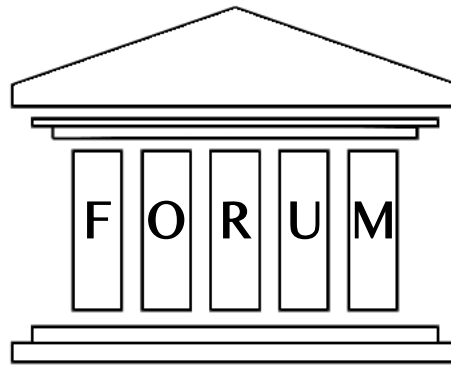


Merton Park Ward Residents' Association

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



June 2022

Issue 68



Thank you!

Our sincerest thanks to all of you who voted for us.
But even if you chose not to vote Independent Resident
we are still here for you.

We look forward to hearing your views and feedback over
the coming term and appreciate your ongoing support.

Edward Foley

Stephen Mercer

Letter from the Chairman:

Welcome to this special edition of FORUM that includes the full results of the recent local council election for Merton Park Ward. 60% of voters supported the Independents, compared to 57% in 2018, assuring them of an increased majority.

So thank you for your continuing confidence in our Independent councillors. During canvassing, we had an inkling that you increasingly thought we were doing a good job. We were very grateful for the warmth and strength of support expressed. About a third of the ward's population has changed since the last local elections and we wanted to be sure that we made contact with voters new to the area. It was gratifying to find the same warm reception when we met them on their doorsteps. We have a wonderful community and architectural heritage and it is a privilege for our councillors to be entrusted, once again, with ensuring the council works to preserve and enhance the Merton Park we know and love.

You appreciate having councillors for the ward who live locally, share your hopes for your area and its environment, and are accountable to you, rather than owing allegiance to any national political party. Local government should be about local issues and some of the important concerns you raised on the doorstep during the election campaign are discussed on pages 2/3. Our Independent councillors will do their utmost to represent these concerns to the council. On page 3 you can read about the roles they will undertake on Merton Council, working with councillors from all parties to make Merton a good place to live and work.

If you are not already a member of MPWRA, please consider joining. MPWRA depends on our residents alone to fund our communications and activities, and in an election year we spend more than our income. A membership form is enclosed and you can also pay and join online at www.mertonpark.org.uk. Whether or not you are a member, please keep in touch with your comments and feedback. Come along to our monthly meetings, read FORUM, sign up for our email alerts mpwra@mertonpark.org.uk and visit our website www.mertonpark.org.uk. For direct contact, you will find the necessary details for the councillors on page 3.

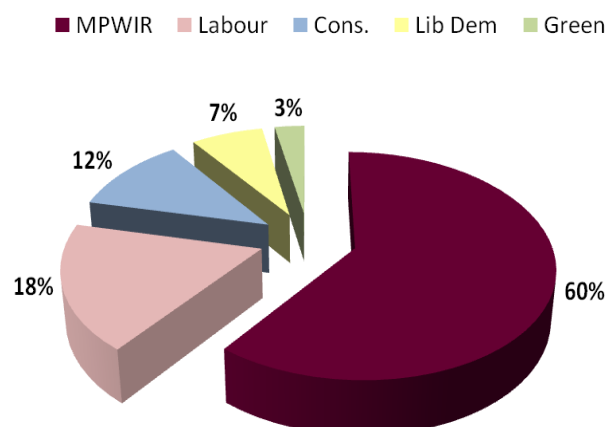
Hubert Child—Chairman | Tel: 0208 540 3087 | Email: hubertchild@hotmail.co.uk

Independents Strengthen Hold on Merton Park Ward

At the local elections held on Thursday 5th May, the Merton Park Ward Independent Residents (MPWIR) scored a convincing win for the ninth time in succession since their formation in 1990.

