit mertonregen.org.uk or call 020 3441 8518

[Image: Council agrees 10 commitments with Circle Housing Merton Priory]
Give your time, gain much more

If you’re looking for a new challenge this autumn, how about volunteering? There are so many different ways to give back to your community and the rewards can be immense. Plus, the amount of time you devote to volunteering can range from a couple of hours a month to a full time job.

As a volunteer you’ll meet people and gain skills that could improve your employment prospects or give you a whole new interest – whether you’re entering the job market for the first time, a retired person looking for a change of direction or you just want to learn something new.

We’ve pulled together a few ideas to get you thinking…

Dig Merton

Whether you’re a green-fingered expert or just fancy having a go, a new community gardening project needs your help.

While we’re not all lucky enough to have a garden or allotment, the Dig Merton project means anyone can help to grow delicious fruit and veg on unused plots of land. The scheme was launched this spring by a range of partners including the council and environmental champions, Sustainable Merton.

The health benefits of community gardening are well recognised – it’s a great workout with the feel-good factor of growing things and spending time with your neighbours. And you’ll have a ready supply of fresh vegetables. Volunteers can join an existing project or suggest an area of land to bring to life with a planting scheme.

Health Champions

Losing weight, stopping smoking or being more physically active can be tough on your own. Sometimes making a vital lifestyle shift is easier if you’ve got someone to motivate and encourage you along the way.

The Health Champions scheme launched in the spring with this in mind. It puts local people in touch with volunteers who help them take manageable steps that can make a big difference. To take part you need to be over 18 and able to give a few hours a week to the programme. All volunteers receive training from the Royal Society of Public Health.

Local residents at a Dig Merton event

The first group of trained Health Champions receiving their certificates
If you’re interested in keeping your area cleaner and safer then think about becoming a street champion. Street Champions are ordinary residents who act as the eyes and ears of the council, reporting problems such as litter, fly-tipping, broken street lights and abandoned cars, when they happen. They also organise clean-ups and make streets brighter with small planting schemes.

If you’d like to help further you can also become a Dementia Champion. You’ll receive training to help you understand the condition and recruit more Dementia Friends. Douglas Russell from the council’s adult social care team is one. “Dementia will become an everyday issue in the future and this scheme is a positive way of putting it on the map,” he explained. “I want to help eradicate the stigma associated with dementia, which I hope will in turn enable our community to learn to live with people with dementia – as they are people just like us!’

You might have heard about the Dementia Friends scheme from the Alzheimer’s Society. It’s a national campaign which asks people from all walks of life to agree to make life easier for people with dementia – by being patient or helping someone who seems confused, in shops or on public transport, for example.

More opportunities

This summer Volunteer Centre Merton merged with Merton Voluntary Service Council to create one single organisation dedicated to helping groups and volunteers.

The new Merton Voluntary Service Council is the place to go for advice and details of hundreds of local volunteering opportunities. It’s also there to help local groups develop and thrive.
Let’s make **Merton cleaner and greener**

You’ve told us that cleaner streets and household recycling are priorities for you and in response we’ve found innovative ways to continue improving these services without a hefty bill for council taxpayers. Read on for the latest developments.

When Merton Mega Recycle launched six months ago, the aim was to increase the recycling rate bringing benefits for the environment and reducing landfill costs. So far 5,600 households have joined the scheme, which offers cash rewards for recycling to residents and schools and funds environmental improvements on housing estates. Since the scheme launched in April we’ve delighted lucky winners with 11 cash prizes a month. We’ve knocked on every door in the borough and spoken to 27,000 people to learn about your recycling needs. We’ve handed out thousands of recycling and food waste bins.

If you haven’t already joined the scheme, you can still do so on the Mega Recycle website. All you need to do is pledge to recycle your household waste and you’ll be entered in the monthly draw where you could win up to £250. You can also nominate your local primary school for a prize of £5,000 – competition is hotting up as the winners will be announced in November.

The roll out of food waste collections across the borough in 2010 was a major step in boosting recycling in Merton with 80,000 households using the scheme. Now it’s being extended to primary schools with 26 signed up so far. The schools are provided with food waste bins and caddies to store fruit peelings and leftovers which are collected weekly and composted. We’ll be offering all schools an assembly and other educational visits to explain the importance of keeping food waste out of landfill where it decomposes producing the greenhouse gas methane.

If you have a garden you could be putting your uncooked fruit and veg peelings to good use by making your own compost. Nutrient-rich compost improves your soil’s structure and keeps its PH levels balanced, so your plants will love it. Merton residents can buy compost bins online at a specially reduced price of £6.98 (plus £5.49 delivery). The council offers a popular garden waste service for £65 a year but home composting is free!
Each year we spend more than £5 million sweeping your streets and clearing up graffiti and flytipping. We also want to keep council tax low which means we’re constantly looking at more efficient ways of working.

One recent success has been our big belly smart bins, located in parks and on streets where there is a high volume of litter. The solar powered bins crush up the waste that would quickly fill a conventional bin – such as drinks cans and pizza cartons, so they need to be emptied less often. What’s particularly smart about them is that they let the council’s litter team know when they’re filling up, helping staff work more efficiently. A pilot scheme which saw six bins installed in our parks was so successful that we added 25 more bins to green spaces including Wimbledon Park, Dundonald Rec, and Figges Marsh during the summer.

Free bulky waste collection

Residents can book a free collection of up to five household items they want to throw away, once every three months. If you have any large electrical appliances, televisions, computer monitors, or furniture you need to get rid of, visit merton.gov.uk/bulky or ring 020 8274 4902.

