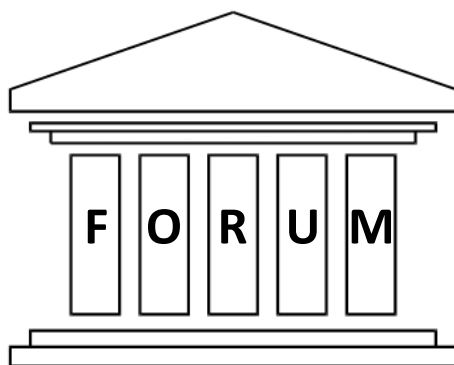


Merton Park Ward Residents' Association

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



Autumn 2023

Issue 71



Two of our Safer Neighbourhood Team and some colleagues enjoying a coronation street party.

Inside this Issue:

- Street Waste Bins
- Councillors' Remuneration
- Public Toilets
- Tennis Court Refurbishment
- Local Crime Update
- News in brief
- + more...

Letter from the Chairman:

If you receive FORUM through your door, you live in Merton Park Ward. My Chairman's letters have frequently encouraged you to join MPWRA as a member and come to meetings, or to register on the MPWRA website to receive our email alerts. This time I am also asking for people to join our committee and get to know about the running of MPWRA. As well as holding our monthly meetings, writing in FORUM and email alerts, we need to give as much support as possible to our two Merton Park Ward Independent residents' councillors.

Because they live in the ward, your Independent councillors know our local problems and share the same concerns about the area as you. We have no affiliation to national political parties.

Some of our committee are quite young, but others have been with us for many years, even since MPWRA was founded nearly 35 years ago. That applies to our wonderful Membership Secretary, Pauline Southgate, who "gave her notice" at our AGM in July. As Chairman for most of these 35 years, I said that I, too, would not be standing for election as Chair at the next AGM. We both felt that, unless we actually stood down, the next generations would hesitate to come forward.

If you value having a residents' association with its Independent residents' councillors, do please consider joining the committee and help us look after Merton Park Ward. You can find out more by phoning or emailing me or one of the councillors - please see below.

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

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

Cllr. Edward Foley

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

Cllr. Stephen Mercer

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



Street Waste Bins—the Do’s and Don’ts—Hubert Child

If you see a street bin full, or overflowing, go to the Merton Council website and enter “Report It” in the search bar at the top of the home page. Don’t wait for someone else to do it – the more people who report it the more seriously the council takes it, including when a problem is regularly repeated. Multiple separate reports also help councillors if, as a last resort, you need their help.

Most street bins in Merton Park are of the letter box type with an opening that is quite wide. If the bin content comes above the lower lip of the opening there is nothing to stop litter falling out or being pulled out by animals and the effects of this can be seen around the ward. You should report bins as full when the content reaches that height.

Please avoid putting food waste in the bins, as this attracts animals. Pizza cartons do not fall properly into

bins and they stop other waste from falling with the bins appearing to be full when they are not. Street bins are not the place for household waste. Houses should have council-provided wheelie bins and flats should have communal council provision. If this is not the case, please apply to the council.

If a bin is full, please take your waste home or go on to the next bin. Putting things in so that bins overflow and litter neighbours’ gardens is very unneighbourly and unhygienic.



Please help to keep our ward tidy and prevent our street bins from overflowing

Councillors’ Remuneration and Merton Toilets Stephen Mercer

In addition to the usual case work, my last six months have been dominated by two issues.

Councillors’ Remuneration

Over the summer I took part in a workshop in which eight councillors considered how we should be remunerated. The report of our conclusions is available on the council website (Standards and General Purposes Committee meeting on Wednesday 19 July 2023). In the discussion it was agreed unanimously that

- Councillors’ allowances should be linked to the pay of council staff
- It should not be for councillors to decide on their own pay and the link should be as automatic as possible in future
- Having been frozen since 2009, it is not reasonable for allowances to continue to be frozen at about £8700 and an increase in allowances is reasonable.

