Providing quality services in tough times

Council tax frozen for the sixth year running

Being smart about sugar
Keeping the borough clean
The Leader of Merton Council, Councillor Stephen Alambris, writes for My Merton

I never thought I’d become a politician, I fell into it by accident. I was fighting for our local hospital at St Helier when I realised the best way to change things was to stand for election.

I can understand why some people say they can’t trust politicians. Too often, they think we say one thing but then do another.

That’s why, when I promised I would freeze Merton’s council tax, I made sure I stuck to my word.

I’m a businessman so I know a company would quickly go bust if they tried to get away with increasing the price after you’d already bought their product!

So I’m pleased we’ve been able to keep our promise to freeze Merton’s council tax again this year, for the sixth year running. Every week I speak to local residents who are struggling with the high cost of living and I’m glad we can help them.

By using our money carefully, we’ve also set up a new £1.3m fund. This will reduce the impact government cuts to our funding will have on services for our most vulnerable residents, including older people and children. The fund uses the income we have received as a result of building more homes, without putting council tax up.

I might be a politician these days, but promises are there to be kept and you can trust me to try to keep mine.

Building a better Merton

I was there before Christmas when the council made the historic decision to approve plans to bring AFC Wimbledon back to the borough. The atmosphere was electric and I couldn’t help giving a big cheer when our planning committee gave its verdict – it was just like being at an important game. Tense, exciting. And the team won in the end!

It was a fantastic night, meaning we can look forward to getting a brand new state of the art stadium, offices and 600 new homes for Merton. It shows what we in Merton can achieve even when, like all councils in the country, we’re faced with big cuts to our funding. By being business-like, by working with developers and land owners, we intend to create much needed new housing.

We’re not going to let funding cuts stop us finding new ways of investing in our town centres and improving your local community.

That’s why I think Crossrail could be great for the borough. It will bring investment, jobs, shops and housing and will make it easier for people to do business in Wimbledon. But it needs to be done properly. We won’t support Crossrail unless it’s right for residents and businesses. But I’m confident we’ll find a solution and I’m looking forward to a thriving town centre that competes with the very best in London.

We’re also looking at ambitious plans to rebuild both Morden and Mitcham town centres. As a Morden man myself, I can hardly wait! It’s an exciting time for the borough, despite the financial challenges. By being business-like, AFC Wimbledon can be just one of many success stories in Merton.
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My Merton is published by the London Borough of Merton and is distributed free to households in the borough four times a year.

The editorial content of My Merton is produced by the London Borough of Merton’s Communications Team.

My Merton is designed by Domino4. Contact 01932 988677 or email andrew@domino4.co.uk.

Printed by Cliffe Enterprise Print Partnership. Contact 0845 601 9478 or email ben@cliffe-enterprise.com.

My Merton is distributed by London Letterbox. Contact 020 8940 0666 or log on to www.londonletterbox.co.uk.

My Merton costs only 12p a copy to produce. Whenever you see this logo that means there’s a volunteering opportunity to get involved in.

Regenerating Morden

Free childcare for two-year-olds
Find out if you are eligible

Budget
Merton freezes council tax for sixth year

contact us

My Merton, Communications, 8th Floor, Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, SM4 5DX. Tel 020 8545 3327. Email mymerton@merton.gov.uk. merton.gov.uk/mymerton.

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New outdoor learning area at Garfield Primary

Mayor of Merton, Councillor David Chung opened the new outdoor learning area at Garfield Primary School in the autumn. The council’s £85,000 investment in the school means that the younger children can now enjoy their new mud kitchens, tepees, allotments and sand pit. There is also a tunnel and hill. Garfield Primary School headteacher Michele Thomas, said: “We recognise the importance of early years education and work with parents to ensure their children have the opportunity to fulfil their potential from their earliest educational experiences.”

Volunteer in your local library

The council is calling on residents to volunteer to help out in its award-winning libraries. Volunteering is a good way of contributing to the community. It also offers the opportunity to meet new people and can be great experience to put on a CV. Volunteers who currently help in Merton’s libraries have a huge variety of skills to share, including teaching people how to use IT, supporting many community activities and providing customer service to members. West Barnes Library volunteer Chiara, said: “I love working here, teaching people how to use a computer and how to do things like email. It is so rewarding and I am thankful for this opportunity. I would recommend volunteering in a library to everybody.”

Free racquet sports for children

The council is now offering free racquet sports lessons to children aged 9 to 16 who live or go to school in Merton. Sessions on squash, table tennis, badminton and tennis are all part of a new initiative called 4 Racquets. Young people taking part could also be in with an opportunity to represent Merton in this year’s London Youth Games.

Merton FoodCycle project launches

A nationwide charity that cooks healthy meals for vulnerable adults using surplus food from supermarkets has launched in Merton this spring. FoodCycle Merton works with people dealing with homelessness or those on low incomes. The charity is looking for volunteers. If you are interested, contact merton@foodcycle.org.uk for more information.

New Sports Blast courses

The council’s free Sports Blast is getting bigger with more classes becoming available all the time. The latest additions to what’s on offer for 14 to 25 year-olds living in the east of the borough are Yoga and Basics2Box. Classes are held at St Marks Academy.

Merton hosts its first ever aquathlon

The council and BETTER Leisure have teamed up to host Merton’s first ever aquathlon. Supported by British Triathlon, the event is open to disabled and non-disabled athletes in the borough and will take place on the 10 April at Canons Leisure Centre. Some of the races will be part of the selection process for young athletes to go through to the Balfour Beatty London Youth Games.

Merton – proud to be a Fairtrade borough
Celebrating the Queen’s birthday

The council is marking the Queen’s 90th birthday in April with a series of events.

Clean for the Queen
Merton’s clean team will join forces with Sustainable Merton, community groups and schools to give the borough a spring clean.

A beacon for the Queen
Merton will join boroughs across the UK in a beacon lighting ceremony on 21 April. The beacon will be lit by the Mayor of Merton, Councillor David Chung on the Piazza in Wimbledon.

Lunch for the Queen
The council welcomes requests from residents to close their streets for parties to join in the national celebrations on 12 June where the Queen will be hosting a special lunch on the Mall.

Crossrail, but not at any cost

In a cross-party response to Crossrail 2 proposals in January, the council came out in support of Crossrail 2 coming to Wimbledon, but not at any cost. All councillors were in agreement that Crossrail 2 would bring opportunities to the area. The council is pro-growth but recognises its duty to represent current businesses and residents of the borough. At the moment, the proposals for Crossrail 2 will cause unacceptable disruption. The council has sent its response to Crossrail and will continue to fight for residents concerned about the plans.

Green light to AFC Wimbledon stadium plans

Cheering from dedicated football fans could be heard at the civic centre in December as the council’s planning committee unanimously approved AFC Wimbledon’s application to build a new stadium. The cross-party committee gave the green light to the plans which will see a new 20,000 seater football stadium in Plough Lane. The plans will now go to the Mayor of London.

Celebrating the Commonwealth

Merton is celebrating Commonwealth Day on Monday 14 March by raising the Commonwealth flag outside the civic centre. Schools are being encouraged to hold their own flag raising ceremonies as part of the increasingly popular event.

Council tax frozen for sixth year

Merton Council has frozen council tax for the sixth year in a row, while setting up a new fund to protect vulnerable residents. The decision follows full council agreement at the annual budget meeting on 2 March when Councillors agreed the budget for 2016–17. In the face of government cuts, the council stuck by its word to keep council tax affordable for residents. For a fourth year running the council has also decided not to pass on government council tax benefit cuts to the lowest income families in the borough.

