

DRAFT

Building a Better Merton Together

London Borough of Merton
Council Plan 2023-26

Purpose of this Document

This plan outlines our ambition to ‘Build a Better Merton Together’ and what we will do over the next four years to achieve this. It is based on extensive engagement with residents, voluntary groups and businesses and details key Council priorities, actions and how we will measure our progress. The Council Plan also sets out principles and values that describe how we will work to achieve our ambition, particularly the importance of developing and maintaining partnerships to achieve common goals. It describes a new relationship between the Council and our residents, where we will work with communities to identify what needs to change and work together to improve their neighbourhoods. The Council Plan will inform all strategic delivery plans and will explain how we will turn priorities into delivery on the ground so that residents will see and feel the difference.

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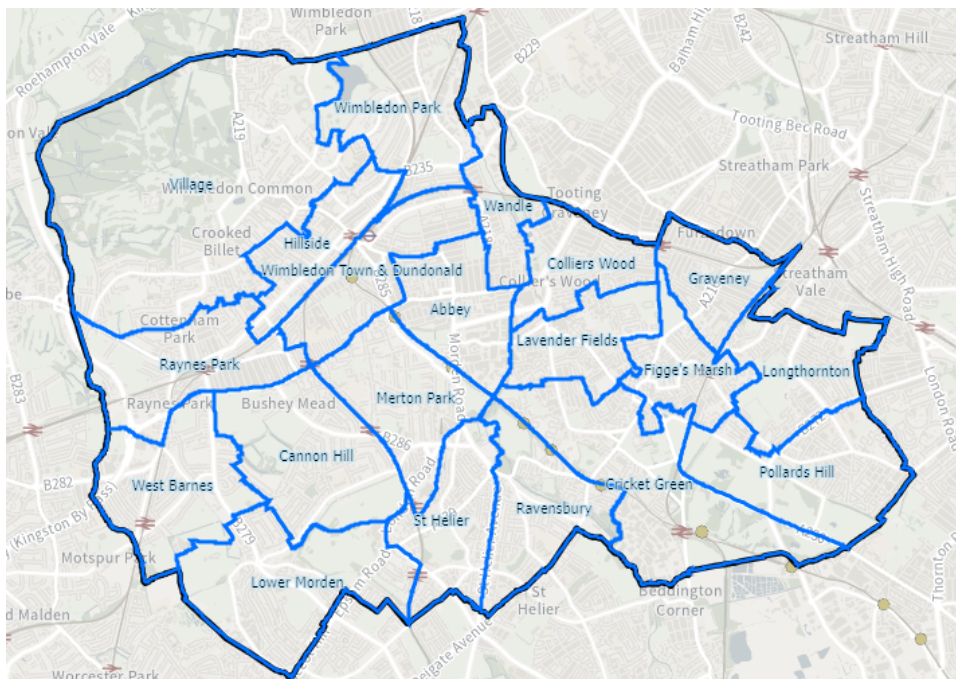
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The Council and What We Do

Local authorities provide a comprehensive range of services to residents and businesses through a combination of direct delivery, partnerships and contracted services. Broadly, these services fall into two main categories.

- Firstly, there are services related to the physical environment – things you can see, feel, smell and touch. These include services such as parks, highways, street cleansing, waste collection and recycling, parking, libraries, leisure centres, community centres, affordable housing and private sector housing conditions, air quality and many others.
- Secondly, there are services that relate to people – supporting those who need help and protecting vulnerable residents from harm. These include services such as adult and children's social care, schools, special educational needs provision, public health, early years provision, lifelong learning and welfare benefits.

The London Borough of Merton also has an important place-shaping role to play as a local authority given its vast array of services, relationships and democratic mandate. This means listening to communities about what they want from their borough, developing a vision with them, and then working with a range of different stakeholders to achieve this vision.



