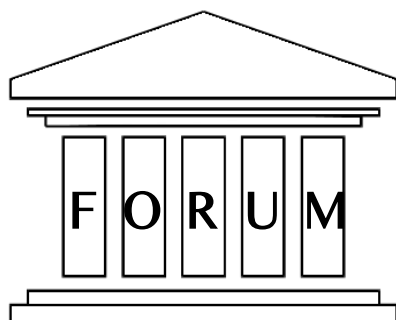


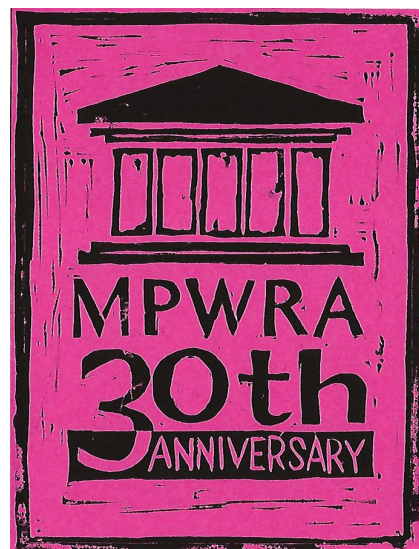
Merton Park Ward Residents' Association

for the residents of: Morden | Merton Park | Wimbledon Chase



Autumn 2019

Issue 63



Letter from the Chairman:

30 years ago, in October, we were in the throes of a campaign to have Bridget Smith elected as our first Independent Residents Councillor.

The issue prompting this was the positioning of a proposed relief road, threatening to destroy several character houses built by John Innes. The Council would not listen so we decided to change things by having our own Independent Councillors. A timely by-election came up, Bridget Smith volunteered to stand and she was elected with a good majority, as have all Independent Resident Candidates since.

The Merton Park Ward Residents' Association was formed and the following May, at the full Council elections, Bridget was re-elected and was joined by two other Independent Councillors, Neville Beddoe and Desé Child. Having successfully stopped the relief road they rapidly found that Independence lent itself to dealing very effectively with all matters affecting the Ward and its individual residents. Successor Independent Residents' Councillors have all carried on a tradition of never opposing for opposition's sake, and of judging issues on their merits.

In her speech at our 30 Year celebration, Bridget remarked on the amount of support our Councillors receive from so many people. This includes the election teams, the committee, the officers and the many hard-working volunteers who offer knowledge and technical support or who produce and distribute FORUM to every door in the Ward.

Our Independent Councillors have become well known and are held in high regard and affection within the community. Fellow councillors have given them honours. Bridget was Mayor of Merton and Edward Foley is currently Deputy Mayor, as was Peter Southgate and many others. Peter, as an Independent, is the long-term Chair of the Council's important Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

Celebrating 30 years means we must look to the future and succession, and it is pleasing to see newer residents joining the Committee and taking up the roles some have been carrying out for so long. There is always room for more, including understudies. If you would like to ask about volunteering, please get in touch with me on Hubertchild@hotmail.co.uk

As well as help, we do need more money. If you are not yet a member, please do join us. The annual subscription is only £5 per household and there are savings for 5 Year and Life memberships.

Hubert Child—Chairman

Tel: 020 8540 3087 | Email: hubertchild@hotmail.co.uk



Contact your local Independent Ward Councillors (pictured left -right)

Cllr. Peter Southgate - Leader MPWIR

peter.southgate@merton.gov.uk / 020 8542 2053

Cllr. Edward Foley

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Cllr. Dickie Wilkinson

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£5000 FOR MERTON PARK – HOW YOU WOULD SPEND IT?

In the last edition of FORUM, we asked for your ideas on how to spend £5000 improving the public spaces in our Ward. A big “thank you” to the 110 residents who responded to the survey and named their top three projects from a list of 11 specified by the council.

These are the three projects that stood out as attracting the most support:

Project	%
Bulb planting	43
Rights of Way – vegetation cutback and weeding	47
Grants to community groups and support or volunteer clean up	48

As might be expected a range of sites are nominated for bulb planting, but the two that come top are Mostyn Gardens (14) and Kendor Gardens (8). John Innes Park and the grass verge in Bakers End each received four nominations.

