

Merton Council

Council Meeting

Membership

The Mayor: Councillor Gill Manly

The Deputy Mayor: Councillor Martin Whelton

Councillors: Sally Kenny, Agatha Mary Akyigyina OBE, Stephen Alambritis MBE, Laxmi Attawar, Thomas Barlow, Hina Bokhari, Mike Brunt, Billy Christie, Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Anthony Fairclough, Edward Foley, Brenda Fraser, Jenifer Gould, Joan Henry, Daniel Holden, Andrew Howard, Natasha Irons, Linda Kirby MBE, Paul Kohler, Edith Macauley MBE, Peter McCabe, Simon McGrath, Nick McLean, Aidan Mundy, Dennis Pearce, Marsie Skeete, Eleanor Stringer, Helena Dollimore, James Williscroft, Sheri-Ann Bhim, John Braithwaite, Michael Butcher, Caroline Charles, Eleanor Cox, Klaar Dresselaers, Chessie Flack, Kirsten Galea, Ross Garrod, Jil Hall, Billy Hayes, Susie Hicks, Dan Johnston, Andrew Judge, Usaama Kaweesa, Samantha MacArthur, Stephen Mercer, Stuart Neaverson, John Oliver, Robert Page, Michael Paterson, Tony Reiss, Slawek Szczepanski, Matthew Willis, Max Austin and Victoria Wilson

Date: Wednesday 15 November 2023

Time: 7.15 pm

Venue: Council chamber - Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX

This is a public meeting and attendance by the public is encouraged and welcomed. For more information about the agenda please contact

democratic.services@merton.gov.uk or telephone [020 8545 3357](tel:02085453357).

All Press contacts: communications@merton.gov.uk, 020 8545 3181

Council meeting

15 November 2023

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Declarations of Pecuniary Interest
- 3 Minutes of the previous meetings 1 - 22
To approve the minutes of the Special Council Meeting and the ordinary Council meeting held on 13 September 2023.
- 4 Announcements by the Mayor, Leader of the Council and Chief Executive
- 5 Public questions to cabinet members
The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting.
- 6 Councillors' ordinary priority questions to cabinet members 23 - 24
The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting
- 7a Strategic theme: Main report 25 - 42
- 7b Strategic theme: Councillors' questions to cabinet members
The questions and written responses will be circulated at the meeting.
- 7c Strategic theme: motions
- 8 Report from Community Forum: Raynes Park 19 September 2023
A verbal update to be provided at the meeting.
- 9 Report from Community Forum: Wimbledon 20 September 2023
A verbal update to be provided at the meeting.
- 10 Report from Community Forum: Mitcham 5 October 2023
A verbal update to be provided at the meeting.
- 11 Report from Community Forum: Morden 18 October 2023
A verbal update to be provided at the meeting.
- 12 Notices of motion
There have been no motions submitted to this meeting.
- 13 Revision of senior pay structure and organisational pay and grading structure review 43 - 58

14	Changes to membership of committees and related matters	59 - 60
15	Petitions	61 - 62
16	Business for the next ordinary meeting of the Council	

Note on declarations of interest

Members are advised to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting. If a pecuniary interest is declared they should withdraw from the meeting room during the whole of the consideration of that matter and must not participate in any vote on that matter. For further advice please speak with the Managing Director, South London Legal Partnership.

Partnership.

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Further information can be found [here](#)

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Agenda Item 3

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COUNCIL

13 SEPTEMBER 2023

(7.01 pm - 8.16 pm)

PRESENT

(in the Chair), Councillor Gill Manly,
Councillor Martin Whelton
Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina,
Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Councillor Laxmi Attawar,
Councillor Thomas Barlow, Councillor Hina Bokhari,
Councillor Michael Brunt, Councillor Billy Christie,
Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah,
Councillor Anthony Fairclough, Councillor Edward Foley,
Councillor Brenda Fraser, Councillor Jenifer Gould,
Councillor Joan Henry, Councillor Daniel Holden,
Councillor Andrew Howard, Councillor Sally Kenny, Linda Kirby,
Councillor Paul Kohler, Councillor Edith Macauley,
Councillor Peter McCabe, Councillor Simon McGrath,
Councillor Nick McLean, Councillor Aidan Mundy,
Councillor Marsie Skeete, Councillor Eleanor Stringer,
Councillor Helena Dollimore, Councillor James Williscroft,
Councillor Sheri-Ann Bhim, Councillor John Braithwaite,
Councillor Michael Butcher, Councillor Caroline Charles,
Councillor Eleanor Cox, Councillor Klaar Dresselaers,
Councillor Chessie Flack, Councillor Kirsten Galea,
Councillor Ross Garrod, Councillor Jil Hall,
Councillor Billy Hayes, Councillor Susie Hicks,
Councillor Dan Johnston, Councillor Andrew Judge,
Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, Councillor Samantha MacArthur,
Councillor Stephen Mercer, Councillor Stuart Neaverson,
Councillor John Oliver, Councillor Robert Page,
Councillor Michael Paterson, Councillor Tony Reiss,
Councillor Slawek Szczepanski, Councillor Matthew Willis,
Councillor Max Austin and Councillor Victoria Wilson

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Irons and Pearce.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3 FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH (Agenda Item 3)

The Mayor invited Councillor Alambritis to move and Councillor Stringer to second the motion.

Councillor Alambritis

Madam Mayor,

Ivor Heller played a fundamental role in the resurrection of AFC Wimbledon but also in the return to the club's home at Plough Lane.

Furthermore, as a community figure Ivor developed the Club's commercial and hospitality revenues through extensive relationship building in Merton over the past 20 years.

What others say about Ivor

Kris Stewart said "Everyone at Wimbledon owes Ivor a debt of gratitude. His passion kept alive the dream of getting back home to Merton.

Mick Buckley added: "Ivor is integral to the AFC Wimbledon story in so many ways. He has led from the front, combining relentless drive with his ability to tell our story and engage with Merton's residents.

For my part I have had the pleasure of knowing Ivor for several years through many meetings. I could see first-hand the passion and dedication he has for the Club and the leading role he played in its reformation and his yearning to be in Merton.

That passion and drive has helped provide the Club with vital commercial revenues throughout the years and has nurtured relationships with a large number of Merton's businesses and Merton's stakeholders.

It has been the greatest honour of my 10 year leadership of Merton Council to have worked with Ivor and this amazing football club.

Ivor was focussed on one venue alone and that was to be back at Plough Lane and that came through loud and clear to me, to Cllrs Judge and Whelton and to our dedicated officers.

Another former leader who had a hand in making sure AFC Wimbledon are where they are today is Tony Colman

Tony was PPS to Mo Mowlam then Northern Ireland Secretary of State in the late 1990's during talks on the Good Friday agreement

Tony argued on the sidelines of those discussions to make sure Wimbledon FC did not get uprooted to either Belfast or Dublin. He won that case!

Years later, I had many meetings with Ivor and Erik Samuelson. Some starting first thing in the morning, not a pretty sight either of us!!!

Others took place last thing in the day after 6pm with Crown House empty of our superb staff and me and Ivor rattling in the building trying to get to grips with developers, financiers and architects...again not a pretty sight!!!!

Council leaders have many meetings, some better than others but meetings with Ivor were always for a purpose, for a decision, for a confirmation and all about getting the club back to Plough Lane.

The memories are many and mostly they are good ones.

The odd tremble between me and Ivor was when I tried to explain the Section 106 planning process to him!

But Ivor is not just about football.

Ivor has also been at the heart of community initiatives.

The Leyton Road Centre (formerly High Path) has been a massive part of his life and will continue to be so and it is a massive part of the council's caring approach.

St George's Hospital Charity is such an important part of the community here in Merton too- putting on the first gala dinner and successive ones and as the auctioneer he raised over £600,000!!

Ivor also supported encouraged and shouted about and volunteered on the most amazing foodbank in the country...The Dons Local Action Group...an award winning football charity helping people through the covid pandemic and beyond and to this day when we have a cost of living crisis

Madam Mayor, the Freedom of Merton recognition has been bestowed upon many worthy recipients for centuries.

I am so pleased to be speaking on this fantastic recognition for Ivor and for AFC Wimbledon where he joins past recipients like a certain Dickie Guy.

New name on the honours board Madam Mayor if you please and that name is for Mr Ivor Heller!

Councillor Stringer:

Thank you Madame Mayor, yes I am seconding, and it's a great honour to second. And this is an absolutely huge honour that we are bestowing on Ivor Heller and it couldn't be more richly deserved. Madame Mayor, years and years of hard work went into creating AFC Wimbledon and turning it into what it is now and Ivor was absolutely central to this as we've just heard. And even more hard work went into bringing the club physically back to SW19. With support from some of my colleagues on these benches, particularly former leader, Cllr Andrew Judge, former chair of the Planning, Cllr Linda Kirby, Martin Whelton and of course the passionate support of another former leader, Cllr Stephen Alambritis. Ivor's work has been transformative. Cllr Alambritis has talked about some of the footballing side, but as a local councillor for the ward that the Cherry Red Records Stadium sits in, I just wanted to thank Ivor for the benefits that it has brought to the wider community, it's put Plough Lane back on the map. The club has supported so many people through all of its charitable initiatives and most importantly it has created a wonderful community of people that love being a part of. It has been really brilliant seeing local families discover AFC Wimbledon and become avid fans since the return to Plough Lane and it's even more wonderful that the more longstanding fans who've seen it through thick and thin have been so welcoming of these new supporters. I'm also really touched by Ivor's commitment to adults with learning disabilities who use the Leyton Road Day Centre, the centre is just a stone's throw from my house and was refurbished a few years ago and is a lovely place providing activities for a range of adults with different needs and Ivor's commitment to supporting the work there is very much appreciated. Madame Mayor, what a great honour, but what a great man and I'm proud to second this proposal.

The Mayor then invited Councillors Hall and Kohler to speak to the motion.

Councillor Hall:

Thank You Madame Mayor. I am delighted to speak in favour of this. Ivor Heller is one of the co-founders of AFC Wimbledon as you have heard. As a life long supporter of Wimbledon Football Club, he was distraught, as most true fans were that their beloved club was due to be sold off and moved elsewhere. Dublin was one of the places considered, but in the end it turned out to be Milton Keynes. The day after

the FA made that fateful decision, allowing the club to be moved 50 miles away from its home, he and others got together to start a new Wimbledon Football Club from scratch and it would be a different club, a club run by fans for fans, and so AFC Wimbledon was born. Its offices were originally in Ivor's print business and trials took place on the Common's extension in May 2002. Hundreds of people turned up to try out, such was the passion for the new club. Ivor's dream, along with many others, was to return the club to Wimbledon and some said it couldn't be done. But here we are, in 2023, with that dream realised. Ivor's been the club's Commercial Director, he was responsible for helping the club raise money through sponsorship, through prudent running of bars, shops, tickets, season tickets. He has a passion for the club which is hard to match. He also places community at the centre of what the club does. There is much that could be said about the youth training, the charitable arm of the club, the Dons Local Action Group, there's just not the time to list all the things that he has done. Suffice to say, AFC Wimbledon is rooted in our community and is in many of our hearts. I personally am delighted my name is up there on the wall at the ground, he is held in very high regard from all who have worked with him. He worked so closely with Eric Samuelson, his right hand man from the early days at Kingsmeadow and now back at Plough Lane. Twenty years of effort and vision for a fantastic result and he is about to be made the life Vice President of the club at the end of this season. As a person he is hardworking, tenacious and full of integrity. He engages with people and is so proud of the club that he helped to form. He is someone that dared to dream and his saw his dream realised. He has achieved so much and to receive the Freedom of the Borough is so fitting for someone who has done so much for AFC and for Merton, come on you Dons!

Councillor Kohler:

Thank you Madame Mayor, I will be speaking briefly in respect of all five of tonight's worthy recipients. On behalf of my group I would like to congratulate all those recognised today, despite the modern tendency to deride it, public service both in the political and wider civic society is critical to our lives and our freedoms, our communities and our country, our wellbeing and our environment. I am consequently pleased tonight for a moment to reflect upon that before the pantomime of Full Council begins, ably refereed by you, Madame Mayor. Cllr Hall gave a fitting tribute to Ivor Heller, and I would only add that my political career notwithstanding and as a dyed in the wool Crystal Palace fan, I just wish my club would take a few lessons from him when it comes to remembering that supporters and not the moneymen are the beating heart of every club. Turning to the three politicians to be made Freeman, they were of course in office long before my, and in fact all my group's, time in this chamber. It is clear that they are an impressive triumvirate. The late Vincent Talbot was the first Leader of Merton Council. Harry Cowd was leader for an impressive 8 years, nearly as long as... the name escapes me! Both Vincent and Harry were

Conservatives and I must confess that it was not until today that I learned how long my fellow Tories reigned supreme in this borough, before that is the even longer period of Labour hegemony. May I venture the thought perhaps that the time has come for a third party to take on the mantle, and I look forward to the time when the Merton Park Independents are sitting on that side of the chamber. The third member of this impressive trio is Tony Colman, who I note has been a businessman, a councillor, an MP and an academic, that I can only add seems like a perfect combination. Finally, last but not least, I turn to the one Honorary Alderwoman of the night, Janice Howard, who I do of course know. A committed councillor for 12 years, a very successful and scrupulously fair mayor and someone who, despite our political differences, was always fun to gossip with, particularly when were together outside one of the polling stations in Wimbledon Park. I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this honour. May I finish by congratulating all those recognised this evening, along with their friends and families. Those of us now sitting in your seats will do our best to live up to your principles and learn from your examples. Thank you.

The Mayor then called for a vote and the vote was carried, unanimously. Ivor Heller was invited to receive a certificate conferring upon him the title of Honorary Freeman of the Borough affixed with the common seal of the Council.

