

Merton Park Ward Residents Association
A G M meeting Tuesday 1st July 2025.

Present Mariam Ali-Puttermil, Hubert Child, Councillor Edward Foley, David Merriman, Fred Rayner, Ian Garbert, Stephen Johnson, Peter Southgate, Pauline Southgate, Neaz Ahmed, Chris Stutt, Krysia Williams, Dese Child

Apologies Councillor Stephen Mercer, Greg Bryant, Brian Anderson

1.0 Welcome & Chair's annual report

Hello everyone and thank you for coming to the AGM.

It's been a busy and at times challenging year, but also one that's seen a lot of positive steps — big and small — for Merton Park. We've had full meeting agendas, great speakers, thoughtful discussions, and a steady stream of casework and campaigns. There's plenty to be proud of, and as ever, it's down to the energy and commitment of our community — so thank you.

Let's start with our monthly meetings, which continue to be a real strength of MPWRA. They're open, well-attended and varied — and that's thanks to both the residents who show up and the range of speakers who come to share their work.

Some of our standout speakers this year were from the Sunshine Recovery Café, which offers mental health and addiction support locally. Their work in Wimbledon Chase is truly inspiring — a service that helps people find purpose and stability, with peer groups, crisis de-escalation and local activities. Please spread the word if you can.

Another well-received talk was on flood risk management. This was a timely and highly relevant session, and I'm sure many of our members responded to the consultation. There's growing interest in things like rain gardens and permeable paving — the small design decisions that add up.

This year saw more activity around Morden town centre. We heard from our Town Centre Manager, Azra Mukadam, and were excited to see plans develop for public realm improvements — from markets and shopfronts to art installations and “meanwhile” spaces. There's a big push to increase “dwell time” and make Morden somewhere people want to linger, not just pass through.

We also welcomed Lilian from Morden POP (Protect Our People and Planet), a grassroots group bringing fresh ideas and youthful energy to how we think about regeneration. I'm hopeful that MPWRA and POP can continue to support each other.

Meanwhile, our tireless councillors — Stephen Mercer and Edward Foley — have been consistently active in championing good design, better consultation, and more community voice in the development process. They have kept the pressure up on the Peel House car

park issue, toilet provision (including a likely accessible toilet at Morden station later this year), and Daybrook and Kenley Road parking concerns. As well as keeping a close eye on ongoing issues regarding street trees, pocket parks and planting, and e-bike management. We also now have a Speedwatch group up and running again – please do volunteer if you're keen, it's a surprisingly effective way to reduce local speeding.

We're grateful to our local police SNT - Sergeant Nathan Attwell and the team have kept us updated and continue to stress how important it is to report even minor incidents. Their advice: if it's not logged, it doesn't get resourced.

As for planning: one of our most time-consuming pieces of work was the Morden Hotel planning application (Crown Lane). The proposal — bigger, bulkier, and less green than previously approved — prompted strong feedback. I'd like to thank David Merriman, who led the sub-committee reviewing the plans, and Stephen Johnson, who helped compile our representation. We believe it fell short of the new Local Plan's aspirations, and said so.

Separately, Cllr Foley flagged a proposed HMO on Kenley Road, and urged residents to make their views known. These small decisions can have a big impact on the character of our neighbourhood.

Also, big thanks to residents like Fred Rayner and Neaz Ahmed — Fred for liaising with tree officers during the Aylward Road lime tree pollarding (which could have easily turned contentious), and Neaz for continuing to drive green projects in Mostyn Gardens, where new benches and planting are being installed.

We paused this year to remember Ian Smith, whose tireless work on the Wimbledon Chase clean-up left a real legacy. Ian helped kick off graffiti removal and planted trees that many of us enjoy every day. He will be missed.

VE Day was again marked with lanterns and music in Wimbledon Village. Thanks to Cllr Foley, who lit a lantern on behalf of Merton Park, and to all who attended and reflected on the sacrifices remembered each year.