While most people are responsible with their litter and waste, this isn’t the case with everyone, so this summer the council got tough and started issuing on the spot fines to people dropping litter including chewing gum and cigarette butts. The council joined forces with specialist environmental crime enforcers for a six month trial focussing on Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden town centres. So far, over 2,000 fixed penalty notices have been handed out.
If you find today’s busy roads a challenge, our **FREE** session* can return you to confident driving.

Designed for drivers over 55 years of age.

*A half day course with presentations on road hazards and driving problems including a practical assessment with a driving instructor to advise on your driving skills.

To find out more, and book online visit the website, or call 020 8545 3206

merton.gov.uk/drive4life

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**COMPETITION**

Win a family ticket to see

**Brian Conley in Barnum**

British theatre producer Sir Cameron Mackintosh and Michael Harrison are bringing their national tour of hit musical Barnum starring Brian Conley, to the New Wimbledon Theatre from Tuesday 14–Saturday 18 October. This exhilarating musical follows the imagination and dreams of Phineas T Barnum, America's greatest showman, who lit up the world with warmth and the excitement of his imagination. Filled with Cy Coleman hits including *Come Follow The Band* and *The Colours Of My Life*. To book tickets visit www.atgtickets.com/wimbledon or call 0844 871 7646 (booking fees apply). For your chance to win a family ticket for four, simply answer the following question:

**Which country is Phineas T Barnum from?**

A) Canada  
B) England  
C) America

In your answer you must include the following: name, email address, phone number, postal address. To enter the competition, tweet your answer to @Merton_Council. You can also email your answer with your name and telephone number to communications@merton.gov.uk or write to us at My Merton, 8th floor, Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, SM4 5DX. The closing date for entries is Monday 29 September.

Terms and conditions: One family ticket equates to four tickets. At least one adult and at least one child. All tickets are subject to availability. Tickets are only redeemable for the named show on one of the dates quoted above and not transferrable to other shows. No cash alternative is available. Tickets are available for collection at the box office on the day of the performance. Ticket for Tuesday 14 October, 7.30pm.
While some councils have been forced to close libraries, Merton’s award winning libraries continue to go from strength to strength. In the last year opening hours have been further extended and our libraries are open longer than ever before. Our residents still love books but they also want libraries to offer new technology to help with learning, finding a job or just surfing the web, so all our libraries have free Wi-Fi available. Following a successful funding application the Wi-Fi network will be upgraded over the winter months to provide even higher speed connection to the Internet.

Investment continues to be made into our online resources. Merton provides a free e-book service with over 15,000 titles to choose from with new titles added daily. An e-magazine service is also provided with many popular titles. Resources such as Encyclopaedia Britannica, Who’s Who and Oxford dictionaries are available for free only through the Merton Library Service website.

If you are not already a member, joining is free and easy to do either online or by visiting one of our libraries. If stretched for time, you can renew your books online and make reservations for titles. Providing an e-mail address will mean that you’ll get a reminder two days before the items you have borrowed are due back, helping you to avoid a fine.

Libraries are great spaces for meeting people and trying new activities. Over 50 events are held each week and range from children’s activities, health based events and support for improving your employment prospects. All libraries provide IT support, which is particularly useful for people who are new to using computers or want to brush up their skills.

If you want to get more involved, our nationally recognised volunteering scheme has a range of opportunities available. Over 700 people contribute time towards supporting our libraries each year, which has enabled them to flourish and become vibrant hubs of the community.

**Library Connect**

Coming soon is a new initiative called Library Connect. It is Merton’s pop up library and will be available in a variety of community settings. It will provide a small but high quality library offer and showcase the range of services provided. Library Connect will offer a collection of popular stock to borrow and a range of activities for all ages. Free Wi-Fi and Internet access will also be available.

**find out more**
merton.gov.uk/libraries
or visit one of our seven libraries today
Back to school

Smart uniforms, new pencil cases, shiny shoes ... September can only mean one thing - back to school. A lot of work is being done to provide more school places and continue improvements to our schools. My Merton takes a closer look...

Primary and nursery applications

If your child was born between 1 September 2010 and 31 August 2011 or 1 April 2012 and 31 August 2012, you need to be thinking about your application now. Read all the information on our website and in our starting school booklets and remember to get your application in on time. The closing date for primary and nursery applications is 15 January 2015. You need to apply for a reception place even if your child attends nursery or has siblings at your preferred school.

You have the opportunity to state up to five preferences. Use them all, as if you don’t you may be offered a place at school that’s further away than you’d like.

Be realistic with your preferences. Look at how close to the school children need to live to be offered a place this year and include schools on your list where you have a reasonable chance of receiving a place.

Secondary school places

Applications for secondary places close 31 October. While pressure on places is still manageable, it is set to grow as the large primary-aged population gets older. We are looking at expanding our good and outstanding secondary schools and possibly building a new school which may be needed leading up to 2018. In the meantime, demand at our most popular schools is growing so make your application carefully – follow the guidance for primary schools about using your preferences and being realistic.

Primary school expansions

Merton Council is continuing with its building work to expand a further seven of the borough’s most popular primaries. The next school to be completed is Cranmer in Mitcham which has grown from 420 to 630 pupils. The expansion has brought a brand new building, creating two schools on one site, and pupils will be settling into their new accommodation this term. Work is also well ahead at Poplar in Morden where a new hall is ready this autumn with the rest due for completion in April.

