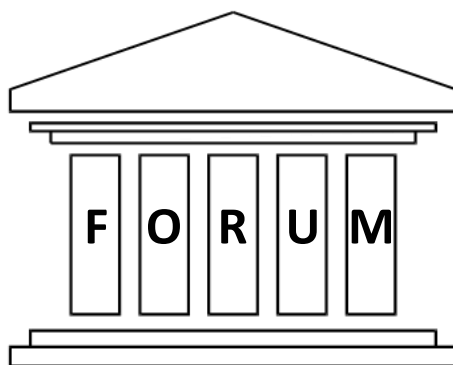


Merton Park Ward Residents' Association

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



Spring 2023

Issue 70

Congratulations to Neaz Ahmed and her team, the Muslim Women of Morden, who have secured funding to improve Mostyn Gardens from the Mayor of London's Grow Back Greener Fund.



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Letter from the Chairman:

It would be nice to see you

Welcome to the Spring edition of FORUM, which is delivered to every household in Merton Park Ward. It is the newsletter whereby MPWRA and your Independent Residents Councillors keep you informed about issues affecting the area. You can also join our email alert list by visiting our website and registering.

Best of all we would like to see you at our monthly meetings (details on page 4). These usually start with a guest speaker, and always have councillors' reports and time to question them closely – an evening of lively debate. Page 4 mentions some of the guest speakers who have attended our meetings since the last edition of FORUM was published.

Tea/coffee time gives a chance for Merton Park's residents to get to know each other as well as the councillors and MPWRA committee. This is important because your councillors live in the ward and, therefore, share your concerns and aspirations and need to meet you. Whether you are new to the ward, or however long you have been here, do please come along and get to know us.

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

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

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Great Expectations - Hubert Child

As I write, daffodils are appearing in many streets in Merton Park, all planted by the residents. Funding to improve Mostyn Gardens, from the Mayor of London's Grow Back Greener Fund, has been achieved by the Muslim Women of Merton. Volunteer Friends Groups in other parks in the ward assist council staff in keeping these parks looking attractive. These are examples of the community spirit we enjoy in our ward. Your Independent Residents Councillors, backed by MPWRA, are another example.

We are proud of our ward and have high expectations.

We notice when things go wrong in the ward, and are quick to alert our councillors but they are very busy. It would help if you report first through the council's website on the "Report it" or "FixMyStreet" pages. It is also important, however, to have realistic expectations. Councils across the country have been short of money and staff for many years, and so getting anything done takes a long time. Unfortunately, frequent repetition of complaints, and the need to reply to these, may even slow the council down from getting work arranged. Your councillors, of course, give priority to issues that pose a danger to try to ensure that they are dealt with urgently.

The Varied Life of a Councillor - Stephen Mercer

The work of attending council meetings and assisting residents continues and, nearly a year into the role, seems almost routine to me now. However, new issues arise to provide variety and below are just some of those that have taken a share of my time and energy:

Toilet Provision in Merton- at our monthly meeting last November I obtained overwhelming support to look into the provision of public /community toilets in Merton. The subject of 'conveniences' is hardly ever mentioned, yet it meets a fundamental need. Age UK has identified that lack of decent toilet provision prevents people of all ages moving throughout the borough without trepidation. Peter Southgate kindly volunteered to lend his extensive experience and energy to the cause and I subsequently received the formal support of the council's Scrutiny Commission and Sustainable Communities Panel to launch an enquiry. With the assistance of council officers, Peter and I have become experts on the topic over the last few months; reading reports, holding focus groups, interviewing interested parties and launching a borough-wide survey to gather the views of residents. The survey is still running at the time of writing but some clear themes emerge.

- People don't feel that there are enough toilets
- People don't know how to find them or when they are open

The lack of toilets at Morden Underground Station is a major irritant. Peter and I are still conducting meetings and will not be ready to produce a report until May but we have already identified opportunities for improvement and have reason to believe that we can contribute to some positive changes.

