

If you are reading this electronically, the Council has saved **£2.64** on printing. For more information on the Modern.gov paperless app, contact Democratic Services

# Merton Council

## Cabinet Agenda

### Membership

#### Councillors:

Mark Allison (Chair)  
Agatha Mary Akyigyina OBE  
Tobin Byers  
Natasha Irons  
Rebecca Lanning  
Owen Pritchard  
Marsie Skeete  
Eleanor Stringer  
Martin Whelton  
Brenda Fraser

**Date: Monday 17 January 2022**

**Time: 7.15 pm**

**Venue: Council Chamber, Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX**

This is a public meeting and will be livestreamed on the Council's Youtube Channel. For more information about the agenda please contact [democratic.services@merton.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@merton.gov.uk) or telephone [0208 545 3357](tel:0208 545 3357).

All Press contacts: [communications@merton.gov.uk](mailto:communications@merton.gov.uk), 020 8545 3181

If you are reading this electronically, the Council has saved **£2.64** on printing. For more information on the Modern.gov paperless app, contact Democratic Services

## **Cabinet Agenda**

### **17 January 2022**

1	Apologies for absence	
2	Declarations of pecuniary interest	
3	Minutes of the previous meeting	1 - 6
4	Adoption of Merton's Housing Delivery Strategy	7 - 58
5	Your Merton	59 - 96
6	Business Plan 2022-26	To Follow
7	Financial Monitoring Report - Period 8 November 2021	To Follow

#### **Note on declarations of interest**

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

# Agenda Item 3

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

## CABINET

6 DECEMBER 2021

(7.15 pm - 7.52 pm)

PRESENT Councillor Mark Allison (in the Chair), Councillor Tobin Byers, Councillor Natasha Irons, Councillor Rebecca Lanning, Councillor Eleanor Stringer and Councillor Brenda Fraser

ALSO PRESENT Councillor Nick Draper  
Councillor Peter Southgate  
Councillor Aidan Mundy

John Morgan (Interim Director Community and Housing), Chris Lee (Director Environment and Regeneration), Louise Round (Managing Director South London Legal Partnership) and Amy Dumitrescu (Democracy Services Manager)

ATTENDING REMOTELY Councillor Agatha Akyigyina, Councillor Owen Pritchard, Councillor Marsie Skeete and Councillor Martin Whelton

Hannah Doody (Chief Executive), Caroline Holland (Director Corporate Services), Jane McSherry (Director Children, Schools and Families), James McGinlay (Assistant Director Sustainable Communities), Jacquie Denton (Principal Estates Surveyor) and Octavia Lamb (Policy and Research Officer – Labour Group).

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

No apologies were received. Councillors Akyigyina, Pritchard, Skeete and Whelton attended the meeting remotely.

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2021 are agreed as an accurate record.

### 4 REFERENCES FROM SCRUTINY PANELS (Agenda Item 4)

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Aidan Mundy, Chair of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel spoke on the item and gave an overview of the recommendations from the panel.

Councillor Irons responded to thank the Chair of the Panel, noting that Merton was currently 8<sup>th</sup> of the London Boroughs for recycling rates.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration spoke to thank Scrutiny for their focus on the topic and noting that the aim of waste minimisation would continue to be focused on.

#### RESOLVED:

Cabinet agreed to implement the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel recommendations as set out in paragraphs 2.6 to 2.9 below and agreed to report back to the Panel with an update in six months' time

2.6 The Panel RESOLVED (six votes for, one abstention) to send the following recommendation to Cabinet;

2.7. The Sustainable Communities Panel recommends Cabinet look at the feasibility of offering discounted access to our paid for waste services, to those residents on council tax support, in order to incentivize take up of these services and further increase the rate of recycling. This should include garden waste collection.

2.8. Furthermore the Panel recommended (five votes for, two abstentions) that as a Council we lobby the government to accept central responsibility for producing effective policy and legislation to deter and deal with fly tipping.

2.9. Lastly, all seven voting Members of the Panel agreed to recommend that the Council, over a suitable time frame, proactively writes to all those blocks of flats with communal recycling, with details on how to recycle correctly and avoid waste contamination.

#### 5 BUSINESS PLAN 2022-26 (Agenda Item 5)

The Cabinet Member for Finance presented the report, thanking officers for their work. The proposed savings were included within the report which would balance the budget for 2022/23 and reduce the budget gap in 2023/24, however the gap would still currently remain at £13m for that year. It was noted that the Equality Impact Assessments and draft list of unachievable savings would be included within the member information packs due to go through the Scrutiny process in January 2022.

#### RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet considered and agreed the draft unachievable savings/income proposals (Appendix 4) put forward by officers and referred them to the Overview and Scrutiny panels and Commission in January 2022 for consideration and comment.

2. That Cabinet considered and agreed the new savings proposals for 2022/23 to 2025/26 (Appendix 3) and referred them to the Overview and Scrutiny panels and Commission in January 2022 for consideration and comment.

3. That Cabinet considered and agreed the draft Capital Programme 2022-2026 (Appendix 5) and refers it to the Overview and Scrutiny panels and Commission in January 2022 for consideration and comment.

4. That Cabinet agreed the proposed Council Tax Base for 2022/23 set out in paragraph 2.7 and Appendix 1.

5. That Cabinet noted the opportunity set out in the Spending Review 2021 to enable social service authorities to apply an Adult Social Care Precept in 2022/23 and, subject to confirmation of this when the Referendum Principles are announced in the

Local Government Finance Settlement 2022/23, agrees to incorporate this into the MTFS for 2022-26.

6. That Cabinet noted that Equalities Impact Assessments for each saving, where applicable, will be included in the Member's Information Pack for consideration in future meetings.

## 6 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT - PERIOD 7 OCTOBER 2021 (Agenda Item 6)

The Cabinet Member for Finance presented the report, noting that without Coronavirus costs there would have been a net positive variance of £1.9m, however with Coronavirus costs included there was currently a net negative variance of £8.5m. No further Coronavirus related support funding was anticipated.

In relation to the Dedicated Schools Grant, discussions with the Department for Education continued, however resolution was not expected until late January 2022.

The Director of Corporate Services noted that the situation continued to be closely monitored.

The Cabinet Member for Finance thanked officers for their work on the report and on managing budgets across the Council.

### RESOLVED:

A. That Cabinet noted the financial reporting data for month 7, October 2021, relating to revenue budgetary control, showing a forecast net adverse variance at year end on net service expenditure of £5.732m, increasing to £8.534m, an increase of £847k over last month when corporate and funding items are included.

B. That Cabinet noted the contents of Section 5, Appendix 5b and 5d of the report and approved the adjustments to the Capital Programme in the Table below:

	Budget 2021-22	Budget 2022-23	Narrative
<b>Corporate Services</b>	£	£	
Compulsory Purchase Order - Clarion	(721,730)		No CPOs Required for Ravensbury
Customer Contact Programme	(200,000)	200,000	Re-profiled in line with projected spend
Westminster Coroners Court	(400,000)	400,000	Re-profiled in line with projected timing of spend, liaising with WCC
<b>Children, Schools and Families</b>			
West Wimb. - Capital Maintenance Budget	(65,000)	65,000	Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
Hillcross - Capital Maintenance Budget	(63,000)	63,000	Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
Joseph Hood - Capital Maintenance Budget	(45,000)	45,000	Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
Dundonald - Capital Maintenance Budget	(20,000)	20,000	Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
Pelham - Capital Maintenance Budget	(30,000)	30,000	Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
Wimb. Chase - Capital Maintenance Budget	(35,000)	35,000	Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
Bond - Capital Maintenance Budget	(30,000)	30,000	Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
Cranmer - Capital Maintenance Budget	(45,000)	45,000	Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
Links - Capital Maintenance Budget	(20,000)	20,000	Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
St Marks - Capital Maintenance Budget	(55,000)	55,000	Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
Lonesome - Capital Maintenance Budget	(30,000)	30,000	Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
Harris Academy Merton - Community Sport Pitch	(65,000)	65,000	Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
Rutlish - Capital Maintenance Budget	5,000		Virements - projected spend capital maintenance
Perseid - Capital Maintenance Budget	(45,000)	40,000	Virements - projected spend capital maintenance
Whately Avenue Expansion	(30,000)	30,000	Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
Unallocated SEN Expansions	(30,000)	30,000	Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
<b>Environment and Regeneration</b>			
Highways & Footways - Highways bridges & structures	105,000		Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
Highways & Footways - Salt Barn	(23,600)		Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
On Street Parking P&D - Pay and Display Machines	(303,000)	303,000	Re-profiled in line with projected spend

Off Street Parking P&D - Car Park Upgrades	(465,530)	465,530	Re-profiled in line with projected spend
Wimbledon Area Regeneration - Crowded Places-Hostile Vehicle	(180,000)	180,000	Re-profiled in accordance with projected Spend
Mitcham Area Regeneration - Canons Parks for the People	590,000		Additional SCIL Funding
Parks Investment - Canons Parks for the People	150,000		Additional SCIL Funding
Parks Investment - Sports Drainage	150,000		New SCIL Funding
<b>Total</b>	<b>(1,901,860)</b>	<b>2,151,530</b>	

## 7 DISPOSAL OF SURPLUS PROPERTY ASSETS (Agenda Item 7)

The Cabinet Member for Finance presented the report and thanked officers and Councillor Whelton for their work.

The report sought to declare the sites listed within the appendix as surplus and available for housing and put in place a mechanism for disposal. Each site would have to be determined how to be disposed of on a site-by-site basis and it was envisaged that this would be assessed by a wider project team.

The sites formerly owned by the Merantun Local Authority Property Company would be the first tranche of sites to be disposed of and to seek to achieve 100% affordable housing on these sites.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency thanked officers and noting that a number of additional housing units would be provided as part of the plan. The report also set out the intention to look at the introduction of an Article 4 direction in parts of Merton for homeowners wishing to convert residential properties into HMOs (houses of multiple occupation), whereby Planning permission would be required to be sought for these conversions.

An evidence base was also being built on the possible introduction of a selective landlord licensing scheme, with a further report due to Cabinet in March 2022.

### RESOLVED:

- A. That the properties listed in the appendix be declared surplus to council requirements.
- B. That the properties listed in the appendix be marketed for housing as soon as they are ready for sale provided the Director of Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, considers that the market is favourable.
- C. That authority was delegated to the Director of Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, to determine which of the properties listed in the appendix be sold on one or more of the following terms:  
 Option 1. Disposal to maximise capital receipt; or  
 Option 2. Disposal to provide redevelopment with 50% affordable Housing; or  
 Option 3. Disposal to provide redevelopment with 100% affordable housing.  
 And on such other terms as he considers are prudent and in the best interests of the Council in concluding a disposal of the properties.
- D. That the Director of Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, is authorised to use delegated powers to make any other decisions that are required to facilitate the conclusion of the disposal of the properties.

E. That members noted that work is underway on wider housing matters including selective licensing and an Article 4 Direction requiring planning permission for smaller Houses in Multiple Occupation set out in paragraphs 2.16-2.22.

#### 8 AWARD OF TERM BUILDING SERVICES CONTRACTS FOR THE PLANNED PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE AND REACTIVE REPAIRS OF BUILDING SERVICES, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT (Agenda Item 8)

The Cabinet Member for Finance presented the report thanking officers for their work. The report proposed the award of the contract for maintenance of the Council's buildings, commencing from April 2022 once the current contracts expired. 5 contracts would be appointed across 6 lots.

#### RESOLVED:

A. That Cabinet agreed to award new term contracts for the maintenance of the council's buildings for a period of 4 years to the contractors listed in Appendix A with potential extensions of 2 years plus one, starting from 01 April 2022.

B. In accordance with Contract Standing Orders (CSO 24.3) authority was delegated to the Director of Corporate Services to exercise, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, the council's option to grant the extension of the contract term for any period up to three further years beyond the expiry of the initial contract term on 31 March 2026

#### 9 SUPPLY OF POWER (Agenda Item 9)

The Cabinet Member for Finance presented the report, thanking officers for their work.

The report proposed to award the contract for a 4 year period with the option to extend for a further year with the contract commencing in April 2022. The contract covered the supply of power to all council buildings including any schools which had opted-in.

#### RESOLVED:

A. That Cabinet agreed to award a 4+1 year contract for the supply of power to Bidder A.

B. That authority to take up the optional 1 year extension on the contract was delegated to the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services.

C. That Authority to take up the option to purchase Renewable Energy Guarantee of Origin Certificates (REGOs) via this contract was delegated to the Director of Corporate Services.

#### 10 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda Item 10)

RESOLVED: That the public were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following report (Item 10) on the grounds that it is exempt from disclosure for the reasons stated in the report.

#### 13 UPDATE ON CHAS - APPOINTMENT OF FINANCIAL ADVISERS (Agenda

Item 13)

The report was discussed within closed session.

RESOLVED: The recommendations within the report were agreed.



## **Committee: Cabinet**

**Date: 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

Wards: all

## **Subject: Adoption of Merton's housing delivery strategy**

Lead officer: Director of Environment and Regeneration, Chris Lee

Lead member: Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Climate Emergency, Councillor Martin Whelton

Contact officer: Deputy FutureMerton Manager, Tara Butler

---

### **Recommendations:**

A. That Cabinet adopt Merton's Housing Delivery Strategy and action plan.

---

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. In July 2021 Merton's Cabinet approved six weeks of public consultation on Merton's draft housing delivery strategy and action plan. Public consultation took place between August and October 2021, alerting a wide range of organisations and people and targeting responses from those involved in delivering housing in Merton.
- 1.2. This report summarises the public consultation results in Appendix A and recommends the adoption of Merton's Housing Delivery Strategy and action plan.
- 1.3. The final housing strategy document will not be reformatted in time for Leaders Strategy Group but will be available for Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

## **2 DETAILS**

- 2.1. Increasing the supply of high quality homes is a priority for the council. The Cabinet report in July 2021 set out the rationale for drafting a housing delivery strategy and action plan for Merton and how it was drafted in dialogue with housing providers.
- 2.2. It also referred to the links with other council strategies (Merton's Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan, Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan, Merton's draft Local Plan and associated housing delivery research and guidance).and referenced the 2015 investigations from the council's Scrutiny Task Group on housing supply and the July 2021 work at full council on housing supply.
- 2.3. The council is undertaking a number of projects towards increasing the delivery of high quality new homes. This draft housing delivery strategy should be read in conjunction with other council strategies, such as Merton's Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan, Merton's Climate Strategy and

Action Plan, Merton's draft Local Plan and associated housing delivery research and guidance.

2.4. In 2020 / 2021, consultancy Campbell Tickell undertook consultancy work for Merton Council to develop a draft housing delivery strategy as one of a range of actions Merton is undertaking to increase the supply and the quality of new homes.

2.5. The work included research on Merton's housing supply and interviews with Registered Housing Providers and others involved in housing supply in Merton.