Continuing reductions in government funding means that the council is having to make increasingly difficult decisions about how it delivers services. However, the council has set up a new £1.3m fund to reduce the impact of cuts on vulnerable people. Merton will continue to be business-like and fair, and will ensure that the services used by the most vulnerable families bear less of a share of the cuts than other services we provide. More information on the council’s budget is on pages 16 and 17.

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New technology to cut congestion

New automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras will be going up around the borough from April as part of the council's efforts to keep Merton moving. Residents have told us repeatedly that congestion is a top concern for them. Enforcing traffic offences is one way of encouraging people to obey the rules of the road. The cameras will be installed at yellow box junctions, banned turns and in bus lanes and will come into force from June 2016. As well as ensuring 100% accuracy, the ANPR cameras will free up enforcement officers' time so they can focus on handling residents' complaints about badly parked vehicles and take action in areas where there is a consistently high number of traffic contraventions.

£4k for Mayor's charities

Merton’s float at this year’s New Year’s Day Parade won £4,000 for the Mayor of Merton’s charities, Merton Centre of Independent Living and Friends in St Helier. Merton’s entry was the Magic Carpet Ride.

Council acts on illegal pavement parking

In response to residents’ concerns, from 4 April the council will be looking out for cars illegally parked on Merton’s pavements. Roads affected are listed on the council’s website. Parking on pavements can mean people in wheelchairs or with pushchairs, and those with sight impairments, are not able to walk on the pavements without bumping into a car or having to go into the road. Parking on grass verges is also out of bounds. In particularly narrow roads, as long as there is at least a metre of pavement for pedestrians, parking will be allowed.

Frozen yet again

Merton has frozen council tax for the sixth year running

merton.gov.uk/counciltax
The council has been working with a specialist leisure centre design and technical team, community groups, Greenwich Leisure Limited, South Thames College and others on the design for the new affordable and family friendly Morden Leisure Centre. The council has designed a planning proposal and is considering all the response to the initial proposal from residents and other interested parties before making any necessary amendments. The council has invited a number of construction contractors to put forward their bids to build the new centre which is on course to open in 2018. Watch this space as My Merton will continue to update readers on how the new leisure centre is progressing.

find out more
merton.gov.uk/leisureformorden

Why not foster?
This Foster Care Fortnight (16–19 May), Merton is calling on people who could offer a safe and stable home to children who are not able to live with their birth family to get in touch. The council is especially interested to hear from people who would like to provide a home for a teenager. Hear from a Merton foster carer in the interview on the back page of this issue.

find out more
fostering.merton.gov.uk

Carnival comes to Mitcham
This year’s Mitcham Carnival is on Saturday 11 June at Three Kings Piece, Commonside West from 12 noon until 5pm. There will be fun and entertainment for all ages. The council’s SportsBlast team will be there offering children the chance to play a variety of sports including football and netball. There will be BMX riding too. The fun fair will be there with everyone’s favourite rides and there will also be over 100 charity and trade stalls as well as food and drink stalls.

Anyone wishing to book a stall should do so online.

find out more
merton.gov.uk/mitchamcarnival

GLA elections and EU referendum
The Greater London Authority election on 5 May 2016 give Londoners the chance to vote for the Mayor of London and its 25 members. The candidates are responsible for issues like housing, transport and policing, to green spaces and air quality. To vote, Londoners need to register by 18 April. On 23 June there will be a referendum on whether Britain should remain in the European Union.

find out more
To register: www.gov.uk/register-to-vote
For election details: www.londonelects.org.uk

Spacehive funding to benefit communities
Merton communities can now benefit from a new website designed to encourage crowd-funding to help transform local public spaces. Spacehive, a social enterprise, is all about getting lots of people involved and pledging their support, financial or otherwise. Anyone can put forward project ideas and anyone can fund them. All Merton projects can be found on the ‘Merton Hive’, set up by the council’s Future Merton team. So whether it is a new community garden, revived sporting facilities or a new playground, Merton Hive could be the answer.

find out more
www.spacehive.com/initiatives/mertonhive
Celebrating National Libraries Day

Merton’s award-winning libraries celebrated National Libraries Day earlier this year. Libraries across the borough gave visitors a taste of the range of services they offer including IT sessions, Spanish language classes, story time, craft activities and much more.

find out more www.merton.gov.uk/libraries

Poplar School’s rocket seeds launch into space

Children at Poplar School, Wimbledon, joined in the excitement around British astronaut, Tim Peake’s launch into space before Christmas.

As part of their space project, they sent two kilograms of rocket lettuce seeds to the International Space Station on Soyuz 44S where they will spend several months. When the seeds return to earth, the pupils will plant them and record data on how seeds grow and compare their development with seeds which remained on earth.

SmartWater to outsmart criminals

The council is using Smartwater in an effort to catch out criminals who steal from them. This action has been prompted by a number of thefts of vehicle parts from refuse trucks and community buses. SmartWater is invisible. Each batch contains a unique forensic code which means the police can trace the stolen item back to the owner and bring the criminals to justice.

Prudential RideLondon is back

RideLondon is back for a third year. On 31 July residents will line the streets of Wimbledon to cheer on thousands of cyclists riding through the town centre on their way to the finish line in The Mall.

find out more www.prudentialridelondon.co.uk

Fostering why Steve thinks you should go for it

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

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

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

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

If you are interested in fostering for Merton, please contact us:
0800 073 0874 fostering@merton.gov.uk
merton.gov.uk/fostering
Free childcare for two-year-olds

If your child is two, and you’re on a low income, you might be eligible for 15 hours of free childcare a week. My Merton speaks to a parent who took up the offer, and finds out how it has helped both her and her child.

Uzma Rafique’s two-year-old son Adam took up a free place at a preschool in September and hasn’t looked back. “He absolutely loves it,” she says “he doesn’t like holidays. Now he knows his colours, his ABC and how to count to 20. It’s so beneficial for the children and it gets them ready for nursery.”

Studies of children who take up their early education show that it not only helps prepare a child for school but impacts on their learning beyond. Children who attend preschool go onto gain better grades at GCSE than those who do not.

In addition to the benefits for your child, there are benefits for parents as well. Some parents are using the 15 hours their child is at preschool to train for work or find a job. Some families in receipt of Working Tax Credit are using the 15 hours of free childcare to increase the hours that they work. Some are using it for extra time for themselves. Uzma says, “It means I can get so much done, shopping and getting things I need”.

To be eligible you need to be receiving certain out-of-work benefits, or be receiving Working Tax Credit and have an annual household income of less than £16,190. Finding out if you’re eligible is easy – visit the council website and use the handy checker. If you’re eligible you’ll receive a reference number that you can use to claim your free place.

On the website you can also find out when your two-year-old can start their early education and how to find a local childcare provider which offers free places. You will also find a great video of real stories from parents whose children have taken up a free early education place.

(find out more)

merton.gov.uk/two
The sugar-smart way to better health

Watch any TV programme or read an article about health and nutrition and it’s hard to avoid one big issue – sugar. It’s been described as ‘deadly as tobacco’ and blamed for the rise in type 2 diabetes. *My Merton* finds out more.

The case against eating too much sugar is undeniable. For a start sugar is a major cause of tooth decay and weight gain. It can also lead to the build-up of harmful fat around the vital organs, leading to heart disease and some cancers.