The expansions are part of the council’s commitment to offer every child a quality education, where possible at their local school. In total 4,400 new primary school places will have been created by 2018, at a cost of £150million. Permanent expansion is also taking place at St Mary’s, Pelham, Singlegate, Hillcross and Merton Abbey schools.
Help boost cash for schools

If every eligible family in Merton claimed free meals, our schools would be better off to the tune of £4million. This cash boost for primary schools could mean up to £1,300 a year for every pupil who qualifies for free school meals. Schools can use the money for equipment or extra teaching staff. Research shows that 27% of local parents who could claim, don’t, compared with around 14% nationally.

So if your child attends a Merton school and you have not already done so, contact your school for an application or apply online. Even if your child is in Key Stage 1 and receiving a free meal – it could make a big difference to your school.

Exam success

This summer, schools and sixth forms celebrated their GCSE and A-Level results. A record 66% of students achieved A*–C grades including English and maths, up four per cent on the previous year and 99% of A-Level students got A*–E grades, beating the national average. For more details see the news item on page 5.

School attendance

Good school attendance leads to good grades as well as setting a strong foundation for children’s futures. This is why it is important parents check and follow the required guidelines when their child cannot make it in to school due to illness, emergencies or planned absence.

Under new guidance from the Government, schools will only allow planned absence in term time if there are exceptional circumstances. Evidence would need to be provided for your request. Parents whose children do not have good attendance or take their child out of school during term time without permission from the school may be issued with a Penalty Charge Notice of up to £120.

To find out your school’s absence policy, visit their website or get in touch with a teacher. If you are worried about a child or young person’s attendance at a Merton school contact 020 8545 4021 for guidance.
Merton Priory

Next time you’re shopping in Colliers Wood Sainsbury’s spare a thought for the medieval monks of Merton Priory, who lived and worked beneath the spot as far back as the 12th century. This year sees Merton Priory’s 900th anniversary. You may not have heard of it but in its day it was famous throughout the land, playing host to coronations and kings’ councils.

It all began when Henry I gave land in the manor of Merton to his trusty knight Gilbert, sheriff of Surrey in 1114. Three years later an Augustinian priory was established where the Roman road (now Colliers Wood High Street) crossed the Wandle.

Over the years its significance grew. In 1236 Henry III met his barons at the priory to agree the Statute of Merton, an important step in the evolution of English common law and the forerunner to our modern parliament. King Henry VI was crowned in the priory – the only king to hold his coronation away from Westminster Abbey in 1,000 years. It was also a seat of learning, with various medieval movers and shakers educated there including Thomas Becket, Nicholas Brakespear (England’s only pope) and Walter de Merton who founded Merton College, Oxford.

The priory was closed in 1538 with Henry VIII’s dissolution of the monasteries. Cromwell’s troops were garrisoned there during the Civil War in 1648 and from the 1660s the Merton Abbey area became the focus of the textile industry. Manufacturer William Morris, founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement worked on the site in the late 1800s with Liberty & Co, founded by Arthur Liberty, operating there until the 1970s.

Excavations took place on the site from the 1920s onwards with a major dig by the Museum of London in the 80s. These have uncovered the medieval infirmary, kitchens and cemetery, with finds including human skeletons, animal bones and seeds, all giving a fascinating insight into diet and medical treatment many centuries ago. The latest excavation took place in the summer with the findings to be displayed at Chapter House, Merton Abbey Mills.

Very few remnants of the original priory can still be found, although a part of the Chapter House has been preserved beneath an elevated section of Merantun Way. Looked after by the Merton Priory Trust it is open to the public at specific times. Visit www.mertonpriory.org to find out more. For more images of Merton Priory visit merton.gov.uk/memories.
As with elsewhere in London, the sheer volume of cars on Merton’s roads means the council has to enforce the parking restrictions and rules of the road that keep the traffic moving. A particular issue is around schools where the safety of children must come first and if inconsiderate parking is making the area dangerous we need to take action. That’s why the council uses mobile CCTV units which can move around the borough and respond to changing circumstances.

Parking and traffic fines are only issued in accordance with our charter, which you can read on our website, but if you do feel you’ve been treated unfairly we will always listen to your appeals and consider your case.

Cashless parking
The council always tries to listen to residents when it comes to parking. Many of you told us that finding change for parking meters was an issue, especially for short stays, so we are introducing cashless parking by mobile phone. You’ll soon be able to download a free app or sign up online and you’ll never be caught without change again, plus you’ll only pay for the parking you need.

By downloading the app you won’t have to return to your car to add more time.

Virtual permits
We will also be introducing virtual permits for some resident zones, so when you renew your permit, our parking wardens get an instant record without you needing to wait for the post. If you register your email address with us, we’ll be in touch with a reminder when you need to renew (although we can’t guarantee that emails will be received so it’s still your responsibility to apply on time).

Other improvements include a new telephone system and better software for parking fine appeals so you can now upload supporting documents more easily, all in response to your comments.
Win one year of free energy!

By taking part in the next Big London Energy Switch auction you could be eligible to win one year of free energy.

The next auction will be held on

14 October 2014

For further information on how to take part please contact Merton Council on 020 8274 4901 or visit www.merton.gov.uk

Please have your most recent gas and electricity annual statement to hand when you register.

Park life

Merton is one of London’s greenest boroughs with more than 100 open spaces for you to pick and choose from. We’re proud to have five parks with Green Flag status, including Colliers Wood Rec, Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Fields and South Park Gardens. To keep them in tip top condition, our parks team are out and about in all weathers clearing litter, cutting lawns and maintaining sports facilities. This team is headed up by parks support manager David Byles who caught up with My Merton.

