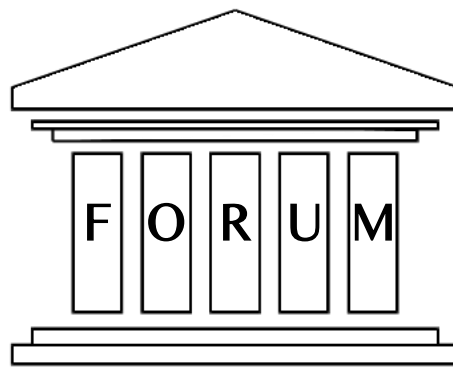


# Merton Park Ward Residents' Association

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



New Year 2022

Issue 67

## NEW BENCHES FOR KENDOR GARDENS



Thank you to local resident and MPWRA Committee member, David Merriman, for sending in this photo of the newly-installed park benches in Kendor Gardens.

These were paid for using the Merton Park Ward Allocation Fund that has been available for local small-scale projects.

CLR. D.W.

## Inside this Issue:

- Where is 'Your Merton'?
- MPWIR Motion Success
- Friends for Mostyn Gardens
- Peel House Car Park Temporary Closure
- + MPWRA future meeting dates for your diary

### Letter from the Chairman:

Welcome to our New Year edition of FORUM. I hope you have been able to enjoy a better Christmas this time round than in 2020.

In his article inside on *Where is "Your Merton"*, Councillor Southgate reminds us that Merton Park Ward has been judged to have the highest "Social Capital" among all the Wards in Merton – meaning we are extremely strong in community spirit. That spirit was shown in so many practical ways in 2020 and has continued in 2021. Thank you for getting vaccinated to protect your neighbours as well as yourselves, and also for volunteering to help at vaccination centres. Long may our social capital sustain us.

MPWRA is maintained by volunteers who provide monthly public meetings for our Independent residents' councillors, email alerts, FORUM and much else. May will see local elections in Merton. In March we will be holding a Special General Meeting to present our Merton Park Ward Independent Residents' candidates willing to stand for election as your councillors for the next four years. All residents are welcome to attend, although only paid-up members of MPWRA will be eligible to vote. MPWRA, its councillors and volunteers are very much part of the community spirit so please help us by becoming a member (form enclosed or via our website).

**Hubert Child - Chairman** Tel 020 8540 3087/email [hubertchild@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:hubertchild@hotmail.co.uk)

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

<b>Cllr. Peter Southgate - Leader MPWIR</b>	<a href="mailto:peter.southgate@merton.gov.uk">peter.southgate@merton.gov.uk</a> / 020 8542 2053
<b>Cllr. Edward Foley</b>	<a href="mailto:edward.foley@merton.gov.uk">edward.foley@merton.gov.uk</a> / 020 8542 5824
<b>Cllr. Dickie Wilkinson</b>	<a href="mailto:dickie.wilkinson@merton.gov.uk">dickie.wilkinson@merton.gov.uk</a> / 07905 103 686



# WHERE IS ‘YOUR MERTON’?

It’s in our parks and green spaces, and on our high streets, according to the council study completed last summer. Billed as the biggest conversation Merton council has ever held, it included thousands of people who live, work or study in Merton, with the aim of understanding their views, experiences and ambitions for the future of their area.

This is very much a place-based study, focussing on the ward or neighbourhood where people live, rather than the borough as a whole. At this level the two assets people value most highly are their parks and open spaces, and the sense of community where they live. The two things they dislike most are the congestion caused by high volumes of traffic, and the perceived increase in litter and anti-social behaviour. Their wishes for the future include a revitalisation of the high street to make it a more community focussed space – less shopping, more socialising.

Those who live in Merton Park will have little difficulty in recognising and endorsing these values. Merton Park Ward is ranked first for social capital (= community cohesion) among the borough’s twenty wards. Our three parks - John Innes Park, Mostyn Gardens and Kendor Gardens - are popular and well supported by their “Friends” groups, and our grass verges will be alight with daffodils when spring comes, thanks to the efforts of the many volunteers who have planted bulbs in their roads.

