

Committee: Council

Date: 19 April 2023

Wards: All

Subject: Strategic Theme Report - Supporting residents who are most in need and promote the safety and wellbeing of all our communities

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Lead Members: Councillor Eleanor Stringer (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Civic Pride), Councillor Natasha Irons (Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Greenspaces and Climate Change), Councillor Stephen Alambritis MBE (Cabinet Member for Transport), Cllr Peter McCabe (Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care), Cllr Brenda Fraser (Cabinet Member for Children's Services)

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Recommendations:

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

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The Council, at its meeting on 2nd March 2022, approved the Business Plan for 2022 - 2026 which sets out five strategic priorities and each meeting of the Council receives a report providing an update on performance against one of the Council's strategic themes.
- 1.2. The Business Plan set out how the Council will deliver its ambition with five strategic priorities to shape and guide delivery:
 - i. Maintaining excellent education and skills for all ages and needs;
 - ii. Promote a dynamic, connected and inclusive community and economy with safe, vibrant high streets and jobs for our residents;
 - iii. Support residents who are most in need and promote the safety and wellbeing of all our communities;
 - iv. Ensure a clean and environmentally sustainable borough with inclusive open spaces where people can come together and enjoy a variety of natural life;
 - v. Work to make Merton a fairer, more equal borough and support those on lower income by tackling poverty and fighting for quality affordable housing

- 1.3. Performance against these priorities is monitored by the Council. Each meeting of the Council receives a report updating on progress against one of these priorities.
- 1.4. 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.
- 1.5. This report provides the Council with an opportunity to consider progress against the priorities that are to be delivered, specifically under the priority to “Support residents who are most in need and promote the safety and wellbeing of all our communities”. In summary, the report focusses on the following areas:
 - 1.5.1 **Safer Merton** – all the work done that keeps Merton as one of the safest boroughs in London by leading the way in tackling Violence Against Women & Girls, effectively using our powers and working in partnership to tackle antisocial behaviour and heavily investing in prevention tools such as CCTV.
 - 1.5.2 **Support to Adults, Children and families most in need** – Our work through the Safeguarding Adults Board & Children’s Safeguarding Partnership to protect our most vulnerable residents from harm; work with the Voluntary and Community Sector to support people with a range of practical support and support to live independently.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. Section 3 of the report provides an overview of how the Council supports residents who are most in need. This includes a focus on community safety and safeguarding our vulnerable residents.
- 2.2. Section 4 of the report provides an overview of how the Council promotes the safety and wellbeing of all our communities.
- 2.3. Section 5 of the report provides an overview some of the key practical initiatives and commissioning activity, both discretionary and statutory, that aim to support people most in need. This includes focus on; the support the Council is providing to residents in the current Cost of Living crisis; the practical support the Disabled Facilities Grant provides to people experience difficulty in maintaining independent living and; the future approach to commissioning home care – strategically important in supporting many residents to continue living independently in their own communities.
- 2.4. Sections 6 to 8 of the report provides information about the work of Merton CCTV.

3 SUPPORTING RESIDENTS MOST IN NEED Violence Against Women and Girls

- 3.1. Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls is one of the priorities of the Community Safety Partnership. The Community Safety Partnership is coordinated by Safer Merton (a Council team) and brings together local agencies with the shared goal of reducing crime and the fear of crime. The priorities for 2023-24 include tackling anti-social behaviour, violence (including serious violence), violence against women and girls, preventing reoffending and increasing community resilience. High volume crime such as burglary and robbery are also a focus. Performance on the priorities is monitored on a quarterly basis by the Community Safety Partnership Board.
- 3.2. The nature of this work supports those residents who are vulnerable to becoming victims of crime and require multi-agency work to support them when they are most in need.
- 3.3. Safer Merton continues to co-ordinate the partnership approach to respond to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).
- 3.4. This includes:
- Management of the VAWG Strategic Board (quarterly meetings) which brings together representatives from the Council, professionals and community working in the VAWG sector. The board oversees the portfolio of VAWG work, including developing and delivering the annual VAWG Action Plan and developing a new VAWG Strategy¹ which launched December 2022.
 - Coordinating the monthly domestic violence Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings for high risk domestic abuse cases². There have been 600 cases discussed at MARAC over the past 12 months.
 - Continuing to raise awareness of Domestic Violence and Abuse and VAWG across the Council, partnership, and community.
 - Ensuring we meet policy and statutory requirements, specifically conducting Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) and co-ordinating the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Recommendations from DHRs are fed back to the Home Office and learning shared across the partnership and with relevant safeguarding boards for implementation.
 - Responding to the Member's motion on the Safety of Women and Girls following the murder of Sarah Everard in March 2021.

¹ <https://www.merton.gov.uk/system/files/Mertons%20VAWG-Strategy%202022%20to%202025.pdf>

² <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/MARAC%20FAQs%20General%20FINAL.pdf>

- 3.5. Commissioning and managing the delivery of front-line services for victims of Domestic Abuse:
- The Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (IDVAs). Currently run by Victim Support, the IDVA service provides advocacy, emotional and practical support to domestic abuse victims at high risk of harm from partners, ex-partners, or family members, helping to ensure the safety of themselves and their families and children. The service is due to be re-commissioned in June 2024.
 - Running the weekly One Stop Shop drop-in advice surgeries at Morden Baptist Church, a safe space for domestic abuse victims to receive confidential advice and support in person. The One Stop Shop has dealt with approx. 100 clients over the past 12 months.
 - Joint commissioning of the Complex Needs IDVA Service with cases where the victim/ survivors have mental health, disabilities, or substance abuse issues.
 - Refuge provision – run by Hestia, this provides 17 beds for women fleeing domestic abuse.
- 3.6. The VAWG Strategy 2022-25 underpins the work we do in Merton to support victims and survivors of all forms of domestic abuse and VAWG. The strategy sets out our vision for ending violence against women and girls and was developed in consultation with VAWG partners across the borough.
- 3.7. The strategy and accompanying action plan address five strategic objectives:
- Partnership Objective 1: Raise awareness and coordinated partnership working***
 - Partnership Objective 2: Prevent VAWG through early intervention***
 - Partnership Objective 3: Support victims, survivors, and their children***
 - Partnership Objective 4: Hold perpetrators to account***
 - Partnership Objective 5: Improve the safety of women and girls***
- 3.8. The action plan is currently being developed and will set out the steps to be taken to achieve these objectives.
- 3.9. These actions include:
- Work with schools in a preventative capacity;
 - Projects helping to make our streets safe;
 - Focused work with survivors from minoritised backgrounds and those who experience multiple disadvantages;
 - Focused work on how to meaningfully engage with a diverse range of survivors including children and young people;
 - Work in changing abuser behaviour;
 - And a focus on improving systems and referral pathways.
- 3.10. This work aligns with Merton’s corporate priorities in terms of creating Civic Pride and a borough where residents feel safe to engage with the council and community services to receive the support they need.

- 3.11. It also links to ensuring all equalities strands (sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy/ maternity, religion/ belief, age, marriage, and civil partnerships) have equal access to our VAWG services.
- 3.12. **Update on other key strands of work in tackling Violence Against Women and Girls and improving the Safety of Women and Girls:**
- 3.13. **Safer Streets Funding:** Safer Merton was successful in its joint bid with Wandsworth, Kingston, and Richmond for the Home Office's Safer Streets funding. £200,000 of funding was awarded in April 2022 and has been shared between the four boroughs on supporting interventions aimed at preventing violence against women and girls in public places and engaging with men to change attitudes and behaviours. High profile local organisations such as AFC Wimbledon have been involved in leading on this work.
- 3.14. The work has included:
- Boys to Men training for professionals working with young men took place November and December 2022.
 - Night-time Economy staff training to identify vulnerability and anti-sexual harassment. Two remaining sessions will take place May and June 2023.
 - Women's safety Night-time Economy audit and strategy. The audit took place in Morden, Mitcham and Wimbledon town centres on 4th March 2023 and included visiting venues in the Night-time Economy and interviews with key stakeholders. Recommendations from the audit due back April 2023 will form the basis of a women's safety Night-time Economy strategy.
 - Women's Safety Business Tool Kit launched March 2023 which can be used by any business in the borough to upskill around women's safety. The toolkit will be available on the Council's new Safer Streets webpage: <https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/vawg/safer-streets>
 - A male accountability survey conducted January 2023 to allow men to contribute to how they can be part of the solution to ending violence against women and girls. The results should be available April 2023.
 - Survivors focus groups took place January 2023 to understand the lived experience of those experiencing domestic abuse.
 - Bystander Training for the community to equip individuals on how they can be aware and intervene safely when incidents take place. A 'train the trainer' model will be rolled out over the next few months to sustain this work.
- 3.15. **White Ribbon Accreditation:** Merton Council achieved White Ribbon accreditation October 2022. White Ribbon UK is a charity focused on engaging with men and boys to end violence against women and girls and is part of our work to develop a strategic approach to ensuring male accountability for ending violence against women and girls.

- 3.16. An action plan detailing the Council's commitment to achieving this via incorporating a responsibility to take action if men are being abusive to women into our policies and strategies has been submitted. Promotion of the campaign will continue to be rolled out internally to Council staff, encouraging them to sign up as White Ribbon Ambassadors and Champions (the Leader of the Council has signed up to be an Ambassador and the Chief Exec as a Champion). Externally our partners in the community and other organisations on borough will be encouraged to make the White Ribbon promise.