Communications & Admin

The Forum newsletter remains our best route into every home. Huge thanks as always to Pauline Lightfoot for editing it and running a tight ship, and to our delivery team including John and Jude Garrett and Malcolm and Grace Jones. And to Thomas Kemp who has offered to help us update our website — thank you!

We're always looking for more volunteers to deliver Forum, write for it, or help with events. If you'd like to lend a hand, please don't be shy.

Final Thanks

To our councillors — Edward Foley and Stephen Mercer — heartfelt thanks. It's been a demanding year, but you've both continued to show what it means to be Independent representatives: accessible, informed, and focused on local needs, not party lines.

To the Committee: my heartfelt thanks to David Merriman and Stephen Johnson for their expertise on planning, Fred Rayner for managing our finances, Chris Stutt for keeping the meeting minutes, Pauline Lightfoot for her work on Forum, Ingrid Holtz for managing the website and alerts, to to Peter and Pauline Southgate and to Hubert and Dese Child for all their guidance, to Bryan Anderson who we wish a speedy recovery, to Greg, Neaz, Ian, Krysia, Jolanta and everyone who keeps the wheels turning — thank you for everything. We are all indebted to you.

And finally, to you: our members and neighbours. Thank you for turning up, speaking up, and caring about where we live. That's what makes MPWRA work.

Let's keep the conversations going.

Mariam Ali-Puttergill
Chair, MPWRA

2.0 Treasurer's Report

Mark Hackforth-Jones is Hon auditor of the Association. Thanks to Pauline Southgate for providing membership figures for 2024, 235 households compared with 127 in 2023. The membership fees together with 100 Club income and no election expenses means we have £11,777 in reserves. FR proposed the acceptance of the audited accounts which was carried unanimously.

The Electoral Commission rules changed in 1992 and so we have a Constitution which needs to be updated. There are 2 roles
Nominating Officer - who fills in forms for the Council elections
Campaigns Officer as Treasurer.

FR proposed a Motion that the Constitution be updated to include these 2 roles and it was adopted unanimously.

3.0 Elections of Officers & Committee

Chairperson	Mariam Ali-Puttergil	proposed & elected unanimously
Deputy Chair	David Merriman	proposed & elected unanimously
Treasurer	Fred Rayner	proposed & elected unanimously
Secretary	Chris Stutt	proposed & elected unanimously

Committee all re-elected unanimously

Neaz Ahmed
Bryan Anderson

Greg Bryant
Hubert Child
Ian Garbett
Ingrid Holtz
Stephen Johnson
Pauline Lightfoot
Jolanta Novak
Pauline Southgate
Peter Southgate
Krysia Williams

Hon Auditor re-elected unanimously

Mark Hackforth-Jones

4.0 100 Club Draw

3rd prize £20 21 Maureen
2nd prize £30 51 Kathy Michell 1st
1st prize £50 17 Eve Hicks

5.0 Councillor Edward Foley's Report

Londis Post Office Martin Way has a Planning Application in. EF has 6-8 calls a day and 30 emails about this. EF has put an auto reply out that because he is on the Planning Committee at the Council he cannot express an opinion on any application.

There will be a workshop on the report about the impact of school streets on people who live in them. One resident got 9 PCNs for using their own road, when registered as living there.

Blue badges - there used to be a long wait for one and now there is new software, which should speed up the application.

A lot of casework is people not filling in forms on time or not being digitally aware, plus the post taking a long time to reach the Councillors. There has been some training regarding planning applications. Councillor Foley said that the best way to object to a planning application is to obtain the policy number that you wish to object under. Try AI to draft an objection -

ChatGPT will give ideas and policy numbers.

Armed forces week. The flag was flown at the Civic Centre and there was a Piper and the Mayor.

Steve Baldrick has refurbished the metal 'Watery Lane' sign - otherwise the Council will replace damaged or missing signs with plastic ones. He has also

painted the Manor Gardens sign. Can anyone help Steve and are there any more signs that need restoration work ?

Please water the new street trees near you.