#### **How we consulted**

2.6. Following Cabinet approval in July 2021 to consult on the draft strategy public consultation took place between Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> August and Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021. Initially consultation was advertised borough-wide and was then consultation was targeted at people and organisations who directly delivered housing (e.g. Registered Housing Providers) or are involved in supporting housing delivery (

2.7. Just over 1,000 emails were sent out combined with correspondence on Merton's Local Plan 2021 to maximise reach.

2.8. Discussions were held with individual housing providers including Wandle and Clarion.

2.9. A presentation was given to Merton Partnership's Sustainable Communities and Transport Partnership group at their meeting in September 2021, which included representatives from the voluntary sector and from Registered Housing Providers

2.10. Responses were received via an online questionnaire and via email.

#### **Consultation feedback**

2.11. Responses were received from four residents and from the following nine organisations:

- Bioregional
- Clarion Housing Group
- Merton Centre for Independent Living
- Merton Citizens
- Merton's Climate Action Group – buildings and energy subgroup
- Merton's Liberal Democrats
- The Destination Developers
- Transport for London Commercial Development
- Wandle Housing

2.12. Responses were all qualitative rather than quantitative. Most respondents structured their responses around the chapters in the housing delivery.

- Introduction

- Vision
- Background and context
- What does Merton need?
- Barriers and constraints
- Delivering the right new homes (and actions)
- Partnership (and actions)
- Direct intervention (and actions)
- Density and intensification (and actions)
- Housing for particular needs (and actions)
- Using and improving the existing stock (and actions)
- Governance and decision making (and actions)

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1. None for the purposes of this report. The alternative option of not adopting the housing delivery strategy and action plan is not considered realistic as most respondents were supportive of the strategy in general, with feedback on specific elements.
- 3.2. There are alternatives for updating individual chapters within this study from public consultation feedback.

### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1. As set out in the body of this report. Appendix A contains a summary of the comments received at public consultation.

### **5 TIMETABLE**

- 5.1. None for the purposes of this report.

### **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. Funding for the preparation of this housing delivery strategy and action plan has come from existing resources. Funding for the delivery over time will come from a range of resources including Merton's existing resources, Registered Housing Providers and funding bids.

### **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. There are no legal implications at this stage.

### **8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. An equalities impact assessment will inform the final housing delivery strategy.

### **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. None for the purposes of this report.

**10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. None for the purposes of this report.

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

- Appendix A summary of comments received at public consultation
- Appendix B Housing Delivery Strategy and Action Plan – final version

**12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1. London Plan 2021 and London Housing Strategy

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land>

12.2. Merton's Strategic Housing Needs Assessment

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/SHMA%20Report%20July%202019.pdf>

12.3. Merton's Local Plan <https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/planning/local-plan>

12.4. Merton's housing delivery evidence

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/Documents/Merton%20Housing%20Delivery%20Research%20Final%20Report%20March%202021.pdf>

12.5. Merton's affordable housing viability study 2020

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/Merton%20Local%20Plan%20Housing%20Viability%20Study%202020.pdf>

## **APPENDIX A – SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED AT CONSULTATION**

Please note that one representor may make several comments on the same chapter.

### **1 General comments**

The comments received were generally supportive that Merton Council has drafted a housing delivery strategy and action plan and people appreciated the opportunity to comment. Other general comments recommended presenting the strategy and action plan in a Merton Council format; being clear at the front and throughout that this is a five-year strategy and carrying the timescales through to the actions.

#### **General actions:**

- Reformat the strategy in Merton Council's format
- Add clarity in introduction and throughout, including action plan, on 5 year strategy and other relevant timescales

### **2 Vision**

Seven comments were received on the vision. The responses either supported the vision or asked for it to be improved as it was not Merton specific, did not refer to other council strategies, the standards of existing housing stock or the need for accessible housing

**Vision - actions** – update the vision to make it more Merton-specific, refer to the climate emergency and accessible housing.

### **3 Background and context**

Eight comments were received on the background and context. The comments were glad that the chapter is transparent about the levels of deprivation in parts of the borough and the lower proportion of housing development. Responses cited specific paragraphs for amendments, sought additional information on housing occupancy levels (which the council does not hold for general housing but Registered Providers hold for social housing) and the availability of socially rented housing that is accessible to deaf and disabled people.

**Background and context - actions:** - Incorporate key data from later chapters for context (e.g. housing needs, particularly for specific groups)

### **4 What does Merton need?**

12 comments were received on the chapter “what does Merton need?” Comments focussed on specific issues that related to the respondent: ranging from the need for affordable housing, accessible housing, net zero carbon housing, robust planning

policies, reference to housing enforcement and licensing, the definition of affordable housing, affordable rent, social rent etc. some comments queried specific data within the chapter.

#### **What does Merton need – actions:**

- Improve the links within this chapter to other council policies and functions where relevant without unnecessary duplication; consider proportionate reference to planning policies, housing enforcement function, the climate strategy and action plan.
- Review the data within this chapter, particularly in the light of specific comments

#### **5 Barriers and constraints**

Eight comments were received on the “barriers and constraints” chapter. Most comments related to the availability of sites of different sizes, which is a feature of this chapter. Other queries were raised about the use of the council’s own sites to deliver affordable housing and whether Merton will restart the Housing Revenue Account.

**Barriers and constraints - actions:** - update chapter to refer to December 2021 Cabinet report which recommended actions on the first tranche of Merton Council owned sites to deliver housing, particularly affordable housing. The same report also refers to selective licensing and planning system actions.

#### **6 Delivering the right new homes (and actions in the Action Plan)**

13 comments were received on this chapter. Housing providers spoke of affordability concerns, the need for subsidy, overcrowding in existing homes and the need for quality in new affordable housing. Other comments referred to government’s new policy on discounted market sales, and the need for genuinely affordable homes. Two comments emphasised the need to be robust in challenging any developers’ assertions that providing affordable housing is not viable. There was broad support for a Registered Provider forum or at least links between RPs and the council as long as any new structure was focussed and relevant and did not duplicate the many existing forums.

#### **Delivering the right new homes (and actions in the Action Plan) - actions**

- as above, refer where relevant to Merton’s planning policies and functions
- review the action on developing a RP forum to see if it would function best as a large group, or as part of existing structures, or with 1-1 dialogue with the council and existing larger meetings

#### **7 Partnerships and actions in the Action Plan**

13 comments were received on the “Partnerships” chapter and the actions in the Action Plan; the chapter and actions were largely strongly supported, particularly the actions for housing providers to work together (either as part of a Registered Provider forum or otherwise) on matters such as net zero development and modular build.

**Partnerships and actions in the Action Plan – actions:** - as in the “delivering the right new homes” chapter, review the action on developing an effective forum for sharing knowledge across registered providers and the council

### **8 Direct intervention (and actions in the action plan)**

15 comments were received on this chapter with many of these comments supportive. Several cited specific Mayor of London funding, housing investment funding, self-build and community build and re-establishing a Housing Revenue Fund. Different views were expressed on modular build, with some respondents supportive and others warning against it.

**Direct intervention (and actions in the action plan) –** review this chapter to update with relevant December 2021 Cabinet report resolutions on direct interventions, including the HRF and HIF.

### **9 Density and intensification (and actions in the action plan)**

9 comments were received on this chapter, ranging from support for densities where quality development was achieved, housing needs and targets were met and to avoid building on open space, to some hesitation, to concerns relating to accessibility. Several comments sought additional planning guidance, which would be delivered through the Local Plan and not the housing delivery strategy.

**Density and intensification (and actions in the action plan)- actions:** review chapter to ensure proportionate reference to planning system actions while avoiding unnecessary duplication.

### **10 Housing for particular needs (and actions in the action plan)**

There were 12 comments made to this chapter and its actions. Merton Centre for Independent Living sought greater reference to the delivery of accessible housing through Building Regulations and planning policy. Other respondents referred to the use of modular buildings for people who become homeless (i.e. similar to Y-cube in Mitcham); support for particular modular housing developments, schemes such as Homeshare or specific support for care leavers.

**Housing for particular needs (and actions in the action plan) – actions:** update this strategy and the actions particularly with reference to matters that have occurred since the draft strategy was published and also with proportionate reference to other council strategies (e.g. planning policy) and where Registered Providers or the housing regulator leads.

### **11 Using and improving the existing stock (and actions in the action plan)**

11 comments were received on this chapter. Registered Providers sought information sharing on retrofit and refurbishment. Some respondents cited Houses in Multiple Occupation and other management and enforcement issues including landlord licensing.

**Using and improving the existing stock (and actions in the action plan) – actions** – review the chapter relating to the specific points raised in the representations to

clarify which are the purpose of the housing delivery strategy (e.g. joint working via RP forum or similar), which are delivered through other council approaches (e.g. update from December 2021 Cabinet report on landlord licensing) and which are delivered by other bodies (e.g. housing regulator).

## **12 Governance and decision making (and actions in the action plan) -**

12 comments were received to this chapter and these were mostly supportive of both the chapter and its proposed actions. Some comments sought greater cross reference to other council functions and sought more commentary on the reasons behind some of the proposed actions

**Governance and decision-making (and actions in the action plan)** – actions: review the chapter to ensure all actions have a commentary to explain their origin within the body of the chapter. Explore whether greater cross reference to other chapters.





# **Housing Delivery Strategy 2022-2027**

**January 2022**

## Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Vision	2
3. Background and context	3
4. What does Merton need?	10
5. Barriers and constraints	18
6. Delivering the right new homes	21
7. Partnership	24
8. Direct intervention	26
9. Density and intensification	30
10. Housing for particular needs	33
11. Using and improving the existing stock	36
12. Governance and decision making	38

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Housing Delivery Strategy considers the need for new homes in Merton and the mechanisms through which they might be delivered, with an emphasis on the need for new affordable housing.
- 1.2 Drawing on views expressed in workshops and conversations with groups and individuals across the council and externally and on a range of evidence in relation to housing supply and demand, it identifies actions, with an emphasis on those most relevant to and with the best prospect of success in the Merton context.
- 1.3 This is an overarching five-year strategy with a focus on securing housing growth, and is intended to complement a wider group of policies and strategies, in particular [Merton's Local Plan](#); [Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#), [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) and [Housing Enforcement policy](#) to which it makes reference as appropriate.

## **2. Vision**

- 2.1 To support sustainable growth in Merton and deliver high quality, accessible new homes of different types, sizes and tenures that match identified local needs, particularly for affordable homes.

### 3. Background and context

- 3.1 In many respects, Merton has the features of an outer-London borough, with a typical housing stock. The most common housing type is a three-bedroom semi-detached house and development historically has been at relatively low densities. However, such a superficial suburban characterisation hides underlying complexities. The following paragraphs highlight some key features of the borough.
- 3.2 Merton is unusual among London boroughs in no longer owning or managing any social housing and the proportion of social rented stock is the fifth lowest in London at 14.1% compared to the regional average of 24.1%. The private rented sector has grown, standing at 24.8%, just below the London average of 25.1%. Owner occupation, outright or with a mortgage, is the dominant tenure. Over 60% of the overall stock, including the private rented sector, comprises houses and 37% flats.
- 3.3 Merton's [2019 Strategic Housing Market Assessment](#) (SHMA) analyses market signals including affordability and occupancy. The SHMA shows that, according to the 2011 Census (currently the most recent data available) approximately 58% of homes in Merton are under-occupied (i.e. had one or more spare bedrooms than their household required). This is lower than the national average (69%) lower than the surrounding outer London boroughs of Kingston, Richmond and Sutton at over 60% but higher than inner London boroughs of Wandsworth and Lambeth at less than 50%. It also shows that 9.2% of homes in Merton are overcrowded (comparable to 11.3% of overcrowded homes across London and 4.3% nationally), with overcrowding concentrated to the east of the borough.

***Table 1: Occupancy rating by neighbourhood (2011)***

	Under Occupied	Right Sized	Over-Occupied
Colliers Wood/South Wimbledon	53.0%	28.7%	18.3%
Mitcham	52.6%	25.8%	21.6%
Morden	68.3%	19.9%	11.8%
Raynes Park	69.4%	19.5%	11.1%
Wimbledon	65.9%	21.0%	13.1%
Merton	60.5%	23.4%	16.1%

Source: Census 2011; Merton SHMA 2019

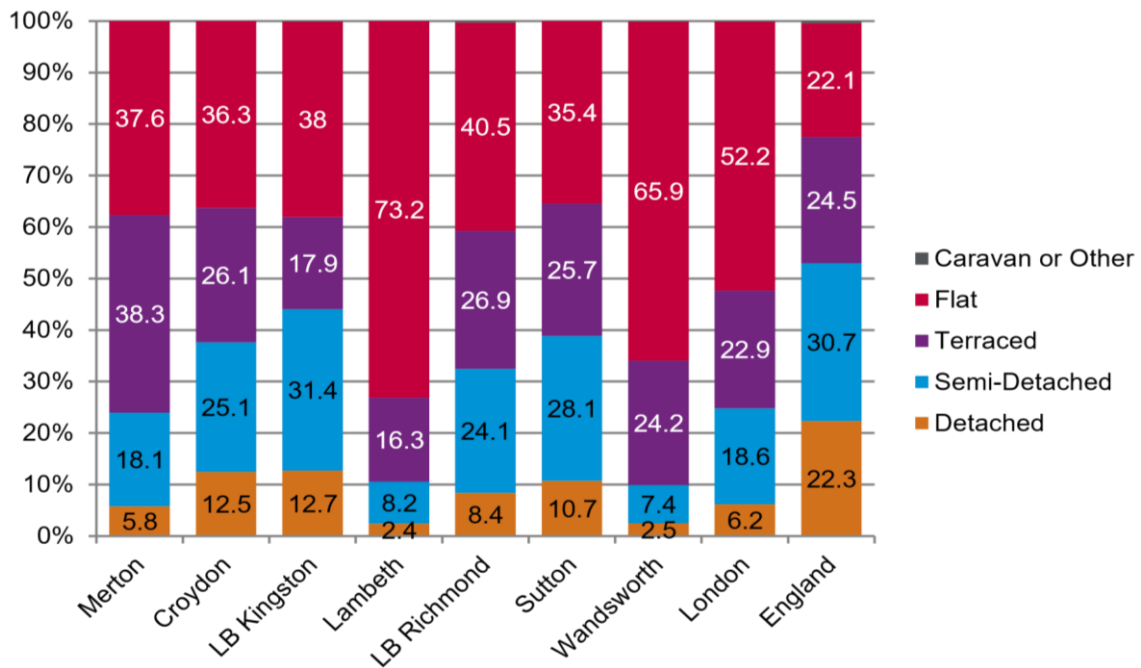
- 3.4 The tables below from the 2019 SHMA illustrate the distribution by neighbourhood and dwelling size and household spaces by dwelling type compared to neighbouring boroughs and the London and England averages.