- 3.17. Merton has also signed up to the **Mayor of London's Night Safety Charter**³. The charter has been created to make London a city where all women feel confident and welcome at night and is part of the Mayor's Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and London's commitment to the UN Women Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces global initiative.
- 3.18. There are continued communications via the Council's publicity channels to raise awareness of VAWG and promote the services available to victims in Merton. This includes working in partnership with the Police and other partners on the annual **16 Days Against Domestic Violence and Abuse Campaign** which includes awareness raising, training and events to shine a spotlight on the different forms of VAWG and signpost to organisations which can provide support to victims.
- 3.19. It also includes engaging with events to mark **International Women's Day** (8th March). This year an event led by Inner Strength Network 'Stronger Now' was hosted in the Council Chamber to celebrate the strength of women and those who have overcome life challenges, including survivors of domestic abuse.
- 3.20. Safer Merton have been supporting the Police '**Walk and Talk**' initiative for female residents to join Police officers to talk about women's safety and

³ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/arts-and-culture/24-hour-london/womens-night-safety-charter#acc-i-57686>

other concerns. The first took place in Morden Hall Park in February and will continue to be rolled out over the coming year.



- 3.21. Funding was secured in August 2022 for three years funding via the **Home Office Young Women and Girls Fund** for St Giles SOS+ Service to be embedded in Merton schools to provide specific support for young women and girls affected by gang association and exploitation. This early intervention work includes a programme of 1:1 mentoring sessions with girls at risk of exclusion, CSE, gang involvement, and serious violence. Awareness raising sessions are also held for teachers, professionals working with young people and parents to raise awareness of gang related harm in young women and girls and to recognise the signs that young people are at risk.
- 3.22. Safer Merton have also recently bid for Home Office funding for a domestic abuse **perpetrator programme**. If successful, Merton alongside six other boroughs (Kingston, Richmond, Wandsworth, Lambeth, Lewisham, and Southwark) will have a worker in the borough, taking referrals to engage with perpetrators on a 1:1 basis, as well as an IDVA on each borough to safeguard the victims.
- 3.23. **Safeguarding vulnerable residents**
- 3.24. The Merton Safeguarding Adults Board (MSAB) work together as a partnership to prevent abuse and neglect. The role of The Board is to ensure the systems, policies and procedures in Merton continue to be effective in keeping adults at risk safe. The MSAB continues to focus its work on its Strategic Priorities 2021-2024 as well as the statutory duties that include, publication of an annual report which can be found here: [MSAB_Annual_Report-2021-2022.pdf](https://mertonsab.org.uk/MSAB_Annual_Report-2021-2022.pdf) (mertonsab.org.uk); focused work based on a strategic plan; and the commissioning and completion of Safeguarding Adults reviews (SARs).
- 3.25. With the Board priorities in mind, partners have continued to build strong partnerships and develop new and innovative ways of connecting with people using services, residents of Merton and each other. They are committed to hearing the voices of people with lived experience as well as learning from feedback to improve on practice going forward. An important success measure of 'Making Safeguarding Personal' is the extent to which the person's desired outcomes are met. Locally, Making Safeguarding

Personal is well embedded in practice, with 97% of people's outcomes being fully or partially met.

- 3.26. During 2021-22 (which is the latest year of published data) 810 concerns were received by Merton Council in total. This is a decrease of 20 (2.5%) on the number of concerns raised in 2020-21. In terms of location of risk 60% were reported to be in people's own homes. Last year it was slightly higher at 63%, however this benchmarks broadly in line with national statistics. As a result of what the data is telling us, there is a focus on raising awareness of safeguarding adults in the local community, voluntary sector, and faith groups. Our Safeguarding Adults Champions initiative came as result of this work and launched in 2022-2023.
- 3.27. Safer Merton is a key member of Merton Safeguarding Adults Board. They ensure a coordinated partnership approach in response to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and have developed a DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour Based Violence) training focused on early risk identification, intervention and prevention delivered to Housing officers.
- 3.28. Safer Merton have also facilitated Bite Size training including, Domestic Abuse Awareness: Supporting those at risk of Domestic Abuse, which focused on the use of the DASH risk assessment referral form and was delivered by the Safer Merton Domestic Abuse & VAWG Lead. They also promoted the SafeLives Dash risk checklist for the identification of high-risk cases of domestic abuse, stalking, and 'honour'-based violence.
- 3.29. Significant further detail of how partners across the borough work together to safeguard vulnerable adults is set out in the Safeguarding Adults Board report. [MSAB_Annual_Report-2021-2022.pdf \(mertonsab.org.uk\)](#)
- 3.30. With over 3500 adults in receipt of care and support plans; the majority of which are provided by external, third party care providers; on a day to day basis the Council works with partners across health, social care, and care regulator, CQC, to improve and maintain high standards of care and support across the borough. The Joint Intelligence Group is the governance that oversees this work. Acting on intelligence from quality assurance visits, safeguarding data and regulatory inspections, the group works to develop and monitor action and improvement plans to drive up standards in care provision with the aim that everyone in receipt of care and support can be satisfied with the standard.
- 3.31. The Council, primarily through our Public Health, Quality Assurance and Contract Management teams have continued to provide significant support to all 38 care homes in the borough, particularly as we have moved into 'living with Covid'. Additional Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) capacity was maintained and continued to provide both on-site and remote advice, training, and support to care home managers and staff.
- 3.32. There has been close and effective partnership working with the developing Care Home Support Team commissioned by the CCG; with specialist Community Pharmacists and with a range of other health colleagues to respond to safeguarding concerns as and when required. The Merton Joint Intelligence Group (MJIG) has continued to provide an effective means of

identifying issues early and ensuring that the required support and challenge is provided to care homes through routine and regular quality assurance visits.

3.33. **Safeguarding Children in Merton**

3.34. The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) brings together partners to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Merton, and partners are committed to working together so that every child in Merton is safe, well, and able to reach their full potential. The MSCP is focused on the following four priority areas, as set out in the MSCP 21-23 Business Plan:

3.35. **Early Help and Neglect** – ensuring Early Help is part of a whole system approach and based on a clear understanding of local need. Good early help will mean that children and their families will experience a high quality and coordinated service that meets their assessed needs and prevents issues from escalating into a safeguarding risk. Ensuring the MSCP provides a strategic and operational framework to improve the identification of early signs of neglect.

3.36. **Contextual Safeguarding** – ensuring as partners we are proactively addressing risks that occur in contexts beyond the family home (e.g. neighbourhood, schools, local shopping centres, youth venues). These risks could include child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, serious youth violence, peer on peer abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, and other overlapping forms of harm.

3.37. **Domestic Abuse and Think Family** – monitoring, coordinating, and evaluating the work of partner agencies to safeguard children who are at risk of, or witnessing, domestic abuse. Working effectively with families, including victims and perpetrators of abuse to create and sustain a safe parenting environment.

3.38. **Strong Leadership & Strong Partnership** – leading an impactful safeguarding agenda, challenging the safeguarding work of partners, and committing to an approach that learns lessons, embeds good practice, and is continually influenced by children, young people, and their families.

3.39. The MSCP also oversees the development of multi-agency policies and procedures and delivers a comprehensive training programme for the multi-agency workforce, overseen by the Policy and Training sub-group. During 21-22, the MSCP delivered training to over 700 practitioners working with children and families in Merton, and we continue to commission new training topics to respond to emerging needs.

3.40. The MSCP is also committed to an approach that learns lessons and the Quality Assurance and Practice Review sub-group oversee a regular audit programme to test the quality of our safeguarding processes in Merton. The MSCP also oversees the delivery of Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, as per Working Together 2018 statutory guidance, to ensure that partners learn from serious incidents involving children living in Merton.

3.41. The MSCP is chaired by an Independent Person, who scrutinises the senior leadership of partners in the MSCP. The MSCP also work with an

Independent Scrutineer and Young Scrutineer, who undertake a programme of thematic scrutiny to provide reassurance of the effectiveness of the MSCP's work. They recently reported on their thematic scrutiny reviewing how effective the MSCP is in responding to sexual harassment in schools, following the national concerns raised in Everyone's Invited. They are planning further scrutiny this year on 'Adultification', in response to the recent concerns raised by Child Q's story, and on family networks in assessments, in response to Merton's local Ananthi review.

4 PROMOTING THE SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF OUR COMMUNITIES

4.1. Safer Merton works closely with our partners to keep and improve on Merton's position as one of the safest boroughs anywhere in London (based upon the rate per 1,000 per population for total notifiable offences). This work includes promoting the safety and wellbeing of our communities and working to overcome barriers some communities may face in keeping safe, alongside putting in place interventions to support them where required.

4.2. Anti-Social Behaviour

4.3. Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is a concern for our local communities and impacts greatly upon individuals' quality of life. Safer Merton continue to provide a multi-agency response to ASB. This is via a targeted neighbourhood problem solving approach, using enforcement tools and powers, and delivering interventions to support the most vulnerable victims and locations.

4.4. The team consists of an ASB Team Manager, alongside three ASB Officers who each manage a geographical area of the borough. Work includes:

- **Promoting awareness of ASB, addressing complaints, and informing residents of how to report ASB issues.** The team review and respond to every complaint with 261 reports dealt with between October – December 2022 and 98% responded to in the target timeframe. Work is undertaken with partners such as Housing, Environmental Health, and Waste Enforcement to support victims and take enforcement action where appropriate.
- **Multi-agency Task and Finish Groups** to look at complex problem locations. This includes working in partnership with Police Designing Out Crime Officers where ASB is impacting on the community. A project is currently underway working in partnership with Public Health to look at the safety of the area around St Mark's Primary School in Mitcham town centre. Safer Merton has led on 15 Task and Finish Groups between April 2022 – March 2023.
- Leading on **Days of Visibility** at targeted locations to address specific concerns. The first took place in Mitcham town centre in December 2022 and involved working in partnership with Police, Trading Standards, Licensing, Parking Services, Waste Services and Homelessness team to meet residents, visit businesses, offer advice, and carry out enforcement activities. These are scheduled to take

place quarterly, with the next Day of Visibility planned for Mitcham town centre in April 2023.