Quick Facts about Merton

Population and demographics

Residents: 215, 187 (Census 2021)

Population by age:

Age 0-15: 23%

Age 16-64: 65.3%

Age 65+: 11.8%

Born in the UK: 59% (Census 2021)

Main language other than English: 21.45% (Census 2021)

Ethnic group (Census 2021):

Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: 18.6%

Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: 10.6%

Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: 5.9%

White: 60.2%

Other ethnic group: 4.6%

Education and Qualifications

60.6% of adults with a degree or equivalent:

2.3% of adults with no qualification: (APS 2021)

24.2% of pupils eligible for free school meals (DFE, 2021/22 academic)

12.8% of Primary school pupils getting SEN support

14.8% of secondary school pupils getting SEN support (DfE 2022)

Economy and Environment

£6,299 million GDP in Merton at current market prices: in 2020 (ONS, 2022)

13,305 Businesses in Merton : (Inter-Departmental Business Register – IDBR, 2020)

80.9% Employment rate: (Annual Population Survey – APS, June 2022):

18,633 Universal Credit recipients (*DWP Claimant Count, December 2022*)

Built and Natural Environment

2.7 tonnes CO2 emissions per capita (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy – BEIS, 2020)

79,871 tonnes Total waste collected: (DEFRA, 2020-21)

10.5% Fuel poverty rate: (BEIS fuel poverty sub-regional statistics, 2020)

28% Canopy cover as of 2020: (Merton Climate Delivery Plan Year 2, 2022)

Health and Wellbeing

78.6 years Male 83.5 Female Life expectancy (Merton Story 2022)

7.7 years for males and **5 years** for females - gap in life expectancy between the 10 % most and least deprived (Merton Story 2022)

53.3% of adults getting five-a-day (Sport England, 2019/20)

67% of adults getting enough physical activity: (Merton Data, 2020/21)

10% of residents aged over 65 live with frailty (Merton Story 2022)

Social & Cultural Environment

86% People who feel a sense of community cohesion: (Merton Residents' Survey, 2021)

6.6 Crime rate per 1,000 people: (MPS data, 12 month rolling August 2022)

63% People who feel safe during the night: (Merton Residents' Survey, 2021)

204 Charities based in Merton: (Merton Connected, 2021)

17,945 Volunteers involved in local charities: (Merton Connected, 2021)

Merton Council 2023-26

The current Council was elected in May 2022 and will serve for four years. Merton has 57 councillors elected by 20 wards from the following political parties:

- 31 Labour
- 17 Liberal Democrats
- 7 Conservative
- 2 Merton Park Independent Residents

The Council is run by a Leader and Cabinet which is proposed by the majority group and confirmed at Full Council. The Cabinet take all major policy, service and financial decisions collectively and they are supported in delivering their goals and priorities by a senior executive team, led by the Chief Executive. The work of the Council is overseen and supported by an Overview and Scrutiny Process formed from all political groups.



From left to right:

- Cllr. Stephen Alambritis MBE, Cabinet Member for Transport
- Cllr. Brenda Fraser, Cabinet Member for Children's Services
- Cllr. Peter McCabe, Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care
- Cllr. Natasha Irons, Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change
- Cllr. Ross Garrod, Leader of the Council
- Cllr. Eleanor Stringer, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Civic Pride
- Cllr. Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Sport and Heritage
- Cllr. Andrew Judge, Cabinet Member for Housing and Sustainable Development
- Cllr. Sally Kenny, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning
- Cllr. Billy Christie, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services

Senior Officers (from April/May 2023)



Hannah Doody
Chief Executive



Jane McSherry
Executive Director
Children LifeLong
Learning and
Families

Responsible for:
Children Social
Care, Education,
Skills and Child
Protection



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

Responsible for:
Adult Social
Care, Public
health and Adult
Safeguarding



Dan Jones
Executive Director
Environment,
Civic Pride and
Climate

Responsible for:
Waste and street
cleansing, Parks,
Climate,
Libraries, Sport
and Heritage



Polly Cziok
Executive Director
Innovation and
Change

Responsible for:
Communications
and Media, Policy,
HR, Monitoring
officer durites and
Legal



Asad Mushtaq
Executive Director
Finance and
Digital

Responsible for:
Finance and
investment,
Section 151 and
digital services



Lucy Owen
Executive Director
Housing and
Sustainability

Responsible for:
Planning,
regeneration,
Housing delivery
and
homelessness

Borough Context

Merton as a borough has a huge amount to offer those who live, work or visit here. It is one of the greenest boroughs in London and has plenty of parks, green spaces and rivers offering easy access to nature. It is extremely well connected to central London, as well as neighbouring boroughs and the Surrey Hills. Each year, 500,000 visitors come to our borough to enjoy the Wimbledon Championships, which have been held since 1877 at the All-England Club. Merton is also proud to be the home once more of AFC Wimbledon in the Plough Lane stadium.