The substantive resolution was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That, by virtue of the power vested in it by Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council does admit Ivor Heller as Freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

This honour is bestowed on Ivor Heller in recognition of the substantial contribution he made to the Borough including his work for AFC Wimbledon and his continuing work within the community.

4 FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH (Agenda Item 4)

The Mayor invited Councillor Judge to move and Councillor McLean to second the motion.

Councillor Judge:

Thank you Madam Mayor it's a pleasure to move this motion. Tony Colman was Leader of Merton Council from 1991 to 1997 before becoming MP for Putney. He'd originally stood in Durnsford against Theresa May before being elected in 1990 for

Lavender ward. He'd only been elected a year earlier but it was a measure of his quality that he became Leader of the Council so quickly.

He had been a director of the Burton group for more than twenty years and played a part in starting TopShop. As such, he brought business and managerial experience into the office. The Labour administration needed a new leader and Tony more than fitted the bill. It was soon apparent that he was completely on top of the business of the Council and demonstrated a sure touch and this was also the first administration Madam Mayor that operated in this Civic Centre.

The Council under his leadership carried through service improvements including being the first Council to introduce free nursery education. Learning disability services became state of the art and the capital headroom of the Council was prioritised for new housing. It was a time of considerable achievement and during his time the Council also had strong partnerships with the voluntary sector.

Tony was and is a strong environmentalist and attended the UN summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. An important appointment Tony made was Dame Heather Rabbatts, then our youngest Chief Executive who made a powerful impression and helped put Merton on the map. His next appointment was also a woman - Sue Charteris.

Tony started a monthly local Council newspaper – the Merton messenger to communicate with residents. Tony's deputies were Maria Louise DeVilliers and then Sheila Knight who was also chair of education. Siobhain McDonagh who is with us this evening, now the MP for Mitcham and Morden, was chair of housing. Linda Kirby was chair of social services, Mike Brunt chair of the environment, Paul Harper chair of leisure, Kingsley Abrams chair of finance and Joe Abrams equalities.

Tony instituted weekly 7.30am Leader's Strategy meetings to keep everyone on their toes, buoyed by compensatory bacon sandwiches. And not least of Tony's contributions were the efforts he made to influence, persuade and sometimes to cajole his Councillor colleagues. The Council then operated through a hierarchy of Committees, political management required a close knowledge of all reports but also the personalities and views of committee chairs. Budgets in particular were a difficult process with continuing cuts due to reductions in government funding. The Labour group had a culture of democratic decision making and the whole group was involved in budget votes, item by item. Tony would go out of his way to discuss details with committee chairs, Linda tells me he once visited her at the school where she was teaching in Wandsworth to discuss the impending social services budget. There is no doubt that Tony worked very hard as Leader. In a pre-digital age, legend has it that the postbox at the end of his road in Wimbledon village had to have an extra unit attached to accommodate his correspondence. He was assisted in all matters by his wife Juliet and they were a very sociable and hospitable couple. Tony was truly a professional leader who led significant achievements and gave Merton Council a profile it wouldn't otherwise have had. We honour Tony for his contribution to Merton.

Councillor McLean:

Thank you, Madam Mayor, and Deputy Lieutenant.

It is my pleasure to second Tony Colman as Freeman of the London Borough of Merton, recognising his six years as council leader as well his wider contribution to British politics, business and academia. This is honour is well deserved. Congratulations.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Brunt to speak to the motion.

Councillor Brunt:

Much has been said about Tony already but as a fellow member of the class of 1990 having joined the Council with others who are no longer here, I'd just like to add to everything that has been said. I was 35 at the time and the Council seemed a very stuffy and stayed place, I think at that age most places do seem like that and Tony really transformed the place. He brought his business experience and he really expanded the service offer moving from what the Government wanted which was value for money to best value and best value was what we looked for in Merton to try and get the best value for our residents. There was one senior assistant director who was retiring towards the end of Tony's time and I remember him taking me aside and saying that under Tony's leadership and the appointments that he made, it was so refreshing that he turned from being a henchman to being a disciple and I think that's a real tribute from a Government officer to say that of a Council. The only blemish on Tony's career is that he became MP for Putney – some seek greatness others have greatness thrust upon them and I became Leader of the Council afterwards and had to deal with the owner of Wimbledon Football Club who tried to persuade us to build him a stadium and various other things but in the two years that I was Leader and that was at a time when Leaders of Councils were not paid, it was a voluntary occupation and you had to have a full time job outside, I don't know how he kept it up and I lasted two years I could not keep that pace up so it's a real tribute to Tony that he achieved so much and went on to achieve even more after leaving Merton, so I wholeheartedly support this resolution and thank you Tony.

The Mayor then called for a vote and the vote was carried, unanimously. Anthony Colman was invited to receive a certificate conferring upon him the title of Honorary Freeman of the Borough affixed with the common seal of the Council.

The substantive resolution was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That, by virtue of the power vested in it by Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council does admit Anthony Colman as Freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

This honour is bestowed on Anthony Colman in recognition of the substantial contribution he made to the Borough including serving as Leader of the Council from 1991-1997.

5 FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH (Agenda Item 5)

The Mayor invited Councillor McLean to move and Councillor Garrod to second the motion.

Councillor McLean:

Madam Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant, I am delighted to propose Harry Cowd to be admitted as a Freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

Harry was a former Leader of this council serving from 1980-1988 and Deputy Mayor in 1982/83 and helped to welcome his Holiness Pope John Paul II to Merton.

Harry was first elected in May 1974 for West Barnes ward, where he has always lived. He was deputy Mayor in 1978/9 and served on the Education, General Purposes, Planning and Housing committees. He was later the Chair of Planning and also of Housing.

Harry helped to develop the conservation areas and the information plaques, as well as leaving his mark on Merton by promoting the development of Wimbledon Town Centre, Savacentre and M and S at Colliers Wood and regenerating Merton Abbey Mills. He worked closely with the MP for Mitcham on the rebuild of Phipps Bridge Estate and worked with the private sector to develop light industrial and retail estates to boost employment in Merton, and supported Cannizaro House and Wimbledon Theatre as they moved from council to commercial ownership, as well as moving the council to our current civic centre.

Harry was also a trustee and chair of the POLKA theatre and Merton Vision and was the chair of Merton and Sutton – later Merton and Wandsworth Health Authority for 17 years. Outside of the council Harry was Headteacher at Chesterton Junior and then later Chesterton Primary School for 30 years as well as being the Scout Leader for the 22nd Wimbledon Scout Group.

His colleagues and fellow councillors always spoke highly of Harry and his enduring qualities of hard work and kindness.

Madam Mayor and Deputy Lieutenant, I am delighted to propose Harry Cowd as freeman of the London Borough of Merton, in recognition of his years of service to the borough.

Councillor Garrod:

Thank you, Madam Mayor.

It is an honour to be able to second the motion to grant Freedom of the Borough to someone who has given so much to the place we all here call home.

Not only during his long stint as Leader of the Council – the second longest serving Leader in the history of the London borough of Merton - but as someone who has dedicated their life to helping make things better for people in our community.

Although not born in the borough – we'll forgive him for that fact - he was raised here in Merton. He went to school here, he was a scout here, and he was a Chorister here too. And he also served the good people of West Barnes, years before his time as a councillor in his duties as a paper a boy.

Harry joined Merton Council in 1974 representing the ward where he grew up. After serving on various committees, including education, general purposes, planning and housing he went on to become Leader from 1980 - 1988.

Now many people have remarked on how young I am to be leading the Council, but Harry was even younger than me when he started out. But his youth did not stop him from leaving a lasting impact in our borough.

He led the Council during the re-development of Wimbledon Town Centre, brought Council staff here into one building in the civic centre, kickstarted a wave of house building and refurbishing of council housing stock, helped keep Merton as the home of tennis, and was a fierce defender of the arts and culture in the borough. I know that Harry is especially proud of the twinning of Merton with Irving, Texas and that he is still in touch with a number of those involved at the time of when he was Leader.

An impressive political operator, Harry as Leader was formidable but thoughtful, tough but kind, and was driven by a clear vision for how he was going to lead Merton to achieve the best chances in life for the people who lived and worked here.

After being Leader of the Council, Harry gave his time to local causes and institutions – from the Polka Theatre to Merton Vision, and Chairing the Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth Health Authority for 17 years where he also held onto local NHS lands standing up to government ministers to protect them for the future healthcare support for the people of Merton - some are still waiting to be redeveloped but that's another story!

A lifetime of service committed to Merton and this award is long overdue.

I want to if I can also congratulate Ivor Heller, Tony Colman, Janice Howard, and the family of Vincent Talbot for the recognition they are so deservedly receiving tonight and thank you for all you have done for Merton over the years.

It hasn't gone unnoticed that tonight the chamber is full of former leaders, not just those that we are celebrating at this meeting but the three that sit on these benches with me. I'm incredibly grateful to be able to turn to Cllrs Brunt, Judge and Alambritis, but also to be able to seek the sage guidance of leaders who stood for other parties than my own but are still generous in their advice and time.

Harry, congratulations and thank you for your unyielding commitment to this borough – the place where you grew up and led.

Madam Mayor, I second the motion.

The Mayor then called for a vote and the vote was carried, unanimously. Harry Cowd was invited to receive a certificate conferring upon him the title of Honorary Freeman of the Borough affixed with the common seal of the Council.

The substantive resolution was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That, by virtue of the power vested in it by Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council does admit Harry Cowd as Freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

This honour is bestowed on Harry Cowd in recognition of the substantial contribution he made to the Borough including serving as Leader from 1980-1988

6 FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH (Agenda Item 6)

The Mayor invited Councillor McLean to move and Councillor Whelton to second the motion.

Councillor McLean:

Madam Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant, I am delighted to propose the late Vincent Talbot as Freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

Vincent was known by his nickname of 'Tolly'. He worked as a stockbroker and was born on 14th March 1916.

Tolly served twice as Leader of the council. He was the first ever Leader of Merton Council following the reorganisation of local government, first serving from 1965-71, he later returned to be Leader of the Council in 1974-75. He was the Mayor of Merton in 1981-82 before standing down at the 1982 elections.

Prior to 1965 Tolly was the Chairman of the Merton & Morden Urban District, this is listed on the board in the corridor beside the Council Chamber. He was always intrigued to wonder if, one day, someone would link the two mentions on the honour boards together. Perhaps this is an idea whose time has now come!

In addition to his service to Merton as a councillor Tolly served for many years on the Aldermanic Bench, until its abolition. He served as a JP in Wimbledon for many years before retiring to Sutton and then to the Sussex coast.

Madam Mayor and Deputy Lieutenant, I am delighted to propose the late Vincent Talbot as freeman of the London Borough of Merton, in recognition of his years of service to the borough.

Councillor Whelton:

Thank you Madam Mayor. I wish to second the nomination of Vincent Talbot. Vincent Talbot had a major part in the history of Merton. He was the first Leader of this Council in 1965. Like some subsequent Councils, it was a hung Council and he rested on the support of the residents to be the Leader. But nevertheless it was bringing three Councils together; Merton and Morden, Wimbledon and Mitcham and that was a time of great change. In that administration Merton was one of the first Councils to introduce comprehensive schools in 1968, something that I believe has significantly benefited this Borough in the past 55 years. He also started a major housebuilding programme a new Council enabled rebuilding of new homes in my ward Pollards Hill and also the Eastfields estate. He was also the first person to serve as Leader and subsequently became Mayor in 1981 to 1982, but after he stood down from the Council in 1982 he was Chair of the Mitcham Common Conservators. I am the current Chair of that body but I know we owe a huge debt of gratitude to Vincent Talbot for his contribution but also ensuring that body has stable finances from which we benefit to this day, so much so that back in 2011 a road in Pollards Hill was named after him on the meadows – Talbot Close. That is the honour of Vincent Talbot and his contribution to Mitcham.

I think in the history of Merton Vincent Talbot and Harry Cowd have two significant places to play given the Conservative dominance of the first 25 years of Merton Council, having us as a Labour party spending just three years of that in power from 1971-1974. They had a knack of winning elections, disappointing for us, but in terms of the Conservatives probably brought them huge benefits in terms of the number of years they governed this Council for, an incredible 22 out of the first 25 years. That success hasn't been replicated since but I think they did leave a legacy in the Borough and Harry Cowd as well as the Leader mentioned. I would also like to pay tribute to the work of Tony Colman. Tony Colman became Leader, this Council had been predominantly a Conservative dominated Council and through his legacy that this has been predominantly Labour since that time. Many difficult choices, many difficult decisions made but made a huge contribution and finally to Ivor Heller, what can I say Ivor about you and your contribution to this Borough?

I first got to know Ivor when I was the Mayor of Merton back in 2008/9; effervescent, lively and completely and utterly dedicated to AFC Wimbledon, rising up from what happened and that terrible decision in 2002 and AFC Wimbledon, if it hadn't been for people like Ivor, we wouldn't have a club in Wimbledon and it wouldn't be here today. It was also a great honour when I was Cabinet Member in my first stint for Culture, then subsequently for Regeneration to work with you in terms of delivery of that stadium, so congratulations to all the recipients today, I formally second, thank you Madam Mayor.

The Mayor then called for a vote and the vote was carried, unanimously. The family of Vincent Talbot were invited to receive a certificate conferring upon Mr Talbot the title of Honorary Freeman of the Borough affixed with the common seal of the Council.

The substantive resolution was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That, by virtue of the power vested in it by Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council does admit the late Vincent Talbot as Freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

This honour is bestowed on the late Vincent Talbot in recognition of the substantial contribution he made to the Borough as the first Council Leader of the then newly formed Borough of Merton.

Mr. Talbot was first elected in 1949 as a councillor for the then Merton and Morden Urban District Council, a position he held for 16 years. He then served as a councillor for the London Borough of Merton from 1964 to 1982 and was elected Mayor of Merton for the civic year 1981/1982.

