

## Merton Park Ward Residents Association Meeting

Tuesday 4th November 2025 via video

Present Miriam Ali Putter-Gill, David Merriman, Bryan Anderson, Hubert Child, Dese Child, Ian Garbett, Neaz Ahmed, Councillor Edward Foley, Councillor Stephen Mercer, Stephen Johnson, Greg Bryant, Jolanta Novak, Peter Southgate, Pauline Southgate, Pauline Lightfoot, Police Sergeant Nathan Atwell, Chris Stutt

### 1.0 Minutes of the last Meeting

These were agreed with, the full names of the speakers added.

### 2.0 Speaker Anthony Hopkins Director of Culture, Sports and Libraries, Environment, Civic pride and Climate at Merton Council

AH introduced himself and said that he has worked for 27 years at the Council. He knows Merton Park well because his partner's family are from Erridge Road !

Overview of the services provided by his department cover  
Culture and events  
Sports and leisure  
Green spaces  
Libraries & heritage

AH said that on the 5th of November and at the weekend there were annual firework events in the Borough, which are the biggest in London. These events are a safe and environmentally friendly way of enjoying fireworks.

The Borough has a cultural impact award of £1.2 million and has bid to be the London Borough of Culture. This year we are the runner-up for this award, it was Croydon and now it is Wandsworth. The disused shops are being put to good use around the Borough.

Music festival is planned for next year in Morden Park

Canons and Morden Hall Park also have music events. Wimbledon library hold Music events and at the end of five days a performance is put on.

Merton 'story and stars' trying to shine the light on the last 50 years of change in the Borough and highlight the cultural icons, i.e. people who have achieved or done outstanding things.

Working to be the London Borough of Sport. We have a mission to give everyone access to sport and to get everyone active and to be the natural home of sports so the economy benefits as well. There are a huge range of sports - see the online portal which showcases everything - some sports are free and others a low cost. The tennis courts in the Borough have been upgraded and they are free to use except in Wimbledon Park. The playing pitches are being upgraded to recognise the change in needs e.g. the new craze for the sport called Paddle.

Green spaces - AH picked up responsibility for this in April. There is a new agricultural manager who is focusing on tree care and the backlog in pollarding, which is hoped to be cleared in the next six months. The Council committed to planting 1000 trees and has started this project in Lavender Ward. There is a map online to show the work in the parks and open spaces, of which are 115 in the Borough. Merton is London's second greenest Borough, after Bromley - which has a proportion of farmland in its boundaries.

Two more Green Flag awards were collected by Merton, so we now have 10 Green Flags. The work is done by ID Verde, whose contract ends next October. The Friends groups will be consulted about the new contractor before any contract is awarded. Friends groups have bid for the CIL funding and Mostyn Gardens has benefited from this. There are currently four bids - one for Kendor Gardens, one for the heritage wall in Church Lane, one for Mostyn Gardens and one for the bandstand in John Innes Park.

There are 7 libraries and a Heritage Centre in the Borough - which have health and well-being information and activities and things like massage chair, weight and blood pressure checks. On the national side the Wimbledon Book Fest has been a great success.

The old phone box in Kingston Road is being transferred as an asset to Merton Council who will maintain it and it will probably be used as a book drop

Q Merton is good for culture but it is a long way from Merton Park to walk to the Book Fest - could we have some activities in Morden library please?

A Yes absolutely keen to expand over the Borough. Venue space is the key - big speakers want a guaranteed audience size so Wimbledon library with a 200 person capacity is the natural choice. Smaller authors & workshops would be happy to go to other libraries.

Q Thank you to the Green Spaces team who helped with a recent Grant application. Three years ago we had to do Grant applications on our own.

A Thank you Dese

Q Thank you for interesting and comprehensive talk. I have been involved with a grant application & been helped by Jonathan Turner. Is it yourself or Andrew Kaufman who will be giving information on the progress on street tree work?

A Andrew Kaufman reports to Anthony Hopkins so AK will be reporting on day-to-day work but please talk to AH on bigger issues or if not getting a response from AK. Maps and planting and maintenance schedules will be on the street tree page which will be updated weekly. It is a busy time with a large backlog and some work may be slipped in as they try to coordinate it.