We are a growing and diverse borough – Merton is home to 215,187 people, an increase of 7% over the last 10 years, and the population is made up of a broad range of ethnicities. One third of residents were born outside the UK and the most common languages spoken after English are Polish, Gujarati and Urdu, which reflects the Polish, Eastern European and Asian communities across Merton.

We have always strived for Merton to be a great place to raise a family. There is excellent support for children and young people and all our secondary schools are rated either good or outstanding. We are the third-safest borough in London, and we have worked hard to prevent homelessness and maintain the lowest number of households in temporary accommodation of all London's boroughs. However, we know there is more to do to meet the expectations of our residents and make Merton a better place to live for everyone.

If we want to achieve the goal of building pride in Merton, this must be truly felt and experienced by all communities across the borough. Parts of Merton have higher levels of overcrowding, poorer health, deprivation and poverty and a greater proportion of lower-income households that are more affected by the cost-of-living emergency. We will target our delivery to address these disparities and to make sure that investment, support, and action goes to the right places and makes a difference.

Community Ambition

Our communities' aspirations

We carried out an extensive engagement programme across Merton during the Covid-19 pandemic to hear what mattered most to our residents, businesses, and wider communities¹. They told us what they enjoyed most about their local area, what they wanted to see improved, and their ambitions in the long term.

People said how much their local parks and green spaces helped with their physical and mental wellbeing. They wanted to see a borough that is cleaner, greener, and less congested, along with improved high streets that they could take pride in. Young people wanted more things to do in their local area and a greater say in decisions about the future.

Community spirit and connection also matter to residents in Merton. People valued the diverse communities, wanted to foster greater community spirit, and have more places in their local area where people can come together. Most importantly, the overall message is that residents want to be included in the decisions that affect their communities.

¹ <https://www.merton.gov.uk/council-and-local-democracy/get-involved/yourmerton>

We held extensive conversations with community groups and the voluntary sector to understand the impact of the pandemic and explore a new approach to working with communities. While there is a strong track record of collaboration and positive examples of engagement with communities, there are missed opportunities to help those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.

Our community ambitions

Our ambition for Merton has been shaped by this feedback from our communities and their aspirations for the borough. In summary, this is how residents felt the borough should look and feel like in future:

- Residents across the borough feel proud of where they live – this means clean streets, vibrant high streets, good schools, and safe neighbourhoods.
- An excellent education and skills programme gives all residents opportunities to access well-paid jobs.
- Town centres are busier, visibly cleaner and destinations in their own right, with regular cultural events taking place. Local businesses, entrepreneurs and start-ups are supported so they can provide employment opportunities for local people.
- Residents enjoy a greener borough with less congestion and improved air quality. Everywhere is well connected by walking and cycling routes so that people can choose healthier and lower-carbon ways of getting around.
- Residents of all ages lead healthy, active lives and more people are involved in sport and exercise. Communities across the borough make the most of the parks and green spaces for leisure, play, sports and enjoying nature.
- Merton becomes a fairer, more equal and inclusive place.
- Residents feel like they have a say in decisions that affect their community and get more involved in local initiatives.

Building A Better Merton Together – Our Council Plan

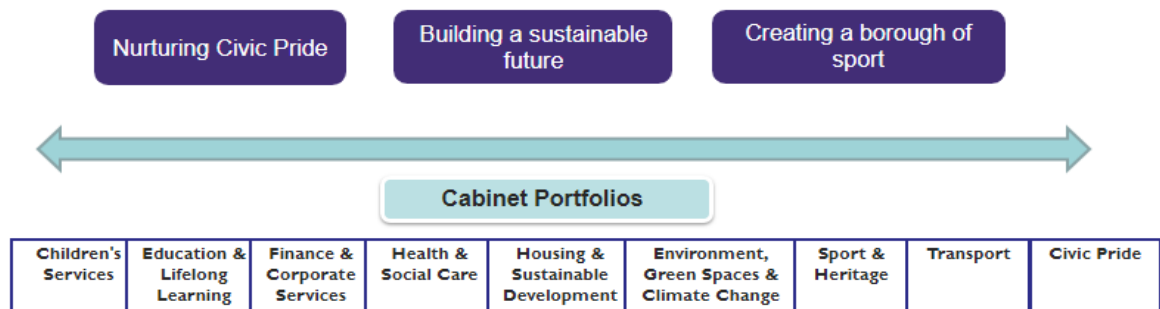
'Building a Better Merton Together' is our Council Plan for 2023-26. It sets out our ambition for rebuilding pride in Merton over the next four years and explains what we will be doing to achieve this over the coming years.