Dave joined aged 18 as a gravedigger’s assistant, before becoming the council’s youngest parks foreman at 21, working at Durnsford Rec, Dundonald Rec and Wimbledon Park. He now manages the 18 members of staff responsible for keeping parks running smoothly by removing litter, managing events and looking after sports pitches.

For Dave the challenge is maintaining the high standards set by the parks team every year. “In the summer the team works from 7.30am in the morning till 9.30pm at night” he says. “During this time we are cutting grass, filling paddling pools and picking litter, which increases with more people using our parks and picnicking in the warm weather. It would help us a lot if everyone was responsible for their own litter, taking it home with them. At the moment we have installed 25 smart bins in parks that we encourage people to use. They have bigger capacity and send us a signal when they need emptying.”

According to Dave it’s Merton’s great range of sports facilities that give its parks the edge; that and its paddling pools which have stayed open in spite of budget pressures. He welcomes the strong network of friends’ groups that work in partnership with the council to raise funds for improvements, organise special events and keep things tidy. “We’ve got a lot of friends’ groups who do help us, and it would be great if more people got involved.”

If he had to choose his favourite place it would have to be Wimbledon Park: “I lived close to it when I was younger and started out working there. It really is a great park.”

find out more
merton.gov.uk/parks
## Choosing a secondary school in Merton

Is your child due to start secondary school in September 2015 or 2016? Come along to the open events listed below to find out more about what Merton secondary schools have to offer.

### Harris Academy Merton
Wide Way, Mitcham CR4 1BP
020 8623 1000 www.harrismerton.org.uk

- **Open evening:** Wednesday 17 September 5.00-8.00pm
- **6th Form:** Thursday 23 October 5.00-7.30pm
- **Open morning:** Wednesday 15 October 9.00-10.25am
- **Testing for new entrants:** Friday 12 December

### Harris Academy Morden
Lilleshall Road, Morden SM4 6DU
020 8687 1157 www.harrismorden.org.uk

- **Open evening:** Thursday 2 October 5.00-8.00pm
- **6th Form:** Thursday 23 October 5.00-7.30pm (at Harris Academy Merton)
- **Open mornings:**
  - Wednesday 25 September, Wednesday 1 October,
  - Tuesday 7 October, Thursday 16 October,
  - Wednesday 22 October 8.15-10.15am
- **Testing for new entrants:** Friday 12 December

### Raynes Park High School
Bushey Road, London SW2 00JL
020 8946 4112 www.raynespark.merton.sch.uk

- **Open evening:** Thursday 25 September 6.00-9.00pm
- **6th Form:** Thursday 6 November 6.00-9.00pm
- **Open mornings:** Monday 29 September to Friday 3 October from 9.30am

### Ricards Lodge High School
Lake Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 7HB
020 8946 2208 www.ricardslodge.merton.sch.uk

- **Open evening:** Thursday 16 September 5.30-8.00pm
- **6th Form:** Tuesday 4 November 5.30-8.00pm
  - (at Rutlish School)
- **Open mornings:**
  - Tuesday 23 and Wednesday 24 September 9.30am-12.00pm

### Rutlish School
Watery Lane, Merton, London SW20 9AD
020 8542 1212 www.rutlish.merton.sch.uk

- **Open evening:** Thursday 23 September 6.00-8.30pm
- **6th Form:** Tuesday 4 November 5.30-8.00pm
- **Open mornings:**
  - Thursday 25 and Friday 26 September 9.00-10.30am

### St Mark’s Church of England Academy
Acacia Road, Mitcham CR4 1SF
020 8648 6627 www.stmarksacademy.com

- **Open evening:** Thursday 11 September 5.30-8.00pm
- **6th Form:** Thursday 16th October 4.00-6.00pm
- **Open mornings:** Monday 15 to Friday 19 September 8.45-10.30am

### Ursuline High School Wimbledon
Crescent Road, Wimbledon, London SW20 8HA
020 8255 2688 www.ursulinehigh.merton.sch.uk

- **Open evening:** Thursday 25 September 6.30-8.30pm
- **6th Form:** Wednesday 12 November 5.00-7.00pm
  - (at Ursuline High School)
- **Open mornings:**
  - Monday 22 September to Friday 26 September
    - 9.00-10.30am and 11.00am-12.30pm

### Wimbledon College
Edge Hill, Wimbledon, London SW19 4NS
020 8879 9355 www.wimbledoncollege.org.uk

- **Open evening:** Thursday 25 September 5.30-8.30pm
- **6th Form:** Wednesday 12 November 5.00-7.00pm
  - (at Ursuline High School)
- **Open mornings:**
  - Monday 29 and Tuesday 30 September 9.00-10.30am

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Parents are asked to submit applications by Friday 24 October 2014.
Parents are advised to apply online at [www.merton.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.merton.gov.uk/admissions)
Statutory closing date for receipt of applications is **Friday 31 October 2014**.

**School Admissions helpline:** 020 8274 4906
Ill-gotten gains confiscated

Two brothers jailed for running a multi-million pound betting scam have been ordered to pay back a record £6.1m thanks to efforts by Merton Council trading standards. The council pursued a confiscation order under the Proceeds of Crime Act after Paul and Gregory Spicer from Brighton duped members of the public using professional looking brochures and phoney qualifications. Complaints from Merton residents brought the scam to the attention of trading standards – so thanks to those who got in touch.