The recommendation is that adults consume no more than 30 grams of added sugar a day, equivalent to seven cubes or teaspoons. For children the limit is five cubes (age four to six) and six cubes for ages seven to ten.

However there are hidden sugars in our food and we often eat extra teaspoons of it without realising. These sugars are naturally present in honey, spreads and syrups. They are also found in sweets, cakes and biscuits, more obviously, as well as in processed foods such as cereals, ready meals and ketchup.

As Merton Council’s Director of Public Health, Dr Dagmar Zeuner explains: “Sugar as part of a healthy balanced diet is fine, but it is still important to limit your intake of foods and drinks that contain added sugar. Fruit doesn’t count towards your sugar intake, so perhaps choose an apple, banana or a seasonal fruit salad instead as these offer vitamins and other nutrients, as well as being sweet in taste.”

Fizzy drinks are often named as the number one culprit when it comes to childhood obesity. This is because they contain a lot of sugar (around nine teaspoons in an average-sized can of cola). As they don’t fill you up it’s difficult to limit how much you consume. The same applies to sweet cordials and fruit juices too.

Put like this, the task of reducing your intake seems like an uphill struggle, but you don’t have to make a massive change overnight. As a start Dr Dagmar Zeuner recommends visiting the Change4Life website, “It gives a number of options of how to approach changes to your family’s lifestyle in a helpful, supportive way and gives you the information to make decisions and the confidence to introduce the small changes that together make a big difference.”

Change4Life’s new campaign is called Sugar Smart and its webpages are packed with facts about how much sugar is lurking in everyday foods. There are easy and practical sugar swaps you can make and plenty of recipes too. There’s also a Sugar Smart app you can download to your smartphone, which allows you to scan the barcodes of food packs for an instant breakdown of the sugar contained in each serving – very illuminating and a great way to get your children signed-up to cutting down.
New health provider for Merton

Community health services for adults and children in the borough, such as speech and language therapy, rehabilitation and school nursing, will be provided by the Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust (CLCH) from 1 April this year. The organisation was commissioned by the council and NHS Merton Clinical Commissioning Group (MCCG) to take over the provision of these services from The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust. Health service users can be assured of continuity in their frontline community health professionals and services. Over the next three years, CLCH, MCCG and the council will focus on prevention, helping people make healthy lifestyle choices.

Five ways to cut your sugar intake

1. Swap sugary cereals for plain ones such as porridge, Weetabix and Shredded Wheat, or supermarket alternatives.
2. Fruit juice counts as one of your five a day but is high in sugar so limit it to one 150ml serving.
3. Cut out sugary after-school snacks such as chocolate or muffins - go for fruit, plain toast or bagels instead.
4. Have fewer sweet treats and cut down on portion size - break chocolate bars into small squares or share a pudding if eating out.
5. Get your kids involved in preparing healthy snacks - they'll be more likely to eat them.

Merton children get sugar smart

As part of its responsibility for public health, Merton Council has been working with school children to get smart about how much sugar they consume. One of the ways they’ve been doing this is through a new free app from the NHS that scans the barcodes on bread, snacks and cereals to find out how much sugar they contain, with 13 cubes worth found in a 500ml fizzy drink.

Singlegate school invests a lot of time in helping students make healthy choices and has been recognised for this by the Food for Life organisation. Healthy eating and physical education for every child is a priority for them.

find out more
www.foodforlife.org.uk

Students from Singlegate and Cabinet member for adult social care and health, Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah
Spring clean for 2016

Young people from the Ahmadiyya Muslim youth association in Morden teamed up with local environmental group Sustainable Merton and Merton Council in a New Year’s Day clean-up.

Up and out at 9am on New Year’s Day morning, a team of 40 young people from ten to thirty years old from the association, along with members of Sustainable Merton and councillors, gave Morden town centre a spruce-up to welcome in 2016.

The council’s Clean Team picked up 15 bags of litter that were collected during the morning.

Free food waste caddy liners at libraries

The food waste we collect is turned into fertiliser for use on arable farmland

Food waste kitchen caddy liners will now be available for free at all the borough’s libraries. To claim your free supply of liners twice a year, you need to take your council tax bill to the library to be stamped by a member of staff. Making liners available this way, to residents who need them, makes more financial sense for the council than delivering to households that don’t use the service. To find out more about food waste recycling, to order a food caddy or outdoor food bin or to see the ‘how to’ video, visit www.merton.gov.uk/foodwaste

Dog waste: Bag it – bin it – any litter bin will do

You can now use litter bins to get rid of your bagged dog waste as it no longer needs to be collected separately. The bins specifically for dog waste will be removed from the borough from this April. There are many litter bins in residential areas, outside schools, at bus stops and in town centres. So please put your bagged dog waste in the litter bins. Or take the waste home and dispose of it with your household waste.

Wheelie bins prove a success

Last year we tested the effectiveness of wheelie bins in the Lavender Fields area of Mitcham. Residents in a number of streets were given two wheelie bins each, one for general waste and one for recycling. We wanted to assess whether wheelie bins would help with improving street cleanliness and increase recycling while ensuring value for council taxpayers’ money.

Here’s what we found. The streets were cleaner as the wheelie bins kept the rubbish from blowing on the street. The provision of the larger wheelie bin for recycling allowed residents to recycle more of their waste. A smaller proportion of waste ended up in landfill, which saves the council money in landfill tax. Eighty-one per cent of residents in the pilot felt that their streets were cleaner. Eighty-nine per cent were happy with the new bins. We’re still looking at the pros and cons of wheelie bins and if they can save us money. My Merton will continue to update readers on the issue.

find out more
merton.gov.uk/wheeliebins

Litter & Dog Waste
Helping estates to recycle more

We want to encourage more residents to use our recycling services because it’s good for the environment. Also, recycling more means we pay less in landfill taxes, and that’s better value for our taxpayers.

At Mitcham’s Phipps Bridge Estate, recycling needed a big boost. Caretaker for estate manager, Circle Housing, Michal Rusinkiewicz, explained: “Residents had the opportunity to recycle and the facilities are there, but they didn’t know how. Plus, the bin area was cluttered and dirty which made it off-putting to residents.”

Michal and his team of eight cleaners worked together with the council’s Waste Service Development Team to turn things around. They distributed recycling guidance leaflets and knocked on every single flat door to explain to people how the recycling service works and what the benefits were. The team cleaned up the bin areas and put up posters showing what can be recycled and how to use the food waste bins.

After three weeks, we found there was a four-fold increase in recycling collected from the estate. Michal said: “The recycling bins are now full every day and people are very positive about recycling. Most residents have got behind it.”

This year, following the success at Phipps Bridge, the council’s Waste Service Development Team will be working with more estates in the borough to help them recycle more. 

Council acts to minimise flood risk

We’ve been working with our gully cleansing experts at FM Conway to keep the borough’s drains clear and reduce the chances of flooding. During the heavy rain at the beginning of the year, our team focused on hotspots in Colliers Wood, Mitcham and Raynes Park and other areas of the borough at risk of flooding. Many of you have told us that that gully cleansing should be our top priority when it comes to how we reduce flood risk in Merton, so we’ve increased the number of priority gullies to be cleansed from 4,795 to 5,450.

Councilors Andrew Judge and Nick Draper with the gully cleaning team.

Book your garden waste collections now

It’s that time of year when plants are starting to bloom and the grass needs mowing. The council provides a fortnightly garden waste collection service for £65 for the year, which includes a brown wheelie bin. If you receive a pension or are on state benefits, the cost is £50.