We want people to feel proud to live, work and visit Merton – rebuilding a sense of pride from the ground up through cleaner streets, more affordable housing, improved town centres and opportunities to be involved in this great sporting borough.

These three strategic objectives will guide our actions as a borough:

- Nurturing civic pride
- Building a sustainable future
- Creating a borough of sport

Our plan for each strategic objective is outlined in more detail below in terms of what you can expect in the coming year and what difference you will see. We have identified the major initiatives for each objective and the role of the Council and partners in delivering these. The work of all Cabinet Members will feed into delivery, spanning all parts of the Council and our work with partners (Fig 1).



How we will measure progress

We will closely monitor delivery over the course of each year and review progress through an Annual Review. As part of this review, we will measure our progress against key indicators for each strategic objective. An annual State of the Borough report will provide a snapshot of our position as a borough in key areas and allow us to see how we are progressing on our big priorities. A redesigned Corporate Performance Framework will align with these objectives to make sure that our services are supporting delivery of our priorities.



1. Nurturing Civic Pride

Civic pride is about the relationship that people and communities have with a place – not only their physical surroundings but also their feelings of identity and belonging. By nurturing civic pride, we want people to be proud of their local area, feel more connected to their community, and get more involved in making Merton a great place to live, work and visit. That means getting the basics right so that all residents across the borough can benefit from cleaner streets, vibrant high streets, good schools, and safe neighbourhoods. It is also about everyone taking pride in their borough, which means becoming a fairer, more equal and inclusive place.

What you can expect from us over the next four years:

We will put residents at the heart of everything we do, and be responsive and resident-centric in our approach to customer service, communication and engagement

Residents, businesses and visitors will enjoy clean, safe and welcoming places across the borough

Existing businesses will be supported, and new businesses, talent and investment will be attracted to the borough

More residents will be able to access secure and well-paid employment in a local economy that is fairer and more inclusive

Town centres will attract more footfall, events and investment, becoming better places to visit, do business and live

Merton is a thriving place for voluntary and community organisations where giving back is valued and encouraged

Fantastic educational provision and support gives children the best start and equips residents of all ages with the skills and qualifications to succeed

Residents across Merton will be supported through the cost-of-living emergency

We will continue to embrace diversity across the borough

How we will measure our progress

Indicator	Desired trend
Resident satisfaction with the council	Increase
Number of customer complaints	Decrease
Fly tips removed within 24 hours	Increase
Street cleanliness meeting expected standards	Increase
Footfall in our main town centres	Increase
Number of businesses	Increase

Percentage of economically active residents	Increase
Number of London-living wage accredited employers	Increase
Number of people volunteering in Merton	Increase
Crime rate and volume	Decrease
Number of schools rated Good or Outstanding	Increase
Number of residents requiring hardship payments and emergency food provision	Decrease

Nurturing Civic Pride: Major initiatives

Priorities	Initiatives	Council's role
We will put residents at the heart of everything we do, and be responsive and resident-centric in our approach to customer service, communication, and engagement	Develop a new Customer Strategy with a focus on the customer experience	Deliver
	Launch a new Communications and Engagement Strategy to reshape our approach to how we engage with our communities	Deliver
	Establish key libraries as community hubs on the high street	Deliver
Residents, businesses and visitors will enjoy clean, safe and welcoming places across the borough	Hold our commissioned providers Veolia to the delivery of their Service Improvement Plan so that they provide a better service to Merton residents	Deliver
	Develop and introduce a new waste and street cleansing service contract from 2025	Deliver
	Launch a new Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy – including street safety, White Ribbon Accreditation, awareness campaigns and a new initiative for young women	Deliver
	Roll out a £1 million upgrade to CCTV to further enhance our provision and keep streets safe and monitored	Deliver