Remember, remember...

Halloween and bonfire night are two of autumn’s highlights. While both days bring fun and games there are safety issues we all need to be aware of. The police have offered some tips to help your children stay safe and out of trouble.

- Only go trick or treating with an adult – if you’re old enough to go alone, you’re too old!
- Don’t knock on doors if there’s a No Trick or Treat sign – stick to houses with a pumpkin outside, where you’ll be welcome.
- Look carefully before crossing the road, you may not be visible after dark if you’re dressed as a vampire or witch.
- Don’t be anti-social – throwing eggs or setting off fireworks in public will get you in trouble with the police.
- Never throw fireworks or put them in your pocket – if you’re under 18, you will be breaking the law if you try and buy fireworks.
- If you’re having fireworks in your garden aim to finish your display by 9pm or go to the council’s fireworks display event. More details on p23.

Have your say on crime

Safer Merton, the borough’s community safety partnership, carries out an annual survey to hear your views on crime issues including anti-social behaviour, drugs and alcohol. It helps set priorities for the coming year. The survey is open now until the end of October. So if you live or work in the borough visit merton.gov.uk/safermertonconsultation to find out more.

One stop shop

Did you know there’s a one stop shop for people experiencing domestic violence, where you can get confidential support and advice? There’s practical information from a range of organisations including, housing, immigration, and domestic violence workers. You’ll find it at Morden Baptist Church, Crown Lane, Morden, SM4 5BL each Monday between 9.30am and 12.30pm (not bank holidays). No appointment needed, just walk in.
New courses available now at Merton Adult Education

Pick up our prospectus from your local library or MAE venue.

Book your place online, in person or by calling 020 8274 5222

Whatley Ave, Wimbledon Chase, SW20 9NS

@MertonAdultEd

www.maec.ac.uk
Arts and entertainment

20 and 21 September
The Polka theatre will be inspiring shoppers and residents with creative workshops based on Peter Pan (great for children age 4–14) and browse our new Arts Market bringing ceramics, prints and much more from local artists and designers.

27 and 28 September
Our partners Bookfest are putting on a host of activities to bring books, characters and the arts to our streets – Wimbledon Library will also be taking over The Piazza. So don your apron, bring a brush and come and get arty this September. A full programme of events is on our website.

Fireworks
Saturday 1 November and Wednesday 5 November
Merton’s popular firework and bonfire displays will be back this year in Morden Park on Saturday 1 November and at Wimbledon Park on Wednesday 5 November. Gates for both events open at 5.15pm with a performance suitable for younger children at 6.30pm and a second one at 8.15pm. With a range of stalls, food and activities taking place, it’s a night not to be missed!

Wimbledon Bookfest
Friday 3–Sunday 12 October
The annual festival of arts in Wimbledon this year includes Ian McEwan, Alexander McCall Smith, Alan Johnson, Shami Chakrabarti, Brian Moore, David Starkey, film screenings, comedy on Wimbledon Common and much more.

Wimbledon Arts Trail
20–21 and 27–28 September
The Merton Arts Trail is an Open House event held throughout the borough, where participating artists open their doors to show and sell their art. Visitors can create their own trail and make direct contact with the artists and chat about their work. Completely free at all open houses across Merton. Visit www.mertonartstrail.org.uk for all venues and open house exhibitions.

Artists’ Hub
Saturday 13–Friday 19 September
Wimbledon Library, Wimbledon Hill Road.

Artists’ Party
Friday 19 September, 7pm
The Alexandra Pub, 33 Wimbledon Hill Road Wimbledon, Wimbledon, SW19 7NE. Meet artists, founders and press over a drink.

Mystery Movie
Saturday 20 September, 6.30pm
Merton Arts Trail has organised a new Mystery Movie event in partnership with Wimbledon Film Club, showing a mystery movie somewhere exciting in Merton. Buy your ticket and start getting your clues... Real location will be revealed to you on 17 September, if not before then. Tickets include a glass of wine.

Artists’ Party
Saturday 13–Friday 19 September
Wimbledon Library, Wimbledon Hill Road, Wimbledon, SW19 7NB. Mini exhibition of artists’ work a week prior to the Merton Arts Trail. The hub will be open during the library’s opening hours.

Merton Adult Education
Book your place online, in person or by calling 020 8274 5222
Whatley Ave, Wimbledon Chase, SW20 9NS
@MertonAdultEd
Pick up our prospectus from your local library or MAE venue.

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**staying in?**  Here’s a selection of what’s new in Merton’s libraries:

**Cycle London**  
by Dominic Bliss  
A collection of 20 rides featuring all of London’s must-visit attractions. London is one of the world’s most celebrated cities, and there’s no better way to see some of the best the city has to offer than by bike. Cycle London has 20 unique routes designed to help you make the most out of this iconic city. Each ride is built around a theme, whether it’s the best art galleries to see some incredible works, great markets to treat yourself to some eclectic purchases, routes that include some of the tastiest food, or rides covering many of the city’s most famous and picturesque parks. There’s even a ride that will take someone who only has 12 hours in the city to all the iconic attractions you will have seen in films and books.

**Other new books:**  
• *The idea of him* – Holly Peterson  
• *Stay with me* – J Lynn  
• *In love and war* – Lily Baxter  
• *Red blooded* – Amanda Carlson

**NEW DVDS: MY MERTON RECOMMENDS**

**Captain America: The winter soldier**  
Chris Evans and Scarlett Johansson star in this action adventure sequel based on the Marvel Comics series. Set two years after The Avengers (2012), the film follows superhero Steve Rogers aka Captain America (Evans) who is now living in Washington where he is trying to adjust to modern society. The cast also includes Samuel L. Jackson, Robert Redford, Cobie Smulders, Dominic Cooper and Emily VanCamp.