Q This is helpful information. How big is the team at Merton?

A There are approximately 70 Council staff employees with 4 Heads of the key areas. There are subcontractors eg IDverde has approximately 100 staff, plus the sports are run by Greenwich centre.

Q I am concerned about the density of tree planting - some are being planted near or under existing trees.

A There is a strategy for the Borough to increase the tree canopy in each Ward and do the pollarding. We are looking at vacant pits where trees have died or failed and we will look at last year's planting. Tree after-care is very important.

Q Grasmere Avenue has problems. Will discuss this with you off-line.

Q There is a dead tree in my road which I have raised on 'Fix my Streets' but it still has not been replaced. Why is this?

A Not ignoring you, prioritising the trees which are falling over et cetera

Q We have a fantastic library in Morden in terms of books. Could it be advertise with billboards outside saying how many books are inside?

A The design of the library is unfortunate. There are offices all around the ground floor and the library is tucked inside so there is no street visibility.

### 3.0 Police Report

Work has been hampered by lack of staff but now have 6 staff on the team.

Meeting about e bikes on Saturday 8th November 10.30-12.30 in Council chamber.

There will be a camera at Morden Tube station which will scan for wanted people. The data will be deleted at the end of the day.

#### Crime statistics

21 burglaries (was 20 in 2024)

5 vehicle crimes (was 12 in 2024) A PC is setting up an operation to reduce vehicle crime.

12 robberies - mainly around Morden College

Shop lifting in Morden & St Helier was down in the summer but on increase in October because fewer Police officers around.

A brothel in Morden was closed down - by using a heavy Police presence.

In the lead up to Christmas with Halloween etc we have not seen an increase in anti social behaviour. 2 PCSOs will be away in Court in December.

Q On Sunday morning we found an 18-year-old girl in the gardens of the Baptist Church in Morden. Although she was 18 she looked a lot younger and had left home in North London the previous evening without telling anyone. She did not want her family told where she was, but we

said we would ring the Police . The Police said that they would attend in an hour, but five hours later we had a call to say that they could not attend because she was 18 years old. She was listed as a missing person, but this did not seem to count for anything. Two members of the Church accompanied her back to North London. What is the position on people who have left home?

A The Police can only help with missing persons under 18 or with vulnerable persons e.g. someone with dementia. Otherwise the Police respect the person's rights not to contact their family, even if the family are worried about them.

Q Maybe on the first call we should have been told that nothing could be done?

A As a missing person that should have been picked up by the Police, who would check that they were okay.

There is a new Met Engage platform which has useful information and contact points which the general public can connect to.

#### 4.0 Councillor Edward Foley's report Report.

There is an E bike conference this Saturday in the Council chamber 10.30 to 12.30 Siobhan McDonagh, the Mitcham and Morden MP, will be attending. There have been reports of antisocial behaviour and 'Lime bike leg' injuries, which have been kept out of the press because the Council makes money from the E bike schemes and they are deemed good for the environment. However, children are injuring their ankles and breaking their collarbones so they can't do sport again, so the bikes are not that necessarily good for people.

Riders tend to jump red lights because they are charged per minute when using the E Bikes, which is not a good system. There have also been bike battery fires - in Mitcham there was an E bike charging in the hall which caught fire and the residents had to be rescued by the Fire Brigade. The bigger bikes have huge batteries and there is a phenomenon called thermal runaway when these batteries easily catch fire and explode.

The Police facial recognition vans have a list of wanted and missing persons. These are usually people who wanted in court or wanted by the Police for various crimes or people denied smartphone use when they are on the sexual offenders register or wanted for rapes, assault or attempted murder. There are numerous officers linked to the van who can then arrest people who have been detected as 'wanted'. If you are worried by your own image being captured at the end of the shift, all data is deleted. There is a good detection rate.

There is a cycling consultation going on. There is also a consultation of what is going well or not so well in the Borough, please reply to this. Public toilet are not mentioned in this consultation. Councillors and the Conservatives complained about this omission.