	Look at implementing a borough-wide Public Space Protection Order to reduce antisocial behaviour and crime	Deliver
Existing businesses are supported, and new businesses, talent and investment will be attracted to the borough	Build closer relationships with local businesses working with Chamber of Commerce and our Business Improvement Districts	Partners
	Deliver placemaking measures for Morden Town Centre which make improvements to the physical surroundings	Deliver
	Undertake feasibility studies to facilitate the regeneration of Morden Town Centre and attract external funding to develop longer-term proposals	Deliver Partner
	Develop our support for Black businesses, including introducing a new Best Black Business Award in the Merton Business Awards	Deliver Advocate
More residents will be able to access secure and well-paid employment in a local economy that is fairer and more inclusive	Take steps to ensure that all our new contracts include a commitment to the London Living Wage	Deliver
	Seek accreditation as a Council for London Living Wage status and work with care homes and other employers towards becoming a London Living Wage borough	Deliver Partner
	Strengthen the application of the Social Value Measurement Charter in our procurement procedures	Deliver
	Introduce a Social Value portal to help monitor social value in contracts following mobilisation	Deliver
	Develop our apprenticeship scheme to increase opportunities with a focus on disadvantaged young people	Deliver Partner
Town centres will attract more footfall, events and investment, becoming better places to visit, do business and live	Engage with event companies to attract cultural events to the borough	Partner Advocate
	Deliver a programme of shopfront improvements across key high streets	Deliver

	Increase the retail, hospitality and entertainment outlets in Mitcham Town Centre by encouraging key stakeholders to redevelop sites in the town and surrounding area	Partner
Merton will be a thriving place for voluntary and community organisations where giving back is valued and encouraged	Establish and deliver a major new Civic Pride Fund to support neighbourhoods and local groups in Merton	Deliver Partner
	Deliver a new volunteering portal through Merton Connected and target key groups for recruitment	Deliver
	Increase the number of young volunteers working in community programmes through the Children’s Trust Board	Deliver
	Introduce the Civic Pride Recognition Awards	Deliver
Fantastic educational provision and support gives children the best start and equips residents of all ages with the skills and qualifications to succeed	Enhance support for families through Children’s Centres and Family Hubs	Deliver
	Maintain and build on the Council’s ‘outstanding’ Children’s Social Care rating, ensuring children and young people get help and protection at the right time and place.	Deliver
	Build a new special school in Merton and increase local special educational needs and disabilities places as part of the Dedicated Schools Grant Safety Valve Agreement	Deliver
	Continued school improvement to help all primary and secondary schools become ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’	Deliver
	Develop our Adult Education commissioning offer to support learning and skills for the future with focus on the east of the borough.	Deliver
	Deliver new health and wellbeing zones to support digital skills and resident wellbeing	Deliver
	Improve pathways to employment through our Adult Education programme	Partner

	Deliver new courses in numeracy, literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages through Adult Education	Deliver
Residents across Merton will be supported through the cost-of-living emergency	Develop a coordinated cross-council response to the cost-of-living emergency through the Merton Partnership	Deliver Partner
	Deliver a £2 million cost-of-living emergency fund to ensure support gets to those who need it most	Deliver
We will continue to embrace diversity across the borough	Launch and deliver on a new Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy	Deliver
	Work with our communities to relaunch the LGBTQ+ forum	Partner
	Celebrate the 75 th Windrush anniversary in partnership with local groups and communities.	Partner

2. Building a Sustainable Future

Working towards a greener, more sustainable, and resilient future for the borough means better housing, action on climate change, and support for the health and wellbeing of our communities. Accelerating the supply of affordable and sustainable homes is a top priority for the Council. Alongside this priority, we will push for better standards in private and social housing and work with Integrated Care partners to make sure that local health provision meets the needs of communities across Merton.

What you can expect from us over the next four years:

New developments deliver more affordable housing and exhibit design excellence

A borough where residents can live in good-quality housing

Our environment and parks will be protected, restored and well managed

Merton Council will aim to reach net zero by 2030

Increased take-up of alternative and sustainable modes of transport

Improved air quality across the borough

Equal access to local health services in Merton

How we will measure progress

Indicator	Desired trend
New starts of affordable homes	Increase
Empty homes brought back into use	Increase
Private rented homes brought up to standard	Increase
Number of housing enforcement or improvement notices	Decrease
Energy efficiency improvements of private sector homes	Increase
Number of trees on public land	Increase
Number of parks with Green Flag status	Increase
Number of EV (electric vehicles) charging points	Increase
Number of vehicles registered in the borough	Decrease
Proportion of active travel journeys being made	Increase
CO2 emissions across Merton Council's operational buildings	Decrease
Number of monitoring stations meeting nitrogen dioxide air-quality objectives	Increase