Find out more
merton.gov.uk/gardenwaste

Getting rid of your old sofa

Many of us will be throwing out the old to make way for the new when it comes to household items. You may think there’s no life left in your old sofa, fridge or TV. But, as long as they’re in working order, there is usually somebody who would benefit from them and give them a new home. Before throwing them out, think about giving them away to charity or you could even make yourself some cash and sell them. Your old possessions don’t need to end up in landfill. The council offers a free bulky waste collection service but if you want to make room for something quickly then selling or donating bulky items might suit you best.

Find out more
merton.gov.uk/bulky
COMPETITION

Win a family ticket* to see Footloose: The Musical
at New Wimbledon Theatre

Based on the 1984 screen sensation starring Kevin Bacon, Footloose: The Musical tells the story of city boy Ren, who has to move to a rural backwater in America where dancing is banned. All hell breaks out as Ren soon has the whole town up on its feet. Featuring the classic 80s hits Holding Out for a Hero, Almost Paradise, Let’s Hear it for the Boy and the unforgettable title track, Footloose.

This brand new production, bursting with youthful spirit, dazzling dance and electrifying music stars Maureen Nolan (renowned for her role as Mrs Johnstone in Blood Brothers) and Luke Baker as Ren McCormack (Green Day’s American Idiot, Sunny Afternoon, Beautiful Thing, I Can’t Sing).

Footloose The Musical will be at New Wimbledon Theatre from Monday 2–Saturday 7 May. To book tickets, visit www.atgtickets.com/wimbledon (booking fees apply). For your chance to win a family ticket for four, simply answer the following question:

Which actor starred in the Footloose film in 1984?
A) Kevin Stacey  B) Kevin Costner  C) Kevin Bacon

In your answer, you must include the following: name, email address, phone number and postal address. You can email your answer to communications@merton.gov.uk or write to us at My Merton, 7th floor, Civic Centre, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX. The closing date for entries is 25 March.

Terms and conditions: *The tickets are non-transferable. There are no cash alternatives, accommodation or travel included in this prize. The competition is for four tickets to see Footloose The Musical at New Wimbledon Theatre on Tuesday 3 May, 7.30pm.

Merton in Bloom
Application for entry 2016

Surname:______________________________________

First Name(s):___________________________________

Address:_______________________________________

_______________________________________________

Postcode:______________________________________

Daytime Telephone No:________________________

Email:_______________________________________

Please tick the categories you wish to enter:

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

All entries must be visible to the passing public. (excluding 4 and 5)

Details of Exhibit(s) and address, if different to above:

_________________________________________________________________________________________

Please send applications and entries for category 5 to:
Greenspaces Events Team
13th Floor
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
Morden SM4 5DX

Closing date for applications 10 June 2016

MERTON COUNCIL

Merton in Bloom
Competition 2016

Categories

1  Best front garden over 20 sqm
2  Best front garden under 20 sqm
3  Best balcony
4  Best school wildlife garden
5  Best child’s A4 drawing of a garden.*
6  Best bloomin’ pub
7  Best floral allotment garden
8  Best hanging basket
9  Best commercial premises
10  Best community garden

*(entries will be judged in age categories 3–6, 7–10 and 11–14)

You can also enter online at: merton.gov.uk/mertoninbloom

Merton in Bloom
Application for entry 2016

Surname:______________________________________

First Name(s):___________________________________

Address:_______________________________________

_______________________________________________

Postcode:______________________________________

Daytime Telephone No:________________________

Email:_______________________________________

Please tick the categories you wish to enter:

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

All entries must be visible to the passing public. (excluding 4 and 5)

Details of Exhibit(s) and address, if different to above:

_________________________________________________________________________________________

Please send applications and entries for category 5 to:
Greenspaces Events Team
13th Floor
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
Morden SM4 5DX

Closing date for applications 10 June 2016

MERTON COUNCIL

Merton in Bloom
Competition 2016

Categories

1  Best front garden over 20 sqm
2  Best front garden under 20 sqm
3  Best balcony
4  Best school wildlife garden
5  Best child’s A4 drawing of a garden.*
6  Best bloomin’ pub
7  Best floral allotment garden
8  Best hanging basket
9  Best commercial premises
10  Best community garden

*(entries will be judged in age categories 3–6, 7–10 and 11–14)

You can also enter online at: merton.gov.uk/mertoninbloom

Merton in Bloom
Application for entry 2016

Surname:______________________________________

First Name(s):___________________________________

Address:_______________________________________

_______________________________________________

Postcode:______________________________________

Daytime Telephone No:________________________

Email:_______________________________________

Please tick the categories you wish to enter:

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

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_______________________________________________

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Working life: parks support

Ted Walters has been working for Merton’s parks service for five years, picking up litter, emptying bins, cleaning the pavilions and checking the play equipment. *My Merton* finds out more about what the parks teams do.

Ted is part of a team of seven, working across verges, parks and greenspaces in the borough.

“We all have our rotas and I look after 20 parks in the borough. I visit these during the week sorting out any issues that may need a rapid response. In the summer the visits are a lot more frequent because the parks get really busy. Part of my role is to make sure the parks are clean and safe for the public to use.”

For Ted the best thing about the job is being out in the open air and meeting people. “You get to know the people who use the parks regularly, like the dog walkers, and they get to know you.” But unfortunately park users can sometimes be the job’s biggest challenge too. “Some people come and have a picnic and leave rubbish everywhere and they’re often the people who complain that the park’s not tidy.”

Ted continues, “Merton has some lovely parks especially Cricket Green, Morden Park, South Park Gardens, Wimbledon Park and Cannizaro. We do our best to make sure they’re well-kept in spite of budget pressures. There are great facilities for people to come and use too, and the public love them. But Dundonald Rec is my favourite.”

*My Merton* asked Ted, what one thing can people do to keep the parks in tip top condition? “Use the bins. We now have Big Belly solar powered bins in all our parks that can hold more rubbish and let us know when they need emptying. If you litter in the parks you risk getting an £80 fixed penalty notice from enforcement officers. Sometimes people leave rubbish by the side of the bins in bags. They think they’re doing their bit by parcelling it up but it means the foxes and squirrels get in. Thankfully most people are responsible and if they see the bin is full they take their rubbish home.”

**Find out more**
For more about Merton's parks and green spaces visit www.merton.gov.uk/parks
Delivering value for money services

Balancing the budget 2016

Every March the council has to balance its budget for the coming year. We have to decide how much to spend on local services and how much we are going to ask local residents to pay in council tax. My Merton looks at this year’s budget.

For lots of residents, the only contact they have with the council is when we pick up their rubbish and when we send them their council tax bill. That’s why we’ve promised to keep council tax low and why we think it’s important to continue a weekly waste collection.

Being business-like
Since 2010 the government have cut the funding for local councils by 40% and more cuts have been announced this year. Although difficult, we’ve taken a business-like approach, planning in advance and making our services more efficient.

New technology means our social workers spend less time on paperwork and more time with families. We’ve shared many of our services with other councils to make savings. And we’re testing out wheelie bins to see if they could save us money while making the streets cleaner at the same time.

By planning ahead carefully, we’re also expanding our schools, and aim to provide an extra 4,000 places for local children.

Looking after those in need
With more than 40% of government cuts to council funding, councils across the UK are having to make savings and services are becoming increasingly stretched.