When Merton was formed in 1965, Honorary Alderman Talbot held the influential position of the first Council Leader until 1971. Mr. Talbot returned to the role of Council Leader for a further year from 1974 to 1975. He was then made an Honorary Alderman for his long service to the Council in 1990.

7 HONORARY ALDERWOMAN (Agenda Item 7)

The Mayor invited Councillor Macauley to move and Councillor Foley to second the motion.

Councillor Macauley:

Thank you Madam Mayor. Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, distinguished guests, I am absolutely delighted to have the opportunity to propose the motion that former Councillor Janice Howard is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderwoman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of her loyal, distinguished and exceptional service to the Council for many years.

Janice was first elected as a Wimbledon Park Councillor in May 2010 and was not re-elected in May 2022 after 12 years of active service as a Councillor. During her time as a Councillor in the Conservative group she was shadow spokesperson for environment, transport and parking as well as culture and leisure, health and wellbeing. She was also vice-chair of the General Purposes Committee and when it merged with Standards. She served on the Licensing Committee, Healthier Communities Older Persons Scrutiny Panel, Planning Committee and the now defunct Street Management advisory committee.

In May 2019 she was honoured to be elected as the first citizen of Merton and due to the pandemic she served until September 2020. She became the longest continuous serving Mayor of Merton. During her Mayoral year she raised £87,000 net, over £100,000 gross for her two charities Macmillan Merton Cancer Support and Faith in Action helping the homeless. She was able to give both of her two chosen charities

the sum of £40,000 each. In addition, she made smaller donations to Merton and Morden Guild and BAME Voice for their support during her Mayoral year. Janice had great support from the Aqua ladies of David Lloyd in Raynes Park and I am delighted to see them here tonight giving her support. After her Mayoral year she was part of the Mayoral fundraising Committee and the trust board helping the Mayors office with fundraising events and also collecting raffle prizes in support of the Mayors charities. In 2021 she was elected to the board of the London Mayors Association and still elected this year for another term. The organised events for all 32 London mayors, attending meetings, protocol training day for all new mayors in Westminster Council and also the London Mayors Civic Service in Westminster Abbey. Because of Janice's excellent skills in charity events, she is now the champion for organising the yearly Wimbledon Theatre event for the London Mayors Association which is very popular with the chain gangs. She is also a committee member of Macmillan Merton Cancer Support and also a school governor of St Mary's Primary School in Merton. Janice has given so much of her time to public duties with her outstanding skill and experience and therefore she deserves the honour of Honorary Alderwoman which I have no iota or scintilla of doubt whatsoever for her services for many years to the Borough. Our sincere thanks to Janice for all her work for the communities in Merton and I propose the motion, thank you very much Madam Mayor.

Councillor Foley:

Thank you Madam Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant. I have pleasure in seconding this motion and the speech I'd made actually repeats a lot of what Councillor Macauley has said. Janice was a Councillor for twelve years in Wimbledon Park, I had the pleasure of working with her for eight years sitting in this Chamber, not always agreeing with things that her party said as we will find out later tonight with various sides and being a true independent but it was in 2018 Janice approached me and asked if I would be her Deputy Mayor. It was a huge honour and in 2019 when she was elected as the first citizen of the Borough, I was Deputy Mayor – that's when you really get to know somebody – a former Councillor told me you really get to know a Borough when you become Mayor or Deputy Mayor which you will be finding out as you travel right across the Borough Madam Mayor, but I thought I knew Janice in the eight years I'd spent with her but that final year and a bit, we had a very busy year and it was a real pleasure working with Janice. She is one of these people with a can-do attitude, I didn't know her husband Andrew – Councillor Andrew Howard who's here at that time, yes I'd met him in the Chamber but I got to know him as well through her – there were a lot of late evenings when we'd be at functions together, she was working tirelessly for her two charities Macmillan Merton and Faith in Action. I also got to know her children Ben and Bella who are here tonight as well supporting her. It was such a shame whilst we heard the net and the gross amount, to do all of that pre-Covid and we never actually had the ball – I think that's always an unknown quantity what we could have actually smashed through but it was a real honour and I think so much has been said about her hard work Madam Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant I have pleasure seconding the motion for Janice to be Honorary Alderwoman London Borough of Merton.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Holden to speak to the motion.

Councillor Holden:

Thank you Madam Mayor.

On behalf of the Conservative Group I too am pleased that the former councillor and Mayor of Merton, Janice Howard, is to be bestowed the status of Honorary Alderman/woman of the London Borough of Merton.

I'm proud that we can make this honour to my friend and former council colleague. Janice Howard served in this place as the Wimbledon Park ward councillor from 2010 to 2022.

Most notably she served as Mayor of Merton from May 2019 until September 2020, making Janice's term in office the longest in a generation.

Janice served as Mayor with distinction, and it was unfortunate that COVID blighted the end of her mayoralty.

The main result being the cancellation of the mayor's charity ball, which was a shame, and I for one had been looking forward to it.

Her Deputy Mayor Cllr Ed Foley formed a good double act with Janice, and its nice to see that he is seconding the nomination.

Janice has an ability to get on with and work well cross-party, something which can be difficult for most of us in this place.

An example of this is her serving on the mayor's events committee and helping serve the mayoralty as a concept across the borough.

To that end I am grateful to Cllr Edith Macauley in the Labour Group for making the changes in the necessary committees to allow for us tonight to award the Honorary Alderman status.

Before retiring from work, Janice held a number of roles and jobs and was adept at event organisation. These talents she brought to her role as a councillor.

Organising successful events in our local Conservative Party, then her years of supporting events in the Mayor's events committee, and latterly since leaving this Council with the Macmillan Merton Cancer charity.

Helping to generate lots of money for the Mayor's charities and local charities.

Her hard-work and dedication also extended to serving in senior positions within our Conservative Group over the years, serving on a wide range of different council committees and in particular a focus on health.

At times her husband wondered why Janice was so busy, and so in 2018 the now Cllr Andrew Howard joined this place as member for Village, to find out.

Madam Mayor, I'm pleased tonight that we can award Janice Howard as Honorary Alderwoman for her years of dedicated service to this borough.

The motion was put to the vote and passed unanimously. Janice Howard was invited to receive a certificate conferring on her the title of Honorary Alderwoman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor Janice Howard is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderwoman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of her loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the committee/panel. To find out the date of the next meeting please check the calendar of events at your local library or online at www.merton.gov.uk/committee.

COUNCIL
13 SEPTEMBER 2023

(8.27 pm - 10.57 pm)

PRESENT (in the Chair), Councillor Gill Manly,
Councillor Martin Whelton, Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina,
Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Councillor Laxmi Attawar,
Councillor Thomas Barlow, Councillor Hina Bokhari,
Councillor Michael Brunt, Councillor Billy Christie,
Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah,
Councillor Anthony Fairclough, Councillor Edward Foley,
Councillor Brenda Fraser, Councillor Jenifer Gould,
Councillor Joan Henry, Councillor Daniel Holden,
Councillor Andrew Howard, Councillor Sally Kenny,
Councillor Linda Kirby, Councillor Paul Kohler,
Councillor Edith Macauley, Councillor Peter McCabe,
Councillor Simon McGrath, Councillor Nick McLean,
Councillor Aidan Mundy, Councillor Dennis Pearce,
Councillor Marsie Skeete, Councillor Eleanor Stringer,
Councillor Helena Dollimore, Councillor James Williscroft,
Councillor Sheri-Ann Bhim, Councillor John Braithwaite,
Councillor Michael Butcher, Councillor Caroline Charles,
Councillor Eleanor Cox, Councillor Klaar Dresselaers,
Councillor Chessie Flack, Councillor Kirsten Galea,
Councillor Ross Garrod, Councillor Jil Hall,
Councillor Billy Hayes, Councillor Susie Hicks,
Councillor Dan Johnston, Councillor Andrew Judge,
Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, Councillor Samantha MacArthur,
Councillor Stephen Mercer, Councillor Stuart Neaverson,
Councillor John Oliver, Councillor Robert Page,
Councillor Michael Paterson, Councillor Tony Reiss,
Councillor Slawek Szczepanski, Councillor Matthew Willis,
Councillor Max Austin and Councillor Victoria Wilson

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Irons.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2023 are agreed as an accurate record.

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE MAYOR, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Agenda Item 4)

The Leader spoke and provided updates on World Suicide Prevention Day, the Galpins Road incident, the response to the Study School incident, the anniversary of the death of Queen Elizabeth 2nd, recent GCSE and A Level exam results across the Borough, renovation of sports courts, the upcoming Merton Sports Day, the Kids Swim Free initiative, Cost of Living events, the local scrappage scheme and informed those present of an upcoming Cost of Living Event and a Leaders' advice surgery.

There were no announcements from the Chief Executive.

The Mayor provided a brief update on her recent and upcoming events and activities.

5 PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS (Agenda Item 5)

The responses to the written public questions were circulated prior to the meeting. There were no supplementary questions.

6 COUNCILLORS' ORDINARY PRIORITY QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS (Agenda Item 6)

The responses to the written member ordinary priority questions were circulated prior to the meeting. The Mayor then invited each of the members in turn to ask (if they wished) a further question to the Cabinet Member. A copy of the supplementary questions and responses will be included in the 'member ordinary priority questions to Cabinet Members' published document.

7a STRATEGIC THEME: MAIN REPORT (Agenda Item 7a)

The Strategic Theme report on Nurturing Civic Pride was moved by Councillor Stringer and seconded by Councillor Christie.

Councillors Bokhari, Austin, Mercer, Johnston, Dresselaers, Kohler and Fairclough also spoke on the item.

The Conservative Amendment 1 to the report was moved by Councillor Holden and seconded by Councillor McLean.

The Conservative Amendment 2 was moved by Councillor Barlow and seconded by Councillor Cox.

The Liberal Democrat Amendment 1 was moved by Councillor MacArthur and seconded by Councillor Galea.

The Liberal Democrat Amendment 2 was moved by Councillor Oliver and seconded by Councillor Fairclough.

The Conservative Amendment 1 was put to the vote and fell: Votes For – 26, Against – 29, Absentions – 1.

The Conservative Amendment 2 was put to the vote and fell: Votes For – 26, Against – 29, Absentions – 1.

The Liberal Democrat Amendment 1 was put to the vote and fell: Votes For – 26, Against – 29, Absentions – 1.

RESOLVED: That the Strategic Theme report is agreed.

7b STRATEGIC THEME: COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS (Agenda Item 7b)

The responses to the written member strategic theme priority questions were circulated prior to the meeting. The Mayor then invited each of the members in turn to ask (if they wished) a further question to the Cabinet Member. A copy of the supplementary questions and responses will be included in the 'member strategic theme priority questions to Cabinet Members' published document.

It was also noted that a copy of the remaining Member questions and responses will be published after the meeting, in line with Constitutional requirements.

7c STRATEGIC THEME: MOTIONS (Agenda Item 7c)

There were no Strategic Theme motions submitted to the meeting.

8 REPORTS FROM COMMUNITY FORUM - RAYNES PARK, 28 JUNE 2023 (Agenda Item 8)

Councillor Oliver presented the report which was received by the Council.

9 NOTICES OF MOTION (Agenda Item 9)

There were no motions submitted to the meeting.

10 MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SCHEME (Agenda Item 10)

The report was moved by Councillor Christie and seconded by Councillor Hayes.

Councillors Bhim, Mercer and McLean also spoke on the item.

The Liberal Democrat Amendment to the report was moved by Councillor Willis and seconded by Councillor Oliver.

The Liberal Democrat Amendment was put to a vote and fell: Votes for – 18, Against – 36, Abstentions – 2.

As six members of the Council requested that a recorded vote be taken on the vote on the substantive motion, a roll call was taken and the votes were as follows:

Votes in Favour (30): Councillors Akyigyina, Alambritis, Attawar, Bhim, Brunt, Butcher, Charles, Christie, Cooper-Marbiah, Dollimore, Fraser, Garrod, Hayes, Henry, Johnston, Judge, Kaweesa, Kenny, Kirby, Macauley, McCabe, Mundy, Neaverson, Pearce, Skeete, Stringer, Szczepanski, Williscroft, Deputy Mayor Councillor Whelton and the Mayor Councillor Manly.

Votes Against (25): Councillors Austin, Barlow, Bokhari, Braithwaite, Cox, Dresselaers, Fairclough, Flack, Galea, Gould, Hall, Hicks, Holden, Howard, Kohler, MacArthur, McGrath, McLean, Mercer, Oliver, Page, Paterson, Reiss, Willis and Wilson.

Abstentions (1): Councillor Foley

RESOLVED:

A. That the Council approved the recommendations of the Standards and General Purposes Committee set out in the report:

(i) that the basic allowance should be increased to £12,014 in line with the recommendation of the 2022 Independent Remuneration Panel;

(ii) to agree to award the Special Responsibility Allowances set out in appendix A;

(iii) that Council reaffirms the linking of future allowances to the annual staff pay award, such increases to be applied automatically and that in future the Scheme be approved as part of the annual budget;

(iv) that the Licensing Committee chair should also be the chair of the Licensing Sub committee meetings convened for the purpose of determining individual licensing applications

(iv) that the new allowances should apply with immediate effect (as of 13 September 2023), but will not be backdated to 1 April 2023

11 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23 (Agenda Item 11)

The report was moved by Councillor Foley and seconded by Councillor Brunt.

Councillors Kohler, Oliver and McLean also spoke on the item.

The report was put to the vote and carried: Votes for – 38, Against – 17, Abstentions – 1.

RESOLVED :

That Council received the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

12 STANDARDS AND GENERAL PURPOSES ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda Item 12)

The report was moved by Councillor Whelton and formally seconded by Councillor Oliver.

Councillor Page also spoke on the item.

RESOLVED:

A That Council noted the Annual Report and agreed to its for publication and distribution to relevant stakeholders.