**Other new DVDs:**  
• *Muppets most wanted*  
• *Tarzan*  
• *Love Punch*  
• *Vampire Academy*  
For more information on books, borrowing ebooks and DVDs, visit merton.gov.uk/libraries

**Polka Theatre**

**Little Angel Theatre presents**  
*We’re Going on a Bear Hunt*  
24 September–12 October  
A family go on an expedition of a lifetime – running down the grassy bank, squelching over the oozy mud and peering into a dark cave… what will they find? Michael Rosen’s thrilling and funny adventure comes to life in this entrancing puppetry production directed by Peter Glanville with music and lyrics by celebrated singer-songwriter Barb Jungr. All ages welcome.  
Performances available for children under the age of 3. Relaxed Performance 11 October at 11am. Tickets £13.50, concessions £10.00 (£1.50 transaction charge per online or telephone booking). Running time 45 mins approx, no interval. Usually two performances daily from Wednesday–Friday with two performances on Saturdays and Sundays.  
[find out more](tel:020 8543 4888), [www.polkatheatre.com](http://www.polkatheatre.com)

**Playfest 2014**  
Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 October, 7.30pm  
Wimbledon Library, SW19 7NB. Attic Theatre Company in partnership with Wimbledon Bookfest presents an evening of rehearsed readings of new short plays. To book tickets, call in to Wimbledon Library on Thursdays or Fridays from 9.30am–1.30pm. Tickets £10 including a drink.  
[find out more](tel:020 8640 6800), [www.wimbledonbookfest.org](http://www.wimbledonbookfest.org)

**Friday lunchtime recitals at St John’s Church**  
Every Friday, 1–1.45pm  
St John’s Church, Spencer Hill, Wimbledon SW19 4NZ. Refreshments available from 12.30pm. Entry by donation.

**Come and Sing ‘Evensong’**  
Saturday 4 October, 2–6pm  
St John’s Church, Spencer Hill, Wimbledon SW19 4NZ. Email music@stjohnswimbledon.co.uk to reserve your place. All sheet music will be provided, and rehearsal tracks will be available online in advance. Entry by donation.  
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**Hill Singers Chamber Choir open rehearsal**
Tuesday 23 September, 7.30pm
The Wesley Room, Raynes Park Methodist Church (entrance via the Lantern Centre in Tolverne Road). As we start our new season, we extend an invitation to potential new members to sing through the music we will feature in our December concert and to find out more about the choir. Singers for all voice parts will be very welcome.

**find out more**

020 8644 3794
www.hillsingers.co.uk

**West Barnes Singers autumn concert**
Saturday 1 November, 7.30pm
St Paul’s Church, Augustus Road, Wimbledon Park SW19 6EW. Faure’s Requiem is loved all over the world and we are delighted to be performing it together with a selection of French Romantic Motets. Tickets £10, children free.

**find out more**

020 8648 3987
www.westbarnessingers.co.uk

**Chinese Cultural Group**
Every first and third Tuesday of the month, from 2 September to 16 December, 3–5pm.
Wimbledon Guild, Guild House, 30/32 Worple Road, Wimbledon, SW19 4EF. The Chinese Cultural Group holds talks and demonstrations on Chinese culture and arts, practise Taiji Qigong exercises and celebrate Chinese festivals. £3 per session.

**find out more**

020 8946 0735
chineseculturalgroup@gmail.com
www.wimbledonguild.co.uk

**Get digging**
Dig Merton, the community food growing project, kicked off earlier this year and the team is looking for people to get digging. To get involved in future community growing projects leave a message with Sustainable Merton on 020 3417 0476.

**find out more**

www.facebook.com/DigMerton

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**Learn to bowl**
There are several bowls clubs in Merton that are always looking for new members. Why not give it a go!

**find out more**

Mitcham Bowling Club 020 8640 8370
Merton Park Bowling Club 020 8542 2174 (Men’s)
020 8540 8490 (Ladies)

Visit merton.gov.uk/bowling_greensto find out more about all of our bowling greens and clubs including Morden Bowling Club, Raynes Park Bowling Club, Merton Bowling Club, Greenwood Bowling Club and Wimbledon Bowling Club.

**Wimbledon Park Bowls Club**
Every Saturday in September, 11am–1pm
The Wimbledon Park Bowls Club will be holding taster/coaching sessions for people interested in learning about bowls.

**find out more**

020 265 5475, barrywillingham@ntlworld.com
www.wimbledonparkbowls.co.uk. Twitter: @MertonBowlers

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**New Wimbledon Theatre**

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

**Sensational 60s Experience: 50th anniversary tour**
Monday 20 October, 7.30pm
This one-off 60s extravaganza is touring the UK on its 50th anniversary. For one night only, six legendary names take to the stage and deliver to you a night never to be forgotten! Hermans Hermits, I'm Into Something Good, The Swinging Blue Jean’s, Hippy Hippy Shake, Dave Berry’s, The Crying Game, The Union Gap UK, Young Girl, The Ivy League, Tossing and Turning and Alan Mosca, I’m Telling You Now. Tickets £28.40–£30.40.