That’s why we have decided to set up a special new fund to try to reduce the impact of the cuts on adult social care and vulnerable children.

We’re putting aside £1.3m this year to make sure we can deliver some of the services that are needed the most. We’ve found the money to do this thanks to the hard work of our planning team and the extra money we receive when more homes are built. And we’ll be looking to, where we can, add to this special fund in future years.

We’ve already added £12m to the adult social care budget since 2010 to take account of the increasing population of older people. In fact adult social care is our biggest area of spending. We want to continue to deliver some of the services to our most vulnerable residents, and to mitigate the impact of funding cuts without putting up Merton’s council tax.

A balancing act
We’ve worked hard to balance the budget in a way that reflects the needs of all our residents, whether you need a school place, adult social care, your street swept or just don’t want your council tax increased.

It’s a difficult balancing act but we’ve made sure we’ve kept the promise we made to you to keep Merton an affordable borough for everyone, while at the same time looking after those who need our help the most.

Find out more
For detailed budget information visit merton.gov.uk/budget
Delivering value for money services

Modernising our services

Like many councils, we’re looking to provide services differently. Instead of old-fashioned meals on wheels we’ll be working with the local voluntary sector and encouraging people to buy their meals direct from Wiltshire Farm Foods, a leading supplier of microwave-ready meals that can be ordered over the phone or online. Where people are unable to do this we’ll make sure they have a home care worker who can help prepare their meal.

We’ll also be offering a different service to carers. At the moment the council pays Crossroads to provide respite care so carers can have a few days off. But some carers would prefer regular evenings off. Eligible residents will get their own personal budgets to spend how they wish, with support from us to help them buy in the services they need. We’ll be working with Crossroads so they can offer more choice while also saving the council money.

Sharing services

Pooling staff and resources with other boroughs is one of the ways we’ve become more efficient, and we’ll be doing more of this over the coming years. Instead of making cuts to our building control service we’re negotiating a shared service with a neighbouring borough. And in adult social care we plan to save £400,000 in 2018/19 by sharing management functions with other councils or the NHS.

We’ll be looking at libraries too, one of our best performing services and one we’re especially proud of. We are looking into sharing our management with another borough. They will benefit from our great service, while we will be able to share some of the savings we make by reducing duplication.

Working smarter

We’re using improved technology to speed up the way we manage services and communicate with residents. Better IT will mean social workers can update case notes on the go, giving them more time to work with families.

Our new website will make it easier for everyone to get the right information first time round, saving us money in staff time. And if you call us, our new personal customer accounts mean we can see the history of your enquiry, helping us sort things out quickly.

Improving the environment and saving money

We’re hoping to save nearly half a million pounds by making the council more environmentally friendly and reducing our spending on electricity, gas and water.

In Merton we’re doing our bit to clamp down on diesel emissions by increasing the cost of parking permits for diesel cars.

Garden waste collection costs have been frozen since 2011 so they will go up by £5 a year from 2017 to £70 (£55 concessions). This is the first price rise since this optional service was introduced five years ago. You can still drop off your garden waste for free at Garth Road, or you could compost it at home.

We’re also cutting down on waste by stopping the delivery of food waste caddy liners to residents who don’t use the service. Instead you can now pick up your free supply of caddy liners from your local library twice a year. See page 12 for details.
The 2016 Heritage Discovery Day will be held at Morden Library and Civic Centre. It will include photographic displays, children’s archaeology and craft activities, as well as bite-sized talks throughout the afternoon.

A big draw will be outdoor cinema screenings of historic film footage supplied by the “Bigger Picture Project.” Their specially-designed ‘Kinovan’ will be parked in front of Merton Civic Centre showing archive cine film.

On the second floor of Morden Library you can visit an exhibition about the history of the St Helier Estate, together with a heritage marketplace featuring stalls and displays from local museums, historic houses and societies.

We will also be launching the Carved in Stone website, produced by volunteers from Merton Heritage Service to document the impact of the First World War upon this area.

Heritage Officer, Sarah Gould, explained: “The website allows everyone to access the amazing life stories of Merton combatants who sacrificed their lives for King and country. Many of these people were effectively hidden from history but the Carved in Stone team is keen to ensure that their courage and contribution are recorded for posterity.”

Heritage volunteers will be on hand during the afternoon to guide you through this fascinating new resource. Author and broadcaster, Robin Gregory will also be giving a talk about his book Tim’s Wars, which describes the experiences of a Merton soldier in the trenches and is based on a diary kept by his late father-in-law from 1914 to 1918.

The website features filmed interviews with the descendants of Merton servicemen, together with a record of First World War resources held by local museums, schools and private collectors – beneficial to anyone researching their ancestors, or Merton’s wartime heritage.

Residents enjoying Merton Heritage Discovery Days

Your date with history

Whether you are a history enthusiast, or just want to know more about the area where you live, Saturday 28 May is a date for your diary. This marks the next of our popular Merton Heritage Discovery Days - an event which showcases the borough’s fascinating past and different methods for exploring it. My Merton finds out more.
Making more of Morden

It’s a busy commuter hub with a young, diverse and growing population, but Morden town centre is still missing something to make residents want to spend time there. My Merton finds out the latest.

While plenty of people live or work in Morden, or travel through, for many it’s still lacking that x factor – yet it has the potential to be a vibrant and attractive town centre. In an effort to change this, the council has developed a vision for improving Morden that involves redesigning its dated high street and removing buses from outside the Underground station, replacing them with a new public space. It’s also about encouraging new housing and commercial premises to the town along with the infrastructure to support them such as school places and health facilities. Between October and December last year the council held a consultation about the town’s future. More than 1,250 people took part, over 80% of whom broadly supported the council’s vision.

In the meantime, the council has successfully bid for funding from Transport for London (TfL) to create a brand new public space at the heart of the town. The Morden design project will explore ways of removing the one-way system around the Civic Centre in an effort to make the high street more pleasant for pedestrians. The council will also work with TfL to redesign Morden bus station and to create a brand new public space in the heart of the town. The project launches in April 2016 with consultation happening this year, followed by design testing in 2017 and construction from 2018.

This announcement follows November 2015’s news that Morden has been made one of the Mayor of London’s 20 Housing Zones. The zones are an initiative to speed up the building of new housing and regeneration projects across the capital. Merton Council and TfL’s property arm will seek to attract a development partner and will this year be working with the community to create an exciting masterplan for the town.

find out more
www.merton.gov.uk/moremorden

An indicative view of Morden town centre and, inset, proposed tram station at Morden Hall Road
### Walk4life Merton
Free group health walks in parks and open spaces. Walking in the fresh air has many health benefits plus you make new friends too.
For more information visit: merton.gov.uk/walk4life

### 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: merton.gov.uk/roadsafety

### Children’s cycle training
Merton provides free ‘on road’ cycle training for ages 10 plus during school term and holidays. Easter holiday dates available now at: cycleconfident.com

### Motor bike and moped courses
Be a brighter biker, for learner riders
Free classroom session and CBT
Bike Safe, for experienced riders. A free training day for experienced riders provided by the police.
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

merton.gov.uk/roadsafety

ref: 3.36
Pop-up events address crime concerns

My Merton caught up with the council’s Safer Merton team at a special event for Pollards Hill residents.

At the start of the year, Safer Merton, the partnership made up of the council, police, fire brigade and other local organisations announced that a series of pop-up events will be held across the borough to address people’s crime concerns and give members of the community the chance to speak to them face-to-face. Inspector Jon Wilson from Merton Police said: “It’s an age of electronic media but many people still value personal contact so we’ll be knocking on doors and visiting areas across the borough to make it easy for people to tell us about issues that matter to them.”