B That Council noted the appointment of an independent person and to co-opt such a person onto the S&GP Committee for the purposes of providing advice on the audit functions of the S&GP Committee; and

C That Council agreed the amended terms of reference for S&GP Committee in accordance with Appendix C

13 APPROVED CAPITAL PROGRAMME AMENDMENTS REQUIRING COUNCIL APPROVAL (Agenda Item 13)

The report was moved by Councillor Christie and seconded by Councillor Kenny.

RESOLVED:

A. That Council approved Ricards Lodge Sixth Form Expansion scheme of £3,600,000 as detailed in the table below:

Scheme	Budget 2023-24	Budget 2024-25	Narrative
Ricards Lodge – 6 th Form Expansion	50,000	3,550,000	DfE Post 16 Capacity Funding £3,235,706 and School Contribution £364,294 match funding

B. That the School Capital Maintenance Budget is treated as one budget for financial management, reducing substantially the level of formal approval required for budget virement sign off to provide valuable historic information whilst allowing for effective budget management.

14 CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND RELATED MATTERS (Agenda Item 14)

The report was formally moved by Councillor Bhim and formally seconded by Councillor Stringer.

RESOLVED:

That the Council:

1. Noted the changes to the membership of Committees that were approved under delegated authority since the last meeting of the Council.

15 PETITIONS (Agenda Item 15)

The report was formally moved by Councillor Garrod and formally seconded by Councillor Stringer.

RESOLVED

That Council

1. Notes the update on the petition received at the last meeting,
2. Accepts receipt of a petition presented by Councillors Dresselaers, Braithwaite and Brunt entitled Stop Rat Running through Abbey Road Neighbourhood.

16 BUSINESS FOR THE NEXT ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL (Agenda Item 16)

That the Strategic Theme for the next ordinary meeting of the Council, being held on 15 November 2023, shall be Borough of Sport.

6: Councillor Priority Questions to Cabinet Members

From Cllr Mike Brunt to the Cabinet Member for Transport

Can the Cabinet Member advise on the progress being made in marking out bays for charging electric vehicles in Wimbledon?

From Cllr Simon McGrath to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

Can the Cabinet Member please outline the responsibilities of the Safer Neighbourhood Board?

From Cllr Stephen Mercer to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green spaces and Climate Change

What level of expenditure does the Cabinet believe is reasonable in support of a decent level of toilet provision in Merton? If a Community Toilet Scheme is the most cost effective way of achieving decent provision, has the Council considered how much is spent by neighbouring councils in funding the same sort of schemes?

From Cllr Stuart Neaverson to the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change

It's been fantastic to see the progress the Council has made on climate action, especially with the planting of 10,000 trees over the last year. How does Merton compare with other councils on climate action?

From Cllr Hina Bokhari to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

Would the Cabinet Member set out how we are supporting asylum seekers who could be at risk of becoming homeless in Merton?

From Cllr Usaama Kaweesa to the Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

It's great to see the brilliant work being done to Vestry Hall through the Civic Pride Fund, can the cabinet member highlight other successes we have had through the fund?

From Cllr Robert Page to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

Only 37% of employees responded to the Council's Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion survey in 2022. Would the Cabinet Member agree with me that the main driver of low survey turnouts is staff feeling that their voice doesn't make a

6: Councillor Priority Questions to Cabinet Members

difference, and that this is a situation that develops over time? Would she also agree with me that the only way to combat this is to build trust through regular, insight-driven staff communications, through taking action on staff concerns and proactively feeding back on this and if so, set out what she is doing to address this?

From Cllr Nick McLean to the Cabinet Member for Finance

In a recent video the Cabinet Member said he was 'excited' to launch the Merton Young Savers accounts with the credit union Croydon Plus.

Please can the Cabinet Member tell me:

- How much money has been allocated to fund the Merton Young Savers accounts and the additional £10 for a parent or guardian to open an account?
- What is the rate of interest that is paid on the Merton Young Savers accounts?
- What is the interest rate charged by Croydon Plus on their Saver Loan and Family Plus Loan?
- Did the Cabinet Member know that at the 2023 AGM the Croydon Plus Treasurer reported that "there was an overall deficit for £21k which has resulted from charging £25k for the payment of a dividend in 2020/21"?
- What due diligence was done on the decision to partner with Croydon Plus and what alternate options were considered? Please provide all reports, correspondence and officer emails.

From Cllr Matthew Willis to the Cabinet Member for Transport

We have heard that the Mayor's ULEZ scrappage scheme has now paid out £121 million or 75% of the funds available. Could the Cabinet Member please state what the equivalent is for Merton's scrappage scheme in £ and % terms?

From Cllr Helena Dollimore to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

The St Helier Hospital impact assessment shows that there will be a huge increased pressure on local hospitals' maternity, A&E and paediatric services if St Helier's services are closed. Can the cabinet member outline how waiting times for local people might be impacted?

Committee: Council

Date: 15 November 2023

Wards: All

Subject: Strategic Theme: Borough of Sport

Lead officer: Dan Jones, Executive Director: Environment, Civic Pride and Climate

John Morgan, Executive Director, Adult Social Care, Integrated Care and Public Health

Lead member: Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage

Cllr Peter McCabe, Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

Contact officer: Keith Burns, Interim Assistant Director, Customers, Policy and Improvement

Recommendations:

A. That the Council note and consider the content of this report.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. The Council, at its meeting on the 19th of March 2023, approved 'Building a Better Merton Together', the Council Plan for 2023 – 2026, which sets out three strategic priorities for the Council. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, delivery against these priorities is monitored by the Council. To facilitate this monitoring role, each meeting of the Council receives a report providing an update on performance against one of the three strategic priorities.

Building a Better Merton Together sets out how the Council will deliver its ambition with three strategic priorities that shape and guide delivery:

- i. Nurturing Civic Pride
- ii. Building a sustainable future
- iii. Creating a Borough of Sport

1.2. The achievement of these strategic priorities will require extensive engagement with residents, voluntary groups, and businesses, building on partnerships and alliances to reach a common goal.

1.3. This report provides the Council with an opportunity to consider progress against the Borough of Sport strategic priority, with a particular focus on:

- I. Increasing access to sport and physical wellbeing activities during the cost of living emergency.
- II. Stakeholder engagement in creating a Borough of Sport.
- III. Merton's Big Sports Day outcomes and next steps.

- 1.4. For the first two areas of focus this report provides:
 - I. An overview of the Council's long-term ambitions.
 - II. Progress to date against those ambitions, including any specific decisions made since the Council last met in September 2023 as well as performance against key performance indicators where relevant.
 - III. Key deliverables and commitments over the life of the new Council Plan (2023 to 2026) and any identified risks or issues relating to these deliverables and commitments.
- 1.5. For the third (Merton's Big Sports Day) an update on how the day was received has been provided.

2 DETAILS

INTRODUCTION

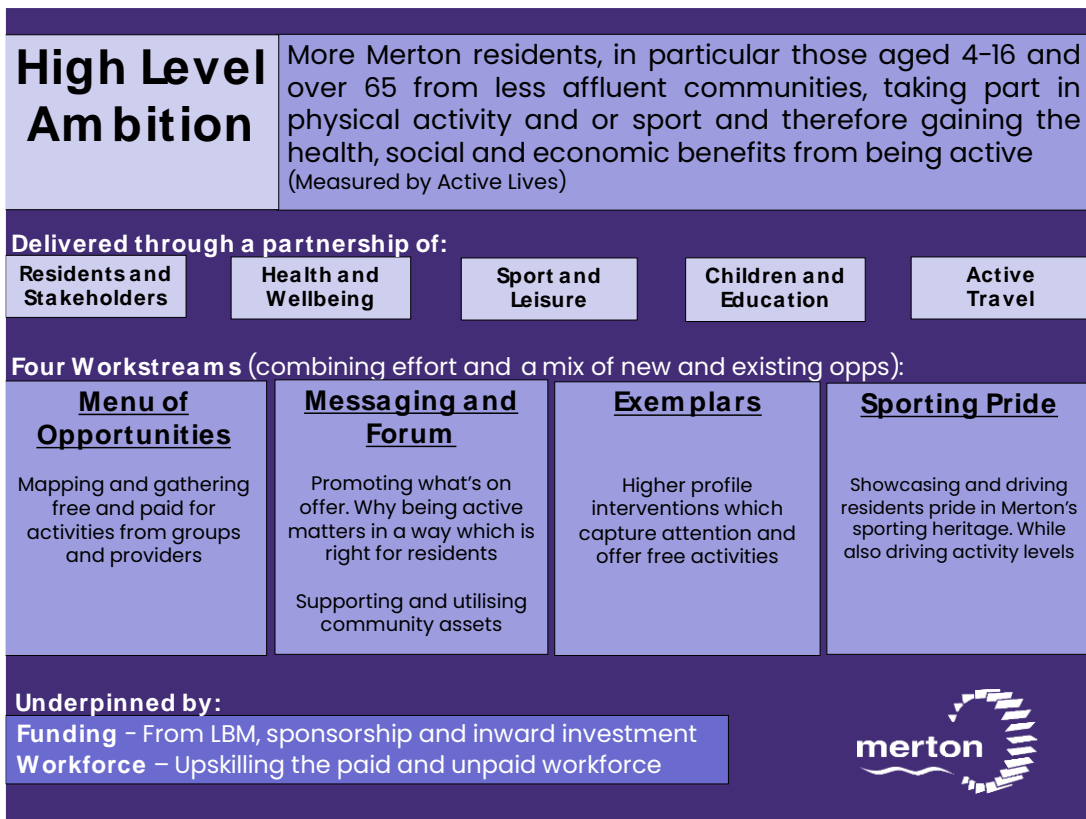
- 2.1. The blueprint – the three year actions – which will ensure Merton becomes London's Borough of Sport were approved by the Cabinet in June 2023. This set the overall ambition to ensure:

“more Merton residents, in particular those aged 4-16, the over 65s and those from less affluent communities, to be taking part in physical activity and sport and therefore gaining the health, social and economic benefits of being active”.

The public call to action is to do one, or one more, physical activity session each week. It's about sport and physical activity in their widest sense including team and individual sports – for example football, swimming, tennis – and wider physical activity – walking, jogging, yoga and exercise sessions. Basically, anything that gets you moving and active. Progress will be measured annually through the Sport England Active Lives surveys.

In addition to the above overall ambition, becoming London's Borough of Sport will:

- reduce inactivity by increasing participation in sport and physical activity.
 - widen access to sport and physical activity by under-represented groups by providing more free and low cost opportunities to these residents.
 - engage more children and young people and older people in sport and physical activity.
 - encourage young people and Merton residents to take up volunteering, officiating and or organising roles in sport and physical activity to drive a more vibrant sports sector and develop their potential; and
 - celebrate the rich sporting heritage in Merton and use this as a tool to engage more residents in physical activity and sport.
- 2.2. The following diagram provides and overview of the Borough of Sport plans.



- 2.3. The target audiences – 4-16 years olds, and 65 and over – were selected because the activity levels of these groups in Merton fall below the London and national averages for these groups particularly in terms of the wards in the east of the borough. Less affluent residents are also being given priority because affluence is the single biggest determinate of whether a child or adult is active. Whilst activity levels for most groups have bounced back to pre-covid levels those from lower income households have not.
- 2.4. The ambition to become London’s Borough of Sport should and will reach and benefit all underrepresented groups in Merton¹. Also, by targeting the less affluent, the high level ambition, will help capture many from these equity groups as a result of intersectionality. However, it will be important to also reach out for example, to more affluent disabled people and others who are more affluent but are also within an under-represented group.
- 2.5. In order to bring together and co-ordinate the various teams and departments within the Council with an interest and contribution to make to the Borough of Sport ambition, an operational group was established in April 2023. This includes representation from: Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces, Public Health, Children’s Services, Transport, the Leader’s Office, Communications, Human Resources, Planning, Community and Housing, and Corporate Services. In the run up to Merton’s Big Sports Day the group has been focused on planning and delivering the event. It is now transitioning its focus back to policy development and implementation. As per the blueprint, a stakeholder advisory group (discussed further at paragraphs 2.39 and 2.41.3 below) has also been established and is helping shape, guide and monitor the Borough of Sport plans.

¹ Girls/women, disabled people, those from Black, Asian and other diverse community groups, the less affluent, LGBTQ+ people and older people

- 2.6. Given the cross-cutting nature of the Borough of Sport agenda, the delivery of the ambitious programme will be resourced by a combination of resources provided from within existing LBM budgets across a number of service areas. This includes Sport and Leisure and Public Health, as well as external sponsorship and partnership funding. There is a commitment of £1.5m in the capital budget from 2024/25 to deliver infrastructure improvements across the borough, which will be informed by the outcome of updating the Playing Pitch Strategy (see paragraph 2.24.4 below) and ongoing dialogue with the sporting community in Merton and key funding partners, such as Sport England, the Football Foundation, the GLA and National Governing Bodies.
- 2.7. Success will be measured by across three key indicators:
- activity levels – an increase in the number active 4-16s and 65 and overs (measured by Sport England’s Active Lives surveys) and a decrease in inactivity.
 - volunteering – an increase in the number of sports and physical activity volunteers (measured by Sport England’s Active Lives surveys); and
 - opportunities – the number of activities on offer with increase and diversify (measured by the Borough of Sport Activity Finder).

COMMUNICATING THE STRATEGY

2.8. Communicating our ambition to become London’s Borough of Sport is a priority workstream for the Council’s Communications Team. Work to promote Borough of Sport spans the entire communications mix including internal engagement; marketing; PR and digital.