- Managing the **Community Trigger**⁴ process for victims of persistent anti-social behaviour. During April 2022- March 2023 Merton received five Community Trigger applications.
- Regular meetings with our largest housing provider Clarion Housing to work in partnership and share information to aid casework and support those impacted by ASB and take enforcement action where appropriate.
- The **Community MARAC (CMARAC)** is a multi-agency meeting where high-risk cases involving vulnerable victims or perpetrators of ASB are discussed. The CMARAC develops action plans to address problematic behaviour affecting the community and safeguard victims. In the last year between April 2022 – March 2023 53 cases have been discussed.
- In addition, the ASB Team support residents most in need by arranging a home visit if visiting the Civic Centre is not possible, offering mediation in appropriate circumstances and via referrals to Victim Support for further emotional support if required.
- The Team also supports businesses in the community where required, for instance arranging leaflet drops to gather intelligence and evidence about ASB issues affecting them.

4.5. **Alcohol related Public Spaces Protection Order - making Merton a responsible drinking borough**

4.6. **Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)** are one of a range of measures introduced by the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), Crime and Policing Act 2014 to combat ASB and its impact on individuals and communities.

4.7. A PSPO identifies a public space and prohibits certain activities within that area and/ or requires certain things to be done by persons engaging in certain activities within that area. PSPOs focus on identified problem behaviour(s), rather than targeting specific individuals or properties. A breach of a PSPO is a criminal offence.

4.8. In October 2020, the Council looked at available evidence, the results of a consultation with the public, Police and community representatives and an equalities impact assessment and implemented a PSPO to address alcohol related ASB in the following five wards: Cricket Green, Figges Marsh, Graveney, Lavender Fields and Ravensbury. This order covering five wards in the Mitcham area was extended in October 2022 until October 2025.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/anti-social-behaviour-asb-case-review-also-known-as-the-community-trigger>

- 4.9. It is important to note that this PSPO only applies to ASB related alcohol consumption. *Officers only enforce this prohibition when people drinking alcohol are currently or likely to cause ASB.*
- 4.10. If an individual is found to be breaching the restrictions, the Police or Council Enforcement Officers (Kingdom Security) can request they either stop drinking or surrender the alcohol.
- 4.11. Anyone who does not comply with the request to stop drinking, or surrender the alcohol, will be issued with a £100 fixed penalty notice.
- 4.12. A PSPO is not solely an enforcement tool, importantly it is also an opportunity to provide pathways to access support for those vulnerable individuals for whom alcohol has become a challenge. This support is provided via signposting and referrals to the borough's drug and alcohol treatment service provider Westminster Drugs Project (WDP).
- 4.13. **A borough wide PSPO in Merton**
- 4.14. Following the extension of the current PSPO in October 2022, a recommendation to go out to further public consultation with regards to making a borough wide PSPO was agreed by Cabinet in September 2022. This is with the aim of making Merton a responsible drinking borough.
- 4.15. The public consultation ran for 10 weeks from 19th December 2022. There were 303 responses to the consultation, with 79% of respondents in favour of making a borough wide PSPO.
- 4.16. Statements of support were also provided by partners – these include Police, LFB, Clarion, Children Schools and Families, Homelessness Team and Public Health.
- 4.17. The recommendation to make a borough wide PSPO was approved by Cabinet on 20th March 2023. Pending the legal process required, it is anticipated the new PSPO will be in place for the spring, in anticipation of the likely seasonal increase in ASB during the summer months.
- 4.18. Making Merton a responsible drinking borough will help to ensure our public spaces such as parks, open spaces, and town centres are places for our communities to enjoy safely.
- 4.19. It should be noted the prohibition will only be exercised when individuals are currently or likely to cause ASB. Those wishing to enjoy alcohol in a public place sensibly without causing ASB can continue to do so.
- 4.20. **Partnership work to support the PSPO**
- 4.21. Partnership work is key to support the implementation of the PSPO. This work is already underway and includes:

- Monitoring of the PSPO at the monthly Partnership Tasking Meeting.
 - Increased patrols by Council Enforcement Officers (Kingdom Security) to offer support and referrals to street drinkers. Between August – December 2022 there were 224 engagements with street drinkers and members of the public in the Mitcham town centre area.
 - A street drinking Task and Finish Group has been established. This is exploring the need for Assertive Outreach to ensure support can be offered to street drinkers in their own environment, training for Police, Kingdom Officers, and front-line staff to improve the engagements they have with street drinkers, and specific projects to address street drinking hotspots in Wimbledon and Mitcham town centres.
 - Multi-agency work is also underway to identify the top 20 street drinkers in the borough and ensure they are offered relevant holistic support.
 - PSPO signage and leaflets use to signpost street drinkers to support are being reviewed to ensure they are clear and user friendly. We will also consider providing this information in alternative languages.
- 4.22. The PSPO will continue to be monitored via a standing item at Safer Merton’s monthly Partnership Tasking Meeting.
- 4.23. **Regulatory Services Partnership (RSP)** – Commercial Services. The service consists of Licensing, Trading Standards and the Food and Safety Team. The teams all work closely with multiple departments and agency across the Council and South London to ensure residents most in need are supported. The teams also engage with businesses to make sure the services and goods provided to Merton residents are safe, reassuring residents that required standards are being met.
- 4.24. **Trading Standards** regulate and enforce consumer protection legislation, with many helping to support and protect vulnerable adults, the elderly and the young.
- 4.25. The team carry out proactive and reactive visits. Any complaints are triaged and responded to, which could involve referrals, advice or formal enforcement action. In 22/23 over 5,900 complaints were received. Successful activity includes investigating a rogue trader who failed to carry out work, doorstep crime where victims are persuaded to transfer a large sum of money to criminals and scam prevention work. Each month the team deliver training to community groups on how to avoid or report potential fraudulent money activity.
- 4.26. In Merton during 22/23 over 100 test purchases have taken place, covering the sales of knives, tobacco, vapes and alcohol. Following legal guidance and careful monitoring by trading standards officers, underage volunteers attempt to buy restricted products. This type of activity helps ensure that all businesses are adhering to legal standards and protecting children. Further in-depth project work is planned for 23/24 focusing on the sales of vapes across the borough, this project links in with public health priorities and will not only work to prevent vapes being sold to underage customers but also that all vapes sold are safe and meet the legal requirements.
- 4.27. **Licensing** process, issue and ensure compliance with multiple types of licences. These licence types include premises licences (covering alcohol,

entertainment, and late night refreshment), special treatment licences (covering nail bars, massage, and tattooing) and licences for gambling premises.

- 4.28. Within alcohol and entertainment licensing, holders must promote the four licensing objectives: Prevention of Crime and Disorder, Public Safety, Prevention of Public Nuisance, and Protection of Children from Harm. The service has worked to produce a licensing policy that supports our economy and sets a clear standard as to the requirements of licence holders.
- 4.29. Compliance checks are undertaken on a regular basis to ensure operators and licence holders are complying with their conditions and promoting the licensing objectives. Where serious concerns are identified, Responsible Authorities such as the police, environmental health or trading standards can apply for an application to review a licence, which could mean the licence is revoked.
- 4.30. The team also check compliance of other licences, particularly where there are age restrictions and carry out test purchases, for example tattoo parlours or premises selling knives or noxious substances.
- The licensing team are fully embedded in the council's VAWG agenda and are positively promoting women's safety to prospective licence holders, applying appropriate conditions where necessary.
- 4.31. **Food & Safety** are responsible for ensuring that hygiene standards in all food business across the borough are maintained to a high standard. As well as commercial premises, this also includes visiting our schools, nurseries, and care homes. All premises are visited on risk based, programme of inspections and complaints are investigated when received.
- 4.32. The team also work alongside the UK Health Security Agency and carry out investigations where certain notifiable diseases are reported to the Council, such as food poisoning, tuberculosis, malaria etc.
- 4.33. The team are also heavily involved in promoting health & safety in workplaces, sports grounds and large-scale events and investigate serious and fatal accidents at work.
- 4.34. **The Air Quality Team** is part of the Regulatory Services Partnership and delivers a number of statutory functions relating to the monitoring and managing of the borough's responsibility to deliver clean air.
- 4.35. The Team act as a statutory consultee on planning applications to ensure that the boroughs planning process considers, and where possible, mitigates the impact on air quality and contaminated land associated with development.
- 4.36. The borough's air quality monitoring network and reporting function is a key output for the team. The borough has seen significant investment in the air quality monitoring network and we now have data at a detailed level, including ultrafine particles (PM2.5s) to help shape our new Air Quality Action Plan scheduled for 2023.
- 4.37. The council also uses a comprehensive network of CCTV and ANPR cameras to enforce moving traffic offences, such as yellow box junctions,

low traffic networks and banned turns. The purpose of enforcement is to encourage greater compliance with the restrictions, reducing traffic congestion, improving road safety and reducing air pollution.

4.38. We have introduced **school streets** across the majority of Merton's schools as part of our commitment to creating and sustaining a safe environment for our children and young people. School streets have a range of benefits, including improving road safety, helping to tackle climate change, improving air quality around schools and encouraging activity and active travel. A school street restricts cars, vans and other traffic using particular streets during specific times for about 45 mins / 1 hour, based on the school's starting and finishing times. The restrictions only apply during school term time periods, with exemption for residents who live in the roads and families with children with special needs who need to be driven to school. Merton's school streets programme now covers 29 schools; Merton has more schools within a school streets than any other London borough.