The first event took place at the New Horizon Centre, Pollards Hill in January and was a success, with Inspector Wilson saying: “I am very pleased with how the event went. It was a great opportunity to get feedback about live issues concerning people who actually live in the area.” At the event the council’s enforcement team were on hand to talk about their work keeping the borough clean and tidy and how residents can help. They also offered a free microchipping service as, from 6 April, all dogs must be microchipped. Pat de Jesus from the team explained: “For us it’s all about getting people to understand the work we do and the ways we can help them. It’s also about encouraging people to report issues such as graffiti for example.” The local Neighbourhood Watch and council road safety team also had stalls on the day.

There are more pop-up events planned for other areas of the borough with dates and venues to be advertised in the near future, giving you the chance to meet your local police officers and councillors. The police promise to report back on what’s been done about your issues at a later date. Also attending your local pop-up event will be local neighbourhood watch groups and local councillors.

find out more
Stay informed about crime and safety issues in your area by joining Neighbourhood Link, a free messaging service from the police.
Visit www.neighbourhoodlink.met.police.uk
For more on crime and safety issues in Merton visit www.merton.gov.uk/safermerton

Merton Council
merton.gov.uk/roadsafety

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ref: 3.36
Save up to 25%* per year on your business energy bill

The Brighter Business scheme will give you expert energy efficiency advice and support to help reduce the running costs and environmental impact of your business.

The scheme provides:
- Fully funded energy efficiency surveys
- Grant funding towards 50% of the costs of energy efficiency improvements** (subject to availability)
- Access to a list of local installers, or the option to use your own

* Source: Department of Energy & Climate Change, SME Guide to Energy Efficiency
**Up to a maximum of £2,500 for premises up to 250m² and £5,000 for premises of more than 250m²

Find out if you’re eligible: merton.gov.uk/brighterbusiness
Merton's community helps refugees

We've all seen the heart-rending pictures on the news of men, women and children making treacherous journeys across land and sea to flee war and find peace in Europe. A number of people in Merton are making life a little easier for those who have had to leave their home. My Merton finds out more.

The pictures of desperate people fleeing violence in the Middle East for sanctuary in Europe have affected many of us. In Merton we’re lucky to have a strong community which comes together to look after the more vulnerable in our society. Local resident, Jackie Schneider, businessman John Merriman, Reverend Andrew Wakefield and Merton Council’s director of children, schools and families, Yvette Stanley, have formed the Merton Welcomes Refugees Network, bringing together faith and community groups, including local churches, the Islamic Community Centre, and Baitul Futuh mosque in Morden to help.

Jackie said: “The country is set to take in 20,000 Syrian families, but councils are still waiting to hear when and how many each area will receive. We found in Merton, there are a lot of people wanting to help, so we thought, let’s just get on and help the refugees who are already here. They aren’t from Syria, but they have been forced to move far away from their home.”

John Merriman, added: “People have been very generous with donating toiletries. We need the very practical things like nappies, toothpaste and soap. Merton Council is very much part of this too. Their social workers take donations with them when they visit refugee families in the borough. And they remain on standby to welcome refugees to Merton when the time comes.”

Along with gifts of toiletries, residents have also donated over £500 worth of Oyster cards for asylum seekers to use. Mitcham resident, Charlotte Walea, has raised money to buy solar lights for the refugee camps in Calais and Dunkirk.

Merton Welcomes Refugees has set up a database of Merton residents, some of whom are descended from refugees, who want to offer friendship to current refugees and help them feel as at home as possible.

find out more
Merton welcomes refugees Facebook page
www.mertonwelcomesrefugees.org
You

If you suspect child abuse, visit gov.uk/reportchildabuse to get the number for your local authority.
**What’s on**

Your comprehensive guide to what’s happening in Merton. merton.gov.uk/events

**Arts and entertainment**

- **West Barnes Singers, Elijah by Felix Mendelssohn**
  Saturday 7 May, 7.30pm
  St Paul’s Church, Augustus Road, Wimbledon Park
  SW19 6EW. Tickets: £10, children free.

- **Hansel and Gretel**
  Saturday 6 February–Sunday 10 April
  The Colour House Theatre, Merton Abbey Mills, Watermill Way, SW19 2RD. Tickets: £12 adult, £10 child.
  [find out more](www.colourhousetheatre.co.uk)

- **Saudha**
  Saturday 12 March
  Morden Assembly Hall, Tudor Drive, Morden, SM4 4PJ. This unique festival of Indian classical music continues with a session led by Chandra Chakraborty and includes critically-acclaimed musician Rekesh Chauhan. Tickets: £10 adult, £8 children.
  [find out more](www.saudha.org)

- **Colliers Wood Chorus Spring Choral Concert**
  Saturday 14 May, 7.30pm
  Christ Church, Christchurch Road, Colliers Wood, SW19 2NY. Colliers Wood Chorus welcomes two guest choirs for a joyous and varied joint concert. Free.
  [find out more](www.collierswoodchorus.org.uk or 020 8543 2179)

- **Sleeping Beauty**
  Tuesday 22–Saturday 26 March, 7.30pm, Thursday and Saturday matinees, 2.30pm
  Matthew Bourne’s dazzling production of Sleeping Beauty has won the hearts of thousands and smashed box office records across the UK and the USA since its premiere. New Adventures have revived this new classic in the repertoire to give audiences one more chance to see the final piece in the trio of Tchaikovsky masterpieces. With sumptuous sets and costumes, evocative lighting and masterly storytelling you will be transported in time from the halcyon days of the late Edwardian era through to the modern day. In a world full of magic, fairies, vampires, love and romance, all bought to life by uniquely talented dancers – will Princess Aurora ever find her true love again? Cost £16.50.

- **Save the last dance for me**
  Tuesday 12–Saturday 16 April, 7.30pm, Thursday and Saturday matinees 2.30pm
  From the team that brought you the huge success that is Dreamboats and Petticoats, Save the Last Dance for Me will take you back through the ‘music and magic’ of the early 60s, a time when each passing week brought another rock ‘n’ roll classic. This nostalgic, feel-good journey will transport you back to music’s golden era as we follow two teenage sisters through the summer of ‘63. Cost £16.50.

- **Peppa Pig’s Surprise**
  Wednesday 20 April, 1 and 4pm, Thursday 21 April, 10am and 1pm
  Surprise! Peppa Pig, George and their friends are back in Wimbledon in a brand new live stage show, Peppa Pig’s Surprise. It’s a lovely day and Peppa is playing outside with her friends. Mummy Pig and Daddy Pig have got a surprise for her and George – they can’t guess what it is, can you? Enjoy fun, games and of course, surprises in this charming, colourful new show with new songs and new life-size puppets, Peppa Pig’s Surprise promises to be the perfect theatre show for all pre-schoolers! Cost £17.15.

**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

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staying in?

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

**MY MERTON’S BOOK CHOICE**

**Death of a Nurse**
by M.C Beaton

Death of a Nurse is the 31st book in the bestselling series featuring the Scottish policeman, Hamish Macbeth, by the very popular author M.C Beaton.