2.9. Successes and achievements to date include:

Big Sports Day

2.10. Efforts in Quarters 1 and 2 of 2023/24 focused on developing a narrative, a clear brand identity and the Big Sports Day community launch event, which attracted more than 5,000 residents and engaged them in physical activity. Communications led the planning and delivery of the day, bringing more than 50 local partners together with regular stakeholder meetings and support on the day as we co-delivered the event with community, volunteer and professional sports organisations. Further detail on the Big Sports Day is provided later in the report.

Digital communications

2.11. In marketing Merton’s Big Sports Day, the Council secured endorsement from West Ham United striker Michail Antonio who started his career with Tooting and Mitcham United FC Juniors, as well as endorsement videos from major local partners including AELTC and AFC Wimbledon.

2.12. More than 5,000 visits to the Borough of Sport webpage, which was created for the launch event, and the Communications Team have received one hundred and sixty one responses to an online survey on what people thought of the event and how it can be improved.

- 2.13. The feedback was broadly very positive. Most importantly in terms of the overall programme aims, 74% of attendees said they or those they attended with were very likely (31%) or somewhat likely (43%) to take up a new sport or activity because of attending. 94% of respondents said were very likely (76%) or somewhat likely (18%) to attend another event like this.
- 2.14. Key Qualitative feedback on what could be improved including: bringing the event earlier in the year, making the event longer or running multiple events, improving parking, and enhancing the food and drink offered at the event.
- 2.15. A series of videos have been released supporting Borough of Sport priorities, including the announcement of Kids Swim Free, and vox pops from residents who attended the Big Sports Day.

A Borough of Sport identity

- 2.16. Alongside the Big Sports Day, the Council has developed a standalone Borough of Sport brand which has now been launched. This included prize giveaway merchandise at the Big Sports Day, including water bottles, gym bags and t-shirts, of which more than 2,000 items were given away during the launch event. Items were given in return for people completing a number of new activities.

Borough of Sport Activity Finder

- 2.17. The Communications Team has worked alongside colleagues to develop the Borough of Sport Activity Finder, drafting content, supplying imagery, and advising the leisure team on site user experience in readiness for the formal website launch.

Future communications plan

- 2.18. Collaboration between the Communications Team, Public Health and the Sport and Leisure team is ongoing, with strategy sessions in place to ensure all work streams are complementary and maximise our impact with residents and stakeholders alike.
- 2.19. Work continues across the full communications mix to continue the narrative development and promote individual exemplars and other activity promotions, including working with sporting partners to cross-promote initiatives digitally and through partners' own unique audiences, particularly the two age groups and under-represented groups targeted.
- 2.20. Development of a New Year participation marketing campaign is now underway for launch in January 2024.

INCREASING ACCESS TO SPORT AND PHYSICAL WELLBEING ACTIVITIES DURING THE COST OF LIVING EMERGENCY

OVERVIEW OF AMBITIONS

- 2.21. There are three key actions which drive forward the Borough of Sport but also seek to help residents through the cost of living crisis: the creation of a Borough of Sport Activity Finder, exemplar projects, and a grants fund.

Borough of Sport Activity Finder

2.22. There is a huge amount of sport and physical activity, free and low cost, on offer across Merton, but many people don't know about what is on offer. There is a need to map opportunities and then publicise them via digital and accessible formats. A bespoke Borough of Sport Activity Finder has been developed and will promote what is on offer to the target audiences and drive-up participation. Community, commercial and voluntary providers are being encouraged and supported to upload their offers on the platform. The activity finder will be promoted by front-line staff including the local health workforce (link workers) and amplified by local trusted groups and networks.

Exemplars

2.23. Exemplars will be higher profile interventions which capture attention and provide free opportunities. The highly successful Beat the Street, funded by Public Health, NHS South West London ICB and Sport England, which engaged 22,549 (10%) residents earlier this year is a good example of what an exemplar will be. Across the three years the plan is to run around 6 or so exemplars. The advisory group (see paragraphs 2.39 and 2.41.3 below) will help select the exemplars to ensure they meet local needs.

Grant Fund

2.24. A Borough of Sport Grants Fund, guided by the Borough of Sport Advisory Group, will be created to support local and grassroots providers, clubs, and community groups. The aim of this fund will be to help transform the sporting and physical activity offer in Merton and help more people, particularly children and young people and older people, to get active locally.

PROGRESS TO DATE

2.25. Considerable progress has been made during the first year of Borough of Sport in the lead up to the community launch – Merton's Big Sports Day (see paragraphs 2.45 to 2.50 below). This includes:

- The highly successful Beat the Streets programme which engaged 10% (22,549) of the Merton population who clocked up 250,636 miles with 28% of players from Index of Multiple Deprivation groups 1 to 4².
- Almost £700,000 of Civic Pride grants shared across eight projects including Merton Saints BMX Club, the Merton School Sport Partnership and Morden Park Playground.
- Free swimming for under 16s trialled over the summer which saw a significant increase in uptake over July and August compared to the previous year when swimmers had to pay. Our Kids Swim Free initiative has now been made permanent with expanded hours during term time in the week and on weekends, and during school holidays; (see chart below)

Canons	Morden	Wimbledon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every weekend: 1.30-3.30pm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every weekend: 1-3pm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every weekend: 1-3pm • Term time: Fridays 4-6pm

² The Index of Multiple Deprivation, commonly known as the IMD, is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in England. IMD 1-4 are the least affluent groups of society.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Term time: Wednesdays 4-6pm • School holidays and public holidays: Monday-Friday 9-10am and 1-3pm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Term time: Monday-Friday 4-5.30pm • School holidays and public holidays: Monday-Friday 9-10am and 1-3pm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School holidays and public holidays: Monday-Friday 9-10am and 1-3pm
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- Following the success of Kids Swim Free, we launched (1 November 2023) our Over 65s Swim Free initiative which provides regular free swimming slots at all three of our leisure centres in the borough.

Canons	Morden	Wimbledon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Term time: Monday 10am-12pm 3 lanes • School holidays and public holidays: Monday 10am-12pm 3 lanes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Term time: Thursday 10am-12pm whole pool • School holidays and public holidays: Thursday 10am-12pm whole pool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Term time: Wednesday 10am-12pm whole pool • School holidays and public holidays: Wednesday 10am-12pm whole pool

- The refurbishment, funded by the LTA, of 42 tennis courts across the borough on 12 sites of which 39 have been completed to date, and we are exploring introducing a number of pickleball courts to provide more accessible options for people to get involved. We have also protected free play at all the sites where it already exists.
- The beach volleyball court in Wimbledon Park has been refurbished.
- Almost £300,000 from the Department of Education and London Sport secured for 23 Merton schools to help them open up their facilities beyond the school day for use by the local community, with additional funding to come in 2023/24.
- Merton's young people winning the Most Improved Cup in this year's London Youth Games by moving up 18 places to 11th.
- GLL has doubled the staff discount for council employees at their gyms to 20%.
- Forest e-bikes came to Merton in May 2023 and support both the Borough of Sport and the Council's Active Travel and Cycling Accessibility plans. Users get 10 free minutes per day. In the run up to Merton's Big Sports Day Forest gave all Merton Residents an additional 60 minutes of free use; and
- Free Walking Netball sessions, delivered by England Netball, started up at Morden Rec on 28 September 2023. After the initial 12 weeks its hoped that they will become self-sustaining through a number of the women attending also taking up free training to deliver the sessions going forward.

2.26. Turning then to the three key actions:

- The activity finder is now live in soft launch mode whilst we work with local providers and clubs to upload their activities on the portal with a particular

focus on free and low cost opportunities. So far, there are more than 900 activities available on the activity finder across the borough. We plan to launch the activity finder publicly soon and promote it to residents between now and Christmas to raise awareness and encourage usage.

- A further exemplar project started up in October. **Our Parks** – free exercise classes – started up on Saturday 28th October at Fair Green, Mitcham Market. The Beginners Bootcamp is a 60-minute workout using body weight exercises suitable for all of the family each week on Saturdays. A second weekly exercise session will target parents on the way home from dropping off their children at school and is due to go live soon. Other exemplar projects are in development and will go live over the coming year.
- The **grants fund** is in development and is schedule to go live in Spring 2024. The development of the fund is being guided by the Borough of Sport Advisory Group (see paragraphs 2.39 and 2.41.3 below). Their initial steer is that the fund should support both individuals and groups and could pay for training and qualifications, coaching, equipment, facility hire and marketing. It was also agreed that the focus of the fund should be on providing free and low cost activities to the target audiences.
- The existing **Playing Pitch Strategy** will be updated during 2023/24. Initially the focus will be on updating the facilities assessment for the Morden Park area.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND ACTIVELY MERTON

- 2.27. The Public Health and Borough of Sport Teams are working closely together and combining efforts and collaborating on joint projects. The highly successful Beat the Street initiative was developed as part of Actively Merton and essentially became the first Borough of Sport exemplar project. The teams of course share an objective – helping Merton residents get active so they can benefit from the health gains this will deliver.
- 2.28. Another positive example of how Actively Merton, a place priority for the Merton Health and Care Committee, is complementing and supporting Borough of Sport, during the cost of living crisis, is this summer's **Actively Merton small grants programme**. Developed to maintain the momentum built up from Beat the Street and to extend opportunities, the programme awarded 14 grants to local organisations totalling £14,948. For example, Commonsides Community Development Trust received £980 for a 'Day of dance' attended by 50 people and the Ethnic Minority Centre got £996 to deliver a six-week talk, coffee and indoor bowling programme aimed at ethnic minority communities, the over 50s and, disabled people. The grants increased local affordable opportunities for physical activity between July and September while also gathering insights on the barriers to being more active. These insights will be critical to the next steps of both Actively Merton and Borough of Sport.
- 2.29. Further planning is in development for the next phase of Actively Merton, including training front line staff, for example those working in primary care, to deliver brief interventions around physical activity and to promote the activity finder so that residents can find and participate in sport and physical activity sessions.

- 2.30. The '**Merton Moves**' scheme (funded by Better Care Fund/Improved Better Care Fund or IBCF) is also supporting the ambitions of Borough of Sport. It's a small scale but innovative programme delivered by Wimbledon Guild providing older people with six weeks of support to engage in physical activity. The project provides practical solutions. Between March 2022 and 2023 105 older people were supported and signed up to the Merton Moves pledge.
- 2.31. Commissioned by Public Health and funded by IBCF, '**Get up and Go**' is run by Everyone Health and is a programme of physical activity for residents and patients in East Merton and Morden Primary Care Networks to address mild frailty, with a focus on strength and balance activities. It works with community organisations and includes seated exercise classes, Pilates, seated yoga, dancing, Zumba Gold and New Age Kurling. Organisations including Attic Theatre and the Dementia Hub, Ethnic Minority Centre and New Horizons Centre are part of the programme which currently is funded to run until end of March 2024.
- 2.32. Merton Public Health are also working to increase activity levels of people living with dementia and their carers, using '**Feel Good Folders**'. This is a national project developed by the Alzheimer's Society and Sport England to encourage people living with dementia to be physically active. We will be working with the Dementia Hub, libraries and healthcare partners to deliver the folders from November 2023.

WALKING AND CYCLING STRATEGY

- 2.33. There are also important links and synergies to be made between Borough of Sport and the Council's planned new Walking and Cycling strategy. The strategy is being developed by Project Centre with consultation underway. This will update plans for promoting sustainable and active travel and set the vision to 2030 and set the foundations for what needs to be done to improve conditions and safety for all those who wish to walk or cycle in the borough.

LIBRARY & HERITAGE SERVICE

- 2.34. Merton's seven public libraries and Heritage Centre play a crucial role in supporting the Borough of Sport aims. As the high street presence of the Council they attract over a million physical visits per year and deliver over 650 events per month.
- 2.35. Improving the health and wellbeing of Merton residents is a key objective of the service and they work with a range of groups and services that support our communities, including health and wellbeing services covering subjects such as healthy eating, sexual health, diabetes, mindfulness and smoking cessation. A year-round approach to promoting healthier lifestyles through libraries is in place and links in with national and local initiatives.
- 2.36. Via external funding Merton's libraries have made adaptations to the buildings and purchased new equipment to create a multi-sensory experience that enhances resident's digital, education and health outcomes. Each library has a designated Health & Wellbeing Zone. As well as books and information the Health & Wellbeing zones provide facilities to assist residents to better manage their health including technology to support relaxation like massage chairs and weight, height and blood pressure monitors that will record a resident's figures and load directly into a customer's GP records should they request this. Bounce pads

provide access to a range of high quality and NHS approved apps to support health and wellbeing and links to sporting and fitness organisations.

- 2.37. A range of fitness and wellbeing events and activities are delivered in libraries including fitness classes and yoga sessions delivered by partners such as Nuffield Health and GLL. Sporting equipment is loaned for free via our libraries enabling residents access to footballs, netballs, and basketballs. The service continues to enhance its health and wellbeing offer in close alignment with the Borough of Sport objectives and recently installed an interactive projector that provides game based physical activities for all ages to use at Mitcham Library.
- 2.38. Merton's Heritage Service plays a key role in promoting and telling the story of the borough's rich sporting heritage and is continuing to enhance its physical and digital collections. Merton Memories is a unique web portal that hosts over 17,000 images of the borough online and enables residents to add content to the resource with significant sections on the borough's sporting history. Walk and talk events are supported by the Heritage Centre and they have also created unique sporting trails around the borough so that all residents can get involved.
- 2.39. Merton libraries provide high quality information and digital support. Libraries enable individuals and communities to develop learning skills to find answers and to inform life choices. The offer helps children and adults to engage and feel safe online. It ensures resources and opportunities are accessible and embraces creative and innovative technology. The service focusses its support on those most in need who potentially have limited access or knowledge of the Internet and other IT applications. In order to support residents, it provides a broad range of one to one and group IT support along with providing general information and signposting towards a range of services including a range of sporting and fitness services.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN CREATING A BOROUGH OF SPORT

OVERVIEW OF AMBITIONS

- 2.40. There are four key actions: creating a Borough of Sport logo, dedicated staffing to support stakeholders and drive the Borough of Sport, a stakeholder advisory group and an open community forum.
- 2.41. Ahead of drawing up the Borough of Sport plans there was engagement with over 100 local groups and individual stakeholders. This wasn't a formal Council consultation but rather informal stakeholder engagement. A list of the stakeholders who were engaged during the development of the plans is attached at **appendix 1**. It was important to take time to listen to local groups and hear what they need. It means the plans are rooted in the realities of what people are facing. Where actions are parachuted into communities without their involvement or agreement, they are unlikely to work. Whilst Borough of Sport will be led by the Council it will only be realised through partnership working and the combining of effort.