Electric vehicle charging - I have enjoyed working in a sub-committee on the subject of electric vehicle charging in Merton. The council has already started a process of introducing street charging from lamp posts and was keen to have the input from a scrutiny group, which we are providing. As I have recently bought my own electric car and bike, I am even more keenly aware of the challenges posed by the new technology and I am conscious that the necessary adjustments will be at the centre of a mini-revolution over the next 5-10 years. I expect the thrust of our recommendations to address the provision of more rapid charging points but also to facilitate residents' ability to charge at home as much as possible.



Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries - last autumn, as councillors and as an association, we tried to make the case on behalf of the majority of Merton Park residents in relation to the proposed parliamentary constituency boundary changes. We shall soon learn if our representations were heeded. For a little more about this see News in Brief on page 4.

Ongoing Support for Ukrainian Refugees - I have continued to focus on the plight of Ukrainian refugees in Merton. More than a year since the war started, there is no sign of an end to the conflict and most of the 300 or so families that we have welcomed here cannot easily return. The council is trying to cope with these guests, as well as refugees from other parts of the world, all in the context of a very difficult rental market. Anyone who feels that they could help under the Homes for Ukraine scheme is encouraged to contact the Housing Department (or me) as there will be challenges for some time yet, I fear.

Out and About in Merton Park - Edward Foley

St Mary's Churchyard Wall

As many residents will probably know, the wall has been leaning in places for many years and unfortunately at the end of January a large section of it collapsed onto the footpath of Church Lane. I was notified and attended and the bricks were cleared from the path. The wall is the responsibility of Merton Council and both Merton Park Councillors had previously supported a bid for some money to repair it. The wall is due to be repaired in the coming months after the rest of the wall has been surveyed and we have asked to be kept informed. Repairs could take some time because the specialist stonemasons capable of such repairs are in high demand.



St Mary's Church wall before bricks moved from pavement



Councillor Foley joining the Night Patrol

Saturday night patrol with our Merton Park Safer Neighbourhood Team

Following increased reports of anti-social behaviour in our parks I joined our team one recent Saturday evening to walk through all those parks where such reports had been received. Now that warmer summer months are on the way, there is often an increase in this type of behaviour, but our team are aware of this and will be monitoring the situation.

Please beware if you live in a "School Street"

A number of residents living in designated school streets have run into problems and received fines for driving in their own roads because they had forgotten to renew their annual permits. We strongly recommend that you make a note of when your permit expires and don't rely on receiving a reminder.

John Innes Park

I attended a meeting with The Friends of John Innes Park and Andrew Kauffman (Head of Parks) to discuss various issues that residents have raised. The bandstand roof repairs that were carried out last year have unfortunately failed and so the roof is due to be repaired again.

A section of archway by the new Rutlish School entrance was removed due to concerns by the school about some cracks in it. The remaining section was checked by an engineer from Merton and was confirmed safe, however the missing section has now been replaced and the path is open.

Several residents contacted us with concerns about the condition of the surface of the tennis courts where moss had built up over the last few years. This made it slippery when wet and so we are pleased to report that the courts were jet washed recently and the broken net replaced. Please treat the courts with respect and use them only for tennis. The weekend after they were cleaned a small group was seen playing football on the courts and this is how the nets get broken.

The fountain in the pond, which has not worked for some years now, is due to have a new pump and so we hope to see that returned to working order over the summer.

The Dorset Hall Group (DHG)

Dorset Hall, a large empty house on Kingston Road, is of historic interest, particularly because it was the home of Rose Lamartine Yates, an important figure in the women's Suffrage Movement. DHG was formed two and a half years ago to stop this neglected building falling into further disrepair. DHG put significant pressure on the owner, Clarion Housing Association, to fulfil their obligation to repair the roof and make the building weatherproof. They also commissioned an Options Appraisal in 2022 which was project managed by the National Trust, looking at possible business plans reflecting Dorset Hall's political heritage and architectural significance. DHG, along with Paul Quinn of Clarion, spoke at our April meeting about the imminent disposal of Dorset Hall. Paul Quinn said that Clarion is selling the building as it does not fit with their long-term strategy but it would like to sell the property to a sympathetic buyer that would work collaboratively to restore the building and grounds to reflect its past

DHG have decided that they have taken it as far as they can and asked that MPWRA now take this on and work with Clarion and any prospective buyer. However, MPWRA are currently too stretched to take on further commitments but if anyone works in architecture, building or law and is willing to get involved please get in touch.