**Other books:**
- Little Shop of Happy Ever After – Jenny Colgan
- The Pharaohs’s Secret – Clive Cussler and Graham Brown
- The Shop Girls of Chapel Street – Jenny Holmes
- Sammy the Shy Kitten – Holly Webb

**NEW DVDS: MY MERTON RECOMMENDS**

**Spectre**

A cryptic message from the past sends Bond on a rogue mission to Mexico City and eventually Rome, where he meets Lucia Sciarra (Monica Bellucci), the beautiful and forbidden widow of an infamous criminal. Bond infiltrates a secret meeting and uncovers the existence of the sinister organisation known as Spectre. Meanwhile back in London, Max Denbigh (Andrew Scott), the new head of the Centre for National Security, questions Bond’s actions and challenges the relevance of MI6, led by M (Ralph Fiennes). Bond covertly enlists Moneypenny (Naomie Harris) and Q (Ben Whishaw) to help him seek out Madeleine Swann (Léa Seydoux), the daughter of his old nemesis Mr White (Jesper Christensen), who may hold the clue to untangling the web of Spectre. As Bond ventures towards the heart of Spectre, he learns of a chilling connection between himself and the enemy he seeks.

**Other DVDs:**
- Brooklyn
- The Intern
- A Walk in the Woods
- Fireman Sam: The great escape of Pontypandy

For more information on books, borrowing eBooks and DVDs, visit merton.gov.uk/libraries

**Rossini – Petite Messe Solennelle by the Wimbledon Choral Society**

Sunday 20 March, 5pm

**Cadogan Hall, 5 Sloane Terrace, London SW1X 5DQ.** Join Wimbledon Choral Society for a vibrant performance of Rossini’s much-loved Petite Messe Solennelle, with its hints of opera writing intertwined with beautifully crafted solo arias. The Wimbledon Choral Society is delighted to be back at Cadogan Hall to perform this glorious work. Tickets: £25; £20; £15; £10 (students).

**find out more**
www.cadoganhall.com
Box office: 020 7730 4500
www.wimbledon-choral.org.uk

**Marryat Players**

Friday 8 April, 7.30–8.30pm

Great Hall at Kings College School, Southside, Wimbledon Common. Marryat Players Chamber Orchestra for Young

Musicians performs Vivaldi, Corelli, Dag Wirén and more conducted by Robert Max. Free admission.

**find out more**
www.marryatplayers.com
020 8947 8203

**The open studios art show**

Thursday 12–Sunday 15 May

Wimbledon Art Studios, 10 Riverside Yard, Riverside Road, London, SW17 0BB. Free entry.

**Attic Theatre Company**

Park Theatre, Clifton Terrace, N4 3JP

**Attic Theatre Company presents the world premiere of Beacons**

Tuesday 22 March–Saturday 16 April, Tuesday–Saturday 7.45pm, Thursday and Saturday matinees 3.15pm

Written by Tabitha Mortiboys. Julie sells ice cream on the cliffs at Beachy Head and searches for love online. Her friend Bernard walks the clifftops and can’t seem to settle. When sixteen year old Skye arrives for the summer and decides to stay, the lives of all three become unexpectedly entwined. But when memory takes hold, will their buried fears force them apart? Tabitha Mortiboys’s magical new play – which began life in Merton at Attic Theatre Company’s annual Playfest – tells of love, loss and midnight ice cream sundaes under the starlit skies of the South Downs. Press night: Thursday 24 March. Tickets: £14.50 previews, £18 full, £16.50 concessions.

For more information on books, borrowing eBooks and DVDs, visit merton.gov.uk/libraries

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT • YOUTH • SENIOR CITIZENS • FAMILY • HEALTH & FITNESS • WALKS & TALKS • FAIRS & EXHIBITIONS

Merton – proud to be a Fairtrade borough
Live at Wimbledon Park

Intimate outdoor picnic concerts set in the stunning surroundings of Wimbledon Park

Friday 26–Monday 29 August, Wimbledon Park
Following the success of Classics in the Park 2015, we are delighted to announce an even bigger and better event for 2016. ‘Live at Wimbledon Park’, will feature 3 days of dazzling Classical and Jazz performances plus a fun filled bank holiday Monday family event. A stunning line up of performers to be announced, just bring your picnic blankets and sunscreen.

For more details of the line-up for each day and ticket information, visit merton.gov.uk/live

Polka Theatre

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

Organ Recital
Saturday 23 April, 7.30–9.30pm
St Saviour’s Church, Grand Drive. Organ Recital by David Adkins, organist of St Saviour’s Church. The first half of the programme will be a celebration of English music for St George’s Day. Full programme available nearer the time. Adult admission £3 to include interval refreshments and admission £10 to include music for St George’s Day. Celebration of English the programme will be a recital by David Adkins, organist of St Saviour’s Church. The first half of the programme will be a performance of The Emperor’s New Clothes. Ages three to six. Tickets: £12 adults and children, concessions £9 (£1.50 transaction charge per booking).

Snow White
Wednesday 23 March–Sunday 10 April
From the company that brought you the hit shows Red Riding Hood and Flat Stanley, Olivier Award-winning Mike Kenny joins forces with acclaimed literacy lunatics LipService (Maggie Fox and Sue Ryding) and director Matt Aston to create a brand new show for children and their families. Ages four to eight. Tickets: £13.50 adults and children, concessions £10 (£1.50 transaction charge per booking).

The Emperor’s New Clothes
Saturday 16–Sunday 17 April
Illusions of grandeur are burst like soap bubbles as the well-known story of vanity is recounted with a washing machine, a clothes line, puppers and song. A welcome return from skilful puppeteer, Martin Bridle, who

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Wimbledon Chamber Choir
40th anniversary concert
Saturday 16 April, 7.30pm
St Matthews Church, Durham Road, London SW20 0DE. This year, WCC is celebrating its 40th anniversary with a special concert in St Matthews Church. The main work of the evening will be a performance of Thomas Tallis 40 part motet ‘Spem in Allium’. As this requires a large number of singers, WCC is inviting other singers to join them for this concert. Tickets £10 from website. www.wimbledonchamberchoir.org.uk

Worples Group art exhibition
Saturday 7 May, 10am–5.30pm
St Mark’s Church, St Mark’s Place, Wimbledon, SW19 7ND (beside the library). Free. Over 200 affordable, original contemporary artworks on show. Twenty local artists will be displaying their new works including an exciting and stunning display of watercolours, oils, acrylics and pastels. www.worplegroup.co.uk 07438 542800
**Health and fitness**

- **Norbury Bowls Club open day**
  Saturday 30 April, 2.30pm
  Turle Road, off Stanford Road, Norbury. Why not come to our club and try your hand at bowls? Whatever your age, ladies or men, all will receive a warm welcome. Season starts April. Whether you have bowled before or are a complete novice we would like to see you. Come and have a look around, a cup of tea and a chat and make some new friends. New members welcome.
  **find out more**
  Jeff Doerr 020 8542 4079

- **Raynes Park Bowls Club**
  Bowls Club
  11am-3pm
  Free. Taunton Avenue Sports Ground, Raynes Park SW20 0BH. The outdoor season of lawn bowls starts with two open days on 7 and 15 May.
  **find out more**
  Brian Elsdon 020 8946 0971
  Kathy Lock 020 8337 1018
  Hardev Dhillon 07983 356272

- **Merton Active Plus**
  Keep your kids entertained this Easter and upcoming summer holidays with a fantastic range of courses for eight to 16 year-olds. Find something for everyone with arts, sports and leisure and watersports courses running at venues all over the borough. With a range of prices to suit every budget, your children can have an Easter and summer to remember!
  **find out more**
  020 8545 4069
  merton.gov.uk/activeplus