The Public Right of Way most frequently chosen for weeding and vegetation cut back is the footpath leading from Dorset Road to the Tram link crossing, and on to Melbourne Road or Merton Park Tram stop (8 nominations). Volunteers made a concerted effort to clear this two years ago, but the weeds have grown back as no new planting was introduced. Dorset Road is also mentioned for the build-up of fallen leaves during the autumn.

Other Public Rights of Way nominated for weeding and vegetation cut back are from Kenley Road to Morden town centre and from Dorset Road across Erridge Road to Wessex Avenue (alongside the Old Ruts sports ground) – but with only two mentions for each.

Volunteer groups are already active in looking after our parks and open spaces in Merton Park and there is strong support for grants to community groups to continue this work – although whether residents want to volunteer themselves is not so clear. The work of the Friends of John Innes Park gets a special mention although it is Mostyn Gardens (currently without a “Friends” group) where most residents feel volunteer input is needed.

The other projects on the list did not receive nearly the same levels of support, and are unlikely to progress further at this stage. Four projects (table 2) were nominated by around a quarter of respondents:

Project	%
Bench seating in parks	27
Refurbishing street furniture	25
Play equipment in parks	22
Deep clean pavements	23

Projects	%
Alley gates – additional funding	15
Paint/renew park railings	14
Paint/renew park litter bins	13
Paint lighting columns	4

Several respondents commented that £5000 only goes so far, so in terms of “bang for bucks” bulb planting has more visual impact than new seating in parks.

The remaining four projects (table 3) may have attracted limited support because of their utilitarian nature – or perhaps a belief that these are routine maintenance tasks that should not require special funding.

Your Ward Councillors are now consulting with local residents on how best to deliver outcomes for these projects. For example, we are talking to the Friends of Kendor Gardens about bulb planting beside the Dorset Road entrance, and re-painting the railings at each end. They can work with the Community Payback team, which means the funds go a lot further.

We welcome your ideas (and even offers of help!) for bulb planting in Mostyn Gardens, and improving the footpath from Dorset Road to the Tram link crossing.



Suspicious characters in John Innes Park!

COMMUNITY GARDEN IN MORDEN

Morden Baptist Church has put forward a proposal to develop the area of lawn alongside the church into a garden for the community. The aim is to provide a place for people to sit and socialise, or reflect, so providing a haven of peace and tranquillity in the middle of a busy town which is getting ever busier. The garden would be available for local residents and those who work in Morden who could come at lunchtime or break times, adding to an improved work/life balance.

The environmental benefits from green spaces are numerous; particularly where overcrowding of buildings can create

uncomfortable heat island effects. Research has shown that plants can reduce air temperature in their immediate vicinity.

Initial estimates of the costs involved indicate the need to raise in excess of £20,000. This is to include seating areas, fruit trees, raised planting and accessible paths. There will be flowers to encourage wildlife; birds, bees and butterflies. The long-term plan would be to develop a kitchen garden where herbs and vegetables can be grown.

MPWRA supports this initiative that would enhance the area and so if you would like to make a contribution to this cause, please email the church: communitygardenteam@outlook.com

Cllr Peter Southgate

BACK TO THE FUTURE - MERTON?

The Future Merton team at Merton Council has announced that it has been awarded £54.5 million from the GLA to help towards funding the Morden Regeneration scheme and so it is looking to procure a development partner in 2020/21. Yes, this may seem like déjà vu and so forgive me if I don't get too excited by the news.

As the diagram below shows, Future Merton have repeatedly announced that they are looking for a development partner, even going so far as to spend £7000 sending council Leader Stephen Alambritis to the South of France, in the height of Summer, to find one. Funding was offered once before in 2015 when Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London, made Morden a 'London Housing Zone' and awarded a £42million development loan to "woo" development partners. Unfortunately, Future Merton failed to organise itself in time and I gather the offer was withdrawn as there is no mention of it after 2017.

I don't want to put a dampener on the work that Future Merton do. This project is hugely complex, but it does deserve to be scrutinised. Regrettably, I feel that such scrutiny has been missing from the meetings held with Future Merton and cross-party Councillors from various wards in Merton.