The rental e bikes are being abandoned everywhere and they are heavy to move out of driveways etc. if a car hits a bike it could be damaged but ridden away by the next user. A lady was nearly hit by one of these bikes and Councillor Foley has been threatened by bike riders. An additional problem is that the Lime bikes are hackable. There is a new member for Transport on the Council. The lads riding the bikes are going at high speed with no insurance or safety gear. The Police have been informed.

Q The school have been watering their plants 24/7 and have an oasis now but have used lots of water

A School was asked 6-7 weeks ago to be careful with water.

Q The Street bins are full everywhere- could we get some more bins please?

A Councillor Mercer got more bins. Please use the Fix my Streets app to report overflowing bins. Also kids have thrown rubbish in the fountain so it is not working.

Q Signs in park?

A The signs are being removed.

6.0 Councillor Stephen Mercer's Report

I am sorry not to be with you for this meeting. I have been working and doing my duties for the last month but we left for Canada at the weekend and so have left these notes for Mariam to kindly read out on my behalf.

1. You may or may not have been aware of the threat to the Londis/Post Office in Crown Lane next to the Baptist Church. An application was made to change the use of the shop to a residential unit (ie a flat) which meant that the application process was very short and difficult to oppose. As the shop is virtually at the end of my road (Grasmere Avenue), I was involved via the street WhatsApp group and several of my immediate neighbours proved very capable campaigners. In addition to putting forward reasoned objections and encouraging lots of local residents to do the same, they also launched and supported a petition against the change of use application which gathered over 2000 signatures. I sent a letter of objection, but was joined by councillors from the other side of Morden and several from further afield, as well as both local MPs. MPWRA put in a very good reasoned objection as did the Baptist Church. In fact, the reality is that the grounds to oppose such an application are very limited. Perhaps surprisingly the loss of such an amenity

and of such important local retailers as Anil and his wife were NOT relevant factors in opposing the application! The Council rejected the application but on the main grounds that the apartment would have insufficient light (since it would have no rear windows and would only have the one window at the front).

2. You may wonder why a landlord would want to change the use of a shop, which produces a rent of £3k per month, to an apartment (which would have needed £50k to redevelop) which would then only produce a rent of £2k per month. There were several answers
 - a. The application was not made by the landlord but by the developers who succeeded in obtaining permission for the hotel to be built several units along from the shop.
 - b. The change of use was a means to an end. It would be obvious that the loss of a Post Office would be a complication for any future planning application. However, if you change the use (through the short application process), it makes it easier to come back later to apply for a large block of apartments on the same site.
 - c. Therefore my expectation is that a new application will come forward before long in which some arrangement is made for the Post Office and a block of apartments of a similar size to the hotel is proposed. I have previously opposed the excessive height of the proposed hotel and I shall oppose any similar development on this site if it is the same size.
3. During the process of fighting the application for change of use, questions were repeatedly raised about how quiet Ed Foley was being. As much as possible, I explained what I think those attending today already know – in other words, Ed has to maintain his impartiality as much as possible, in order to avoid losing the ability to vote if an issue comes to the planning committee.
4. As an aside, we spoke in these meetings a couple of years ago about the position I take in relation to planning applications and we agreed that I should also avoid committing myself - if it can be avoided - in case I am called upon to vote in Ed's place (if, for example, he is unwell). However, this puts pressure on MPWRA to express a view when the residents of the ward are clearly opposed to a proposed development. In this context I wanted to particularly thank Stephen Johnson, David Merriman and Mariam who put in a lot of work, yet again, at short notice, putting together our objection to the application for the change of use.
5. When I was canvassing before the election 3 years ago, a common question from residents was 'When are they going to get round to redeveloping Morden?' and 'What is happening in the meantime?' I had a conversation

with the Cabinet member last summer in which he reassured me that he wants a high quality regeneration of Morden and that the least we might hope for was an outline plan and a development partner before the next election in May next year. However, speaking to him a couple of weeks ago it now seems unlikely that the Labour administration will have anything ready before the election. I pointed out that this meant that in over 20 years there is no redevelopment plan – he responded that you can get rubbish done quickly.