There are different amounts by which the allowances might have been increased and suggestions were:

- A. In line with an independent report, suggesting that allowances should increase to about £12,000 (38%) to allow for the greater work pressures felt by councillors since Covid;
- B. The same amount as the average in London, an increase to £10,700 (about 23%);
- C. In line with the level they would have been had they not been frozen but remained tied to staff increases over the period 2009 to date; ie a change to about £10,000 (15.5%).

The majority of the working group decided that councillors at all levels should get an increase of 38% while some position holders should receive a larger increase. I felt that the change was well intentioned, particularly in its aim to support younger councillors with families, but poorly judged at a time of relative austerity, when doctors, nurses and teachers are fighting to get increases approaching the level of inflation. I called for the increase to be limited to match the increases received by the staff but in full Council, the Labour majority voted through the 38% increase.

Cllr Mercer draws attention to the lack of toilet facilities at Morden Station.



Toilets

Peter Southgate and I completed a report into the provision of public toilets in Merton and I presented it to the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel in July. The main finding is that the current provision is very poor and our key recommendations were to:

- a. Make decent provision a key aspect of council policy;
- b. Introduce a Community Toilet Scheme (CTS) to make available as many as possible of the existing toilets managed by public and major private organisations in the area;
- c. Provide adequate funding to ensure that such a Scheme is successful.

The recommendations were agreed unanimously and I presented the report to the Cabinet in early September. Now it comes down to money. We believe that a CTS could make a significant difference to toilets being available and residents knowing where they are. We estimated that this could be achieved at a cost of about 1p per Merton resident per week. We await Cabinet’s response.

As part of our report we identified the lack of toilets at Morden station as a major challenge. I launched a petition calling for the Mayor and TfL to ‘pull their finger out’, supported by Merton Council, Stephen Hammond and local London Assembly Members Leonie Cooper and Hina Bohkari. I hope for a positive outcome!

I feel I have become the ‘Toilet Councillor’ but I am conscious that my responsibilities are wider than that. Please drop me a line if I can help.

Working Together for the Benefit of our Community—Edward Foley

Tennis Courts Refurbishment in John Innes Park - Merton Council and the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) have joined together to refurbish 47 tennis courts in 11 parks across the borough. The programme, which is managed by the LTA and funded by the LTA Tennis Foundation and Merton, will see an investment of almost £1m in tennis facilities for Merton residents. This will ensure that high quality facilities are available for the local community and free access will be maintained at venues where this is already offered.

The refurbishment of the tennis courts in John Innes Park took place over September. The spring edition of FORUM reported that the courts had been cleaned to remove moss and other detritus. One of the courts had surface damage from tree roots which prevented it being of any real use to serious tennis players. The nets were removed from the courts in the summer to enable re-surfacing which is now complete. Four courts will be available shortly.



Aerial view of the re-surfaced tennis courts in John Innes Park looking at their best.

The project includes improvements to gate access and a new booking system to ensure users will have access to tennis courts at the time of their choosing. The new booking system and gate access technology make it easier to get on court by booking in advance to guarantee availability. To make sure that the future costs of court maintenance are covered Merton Council is now tendering for a court coaching operator to work with them to bring tennis coaching to all areas of the borough. This partnership between the council and the LTA is an exciting initiative that will help Merton take another important step forward in its ambition to become London's leading borough of sport.



Aerial view of a coronation street party in full swing.

Local crime update - I understand that crime is a growing concern amongst residents in the area with rising incidents of shoplifting and anti-social behaviour. I strongly encourage you to report any such incidents to the authorities so that they can be addressed in a timely manner.

Detective Chief Superintendent Clair Kelland, the Borough Commander, has noted your concerns and has asked Superintendent Luke Mooney to meet with me to discuss the issues that have been raised. This is an excellent opportunity to work together with the authorities to find solutions.

In the meantime I would like to remind you that reporting any suspicious activity or crime is crucial in keeping our community safe. Posting comments on WhatsApp groups such as Nextdoor without making a formal report means that crimes are not recorded and this could adversely affect the resources allocated to crime reduction locally. You can report any such incidents by calling 101 (or 999 if the incident is in progress or you feel threatened). You can also report anonymously through Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. I hope that this meeting will be productive and lead to positive changes in our community. I will report back at our monthly residents' meeting.