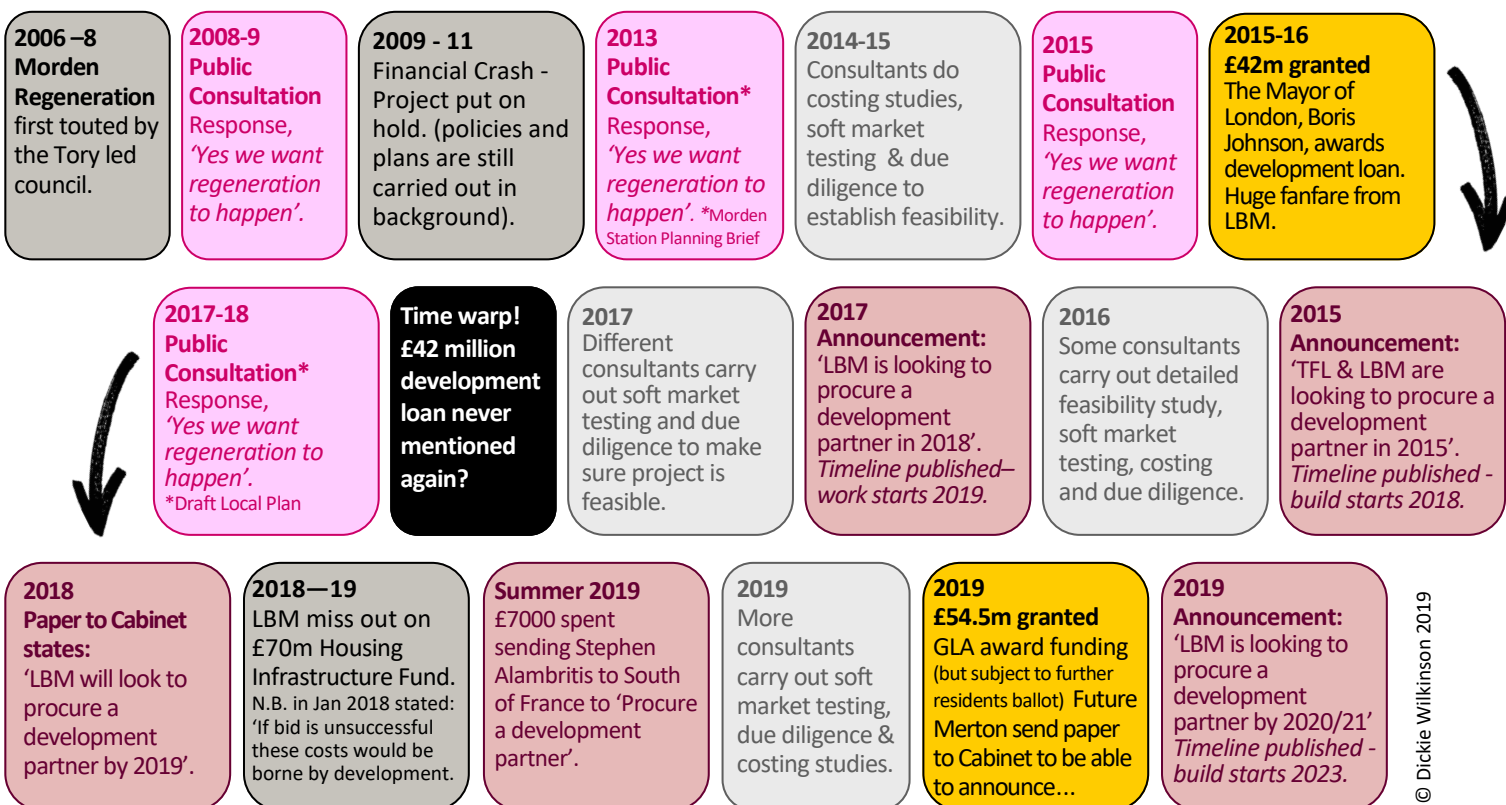
Meanwhile Morden is suffering from 'informal blight' as shopkeepers, business owners, investors, TFL and the Council itself, continue to put off investing any time or money in it and so the area outside the station becomes increasingly unwelcoming and dirty along with more anti-social behaviour. Given that no work will happen before 2023, this blight has to stop now and we need to call on the Council, Future Merton and TFL to work with landlords and shop owners to get the place cleaned up. If they cannot manage that, then what hope is there of them working together to completely rebuild the place?