4.39. **Tackling public space violence**

4.40. The Serious Violence Duty is a new statutory duty that came into effect on 31st January 2023. It places a new legal requirement on public sector organisations to reduce violence and focuses on a partnership approach to reducing and preventing serious violence. The responsible authorities are the Police, Local Authority, Fire and Rescue Authorities, justice organisations (including Youth Offending Teams and Probation) and Integrated Care Boards.

4.41. Boroughs have one year to implement the duty requirements, with the Community Safety Partnership agreeing to take the lead on coordinating. This work will include a serious violence strategic needs assessment to indicate local priority issues and development of a delivery plan for partners to collectively work on to reduce violence and support those vulnerable to being involved in violence.

4.42. A small amount of funding has been assigned to the duty which is currently being used for a Youth Integrated Offender Management (IOM) pilot initiative, working with the police and mentors from St Giles Trust SOS+ Service to support young people who present the highest level of risk.

4.43. Work continues on **Merton's Violence Reduction Plan**. The plan is overseen by the London Violence Reduction Unit and ensures that actions to reduce violence remain up to date and have a focus on violence, vulnerability, and a public health multi-agency approach. The plan captures the efforts made by partners to support the reduction and prevention of violence in Merton. This includes initiatives such as weapons sweeps, with a recent sweep being held in Morden Hall Park by Merton police in February 2023



resulting in an axe being recovered.

4.44. A **CrimeStoppers Fearless** campaign ran in autumn 2022, encouraging young people to come forward and report violent crime confidentially. The campaign covered social media channels relevant to young people such as Instagram and Spotify and awareness raising sessions for professionals. The campaign was promoted at key locations such as Merton College.

4.45. Safer Merton has also worked with Children, Schools, and Families Department to secure funding from the Violence Reduction Unit for St Giles SOS+ Service to deliver contextual safeguarding work in schools within the highest violent crime areas in the borough. The work is delivered via preventative sessions on violence, vulnerability and exploitation and mentoring of young people at raised risk of gang-involvement, criminal child exploitation and violence, with 12 young people currently being mentored on a 1:1 basis. 10 prevention and awareness raising sessions will also be provided to year group cohorts via whole school assemblies.



4.46. In addition, professionals sessions are being provided to schools so teachers have the knowledge to deal with issues they encounter with students around child criminal exploitation and gangs, and sessions are hosted for parents and carers on how to spot the signs of grooming. This intervention supplements the approach being delivered by the council based Contextual Safeguarding Team

4.47. **Hate crime**

4.48. Work on the hate crime agenda is driven by Merton's Hate Crime Strategy Group, made up of members from the Council and community representing each strand of hate crime. We recognise the negative effect hate crimes can have on communities and that some communities may feel uncomfortable reporting these crimes directly to the Police.

4.49. Therefore, Merton's **Hate Crime Strategy**⁵ centres on preventing hate crime and working with the community to increase confidence in reporting and encourage victims to come forward and obtain the support they need.

- Key initiatives include the promotion of the 24hr **Stop Hate UK Helpline for Merton** (a poster competition was recently run in Merton primary schools), monthly **Merton Hate Crime Advice Surgeries** held at locations across the borough, and the development of a network of **Hate**

⁵ <https://www.merton.gov.uk/system/files/Merton%20Hate%20Crime%20Strategy%202022-26.pdf>

Crime Third Party Reporting Centres. Key organisations in the community such as AFC Wimbledon and Tooting and Mitcham FC have signed up to be hate crime Third Party Reporting Centres.



- 4.50. The marking of key events to promote Merton as a safe and inclusive borough where hate in any form is not tolerated. This includes community engagement events for **IDAHOBIT (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia)** and **National Hate Crime Awareness Week**. Awareness also continues to be raised via the Council's media channels via the 'Merton Stops Hate' hashtag.



- 4.51. **Neighbourhood Policing**

- 4.52. The work detailed above contributes to making sure Merton maintains its position as one of London's safest boroughs, based upon the rate per 1,000 per population for total notifiable offences. .

- 4.53. We recognise the significant challenges the Met Police face in light of the damning Baroness Casey review⁶. The Community Safety Partnership has a close working relationship with Merton Police and will continue to work to strengthen this, especially in light of the deeply troubling findings of the Casey review.
- 4.54. The Met Police have recently published a Turnaround Plan⁷ which sets out its priorities for the next two years and centres around the pillars of more trust, less crime, and high standards. Merton Council have formally responded to the plan and expressed our wish to work with the Police to develop and support this work and ensure our local priorities are achieved alongside the changes that need to be seen in the Met.
- 4.55. These priorities include building strong neighbourhood policing links to reduce local crime and anti-social behaviour and working with our young people to keep them from becoming victims or perpetrators of crime. In partnership we will continue to support residents who are most in need and promote the safety and wellbeing of all our communities.
- 4.56. A stronger neighbourhood policing model is a focus of the plan. A number of workstreams are being developed by the Police to deliver this, ranging from uplifts in staff, more training, better performance management and a review of Police bases.
- 4.57. It is noted that the Turnaround Plan will include an increase in officers and an aim of keeping officers based locally, therefore the Council is supportive of keeping both Wimbledon and Mitcham Police Stations open as part of the Met Estates Strategy, to continue to support our communities effectively.
- 4.58. A sign of commitment to this work has begun with the Police introducing a Neighbourhood Superintendent at borough level.
- 4.59. Further examples of partnership working with the Police include:
- 4.60. Monthly **Partnership Tasking Meeting** co-chaired by Safer Merton and Police – a problem solving forum for different council teams and partners (including CCTV, homelessness, ASB, waste enforcement, licensing, housing associations, charities) to collaborate to identify locations that are hotspots for crime or anti-social behaviour, and work together to solve them. Quarterly meetings with local political leaders ensure that teams are held to account for their actions.
- 4.61. A weekly meeting with the Neighbourhoods Inspector to feedback on key issues and identify areas requiring partnership working.

⁶ <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/baroness-casey-review/update-march-2023/baroness-casey-review-march-2023.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/turnaround-plan.pdf>

- 4.62. A weekly **Violence Communication Strategy Meeting** chaired by the Police and attended by Safer Merton and the Youth Offending Team. This discusses violent crimes of note on borough and how partnership working can put in place plans to mitigate and safeguard individuals involved.
- 4.63. Partnership working between Police and the ASB Team to **utilise ASB tools and powers**. This includes closing premises that are causing ASB and disturbance to local residents. Examples include:
- *Unlicensed premises in Mitcham*
 - *Closure for Anti-social behaviour*
- 4.64. Joint working on the **Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Panel** which coordinates a multi-agency response to the most prolific offenders on borough to prevent reoffending threats to the community.
- 4.65. **Merton's Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB)** brings together local Police and the community to ensure residents hold Police to account on their priorities and are involved in community safety decisions. It also oversees the work of Merton's Stop & Search Community Monitoring Group.

- 4.66. The SNB provides funding via MOPAC for grass root community engagement projects to reduce crime and increase confidence in the Police. Projects funded in 2022-23 included a football project for young women and girls in Pollards Hill ward and support for a youth club targeting vulnerable young people on the Phipps Bridge Estate.



- 4.67. Safer Merton also coordinates **Merton's Neighbourhood Watch⁸ scheme** which works in partnership with Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams to share crime prevention advice, encourage the reporting of crime and build safer and stronger communities.

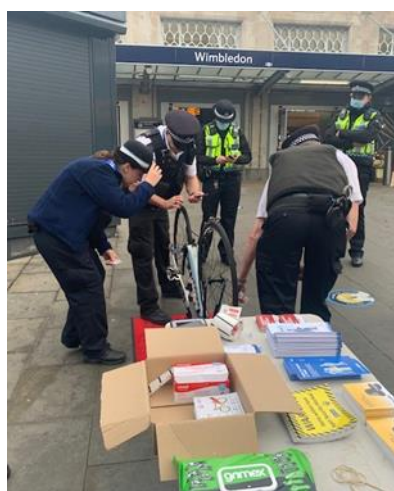
- 4.68. Merton Neighbourhood Watch lead on local crime prevention projects, in 2022-23 successfully obtaining MOPAC funding to coordinate bike security marking and catalytic convertor marking events across the borough. Shed alarms were also distributed to



⁸ <https://www.mertonnhw.co.uk/>

roads in the borough most affected by burglary.

- 4.69. The scheme continues to target areas of the borough with high crime levels or where residents feel less safe, with a scheme currently being set up in the Galpins Road area.
- 4.70. **BCU and Borough level Confidence Boards** have been established to focus on how Police can engage with our community to increase confidence and trust. Safer Merton input on how this work can be supported from a Local Authority perspective, for instance via partnership working to support the Neighbourhood Watch scheme, by joint communications utilising the Council's media channels, and by sharing our community contacts to ensure Police are linked in with our communities to make reach and representation as diverse as possible.



