

Merton Park Ward Residents' Association

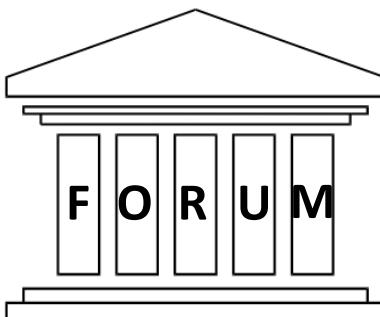
for the residents of: Morden | Merton Park | Wimbledon Chase

New Year 2026

Issue 76



A frosty New Year afternoon in Church Lane Playing Fields.



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Letter from the Interim Chair:

As 2025 has now transitioned into 2026, in this issue we reflect on the work and achievements of our two councillors, Edward Foley and Stephen Mercer.

It has been a delight to serve alongside our Chair, Mariam Ali-Puttergill. Although still thoroughly committed to the wellbeing of Merton Park, sadly, due to increasing work commitments, Mariam has needed to step down from the role. I will continue as Vice Chair, and have accepted the offer to serve as Interim Chair until a new appointment is made.

Catherine and I have just celebrated 50 years in our Merton Park house. I was brought up in nearby Keswick Avenue, educated at Merton Park Primary School, so my roots have always been firmly within this wonderful community. It is perhaps not surprising that much change has been witnessed over the last 70+ years.

Merton Park's character might be described as traditional yet full of variety, and well established, yet fluid. Currently, this sense of fluidity seems to be particularly reflected in the numerous building works being undertaken within so many of its streets. It is, and always will be, important to ensure that these changes, and indeed any new developments, remain sympathetic to the existing surroundings.

In town and city centres a "crane count" is often regarded as an informal indicator of the economic strength of a region. Acknowledging that Merton Park's "scaffolding and skip" count is not the sole measure of economic outlook, it is at least encouraging that residents are investing not only into the built fabric of Merton Park, but also, it is hoped that by doing so, there may follow investment of time, talent and friendship into the community life of Merton Park. One way is to join MPWRA – please see application/renewal form enclosed.

Wishing you well for this New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Merriman".

David Merriman - Interim Chair: 020 8542 7183 email: dmerriman@btinternet.com

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



Working Together for Safer Streets in Merton Park - Edward Foley

Speeding vehicles have been one of the most frequent concerns raised by residents in recent months—and we've been listening. Councillor Stephen Mercer and I have been working closely with local police to address these worries and make our streets safer.

Recently, we joined the Merton Police Road Safety Team on patrol right here in Merton Park. This gave us a first-hand look at the challenges officers face and the steps being taken to tackle speeding. From monitoring traffic hotspots to speaking with drivers, the patrol was a practical way to understand what's happening on the ground.

Our message is clear: road safety is a shared responsibility. We'll continue to push for measures that protect pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers alike. If you have concerns about speeding or dangerous driving in your area, please let us know—your feedback helps shape the action we take. Together, we can keep Merton Park safe for everyone.



Cllr Mercer on night patrol with the Police Road Safety Team.

Remaking Morden: What's Next for our Town Centre? - Edward Foley

If you've walked through Morden recently, you'll know it's a place full of potential—but it's been waiting for a big refresh for quite a while. The Council's 'Remaking Morden' project is all about giving our town centre a new lease of life, and although progress has been slower than hoped, plans are still very much alive. The latest update? The timeline now stretches toward 2040, but the vision remains exciting.

What's the Big Idea? Think greener spaces, safer streets, and a town centre that feels welcoming and modern. The plans include new homes (with affordable options), better transport links, and a layout that makes it easier to walk, cycle, and enjoy the area. Sustainability is a big part of it too—energy-efficient buildings and improved public spaces are on the agenda.



Where Do Things Stand? The Council has hit pause to rethink and reset the project so it fits today's economic reality and community needs. That means a longer wait, but also a chance to make sure the plans really work for us.