**Cape Town Funny Festival in London**
Thursday 23-Saturday 25 October, 7.30pm
Cape Town’s award-winning and annual comedy festival comes to London under the guise of the Cape Town Funny Festival in London. Imported just for your entertainment, allow South Africa’s biggest TV and theatre comics to tickle your fancy for an evening of unique, eclectic and cultured comedy. Headlining the event will be the country’s number one comedian and TV star, Marc Lottering. This comedy legend will be ably supported by the unforgettable Alan Committe who will be returning to Wimbledon following his star performance in Aladdin. Tickets £22.90–£32.90.
Scottish Country Dancing
Tuesdays evenings starting 16 September from 8–10.30pm
Holy Trinity Church Hall, 243 The Broadway, Wimbledon, SW19 1SS
(next to Polka Theatre). Friendly and sociable class open to new members ranging from teens to seniors. Kilts are not mandatory but soft shoes are recommended. Have fun and give it a try, some instruction is available. £4.50 for non-members, refreshments included during the interval.

Horse-riding Courses
Weekdays
It’s never too late to learn to ride. Ridgway stables is offering an intensive, all-day midweek course for adults. This includes private tuition throughout the day and lunch is included. Special offer of £20 off to My Merton readers.

Ridgway stables
93 Ridgway, Wimbledon Village, London SW19 4SU

Merton's forum for parents of children, young people and adults with autism
Sessions take place at the Chaucer Centre, Canterbury Road, Morden, SM4 6PX

Welfare Benefits Advice
Tuesday 21 October, 10am to 12pm
Presentation with Suzie Rollins, Merton’s Welfare Benefits Co-ordinator. Find out about welfare benefits including an update on changes implemented in the past year. The Welfare Benefits Service offers expert help and advice in relation to benefits, allowances and tax credits. They can also assist with form filling.

Carers Support Merton with Donna Perkins, Adult Carers Support Worker
Monday 10 November, 10am to 12pm
Meet Donna and find out what advice, information and support the Adult Carers Team at Carers Support Merton can offer to carers of adults.

Walks and talks
Wimbledon
National Trust Association talks
‘Persevering with Father Thames’ by Bob Wells
Saturday 18 October, 2.15pm
Christ Church Hall, Cottenham Park Road, Wimbledon, SW19 0HG. In October 2006 Bob spoke to us about his finds from the tidal foreshores of the Upper Thames, collected over 30 years. This is a welcome update on recent treasures and their stories from our much threatened river. Tickets £3 for members and £3.50 for non-members.

Mitcham walks
Mitcham Common Health Walk
Every Thursday, 11am
Join us on our weekly 45 minute walk around Mitcham Common. Our meeting point is Mitcham Junction.

Walk around Mitcham Common
Saturday 4 October, 2.30pm
We’ll be meeting at the bus stop on the bridge at Mitcham Junction station to do a 3 to 4 mile easy walk around Mitcham Common. Come along!

‘The War Poets: What they mean to us today’ by Professor Paul O’Prey
Saturday 15 November, 2.15pm
Christ Church Hall, Cottenham Park Road, Wimbledon, SW19 0HG. Professor Paul O’Prey will talk about the poets in his newly published book, First World War Poems from the Front. Tickets £3 for members and £3.50 for non-members.

Autumn Show at Mitcham Horticultural Society
Saturday 11 October, 2pm
St Mark’s Church Hall, St Mark’s Road, Mitcham, CR4 2LF. Mitcham Horticultural Society will be holding their Autumn Show. There is no admission charge and refreshments are available, including home-made cakes.

Autumn Show
at Mitcham
Horticultural Society
Saturday 11 October, 2pm
St Mark’s Church Hall, St Mark’s Road, Mitcham, CR4 2LF. Mitcham Horticultural Society will be holding their Autumn Show. There is no admission charge and refreshments are available, including home-made cakes.

Find out more
020 8540 6754
findoutmore@mitchamhorticulturalsociety.co.uk

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Find out more
kids.first@swlondonmencap.nhs.uk or 020 8687 4644

Find out more
020 8540 1755
araffan@googlemail.com
www.standrewsoclondon.netne.net
Community Forums

Community Forums are for local people – anyone with an interest in the local area is invited to attend these free meetings. Issues raised at Community Forum meetings will be taken up by the responsible organisation to follow up and report back on how problems are resolved.

- Wimbledon Community Forum
  Tuesday 23 September, 7.15pm
  Wimbledon Guild, Drake House, Wimbledon.

- Raynes Park Community Forum
  Tuesday 30 September, 7.15pm
  Raynes Park Library, Raynes Park.

- Morden Community Forum
  Tuesday 9 October, 7.15pm
  Civic Centre, Morden.

- Mitcham Community Forum
  Tuesday 14 October, 7.15pm
  Vestry Hall, Mitcham.

- Colliers Wood Community Forum
  Tuesday 21 October, 7.15pm
  St Joseph’s Church Hall, Colliers Wood.

Family events

Family Learning Festival

Sunday 5–Thursday 30 October

This year, Merton Adult Education’s free Family Learning Festival will run from 5–30 October 2014 to encourage parents, carers and children to have fun learning together. Our main event is being held at Whatley Avenue on 18 October with free activities for all the family including messy play, science, knitting and crochet, mask making, cooking and lots more. Free one-off sessions will also be held around the borough during this month.

Tel: 020 8274 5222
www.maec.ac.uk/family-learning

Senior citizens

The Pavilion Social Club

The Pavilion, 129 Grand Drive,
Raynes Park, SW20 9LY

Every Thursday 2–4pm

Join us at the Old Raynes Park Residents’ Tennis Club where we have weekly get-togethers with a range of activities including occasional guest speakers and visits to places of interest. Our main focus is developing social links and enjoying friendships. Everyone welcome.

