

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 18 March 2024

Wards: All

Subject: Borough of Sport

Lead Director: Dan Jones, Executive Director Environment, Civic Pride & Climate

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

Contact Officer: David Gentles, Head of Sport and Leisure

Part 4b Section 10 of the constitution applies in respect of information within appendix 3 and it is therefore exempt from publication:

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information).

Members and officers are advised not to disclose the contents of the Exempt appendix.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet:

- A. Note the good progress in implementing the plans for Merton to become London's Borough of Sport and the actions across 2024.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Becoming London's Borough of Sport is one of the administrations' three strategic objectives, alongside civic pride and sustainable futures. The plans were publicly launched at the highly successful Merton's Big Sports day in September 2023 and are now in full delivery mode. This report provides an update on progress across 2023 and looks ahead to new action in 2024.
- 1.2. Borough of Sport is about: getting more residents, in particular, but not only, 4 to 16-year-olds, the over 65s and the less affluent, physically active; putting Merton on the map for Sport; and celebrating the borough's sporting heritage. It's about sport in its widest sense so includes walking, cycling, dance – anything that gets residents moving. The call to action is to do one, or one more, physical activity session each week, to unlock the health social and economic benefits for individuals and the borough.
- 1.3. The key deliverables in 2023 included:
 - the establishment of an advisory group, public forum and internal council operational group;
 - the creation of a Borough of Sport brand;
 - almost £700,000 of Civic Pride grants shared across eight projects, inward investment of £300,000 from the Department of Education and London Sport for 21 Merton Schools (each school has been offered and additional £2K in 2023-24 and four special schools are able to

apply for additional funding) and there were also 14 Actively Merton Small Grants (funded by Public Health) totalling almost £15,000;

- refurbishment, by Merton Council and the LTA, of 47 tennis courts plus the Council refurbished the beach volleyball court at Wimbledon Park;
- recruitment of a Head of Sport and Leisure (September 2023);
- the public launch of Borough of Sport via Merton's Big Sport Day (September 2023) linked to the extension of the free swimming offer for children and older people, plus 60 minutes free use of Forest e-bikes for all residents aged 18 and over;
- the launch of the Borough of Sport Activity Finder web platform (November 2023); and
- exemplar projects - Beat the Streets, walking netball at Morden Rec and Our Parks exercise sessions at Mitcham Fair Green to catch attention;
- enhanced investment and participation in the London Youth Games leading to Merton winning the most improved borough cup which was celebrated at a community event in December 2023.

1.4. Activity will continue to ramp up during 2024 and includes:

- the 'Find your #Borough of Sport' campaign starting in January 2024;
- launch of Borough of Sport grants fund;
- partnership with London Broncos;
- Safe Spaces investment of £20k from GLA;
- women's running clubs;
- further exemplar projects (Our Parks, ParkPlay, ParkRun); and
- the advisory group, forum and internal council operational group will continue to meet and guide development.

1.5. We are also considering how best to build on Merton's Big Sports Day in 2024.

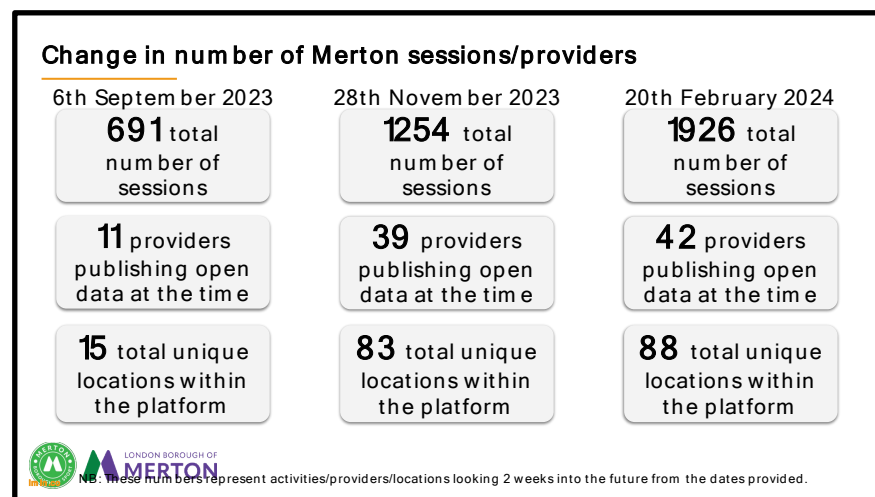
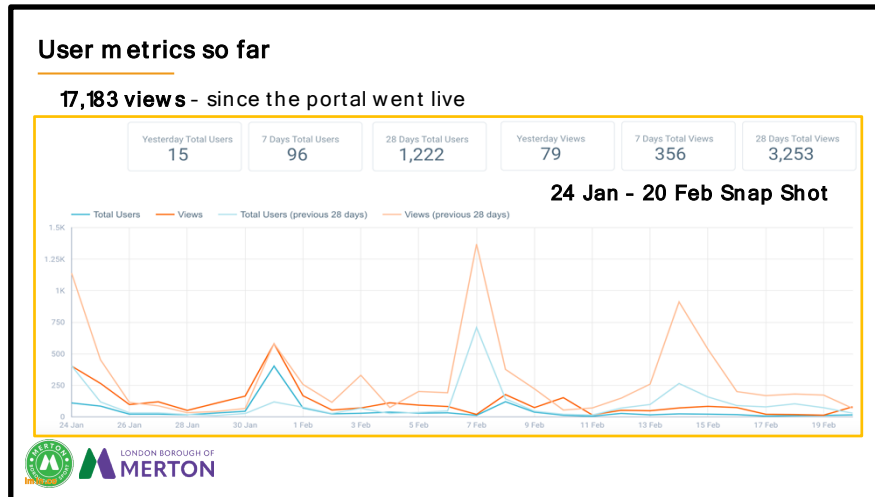
2 DETAILS