Why Should We Care? Done well, this could mean more local shops, better amenities, and a boost for businesses. Of course, there are concerns—construction can be disruptive, and we'll need to keep an eye on how it affects traders and traffic.

Your Voice Matters—This isn't just a council project—it's our town. Public consultations and surveys will help shape what happens next, and local meetings are a great way to stay in the loop. If you've got ideas or worries, now's the time to speak up.

Want to find out more or get involved? Head to Merton Council's regeneration page: <https://www.merton.gov.uk/remakingmorden>

Change is coming to our town centre.

Interesting Times - Stephen Mercer

Although there seems to be no direct translation, 'May you live in interesting times' is supposed to have been an ancient Chinese curse. Whether genuinely Chinese or not, we have certainly had a turbulent last year and, looking ahead at 2026, face ongoing interest in the broadest sense of the word. As I write this piece, stock markets are reaching new record-breaking heights and "The Donald" has just invaded Venezuela, so who knows what the New Year will bring?

So what am I looking out for over the next 6 months?

- Morden regeneration – the Council has announced a commitment of £30 million to Morden. This sounds wonderful but prompts the questions – When? And on what? MPWRA have supported and contributed to all the consultations on this issue since regeneration was first discussed 20+ years ago. We have contributed to discussions about “meanwhile” improvements and pressed the Council for progress. Although we have seen some decorative improvements there is still no concrete plan and change is glacially slow.
- Will Abbottsbury Road be revived and used for a regular market? I have been pushing for this neighbouring road to be more imaginatively used and there are signs that the Morden Town Centre manager agrees with me.
- When will the toilets be installed in Morden Underground station and will the London Borough of Merton commit any of its own money to improving public toilet provision?
- We all love the greenery of our ward. Will the new street trees survive last year’s drought? Will any money be found for a water supply for the volunteers who do such a good job in Kendor Gardens?
- How much disruption will be caused by the new hotel at the end of Windermere Avenue and will our Post Office in Crown Lane be saved?

I shall be focusing on all of these and shall give you updates on any developments. As usual, if you have any local issues that you think Ed or I can help with, please tell us. At the same time, we should acknowledge and be grateful that our current local challenges are not as grave as many of the national and international ones.



Preparing the site for the new hotel in Crown Lane, Morden as seen from Windermere Avenue.

How do I spend my time? Stephen Mercer

Councillors for any opposition party rarely get any proposal voted through in full Council. Labour currently have a majority and the Cabinet leads on all policy decisions – so our main responsibility is to scrutinize, criticise and campaign in relation to their plans. However, there are only 7 or 8 full Council meetings per year, so what are we doing the rest of the time?

I am on the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel, which is made up of councillors who are not in the administration. We have a wide ranging remit, including green spaces, housing, waste and street cleansing amongst many others. A few years ago, I produced a report on public toilet provision for this panel and I also worked on the EV charging strategy, suggesting policy and commenting on officers’ plans. This Panel inputs into the Budget in 2 sessions at this time of year; given that the paperwork stretches to over 300 pages this is not a small task. As an aside, I continue to press for an update after TFL cancelled the reopening of the Morden station toilets at the last minute. Instead of the planned launch on 19th November, they now talk of an opening ‘in the New Year’, ie some time in 2026!

I am also on the Licensing Committee and participate from time to time on sub-committees deciding on, for example, new drinks licences or gambling licences. Councillors act in a quasi-judicial role and objectivity is assisted by the fact that we are not permitted to consider applications in our own ward.

Since last year I have been on the Board of the North East Surrey Crematorium, which is in the South East of the borough. The Crematorium is jointly run by Sutton, Morden and Wandsworth councils and effectively runs like a small not-for-profit enterprise. It makes a surplus each year which is shared between the 3 councils and board members take their responsibilities very seriously. I feel the facility generally carries out its roles sensitively and to a good standard.