Logo

- 2.42. A simple and easily recognisable logo which can be used widely by the council and partners to badge and promote the Borough of Sport, something akin to the

hugely successful 'Inspired by 2012' logo. This is designed to drive buy in and create a sense of ownership of Borough of Sport for the whole community.

Dedicated Staffing

2.43. The Head of Leisure Role at the Council has been replaced by a new Head of Sport and Leisure. Open recruitment was undertaken during the summer and the successful candidate took up the post at the start of September. There will then be two additional Council roles:

- The first will be primarily inward facing and their key tasks will include: working across the Council to combine effort and ensure Borough of Sport is a priority, ensuring alignment with other corporate Council agendas, supporting the operational group, Leader and Cabinet Member, overseeing the small grants fund and some key stakeholder relationships, and maintaining the overall work plan and risk register.
- The second role will be primarily outward community facing and key tasks include: building and maintaining relationships with the stakeholders, supporting local groups to take advantage of funding and other opportunities, building the number of activities on the Activity Finder and supporting the advisory group and forum.

2.44. We are also exploring options for hiring community activators based within a community organisation host. These would not be council roles, rather roles within the community, with the hosts and council agreeing their work programmes. They will help support community groups and assets, seek to garner support, and also help local groups apply for funding and combine effort with others.

Advisory Group

2.45. In order to further garner support and ensure plans are guided by what is needed and work for local communities an advisory group has been created to help guide actions. The group has a regular membership, though others will be able to join, meet every other month and bring key partners including around the same table.

Forum

2.46. A public forum will be created to bring a much larger number of partners and potentially residents together to drive the plans. Membership will be open, so anyone can attend. Non-sporting groups will be encouraged to join. The forum's purpose is to explain the Borough of Sport concept, garner support, gather questions, concerns and gaps and then combine effort. The forum will be used to keep local groups informed of developments and opportunities.

PROGRESS TO DATE

2.47. The following progress has been made against the above four key actions:

- The **Borough of Sport Logo** was launched at Merton's Big Sports Day on Sunday 24th September and is now being actively used. The logo will be deployed as widely as possible with community and commercial providers, within the borough, able to access and use it easily.



- **Dedicated Staffing** – At the time of writing this report the job description and person specifications are with HR for grading and we envisage recruitment of the two council roles starting soon.
- The **advisory group** met for the first time on Thursday 14 September. It is chaired jointly by Cllr Caroline Cooper–Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage, and Jackie Watkins, the CEO of Tooting and Mitcham Community Sports Club, who was elected by the other members of the group. The table below sets out the group’s remit and membership.

Advisory Group Remit

The Advisory Group will:

- guide decisions on the strategic direction, design, development, promotion and implementation of the Borough of Sport plans.
- guide the focus and allocation of the Borough of Sport small grants fund.
- guide the focus and choice of exemplar projects.
- monitor the strategic performance, effectiveness and impact of the Borough of Sport
- help ensure any learnings are built into future phases of the Borough of Sport plans; and
- monitoring strategic risks and opportunities.

Advisory Group Membership

Co-Chairpersons

- **Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah** , Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage
- **Jackie Watkins**, Tooting and Mitcham Community Sports Club

Members

- **Naomi Martin**, Commonsense Community Development Trust
- **Nicola Ryan**, Merton School Sport Partnership
- **Tony Molloy**, Merton Connected
- **Taki Hussain**, Young Inspector
- **Jen Goddard**, Age UK Merton
- **Helen Duckworth**, Wimbledon Guild
- **Ulrika Hogberg**, Wimbledon Foundation/AELTC
- **Andrew Whittington**, Merton Mencap

- **Gemma Dawson**, NHS South West London
- **Philip Rudling**, AFC Wimbledon
- **Matthew Parsonage**, Clarion Housing Group
- **Lorna Boothe**, Olympian/Commonwealth Games Medallist
- **Daniel Leggett**, London Sport
- **James Brackenborough**, GLL
- **Dan Jones**, Exec Director Environment, Civic Pride and Climate, LBM
- **David Gentles**, Head of Sport and Leisure, LBM
- **Hannah Neal**, BAME Voice

In addition, a GP representative is being recruited and three clubs will be recruited via the first forum.

- 2.48. The **forum** which will be delivered via Teams will meet up to four times a year. Plans for the first forum are being finalised and will take place in November 2023.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND ACTIVELY MERTON STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- 2.49. Public Health and Actively Merton are also supporting and amplifying Borough of Sport's stakeholder engagement. They have helped reach underserved and less active groups to hear their voices, benefit from understanding their lived experience and ensure we take the community with us, rather than doing to them. For example, a community event in late June 2023, brought providers, partners, and organisations from across Merton together. This workshop shared and discussed the learning from Beat the Street, considered a framework for action developed by London Sport, and was a show case for Borough of Sport. The workshop discussed assets and the barriers to activity the key groups that are less physically active (women and girls, older people and residents with a disability) face. The insights gained is informing the development of the Borough of Sport Activity Finder, helping connect underserved groups through existing networks to physical activities and driving awareness of the benefits of physical activity.
- 2.50. Other Public Health funded physical activity programmes include Frailty, Merton Moves, promoting of physical activity as part of the work of the Dementia Action Alliance (feel good folder) and contributing to the funding of Merton School Sport Partnership (MSSP). MSSP have supported schools to achieve Healthy Schools London accreditation with 50 schools currently registered (19 have achieved the bronze standard, 11 silver and 3 gold).

KEY DELIVERABLES AND COMMITMENTS 2023 TO 2026

- 2.51. The key deliverables and commitments are:
- the creation of the Borough of Sport logo – completed.
 - recruitment of dedicated staffing – about to commence.

- the creation and operation of the advisory group – the first meeting has taken place and meetings are scheduled for November 2023, January, March, May, July 2024 after which the frequency of meetings will be reviewed.
- the creation and operation of the forum – in development.

MERTON'S BIG SPORTS DAY

- 2.52. Borough of Sport was formally launched via **Merton's Big Sports Day** on Sunday 24 September 2023 at Canons House and Grounds. The community fun day, where children and adults could try out sports and activities, was a resounding success and was the longest feature on **ITV London News** that night.
- 2.53. We are delighted that around **5000 residents attended**. Feedback of how the day felt for residents has been collected via a survey which closed on 27th October 2023.
- 2.54. Almost **60 local groups and clubs were part of the day** providing a great range of activities including Yoga, Football, Dance, Tennis, athletics, climbing, BMXing and many more. The clubs and groups are being encouraged and supported to promote their activity offers via the Borough of Sport Activity Finder.
- 2.55. Quotes from those who attended include:
- **Sheila White, Hercules Wimbledon Athletics Club:** Just to say congratulations on a great event yesterday! Certainly on the West Lawn it was full on all day, and fantastic to meet so many whole families out enjoying themselves and trying different sports.
 - **Dickie Wilkinson, Merton RFC:** Massive well done to you all today! Such a fun day and genuinely helpful in connecting clubs and people!
 - **Dee Soul, Salsa Got Soul:** Just wanted to personally say how impressed I am with the day yesterday!!! The attention to detail and the execution of the day was excellent!! We thoroughly enjoyed the day, we had a good footfall and interest. Thank you again for having me join the day and I would love to be involved in future events if the opportunity arises.
- 2.56. The event also drove strong digital and social engagement with residents and the headlines are:
- Engagement with E-News Stories**
- **670** views of the Sports Day webpage via the pre-event e-news; and
 - At the time of writing this report **230** views of the post event survey.
- Social Media Reach**
- X (formerly Twitter) **20,000** views of Merton Council posts and reposts including **4500** views of the morning post; almost **6000** of the repost of AFC Wimbledon's post; **1700** views of the Michael Antonio's video post and **100** views of Jah Wobbles video post.
 - Facebook – **10,000** views.

- Instagram – **1000** views.
 - Web-Page – **5,200** with an average time spent on page of **5m 30s**.
- 2.57. Once the attendee feedback has been analysed, we will take stock of the event and consider if it should become an annual event. An alternative might be a series of smaller events across the entire borough bigraded as Merton’s Big Summer of Sport. We are also at the early stages of scoping a Borough of Sport Celebration and Awards event.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. This report is for noting and discussing only, so alternative options are not being presented.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. Any relevant consultation undertaken or proposed is referenced in the body of the report.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. The body of the report includes details on a range of planned deliverables and commitments over the period 2023 to 2026.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The cost implications for the initiatives outlined in this report are covered within the current MTFs. Any further spending required beyond existing budgets will be reported to Cabinet.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This report has been prepared as required by part 4A, paragraph 2.3 (g) of the Constitution and there are no legal implications arising out of this report.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. None immediately arising beyond those covered in the body of the report.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None immediately arising.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. A robust process for monitoring delivery of the Council Plan, including many of the commitments and deliverables referenced in this report, is being put in place to minimise the risk of non-delivery. The Borough of Sport Advisory Group will also monitor and review the strategic risks.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Appendix 1 – List of stakeholders engaged in developing the Borough of Sport plans.

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. None

APPENDIX 1 – LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED IN DEVELOPING THE BOROUGH OF SPORT PLANS

In drawing up the plans for Merton to become London's Borough of Sport the London Sport consultants spoke with and discussed the emerging plans with the following club and community groups:

- AFC Wimbledon
- Age UK Merton
- AELTC
- Balham Boxing Club
- Baitul Futuh Mosque
- Canons House and Grounds
- GLL
- Merton Connected
- Merton Dementia Hub
- Merton Health
- Merton Health Leaders Board (GP Forum)
- Merton Mencap
- Merton School Sport Partnership
- Motspur Park FC
- Commonsie Community Trust
- Sean McInnes Sports Coaching
- South West Runs Basketball Club
- Surrey FA
- Awing Fitness
- The Active Merton Steering Group
- Together We Ride
- Tooting and Mitcham Hub
- Wimbledon Guild
- Wimbledon Parkrun
- Wimbledon Rugby Club
- Wimbledon Sporting History

Within the council they spoke to:

- Corporate Comms
- Children Services
- Finance
- Leisure
- HR
- Merton Libraries
- Planning
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Public Health
- Transport
- Youth Service

Beyond Merton they also spoke to:

- England Netball
- Football Foundation
- Fulham FC Foundation
- Intelligent Health
- London Sport
- NHS South West London
- Our Parks
- ParkPlay
- Royal Mencap
- Sport England
- Stormbreak UK
- Sutton Mencap
- The Outdoor Classroom

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Committee: Council

Date: 15 November 2023

Agenda item:

Wards: All

Subject: Revision of senior pay structure and organisational pay and grading structure review

Lead officer: Polly Cziok, Executive Director of Innovation and Change

Lead member: Councillor Billy Christie, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services

Recommendations:

- (A) That Full Council approves the following recommendations from the Appointments Committee:
- (I) The first tranche of the wider organisational pay and grading review, namely proposed revisions to the senior pay structure and salary levels for Tier 1 (Executive Director), Tier 2 (present Assistant Director) and Tier 3 (Head of Service) posts, to take effect from 1 April 2024, in so far as it relates to those roles where the revised salary range exceeds £100k per annum.
 - (II) To delegate authority to the relevant Executive Directors to recruit to vacant senior roles given that at least some element of the salary range for each of these roles is expected to exceed £100k per annum.

1. Purpose of report and executive summary

- 1.1 The Appointments Committee met on 19 October to consider the issues outlined in this paper. They agreed the recommendations outlined in the section above for approval by full Council. The full paper considered by the Appointments Committee is included for information as Appendix A.
- 1.2 The recommendations relate to revisions to senior salaries, as a first step in an organisation wide pay review, with a view to enabling LB Merton to compete more effectively in the recruitment market, and to recruit permanent staff into roles currently filled by interim managers
- 1.3 Merton Council has for some years had an increasing reliance on agency and interim workers to fill a wide range of positions across the organisation. This reliance has increased in recent years, and this combined with pay inflation across all sectors, has led to a doubling of Merton's agency spend since 2019. The spend in this financial year is set to be more than £24m. There are a number of driving factors behind this; local government as a whole is operating in a highly challenging recruitment market, especially in London where there is competition between the 32 boroughs for the same staff; Merton has not actively promoted itself as an employer, either locally or within the London market; there are a number of areas in which we work where there are skills shortages; our permanent recruitment processes can be slow and difficult to navigate; a high level of organisational change and ongoing financial uncertainty has created some instability, and reluctance to permanently recruit. Alongside those issues, a fundamental problem facing Merton is that in many cases, its pay bands are below those in other local authorities, making recruitment extremely difficult. For hard to recruit roles market supplements are sometimes used, which add to the basic pay for the post. Whilst increasing the overall pay offer such allowances can be problematic for the employee since, as they are not consolidated into the salary, banks don't recognise

them for loan or mortgage purposes – thus reducing the effectiveness of them as recruitment and retention tools.