5 PRACTICAL SUPPORT TO OUR COMMUNITIES AND RESIDENTS WHO ARE MOST IN NEED

- 5.1. **Supporting People in need through the Council's Civic Pride programme.**
- 5.2. The Council have allocated 23 new Civic Pride Grant projects totalling £4,937,941.50 in grants to the voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations who applied to the Merton Civic Pride Fund: Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector 2023/26. This has seen a positive and significant increase of 35% more funding than the equivalent parts of previous Strategic Partner Programme 2019-22. This preventative grants programme is specifically designed to support residents who are in most need to prevent, reduce, and delay the need for health and social care. In addition, the services promote the safety, independence, and wellbeing of more marginalised and potentially vulnerable communities.
- 5.3. With Nurturing Civic Pride, one of the new administration's key priorities for Merton, the funding programme has involved extensive engagement and collaborative working alongside the voluntary and community sector,

including benchmarking and researching into the national and local context. This programme has used the 'Working Better with Communities' Framework to reflect the Council's commitment to building a better Merton together. Key headlines include:

- At almost £5 million, this combined grant programme is the largest contribution to support the voluntary and community sector for many years.
- Out of the 18 organisations, 3 organisations haven't received this funding previously. This provides both stability within the sector, and opportunities to explore new projects.
- 28% of the total funding available is going to smaller groups/organisations.
- Over £1 million to organisations that support older people.
- Over £500,000 to organisations that support people with disabilities and impairments.
- £203,962.00 to BAME Voice, a significant increase on the previous round of grant funding.

5.4. **Cost of Living Support**

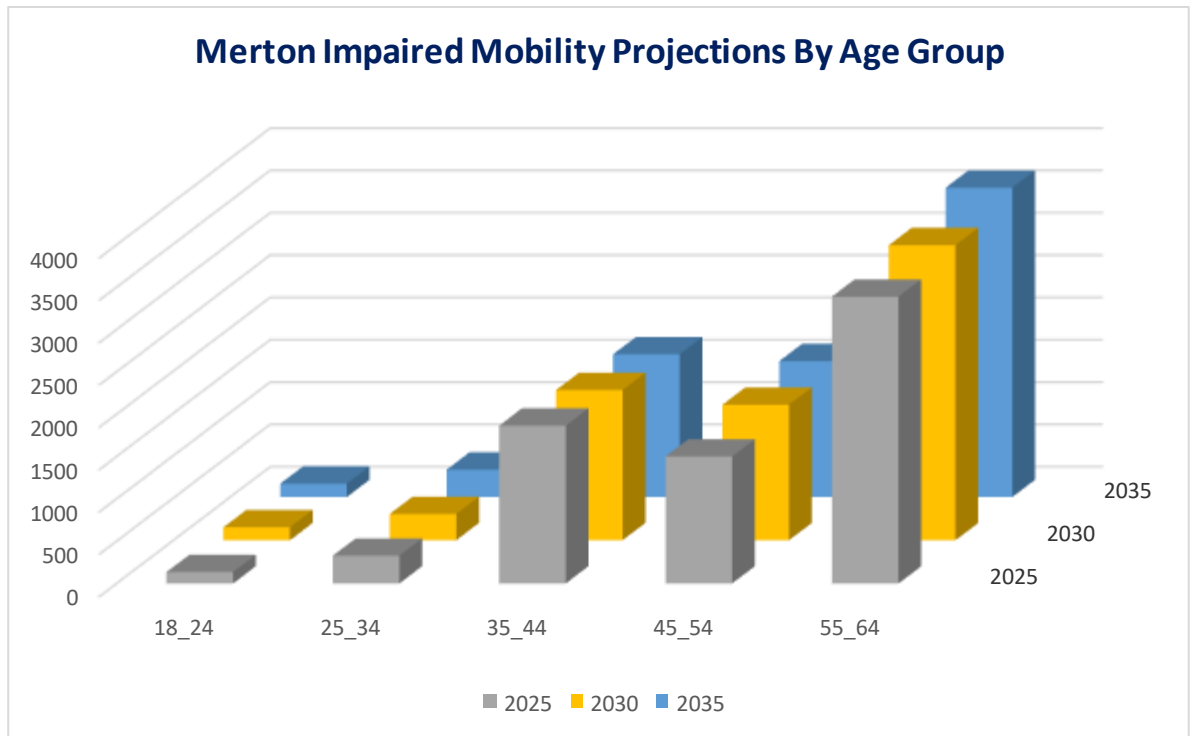
5.5. Since the council declared a costofliving emergency in July 2022, it is continuing to work with its partners to identify and support people in need. A CostofLiving Emergency Support Fund of £2 million was agreed by Cabinet in September 2022. Cabinet agreed allocations for the first £1 million, focusing on crisis support and addressing immediate challenges for residents most in need and an action plan to implement the second £1 million was approved by Cabinet on 20 March. Included in the two year action plan includes supporting residents with immediate need when in crisis, and more longer term sustainable support to promote the longer term wellbeing and financial stability of residents who are most in need.

5.6. As part of tranche one Cost of Living Fund allocations, £200,000 was apportioned to the £60 Post Office voucher scheme in 2022-23. Based on the number of post office vouchers redeemed to date, spending up to when the vouchers expire in March 2023 is estimated at £70,000. This leaves an estimated £130,000 underspend from the first tranche. Proposals for allocations of this underspend are: £68,000 for £160 payments to care leavers, special guardians, and in-house foster carers; topping up Thinking Works fuel vouchers by £18,429; £40,000 towards the Discretionary Housing Payments fund.

5.7. Ongoing mechanisms are in place for engaging with voluntary sector and other key partners, including the Community Response Steering Group made up of the Council and partners, sharing ideas and best practice, determining volunteering and neighbourhood support and oversight of local demand and emerging themes and its Fuel Poverty Subgroup, plus the Food Response Network.

- 5.8. A cross-council Cost of Living Working Group was also established in November 2022 which draws together and builds on the various strands of work being undertaken to address the costofliving crisis by sharing knowledge on the changing scale and nature of residents' cost of living needs, both short and long term.
- 5.9. **Disabled Facilities Grant**
- 5.10. Borough and District Councils have a statutory responsibility, under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act (HGCR) 1996 to award Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs. These means tested grants enable people with disabilities to have adaptations installed in their homes to improve access into and around their homes. The maximum grant is set at £30,000 by legislation.
- 5.11. The Council receives an annual grant from government to fund DFG services. The DFG allocation is ring-fenced within the Better Care Fund (BCF) which was established to join up NHS, social care, and housing services to enable older people, and those with complex needs, to manage their own health and wellbeing and live safely and independently in their communities. In 2022/23 the DFG income available within the BCF is £1,452,224.
- 5.12. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO 2002) introduced powers for local housing authorities to provide discretionary financial assistance for vulnerable and elderly residents to carry out essential repairs and home improvements, to keep their home environment safe and to provide advice about other support services. The assistance may take the form of a grant, loan, equity release or practical method of assistance, but only in accordance with an adopted Housing Assistance Policy which has also been published.
- 5.13. The Council has recently drafted a new Housing Assistance Policy (HAP) which is currently progressing though approval stages. The overall aim of the policy is to address the needs of elderly, disabled and vulnerable residents living in inappropriate or inaccessible housing, where adaptations can improve accessibility of the accommodation, and improve health and wellbeing.
- 5.14. A key focus of the discretionary policy provisions will be to support the BCF Plan objectives, in relation to the priorities aimed at reduction in delayed discharges from hospital and avoidance of admission to hospital or residential care. Service areas that would assist in addressing those priorities include:
- Hoarding support to enable discharge from hospital
 - Dementia support (have use of the handyman service)
 - Deep clean services to enable safe return to property
 - Relocation Assistance
 - Energy efficiency and warmth services to enable discharge from hospital

5.15. The discretionary provisions in the policy enable the Council to provide assistance to applicants that are unable to meet their contribution requirements where a mandatory DFG may be awarded but be insufficient to meet the needs of the applicant. Other groups that would benefit include those that do not qualify for DFGs and those on low incomes that are unable to meet means test requirements and have insufficient resources to enable their properties to be adapted to meet their needs. As the population ages, projections for mobility impairment in the borough also show an increase.



5.16. The Council currently contracts out the provision of its DFG works to two organisations, Sutton Staying Put, the improvement agency of Sutton Council, and CBS Adaptation Design, a private company. These two organisations in effect operate as Merton’s Home Improvement Agency (HIA). The annual number of DFG applications processed in the previous two years is shown below .