Building a Sustainable Future: Major initiatives

Priorities	Initiatives	Council's role
New developments deliver more affordable housing and exhibit design excellence	Work in partnership with registered providers to encourage greater provision of affordable housing and work with private developers on large sites to meet the Council's affordable housing target.	Partner
	Deliver 400 new affordable homes on Council land over the next four years	Deliver
	Establish a new Registered Provider/Developer Forum to strengthen working relationships with key partners in the housing sector	Deliver Partner
	Implement ambitious climate policies in a new Local Plan following approval by the Secretary of State	Deliver
A borough where residents can live in good quality housing	Introduce Article 4 and a Selective Licensing Scheme to improve standards in multiple-occupancy homes in key wards	Deliver
	Introduce an Empty Homes Strategy to make empty properties suitable for accommodation	Deliver
	Strengthen housing enforcement with an emphasis on standards and safety in privately rented accommodation	Deliver
	Develop a Registered Provider Charter and make the Tenants Champion a permanent position	Deliver
	Develop a borough-wide retrofit strategy and energy masterplan to improve energy efficiency for homeowners and the private sector	Deliver
	Provide strong oversight of Clarion in their delivery of the Merton Estate Regeneration Plan	Partner

Our environment and parks will be protected, restored, and well managed	Development and delivery of phase two of our Tree Strategy	Deliver
	Target tree-planting opportunities at wards with low canopy cover	Deliver
	Work with 'Friends of' parks groups to increase the number of Green Flag Award sites in Merton from six to nine	Partner
	Develop a Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and deliver a programme of improvement to our parks	Deliver
The Council will aim to reach net zero by 2030	Develop and deliver Year 3 of the Climate Delivery Plan for 2023, building on the success of Year 1 and Year 2	Deliver
	Increase the involvement of young people in climate action and green spaces as part of delivering the Youth Survey's recommendations	Deliver
Take-up of alternative and sustainable modes of transport increases	Develop a new electric vehicle charging strategy to support increased use of electric vehicles across the borough	Deliver
	Deliver 200 new electric vehicle lamp column charging points to improve the borough's charging infrastructure.	Deliver
	Work towards establishing three electric vehicle forecourt hubs and having 100% electric vehicle car clubs in the borough	Partner
	Roll out a borough-wide bike-hire scheme to increase cycling as a mode of transport	Deliver
	Develop a walking and cycling strategy to encourage active travel, focusing on areas with high car ownership and low Public Transport Accessibility Levels (PTAL)	Deliver
	Introduce e-scooters in areas with high car ownership and low Public Transport Accessibility Levels (PTAL) in line with the introduction of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone	Deliver

	Deliver a programme of segregated cycleways in areas with high car ownership and low Public Transport Accessibility Levels (PTAL)	Deliver
	Support greater public transport connectivity to and within Merton, such as the ongoing development of Crossrail 2	Partner
Air quality across the borough will improve	Develop and deliver a new air-quality action plan to reduce emissions and air pollution in the borough	Delivery
	Introduce additional school streets schemes to reduce car usage near schools and build on Merton's success of having the highest proportion in London	Deliver
Equal access to local health services in Merton	Move forward with the NHS on the development of East Merton Health Centre with GP provision and Colliers Wood GP Practice	Partner
	Develop a strategy to support the borough's ambition to retain all services at St Helier Hospital and lobby the government for refurbishment funding	Deliver Partner
	Work with the NHS to ensure that residents of Mitcham and Morden have access to a Nelson-equivalent health facility	Partner
	Develop our approach to the One Public Estate with the NHS to ensure that any proposed services on the NHS estate meet the needs of residents	Partner

3. Creating a Borough of Sport

As the home of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships, AFC Wimbledon, the oldest cricket club in the world, and a rugby club that was one of the founding members of the RFU, our borough has a great sporting heritage on which to build. Today, we have an array of parks, tennis courts, sports pitches, leisure centres and a wealth of grassroots clubs and sporting organisations.