Revitalisation of the high street has been a long time coming as far as Morden is concerned. Regeneration of Morden town centre has been under discussion for 20 years, but the financial difficulties of TfL as a joint partner with the council and major site owner make this prospect as remote as ever. So revitalisation will depend on more immediate initiatives such as “meanwhile” uses for empty premises, greening opportunities like parklets, and better signage to take visitors beyond the centre and into two of the borough’s best open spaces, Morden Park and Morden Hall Park. Like all our high streets, Morden needs a town centre manager whose role will be to promote the independent businesses on which the vitality of the high street depends.

If Morden town centre is to engender a sense of civic pride and ownership amongst residents and users, it will need more than a superficial makeover. Each of Merton’s five town centres has a unique history that is too easily obscured by transitory businesses and tatty shopfronts. This historical legacy needs to be surfaced and put on display to differentiate Morden from other town centres, and give depth to its character. So the award of £35,000 to Merton Heritage for its project “There’s More to Morden” is good news. The project will use shop window displays and orientation panels to highlight local history, and create heritage trails linking the town centre to residential areas and parks.

But if we widen this out to the bigger picture of the borough as a whole, we are bound to ask – is this enough? The findings from “Your Merton” are intended to serve as the basis of a strategic vision for Merton through to 2030. Can an approach based on our parks and open spaces and the rejuvenation of our high streets address inequalities between east and west that have been made worse by the pandemic? Is it just a snapshot taken at an exceptional moment in time, or does it offer a durable path to the future?

Answering these questions is the challenge that Merton Council must address as it formulates its strategic plan for the years ahead. As your Independent councillors, we will be working to ensure the views of Merton Park residents are taken into account in the planning process.

Cllr. Peter Southgate

## RESIDENTS’ SURVEYS - WHAT’S CHANGED?

### Residents’ Surveys: 2010—2013

Crime was the Number 1 concern for residents

### Every Survey Since 2014

Litter & Street Cleaning has been the Number 1 concern for residents

### 2017 Survey report stated:

“Litter/poor street cleaning is the leading cause of dissatisfaction... this should be an area of focus”.

### 2019 Survey Key Findings:

“...45% of residents believe street cleanliness is an area that most needs improving across the borough.”

### 2021 Big Conversation Recommendation 1

“The council must improve... the cleanliness of Merton’s Streets.”

### Conclusion

That’s for you to decide in an election year. But despite the biggest (or longest) conversation ever, one has to ask is the council actually listening?

# MPWIR MOTION HELPS COUNCIL TO ‘GET SMART’

As Independent councillors our remit is very simple; to represent the views of our residents, even if we may not always entirely agree with them. We tend to do this backstage, via the committees we sit on, or simply by direct action.

We rarely put forward motions, but after sitting quietly in council for three and a half years I recognised that far too often motions rarely affect anything, they are often simply political point scoring. Because motions usually have a political tone, they are amended, watered down or kicked into the long grass, understandable when such motions lend themselves more to tweets and election leaflet headlines than to action. Beyond the meeting there is no accountability.

Therefore, at the last council meeting I saw an opportunity to improve accountability and ensure that all parties can more effectively represent their residents’ interests. The idea was simple; a proposal would be made that all future motions should be based on SMART goal principles, which could then be held to account. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound.

Your Independent councillors were unsure how this proposal would be received. However, there were no suggested amendments nor indication of opposition from the other parties in the leaders’ pre-meeting and I was delighted when the motion was passed unanimously. All parties agreed that, where possible, future motions would be based on SMART goal principles and that an annual update would be sent to councillors reporting the progress made on the motions passed in the previous year. This allows further scrutiny and accountability of the council, as well as, one hopes, celebrating achievements and the opportunity to query how best to make ideas happen for the good of our residents.

While this may not be the most exciting or headline grabbing news to report, I am hopeful that it is one that can effect real change. As we go into the local elections in May, I would hope that our residents recognise that Merton Park Independent councillors get things done because we work with the administration, rather than focussing our efforts on trying to become the party in power.

You can read my speech and see the original motion on the MPWRA website and you can also watch the video clip of the relevant council meeting on YouTube.