- 1.4 At a senior level, where interim day rates are often very high, this can have a severe financial impact, leading to long term overspends, as well as potential instability in the leadership of services. Having a high number of interims in leadership roles, also restricts our ability to drive through the change needed to build a stable and sustainable workforce through the organisation.
- 1.5 The Council needs to conduct a pay review right across the organisation in order to ensure that staff are being paid in line with other local authorities. This will be vital to successful permanent recruitment, to driving down agency spend, and to the long-term sustainability of the organisation. A pay review of the whole organisation is likely to take 12-18 months and has commenced through early discussions with trade union colleagues, and a pay benchmarking exercise. The next stage is to agree the scope and timetable for that work at CMT and with trade unions. Similar reviews have been done at other Councils, for example Sutton introduced a new grade structure and pay ranges in 2016, following benchmarking with other authorities.

Senior pay bands

- 1.6 The first stage of the pay review, which is presented in this paper, proposes new pay scales for Executive Directors, Assistant Directors, and Heads of Service. This will allow us to recruit permanently into Assistant Director and Head of Service roles and to consolidate market factor pay into basic salaries, leading to an estimated cost avoidance of more than £200,000 per annum. As well as allowing the Council to end its most expensive interim arrangements, this will create stability throughout the leadership of the organisation and ensure that change can be driven throughout the organisation. For Executive Directors the proposal is just to consolidate existing market pay into base pay, and not to increase the total pay level which was approved last year through Appointments Committee and full Council.
- 1.7 Merton currently has 15 posts at 2nd tier (Assistant Director level) and 3rd tier (Head of Service level) filled by interim managers. We also have 14 permanent staff working at those levels where salaries are being supplemented by market factor pay, totalling £127k per annum.
- 1.8 Last year, in June 2022, the Appointments Committee agreed the creation of 6 new Executive Director roles and agreed their salaries, including an element of market pay, following a pay benchmarking exercise. These were created with the expectation that the market factor pay would be consolidated into salaries as part of the overall pay review. This review achieves that without increasing overall pay for Executive Directors.

2. Details

- 2.1 Pay benchmarking was conducted against the London Council's Chief Officer pay survey, which for most authorities covers roles down to third tier level (two tiers below Executive Director). The data was weighted to place emphasis on benchmarking against Outer London authorities.
- 2.2 Benchmarking established that Merton's pay levels are adrift from the market, particularly below Executive Director level – Executive Director's pay was benchmarked and set in the last year ahead of the round of Executive Director appointments, and this is reflected in the current market supplement arrangements.
- 2.3 The proposed senior pay structure sees an increase in Executive Director's basic salary but not an overall increase in pay for that grade beyond that approved by appointments committee

and full Council last year. The increase will take out the current separate market pay element, consolidating all Executive Director pay into basic salary but with no overall increase in pay. For some lower senior grades, in particular Assistant Directors, there is a proposed increase in pay evidenced by benchmarking data.

- 2.4 Reducing the reliance on market pay for senior posts and hard to recruit roles can act as a recruitment and retention incentive, as for mortgage and loan purposes banks look at market pay as temporary unguaranteed income, and individuals are anxious that market pay could be removed.
- 2.5 Below Executive Director, pay levels are adrift from the market and there are a number of expensive interim agency staff covering permanent posts. By realigning pay our ability to recruit and retain permanent staff should improve, reducing reliance on expensive agency staff which on average cost 20% more than their permanent equivalents.
- 2.6 The tables below set out the results of pay benchmarking and the proposals for revisions to grade structures and salary levels.

This model:

- Applies greater weighting to Outer London benchmarks
- Caps any increase for Executive Directors so that it buys out their market pay but no more. The current maximum for Executive Directors shown in Table 1 reflects basic salary following the 1/4/2023 national pay award for Chief Officers. The current maximum including market pay is £154,539 i.e. the same as the new proposed maximum basic pay in Table 2.
- Preserves the current maximum for grade MG3 (the upper grade of the 3rd tier in the model) which otherwise would have reduced based on benchmarking.

The largest actual increases would be for the current Assistant Director level grades of MG4 and MG5.

Table 1 Benchmarking

Merton Grade	Benchmark Median Min	Benchmark Median Max	Current Merton Min	Current Merton Max
Exec Director	£134,690	£163,224	£116,046	£134,181
MG5	£101,262	£116,319	£103,728	£108,300
MG4			£96,144	£100,239
MG3	£78,960	£91,440	£89,109	£92,943
MG1 & MG2			£71,973	£84,564

Table 2 Proposed revised scales

Merton Grade	Notional 5-point scale based on Median (Median)					Increase over current Min	Increase over current max
Exec Director	£134,690	£139,652	£144,615	£149,577	£154,539	16.07%	15.17%
MG5	£108,790	£110,672	£112,554	£114,437	£116,319	4.88%	7.40%
MG4	£101,262	£103,144	£105,026	£106,908	£108,790	5.32%	8.53%
MG3	£85,200	£87,136	£89,072	£91,007	£92,943	-4.39%	0.00%
MG1 & MG2	£78,960	£80,520	£82,080	£83,640	£85,200	9.71%	0.75%

- 2.6 The tables above show both the benchmarking and the proposed new pay scales. The benchmarking is difficult to compare with some of the Merton management grades as where other Councils only have one grade, Merton has split this into two or three grades. So, for example Merton grades MG3, MG4, and MG5 are a single grade elsewhere. The same applies to MG1 and MG2, where this is a single grade elsewhere.
- 2.7 The proposed pay table has been designed by taking the benchmarking and modelling this against our current grades to place Merton in a better place against the market and consolidate market premia. The incremental progression has been designed to give each grade five well-spaced incremental points. We have also taken the benchmarked salary range and divided it to create two levels of Assistant Director salary in the form of the MG4 and MG5 grades as with present arrangement. We will use the HAY job evaluation scheme to assess the grades.

3. Financial, resource and property implications

- 3.1 Realigning pay to the market medians will facilitate recruitment and retention of staff and reduce expenditure above budget on agency workers. There is therefore going to be a cost avoidance achieved by implementing the new senior pay scales and filling the posts with permanent staff, despite substantive grades increasing. The cost avoidance upon implementation of the new pay scale is estimated to be c.a. £209k/annum. This will increase or reduce over time as and when staff move on to the various increment points of the new scale and is reliant upon all posts being filled with permanent staff as opposed to agency.
- 3.2 Whilst there will be a significant cost avoidance by offering salaries at a level which enables the organisation to recruit permanent staff and become less reliant upon agency spend, there will be an increased salary budget requirement as shown in the table below to bring the current salary budgets in line with the new proposed rates. A growth bid to address the budget requirement for future years is being submitted as part of the MTFs process. The costing model assumes annual incremental progression (with smaller steps) rather than the current bi-annual progression and it should be noted that the estimated figures quoted in this report are based on the new proposed pay rates upon existing roles, though these may be subject to change in line with structure reviews.

3.3

£'000				
Current Spend	7,691			
Current Budget	7,223			
Under new pay proposals				
	Spend	Cost avoidance	Increased budget requirement - compared to current budget	Increased budget requirement - annual increase (Growth bid requirement)
On implementation	7,482	-209	260	260
After 1st increment	7,528	-163	305	45
After 2nd increment	7,570	-121	348	43

After 3rd increment	7,608	-83	386	38
After 4th increment	7,638	-53	415	30

4. Legal and statutory implications

- 4.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to prepare a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year. It must be approved by a resolution of the Council before it comes into force, it must be prepared and approved before 31 March and it must be published in such manner as the Council thinks fit (which must include publication on the website). The most recent Pay Policy was approved by Full Council on 1 March 2023.
- 4.2 Section 40 of the Act includes provision for the Secretary of State to issue guidance on the content and application of pay policy statements. Councils must have regard to this guidance in the exercise of their functions under the pay policy.
- 4.3 Initial Guidance under section 40 was published in February 2012 and this was supplemented by further Guidance in February 2013. Best Value Guidance on Special Severance Payments has also been published in May 2022 under section 26 of the Local Government Act 1999. The Guidance is statutory guidance, and although it is not law, the Council will need to demonstrate good reasons for departing from it. Failure to do so is likely to result in successful legal challenge. The Guidance advises that Full Council should be given the opportunity to vote before salaries or severance payments of £100,000 or more are agreed.
- 4.4 Section 41 of the Localism Act 2011 says that in making a decision which relates to the remuneration of or other terms and conditions applying to a chief officer, the Council must comply with its pay policy statement for the financial year, The recommendations in this report comply with the pay policy statement approved by Full Council on 1 March 2023.
- 4.5 The references in the report to Full Council agreeing the salary are where there are posts with a remuneration package of £100,000 or over in relation to a specific appointment.

5. Human rights, equalities and community cohesion implications

- 5.1 The contents of this report are designed to ensure that the Council's processes are human rights and equalities compliant, in particular in relation to compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. Grading of posts is based on the principles of equal value as determined by use of objective job evaluation schemes.

4 Risk management and health and safety implications

- 4.1 The main risk when redesigning pay and grading schemes is Equal Pay is in relation to gender. 31 staff in the cost modelling are female, 29 are male. Female staff would see a 5.3% increase in pay and male staff 3.4%. A check has also been made on ethnicity, only 8 of those in the modelling are Black, Asian or Multi-Ethnic but they would see a 4.9% increase compared to 4.8% for White staff. The Council's equality impact assessment template has been completed and the conclusion is that the level of increase for individuals will be a product of current grade and spine point, and the extent to which market pay is being "bought out" and not related to a protected characteristic. Grades are determined using the Hay job evaluation scheme which gives a level of assurance against equal pay claims based on jobs of equal value.

5 Appendices – the following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report

Appendix A - Paper to Appointments Committee, 19th October 2023

6 Contacts

- Report author: Peter Andrews
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- email: peter.andrews@merton.gov.uk

6.1.1 Meeting arrangements - Democratic Services:

- email: democratic.services@merton.gov.uk
- Tel: 020 8545 3357

6.1.2 All press contacts - Merton's Press office:

- email: press@merton.gov.uk
- Tel: 020 8545 3181

6.1.3 London Borough of Merton:

- Address: Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, SM4 5DX
- Tel: 020 8274 4901

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Committee: Appointments Committee

Date: 19 October 2023

Agenda item:

Wards: All

Subject: Commencement of organisation pay review and senior recruitment

Lead officer: Polly Cziok, Executive Director of Innovation and Change

Lead member: Leader of the Council

Recommendations:

- (A) That the Committee approve:
- (I) The first tranche of the wider organisational pay and grading review, namely proposed revisions to the senior pay structure and salary levels for Tier 1 (Executive Director), Tier 2 (present Assistant Director) and Tier 3 (Head of Service) posts, to take effect from 1 April 2024. This is subject to Full Council agreement at its meeting on 15th November 2023 for those roles where the revised salary range exceeds £100k per annum.
 - (II) That posts below present Assistant Director level are removed from the Chief Officer's terms and conditions and placed on the National Joint Council arrangements, subject to negotiation with the trade unions.
 - (III) That the present Assistant Director level is redesignated to Director.
 - (IV) That the existing role of Head of HR is repurposed as Director of HR and OD.
- (B) That the Committee agrees to delegate authority to the relevant Executive Directors to recruit to existing vacant senior roles subject to full Council approval given that at least some element of the salary range for each of these roles is expected to exceed £100k per annum.
- (C) That the Committee delegates approval of the job descriptions/person specifications for these roles to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the Appointments Committee.
- (D) That the Committee delegates the implementation of the recruitment process for the Director level posts to the Executive Director of Innovation and Change in consultation with the Chair of the Appointments Committee.
- (E) That the Committee agrees to establish a sub-committee for the Director level posts for the purposes of agreeing a shortlist of candidates and to act as the interview panel for the final interviews.

1. Purpose of report and executive summary

- 1.1 Merton Council has for some years had an increasing reliance on agency and interim workers to fill a wide range of positions across the organisation. This reliance has increased in recent years, and this combined with pay inflation across all sectors, has led to a doubling of Merton's agency spend since 2019. The spend in this financial year is set to be more than £24m.
- 1.2 There are a number of driving factors behind this; local government as a whole is operating in a highly challenging recruitment market, especially in London where there is competition between the 32 boroughs for the same staff. Merton has not actively promoted itself as an

employer, either locally or within the London market; there are a number of areas in which we work where there are skills shortages; our permanent recruitment processes can be slow and difficult to navigate; a high level of organisational change and ongoing financial uncertainty has created some instability, and reluctance to permanently recruit. Alongside those issues, a fundamental problem facing Merton is that in many cases, its pay bands are below those in other local authorities, making recruitment extremely difficult. For hard to recruit roles market supplements are sometimes used, which add to the basic pay for the post. Whilst increasing the overall pay offer such allowances can be problematic for the employee since, as they are not consolidated into the salary, banks don't recognise them for loan or mortgage purposes – thus reducing the effectiveness of them as recruitment and retention tools.

- 1.3 At a senior level, where interim day rates are often very high, this can have a severe financial impact, leading to long term overspends, as well as potential instability in the leadership of services. Having a high number of interims in leadership roles, also restricts our ability to drive through the change needed to build a stable and sustainable workforce through the organisation.
- 1.4 The Council needs to conduct a pay review right across the organisation in order to ensure that staff are being paid in line with other local authorities. This will be vital to successful permanent recruitment, to driving down agency spend, and to the long-term sustainability of the organisation. A pay review of the whole organisation is likely to take 12-18 months and has commenced through early discussions with trade union colleagues, and a pay benchmarking exercise. The next stage is to agree the scope and timetable for that work at CMT and with trade unions. Similar reviews have been done at other Councils, for example Sutton introduced a new grade structure and pay ranges in 2016, following benchmarking with other authorities.