**Table 1: Housing Stock, June 2018 (rounded to nearest 10)**

	Stock 2011	Dwelling Stock 2018	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4+ beds
<b>Colliers Wood/South Wimbledon</b>	14,470	15,230	26%	40%	22%	12%
<b>Mitcham</b>	24,370	25,800	18%	27%	44%	10%
<b>Morden</b>	15,570	16,050	9%	26%	48%	17%
<b>Raynes Park</b>	10,010	10,630	18%	28%	36%	18%
<b>Wimbledon</b>	16,490	17,010	18%	28%	20%	33%
<b>LB Merton</b>	80,920	84,720	18%	29%	36%	17%

Source: Merton SHMA 2019 derived from Census 2011 and LBM monitoring database

**Figure 1: Household by Type (SHMA 2019)**



3.5 There is significant variation across the borough, reflecting the availability of sites and other factors, with Mitcham, Colliers Wood and South Wimbledon delivering a significant proportion of all new homes. However, affordable housing delivery has only made up an average of 26% within the total. This includes a high proportion of one- and two- bedroom homes, for which demand is highest in the borough.

3.6 A number of factors influence delivery, in particular, the predominance of small sites. Small sites cost more to develop than larger sites and so are less attractive to developers. In addition the current planning system does not support requiring affordable housing for developments of small sites (10 homes or fewer). For example, all completions in 2018/19 were on small sites of less than 0.25 hectares; all schemes except one delivered 10 homes or fewer, with one scheme of 11 homes and there were no large schemes completed. 52 new homes were delivered through the prior approvals process, meaning that the council had no influence on design, layout or quality as through the normal planning process and could not require any affordable housing. Proposed extension of prior approvals, for example allowing conversion of storage and industrial space to residential use, is likely to lead to more development through

this route, adding to the 683 homes delivered in this way in the five years from 2014/15.

- 3.7 2018/19 was exceptional in that London Plan targets were not met, while over the period from 2004/5 to 2019 the council delivered 140% (2,300 additional homes) of its target. However, although the overall housing targets were exceeded, the lower affordable housing proportion in the same decades is caused by the lack of a planning requirement to deliver affordable housing on small sites and the growth of prior approvals, where affordable housing cannot be required. In addition the introduction of prior approval for office and other conversions to residential with no requirement for affordable housing has impacted on delivery and there are serious concerns about the poor quality of some developments. Proposed extension of permitted development rights is likely to exacerbate this problem.
- 3.8 Purchase prices and rents in the private sector are unaffordable for many Merton households but, as with other factors, there is significant variation across the borough. For example, as of August 2020, the Greater London Authority's (GLA) London Rents Map gives an average monthly rent of £1,553 for a two-bed flat in Wimbledon, compared to £1,258 in Mitcham. Purchase prices vary even more widely, with the average price in Wimbledon at £801,741, compared to £445,499 in Mitcham and the average house price to earnings ratio is 15.4:1. Affordability is considered further below.
- 3.9 The council has an ambitious regeneration programme, partly underway and partly at the planning stage. Clarion are working on the council's former estates following transfer of the stock to them and the council has wide-ranging proposals for Morden town centre, for example. The new Local Plan is at an advanced stage of preparation and a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is being developed. This document will need to remain aligned closely with both.
- 3.10 The population is expected to grow by 4% by 2029 and the impact of this is considered further below. There is a waiting list of 9,845 households (April



2020), of whom around 4,376 fall into “reasonable preference” categories . Homelessness acceptances and temporary accommodation occupation are low for London but still a significant challenge. Eviction from private rented sector through the ending of assured short hold tenancies is the most common cause of homelessness and it is expected that the ending of Covid-related restrictions on no fault evictions could lead to a spike in applications.

- 3.11 While Merton is ranked 214 on the Index of Multiple Deprivation, placing it among the least deprived authorities, this again masks local contrasts. For example, east Merton is, on average, 2.5 times more deprived than the west of the borough and the borough as a whole is ranked much lower at 128 on the barriers to housing and services element of the Index; 15.8% of households are overcrowded and 10.2% of are fuel poor. While these figures are not especially high for London, they are an indicator of poor conditions and housing need.
- 3.12 Chapter 3 of [Merton’s Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2019](#) contains extensive details on demographic profiles and projections, skills and earnings and the consequential impact on housing need in Merton. The SHMA gives the median wage of residents in full-time employment as £35,708, slightly higher than the London wide median of £34,725. However, median earnings of those working and living in the borough are lower at £29,627, closer to the national average of £29,083 and well below the London figure of £37,171. This reflects the fact that many Merton residents work in other parts of London, with 43% of residents working in Inner London. The SHMA shows that, the government methodology used, housing needs range from c800 homes per annum to over 1,300 homes per annum; Merton’s share of London’s new homes is identified as 918 new homes per annum in the London Plan 2021. As the SHMA concludes, housing land availability, access to funding and housebuilders / lender’s capacity and willingness to deliver new homes at this level to meet housing needs.
- 3.13 Merton’s SHMA 2019 (chapter 8 in particular) also contains analysis of specialist needs, including for people with disabilities. It shows that in general, Merton has slightly lower levels of disability compared with other areas and that

an ageing population means that the number of people with disabilities is likely to increase substantially in the future.

- 3.14 Key findings from the SHMA 2019 and other sources include the forecast of a need for up to 3% of future dwellings to be for wheelchair users (meeting Building Regulations technical standard M4(3) “wheelchair user dwellings”).
- 3.15 Merton’s emerging Local Plan 2022 requires 10% of all new homes to be “wheelchair user dwellings” (Building Regulations M4(3)) and the remaining 90% of all new homes to be “accessible and adaptable dwellings (Building Regulations M4(2)). This standard is applied across London via policies in the London Plan 2021.
- 3.16 At the national level, Brexit had dominated political debate leading up to the election and will influence the direction of policy for the immediate future as the terms of future trade deals and other arrangements are negotiated. However, the Covid-19 pandemic now overshadows other matters. Speculation at this point is difficult and, to a large extent, issues and priorities will be unchanged. However, there are some obvious points that should be considered. There has been an impact on local authority revenues and costs that may be difficult to quantify immediately but will almost certainly affect ability to invest. The long-term impact of unprecedented government intervention on borrowing levels and the future approach to spending is also difficult to quantify but the economic downturn is likely to have at least a medium-term effect on housing demand and need with, as noted earlier, the risk of a short-term spike in homelessness.
- 3.17 The impact on the housing market is particularly difficult to anticipate, although it seems unlikely that London will see falls in prices and rents large enough to have much impact on affordability, especially when coupled with expected rises in unemployment. In the short term, there are indications that purchase prices have risen, although this is combined with evidence that households are seeking moves out of cities including London, where prices in the prime market have fallen. Similarly, there is evidence that landlords in inner-London have

reduced rents in response to falling demand, while outer-London boroughs are becoming more attractive, partly as a result of home working.

- 3.18 The government has announced an £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme for the 5 years 2021 to 2026, aiming to deliver up to 180,000 new homes across the country (although note the caveat “should economic conditions allow”). It is expected that the programme will unlock a further £38 billion in public and private investment in affordable housing. Around half of the new homes will be available for affordable home ownership and the rest will be made available for discounted rent, including 10% for supported housing. The GLA has been offered £4 billion and negotiations about what they will deliver with this funding are in progress.
- 3.19 The programme includes funding for Social Rent, which is welcome, but also emphasises a new model for Shared Ownership. This will reduce the minimum initial share from 25% to 10%, allow purchase of additional shares in 1% instalments and introduce a 10-year period for new shared owners where the landlord will cover the cost of any repairs and maintenance. Most significantly, a Right to Shared Ownership will be available on the vast majority of rented homes delivered by registered providers through the new programme.
- 3.20 The most important shift is set out in the recent Planning White Paper. Further relaxation permitted development rules and proposals to designate neighbourhoods on zoning principles have the potential to seriously weaken local authority input into planning decisions and development control, while a new infrastructure levy replacing S106 is intended to deliver the same proportion of affordable homes, although the mechanism through which this will be achieved is unclear. There is as yet little detail on some aspects such as design principles but a steering group has been set up to establish a design body that will *“support communities in producing binding design codes for their local area, massively increase focus on design and quality in the planning process and ensure local design and architecture is recognised and conserved”*.

## 4. What does Merton need?

- 4.1 Decisions on the quantity, tenure and size mix of housing take account of several sources of evidence, which are considered in this section. The desired outcome is that delivery on the ground should be achievable and match as closely as possible identified need, with a time horizon matching the first five years of the emerging Local Plan.
- 4.2 Merton Council is preparing a [new Local Plan](#), informed by a body of supporting evidence including [Merton's Strategic Housing Market Assessment](#) 2019 and this will underpin decisions on the level and mix of new housing. The draft Local Plan includes a borough wide affordable housing target requirement of 50% with a tenure split of 70% low cost affordable rented and 30% intermediate housing.
- 4.3 The SHMA's assessment of housing need relies to a large extent on predicted population growth. Different methodologies produce different predictions so that, for example, the GLA will not arrive at the same figure as the Office for National Statistics. The [Mayor's London Plan 2021](#) requires Merton to deliver 918 new homes per annum as its share of London's 53,000 new homes required each year. The Mayor's target assumes that 261 of its proposed 918 homes would be delivered on smaller sites of 0.25 hectares or less. For the purposes of this strategy, the aspiration will be to meet the London Plan target. Within the overall total, the SHMA suggests the following distribution for general needs housing:

**Table 2: Housing Supply Requirements**

Bedrooms	Affordable Rent %	Low Cost Home Ownership %	Market %
1	25-30	25-30	5-10
2	35-40	30-35	20-25
3	25-30	25-30	45-50
4	5-10	10-15	20-25

- 4.4 A more immediate picture of need is provided by applications on the Housing Register and homelessness data, as set out in the tables below.

**Table 3: Households on Housing Register at year end**

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
9,802	10,216	9,845

- 4.5 Housing Register demand has remained high but relatively stable over the last three years, although it should be noted that it has increased by a third since 2014. It should be stressed that these figures only include those who have made an application, while it is likely that other households will not apply as they have little expectation of securing a home through this route. The total will also include households who are considered low priority.

**Table 4: Current Housing Register by bedroom requirement at 1 November 2020**

No of Bedrooms	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Count of Applications	4,331	2,937	2,046	395	59	6	9,774

- 4.6 The shape of need for different bedroom sizes is similar to that in other London boroughs. The highest demand is for one and two bedroom homes (which are also the primary product for developers) but the most difficult needs to meet are those for larger homes.

**Table 5: Households in Temporary Accommodation at year end and current**

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	31 October 2020
165	174	199	214

- 4.7 Merton has been successful in managing homelessness demand, as demonstrated by tables 5 and 6. Temporary accommodation use is low and

homelessness preventions are high. Nevertheless, further reduction in TA use and associated costs remains a priority.

**Table 6: Homelessness Preventions at year end and current**

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	31 October 2020
465	504	480	264

- 4.8 The SHMA also considers affordability, reviewing the various approaches adopted in terms of the proportion of income a household should reasonably spend on housing. The recommendation is that the starting point should be that no more than 37.5% of household income should normally be spent on housing costs (e.g. rent; mortgage; serviced charges) and this should be the basis for any assessment of the affordability of new homes. It should be stressed that the 37.5% threshold is arrived at through examination of private rents. Some flexibility should be applied, for example acknowledging that a lower figure may be appropriate for social rented housing and a higher figure, not exceeding 40%, for owner occupation, private rent or shared ownership which cost more than social rent. This assumes that it is reasonable for a household with a lower disposable income and a more restricted choice of accommodation to spend a lower proportion on housing costs than a household with a relatively high income which, as well as having more cash to spend, may exercise a choice to spend more on housing costs, for example to purchase a home that represents a long-term investment or to rent a home in a more expensive area.
- 4.9 The tables below are taken from the SHMA. The first illustrates suggested income thresholds for different housing costs and should be seen as a guide rather than a fixed approach. The second looks at costs in different locations as further guidance on assessing affordability. Note that, even at lower quartile rents, the required income is above the median for households working and living in the borough in all locations and above the median for all employment other than in Mitcham and Morden.

**Table 7: Suggested income thresholds for different levels of housing cost**

Housing Cost per Month (£)	% of Income	Income Threshold (£) (gross)
400	25	19,200
600	29.2	24,686
800	32.5	29,538
1000	35.2	34,065
1200	37.5	38,400
1400	39.4	41,615
1467	40	44,010

**Table 8: Annual gross income required to afford lowest cost private tenures (rent or purchase) in different locations in Merton**

	Lower Quartile income required to purchase home	Lower Quartile income required to rent home
Mitcham	£63,900	£33,600
Morden	£79,900	£33,600
Raynes Park	£91,000	£38,400
South Wimbledon/Colliers Wood	£85,800	£38,400
Wimbledon	£115,300	£43,200
Merton	£81,700	£38,400

4.10 Based on the latest London Rents Map figures, the table below contrasts weekly private sector rents (rounded to the nearest £1) in Wimbledon and Mitcham, the highest and lowest cost areas in the borough.

**Table 9: Highest and Lowest Rents**

Wimbledon	Lower quartile	Median	Borough Median
1 bed	£273	£294	£288
2 bed	£300	£346	£323
3 bed	£415	£464	£409
Mitcham	Lower quartile	Median	Borough Median
1 bed	£211	£231	£288
2 bed	£254	£282	£323
3 bed	£329	£344	£409

4.11 In practice, the majority of these rent levels are not affordable to those on median incomes without Housing Benefit Support. The relevant Local Housing Allowance levels for. The borough, which falls into three Broad Market Areas, are set out in the table below.

**Table 10: Local Housing Allowance weekly rates Apr 2020- Mar 21**

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed
Inner southwest London	£295.39	£356.71	£441.46
Outer southwest London	£241.64	£304.93	£368.22
Outer south London	£201.37	£253.15	£316.44

Source – [local housing allowance 2020-21 gov.uk \(table 4\)](#)

4.12 Overall, while properties are available at Local Housing Allowance rates in both higher and lower cost areas, median rents will be out of reach in many cases for lower income households. This reinforces the need for homes at genuinely affordable rents and this is considered further below.

4.13 The Local Plan is the primary reference for new development. A key aim is *“creating a high quality urban and suburban environment where development is*



*well designed and contributes to the function and character of the borough”* and new housing supply will be an important contributor to this ambition. The Plan currently aims to deliver a minimum of 11,732 homes in the period 2021-36 and intends to:

- a) Require good design and create socially mixed, inclusive and sustainable neighbourhoods
- b) Seek a type and size mix to meet need across all tenures including family and smaller homes, affordable and special needs housing
- c) Require all new homes to minimise energy use and to be net-zero carbon
- d) 90% of all new homes to be accessible and adaptable, with 10% wheelchair accessible

4.14 Emerging policy in the Local Plan expects 50% of new homes to be affordable and the current 60:40 ratio of affordable rent to intermediate changes to 70:30, recognising the particular need for genuinely affordable rented products in the context of the need profile outlined above. It is expected that sites of 10 or more homes should deliver 50% affordable homes on public land and 35% elsewhere, in line with the London Plan and the London Housing Strategy. For smaller sites of 2- 9 homes, a 20% financial contribution is sought. Should this emerging Local Plan policy pass independent examination, the council will need to draw up an approach to spend cash in lieu gathered with its partners on increasing the supply of affordable housing

4.15 As it stands, the Local Plan aligns well with the priorities identified in this document, to increase the supply of affordable homes. However, the recent Planning White Paper sets out proposals that may alter the context significantly.