Tram link on going - there may be an update next month. Councillor Foley will do a video of the route to Morden Road tram stop. It is not possible to get there in a mobility scooter, wheelchair or with young children in push chairs et cetera.

Fundraising Quiz on 16th of November in the Alex pub in Wimbledon 7:30 pm cost £10.50 per person see Mayor's page for further details.

Mayor's Christmas Dinner will take place on Friday at the 5th of December at the Polish restaurant at a cost of £50 a head - see website for details.

Mayor's Carol Service in Cannon Hill Lane, St John's Fisher Church on Friday 12th of December.

Pauline and Maggie thanked for their work on Forum newsletter.

Beware of letter boxes - a Labour Councillor got their finger bitten by a dog the other side.

Remembrance Sunday service at the Nelson Health Centre 8.45 on Sunday 9th November and 11am in Wimbledon Village.

Councillor Foley had a lot of case work during the last month.

Q Does the facial recognition trial in hotspots indicate that Morden is a bad place?

A End of the line for the Tube so a good place to try out the software.

## 5.0 Councillor Stephen Mercer's Report

Councillor Mercer said it was nice to see people on the video call who do not get to the usual face-to-face meetings.

Councillor Mercer said that facial recognition would be more difficult in the cold weather as people wrapped up with scarves and masks.

Councillor Mercer had been invited by Clarion to inspect the social housing that they provided in the Borough. He visited a block near the Mosque, where he had been before to try and get bike parking put in.

School streets in yellow posts - Council supported more obvious marking to alert drivers to the restrictions on roads by schools during school term time. People are now more aware of the restrictions and there has been a 50% decrease in fines this year and after the yellow posts were installed there was another decreased in fines of 15%.

Jonathan Greece of the Wimbledon Guild said that when money is tight people cut down on energy costs. This has led to several scams about the winter fuel discount so please make sure any correspondence or phone calls you have a legitimate. Priority Service Register is a free service for vulnerable energy customers e.g. old, disabled or people with children under five, or those pregnant, who can be put on this register and they will get priority service and notifications.

There have been applications for funds from the Civic Pride award to repair the wall of Church Lane playing field, repair the band stand in John Innes Park, provide water and funds for a sunken garden in Morden Gardens. There have been 47 bids totalling £1.9 million and the Council have £667,000 in cash so sadly 2/3 of the bids will miss out.

Community Fridge in the Baptist Church is a charity supported by Councillor Mercer 150-200 people are supported by 65 volunteers, with two paid helpers, plus some cyclists and cost £50,000 a year to run.

Walking and cycling strategy consultation – support for comprehensive cycle lanes but we all walk, so we have a chance for all of us to comment.

There is a link on the website to report developers who are breaking paving slabs. Please take photos of the pavement if neighbours are doing work - before and afterwards.

We want to crossing at the end of Mostyn Road, please let Stephen or Edward know if you are in favour of this?

Hotel in Crown Lane - Stephen spoke to the Leader of the Council about the article 4 directive which stops permitted development in Morden, forcing people to make planning applications. However if people appeal planning applications, they can have costs awarded to them from the Council. Demolition work has started and Council and Councillor Mercer will keep in contact with the developers.

Councillor Mercer is away on Remembrance Day but will be at the Services on the 11th of November

19th of November Council meeting. Toilets in Morden station are close to opening. Will ask for more money for toilets in the Borough at this meeting. At a cost of 1p per resident, per week, we could raise £100,000 for the community toilet scheme.

Budget consultation on your priorities for the next year - ask how much we could achieve for 1p per person, per week?

Rachel Tyler has taken over the community bulb planting from Jason Besant. 13,000 daffodils and 1,200 crocuses were planted last year, and there is still more demand.

#### 6.0 Any Other Business

Neaz Ahmed reported that very sadly her husband had died last week.

#### 7.0 Date Next Meeting

Tuesday 2nd December 8pm at Merton Park Primary School. Councillors Question Time with Christmas refreshments.