Senior pay bands

- 1.5 The first stage of the pay review, which is presented in this paper, proposes new pay scales for Executive Directors, Assistant Directors, and Heads of Service. This will allow us to recruit permanently into Assistant Director and Head of Service roles and to consolidate market factor pay into basic salaries, leading to an estimated cost avoidance of more than £200,000 per annum. As well as allowing the Council to end its most expensive interim arrangements, this will create stability throughout the leadership of the organisation and ensure that change can be driven throughout the organisation. For Executive Directors the proposal is just to consolidate existing market pay into base pay, and not to increase the total pay level which was approved last year through appointments committee and full Council.
- 1.6 Merton currently has 15 posts at 2nd tier (Assistant Director level) and 3rd tier (Head of Service level) filled by interim managers. We also have 10 permanent staff working at those levels where salaries are being supplemented by market factor pay, totalling £127k per annum.
- 1.7 Last year, in June 2022, the Appointments Committee agreed the creation of 6 new Executive Director roles and agreed their salaries, including an element of market pay, following a pay benchmarking exercise. These were created with the expectation that the market factor pay would be consolidated into salaries as part of the overall pay review. This review achieves that without increasing overall pay for Executive Directors.
- 1.8 These changes will take effect from 1 April 2024.

2. Details

- 2.1 Pay benchmarking was conducted against the London Council's Chief Officer pay survey, which for most authorities covers roles down to third tier level (two tiers below Executive Director). The data was weighted to place emphasis on benchmarking against Outer London authorities.
- 2.2 Benchmarking established that Merton's pay levels are adrift from the market, particularly below Executive Director level – Executive Director's pay was benchmarked and set in the last year ahead of the round of Executive Director appointments.
- 2.3 The proposed senior pay structure sees an increase in Executive Director's basic salary but not an overall increase in pay for that level beyond that approved by appointments committee and full Council last year. The increase will take out the current separate market pay element, consolidating all Executive Director pay into basic salary but with no overall increase in pay. For some lower senior grades, in particular Assistant Directors, there is a proposed increase in pay evidenced by benchmarking data.
- 2.4 Reducing the reliance on market pay for senior posts and hard to recruit roles can act as a recruitment and retention incentive, as for mortgage and loan purposes banks look at market pay as temporary unguaranteed income, and individuals are anxious that market pay could be removed.
- 2.5 Below Executive Director, pay levels are adrift from the market and there are a number of expensive interim agency staff covering permanent posts. By realigning pay our ability to recruit and retain permanent staff should improve, reducing reliance on expensive agency staff which on average cost 20% more than their permanent equivalents.
- 2.6 The tables below set out the results of pay benchmarking and the proposals for revisions to grade structures and salary levels.

This model:

- Applies greater weighting to Outer London benchmarks
- Caps any increase for Executive Directors so that it buys out their market pay but no more. The current maximum for Executive Directors shown in Table 1 reflects basic salary following the 1/4/2023 national pay award for Chief Officers. The current maximum including market pay is £154,539 i.e. the same as the new proposed maximum basic pay in Table 2.
- Preserves the current maximum for grade MG3 (the upper grade of the 3rd tier in the model) which otherwise would have reduced based on benchmarking.

The largest actual increases would be for the current Assistant Director level grades of MG4 and MG5.

Table 1 Benchmarking

Merton Grade	Benchmark Median Min	Benchmark Median Max	Current Merton Min	Current Merton Max
Exec Director	£134,690	£163,224	£116,046	£134,181
MG5	£101,262	£116,319	£103,728	£108,300
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MG3		£89,109	£92,943
MG1 & MG2	£78,960	£91,440	£84,564
		£71,973	

Table 2 Proposed revised scales

Merton Grade	Notional 5-point scale based on Median (Median)					Increase over current Min	Increase over current max
Exec Director	£134,690	£139,652	£144,615	£149,577	£154,539	16.07%	15.17%
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MG1 & MG2	£78,960	£80,520	£82,080	£83,640	£85,200	9.71%	0.75%

2.6 The tables above show both the bench-marking and the proposed new pay scales. The bench-marking is difficult to compare with some of the Merton management grades as where other Councils only have one grade Merton has split this into two or three grades. So, for example Merton grades MG3, MG4, and MG5 are a single grade elsewhere. The same applies to MG1 and MG2, where this is a single grade elsewhere.

2.7 The proposed pay table has been designed by taking the bench-marking and modelling this against our current grades to place Merton in a better place against the market and consolidate market premia. The incremental progression has been designed to give each grade 5 relatively even incremental points. We have also taken the benchmarked salary range and divided it to create two levels of Assistant Director salary in the form of the MG4 and MG5 grades as with present arrangement. We will use the HAY job evaluation scheme to assess the grades.

Merton’s practice of applying Chief Officer terms and conditions to all manager grades is not in line with the practice in other authorities. The typical model in other authorities is that grades up to the tier below Executive Director (i.e., below Assistant Director level) are on NJC terms and conditions, with higher posts being on Chief Officer conditions. This difference can explain some of the pay drift from market medians as NJC pay awards have often exceeded Chief Officer pay awards. The other key differences between Chief Officer and NJC conditions are around disciplinaries and suspensions, where the intention in the Chief Officer conditions is that this really applies to statutory and non-statutory Chief Officers and their deputies and not lower levels of management, and an additional day’s leave for NJC staff. To change terms and conditions for staff would require HR to reach a collective agreement with the relevant recognised trade unions, which can be negotiated once we have agreement in principle to make the change.

2.7 It is proposed that the current title “Assistant Director” for the tier below Executive Director is renamed “Director”. This will reflect the practice in many other London authorities and can also help make the role appear more attractive when recruiting.

2.8 It is also proposed that the existing role of Head of HR is repurposed as Director of HR and OD. This because the role has been filled by agency staff for more than four years due to

failure to appoint at a lower grade, and the need for greater leadership in this area to drive transformation.

2.9 Finally, the Committee is asked to delegate authority to the relevant Executive Directors to recruit to existing vacant senior roles subject to full Council approval given that at least some element of the salary range for each of these roles is expected to exceed £100k per annum.

3. Financial, resource and property implications

3.1 Realigning pay to the market medians will facilitate recruitment and retention of staff and reduce expenditure above budget on agency workers. There is therefore going to be a cost avoidance achieved by implementing the new senior pay scales and filling the posts with permanent staff, despite substantive grades increasing. The cost avoidance upon implementation of the new pay scale is estimated to be c.a. £209k/annum. This will increase or reduce over time as and when staff move on to the various increment points of the new scale and is reliant upon all posts being filled with permanent staff as opposed to agency.

3.2 Whilst there will be a significant cost avoidance by offering salaries at a level which enables the organisation to recruit permanent staff and become less reliant upon agency spend, there will be an increased salary budget requirement as shown in the table below to bring the current salary budgets in line with the new proposed rates. A growth bid to address the budget requirement for future years is being submitted as part of the MTFs process. The costing model assumes annual incremental progression (with smaller steps) rather than the current bi-annual progression and it should be noted that the estimated figures quoted in this report are based on the new proposed pay rates upon existing roles, though these may be subject to change in line with structure reviews.

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£'000				
Current Spend	7,691			
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After 3rd increment	7,608	-83	386	38
After 4th increment	7,638	-53	415	30

4. Legal and statutory implications

- 4 Under Part 3B of the Council's Constitution ([Responsibility for non-executive Council functions](#)), the functions of the Appointments Committee include determining the terms and conditions on which officers hold office.
- 4.1 Staff terms and conditions can be changed through collective agreement (with the trade unions), mutual or individual agreements.
- 4.2 The Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to prepare a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year. It must be approved by a resolution of the Council before it comes into force, it must be prepared and approved before 31 March and it must be published in such manner as the Council thinks fit (which must include publication on the website). The most recent Pay Policy was approved by Full Council on 1 March 2023.
- 4.3 Section 40 of the Act includes provision for the Secretary of State to issue guidance on the content and application of pay policy statements. Councils must have regard to this guidance in the exercise of their functions under the pay policy.
- 4.4 Initial Guidance under section 40 was published in February 2012 and this was supplemented by further Guidance in February 2013. Best Value Guidance on Special Severance Payments has also been published in May 2022 under section 26 of the Local Government Act 1999. The Guidance is statutory guidance, and although it is not law, the Council will need to demonstrate good reasons for departing from it. Failure to do so is likely to result in successful legal challenge. The Guidance advises that Full Council should be given the opportunity to vote before salaries or severance payments of £100,000 or more are agreed.
- 4.5 Section 41 of the Localism Act 2011 says that in making a decision which relates to the remuneration of or other terms and conditions applying to a chief officer, the Council must comply with its pay policy statement for the financial year, The recommendations in this report comply with the pay policy statement approved by Full Council on 1 March 2023.
- 4.6 The references in the report to Full Council agreeing the salary are where there are posts with a remuneration package of £100,000 or over in relation to a specific appointment.

5. Human rights, equalities and community cohesion implications

- 5.1 The contents of this report are designed to ensure that the Council's processes are human rights and equalities compliant, in particular in relation to compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. Grading of posts is based on the principles of equal value as determined by use of objective job evaluation schemes.

4 Risk management and health and safety implications

- 4.1 The main risk when redesigning pay and grading schemes is Equal Pay is in relation to gender. 31 staff in the cost modelling are female, 29 are male. Female staff would see a 5.3% increase in pay and male staff 3.4%. A check has also been made on ethnicity, only 8 of those in the modelling are Black, Asian or Multi-Ethnic but they would see a 4.9% increase compared to 4.8% for White staff. The Council's equality impact assessment template has been completed and the conclusion is that the level of increase for individuals will be a product of current grade and spine point, and the extent to which market pay is being "bought out" and not related to a protected characteristic. Grades are determined using the Hay job evaluation scheme which gives a level of assurance against equal pay claims based on jobs of equal value.

5 Appendices – the following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report

5.1 None.

6 Background Papers – the following documents have been relied on in drawing up this report but do not form part of the report

6.1 None

7 Contacts

- Report author: Peter Andrews
- Tel: 020 8545 3285
- email: peter.andrews@merton.gov.uk

7.1.1 Meeting arrangements - Democratic Services:

- email: democratic.services@merton.gov.uk
- Tel: 020 8545 3356/3357/3359/3361/3616

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Committee: Council

Date: 15 November 2023

Subject: Changes to Membership of Committees and related matters

Lead officer: Hannah Doody, Chief Executive

Contact officer: Amy Dumitrescu, Democracy Services Manager

Recommendations:

That the Council:

1. Notes the changes to the membership of Committees that were approved under delegated authority since the last meeting of the Council.
 2. That Council approves the changes requested by the Conservative group as detailed at 2.2 below.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report asks Council to note the changes made to committee memberships under delegated authority since the publication of the agenda for the last ordinary Council meeting on 13 September 2023.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. The following membership changes have been made by the Chief Executive under their delegated authority in accordance with part 3E of the Constitution:

Committee	Member resigning	Replaced by	Date
Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations	Cllr Nick McLean	Cllr Eleanor Cox	6 September 2023
Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel	Cllr Nick McLean	Cllr Thomas Barlow	15 September 2023
Appointments Committee	Cllr Simon McGrath	Cllr Tony Reiss	2 October 2023
Appointments Committee	Cllr Kirsten Galea	Cllr Victoria Wilson	2 October 2023

2.2. The Conservative Group have provided some additional changes for which Council approval is requested. These can be found below:

Committee	Member resigning	Replaced by
Healthier Communities and Older People OSP	Cllr Max Austin	Cllr Andrew Howard
Children and Young People OSP	Cllr Andrew Howard	Cllr Max Austin

3 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR

PROPOSED

3.1 None for the purposes of this report.

4 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

4.1. None for the purposes of this report.

5 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The information regarding membership changes in this report complies with legal and statutory requirements. Council is required to accept nominations made by political groups.
- 5.2. The Housing and Local Government Act 1989 contains provisions relating to the political balance on committees, the duty to allocate seats to political groups and the duty to give effect to allocations.

6 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

6.1. None for the purposes of this report.

7 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

7.1. None for the purposes of this report.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1. N/A

9 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

9.1 None.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Documents from the authorised officer confirming approval of the membership changes agreed under delegated authority.

Committee: Council

Date: 15 November 2023

Subject: Petitions

Lead officer: John Scarborough, Managing Director South London Legal Partnership

Lead member: Leader of the Council, Councillor Ross Garrod

Contact officer: Amy Dumitrescu, Democracy Services Manager

Recommendation:

1. That Council receive petitions (if any) in accordance with Part 4A, paragraph 18.1 of the Council's Constitution.
 2. That Council notes the responses provided to the petition submitted at the meeting held on 13 September 2023.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report invites Council to receive petitions in accordance with Part 4A, paragraph 18.1 of the Council's Constitution.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. At the meeting held on 13 September 2023 the petition listed below was submitted and the response is set out below. Any petitions received by Council are referred to respective departments with responsible officers asked to advise the presenting member in each case of the way in which the petition is to be progressed.

Petition

A petition entitled "Stop rat running through Abbey Road Neighbourhood" was submitted by Ward Councillors Braithwaite, Brunt and Dresselaers and requested the following alongside a letter of further detail: "We the undersigned petition Merton Council to consider options for significant action to reduce traffic congestion down Abbey Road, Mill Road and Dane Road including implementing a one-way system or low traffic neighbourhood and conduct a full consultation on these options with affected parties before making a final decision".

Officer Response

The Council is aware of resident's concerns regarding rat running in Abbey Road and in the past the Council did propose a traffic scheme which at the time was not supported locally.

We can confirm that the proposals for a LTN in this area is already on the Council's pending list of schemes along with many other competing priorities for consideration.

Although the Council is keen to consider some proposals within a future programme, there are no available resources in this financial year's programme; it is not possible to provide a firm timetable at this stage.

- 2.6 Members are invited to present petitions at this meeting, and a copy of the response will be provided to the next ordinary Council meeting in February 2024.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. None for the purposes of this report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. None for the purpose of this report.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. None for the purpose of this report.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. None for the purpose of this report.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. None for the purpose of this report.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. None for the purpose of this report.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None for the purpose of this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11 APPENDICES

- 11.1. None

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. None.