4.16 In July 2019, the council declared a Climate Emergency and committed to working toward becoming a net-zero carbon borough by 2050 in line with regional and national targets. This document should be viewed alongside the [Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#), which set out the council’s approach, in particular to the 86,000 existing homes that are responsible for around 46% of

emissions locally. Similarly, the Local Plan sets out policy in relation to the new homes with which this document is primarily concerned.

- 4.17 This document is not specifically concerned with the Private Rented Sector except in so far as it contributes to fuelling or meeting need and demand. It has been suggested that a separate strategy to address the council's relationship with the sector should be developed. For the purposes of this document, it is worth noting that the council relies heavily on the private rented sector to provide temporary accommodation but at high cost, including a relatively high proportion of nightly payments. Overall, the sector makes up 20% of the housing stock and, as in the rest of London, has expanded in recent years. Most of it is well managed and is a vital resource for working people needing access to the local and London-wide jobs market. Parts of the sector are poorly managed and maintained, contributing to housing register demand, and impacting negatively on health and wellbeing. Responses to the public consultation on this document have highlighted the importance of housing enforcement and the [council's housing enforcement policies](#) and [Housing in Multiple Occupation \(HMO\) licensing](#) in maintaining and improving standards in the private sector.
- 4.18 The council's Adult Social Care services have statutory responsibilities to meet the needs of individuals eligible for support under the Care Act. Including accommodation- based care and support. Accommodation settings range from Residential and Nursing Care Homes (39 in the borough) to Extra Care Housing Schemes (3 in the borough) and Supported Living schemes (20+ in the borough). With the exception of care homes, the individual has a tenancy with a registered provider and care and support provision alongside, often provided by an arm of the housing provider.
- 4.19 People with a Learning Disability are a particular focus. And a range of projects is underway to review the accommodation offer, with a view to market-shaping existing and prospective providers to change what they offer. In addition to this the day opportunities review has the potential to release some sites that

currently have a day centre in situ and repurpose these, prioritising housing - either specialist or general needs dependent on the right fit for each site.

4.20 There are 763 people with a registration of moderate or severe learning disabilities. Of these:

- 287 of these are living with families and receive funded care packages.
- 546 people aged 18+ are known to Integrated Health and Social care.
- There are 233 service users receiving 24-hour support services: 127 in-borough services (55%) and 106 (45%) out of borough.
- Of the 106 service users receiving out of borough services, 44 receive services from a neighbouring borough and 62 from other boroughs. The vast majority of these placements are in residential care homes
- CCG has 16 CHC cases placed outside of the borough.
- There is a significant proportion (estimated 100-150) adults aged 50+, and living with parents/family carers and it is questionable how sustainable these arrangements are.
- Demand in transitions is expected to be around 27 over the next year.

4.21 There is a wider group of children and young people for whom preparation for adulthood will require support to find the right accommodation in the borough. These include care leavers and people with Autism or mental health needs. The ideal is to develop small scale (typically less than 12 units) independent living units that allow people to have a tenancy at affordable rent and the ability to wrap around an individual package of care and support that can be flexed up and down as needs change.

4.22 Larger sites may lend themselves to Extra Care Housing or a mixed economy of units that serve a range of client groups and do not over-complicate barriers to community inclusion/cohesion. In Older people's services there are four main cohorts:

- People who live in their own home (owned and private rented)
- People in social rented homes (mainstream and sheltered housing)

- Extra Care Schemes where people own or rent their home but the scheme has a dedicated, often on site, care team
- Residential and Nursing Care Homes.

4.23 With an ageing population, living longer, and many living more years with ill health/difficulties with everyday independent living, consideration needs to be given to the supply of decent and accessible accommodation, across all tenures, that can be adapted to help people live at home for as long as possible and where additional care and support can be increased and decreased as necessary.

## **5. Barriers and Constraints**

5.1 There are barriers to achieving desired outcomes.

5.2 There is a lack of larger sites, with 90% of planning applications on average currently for sites of 10 or fewer homes, which is under the national threshold where the council can require a proportion of affordable housing via the planning system. Some Registered Providers have told the council that they are not interested in developing sites with fewer than 50 homes, although others have indicated that they can develop smaller sites if they have existing stock nearby.

5.3 The planning system is producing limited affordable housing in Merton due to the lack of large sites coming forward and within this there is a perceived over-provision of shared ownership, much of which is not genuinely affordable to those in housing need. Fragmented land ownership and expensive land prices in Merton has of over 10 homes that in recent years, although overall delivery of new homes has exceeded London Plan targets, delivery of affordable homes has been low.

5.4 Moving to a position in which new Local Plan and London Plan targets for affordable homes are met will be challenging due to the lack of large sites. However, it should be recognised that if proposed planning reforms come into

effect, the picture could change. For example, local authorities may be able to work with registered providers to use the proposed infrastructure fund that may replace S106 and CIL to develop smaller sites among other options.

- 5.5 As planning reform hasn't been secured, the council is seeking to address the gap in national planning policy not requiring smaller sites to contribute to affordable homes by creating a new planning policy in Merton's emerging Local Plan. The new planning policy would require a 20% cash in lieu contribution from smaller sites towards new affordable homes, and will be adopted by Merton subject to passing the Local Plan independent examination. Merton operated a similar policy
- 5.6 The council has transferred its stock and owns relatively little land suitable for development. Around 24 sites are identified within the General Fund, but the council has no access to the Housing Revenue Account land and borrowing opportunities that other boroughs are using to develop new social rented and other affordable homes. The council closed its own Development Company, Merantun Developments Ltd, in November 2020 and in December 2021 resolved to dispose of several sites including the four sites that Merantun gained planning approval for a total of 93 homes, aiming to secure 100% affordable housing.
- 5.7 Developers frequently question the viability of affordable housing delivery, a challenge shared across London, leading to delay in delivery and, frequently, inability to deliver the optimum outcome. At the same time, the registered provider sector is dominated by a relatively small group of organisations<sup>2</sup> and could benefit from both greater diversity and closer partnership with existing providers.
- 5.8 Achieving the required acceleration in supply will mean significant new development, alongside improvements to and more efficient use of existing housing stock. It is recognised that there may be anxieties about the scale of development in a borough with a broadly suburban character.

- 5.9 Any increase in affordable housing supply will require resources. Most obviously, capital investment through grant to providers and borrowing, by the council or partners. Borrowing rates for Public Works Loan Board funding are historically low and below commercial lending levels and local authorities are making increasing use of borrowing opportunities. Revenue investment to support delivery of policy will also be needed, for example recruitment and training of planning and development staff. Note that it is possible to capitalise some of these costs in relation to projects that go forward, potentially mitigating any revenue impact. In addition, it will be necessary to consider how other resources, such as public land, can be brought into play and this has already started with the inclusion of surplus council-owned sites in Merton's emerging Local Plan as allocated for housing and December 2021's decision on the disposal of council sites for housing. With these and the other constraints noted above in mind, the following sections review the options.
- 5.10 While it is difficult to assess the long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, it has added extra pressure. The council is committed to helping the most vulnerable in society and has successfully used Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) funding and close partnership working with other statutory, voluntary and faith groups to house rough sleepers and others with no recourse to public funds during the pandemic. In addition, the Home Office is working to move many thousands of asylum seekers across the country into dispersed accommodation from the hotels in which they were housed during the pandemic. This welcome approach to supporting vulnerable households puts extra pressure on an already stretched housing market and accommodation spaces. Government and GLA funding will need to keep pace and not be reduced if the council is to sustain this good work.

## 6. Delivering the Right New Homes

### Affordability

- 6.1 As noted earlier, the high costs of private renting and house purchase relative to local incomes is the main barrier to securing a suitable home for many households. While demand is met effectively by the market for many, this is not the case for households at or below median income levels. Improving affordability is therefore a key goal and the priorities and actions identified in this document place a strong emphasis on homes at social or London Affordable Rent levels and delivery of a higher proportion of these than is currently achieved. Market and intermediate options will also be needed but, to some extent at least, the former will be delivered without the need for significant intervention and delivery of the latter is already at an acceptable level. The key question, therefore, is what the council can do, alone and in partnership, to shift delivery in a direction more attuned to local needs and local incomes.
- 6.2 The very broad approach to affordability at the national level, encompassing everything from social rent to costs at 90% of market levels, is unhelpful and, while the council cannot impose and enforce a local approach, a clear statement of intent may be beneficial. To this end, the council should state its clear preference for new homes at Social and London Affordable Rents. It is possible, as some London councils have done, to adopt a “Merton Rent” approach, setting out a range of rents for different types and sizes of accommodation that are recognised by the council as genuinely affordable. However, this approach is not enforceable and, at best, is likely to produce figures broadly in line with social or London Affordable Rent levels.
- 6.3 Shared ownership will form part of the range of affordable housing products, within the ratio set out in the following paragraph. In general terms, while classed as affordable housing, shared ownership and other sub-market products are not accessible to those on lower incomes, although it is not straightforward to identify a specific income level above or below which intermediate housing is an attractive option. This will depend not only on

incomes, but on household attitudes to housing costs, expectations about future income and employment, availability of support from, for example, family members and other factors. Costs will vary according to provider, type of scheme, size of property and so on but, as an indication, Clarion assess the average purchase cost of a new home at £309,000 and of a property bought on resale by an existing occupier at £265,000. The average share purchase is 37% and the average deposit is 5-10% of the value of the purchased share.

- 6.4 Planning policy in Merton's emerging Local Plan will set out the proportions required based on 50% affordable homes with a 70:30 ratio of affordable rent to intermediate. However, it should be recognised that, while the 50% threshold remains London Plan policy and has been adopted by the majority of London boroughs, it is rarely achieved, as has been the case in Merton. This illustrates that although both the London Plan and Local Plan affordable housing planning policies are ambitious, they also contain appropriate levels of flexibility to ensure that these requirements do not impinge adversely on development viability.
- 6.5 The Mayor has adopted pragmatic approach in setting the 35% threshold, with 50% remaining the aspiration other than on public land. This approach is also replicated in Merton's emerging Local Plan policies and has been implemented in the borough since the London Plan was adopted in March 2021. In practice, approaches to affordable housing delivery will vary on a site-by-site basis, depending on factors such as land values, build costs and scale. Affordable housing proportions will therefore vary. There is early evidence across London and in Merton that developers of larger sites are already adhering to the 35% affordable housing threshold per site (of which 70% affordable and 30% intermediate), enabling them to progress the "fast track" route.
- 6.6 While not directly a matter for this exercise, there is a need to identify the groups that new supply aims to assist. In the short term it will not be possible to meet all needs, so it will be necessary to prioritise and to explain the basis for decisions.





## 7. Partnership

- 7.1 Without a Housing Revenue Account, the council depends on partnership with developers and registered providers. A range of options could be adopted, in whole or in part, to maximise delivery and steer provision in the preferred direction. It has been suggested that registered providers are keen for the council to set out its ambitions and a starting point should be the establishment of a revised and strengthened registered provider forum, bringing together registered providers, developers, Planning and Housing staff. This would provide a basis to test approaches, improve communication and seek consensus and a setting for collaboration on other priorities, such as sustainability and delivery of low carbon homes. Within this, the council's relationship with Clarion, responsible for the council's former stock and the largest single provider in the borough, will be important.
- 7.2 Given the relatively small number of registered providers and developers active at any scale in the borough, the council should consider whether greater diversity could be achieved, for example by approaching smaller registered providers and companies who may be willing to consider smaller sites. At the same time, it will be important to maintain and improve existing relationships. A renewed Forum should be the mechanism through which approaches are identified and tested.
- 7.3 Clarity over the treatment of planning applications, particularly matters that may lead to refusal, is important. This might include establishing processes for early and open engagement and a clear and vigorous approach to viability challenges where affordable housing proportions are questioned. At the political level, there is a need to clarify priorities, for example how housing provision is treated, in comparison to and relationship with other development such as schools or alongside other requirements that may impact on housing viability. Merton's Local Plan sets out approaches to design and quality, the council has produced significant work on the borough character study and small sites toolkit and the

council should continue to be proactive in creating area design codes, so developers and registered providers know what is acceptable and achievable.

- 7.4 The preponderance of small sites has been highlighted as an issue. Over 90% of applications for new homes over the last ten years have been for sites accommodating less than ten homes, a position very different to that of most London boroughs. As already discussed earlier in this report, this is due in larger part to fragmented land ownership and high land prices, both factors making land assembly expensive. This also makes it more difficult and costly to deliver estate and town centre-based regeneration projects. In recognition of the opportunity that small sites could make to contributing to meeting affordable housing needs the new Local Plan is proposing a policy requiring a cash in lieu payment from sites below 10 homes. Should this new policy be able to be adopted, it would lever new funding for affordable homes which could be used with Registered Providers and other partners to increase affordable housing supply.
- 7.5 In the past the council has sought market value on land disposal when, in some cases, alternatives might be more beneficial and lead to cost savings longer term. In December 2021 the council resolved to dispose of some council-owned sites for 100% affordable housing. There may also be options to redevelop or repurpose council owned buildings within the General Fund to achieve similar benefits. Housing officers should develop the case for a different approach for member consideration.

## 8. Direct intervention

- 8.1 There are opportunities for council-led approaches directly or through a wholly owned subsidiary or joint venture vehicle, enabling the council to take risk and profit from development. A company that can deliver new schemes without the need for a developer can have a significant impact on delivery and on the type of development that can be achieved as well as using the potential developer profit as cross-subsidy. This would offer more control over what is built, potentially increasing the number of genuinely affordable homes.
- 8.2 It has also been suggested that the council could consider re-establishing a Housing Revenue Account, with the borrowing capacity that goes with it. While the process for this is simple, only requiring the council to have a stock holding of 199 or more homes, it would require significant upfront investment and a long lead in. A key question for both options is whether the council currently has the internal capacity, skills and knowledge to implement them and, if not, whether the necessary capital and revenue resources can be secured and over what time period. Public Works Loan Board funding is the most obvious source of capital investment in the medium term, since it would be some time before the Housing Revenue Account itself could support significant borrowing through rent revenues. In addition, the Mayor's Building Council Homes for Londoners programme offers both capital investment through grant and capacity building through training and access to GLA expertise. A new build programme leading to the eventual establishment of a Housing Revenue Account could, over the longer term, offer the best opportunity to deliver new homes at social rents.
- 8.3 An immediate priority should be the establishment of a Housing Investment Fund, consolidating resources including the Right to Buy receipts still available under the stock transfer agreement, commuted sums, prudential borrowing, New Homes Bonus and S106 and use this to invest strategically to create the desired mix of housing types, sizes, tenures and affordability. Alternatively, or alongside this approach, funding (such as from Community Infrastructure Levy) could be used to invest in public realm improvement and social infrastructure to

facilitate or unlock sites and to encourage support for development among the community and politicians. However, it should be stressed that the sums involved are not large enough to support large scale interventions. For example, the S106 pot is £5m and identifying creative uses is not simple. Using the funding to support viability has been suggested but with no specific proposals, while using such funding as direct grant has limited potential as the sums involved may not be large enough to attract interest from registered providers. Support from the GLA housebuilding capacity fund has been secured but this is primarily seed funding aimed at building capacity, not a capital resource. It would be important to develop a Housing investment Strategy alongside this to identify investment priorities and mechanisms.