At 60% their share of the total vote exceeded all other parties combined and represents an increase on 57% achieved in 2018. Both Edward Foley and Stephen Mercer won three times as many votes as the next highest candidate. Turnout this time was 50%, the same as in 2018 and above the 40% turnout averaged across all Merton wards. Results by party for Merton Park Ward are shown in the table below:

Party	Total Votes	%	2018 %
MPWIR Edward Foley (1853 votes 31%)	3576	60	57
MPWIR Stephen Mercer (1723 votes 29%)			
Labour	1073	18	18
Conservative	679	12	16
Liberal Democrats	470	7	7
Green Party	173	3	3



Apart from a drop in the Conservative vote (which appears to have benefitted MPWIR), the positions of the other parties in Merton Park Ward are unchanged from 2018. Not so across the borough as a whole. In an inversion of the *status quo* in the last council, the LibDems have gone from 6 seats to 17, while the Conservatives have been reduced from 17 seats to 7. Labour remains in power with 31 seats out of 57; this is little changed from 34 seats out of 60 in the last council. (The Boundary Commission reduced the number of seats and redrew the ward boundaries in 2019/20, as we know to our cost.) There are now five split wards; Hillside (Cons/LibDem), Abbey (Labour/LibDem), Wandle (Labour/LibDem) Cannon Hill (Cons/LibDem) and Lower Morden (Cons/Labour).

At the Annual Council Meeting on 25th May, Cllr Ross Garrod was elected as the new Leader, since the previous Leader, Cllr Mark Allison, failed in his bid for election to the new Wandle Ward. Cllr Garrod represents Longthornton Ward, and previously served in the 2014-18 council, when he was Cabinet member for the Environment. The new Mayor is Cllr Joan Henry and the Deputy is Cllr Agatha Akyigyina.

For full results in each ward, go to:

www.merton.gov.uk/council-and-local-democracy/elections-and-voting/election-results

Peter Southgate

What we Learned on the Doorstep

The first thing we learned is that one in three of you is new to Merton Park Ward, or to be more precise, you were not living at your present address at the time of the last election in 2018. Welcome! We know from meeting you that you are pleased to be here, and you like the parks and green spaces, the tree lined streets and daffodils growing in the grass verges. You value being part of an open, inclusive and welcoming community, evident in the street parties that took place to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

In the next four years we want to build on that sense of community. We will use our Ward Allocation Fund to extend the work of the volunteers who planted all the bulbs in our parks and verges. Let us know if you'd like to join them for bulb planting in the autumn.

But not everything in Merton Park is perfect. There are small things which need putting right to make it a much better place. Household waste collections are missed too often. Uneven pavements and overgrown hedges make life hazardous for pedestrians, litter and fly-tipping spoil the public environment, and potholes need fixing. Street lighting is inadequate in places and needs to be improved, especially in roads with a dense tree canopy like Dorset Road. That's why we ran a petition for better street lighting, which gained wide support – thanks to all of you who signed. We'll be pressing the council for improvements.

The consultation on a Low Traffic Neighbourhood made it clear residents do not want restrictions designed to deter rat running traffic if it makes their own journeys longer or more difficult. So don't expect the peak hour traffic through our residential roads to reduce, but we will continue to work with the Merton Park police team to enforce 20mph speed limits.

The extended closure of Sainsbury's car park has dealt a blow to the businesses in Morden town centre. Getting it re-opened and improving the approach road and surroundings should be a priority for the council.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3 ...

Meet your Local Independent Resident Ward Councillors



L-R: Cllr Edward Foley & Cllr Stephen Mercer

Thank you Merton Park residents for electing me! I am particularly grateful that so many of you who don't yet know me were willing to trust Merton Park Ward Independent Residents. I shall do my best to justify your confidence.

Canvassing before the election was a reassuring process, with many residents expressing satisfaction about the performance of our councillors. Peter Southgate's name was often mentioned! However, for some the function of the association is less well known – 'representing residents to the best of our ability and voting impartially on the merits of a given proposal' is the summary of my response.

Elsewhere in FORUM we have explained what we learnt from our discussions on doorsteps. However, in all those discussions during canvassing I did not spend much time considering the reality of starting in the role. What did my first week look like? A party to celebrate our election, followed by informing my company that I shall be reducing my hours to facilitate my new responsibilities.

A 'Members Welcome Evening' held at Crown House felt like my first day at school, though I think it was easier to comprehend secondary school than all the committees, sub-committees, officers, rules, regulations and processes of Merton Council. Later in the week I attended a further meeting outlining the role of councillors, decision making and ethics. I joined a very informative inspection of a block of flats run by Clarion Housing and met some of the residents. I discussed with Jason Besant how we could help with more planting this autumn. I collected a PC from the council and received relevant training but, with all the usual complications involved when accessing information on a large local network, I was still not able to use it when writing this article. I finished with a boundary dispute on Saturday morning before tea and cake at the John Innes Society plant sale.