One officer in a recent meeting described Morden as being 'economically unsustainable'. I find this insulting and untrue. Over the last ten years while Future Merton has been making grand plans about how wonderful Morden *can be*, businesses and shops have continued to open and trade successfully. Love Morden (a local community group) have strived to put on some form of gathering every Christmas without any funding from the Council. Morden is, in fact, sustaining itself despite the Council's inertia and failure to improve the area.

Many of the shops and businesses in Morden are independent and have proved to be very resilient both during and after the banking crisis. While many high streets chains are closing, Morden's eclectic mix of Halal butchers, hardware stores and 'traditional caffs' continue to thrive. These businesses deserve support now. Council funding specifically to improve shop fronts, closely monitored by the Planning Department, would ensure that businesses follow the Council's shop front guidelines to the benefit of everyone locally. I must stress that I fully support the plans to regenerate Morden and recognise the task that the Future Merton team face, but I hope that Merton Council will see that something urgently needs to be done now and not put off yet again until such time that official regeneration begins.

Cllr Dickie Wilkinson

MORDEN REGENERATION TIMELINE





MPWRA 30th ANNIVERSARY

Our October meeting was transformed into a very enjoyable **30 Year Celebration Party** with a glass of prosecco and a warm welcome for everyone of the 80 + people who attended!

More than £200 was raised on the evening through donations and raffle tickets sales and we want to take this opportunity to thank the following **local, independent businesses** for donating prizes alongside our own contributions;

Gina Conway - Hair & Beauty Salon
£50 Gift Voucher for hair & beauty services

Cranleigh - Tennis & Social Club
Voucher for, Child tennis membership or Adult social membership

Holistic Fitness - Martial Arts & Personal Training Studios
Voucher for 1-2-1 training session or massage

Ambience - Turkish Restaurant
£50 Gift Voucher for dinner for 2

Thank you to all those involved and to our hosts, Old Ruts Club, for making it such a successful evening.

But don't worry if you missed out! Our December meeting will be our usual festive soiree with wine & food and a chance to catch up socially.

Join us at Our Future Meetings - All Welcome

Tuesday 4th December – 8pm

Merton Park Primary School (Erridge Road)

Guest Speaker: Katharine Kiernan from Wimbledon Guild— Living Warm & Well

Plus: Councillors' Reports & Q&A

With festive food and drinks.

Jan. 2020 - No Meeting but do resolve to Join MPWRA if not already a member!

Tues. 4th Feb. – 8pm Speaker: **Dominique Hall LBM** - Climate Emergency

Tues. 3rd Mar. – 8pm Speaker: **Ben Stephens LBM** - Parking Services (tbc)

Tues. 7th Apr. – 8pm Speaker: **Eben Van Der Westhuizen** - Future Merton (tbc)

Not yet a member of MPWRA? - Join at: www.mertonpark.org.uk

SEASONAL SCAM WARNING

Christmas is fast approaching. Royal Mail & The Trading Standards Office are making people aware of the following scam:

A card is posted through your door from a company called **PDS (Parcel Delivery Service)** suggesting that they were unable to deliver a parcel and that you need to contact them on a premium rate number. **Do not call any number on a card from PDS.** If you call the number and you start to hear a recorded message you will already have been billed £315 for the phone call!

MPWRA Officers

Chairman:	Hubert Child	020 8540 3087
Vice Chairman:	Bryan Anderson	
Secretary:	Christine Stutt	020 8543 6843
Treasurer:	Fred Rayner	

MPWRA Committee

Ingrid Holtz	Krysia Williams	Greg Bryant
Graham Clark	Stephen Mercer	Pauline Southgate
Pauline Lightfoot	David Merriman	Jolanta Nowak
Ian Garbett		

Contact MPWRA:

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