2.1. Borough of Sport is a three-year action plan. The diagram at **appendix 1** sets out the headlines of the plan.

PROGRESS IN 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

2.2. **Merton's Big Sports Day** - Borough of Sport was launched publicly on Sunday 24 September 2023. Over 5000 residents attended, almost 60 local groups and clubs run activities across the day and the event was showcased by ITV London News. Engagement via the Council's social channels was also very high. The post event survey found that almost 74% of respondents said they or another family member were very likely or somewhat likely to take up a new sport or activity as a result of Merton's Big Sports Day.

2.3. **Activity Finder** - The bespoke [Borough of Sport Activity Finder](#) went live for at the start of November 2023 and brings together in one place as many as possible of the sport and physical activity opportunities in Merton. It helps providers promote their activities and residents find what they could do. Local groups/clubs continue to be encouraged and supported to use the platform. User data is encouraging. The tables below provide a snap shot. Since it launched and up until 20 February 2024 there have been 17,183 individual views. Providers say the number of people coming to their sessions is increasing and the platform is relatively easy to use.



- ### Provider metrics so far
- **113** - number of activity providers reached out to
 - **56** - number of unique providers who have published open data across the different snapshots.
 - **44** - number of providers we've supported in conversation over phone/em ail.
 - **9** one-to-one Teams meetings conducted with providers.
 - **2** group sessions conducted
- LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON**

- 2.4. **Forum** - The open membership forum, designed to garner support, gather concerns and combine effort, met for the first time via Teams on Tuesday 14 November 2023. Across session 71 people attended from residents to partner organisations. The forum publicly launched the activity finder. The plan is for the forum to meet again in March/April.
- 2.5. **Exemplars** - These are higher profile free initiatives designed to capture attention. In March/April 2023, funded by Public Health, there was the highly successful Beat the Streets (in which 10% or 22,549 residents - young and older - took part), Walking Netball started up in September 2023 and Saturday morning Our Parks exercise sessions at Mitcham Fair Green went live in October 2023 regularly attracting 20 plus people.
- 2.6. **Free Swimming** - Linked to Merton's Big Sports Day (September 2023) the kids free swimming offer was made permanent and a new free offer for the 65s and overs went live in November 2023. Take up is strong. Between July and December 2023 there were 2806 free kids swims and between November and December 2023 (the first available data) 321 free 65s and over free swims. January 2024 figures are not yet available due to technical issues at GLL.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- 2.7. **'Find your #Borough of Sport' campaign (January 2024)** - The campaign runs across January utilising a highly teachable moment - the new year - when many think about making changes to impact on their wellbeing. The diagram below sets out the campaign's aims.



The campaign is about helping residents discover what works for them and promotes further use of the activity finder. It's also about reinforcing that Merton has a strong local sport and activity offer for residents and the Council's ongoing commitment to sport and activity. A key tool is a series of short two minute video stories ([click to view an example](#)):

- 2.7.1 practical tips from in-borough coaches, practitioners and services;

2.7.2 spotlights on notable providers and their offers; and

2.7.3 inspirational stories from practitioners and residents.