Cllr. Dickie Wilkinson



# PEEL HOUSE CAR PARK CLOSURE

Merton Park councillors were the first to break the news that the Peel House car park which serves Sainsbury’s Morden would close on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> January for urgent investigatory work into its structural condition. Initial estimates are that repairs will take 3 – 6 months.

Clearly a car park that is unsafe must be closed, but this is a major blow to Sainsbury’s, which has served the residents of Merton Park well over the years, especially those who prefer its familiar aisles to the wide-open spaces of the Colliers Wood store. Peel House is the only conveniently sited council car park for centre of Morden.

The suggestion that Sainsbury’s shoppers can use the York Close car park as an alternative is frankly ludicrous, and we will be pressing Parking Services to regain use of the Kenley Road car park for shoppers, now that its use as a Covid testing centre is declining.

Looking beyond the effect on Sainsbury’s, this closure is a setback to our ambitions for the revitalisation of Morden town centre. The council has set aside significant funds for Morden (£200,000 for improvements in 2022/23 and £2m in matched funding for each of the next three years), and we will work hard to ensure this money is spent well. But let’s get the little things right first – like a town centre with adequate parking for residents who want to shop locally and support their own High Street.

Cllr. Peter Southgate

# LOCAL ELECTIONS 5TH MAY 2022

At the end of December, the weekly Covid infection rate in Merton Park was 1896.6 per 100,000 (150 cases). This may fall as rapidly as it has risen, but you can make sure of your vote for the local elections in May by registering for a postal vote now. This will avoid the need to visit a polling station in person.

To register for a postal vote, simply go to the council website ([www.merton.gov.uk](http://www.merton.gov.uk)) and enter "postal vote" in the search box to download the application form. If you do not have internet access, ask one of your councillors to get the form for you.

The last date to apply in time for the local elections is **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> April**.

Cllr. Peter Southgate



## MPWRA IS FOR ALL RESIDENTS

Are you a resident of the areas on or around London Road, including, Morden Court, Morden House, Grosvenor Court, The Holt and The Homefield?

We want to remind all of our residents that we are here to represent every one of you, but realise that too often people on the London Road side of the ward may feel less involved.

Please speak up if so!

MPWRA delivers FORUM to every address in the ward, so do come along to our meetings or sign up to our mailing list and get involved.

[mpwra@mertonpark.org.uk](mailto:mpwra@mertonpark.org.uk)

Cllr. Dickie Wilkinson

## A FRIENDS GROUP FOR MOSTYN GARDENS

At our September meeting guest speaker, Lorna Collins of Figges Marsh Friends Group, gave a talk entitled "Exploring Merton's Parks." Merton Park has volunteer Friends Groups, who help with gardening in John Innes Park, Kendor Gardens and St Mary's Churchyard.

On hearing that no such group existed for Mostyn Gardens, Neaz Ahmed, our newest committee member, immediately volunteered to set one up and has enlisted help from her friends and neighbours.

Another shining example of community spirit in Merton Park.

Hubert Child

## Join us at Our Future Meetings - All Welcome

**Tuesday 15th March — 8pm (please note the mid-month date)**

Merton Park Primary School

**Special General Meeting — Candidate Selection for 2022 local election**

### Plus: Councillors' Reports & Q&A

This will be our first in-person meeting for 2 years  
so please do come along and say hello to your neighbours and friends.

**Tuesday 5th April — 8pm**

Guest Speaker: Diana Sterck—Sustainable Merton

**Tuesday 3rd May — 8pm**

Guest Speaker: tbc

#### MPWRA Officers

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

#### MPWRA Committee

Ingrid Holtz Krysia Williams Greg Bryant  
Stephen Johnson Stephen Mercer Pauline Southgate  
Pauline Lightfoot Ian Garbett Jolanta Nowak  
Neaz Ahmed Bryan Anderson

#### Contact MPWRA:

Website: [www.mertonpark.org.uk](http://www.mertonpark.org.uk)  
Email: [mpwra@mertonpark.org.uk](mailto:mpwra@mertonpark.org.uk)  
Telephone: 0208 540 3087