- 8.4 The council is exploring the potential for council land to be used for housing, with the work due to complete during 2021. A Property Asset Management Board reviews opportunities and the case for housing investment needs to be made here, for example by identifying future cost savings, service improvements or community benefits rather than simply seeking the maximum capital receipt. For example, it has been suggested that the council's own land resources could be focussed on vulnerable groups rather than general needs, offering both more certain delivery of specialist housing and revenue savings.
- 8.5 The relative lack of larger sites or, where they exist, the slow pace at which they come forward, have been identified as barriers to delivery. As well as supporting site assembly or packaging of smaller sites, by the council and with partners, the council could consider land acquisition through its company, through joint ventures or support from the Mayor's Land Fund and its own Housing Investment Fund.
- 8.6 It would also be possible to create new sites and opportunities by proactively identifying strategic sites for demolition / acquisition / partnership led development and, if required, use compulsory purchase order powers to do this. This approach is being taken forward for regeneration programmes on the High Path, Eastfields and Ravensbury estates. The council could also use its

compulsory purchase order powers with Clarion, who have no such powers, to buy back leaseholds, subject to back-to-back funding by them.

- 8.7 Where key sites are not being brought forward for development, the council could consider entering negotiations to acquire them in order to speed up development. Opportunities could be identified by reviewing the current site allocations in the Local Plan and a thorough review of land and property assets in Merton's ownership. As noted above, the council has a number of sites in the General Fund and it would be helpful to review these in terms of their potential and location, in particular where there may be other publicly owned sites adjacent or nearby. As the public-sector contracts (e.g. rationalised NHS and LA neighbourhood facilities) and as town centre retail uses decline, there are opportunities to re-vision the use of land and assets. The One Public Estate map of land ownership indicates that opportunities are limited outside Morden Town Centre, but this should be kept under review to identify, align and merge public sector land interests with partners to unlock opportunities and bring greater additionality. As part of this, the council should identify gap funding needs for partners and developers to see whether a portfolio approach with the GLA on grant funding could help. A successful approach to GLA would require identified sites and proposed funding requirements.
- 8.8 Similarly, any review of potential sites should include surplus brownfield sites. The London Plan includes two open space sites and one industrial site and all three are coming forward but, again, the position should be kept under review as new opportunities emerge. In terms of other changes of use, particularly on high streets, the recent announcement of further changes to permitted development will doubtless result in increased delivery through this route, although the lack of planning input and local authority engagement means that the benefits may at best not be fully realised or, at worst, that delivery will be in direct conflict with local priorities. It is unlikely that such developments will produce affordable housing and, as noted earlier, there are continuing concerns over quality, although government has put forward proposals to address this issue. It is not yet clear how far planning authorities will be able to exert control

and it may be that a pre-emptive approach to assessing opportunities, including CPO or agreed purchase options for the council or partners would be appropriate.

- 8.9 Innovative techniques such as modular building and off-site construction are increasingly available and may have potential to speed up delivery. While these approaches are not being adopted at a scale that offers significant cost or time savings, at this stage, the most practical approach may be to encourage development of this kind where it could provide in- borough temporary accommodation as an alternative to using the private rented sector.
- 8.10 Given the preponderance of smaller sites, the council should also consider mechanisms to engage with local SME builders and developers and owners of small sites around development, where some government support is available. This could include guidance and assistance on planning and building control processes, supporting site assembly and packaging of small sites to improve viability, and use of a Housing Investment Fund should the council decide to establish one. The council has used GLA Homebuilding Capacity Funding to create a Small Sites Supplementary Planning Document for Merton. All of these might sit alongside support for construction training and other employment initiatives.
- 8.11 Finally, both government and the Mayor are taking steps to support self-build and community building. While neither will deliver large numbers, they could be a useful adjunct to more traditional approaches and play a role in helping local people to access the housing ladder.

## 9. Density and intensification

- 9.1 Any new development faces the prospect of local opposition through the planning process, particularly if it is perceived as out of keeping with local character or likely to put pressure on local amenities and services, for example through increased traffic or demand for school places. In turn, local opposition can encourage both officers and members to be cautious in supporting development. In a borough with an established suburban character, development that increases building heights or density is likely to be a concern for residents and therefore for members.
- 9.2 While new supply should be delivered in a way that is sensitive to and respectful of the character of the borough, this need not preclude intensification. Indeed, meeting housing demand will require a change of approach. It will therefore be essential to demonstrate the benefits of change to residents, businesses and local politicians, beyond the immediate benefits of reducing housing need and preventing homelessness. For example, improving the quality and liveability of neighbourhoods, the positive impact of good design, benefits to the local economy and business through provision of more affordable homes such as increased disposable incomes, better access to employment.
- 9.3 Merton received money from the GLA's Homebuilding Capacity Fund to increase housing delivery in the borough, in particular on small sites. This included a [Characterisation Study of Merton](#), looking at opportunities for intensification and [Housing Delivery Study](#), looking at historic delivery trends, engaging with developers, landowners, registered providers and council officers and members about barriers to housing delivery and opportunities to increase delivery.
- 9.4 Merton has also prepared a [Small Sites Toolkit](#), which is aimed at landowners and developers and their design teams seeking planning permission. The document provides guidance on delivering high quality developments on sites below 0.25 hectares and will explore the different types of small site found across the borough that may be suitable for delivering new homes.



- 9.5 The council has declared a Climate Emergency, has adopted a [Climate Strategy and Action Plan 2020](#) and is undertaking a range of actions to deliver ambitious carbon reduction targets among other environmental measures. As part of this, the council is considering more ambitious standards for new homes in the New Local Plan to minimise Merton's future domestic retrofit burden (and the significant associated costs) and to ensure that energy use and carbon emissions from new homes are minimised.
- 9.6 Building on this work, the starting point should be identification of areas where there is potential for intensification and, conversely, neighbourhoods where this approach would not be appropriate, giving clarity to developers and residents, and this work has commenced as part of the Characterisation Study. This could include areas where density is already above average, such as former council estates and town centres or neighbourhoods with a high PTAL score. It could also include areas where there is no or limited residential development at present, such as poor quality or under-used open space or redundant industrial land. Developer challenge to affordable housing on viability grounds has been noted earlier and supporting intensification is one way to increase viability, with demonstrable benefits for affordability.
- 9.7 Promotion of and support for good design, the provision of physical and social infrastructure and measures to improve energy efficiency, minimise carbon emissions and water use, and promote other environmental benefits should be at the forefront of policies embracing intensification. Some of this is already in place through planning policy and design guidance at the London and Local Plan levels but it may be advisable to review the local approach to provide a clear direction. It will also be necessary to balance the need for more homes with the need for greater quality, recognising that this may involve some trade-offs.
- 9.8 It should be stressed that much of the above may be subject to change if the Planning White Paper proceeds as planned. For example, the designation of neighbourhoods on zoning principles and introduction of national level design guidance may undermine or entirely replace local approaches. As noted earlier,

at this stage it is prudent to avoid too much speculation and to proceed based on legislation and policy as is exists.

## 10. Housing for particular needs

- 10.1 The needs of more vulnerable households, for example older people, those with physical or learning disabilities and care leavers, emerged strongly in initial discussions. Data and analysis is incorporated in Merton's Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2019 and is summarised in the "Background and context" chapter to this document. These will need to be addressed as part of wider ambitions for new supply. It was also recognised that current and future demand from these groups is not well understood and that further work will be needed to obtain an accurate picture, both of needs and of the pathways through which households access housing.
- 10.2 Having said this, it is also felt that there is significant existing provision, although not all of it is fit for purpose or making best use of land and buildings. Enabling people to stay in the borough is a priority, for example to allow care leavers or those in other care settings to sustain support networks.
- 10.3 The older population is predicted to grow by 17% over the next decade but demand for sheltered housing and extra care appears to be weakening.<sup>4</sup> This may reflect changing attitudes as well as the availability of more flexible home care options using new technology. Certainly, the direction of travel in care is towards home-based alternatives and community support. However, the national and local demographic trends suggests a need to keep this under review while recognising that there is too much sheltered housing capacity at present. This offers opportunities to re-purpose existing provision and/or intensify use of sites.
- 10.4 Care Homes play an important role but there has been an over reliance on these settings, in and, where there is no local alternative, outside the borough. Part of the solution could be a process of de-registration, allowing providers to make improvements and re-register as supported living schemes. The council should explore both the appetite of providers to undertake this change and the costs and benefits of facilitating this market shaping.

- 10.5 There are similar questions around supported housing, where relatively large numbers are in large shared houses while support could be better provided elsewhere with existing buildings re- purposed for general needs and sites reconfigured to enable mixed development.
- 10.6 There is a need for greater clarity around move-on options, for example into independent living from supported housing and, more widely, on options at different life stages. Linked to this, there is potential for more interventions to support people to remain in their homes, for example through aids and adaptations using Disabled Facilities Grants, extensions and de-conversions.
- 10.7 Identifying and delivering the right options will require effective integration of policy and service provision across key service areas, including Housing, Children, Schools and Families and Adult Social Care. It will also require informed decisions about the use of capital and revenue resources to strike the right balance between, for example, capital expenditure on new provision and revenue spend on existing or new support options that could keep people in their present homes. It should also be stressed that investment in specialist provision will need to be balanced with investment in general needs and the council will need to make decisions on resource allocation accordingly. There will also be opportunities to seek funding in partnership with registered providers through the Affordable Homes Programme, which includes a specific allocation for supported and specialised housing.
- 10.8 There is potential to support the development of innovative solutions, such as Homeshare. Where older people are under-occupying homes, the council could offer a 'vetting' and management service for older people prepared to offer a room for rent to young people, particularly those affected by the increased age for the single room rate.
- 10.9 Although primarily a matter for the [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy](#), it has been reported that there is no locally provided supported accommodation for rough sleepers and agencies working with rough sleepers are keen to see the council trial a Housing First approach. It remains to be seen

what lasting impact emergency measures to get people off the streets during the pandemic will have but there is some commitment to deliver lasting change.

10.10 In terms of homelessness and supply, immediate questions for the council include the potential role of modular buildings in providing a short to medium-term option for temporary accommodation to avoid expensive private rented sector placements, potentially incorporating Housing First, through a relatively modest capital investment, what mix of new supply would best fit the demand profile from homeless households and what proportion of new lettings should go to this group.

## 11. Using and improving the existing stock

- 11.1 Whatever the level of new development, most of Merton's 86,000 housing stock has already been built. This section considers, across tenures, measures to make best use of it to meet need, address physical and economic regeneration objectives and assist other priorities, such as climate change.
- 11.2 In partnership with Clarion, a major regeneration programme is underway on Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury estates. Most of the delivery of new homes within this 15 year regeneration programme will take place outside the timescale of this five year housing strategy. Further opportunities exist, for example around town centres, which could be supported by Mayoral or government funding subject to successful bids. Regeneration is expected to play a key role in addressing the significant disparities in income, health and wellbeing between the east and west of the borough and Merton's emerging Local Plan sets out intentions for a range of neighbourhoods.
- 11.3 Clarion is the largest provider of affordable homes in the borough and its regeneration programme has the potential to make the largest single contribution to increased supply if development on the estates can take place at scale alongside improvements to the existing stock. As noted above, given the 15 year programme, much of this will happen beyond the timeframe of this document. In general, and beyond the transferred estates, it is recognised that the main opportunities for development at scale are around transport hubs and areas where the public sector owns land.
- 11.4 In general, regeneration is influenced by the same factors considered earlier in relation to any new housing supply. Decisions on the council's approach to intensification and its capital expenditure priorities, along with other factors, will be relevant here. Given the potential scale of programmes in, for example, town centres, particular attention will need to be paid to the council's use of its own land, its willingness and ability to buy land to facilitate development and delivery of infrastructure, including access to GLA funding, and its approach to viability assessment.

- 11.5 Discussion so far has identified the need for better joint working across Housing and Planning functions. Suggestions for further action include a housing presence in discussions on applications at an early stage, encouragement for registered providers to sign up to schemes at the point planning applications are submitted and work with Planning Committee members to ensure the case for housing is well understood.
- 11.6 Responses to public consultation on the draft housing delivery strategy emphasised the importance of housing enforcement. While this housing delivery strategy is focussed on the rationale and actions to deliver new homes, the council agrees that maintaining the quality of existing homes is important as this improves quality of life for residents and can also help with other priorities such as reducing carbon emissions from existing homes (and energy bills for the occupiers). The council is committed to improving standards in the private rented sector and has introduced new [civil penalties policies in 2019](#), including fines and prosecutions for landlords of private rented properties that don't ensure that their properties are well managed, properly maintained, habitable and safe. The council also operates a licensing regime for all Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), requiring any landlord renting to a household of more than 2 people forming more than one household to be licensed. Licenses address fire safety, rubbish collection, noise and disturbance, and failure to comply has resulted in prosecution. The council is actively keeping other measures under review such as selective landlord licensing and planning measures such as Article 4 Directions for HMOs.

## **12. Governance and decision making**

- 12.1 The role of the housing service in a non-stock holding borough is necessarily limited and delivering the objectives in this strategy will require consideration of organisational structures and governance. This should include a review of the required skills, knowledge and associated responsibilities and opportunities for stronger partnership arrangements with registered providers and developers, together with an assessment of the potential costs of establishing an improved development function.
- 12.2 The council is not at present geared up to take on significant new responsibilities around development and this may require investment in staffing with revenue implications. For example, Bromley (also a borough with no stock) is establishing a new Housing Revenue Account and has invested in a multi-disciplinary development team and a revised and strengthened partnership group involving registered providers and developers. Investment in staffing may be required to ensure the required knowledge and skill are in place.