Tel: 020 8879 3525 or 020 8540 0164

- Going for a song
  Wednesdays 1–2pm
  Vestry Hall, Cricket Green, Mitcham, CR4 3UD. Do you enjoy singing? Want to improve your voice? Want to meet new people? No audition, just come along and join in. Only £3.50 per session.

- Sexual development and growing up
  Tuesday 23 September, 10am to 2pm (lunch included)
  Chaucer Centre, Room D, Canterbury Road, Morden, SM4 6PX. A talk from Andy Whysall, Sherwood Training Ltd. Explore ways of supporting your child through the changes of adolescence and growing up.

- Computing for disabled children and young people
  Wednesday 22 October, 11am to 2pm
  Chaucer Centre, Room D, Canterbury Road, Morden, SM4 6PX. Adapt-IT with Martyn Slyper. Find out about specialist IT equipment, computer aids, software and visual impairment products which could support your child with a disability. Lunch included.

- Healthwatch Merton with Adele Williams, Information and Outreach Officer
  Thursday 18 September, 10am to 12pm
  Chaucer Centre, Room D, Canterbury Road, Morden, SM4 6PX. Do you have issues and concerns about your local health and social care services? Would you like to influence the delivery and design of these services? Come along and share your opinions with Adele from Healthwatch Merton, whose role is to help ensure the views of patients and carers are heard to improve local health and social care services.

- Children and Families Bill 2014 – Open parent feedback meeting
  Tuesday 14 October, 10am to 12pm
  Chaucer Centre, Room J, Canterbury Road, Morden, SM4 6PX. Information session about the Children and Families Bill and an update on the progress in Merton, with particular focus on the Local Offer that Merton is developing.

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- Barn dance
  Saturday 4 October, 8–11pm
  Wimbledon Racquets and Fitness Club, Cranbrook Road, Wimbledon SW19 4HD. The Greensleeves Morris Men in association with Wimbledon Racquets and Fitness Club will be holding a barn dance with guests The Sugar Loaf Band, with a licensed bar. Fun for all members of the family. Tickets £7 adults, £4 children (11–18) and under 11s free.

Merton’s forum for parents of children and young people with disabilities or special needs

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Mum2mum market sale
Saturday 13 September, 2–4pm
Ricards Lodge High School, Lake Road, Wimbledon, SW19 7HB.
The pop up market is open to mums wanting to buy or sell baby and children’s goods. Visit the website to book a stall.
£2 entry fee.

Find out more
mum2mummarket.co.uk

Harvest Supper and Race Night
Saturday 4 October, 6.30–8.30pm
St Saviour’s Church Hall, Grand Drive, Raynes Park, SW20 9DG.
Have some family fun with Hobby Horse Racing and a home-cooked supper. Tickets £7 adults, £4 children or £20 family. Tickets to be booked by 28 September.

Find out more
020 8395 6095
stsaviour.net

Crafts Fair
18 October, 10am–1pm
St Saviour’s Church Hall, Grand Drive, Raynes Park.
Admission 30p, £1 before 10am and tables £8.50.

Find out more
020 8540 2483
stsaviour.net

Abundance Wimbledon Fruit Day
Saturday 20 September, 11am–2pm
Meeting place is St Mark’s Church garden (just behind Wimbledon Library). There are lots of fruit trees around Wimbledon, but much of the fruit falls to the ground and is wasted. Abundance Wimbledon helps people to pick fruit and give the surplus to others.

Find out more
020 8545 3517
abundancewimbledon@gmail.com

Save the date
Mayor of Merton’s quiz night
Friday 10 October
Merton Junction, Civic Centre, Morden, SM4 5DX.
The Mayor of Merton, Councillor Agatha Akyigyina, is holding a big charity quiz night in aid of her two charities, Merton Street Pastors and Shooting Star Chase, and is looking for teams to take part. The ticket price will include a supper.

Find out more
020 8545 3517
mayor@merton.gov.uk

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www.chas.co.uk

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Mascot Telecare is provided by the London Borough of Merton and helps to provide safety, security and well-being, enabling people to live independently in their own homes.

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- Quick friendly response when button is pressed
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- Appropriate response or emergency services contacted
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- Help with cost if you are on benefits or pension credit
Natalie Gardner

Following Merton’s successful Armed Forces Parade this past summer, *My Merton* caught up with local Army Reserve Natalie Gardner. Aged 26, she is a physiotherapist and Lance Corporal in the Army Reserve Squadron. This role has taken her to Cyprus and Afghanistan.

**Why did you become a reservist?**
I was looking for my next adventure. I had just finished university and started my first job as a physiotherapist. I knew that a 9 to 5 job would not be enough.

**What’s the training like?**
It ranges from fitness, map reading, shooting and driving skills to command and leadership. The training pushes you past your comfort zone, to find out how you react under pressure.

**What are the best things about being in the army reserve?**
I have experienced some amazing things, like my two tours overseas. You develop friendships in the army that are not comparable with your civilian ones. You know each other inside out.

**What’s been your biggest challenge?**
Trying to get on a tour of Afghanistan; I had to retrain twice, prove myself in a battalion of men and recover from fracturing my leg in three places. Eventually I was deployed for six months. Having returned I am so glad I persevered. I now look back at that time with pride, knowing that I achieved my goal through difficult circumstances.

[find out more](www.army.mod.uk/armyreserve)