News in Brief

The Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla - this took place on Saturday May 6th and many street parties were held in our ward to celebrate this event. The weather was fine and it was lovely to see so many residents of all ages enjoying the occasion together; eating, drinking, playing games, enjoying music and even dancing in the street!

Reminder about Voter ID for elections - if you do not yet have an accepted form of voter ID that includes your photo you will not be able to vote in local and general elections. Visit the Electoral Commission website (electoralcommission.org.uk) to apply for a free voter ID document.

St Mary's Churchyard Wall - unfortunately this still awaits repairs and in the meantime the loose bricks have been put into storage for safe keeping. We do not yet know when the wall will be repaired but our councillors are pushing hard for a resolution to this.

ULEZ 2 - The Ultra-Low Emissions Zone was extended to outer London on 29th August and now covers all London Boroughs, including Merton. Non ULEZ compliant vehicles must now pay the same daily rate of £12.50 to enter Zones 1 and 2 and penalties are incurred for non, or late, payment. A scrappage scheme exists to help with the cost of replacing non-compliant vehicles.

Armistice Day services and Remembrance Sunday - The Mayor of Merton, Cllr Gill Manly, and Cllr Foley will attend a ceremony to mark Armistice Day at 10:45am on Friday 10th November in front of the Civic Centre in Morden. Cllr Mercer and the Deputy Mayor will attend a ceremony at the same time at the Mitcham War Memorial. The Mayor and Cllrs Foley and Mercer will also attend a Remembrance Sunday service outside the Nelson Medical Centre beginning at 9:00am. Also attending will be the choir of St. Mary's Church and a contingent of cadets from Rutlish School. Residents are asked to assemble at the front at 8:30am. At 11:00am on Remembrance Sunday Councillor Foley and the Mayor will attend a ceremony at the Wimbledon War Memorial and Councillor Mercer and the Deputy Mayor will attend a ceremony at the same time at the Mitcham War Memorial. All are welcome.

Join us at Our Future Meetings - All Welcome

Next meeting Tuesday 7th November - 8pm via Zoom

Speaker Lucy Owen, Director of Housing and Regeneration, London Borough of Merton

Plus: Councillors' Reports & Q&A

Tuesday 5th December Councillors' Question Time and seasonal refreshments

No meeting January 2024 but do resolve to join MPWRA if you haven't done so already!

Tuesday 6th February - 8pm speaker tba.

Tea and coffee served during break with biscuits and a chance to chat to your councillors and neighbours
Please see website and posters for more information.

Speakers at recent MPWRA meetings included:

- Leonie Cooper, Merton and Wandsworth's London Assembly member, explained that the role of the Assembly is to scrutinise the work of the Mayor of London's Office. She is currently Chair of Environmental Committee and one of her achievements was the introduction of water fountains across London.
- Kevin Chambers, Inspector in charge of the five-person Safer Neighbourhoods Team outlined their current priorities: robbery; burglary; theft from the person; and theft from vehicles.
- Paul Munroe from AFC Wimbledon Foundation, the charitable arm of AFC Wimbledon, outlined the work of this body. It aims to improve the lives of local people of all ages through a variety of initiatives focussed on encouraging active lifestyles, increased participation in sport and social contact.
- Neaz Ahmed of the Muslim Women of Morden reported back on progress made in improving Mostyn Gardens using funding secured from the Mayor of London's Grow Back Greener Fund. Currently the team is working to clear the section close to Mostyn Road previously used for storage but there are also plans to improve the "sunken garden" area close to the swings.
- Mick Taylor from The Wandle Industrial Museum gave a fascinating presentation about the history and development of local industry based along the Wandle. A number of well known family names are linked to this including those associated with brewing and textiles e.g. Watneys, Youngs and William Morris but many other, now less widely known, also made a significant contribution.

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	Ian Garbett
Mariam Ali-Putnergill	Ingrid Holtz
Bryan Anderson	Stephen Johnson
Greg Bryant	Pauline Lightfoot

Contact MPWRA:

Website:	www.mertonpark.org.uk
Email:	mpwra@mertonpark.org.uk
Telephone:	0208 540 3087