We are perfectly placed to establish Merton as a borough of sport and promote healthy, active lives for all our residents. Increasing participation in sport and exercise not only supports better health and wellbeing but can also bring wider social benefits such as greater connectedness and engage young people. By supporting residents of all ages to be active and incorporate more movement into their lives, we can help people to lead more healthier lives and become more independent, particularly those who are older or disabled.

What you can expect from us over the next four years:

National recognition of Merton’s sporting heritage

All 4- to 16-year-olds and over 65s will have access to weekly sporting and wellbeing activities

More residents take part in sport and physical activities

Investment in sporting infrastructure and promoting healthy activities

How we will monitor progress

Indicator	Desired trend
Participation in sport and exercise	Increase
Improvements to sporting infrastructure	Increase
Number of leisure centre users	Increase
Proportion of children aged 4 to 5 and 10 to 11 classified as overweight or obese	Decrease
Fitness participation at leisure centres for those aged 14 to 25	Increase
Number of children and young people who agree that participation in a culture or sports project, activity or event has helped them feel healthier, stronger, fitter, or happier	Increase

Creating a Borough of Sport - Major Initiatives

Priorities	Initiatives	Council's role
Merton's sporting heritage will receive national recognition	Set up a Merton Sports partnership to promote sport in our borough	Partner
	We will market and promote Merton as the Borough of Sport following the outcome of the Sport London Strategy	Deliver
All 4- to 16-year-olds and over 65s will have access to weekly sporting and wellbeing activities	Extend delivery of the Kids Swim for a Quid initiative	Deliver
	Work in partnership with Merton's sporting organisations to increase the provision of activities for these age groups	Deliver Partner
More residents will take part in sport and physical activities	Establish a Sports Fund to support grassroots sport and activity in the borough	Deliver
	Develop an Actively Merton Programme through the Health and Wellbeing Board	Deliver Partner
	Produce an annual events planner to increase awareness of sport and leisure opportunities and events across the borough	Deliver
	Develop a blueprint with London Sport to increase participation and leverage external funding	Deliver Partner
Investment in sporting infrastructure and promoting healthy activities	Deliver improvements to key Multi-Use Sports Areas to encourage sports and exercise in our parks and recreation grounds	Deliver
	Deliver a programme of sports-pitch improvements to increase the quality of our facilities	Deliver
	Refurbish tennis courts across the borough	Deliver

Our Principles and Values

Our principles and values will guide how we work across the Council and the borough to build a better Merton together. We are committed to delivering the best for our communities and putting the needs of residents at the heart of everything we do.

You can expect us to be:

- Responsive to the needs of our residents
- Embedded in our local communities
- Innovative in our approach to tackling the challenges we face as a borough
- Striving to deliver excellent services for all

We are working on a new People and Culture Plan will set out our values as an organisation and how we will support our workforce so that they can work to their best:

My Health & Wellbeing - We will support the health and wellbeing of our workforce by expanding employee benefits, new health and wellbeing training and increasing staff engagement and communication.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion - We will embed equality and inclusion in our culture through new training priorities, external relationships with partners, and listening to the needs of our staff.

Smarter Working - We will enable more flexible and agile working practices through smart working and remote-working technologies

Leadership & Management – We will improve leadership and management at all levels of the Council with new training, more development opportunities for upcoming and existing leaders, and collaboration between leaders to help deliver our priorities.

Next Steps

Delivering the ambition in this plan will require collaborative working, not only with our residents and businesses but also with a range of partners at local and regional level. This section sets out how we will work together with residents, community groups and partners to achieve our goals.