# **Housing Delivery Strategy**

## **Action Plan**

**Final Draft**

**January 2022**

## Action Plan

<b>6</b>	<b>Delivering the right new homes</b>
6.1	Emphasise intention to deliver social rented homes in guidance and negotiations with developers and RPs
6.2	Adopt benchmarks as a baseline
6.3	Support London Living Rent development
6.4	Consider approach to cash in lieu on smaller sites

<b>7</b>	<b>Partnership</b>
7.1	Review and relaunch RP and Developer Forum
7.2	Identify and approach additional providers
7.3	Review approach to viability challenge and identify any need for additional resources
7.4	Consider ongoing programme of continuous development for members in relation to viability
7.5	Review and update design codes
7.6	Develop approach to assessing value in land sales

<b>8</b>	<b>Direct intervention</b>
8.1	Consider re-establishment of HRA
8.2	Establish Housing Investment Fund including establishment for a PWLB investment strategy to provide genuinely affordable homes in Merton

8.3	Review potential for off-site construction and modular building
8.4	Review engagement with SMEs

<b>9</b>	<b>Density and intensification</b>
9.1	Build on Characterisation Study and Small Sites Supplementary Planning Guidance to identify and make the case for areas where intensification will be supported
9.2	Establish local zoning guidance to indicate heights and densities that can be achieved and supported with good design

<b>10</b>	<b>Housing for particular needs</b>
10.1	Research to assess demand for supported and older people's housing and review existing provision and assess its effectiveness
10.2	Assess demand for independent living and the scope for shared options, including the potential of an appropriate programme of aids, adaptations and use of technology to reduce demand for new or alternative homes.
10.3	Assess the scope for redevelopment/remodelling of existing sheltered housing
10.4	Identify housing options that enable older people to right size and free up equity and larger family housing; potentially offering financial incentives around support to move etc.
10.5	Consider partnering with a housing association to develop a product for older people that enables older owners the opportunity to access an ethical equity release product on their existing home. The equity released could be used to invest in a long-term care package or to pay for ongoing maintenance and repairs

10.6	Quantify potential savings through capital and revenue investment
------	---

<b>11</b>	<b>Using and improving the existing stock</b>
11.1	Establish housing staff presence alongside planning colleagues in early-stage planning discussions on estate regeneration
11.2	Agree and publish position on intensification, including neighbourhood level guidance on acceptable heights and density
11.3	Implement Housing Investment Fund with guidance on its application in regeneration schemes

<b>12</b>	<b>Governance and decision making</b>
12.1	Determine the appropriate structures within Merton's governance framework to ensure agile decision making
12.2	Establish a Delivery Board to oversee progress
12.3	Establish Housing and Land Commission
12.4	Consider establishing an appropriate structure and decision-making channels to support housing development

## **Committee: Cabinet**

**Date: 17 January 2022**

Wards: ALL

### **Subject: Merton 2030 Strategic Framework and approach to delivery**

Lead officer: Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration

Lead member: Cllr Owen Pritchard, Joint Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance, Recovery and the Local Economy

Contact officer: Catherine Dunn [catherine.dunn@merton.gov.uk](mailto:catherine.dunn@merton.gov.uk) / John Dimmer [john.dimmer@merton.gov.uk](mailto:john.dimmer@merton.gov.uk) / Frank Dick [frank.dick@merton.gov.uk](mailto:frank.dick@merton.gov.uk)

---

### **Recommendations:**

- A. To approve the Strategic Framework comprising an ambition for Merton, strategic priorities, guiding principles and delivery objectives as set out in Appendix 1.
  - B. To note our immediate response to the key themes emerging from the Your Merton engagement as set out in Appendix 2.
  - C. To note that further work will take place within the council and with partners on the delivery objectives and the plans to deliver on these objectives and that an update will be provided to Cabinet in June 2022.
  - D. To agree that an annual update will be provided to Full Council on progress and updated plans.
  - E. To agree that the Strategic Framework set out in Appendix 1 will be communicated to residents, businesses and partners, with content, design and communication channels adjusted to reflect the different audiences through the appropriate channels in January 2022.
- 

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The pandemic has had, and continues to have, a profound impact on the people and businesses of Merton. Many people have spent more time locally as a result of the lockdowns. They have come to appreciate more than ever the assets that the borough has, in particular its green spaces, community spirit and local high streets. However, this has also pinpointed some of the frustrations people have with the things that negatively impact on what people enjoy most about the borough such as litter, traffic congestion and anti-social behaviour in some parts of the borough.
- 1.2 In September 2020 Cabinet asked officers to develop an ambition for the future of Merton as part of our recovery planning from the pandemic. They asked for this ambition to be co-designed with residents, businesses and partners.
- 1.3 Beginning in April 2021 we have undertaken one of the most extensive listening exercises in recent times to understand the impact of the pandemic and what people want their borough to look like in the future. Thousands have taken part in this engagement across a range of different platforms – statistical survey, community groups, open access website and focus groups.

- 1.4 Using this insight - alongside other recent engagement activities and data and intelligence about the borough - we have developed an ambition for the borough rooted in the views and aspirations of residents. Alongside this ambition, we have developed a strategic framework for delivery which includes 5 priorities, 10 principles and a range of delivery objectives for each of the priorities.
- 1.5 This strategic framework is intended to shape and guide the future delivery of the council, how it invests its resources and its approach to working with partners. To deliver the ambition that residents have set out will require all of us – the council, residents, businesses, voluntary and community sector and public sector bodies – to work collaboratively and cooperatively together.
- 1.6 Once agreed by Cabinet the Strategic Framework will be communicated to residents, businesses and partners, with content, design and communication channels adjusted to reflect the different audiences through the appropriate channels in January 2022.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1. Cabinet identified the need for an outward facing strand of the Recovery and Modernisation programme in September 2020 to support the borough's recovery from the pandemic and to deliver on recommendations from the LGA Peer Challenge. It was agreed the Council would go ahead with developing a long-term place-based strategic ambition and future priorities in collaboration with our partners. At this stage, the scale of the challenge ahead for post-pandemic recovery was becoming apparent, with emerging evidence of the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on our communities, challenges facing households across the borough and high numbers of residents on financial support with further uncertainty ahead. <sup>1</sup>
- 2.2 To this end, we have undertaken the largest borough-wide engagement programme in recent times to understand what matters most to our residents, how the pandemic has affected them and to find out their ambition for the future of the borough. We recognised that any ambition for the future and post-pandemic recovery needed to be evidence-led from the outset and rooted in the insight from those who live, work and spend time in the borough. Insight from this engagement has provided a robust evidence base about what matters most to residents in Merton, their experiences of the pandemic and what they want for the future.

## **3 OVERVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT**

- 3.1. Early in 2021 the council commissioned Traverse to work with us on developing and delivering a borough wide engagement programme – Your Merton. The engagement took place from April to August 2021. It was made up of four distinct but complementary strands:
  - Residents Perception survey;
  - Open access digital platform – Commonplace;
  - Focus groups delivered on our behalf by local VCS groups;

---

<sup>1</sup> Council response to the Covid-19 pandemic report to Full Council, August 2020

- In-depth deliberative workshops with residents.
- 3.2. The focus of the engagement was to understand three key areas:
    1. the impact of the pandemic;
    2. how people felt about their local area;
    3. what people wanted for the future – both in the short to long term.
  - 3.3. The full report has now been published and can be viewed online [here](#). Key findings are outlined below and the public document for Merton 2030 will include a short summary of the engagement findings to set the context for the ambition and strategic priorities.
  - 3.4. At the same time as the Your Merton engagement programme, a dedicated youth survey of young residents in Merton was commissioned by the Children’s Trust specifically to hear from young residents about the impact of Covid-19 and what they want in future. This has enabled us to take account of these emerging findings from the research to ensure the voice of young residents’ is reflected. Over 2,200 young residents participated in this research, which is due to be published in January 2022. Emerging insights from the draft report are referred to below.
  - 3.5. Research undertaken by BAME Voice, Mencap and Age UK in 2021, commissioned through the Health and Wellbeing Board, has also provided valuable insight into the lived experience of those hit hardest by the pandemic. All these engagement findings have informed our evidence base and our understanding of what our communities want for the future.

## 4 INSIGHT FROM THE ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. The findings from the Your Merton engagement broadly fall into three areas:
  - Assets
  - Frustrations
  - Ambitions for the future
- 4.2. **Our assets**
- 4.3. **Green spaces** emerge as a highly valued asset of Merton and part of the borough’s unique identity. People reported valuing parks and green spaces across the borough much more during the pandemic. This is echoed in the early findings of the Youth Survey research commissioned by the Children’s Trust.
- 4.4. People also spoke positively about their communities and valued the **community feel** in their local area during the pandemic. They wanted to hold onto this and see shared spaces in the borough – such as high streets and green spaces – where people can come together.

- 4.5. **Frustrations**
- 4.6. **Litter and cleanliness** came out as a big frustration for our residents and featured frequently on the open-access website. It was a common theme across all strands of the engagement and respondent groups. Your Merton community group respondents spoke negatively about dirty streets and young residents highlighted litter as one of the top problems in the borough
- 4.7. **Traffic and transport** also emerged as a significant source of frustration, although this was felt differently by respondents – from frustration about parking and traffic management to lack of safe active travel. Young people cited pollution as one of their top concerns.
- 4.8. **Anti-social behaviour and safety** concerns were expressed by residents in parts of the borough – in particular the eastern side of Merton and Mitcham. This was often connected with public spaces and issues such as public alcohol consumption. Young people consider safety to be an important issue for the future and have raised this through the Youth Survey.
- 4.9. **Isolation** emerged strongly in the feedback from the community groups. People spoke about loneliness, isolation and depression and missing their everyday activities. This is echoed in the early findings from the Children’s Trust commissioned research - almost two in five young people reported concerns about their mental health during lockdown.
- 4.10. **Declining high streets** were commented on as a source of frustration across all forms of the engagement. In the community groups, the less mobile and digitally excluded wanted to see a wider range of local independent shops and leisure facilities.
- 4.11. **Ambitions for the future**
- 4.12. **Revitalised high streets** emerged as a top ambition for the future – people wanted to see a community hub high street where people could connect and high streets which were a source of pride and identity and a destination in themselves. When asked to think towards 2030, respondents on the open access platform Commonplace had ambitions for redesigned, revitalised high streets with a mix of uses – spaces for people to socialise, mix of independent shops and more pedestrianised.
- 4.13. **Maximising Merton’s green assets** was important to residents for the future, and they wanted to see them serve a range of uses in future. They wanted their parks to support wellbeing and act as shared spaces for community activity, but also generate visitors and income as well as protecting the environment and biodiversity. It was felt that Merton has sufficient range and diversity of green spaces to accommodate a variety of uses.
- 4.14. When asked to look ahead towards 2030, as well as a vibrant high street, respondents wanted to see measures which protected the environment, such as **increased active travel and green transport**. This includes electric cars, better buses, green infrastructure and less pollution. Residents saw active travel forming part of their vision for future high streets as well as a range of other green initiatives. Addressing pollution and climate change was a top concern for young people in the resident’s survey.



- 4.15. In the findings from the Children’s Trust commissioned Youth Survey, when asked about what they wanted to see for the future in Merton, four specific themes are emerging from young residents:
- (i) The environment – (e.g. cleaner streets and less pollution)
  - (ii) Space and places – (e.g. parks and youth clubs to go to, things to do)
  - (iii) More of a say – (e.g. involved in decision-making and having a say)
  - (iv) To feel safe – (e.g. better relationship with police, more street lighting)

Over and above this, however, they wanted the same kinds of improvements in common with other residents of Merton – such as improved services, better transport and more support for those in need.

## **5 INSIGHT FROM DATA AND INTELLIGENCE.**

- 5.1. Covid-19 is known to have affected parts of our communities differently, in common with other local authority areas, and exacerbated existing inequalities and disadvantage. The economic impact of the pandemic and lockdown restrictions has had a harder hit on lower income households and placed our local business sectors and high streets under severe strain and continued uncertainty.
- 5.2. Pre-pandemic, Merton has worked with partners to address the challenges in existing inequalities in the borough and bridge the gap in outcomes across different wards. This is reflected in key strategies such as the Community Plan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Equality and Community Cohesion strategy.
- 5.3. We have drawn on the most recent data and intelligence to inform the ambition and the priorities which comprise the strategic framework. A more detailed data ‘snapshot’ will be published alongside the ambition as a summary of the data evidence base. The current evidence shows the scale of the challenge in the wake of Covid-19 and points to the need to work urgently with our partners to address the ongoing financial, social and health impact of the pandemic and tackle inequalities in the borough.
- 5.4. The published public-facing Merton2030 document will include a short, visual snapshot of key statistics and data about the borough infographic, in particular what we know the impact of Covid -19 so far.
- 5.5. Some of the key statistics are set out below:

### **Health and wellbeing**

- 514 deaths in total from Covid-19 as of December 2021 – the east of the borough saw a higher rate of COVID-19 deaths over 2020 (131.1 per 100,000), than those in the west (120.7 per 100,000)
- 13,680 residents (6.6% of the population) were on the shielding patients list (SPL), predominantly in the east of the borough
- 11.2% of residents aged 16+ reported often or always feeling lonely during the pandemic.

- 3 in 10 referrals to social prescribers between Oct 2019 and March 2021 were for social isolation. Of these nearly 30% were aged 65+.

### **Impact on low-income households.**

- 5.2% of working age residents on Universal credit. This remains significantly higher than 2.7% pre-pandemic and equates to 7,115 working age residents.
- 317% increase was seen in emergency food provision during the pandemic, which was mostly provided to households in the east of the borough.
- The number of school pupils eligible for free school meals rose during the pandemic – from 17.5% to 22.1% (an extra 1,220) in 2020/21.
- 5,195 (13.1%) children in Merton under 16 years live in low-income families

### **Impact on children and young people**

- (73.1%) of young people in Merton were worried about falling behind or less confident about their learning because of Covid-19 and lockdown.
- 55% of children in the east of the borough meet school readiness expectations, this compares to 68% in the west of the borough; the London Average is 62%. - there is a risk that this gap could wider further due to the impact on disadvantaged pupils.
- 12.6% (4,131) of Merton school pupils received Special Educational Needs (SEN) support – an extra 120 children in 2020/21. Of these 4.8% (1,583) had an Education Health and Care Plan in 2020/21 – mostly living in the East of the borough.

### **Economy and employments**

- 38,200 people were furloughed in Merton during the pandemic – topping a height of 18.6% as a proportion of the age working population. Merton has consistently had the highest rate of jobs furloughed during the pandemic out of the SLP borough.
  - In June 2021, the proportion of the working age population claiming self-employment funding support (SEISS) was 7.8% down from 9.8% in July 2020. Merton has had the highest rate of SEISS claims out of the SLP boroughs and higher than the London average
  - 3,500 jobs were lost in Merton in 2020 and a further 1,800 in 2021, as estimated by Oxford Economics.
  - Over £55m of financial support was provided to Merton businesses in rates relief and grants.
  - Current shop vacancy rate for the borough on street inspections is estimated at 12.6%, with highest vacancy rates in Raynes Park and Mitcham.
- 5.6. With significant uncertainty still ahead, strategic use of our data and intelligence - and that of our partners - will be crucial to understand the needs of our communities on a local level.

- 5.7. Development and delivery of the Merton 2030 ambition should be evidence-led across the piece – setting baselines, monitoring our progress, targeting implementation, and identifying emerging issues. This presents an opportunity for the council and its partners to address gaps in our intelligence and transform how we use data and intelligence as a borough. This will be critical for navigating the uncertainties and emerging challenges ahead – such as increasing mental health problems, food and fuel insecurity and resilience of our local businesses.