The campaign has resonated with residents and driven greater awareness and use of the activity finder as evidenced by the user date set out at paragraph 2.3 above. The table below shows the immediate impact the campaign had.

| | Before (1-26 Dec) | After (27th Dec onwards) | % Increase |
|--------------|--------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Users | 395 | 2043 | +417% |
| Views | 1257 | 5926 | +371% |

The video stories have played particularly well. The most successful spotlight film was Movement Mornings by the Attic Theatre Company ([click to view](#)) where there were 2787 engagements. The emerging learnings are that content featuring Merton residents, dynamic footage of movement performed much better than content which solely featured professionals and outlined service offers. The 'Find your #Borough of Sport' call to action will continue throughout the year as will the use of short films.

2.8. **Recruitment** - Two additional Borough of Sport Officers have been recruited completing the in-Council Borough of Sport Team. A Sports and Leisure Manager (Policy and Strategy) - Roxanne Bennett - started on 19 February 2024. Her role internally focused working across the Council to combine effort. She brings 22 years of sports experience and joins from the Palace for Life Foundation (the Crystal Palace FC charity) and has also worked at the Fulham FC Foundation and the David Beckham Academy. Then a Sport and Leisure Manager (Projects and Partnerships) - Janna Scott - will take up post on 16 April 2024. Her role is focused on supporting stakeholders and partners. Janna has spent the last three years working for London Sport and has also worked at Scope and Swim England.

2.9. **Grants Fund** - The Borough of Sport Advisory Group discussed and agreed plans for the Borough of Sport Grants Fund at its meeting on Wednesday 24 January 2024. The grants fund is a key element of the Borough of Sport plans and will provide small grants funding to support and increase the amount of free and low cost opportunities to get active through sport and physical activity with a particular focus on 4-16 year olds, 65s and over and less affluent groups. The plan is to announce the fund in March 2024 with applications opening in April 2024 and awards in place by June 2024 in time for summer.

2.10. **Stakeholder Event** - This is being held on 5 March at the All England Lawn Tennis Club. This will bring together national stakeholders and potential funders together with local partners.

2.11. **Partnership with London Broncos** - Broncos are the only London based rugby league team that play in the RFL Super League (rugby league's top tier) and are based at the Cherry Red Records Stadium. We are developing a strategic partnership with the Club and they are keen to support and promote Merton's drive to become London's Borough of Sport. The partnership launched on 23 February 2024 at the first home game of the new season. The game was shown live on Sky Sports. The mascots at each home match who

walk out with each player will be drawn from a Merton School in rotation wearing Borough of Sport branded shirts (see pictures at **appendix 1**). The club is giving 50 pairs of tickets to each of Merton's 59 schools for the 23 February match, offering tickets to LBM employees and the Borough of Sport advisory group and key stakeholders. This represents an estimated in-kind sponsorship of Borough of Sport in the region of £300K when the Sky TV coverage is included. In addition, the club are investing £10K (matched funded by the Council) into a schools project which will promote good mental health. The project is in development and will launch later this year.

- 2.12. **Safe Spaces Investment** - We have secured £20K inward investment from the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit at the GLA to deliver a Sport Unites Safe Spaces pilot. We are working closely with the Safer Merton Team to develop the pilot which will test finding the right trusted adults (coaches) and places to deliver sport and improve feelings of safety and integration. Local police are part of the pilot as are the Merton Youth Partnership. It will engage at least 10 year 6 and 7 children and run sessions up to twice a week. The proposal is in development and will be signed off shortly by the GLA. This potentially provides a strong foundation for further funding discussions with the Mayor of London.
- 2.13. **Women's Running Clubs** - In partnership with the Safer Merton Team, we are creating women's only running clubs. Women led runs to make women feel safer. A cohort of women run leaders will be recruited and trained in March 2024 with the first clubs scheduled to go live in April 2024. The clubs will empower women to be more active, to have greater control in deciding when and where they run and provide a platform for women to raise issues affecting their safety. Intel gathered via the clubs will be feedback to the Safer Merton's monthly Partnership Tasking meetings and be addressed via a multi-agency approach. Participants will also be able to engage with the Police.
- 2.14. **Exemplars** - Throughout 2024 further exemplar projects will start up. The second **Our Parks** session, targeted at parents who have just dropped their children off at school, started at Mitcham Fair Green on Tuesday 9 January and runs each week. The plan is to start up additional Our Parks sessions at three further locations by the summer. The **Women's Walking Netball** weekly sessions have moved inside (Canons Leisure Centre) and restarted for the winter. Plans are now moving forward for the **ParkPlays**. The first at Canons House will go live on Saturday 20 April 2024 with promotion ramping up from mid-March 2024. The second and third ParkPlays, at Acacia and Phips Bridge, in active development. Canons was picked because of its easy access and also the number of lower income families in the area. The other two venues were chosen as they align to and complement the two most established family hubs.
- 2.15. **Cross Team Working** - The internal Council operational group is now meeting each month and is providing a strong forum to combine effort. In particular really strong and positive cross team working has been forged between Sport and Leisure and Public Health (including co-funding), Children's Services, Planning and Safer Merton. We are also forging strong links with the Police.