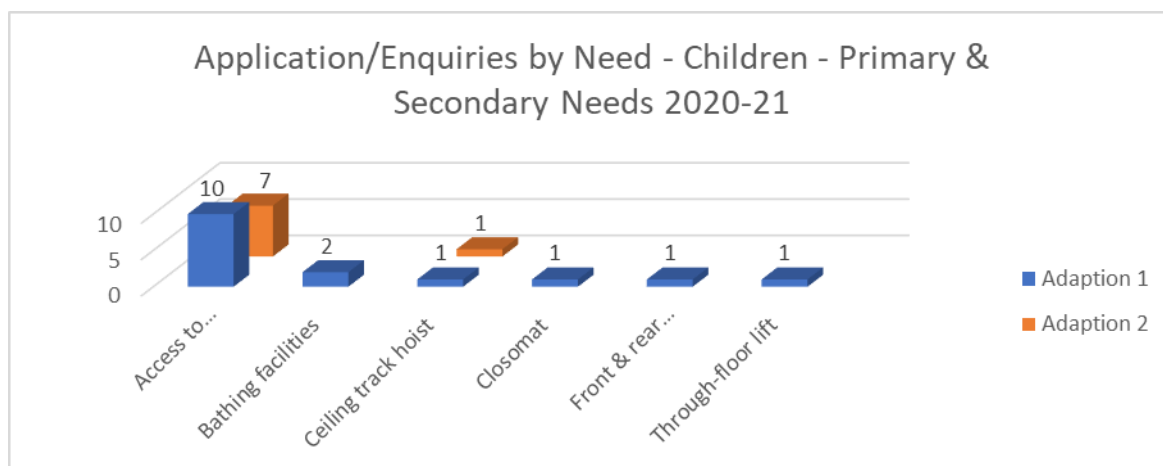
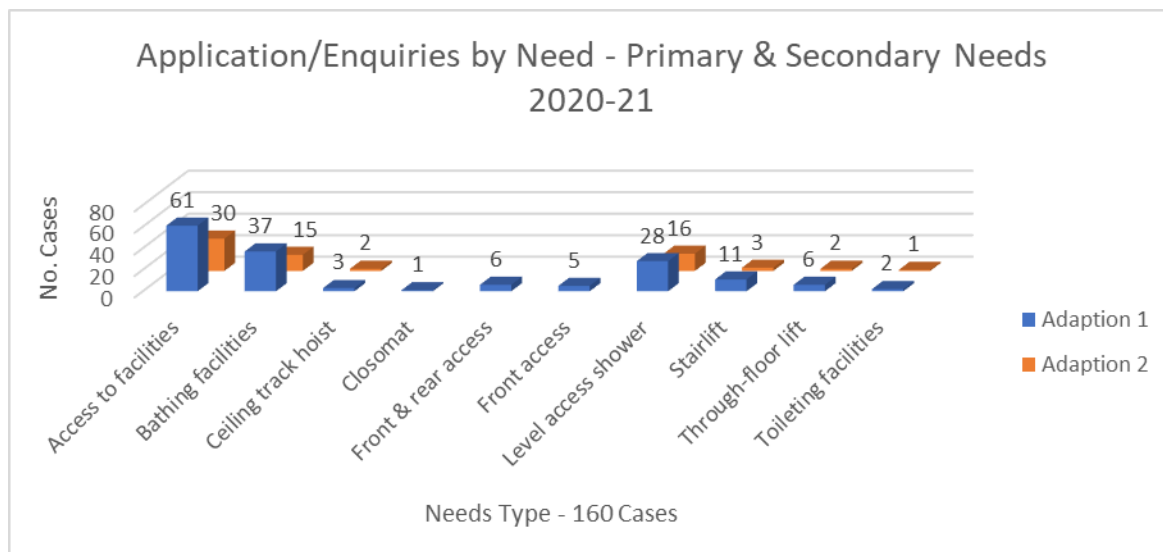
Year	DFG Enquiries	DFG Applications	Approved *
2022-23	172	50	60
2021-22	147	75	73

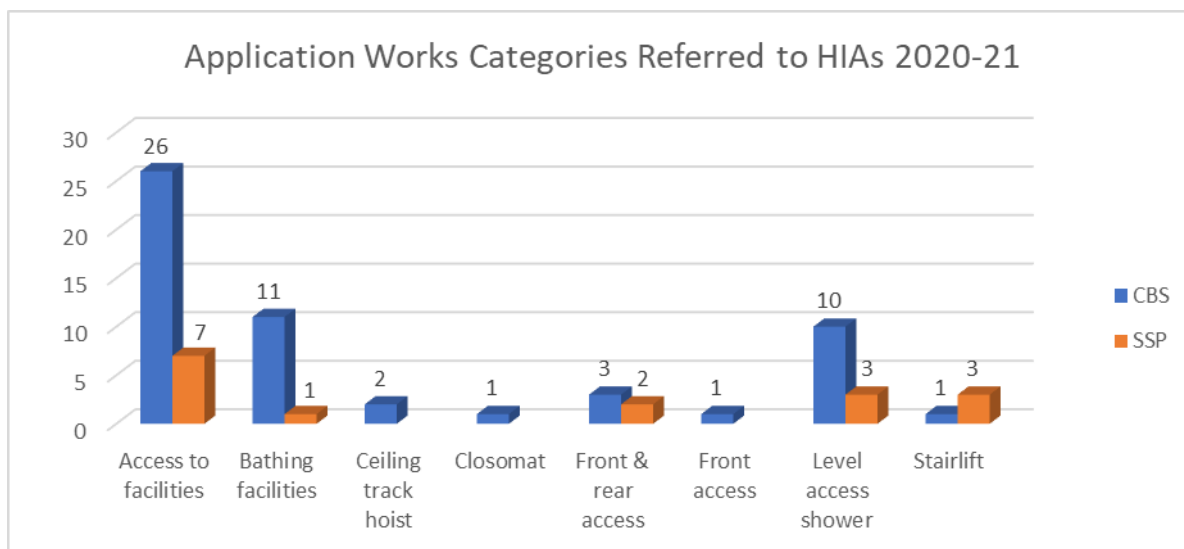
* *Approved cases include some cases from the previous year*

5.17. A strategic review of the DFG service was carried out in 2021 and in line with the recommendations the service contract was retendered at the end of

2022. The contract award report is being progressed. The review provided a detailed view of the needs of applicants in Merton and the DFG service delivered. Sample data is provided below.

Year	DFG Enquiries	Applied	Approved
2018-19	155	61	67
2019-20	181	65	60
2020-21	166	70	67





5.18. In addition to DFG the Council provides a range of services in partnership with Adult Social Care (ASC) and Health, and these include minor technical repairs and handyman services via the MASCOT service, and minor adaptations and equipment provided by Occupational Therapist Services.

5.19. The ASC OT service is normally the first point of contact for enquiries relating to disabled related assistance or equipment and handles over 4000 enquiries annually. Around 60 minor adaptations jobs are commissioned annually by the Service. DFG enquiries are referred to the Housing DFG service. Works to enable access to bathing and toilet facilities were the most common works categories.

5.20. **Support for people with Dementia**

5.21. Highlighted as a model of best practice, Merton’s community-based approach to providing support to people with Dementia and their carers throughout their Dementia Journey has been underpinned by previous benchmarking and research into the national, regional, and local context. Understanding how and where our residents with Dementia and their families need support to promote their safety and wellbeing reflects our commitment to restoring Civic Pride in our borough.

5.22. Cabinet approved the extension of Community Dementia Services in March 2023 with the Alzheimer’s Society so all partners including health and social care can further embed and develop the community focus of the model. This will enable commissioners across the health and care place partnership to undertake a joint review and remodelling of dementia services in Merton. The overall aim being that future services are integrated and accessible to support residents who are in the most need, providing a high quality service to promote the safety and wellbeing of people with dementia and their families across the borough.

5.23. **Home Care support in Merton**

- 5.24. In February this year, Cabinet approved a report setting out the planned approach to securing provision of Home Care Services to people within Merton who are assessed as requiring such care and support. To meet the Council's statutory duties under the Care Act 2014 the services will be designed to enable customers to live as independently as possible, for as long as possible, as engaged and active citizens while living in their own homes. The report set out the intention to recommission homecare service for a period of five years from 1st October 2023 to 30th September 2028 without the option to extend.
- 5.25. This report reflects the Council's commitment to ensuring that wider ASC reforms provide for improvements in homecare provision across Merton. The number of hours of care being delivered has been increasing, reflecting both increasing need and complexity for existing service users and increasing numbers of individuals coming into the social care system. Approximately 8,400 hours of care are delivered each week, which comprises of 7,556 hours per week for contracted providers and 844 hours per week that are spot purchased. This demonstrates that home care remains one of the most important services to support people to continue to live independently and safely in their own communities.
- 5.26. The report included a recommendation, following the Council's decision to become London Living Wage accredited, that the tender for Home Care services is advertised with a requirement that the successful bidders pay all employees wholly or substantively engaged in the delivery of services under the contract London Living Wage as a minimum.
- 5.27. **Supporting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness**
- 5.28. Homeless legislation has existed in varying forms since 1977, with a significant update occurring with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Where a resident makes a homeless application to the Council the law says that we must look into their circumstances to find out what type of help we can provide.
- 5.29. If we are satisfied that a resident is eligible and homeless (or threatened with homelessness), we have a duty to work with them to draw up a 'Personal Housing Plan', listing the steps both the Council and the resident can take to solve their identified needs. However, we will have further duties to priority need homeless applicants. Priority need is a legal term set out in the Act. To establish a "priority need" we will look at the following:
- Do they have dependent children, or are (or a house-hold member) pregnant? and/ or
 - Are they vulnerable, for example because of age, mental health or disability? and/ or
 - Are they 16 or 17 years old or a care leaver under the age of 20 and / or
 - Have they lost your home because of an emergency such as a fire or flood?

- 5.30. If a resident is in a 'priority need' group, have lost their home and they need temporary accommodation, we will provide this for them, while we work together on a solution. Regardless of whether an applicant is in priority need, we will try and prevent homelessness for 56 days. This is called the prevention duty. If we fail to resolve their homelessness during this time and/or they become actually homeless, then we have a further 56 days to relieve their homelessness. This is called the relief duty.
- 5.31. If the relief duty is owed, we will also look at whether they have local connection with Merton Council, and this is defined in the law and is based either on residence, employment, or close family members living locally. We may refer a resident to another council for more help, if it is safe to do so and there is insufficient local connection with Merton.
- 5.32. If a resident does have a local connection with Merton, are in priority need, and our work with them has failed to relieve their homelessness after 56 days, we will consider whether they have lost their home because of something they have deliberately done (or because of something they have failed to do). This relates to whether or not an applicant is regarded as being intentionally homeless. This is a very complex area of law, and every case will be considered on its individual merits. This will affect whether the Council owes a resident a long-term duty to make a final offer of accommodation.
- 5.33. **Prevention and Relief of Homelessness**
- 5.34. Under the Homelessness Reduction Act there are a number of specified circumstances where the prevention and relief duties come to an end. The Council records the reasons that the prevention and relief duties end against each separate homeless case.
- 5.35. If the duty ends due to the applicant being able to stay in their current home for 6 months, or because they have found alternative accommodation that is available for at least 6 months, this is recorded as either a positive prevention or relief outcome. It is the case that prevention and relief activities mean the individual's housing crises are resolved far quicker than those cases who go beyond the 56-day duty. Prevention and relief activities have a cost benefit for the Council in that where this is achieved the Council does not have a long-term duty to provide temporary accommodation with the associated general fund costs.
- 5.36. When the Council devises a personalised housing plan it will set out what options and action will be taken to prevent and relieve homelessness. These are called **reasonable steps**.
- 5.37. The Council can prevent and relieve homelessness in a variety of ways such as-
- Advice on security of tenure.
 - Advice on Protection from Eviction.
 - Legal Advocacy on tenant's behalf with private landlords.
 - Negotiating with hosts to allow clients to continue to stay with them.