I believe that my legal training and experience of running a business mean that I can make a useful contribution to the formal processes of scrutinising the council plans and policies. However, my first week's experiences have reassured me that I can also add value by assisting residents with their challenges and by supporting them with their aspirations, both for themselves and for their homes, which together make up Merton Park.

Cllr Stephen Mercer

Alongside the day-to-day activities of representing our ward your MPWIR councillors play a full role in the work of the council and the community, with appointments to the key committees and external organisations.

Stephen Mercer (newly elected)

- Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel
- Licensing
- Morden Community Forum
- Overview & Scrutiny Panel – Substitute
- Planning Applications Committee - Substitute

Contact: stephen.mercer@merton.gov.uk / 020 8543 2143

Edward Foley (Cllr since 2014)

- Overview & Scrutiny Commission - Chair
- Planning Applications Committee
- Morden Community Forum
- Locations Board
- Ricards Lodge High School - Chair
- RR6
- Merton United Charities - Trustee
- Safer Neighbourhood Panel
- Sustainable Communities - Substitute
- Licensing - Substitute

Contact: edward.foley@merton.gov.uk / 020 8542 5824

...WHAT WE LEARNED ON THE DOORSTEP CONTINUED

Major regeneration of Morden town centre looks as far away as ever, but we will press for "meanwhile" opportunities on the High Street (such as seats and planting) to make it a place for socialising as well as shopping.

Four years ago, we set ourselves the target of opening up the path from Dorset Road through to Morden Road tram-stop, beside Park Academy. This would provide level access for wheel chair users, and save the long detour over the bridge on busy Morden Road to reach the platforms. We haven't succeeded yet, and the bureaucratic obstacles seem as intractable as ever, but we're not giving up. Rather we will redouble our efforts in the next four years.

Peter Southgate

Thank you to Peter Southgate and Dickie Wilkinson



Before closing I must thank our two outgoing Independent councillors. I know that you would wish to join me in paying tribute to the excellent contribution that they have made over a number of years to improving the lives of residents.

Firstly, I would like to thank **Dickie** for the impact he has made his during four years of service as a councillor. He has fulfilled the usual responsibilities of a councillor, such as sitting on committees but in addition has used his IT and design skills to manage our website and email alerts as well as being responsible for the design and layout of FORUM to make it attractive to look at and interesting to read. Furthermore, he has pushed consistently for the development of Morden town centre, despite his frustration that plans for this have been delayed yet again. He has also urged us to adopt a greener lifestyle, even in the smaller things such as switching to bamboo toothbrushes!

What can I say about **Peter's** outstanding contribution over the last 20 years as a councillor, many of you know him so well. There is far too much to cover it all and so I will mention some of the things he has done, each different in complexity and scale, but nevertheless showing how he made a difference for residents. Sitting on the Planning Applications Committee he was able to put the case for residents' interests clearly and strongly especially regarding undesirable projects. This was undoubtedly frustrating at times when, despite his best efforts, his objections were overruled. He also distinguished himself as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission that reviews council decisions, a crucial role in ensuring accountability in government. Even in smaller issues he has acted quickly and effectively. He got abandoned equipment removed from a daffodil bed in Mostyn Gardens almost overnight!

Twenty years of service (plus prior involvement in MPWRA) requires stamina and support. His wife, Pauline, who was involved in the association from its formation, has dealt with membership and other tasks willingly and ably over all these years. She too, deserves our gratitude and we know that both Peter and Pauline will continue to offer their expertise and experience through their ongoing work on the committee. Those of you who have seen Peter out and about in the ward on council business will doubtless still bump into him now and again.

Our heartfelt thanks go to both Peter and Dickie and we wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

Pauline Lightfoot—Editor



Join us at Our Next Meeting - All Welcome

**Tuesday 5th July
Merton Park Primary School
AGM ***

Plus: Councillors' Reports & Q&A

*All paid up members will be able to vote on any issues that arise at the AGM, if your membership has lapsed or you wish to join, please fill in the enclosed leaflet and return to us by July 1st or see details on our website: www.mertonpark.org.uk