How we will engage residents

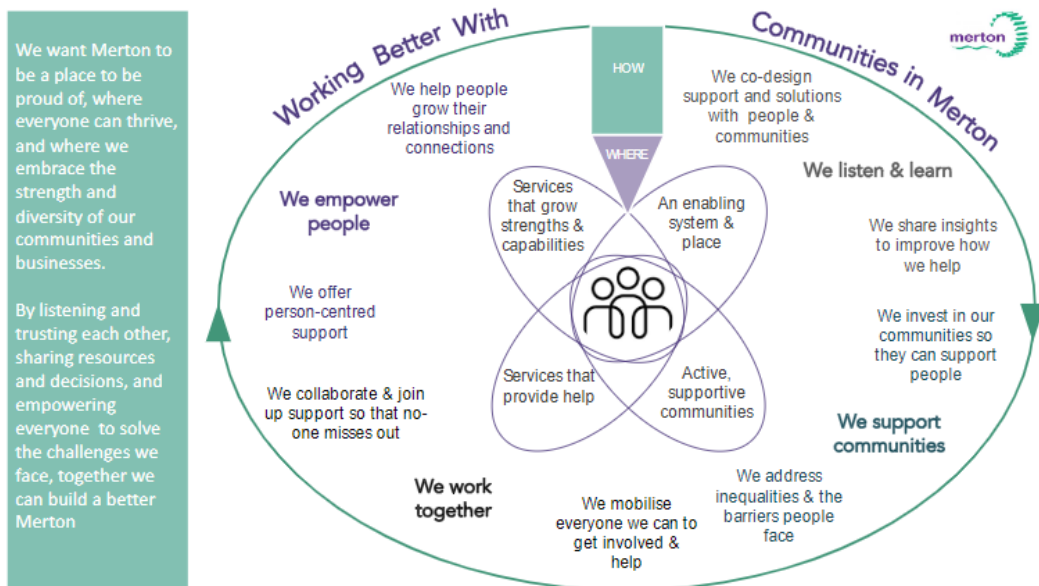
Residents have told us they want to be involved in decisions that affect the things that matter most to them, such as their high streets, parks and local services. They want to maintain and build on the community spirit that saw us through the pandemic where thousands of residents, businesses and local organisations helped support some of our most vulnerable residents. We want to harness this collaborative spirit to work with residents, businesses and local organisations and build a better Merton together.

Our new Community Engagement strategy will change our approach to engaging with residents and enable us to engage more directly. We will be expanding the use of new and existing digital channels to engage with residents on a regular basis and seek their views on a range of topics. We will also bring in new ways for residents to talk with us and each other, including an annual Question Time for the Leader and Cabinet in each town centre and more support for community groups that hold consultations with residents.

How we will work collaboratively with communities

We have co-designed a methodology with our partners to improve how we work with our local communities and use local, Council and partner assets and resources. This work was undertaken with Collaborate CIC, one of the leaders in the field of collaboratively designed public services and produced 'Working Better with Communities' framework. This model takes what we learned from how we worked differently with partners during the pandemic, feedback from community groups and best practice from Merton and elsewhere to offer a guide to how we can work differently with communities.

The commissioning of our new multi-million-pound Civic Pride Fund: Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector has provided a valuable opportunity to put this framework into practice. The fund invests in social infrastructure at a neighbourhood level and supports our voluntary groups.



How we will work in partnership

We cannot deliver this plan on our own. We will work with a range of partners to find common purpose and combine our efforts. This means working with the Mayor of London on structural issues like transport and regeneration where the interests of London as a whole and Merton as a borough intersect.

We will be an active member of the South London Partnership so that we can achieve better outcomes for Merton's residents and businesses where activity is best coordinated at a sub-regional level such as economic growth and training.

We will continue to build on our successful track record of working through the Merton Partnership. The Merton Partnership brings together community leaders, business leaders and leaders from public services such as the Council, NHS, police, fire brigade and educational settings.

How we will pay for it

'Building a Better Merton Together' will inform how we allocate our resources to deliver our priorities while balancing our duty to keep our finances on a sustainable footing. Local governments face a difficult financial situation with high inflation, rising costs and a worsening national economic context. Reductions in funding from central government will result in some tough decisions at local level but we will prioritise those who are most vulnerable and focus our delivery on what matters most to residents.

The Business Plan 2023-26 sets out the resources and financial details behind this plan and gives further context on how we will fund our strategic priorities through our Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Developing a new investment strategy, we will explore new avenues for external investment while working with our partners to maximise the funds at our disposal.

Other key strategies and plans

This Council Plan is our overarching strategic plan. However, the Council has more key strategies and plans that will guide how we deliver specific priorities, including how we are governed and our finances. The main strategies and plans are:

- Business Plan
- Community Plan
- Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy
- Housing Strategy
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Local Plan
- Children and Young People's Plan
- Climate Change Strategy

These are available to view online [here](#).

These strategies are informed by Merton Data, a council-run website that acts as a directory for a wide range of data in Merton. This includes population profiles, health and wellbeing statistics, house prices, employment statistics and more. It holds data for the whole borough, as well as for the individual wards, and can generate data profiles for each.

You can find Merton Data [here](#).