- Offering incentives to Landlords to renew tenancies
- Increasing the security of the homes of the victims of domestic violence via the sanctuary scheme to allow them to stay.
- Home visits to confirm the circumstances of the client.
- Rent and mortgage rescue scheme to pay arrears where clients meet the criteria
- Increased priority on the Council's waiting list where the requirements of the Council's Housing Allocations and Nominations Policy are met.
- Offers of accommodation from the Council's Rent Deposit Scheme.
- Arranging local supported housing / hostel places for single people.

5.38. Performance in relation to the number of positive outcomes is recorded below. As the table below sets out, the number of homelessness preventions have remained fairly consistent over the previous years. Merton has historically had the lowest number of cases in temporary accommodation in London and these activities contribute directly to this achievement.

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	21/22	22/23 to Dec '22
Preventions	465	504	480	455	452	317

5.39. **Rough Sleeping Outreach Services**

5.40. Over the last five years, the Council has secured just over £2 million of grant funding to develop a range of services specifically for rough sleepers. This group has specific needs above and beyond the provision of accommodation alone. The services include: day-time outreach provided by a team of in-house staff with night-time outreach covered by Thamesreach; emergency accommodation; and day-to-day support and tenancy sustainment for clients. The service has established an accommodation pathway for clients to enable them to move on to more sustainable housing depending on their needs, including shared housing with support in the private rented sector, supported housing, or tenancies of self-contained accommodation in the private rented sector.

5.41. As of November, there were 56 rough sleeper referrals during the month concerning 33 known individuals. Some of these referrals concern rough sleepers already accommodated by the council, or who have refused multiple offers of accommodation. The council continues to try and work with entrenched rough sleepers who have not accepted accommodation alongside other agencies that support them with a view to finding accommodation that meets their needs.

5.42. Below is a summary of the rough sleeper cases currently accommodated by the Council as of November 22.

In Accommodation	No of Clients	Of which No recourse to public fund
Nightly Paid Temporary Accommodation	19	6
PRS Shared Housing	26	7
Supported Housing	35	0
Total	80	13

5.43. **Provision of Temporary Accommodation**

5.44. As noted above when residents make homeless applications, in some circumstances the Council has a legal duty to provide temporary accommodation, typically during the relief period if someone is actually homeless. Not all individuals are entitled to temporary accommodation.

5.45. As noted above where people appear to be (a) eligible for assistance; (b) homeless; and (c) in priority need of accommodation, they are owed what is known as the 'interim' duty. This duty provides them with temporary accommodation pending more detailed enquiries into their application and actions taken by the authority to relieve their homelessness.

5.46. Where on conclusion of those enquiries, (and assuming it is not possible to prevent or relieve homelessness) if officers within the Housing Department are satisfied that the homeless person is eligible; homeless; is in priority need and did not become intentionally homeless; and has a local connection, then they are owed what is known as the 'full' or the 'main' duty.

5.47. This is a duty to continue to provide them with suitable temporary accommodation, without limit of time, until the duty is brought to an end in a limited number of prescribed circumstances, most commonly via a reasonable offer of accommodation. This offer is from a registered social landlord or via a private sector landlord.

5.48. Accommodation offered under the Act is required to be suitable for homeless households and this is set out in the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012. When securing accommodation in relation to either the "interim" or "main" homeless duty, s208(1) of the Housing Act states, so far as reasonably practical, the authority must secure this accommodation in its own area. This was reinforced in the Supreme Court judgement handed down in the case of *Nzolameso v Westminster 2015*.

5.49. Central government policy has restricted the types of temporary accommodation that can be seen as suitable in the discharge of these duties. With effect from 1st April 2004, the use of bed and breakfast for families with children was made unlawful over a 6-week period and the use

of this accommodation for persons aged 16 or 17 years old is likewise discouraged.

- 5.50. Merton Council has the lowest number of households in temporary accommodation of a London Borough. However there has been a significant increase in numbers going into temporary accommodation across 2022/23. This is due to a number of factors. From July to September 2022 the number of landlord possession orders through the courts increased from 5,601 to 15,353 (174%) and bailiff's warrants from £4,552 to £8,505 (87%) across England. This is likely due to the back log of cases from the moratorium on evictions coming to an end following the Covid-19 restrictions being lifted.
- 5.51. The Council has submitted data to London Councils who have collated an overall position for the capital. This shows a worsening situation compared to the previous years with recent increases of homeless applications in November and December 2022 of 16.9% and 19.7% respectively.
- 5.52. The Council has also taken a number of applications from people from Ukraine whose host or family arrangement has or is about to break down. The Council always takes steps to prevent homelessness and current there are only four cases in temporary accommodation from Ukraine. The Council had also accommodated one case from Afghanistan. However, this case was rehoused this month and has left temporary accommodation.
- 5.53. Numbers in Temporary accommodation snapshot at year end

2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23 (to date)
174	199	197	230	333 (December)

6 MERTON CCTV

- 6.1. Merton CCTV is part of Safer Merton and is a 24/7 service operated from the Civic Centre. Merton operators proactively watch more than 200 cameras across the borough with the biggest concentration of cameras within the town centres, and the housing estates. Merton CCTV works closely with partners, such as the Police, Community Safety, Clarion Hosing and Love Wimbledon to make sure Merton residents feel safe.
- 6.2. There are two types of cameras that are used by Merton CCTV; permanent cameras which are located in the busiest parts of the borough, and temporary deployable cameras which can be deployed at short notice in hot spots that require special attention, i.e. a new fly tipping location. Merton operators have a direct link to the police via the police radio enabling them to communicate without unnecessary delay, which makes a huge difference whenever there is an incident that requires attention. In the past year Merton CCTV has assisted in several high-profile incidents including sexual offences, firearm offences, and knife crime robberies and Merton operators and Council are very proud of their achievements whenever their assistance

results in preventing harm, and violence. It must be noted, however, that CCTV on its own does not solve the problems. The fact something can be seen on camera does not on its own prevent it from happening. It requires an effective multi-agency communication and response to work well, and even then, sometimes it is not enough to stop incidents from occurring.

6.3. **CCTV in numbers**

Merton Council currently has

- 216 permanent cameras
- 21 deployable cameras
- 7 CCTV operators observing cameras 24/7
- 4174 incidents logged since 1st April 2022
- 520 serious incidents recorded since 1st of April 2022
- 621 fly tipping incidents recorded since 1st April 2022

6.4. The Council recognise the importance and value of an effective CCTV and investing significantly in an upgrade of the cameras from April 2023. The Council have approved £1,200,000 towards the upgrade and plan to upgrade all CCTV cameras to High-Definition quality by the end of March 2024.



6.5. **CCTV success stories**

6.6. 2022/23 was a busy year for Merton CCTV, with multiple serious offences that were prevented thanks to the professional work of the CCTV operators. Below is the list of some of the most serious incidents where CCTV operators prevented the incident from happening or turning into something far more serious.

- 17/02/23 two burglars captured on CCTV in Wimbledon town centre. The CCTV operator notified the police who stopped the males and recovered the stolen goods.
- 02/01/23 suspects of an attempted robbery filmed on camera leaving the location.
- 23/12/23 suicidal male found on camera and saved by the CCTV operator notifying the police.

- 19/12/23 female filmed in Mitcham Town Centre in charge of a small child while being very drunk. CCTV operator informed the police who took the baby to safety.
- 01/11/22 sexual assault in The Broadway, Wimbledon. Due to the swift action of the CCTV Operator the police attended swiftly, detained the suspect and supported the victim. Our CCTV Operator has been nominated for a commendation for their work.

The March 2023 edition of 'My Merton' magazine has got a full page dedicated to CCTV and the success stories.

7 PARTNERSHIP WORK

7.1. Merton CCTV works with a whole range of partners both internal and external promoting the multi-agency approach to ensure the safety of the public. There are monthly tasking meetings led by Safer Merton that work in partnership to identify issues that require multi-agency response. Merton CCTV is crucial for the multi-agency work in within public safety, and the decision about deployment of the temporary wireless cameras is made during these meetings. Merton is also investing in upgrading the whole CCTV network (see section 8).

7.2. The Police

Merton CCTV operators have access to the Police radio, which is used to co-ordinate with the Police whenever there is an ongoing incident. Recently, the information sharing agreement between the Police and Merton CCTV has been vital for joint operations against gang violence, and street drinking.

7.3. In 2022 the police introduced Operation Nightingale focusing on serious violence, and in particular violence against women and girls. In March 2023, as part of this Operation the police decided to invest £48,000 in Wimbledon town centre CCTV, recognising the importance of CCTV in the area with vibrant night-time economy. This funding has been allocated to the upgrade of CCTV along Wimbledon Broadway, with works due to commence at the beginning of April. The target day for completion is end of May 2023.