6. He also pointed to the meanwhile improvements which are coming and which include the plan for greater use of Abbotsbury Road opposite Sainsburys, perhaps for a monthly market and/or Christmas market – which, he acknowledged, I had suggested. Of course, I proposed it as a quick fix as something that could be implemented in a few months, little knowing how long these things take. My understanding is that Dickie Wilkinson and Peter Southgate were on a working party 4 years ago to plan for the short term improvements of Morden. Since then? Last year there was a consultation with residents and a report after the consultation and some coloured street furniture in Abbotsbury Road. Now a design competition has been launched for 'Morden Moments' – 6 architectural teams have been shortlisted. It sounds exciting and positive, but remember this is still deliberations about the 'meanwhile improvements'. Watch this space!
7. The population of Merton now exceeds 210,000. This means that Merton Borough is entitled to another seat on the North East Surrey Crematorium Board (the Board is shared between Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth boroughs). The holder of this new seat is one Stephen Mercer, so I am now involved in the management of the crematorium (for those unaware the cemetery and the crematorium are in the west of the borough in the direction of the Garth Road tip). I shall be attending meetings of the board 4 times per year from now on. My first contribution has been to call for a review of energy use; all 3 boroughs have made commitments to 'Net Zero' by 2030 or soon afterwards but nothing has been done at the Crematorium and the Crematorium has quite high energy use!
8. I would like to quickly mention the picnic for local residents thrown by Fred Rayner and co in Kendor Gardens. Fred kindly invited along my wife and I; we had lovely weather and it was well attended with quite a variety of neighbours. Thankyou Fred.
9. You may recall that consultations are planned for greater restrictions on parking in Daybrook Avenue and at the southern end of Kenley Road where it meets the roundabout. The suspicion is that the success of the SAAMS hall in the premises of the old Woolworths in the high street has generated

demand for parking and has contributed to the problems of residents in Kenley and Daybrook. David Merriman asked me at the last meeting if there might not be some planning or license restrictions on the SAAMS hall and I took up the query and contacted the relevant officers. The answers are that the SAAMS hall has no license; the officer told me 'the hall is hired out for private functions, with no sale by retail of alcohol and no charge made for attending eg weddings / birthdays. With the information we have, they wouldn't need a premises licence.' Even if they did, it would not cover issues like parking. The planning officer told me that when planning was approved the view was that 'the site is in an area with very good public transport line and is also within a Controlled Parking Zone. **The proposal is unlikely to result in harm to highway safety or increased demand for on-street parking**'!?! He told me that the horse has now bolted and there is nothing that can be done through the planning department in relation to the issue.

10. Lots of residents have contacted me about the sad appearance of our newly planted trees. The current hot weather is not helping. I am in contact with the leader of the Council and the Head of Parks, Andrew Kauffman, about what they are doing to help the trees – apparently the new trees have been watered 6 times since April (!?) - I shall continue to follow this up. However, anything we can do in terms of watering can help. There is a page on the Merton website titled [How to help look after new street trees | Merton Council](#)
11. Lastly, I was at Rutlish School last week. It was the second time for me, though I believe Ed has been along many time judging presentations by groups of young men. All the chaps in their Year 9 are encouraged to work with a local charity, raise money for it, and make their fellow students more aware of it. They then do a presentation about it and ask questions on their work. The team judged to be the best on the day was supporting a charity campaigning against knife culture, called Lives not Knives. I think it is a great initiative and heart warming to see what positive young men we have in our area – it is sometimes easy to forget.
12. I shall be doing Council work and attending meetings while I am away – indeed I am planning to be participating in a meeting of the Sustainable Communities panel this evening (Tuesday 1st July). Please drop me a line as usual if you want me to help with something, but please make allowances if there are a couple of days' delay.

7.0 AOB & date of next meeting

No AOB. Next meeting is Tuesday 2nd September at 8pm at Merton Park Primary