My most important role is responding to residents’ queries and these probably take the most of my time. They range from supporting Council grant applications to concerns about planning applications to boundary disputes to assisting with perceived uncommunicative or unsympathetic departments at Merton Council. Ed and I both prioritise residents’ enquiries and frequently support challenges against apparent maladministration. However, individual cases are confidential, so not ideal for an article like this. Nevertheless, we welcome the opportunity to help and encourage you to contact us if you are struggling with the Council; if we cannot help ourselves, we usually know ‘a person who can’.

News in Brief

Recent speakers:

October: Laura Howarth, Head Teacher, Rutlish School - Most students live locally (within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile) and so are very much part of the community. The intake is diverse with 83 languages spoken. Exam results are very good and the school places a high priority on physical and mental health. Sports, Music and Drama are strong and extra-curricular activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, are popular. The school has a distinction award as an eco-school and students have helped to plant daffodils locally. The collaboration with Ricard's Lodge enables a successful joint Sixth Form for girls and boys. If anyone could offer work experience or attend a careers day to describe their own jobs and how to get into that career please get in touch. The school was rated as "Outstanding" in all 5 categories in its 2024 Ofsted inspection, a great and well-deserved achievement.

November: Anthony Hopkins, Director of Culture, Sports and Libraries, Environment, Civic Pride and Climate at Merton Council - Anthony has worked for the council for 27 years and knows the area well. His extensive brief now includes Green Spaces. One focus is to reduce the backlog of tree pollarding which he hopes will be clear by May 2026. In 2025 Merton was runner-up for "London Borough of Culture" losing out to neighbouring Wandsworth. He outlined some of the major sporting opportunities provided in pursuit of the award to be "London Borough of Sport". As you know Merton has many green spaces and Merton is officially the second greenest London Borough after Bromley (whose boundaries include some farmland).

Met Engage - This is a new initiative of the Metropolitan Police to improve communication with local residents who can sign up to receive regular email reports about the work of PCSOs and the police in their local ward. We now have 3 PCSOs in our ward who make a point of looking out for the sort of things that residents indicate are a priority. In response to concerns raised through residents' surveys there has been a focus on patrolling Morden Town Centre to deter shoplifting as well as deter anti-social bike, scooter and e-bike riding. Feedback indicates that such action has met with some success. Please consider joining this helpful service and making your voice heard by contacting one of our ward's PCSOs david.haywood@met.police.uk



A nice footnote to end on - A recent survey published on the Rightmove property website indicated that Merton is the 4th happiest London borough to live in based on data such as crime rates, green spaces, education and community organisations. This backs up the national survey undertaken by the Sunday Times as mentioned in the Spring 2025 edition where Merton also came 4th.

Join us at Our Future Meetings - All Welcome

Tuesday 3rd February 2026 - 7.45pm.

Tuesday 3rd March 2026 (and Special General Meeting - see notice enclosed) - 7.45pm.

Tuesday 7th April 2026 - 7.45pm.

Tuesday 2nd June 2026 - 7.45pm.

Tuesday 7th July 2026 (and Annual General Meeting) - 7.45pm

Speakers to be confirmed followed by Councillors' Reports, Q&A, tea and coffee and pay bar.

All meetings will take place at Old Rutlishians' Clubhouse, Poplar Road.

Please see posters and our website for more information, including the minutes of our recent meetings.

MPWRA Officers

Chairman: Vacancy
Vice Chairman: David Merriman 020 8542 7183
Secretary: Christine Stutt 020 8543 6843
Treasurer: Fred Rayner

MPWRA Committee

Neaz Ahmed
Mariam Ali-Puttergill
Bryan Anderson
Greg Bryant
Hubert Child
Ian Garbett
Ingrid Holtz
Stephen Johnson
Pauline Lightfoot
Jolanta Novak
Peter Southgate
Krysia Williams

Contact MPWRA

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Please note that any views expressed in this newsletter are the personal opinion of the relevant contributor and should not be taken to represent the views of any other contributor nor of MPWRA.