7.4. Love Wimbledon and the TownLink Radio

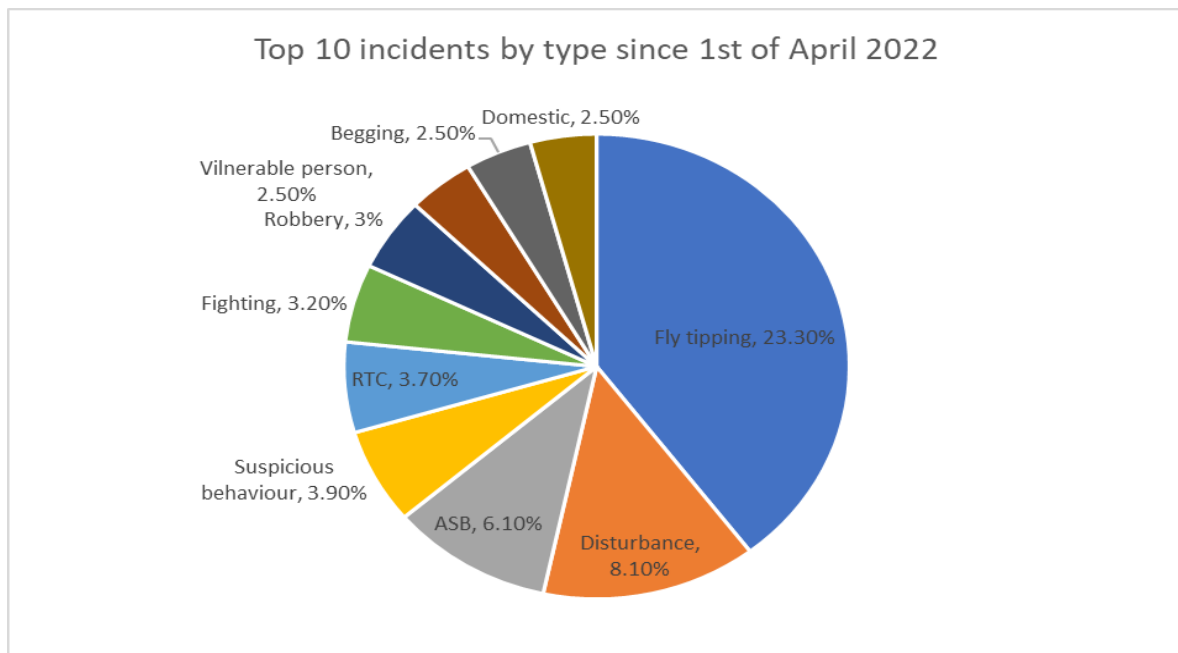
7.5. Merton CCTV have got direct connection to partners in Wimbledon Town centre via the TownLink radio. It was introduced by Love Wimbledon, and it connects the shops, pubs and clubs in Wimbledon with Merton CCTV and the police to ensure the quick flow of information and better reaction to the incidents. When it works, it is a great tool for catching shoplifters, and people causing problems in pubs and clubs. The problem is that not everyone who is connected to TownLink radio is actively using it, which sometimes causes a breakdown in communication, and diminished response to the problem. Those and other issues are resolved during the monthly Pubwatch Meetings, which are vital for these schemes to work, as well as the information sharing. There is a plan to extend the TownLink radio to Morden town centre in the future.

7.6. Tackling Street drinking and rough sleeping

7.7. As outlined in section 4.5, street drinking and rough sleeping are a focus for the council and external partners such as the police, public health, housing, and Love Wimbledon. Merton CCTV is part of the multi-agency response providing vital evidence, and intelligence that helps to understand the problem and find the best solution. This work links into the PSPO and ensuring that those that are causing alcohol related ASB is reported and shared with the ASB team.

7.8. **Fly tipping**

7.9. Fly tipping has become, by far, the most common incident type filmed on Merton CCTV cameras. Merton CCTV is working closely with environmental enforcement to tackle this problem. 13 deployable cameras have been dedicated to monitor fly tipping, and they are very successful capturing the footage of the offenders. Merton CCTV supplies the videos for Merton Wall of Shame, which was created to share the faces of offender who couldn't be identified and fined by the council.



7.10. **Partnership Agreements.**

7.11. Providing a 24/7 CCTV service can be quite expensive, which is why Merton CCTV is working with external partners to provide them with our services, which increases our CCTV coverage and enhances safety across the borough. The CCTV upgrade will enable Merton CCTV to reach more partners and become less reliant on Council funding. It will also enable CCTV to cover bigger area and reach communities within Merton which never had CCTV coverage. The partnership work is important to ensure a comprehensive and multi-agency approach to any problems that need resolving.

7.12. **Clarion Housing Group**

7.13. Merton Council and Clarion have been working together since the 1990s. A new partnership agreement has been established which will see CCTV within Clarion Housing stock beamed into our 24/7 control room. As part of this partnership, the housing cameras will be upgraded by end of March 2024, ensuring much better quality of evidence, and much better coverage of the CCTV. There is an agreement to use council's deployable cameras in the hot spots identified by Clarion, where there is no permanent camera present.

7.14. **South Wimbledon Business Partnership**

7.15. South Wimbledon Business Partnership recently upgraded their 6 cameras and approached Merton CCTV to form a partnership. The Service Level Agreement that would generate £12,000/ year revenue income for the council has been issued to SWBP. As part of the SLA, Merton CCTV will monitor the cameras in South Wimbledon Business Park, share intelligence with SWBP, and liaise with the police to respond to any incidents.

7.16. **Morden Hall Park**

7.17. The National Trust in Morden Hall Park has recently approached Merton CCTV to form a partnership. The details are yet to be agreed, but there is good understanding and strong will from both sides to proceed. This will be a vital agreement for Merton, as Morden Hall Park recently has been a hot spot for anti-social behaviour, and robberies. Extension of the CCTV coverage to the park would help to decrease the number of incidents and protect the park from vandals. The CCTV upgrade will be vital for this partnership to work.

7.18. **Canons Leisure Centre**

7.19. Canons Leisure Centre has got newly installed CCTV cameras, which currently are not connected to Merton CCTV. There are two solutions, currently being reviewed, and the hope is that by May this connection will be active. There have been several serious incidents around Canons recently, which puts even greater urgency on creating that connection.

8 CCTV UPGRADE

8.1. Currently, nearly all cameras owned by Merton CCTV are analogue. The analogue system is very inflexible, and notoriously difficult to expand and maintain. This is the main reason why the locations for Merton's permanent cameras have changed very little in the last 25 years. The CCTV upgrade project will change that. Having a boroughwide, fibre-wireless hybrid solution will make adding new cameras much easier, and consequently Merton CCTV will be able to offer its services to new partners both within the council, and external. The ultimate goal is to make CCTV self-funding through various partnerships. Other London boroughs are also exploring that possibility, and by working together, and learning from their experiences, there is potential to make it happen.

8.2. 2023-24 will be a crucial year for Merton CCTV. There is a planned upgrade of all the public space cameras that is due to finish by the end of March 2024. It is a considerable project that includes upgrading Merton’s fibre network and installing new high-definition cameras in place of the current analogue devices, which are on average at least 10-15 years old. The upgrade will allow Merton CCTV to produce much better quality of evidence for partner enforcement agencies. The upgrade will cost £1.3 million, but it will generate savings on fibre rental for years to come, and more importantly Merton will have one of the best and most effective CCTV systems in the country. The upgrade will also allow Merton to extend the CCTV coverage and offer the CCTV services to new partners across the borough.

8.3. **Timeline**

The timeline for the upgrade depends on many factors, such as previously mentioned dark fibre project, availability of parts, etc. The main milestones are listed in the table below. The start of phase 2 and phase 3 is highly dependant on the fibre installation progress, and they may change.

March 2023	Procurement of CCTV consultant
March 2023	First project board meeting
March 2023	Approval of the dark fibre project.
Spring 2023	Beginning of the upgrade of cameras in Merton Civic Centre. These cameras do not rely on fibre and can be upgraded first
Spring/Summer 2023	Phase 1 of the on-street camera upgrade
Summer/Autumn 2023	Phase 2 of the on-street camera upgrade
Winter 2023-24	Phase 2 of the on-street camera upgrade

8.4. **How can CCTV upgrade benefit the council?**

8.5. The CCTV upgrade will provide benefits for other council departments. If the fibre project is agreed, the fibre may be used to connect devices such as noise and pollution sensors. It can be used for a variety of smart city projects.

8.6. The high-definition cameras will provide much better evidence that can be used for multi-agency taskings including Safer Merton, regulatory services, housing, highways, parking, and other partners.

8.7. The upgrade will also make it much easier to expand the CCTV network in the future. There are multiple areas in the borough that are considered blind spots due to lack of infrastructure to connect the cameras. With the Protect Duty in place it will be necessary for the council to introduce measures such as CCTV cameras in some of the blind spot areas. The upgrade should make it a much easier task.

9 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None for the purposes of this report

10 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. Any legal or statutory implications are addressed in the report and for the purposes of this report there are no further comment.

11 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

11.1. Health equity is a key focus of Merton Health and Wellbeing Strategy and is integral to the work set out in this report. Significant amounts of the report reflect work ongoing to ensure community cohesion and uphold resident's human rights.

12 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

12.1. None for the purposes of this report.

13 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1. None for the purposes of this report.

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

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15 BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1. n/a