## **6. THE MERTON 2030 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK**

- 6.1 Appendix 1 sets out the draft strategic framework that comprises our ambition for the borough, strategic priorities, guiding principles and delivery objectives. The ambition and strategic priorities are informed by the findings from engagement and the data analysis. This strategic framework is intended to shape and guide the strategic direction and delivery of the council and its partners.
- 6.2 To deliver an ambition which is rooted in the community, residents need to see their voice and their concerns reflected back to them. Our priorities and delivery objectives are grounded by what people have told us matters most to them, their lived experience and in our intelligence about the borough and its needs. The ambition and strategic priorities respond to the immediate challenges facing the borough in the wake of the pandemic – in particular, tackling inequalities and disadvantage and acting to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on the most vulnerable.
- 6.3 This speaks to the importance of listening to insight from community groups and those who we tend to hear from less often in our usual engagement - especially those who have been hardest hit during Covid-19. This includes people from our BAME communities, older people, disabled people and young people who were all disproportionately affected by the pandemic. It will be important that we hear and respond to their experiences during, and prior to, the pandemic and continue to listen.
- 6.4 While the Council has an important role to play in shaping and taking forward the ambition as a leader of place, it should be a collaborative enterprise and partnership response – working hand in hand with our partners on a local level but also with our communities, aligning our collective resources and efforts towards a shared ambition for the borough

### **Our Ambition for Merton**

- 6.5 Looking back over the last decade, there is much that Merton can be proud of in what the council and its partners have delivered for its residents and communities. The recent experience of the pandemic has imposed huge strains on the borough's residents, but it has also reinforced the value and importance of the council's role in leading the response to this unique event. We have shown the strength and effectiveness of our local partnerships and what we can achieve when we work cooperatively with our communities and partners.

- 6.6 Our residents have described a set of aspirations for the future of the borough and its communities which provides the bedrock for our ambition. Our ambition, set out in Appendix 1, very much reflects what residents have told us they want the borough to look and feel like in the future. It builds on the strengths of the borough and what makes Merton unique, while not shying away from the big challenges ahead. Merton has a huge amount to offer but not everyone has been able to benefit from this to the same degree and we have not shouted loud enough about what makes Merton and its communities great.
- 6.7 People have also told us how important community is to them and want to see a vision for the future which brings people together. They value the diversity in our communities, want to hold onto the community spirit from the pandemic and see more places in their local area where people can come together. Residents recognised the importance of fairness and that strong communities support those in need and that people need to have a stake in the borough and can afford the basics in life including somewhere decent to live. Young people want to have say in the future of the borough. Merton has a wealth of assets in its community infrastructure, especially our voluntary and community groups – our ambition must reinforce and build on these.
- 6.8 High street regeneration was a shared ambition for residents across the borough. They emphasised a high street that delivered a place to meet up with family and friends, with things to do and which gave them a sense of pride in their local neighbourhood.
- 6.9 As Merton’s main asset, residents wanted well-maintained parks, waterways and green space to be central to the future ambition. They wanted parks to support individual wellbeing, foster a sense of community, generate income and help tackle climate.
- 6.10 Residents told us how much community, high streets and green spaces matter to them as a source of both pride and a feeling of belonging. Therefore they want to contribute to delivering this ambition with the council and its partners. Also, they want to be actively engaged in shaping the future of these assets including being involved in discussing any trade-offs of possible futures. We have tried to reflect all of the above in the draft ambition.

### **Our Strategic Priorities**

- 6.11 To achieve our ambition we have developed 5 strategic priorities to shape and guide delivery. In no particular order these are:
- Maintaining excellent education and skills for all ages and needs;
  - Promote a dynamic, connected and inclusive community and economy with safe, vibrant high streets and jobs for our residents;
  - Support residents who are most in need and promote the safety and wellbeing of all our communities;
  - Ensure a clean and environmentally sustainable borough with inclusive open spaces where people can come together and enjoy a variety of natural life;
  - Work to make Merton a fairer, more equal borough and support those on lower income by tackling poverty and fighting for quality affordable housing.

6.12 Each strategic priority has a number of delivery objectives sitting beneath it. These are set out in detail in Appendix 1. Delivery objectives are set out by timescale:

- Short term – delivered in the next 12 months
- Medium term – delivered over 1 to 4 years
- Longer term – delivered within 4 to 8 years

Further work to develop delivery objectives with departments and partners is planned for the next six months.

### **Our Guiding Principles**

6.13 We have developed 10 guiding principles to inform how we implement the strategic priorities and related delivery objectives. These are the things that matter to this council and also act as enablers for delivery. Our guiding principles are:

- Engage, involve and communicate effectively with our community;
- Actively promote equality, representation and inclusion;
- Aim to keep council tax at or below the south London average;
- Ensuring financial stability and value for money;
- Invest in the efficient and secure use of digital technology and & data;
- Work with and learn from national, regional and local partners;
- Consider the environmental and social impact of all that we do;
- Monitor our progress – from local to global;
- Put Merton first in all economic and financial decisions;
- Look to the long term.

## **7. PLANNING FOR DELIVERY**

7.1 CMT has agreed that there should be an overarching delivery framework for each strategic priority. Given the broad nature of the priorities, Directors and DMTs have developed a series of more specific objectives for each (Appendix 1), which will form the basis for more detailed delivery plans.

7.2 Planning for delivery will need to be ongoing over the coming months. While some of the delivery objectives are fully funded, with an implementation plan already in place, others require work to more clearly define the objectives and develop the related plans, including consideration of any investment required to support delivery. Officers therefore intend to bring back to Cabinet an updated list of delivery objectives in June 2022.

7.3 Some of this can be developed at departmental level, but the more complex and cross-cutting issues e.g. high streets, community spirit, economy and employment, etc. will require different approaches. These will need to include active engagement from other organisations across the public, voluntary and

business sectors, as well as managers and staff across the organisation. Most importantly, they will need to engage with residents and their communities.

- 7.4 There are already several mechanisms in place - either well-established or recently set up - to support this work, e.g. the joint Merton Partnership and its thematic boards; AD/CMT meetings; innovation lab approach to service redesign<sup>2</sup>.
- 7.5 The delivery of this ambition will clearly not be a short-term action but will require it being worked through the Council's annual business planning process for several years to ensure that our business and resource is directed to the appropriate actions.
- 7.6 There is already a significant amount of work underway across the council and with partners that aligns with these strategic priorities. As we plan for delivery, we will consider existing commitments and potential development or extension of additional projects or services. Key dependencies to consider will be the levers at the disposal of the Council and its partners, planning across the short to long term and resources required to deliver.
- 7.7 A 'Your Merton' fund of £1m was set up in reserves during 2020/21 to support our initial response to what residents have told us. We have set out in Appendix 2 a list of delivery objectives that will be implemented in the short term, including those projects being supported by investment from the 'Your Merton' fund.
- 7.8 In September CMT agreed a new approach to service planning starting in April 2022. The new approach is focused on translating the strategic priorities and delivery objectives into operational delivery at a team level with staff engagement at the heart of the process. It allows for the service delivery planning process to be more effectively used internally to engage with staff about how they think we should deliver the priorities and delivery objectives into the future. It allows time to share plans across directorates and with other relevant teams.
- 7.9 The new timetable provides DMTs with early identification of resourcing issues that can feed into the budget planning process and where services need to be redesigned / recommissioned. It gives teams and individuals the chance to contribute to how priorities are delivered and that they see how their work contributes to the achievement of the strategic priorities.
- 7.10 Further resourcing implications will be considered through the process for developing the MTFs as part of the council's delivery planning process. We would also look to leverage external investment to support delivery – for example accessing grants from regional or central government – and work with our partners to make use of all the levers, assets and investment at our disposal at a local level.
- 7.11 Members will have important and sometimes difficult decisions concerning how the Council funds its strategic priorities and at the same time ensures it achieves a balanced annual budget. This will include consideration of investment to ensure Departments have the necessary expertise and capacity

---

<sup>2</sup> [Design Council Framework for Innovation](#)

to develop and deliver the plans and programmes that will be critical to success and achieving outcomes for residents.

- 7.12 The strategic priorities and delivery objectives will be reflected in a refreshed Corporate Performance Framework for 2022/23 and a new Corporate Performance Framework will be in place for 2023/24.
- 7.13 It is proposed that Council receives an annual update on progress on implementing the delivery objectives over the last financial year and proposals for the forthcoming year in May/June. This update would also go to each of the scrutiny panels for review. This timeframe allows Scrutiny the opportunity to both scrutinise performance and to contribute to the future planning process and resourcing around delivery.

## **8. COMMUNICATING TO RESIDENTS AND PARTNERS**

- 8.1 Articulating and communicating these ambitions to our residents, as well as how we propose to turn them into actions, is a critical next step in the development of the Merton 2030 ambition. The LGA Peer Challenge in 2020 stressed the importance of designing the ambition with residents, communicating it back to them and keeping them informed of progress.
- 8.2 Once agreed by Cabinet, the Merton 2030 strategic framework will be published in January 2022 and made available to residents, partners and staff, with content, design and communication channels adjusted to reflect the different audiences.

## **9 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 9.1. Cabinet have already agreed the development of an ambition that is based on comprehensive engagement with residents. The approach set out in the report above meets that requirement. One alternative option is to develop a different set of priorities. However, it should be noted that the draft priorities and delivery objectives set out in this report directly reflect the feedback from residents and are informed by the data analysis to identify the key issues and needs which was the approach agreed by LSG.

## **10 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 10.1. A borough-wide engagement programme was carried out to inform the development of strategic priorities. Further detail about the engagement undertaken is included above in Section 2 and covered in the appendix. There has been consultation with all DMTs regarding the findings and priority areas for delivery.
- 10.2. Briefings on the engagement and data analysis to inform the development of the ambition have been provided to: all councillors, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Sustainable Communities and Transport Board and the Merton Partnership.



## 11 TIMETABLE

	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Delivery planning	→									
Strategic Framework to Cabinet	▲									
Strategic Framework published and communicated	▲									
Updated Strategic Framework to Cabinet / Council with delivery plans			▲							
New approach to service planning starts		→				→				
Growth, savings and recommissioning plans considered				→				→		
Annual review of performance and delivery objectives to Council / Scrutiny						▲				▲

## 12 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

12.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. As delivery plans are developed, resourcing implications will be considered through the process for developing the MTFs for 2023/26. £1m was allocated to the Your Merton reserve at the end of 2020/21 and has been used to further develop our immediate response to the issues raised through the engagement – see Appendix 2.

## 13 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

13.1. There are no legal implications at this stage.

## 14 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

14.1. The engagement and data analysis has been developed with these considerations to the fore. In particular the engagement with residents through the community groups has specifically focused on those residents who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The priorities set out above and in particular priority 5 aim to promote human rights, equalities and community cohesion.

## 15 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

15.1. Priority 3 seeks to address the issues and concerns raised by residents about crime and anti-social behaviour.

## 16 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

16.1. There are no risk management and health and safety implications arising from this report.

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

- Appendix 1 – Strategic Framework
- Appendix 2 – List of short term delivery objectives



## **18 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 18.1. LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, report to Cabinet, 9 March 2020
- 18.2. Developing a place based strategic vision for Merton, report to LSG, 28 September 2020
- 18.3. Your Merton update to LSG 11 October 2021

This page is intentionally left blank

## Appendix 1: Merton 2030 Strategic Framework

### Our Ambition for Merton 2030

Our ambition is to make Merton a place you are proud to call home - a borough that enables you to get as far as you want to go, and a place where nobody is left behind.

This means building on our past educational and economic successes, and ensuring you have the skills and job opportunities you need to go places and fulfil your ambitions. It means building on our core strength of local communities and how we support them to thrive.

Above all, it means listening to you – by investing into the things you want to see developed, such as our high streets, open spaces and community hubs, and by tackling the things you told us need improvement - including street cleanliness, parking and transport.

*To achieve all this, we will set five clear work programmes.*



**Fig. 1: Key themes from Your Merton engagement**

## What will Merton look and feel like in 2030?

Our aim is that by 2030, those programmes have delivered a real difference in quality of life in the borough.

Our biggest assets, our **local communities**, are thriving – communities have a sense of identity and pride in their area, and people feel connected and safe locally. Most of all nobody is left behind, with both community and council support for those in need.

In addition, people are spending more time in the area because we've helped deliver **better quality spaces** to spend their leisure and family time; we've encouraged more diversity into our local High Streets; and invested into our highly-rated open spaces.

**Local high streets** are now bustling, with a mix of independent and high-street traders, as well as cafes, restaurants and community spaces. They feature a visible improvement in **street-scene and cleanliness**. They are now places to spend time to relax, socialize and stay healthy, not just places to go when you need something. And each one is unique, reflecting the needs of its communities.

Investment into improving **access to skills & education** has allowed people to make the most of a stronger local economy, with a focus on supporting schools, apprenticeships, colleges and adult education helping more people into local employment as career opportunities grow.

But we have also incorporated our residents' biggest local priority – a **cleaner, and greener borough**. We've improved our key open spaces, and our green-flag parks are now the place of choice during the summer for local families. Additionally, we are delivering on our commitments around climate change and air pollution. This has meant change, but we've engaged residents in it and people recognise why it is necessary.

Finally, we have invested to **celebrate our history and the diversity** across each community in the borough. Local references & infrastructure generate pride in what makes us Merton – our local communities. To deliver all this, the council is working collaboratively with local communities and partners more than ever before.

## How we are going to deliver Merton 2030

Five strategic priorities will drive delivery of our ambition and guide the strategic direction of the council and its partners. Each priority has delivery objectives which set out what we aim to achieve in the coming decade, alongside those projects that are currently being delivered in the borough.

Through further collaboration and engagement, we will be developing more detailed plans to shape delivery of Merton 2030 together with our partners and communities. Collective action will be key to achieving all priorities, and there will be opportunities for everyone to get involved.

### Priority 1: Maintaining Excellent Education and Skills

Education and skills will be key to opening up opportunities for Merton residents in the wake of the pandemic and supporting the borough's economic recovery - whether that's through early years settings, primary and secondary school, further education or adult education.

Children and young people across the borough deserve the best start in life and opportunities for the future, no matter what their situation or where they live in our borough. Merton has prided itself on being a great place for families and offering an excellent standard of education. However, the pandemic and online learning has had a greater impact on those who are more disadvantaged with the risk of widening the gap in school readiness and attainment between the east and West of the borough.

In the Youth Survey research on the impact of Covid-19, 73.1% percent of young people said they were worried or very worried about falling behind and or less confident about their learning because of Covid-19 and lockdown. Many reported that their future plans have changed as a consequence of Covid-19.

***Merton will be a borough where the potential of all our residents is maximised, especially our children and young people.***

Working with our schools, libraries, further education sector and our local charities, voluntary groups and businesses we will develop a renewed employability and skills offer in the borough. Improving the pathways between education and employment will enable Merton to build its local skills base and increase opportunities for young people and those on lower incomes.

In the longer term, Merton will be looking ahead to future growth sectors and how we can position ourselves to capture the skills opportunities – for example, the transition to a green, net zero economy and continued growth of the tech sector.