OUTCOMES AND MEASUREMENT OF IMPACT

- 2.16. The ambition to increase participation in sport and physical activity will be measured through the Sport England Active Lives adults and children's surveys which report once a year. The two most recent releases set the baseline for future growth:

Children

- 2.16.1 The latest results for the academic year 2022-23 were published in December 2023. We paid Sport England (£2.5K) so every school in Merton could take part and 17 did. This is by far the highest number of schools taking part in London and significantly above the next best borough - Sutton - where 5 schools took part. Overall 55.7% of 5-16 years olds in Merton are active doing on average 60 minutes of physical activity each day, compared to the London average 45.7% and England average 47%. It is important to cavate the Merton score skews starkly to children from more affluent families. The active lives data shows that children from low income families, the disabled and those from Black, Asian and other community groups are more likely to be less active; and

Adults

- 2.16.2 The latest results covering the 12 month period November 2021 to November 2022 were published in April 2023. They show that 63.7% of Merton adults (aged 16 and above) are active doing 150 or more minutes of physical activity each day. This is broadly similar to the England averaged 63.1% but below the London average of 64.2%. Again it is important to cavate that participation in Merton skews starkly to the more affluent. National trend data from Active Lives shows over 65s with low incomes are far more likely to be inactive compared to more affluent older people. The next data set is due to be released by Sport England in April 2024 and will be the first indicator of the impact Borough of Sport is having on adult participation levels.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. Alternative options have not been considered and the plans represent best practice. As action will be delivered across a three-year period 2023-26, plans can evolve and be tweaked to respond to changing needs.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. In drawing up the plans over 100 local groups and individuals have been consulted. The forum and the advisory group are also helping steer the development and implementation and provide for an on-going dialogue with residents and local groups.

5 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. Please see **Exempt Appendix 3** for the Financial, Resource and Property implications. There are no new or unfunded financial implications arising from the contents of this report.

6 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. There are no legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

7 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

7.1. There are no material equalities implications resulting from the recommendation(s) of this report.

8 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

8.1. There are no material crime and disorder implications resulting from the recommendation(s) of this report.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1. The Borough of Sport Operational Group and the stakeholder Advisory Group monitor and track risks.


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

- Appendix 1 - Borough of Sport Headlines On One Page
- Appendix 2 - London Broncos T-shirts
- Exempted Appendix 3 - Financial, resource and property implications

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Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information).

APPENDIX 1 - BOROUGH OF SPORT ONE PAGE HEADLINES

| | |
|---|--|
| <h2>High Level Ambition</h2> | <p>More Merton residents, in particular those aged 4- 16 and over 65 from less affluent communities, taking part in physical activity and or sport and therefore gaining the health, social and economic benefits from being active (Measured by Active Lives)</p> |
| <h2>Call to Action</h2> <p>Do one, or one more, physical activity each week</p> | |
| <p>Delivered through a partnership of:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div data-bbox="212 510 456 544">Residents & Stakeholders</div> <div data-bbox="520 510 715 544">Health & Wellbeing</div> <div data-bbox="770 510 927 544">Sport & Leisure</div> <div data-bbox="983 510 1190 544">Children & Education</div> <div data-bbox="1241 510 1385 544">Active Travel</div> </div> | |
| <p>Four Workstreams</p> | |
| <p>Menu of Opportunities/ Messaging</p> <p>Mapping and promoting opportunities to get active through Activity Finder</p> | <p>Supporting local clubs and groups</p> <p>Supporting and utilising community assets through the forum and grants fund</p> |
| <p>Exemplars</p> <p>Higher profile free projects to capture attention - Beat the Street, Our Parks, Walking Netball</p> | <p>Sporting Pride</p> <p>Showcasing and driving residents pride in Merton's sporting heritage.</p> |
| <p>Underpinned by:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div data-bbox="212 790 818 846"> <p>Funding - From LBM, sponsorship and inward investment Workforce - Upskilling the paid and unpaid workforce</p> </div> <div data-bbox="850 770 1385 846"> <p>Guided by: Stakeholder Advisory Group - which includes representatives from local clubs/ groups</p> </div> </div> | |
|  | |

APPENDIX 2 - LONDON BRONCOS T-SHIRTS