Make sure you have a current permit to drive on these streets



Aerial view of Dorset Hall

News in Brief

Voter ID for Elections - from 4 May 2023 you will need to provide photo ID when voting in certain UK elections including Local elections and Parliamentary by-elections and from October 2023 in General elections. You may already have an accepted form of ID for this purpose but if unsure please check the Electoral Commission website (electoralcommission.org.uk) which also explains how to apply for a free voter ID document (Voter Authority Certificate). Please note: you must be recognisable from your photo ID and you do **not** need to provide photo ID to vote by post.

Proposed Parliamentary Constituency changes - following boundary changes to Merton Park Ward for the purposes of Local elections, boundary changes for Parliamentary constituencies that would affect residents in Merton Park Ward were proposed. The revised proposals would move the whole of Merton Park from the Wimbledon to the Morden constituency. Honorary Alderman Peter Southgate investigated this with his usual energy and put together what MPWRA consider to be a very well-considered and practical alternative proposal that would leave Merton Park within the Wimbledon constituency. Let us hope that his arguments, plus the numerous strong comments expressed by individual residents to the Boundary Commission, will persuade it of the logic, and indeed the justice, of our case. Peter's submission can be read by following the link on MPWRA's website, mertonpark.org.uk.

Waste Collection and Street Cleaning - following campaigning from our Independent councillors Merton Council decided to discontinue its contract with Veolia for these services from 2025. The council has decided to continue to contract-out household waste collection but to bring street cleaning in-house. It remains to be seen how the two-part service will work out in practice.

Heritage - Morden Heritage Week was held 25-31 March as part of the "There's More to Morden" neighbourhood project. Events included free guided walks and displays, local history talks and family workshops. The project aims at developing civic pride and local identity by focussing on the unique character of the Morden and Merton Park area as illustrated by its history over the last 100 years. This year exhibitions ran until mid-April in Mostyn Gardens, Kendor Gardens, Morden Hall Park and Morden Baptist Church garden area. They contained photographs and background about the development of the area and provided a fascinating insight into our local history.

Join us at Our Future Meetings - All Welcome

Next meeting Tuesday 2nd May - 8pm Merton Park Primary School (Erridge Road)

Speaker tba Plus: Councillors' Reports & Q&A

Tea and coffee served during break with biscuits and a chance to chat to your councillors and neighbours.

Tuesday 6th June, Tuesday 4th July - 8pm speakers tba. August: no meeting, summer break

Please see website and posters for more information.

Speakers at recent MPWRA meetings included:

- Tara Butler, Future Merton, London Borough of Merton on Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan.
- Adrian Ash, Interim Director of Environment, Civic Pride and Climate, London Borough of Merton on waste management.
- Andrew Kauffman Parks and Gardens, London Borough of Merton on Merton's Tree Contract. A new 3-year contract was awarded in November 2022 to cover trees on public highways and in parks that includes the planting of hundreds of new trees and a more diverse range of trees to improve drought resistance.
- Amy Mallett, Climate Engagement Officer, London Borough of Merton on tackling climate change in Merton. A number of initiatives are ongoing or in the pipeline.
- Maria Dartnell, Police Community Support Officer for Merton Park, on Safer Neighbourhoods. Our ward remains a relatively low crime area, particularly with regard to violent crime, despite the impression given on Nextdoor. Maria emphasised that residents should call 999 to report incidents in progress but should call 101 or visit www.met.police.uk to report crimes that have already happened (and to do this before posting details to Nextdoor). The local police officers for Merton Park are PC Cassar 1183SW and PC Matthew 1126SW assisted by PCSO Dartnell 7038SW. The relevant contact number is 07920 233908.
- Barbara Gorna and Simon Hood, Dorset Hall Group on the future of Dorset Hall.

MPWRA Officers

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

MPWRA Committee

Neaz Ahmed
Mariam Ali-Putnergill
Bryan Anderson
Greg Bryant

Ian Garbett
Ingrid Holtz
Stephen Johnson
Pauline Lightfoot

Jolanta Novak
Pauline Southgate
Peter Southgate
Krysia Williams

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