- **Middleditch Bowls Club**
  April to September
  The Canons, Madeira Road, Mitcham CR4 4EG.
  **find out more**
  07931 000174

- **Sports Blast**
  There are lots of free sports activities for young people aged 14 to 25 living in the east of the borough including tennis, netball, Zumba, football and BMX.
  **find out more**
  merton.gov.uk/sportsblast
  www.facebook.com/sportsblastmerton
  twitter.com/SportsBlastLBM

- **Mitcham Bowls Club**
  April to September
  The Canons, Madeira Road, Mitcham CR4 4EG.
  **find out more**
  07931 000174

- **Wimbledon Park Bowls Club**
  Every Saturday, May to September, 11am-12.30pm
  Wimbledon Park SW19 7HX.
  **find out more**
  020 8265 547
  barrywillingham@ntlworld.com

- **Wimbledon Park Watersports**
  This spring there are a series of fun-filled activities on offer at the Wimbledon Park Watersports Centre. You can book birthday parties for kids aged eight and above, adult sailing courses and much more. All courses need a minimum number of participants, so why not ask your friends? Come to the taster day 19 March.
  **find out more**
  booking.merton.gov.uk/wimbledon-park-watersports-centre/

- **Merton’s spring/summer walks**
  Saturday 26 March, 1pm
  Meet at Mitcham Junction (by the bus stop on the bridge) for a 3–4 mile walk around the common.
  Sunday 22 May, 3pm
  Meet at Mitcham Junction (by the bus stop on the bridge) for a 3–4 mile walk around the common, finished with a drink at Mitcham Golf Club.
  **find out more**
  07944 833605; minnunzet@gmail.com
Walks and talks

Community Forums

Merton’s Community Forums are for residents interested in their local area. It’s a chance to raise issues. These will be taken up by the organisation responsible to follow up and report back on how problems are solved.

- **Wimbledon Community Forum**
  Monday 14 March, 7.15pm
  Mansel Rd Centre, 1 Mansel Rd, London SW19 4AA.

- **Mitcham Community Forum**
  Tuesday, 15 March, 7.15pm
  Vestry Hall, 338 London Road, Mitcham CR4 3UD.

- **Morden Park House Wedding Fair**
  Sunday 20 March,
  11am-3pm

Morden Park House, London Road (behind Merton College), Morden SM4 5QU. Free admission. We are pleased to announce our Wedding Fair is back by popular request so why don’t you pop along? There will be lots of local exhibitors including photographers, florists, cars, bridal wear and much more. This is also an opportunity to view this beautiful Georgian house set in lovely parkland. All visitors will be entered into a draw to win a free ceremony (terms and conditions apply).

- **Mitcham Horticultural Society’s Spring Bulb Show**
  Saturday 19 March,
  2-5pm
  St Marks Church Hall, St Marks Road, Mitcham. This first show of the year will be a mass of colour, a wonderful spectacle. Free. [find out more](#)

- **Southside House**
  Sunday 27 March
  3 Woodhayes Road, Wimbledon SW19 4RJ.
  Maintained in traditional style without intrusive refurbishment and crowded with family possessions of centuries, Southside offers a wealth of fascinating family stories. This magical house and gardens can inspire the unusual, adventurous and unexpected. Guided tours on Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday and bank holiday afternoons at 1, 2 and 3pm. Gates open 20 minutes before each tour: Visitors can book and pay for tours online. Adults £9, students £7.50, families £20. [find out more](#)

- **Merton Mencap Kids First events**

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

  - **Chaucer Centre, Canterbury Road, Morden SM4 6PX**
    - **Speech and language therapy workshop**
      with Karen Akroyd, Manager of Merton’s Language & Learning Support Team
      Thursday 17 March, 10am to 12.30pm
      Chaucer Centre, Room B. Find out how the service is commissioned and how the team can help you and your child. Learn about speech therapy techniques, how assessments are undertaken and much more.
      [find out more](#)

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Family events

- **Find yourself in Mitcham Festival**
  Saturday 19 March, 11am–5pm
  Mitcham Fair Green, Mitcham Town Centre. Come and find yourself in the heart of Mitcham. Take part in fun activities lined up for the family including taster tai chi sessions for adults and arts, crafts and a bouncy castle for children and toddlers. All for free!
  **find out more**
  www.stsaviour.net

- **Hatfield Primary School ‘Wild West’ Summer Fair**
  Saturday 11 June, 12-3.30pm
  Saddle up your horse and giddy-up along to the Wild West to join us for an afternoon of fun at Hatfield Primary School, Lower Morden Lane, Morden. Rides will include a 75ft inflatable obstacle course, Chair’s Plane, Go-Karts and there are Bouncy Castles for all ages. It’s a day not to be missed! Entry is £1.50 per adult, all children must be accompanied and are free with a paying adult.
  **find out more**
  Kallina on 07747 064662

- **Morden Family Fun-Day**
  Sunday 17 July, 10.30am–5pm
  Morden Park Sports Field. Free.
  **find out more**
  www.mordenfunday.org

  Book a stall at Mitcham Carnival and Morden Family Fun-Day and get a 10% discount on both events.

- **May Fair**
  Monday 2 May, 12-3pm
  St Saviour’s Church, Grand Drive. Free admission.
  **find out more**
  020 8395 6095
  www.stsaviour.net

- **Wimbledon Guild Village Fair**
  Saturday 18 June, 10.30am–5pm
  Wimbledon Common, Southside. Shopping areas, children’s zones and performances including a fun dog show. Free entry.

**Have a great idea for a new business? Not sure of the next step?**

The Merton Business Support Service gives you the knowledge and skills to make your business ideas happen; and we will be there for you every step of the way!

Call the helpdesk today to see how we can help!

020 8619 0700
mertonbusinesssupport.co.uk
helpdesk@mertonbusinesssupport.co.uk

The Merton Business Support Service is financially supported by The London Borough of Merton.
The way we all register to vote has changed. Under the old system the ‘head of household’ could register everyone who lives at their address. Now everyone is responsible for registering themselves.

If you have just turned 18 or moved to the area, make sure you get heard and register to vote. Go online and register, all you need is your National Insurance number and date of birth.

www.gov.uk/register-to-vote
Merton Council is calling on people to become foster carers and give young people a loving home. *My Merton* met Evelyn Marshall who has taken that step.

**How long have you been fostering?**
My partner and I have been fostering for 20 years. We’re currently fostering a 16-year-old boy and a 17-year-old girl. In total, we’ve fostered 30 children with Merton Council.

**Why do you foster?**
There are so many children who need a loving home and I can offer that as well as being able to support them through a very difficult time. I want to be there for them for the highs as well as the lows.

**What support do you get from the council?**
Merton’s fostering team go above and beyond to support me. They support us through various challenges. They visit monthly and are always there at the end of a phone.

**Why do you foster teenagers?**
There has been such an increase in the numbers of teenagers coming into care I felt I had to offer stability and support to them. I enjoy listening to them, helping them with their education and helping them to achieve their goals.

**What would you say to potential foster carers?**
Fostering is very rewarding. But you need to be open minded, adaptable, patient and a good listener.

**What are the challenges?**
The challenges are always in the beginning when a child comes to stay. They can sometimes be angry and act out because of what has happened to them. We are trained and supported to deal with this.

**What is most rewarding about fostering?**
I love it when a child comes back to see me and has reached their goals in life.

[find out more](merton.gov.uk/fostering)