## **What we're doing now**

- Expanding our SEND places to provide excellent education for children in our borough with special educational needs.
- Working with schools on catch-up from Covid, including targeted additional mental health support for pupils and support for those at risk of falling behind.
- Investing in a new Apprenticeship scheme targeted at young care-leavers and other young people facing disadvantage in Merton to help them access employment opportunities
- Piloting a new programme of support for young people with learning disabilities to support them towards employment and volunteering skills.
- Supporting digital skills and connection for those who are digitally excluded through the Connecting Merton project by offering laptops on loan through libraries and classes.
- Establishing digital, education and wellbeing hubs in libraries

## **What we're planning for the future**

### **By 2025...**

- We will work with partners to develop vibrant partnerships on youth employability – co-produced with young people.
- We will expand our work in partnership with our local colleges to develop more opportunities for Merton residents and pathways to further skills and employment.
- We will work with our local business sector to exploit the Apprenticeship Levy to its fullest and support local employment and skills.

### **By 2030...**

- We will maximise the skills opportunities in the transition to a green, net zero economy and work with partners in the business sector (such as our industrial estates) to develop a local green jobs skills base.
- We will work with partners to develop a compelling offer to bring the tech sector to Merton and increase our digital skills base in our local workforce.

## Priority 2: Promote a dynamic, connected and inclusive community and economy with safe, vibrant high streets and jobs for our residents

Community spirit and connection matter to residents in Merton - they value the diversity in our communities, want to hold onto the community spirit from the pandemic and see more places in their local area where people can come together. Young people felt more positive about their local area during the pandemic but want to see tangible change for the future.

High streets are often viewed as the heart of a community but many people in Merton are dissatisfied with the offer in their town centres, especially in the east of the borough. The pandemic risks accelerating the decline of our local high streets with more people shopping online, businesses closing down and more vacant premises. Some parts of the borough have been worse affected by anti-social behaviour and seen an increase in reported incidents over lockdown.

People who live and work in Merton want the town centres to be places where they can spend time, with things to do and opportunities to catch up with family and friends. They want to see action and investment targeted to the areas that need it most.

***Revitalising high streets as hubs of the community will be the future of town centres in Merton - supporting a connected community and driving local economic recovery.***

Merton has a wealth of local assets to draw on – our business sector with a range of small businesses and a vibrant self-employed workforce; our community infrastructure such schools, libraries and sports facilities; our exceptional green spaces and excellent transport links. Using space in our town centres differently could unlock huge potential.

The council will work collaboratively with the local business sector, community and voluntary sector to think creatively about ways to repurpose our high streets and opportunities to bring in good quality investment. Making sure our high streets are safe, accessible and welcome to all for the future will be an important part of this.

Looking to the future, our focus will be to regenerate high streets in Merton, develop a model for community development and do more to grow a sustainable green economy in Merton, supporting the transition to low carbon economy and a green recovery.

## What we're doing now

- Developing support to local businesses including an e-commerce digital platform to promote local independent businesses as a 'virtual high street', a market management offer in Mitcham and a local register of medium sized business in Merton
- Trialing 'Health on the High Street' a pop-up health and wellbeing service on Mitcham High Street
- Introducing the Workery in Mitcham - a co-working space for local start-ups, entrepreneurs and freelancers, building on the successful model of Wimbletech CIC.
- Bringing a community banking service and debt advice into East Merton libraries so businesses and residents can access local community banking.
- Delivering parklets, outdoor seating and spaces for events, as improvements to the public realm and support for the hospitality sector
- Investing in extra capacity for street pastors in high streets and night-time economy with focus on safety of women and girls
- Carrying out a communication campaign and engagement to seek views and raise awareness around the safety of women and girls in the borough
- Commissioning an innovation lab approach to develop ideas for the future of Merton's high streets in collaboration with the business sector and partners.

## What we're planning for the future

### By 2025.....

- We will set up an investment fund to support community development through our Strategic Partner Grant programme.
- We will use all assets and levers at our disposal to kick-start the regeneration of key town centres – in particular Morden and Mitcham - and leverage external funding for the long term.
- We will continue to support creation of different types of services and workspaces on our high streets to support entrepreneurship, self-employment and working close to home.
- We will support businesses by working to improve internet connectivity and faster WiFi, addressing internet cold spots in East Merton

### By 2030....

- We will regenerate Morden High Street, including development of affordable housing
- We will develop Masterplan for Mitcham to maximise the area's economic opportunities in the long term while capitalising on existing assets.
- We will work with our industrial sector to identify opportunities to develop the green economy in Merton, looking ahead to a low carbon transition.



### Priority 3: Supporting and caring for residents who are most in need and promote the safety and wellbeing of our communities.

Supporting those who are most in need in Merton and reducing health inequalities will be key to building resilient and safe communities and the wider conditions that make up a healthy place.

The pandemic showed the level of unmet need in parts of our borough and shone a light on existing inequalities, especially in the East of the borough. People with care and support needs, such as the elderly and disabled people, were hardest hit, as were vulnerable children. Some have been at greater risk of violence, abuse and harm, such as survivors of domestic abuse.

Many have felt isolated during this time and had difficulties accessing their usual support network and local services. Two in five young people said that they were concerned about their mental health during lockdown and want to see more support, advice and understanding for mental health in the future.

***Merton will be a healthy and safe place where people across the borough can thrive and get access to the right support at the right time.***

Prevention will guide our approach at all points so that people can get help at an earlier stage. Residents will be both empowered and supported to lead healthy, happy and independent lives. Where people do need supported residential care we will ensure that as far as practicable that this is in Merton so that people remain close to their networks of support.

Young people will be involved in decisions about the future of the borough and their voice will matter, in response to Youth Parliament recommendations from the survey on the impact of Covid-19 on young people.

Looking ahead, Merton will work on developing a longer-term strategic approach to community empowerment and support, based on a new framework for working collaboratively with communities. This will set out how the Council can take action with Merton communities at different levels to ensure that everyone gets help when they need it and that in turn these communities are more resilient and empowered.

Drawing on the community infrastructure in Merton will be key to promoting the safety and wellbeing of our communities – harnessing Merton’s diverse voluntary and community sector and its community assets as well as working with our partners in health, police and social care. People greatly value the support from local grassroots organisations, faith groups and mutual aid networks and want to see more of this in future.

## What we're doing now

- Recommissioning our Community Hub to build on the local support offer from our voluntary sector partners for residents who are most need.
- Establishing a Youth Fund which will be jointly managed by young people and the Children Trust to respond to the needs evidenced in the Merton Youth survey
- Piloting our Transforming How We Work with Communities approach looking at Early Years Speech and Language and Young People's wellbeing.
- Collaborating with the NHS on a refreshed Health and Care plan to tackle health inequalities in Merton.
- Introducing the Mockingbird model to support local foster carers so that more young people can be placed in foster care closer to home

## What we're going to do

### By 2025...

- We will be offering a redesigned early help offer for parents and children to provide support and interventions at earlier stage
- We will develop a contextual safeguarding approach for children and young people at risk from harm, exploitation, and abuse outside the home.
- We will develop and commission a new model of support at home for the most vulnerable from 2023
- We will improve transition for young adults between child and adult services through joint commissioning opportunities.
- We will develop a long-term model for community empowerment and support in collaboration with our local partners and communities.

### By 2030...

- We will be embedding prevention of ill health and promotion of wellbeing into everything we do as a Council through a 'Health in all Policies' approach - informed by a robust evidence base.
- We will adopt our new long-term model for community empowerment and support to embed our approach to working collaboratively with communities through

## Priority 4: Ensure a clean and environmentally sustainable borough with inclusive open spaces where people can come together and there is a variety of natural life

Merton is one of the greenest borough in London with a diverse range of parks, recreation grounds, waterways and nature trails which are greatly loved by its residents. They are viewed as shared assets of the community – place where people can escape urban life, de-stress and come together with friends and family. But they are also key to tackling climate change – cooling the built environment, improving air quality, mitigating impacts such as flooding and supporting biodiversity.

Residents are concerned about climate change and want to see the Council act as a leader, especially our young people who named it as their top concern. Maximising Merton's green spaces to their fullest extent will be key to building a borough that tackles climate change challenge and embeds environmental sustainability in everything it does.

Residents want Merton to be a clean, green and environmentally sustainable borough that they can take pride in. Getting the basics right through delivering our 'Cleaner Greener Programme' will be key to addressing residents' frustrations and meeting their expectations on cleanliness and effective waste management.

***Our aim is to become a borough which is known for its fantastic green spaces filled with nature – a haven from urban life used by all our communities and the key to tackling climate change.***

Our residents are ambitious for our green spaces and deeply value them. We will engage with our partners, community groups and residents – including young residents in Merton - for their ideas on how we can make the most of our parks and green spaces for the future, navigating any tensions and trade-offs.

Our green spaces are key to our aspirations for Merton as a healthy place and will have an important role to play in our plans to tackle health inequalities in the long term – in particular boosting mental and physical health and mitigating risks from air pollution.

Between now and 2050 the borough aspires to become net zero. To achieve this, Merton will need to progress an ambitious climate change agenda – supporting a green recovery and transition to a low carbon economy; tackling waste management issues and promoting more walking and cycling. Involving young people in action on the environment will be an important to achieving these ambitions and building a clean, healthy, sustainable borough for the next generation.

## **What we are doing now**

- Investing additional £250,000 into street scene cleanliness as part of our Cleaner Greener Merton Programme.
- Investing an additional £400,000 in a range of enhanced enforcement activity and increased street cleansing capacity, including piloting a park ranger service to improve safety in our parks and green spaces
- Installing air quality sensors in priority locations around the borough to support our ambition to tackle toxic air pollution
- Promoting active travel and air quality through schools by engaging with parents and young people on school active travel policies and introducing School Streets.
- Planting more trees through the Urban Tree Challenge to progress towards our targets for increasing tree canopy cover by 2050.

## **What we are going to do**

### **By 2025...**

- We will increase youth involvement in our green spaces and climate action plan with a link to the green economy and designing our future for Merton.
- We will review our contract with Veolia for street cleanliness and waste management.
- We will decarbonise our operational building stock and vehicle fleet
- We will develop a long-term plan for walking, cycling and EV charging infrastructure

### **By 2030...**

- We will be on track to meet our target of increasing the tree canopy coverage by 10% in Merton by 2050.
- We will achieve net-zero targets in Climate Change Strategy, including the targets of the council to be carbon neutral by 2030 and borough to be carbon neutral by 2050.

## Priority 5: Work to make Merton a fairer, more equal borough and support those on lower income by tackling poverty and fighting for affordable housing.

A better future for the borough must be one which all people in Merton feel part of and benefit from. Working side by side with communities and supporting them to build on their assets will be key to making Merton a fairer more equal borough and improving the lives for those on lower income.

There is hope that the crisis offers a point to build a fairer and more equitable place for the future. In the East of the borough, there are higher levels of overcrowding, poor health, deprivation and poverty and a greater proportion of lower income households, which continue to be hit harder by economic uncertainty and rising household costs. But there are also vibrant diverse communities where people are well connected and look out for each other.

People in these parts of the borough want to see these issues addressed but are clear that there are huge strengths and assets in their local area. They want to feel positive about the future, see action in the local area and be involved in making things better for their community.

**Merton will become a borough where opportunities are the same for all residents – a better future which all people in Merton feel part of and benefit from**

Looking ahead, there is an opportunity to build on the success of the Merton Community Hub so that a wide support and advice offer is available at a local level to residents experiencing poverty, expanding referral pathways across the borough.

The council will improve how it uses data to build a more accurate picture of hardship and vulnerability that can give better insight into our communities, inform delivery and targeted interventions.

Good quality, affordable housing is fundamental to a decent standard of living. Increasing housing supply with a share of affordable housing that meets local need and ensuring housing is delivered to high standards will be a top priority for Merton - requiring a joint effort by the council and housing providers.

## **What we are doing now**

- Continuing to provide financial support to those on lower income through the household support grant and council tax support scheme
- Administering additional financial assistance targeted to those on low income during Winter 2021 including free school meal provision over the holidays and a range of holiday activities for children.
- Improving our use of data to build an accurate picture of hardship and vulnerability as part of our Supporting Families programme
- Refreshing our Equalities strategy to tackle inequalities and disadvantage in the borough in the wake of Covid-19.
- Increasing the supply of temporary accommodation through joining the pan-London Capital Letters' scheme to procure properties

## **What we're going to do**

By 2025...

- We will explore how we can redefine the social contract with the community and maximize social value through the council's procurement processes
- We will develop initiatives to improve connectivity and increase digital inclusion for East of the borough

By 2030...

- We will deliver affordable housing and quality housing through regeneration of High Park and Eastfields
- We will increase housing supply through the redevelopment of Morden Town Centre.
- Building affordable housing for our residents to enable people to stay in the borough, rather than being pushed out for due to high housing costs - linked to supporting high wage jobs in borough for residents

## What you can expect from us

Our ambition for Merton 2030 can only be achieved by working in collaboration with our partners, businesses and community groups. Over the next six months, we will work together to develop plans for delivery and a roadmap for how we will work together to achieve our collective ambition.

As a council, we have an important role to enable delivery against these five strategic priorities. We have already invested £1million to kick start delivery and will be developing an investment strategy to guide future resourcing.

We have identified ten principles which will guide our delivery as a council in the years ahead– setting out what you can expect from us and how we will work across the council to deliver the best for the borough and our communities.

### **1. Engage, involve and communicate effectively with our community.**

Our residents care a lot about their borough and want to be involved in conversations about the future. We will engage, involve and communicate effectively so that our community has a voice and is kept informed about what is happening in their local area.

### **2. Actively promote equality, representation and inclusion**

Merton is proud to have diverse communities. We will actively celebrate and promote equality, representation and inclusion in everything we do as a council and in our communities across Merton.

### **3. Aim to keep council tax at or below the south London average**

At a time of increased financial pressure on households, we will aim to keep our council tax at the same level or lower than the South London average to reduce the financial burden on our residents as far as possible.

### **4. Ensuring financial stability and value for money**

Our residents expect us to be responsible stewards of the council finances and to make the best use of the resources at our disposal while delivering for our residents. We will continue to ensure financial stability while delivering safe services of the best possible quality and finding innovative solutions to maximise efficiency.

### **5. Invest in the efficient & secure use of digital tech & data**

Modernising our use of digital technologies and data will enable us to become a smarter and more evidence-led council. Developing a digital strategy, making better use of insight and intelligence and offering more digitally designed services will all be key to supporting delivery of the ambition.

### **6. Work with and learn from national, regional and local partners.**

We will collaborate with our local partners and grassroots organisations to shape how we collectively deliver the priorities, building on our strong history of partnership working in Merton. We will learn from best practice across London and other local authorities to identify the right solutions for Merton.

### **7. Consider the environmental and social impact of all that we do**

At all points, we will consider the impact on our communities of anything we do, especially for those who are most disadvantaged. Our commitment to tackling climate change means that we will design policies, programmes and strategies with the environment and climate change impact in mind.

### **8. Monitor our progress – from local to global.**

We will use the data and insight that we have about the borough and its population to set a baseline and monitor our progress against our aims. We will draw on UN Sustainable Development Goals to set indicators for tracking delivery and impact against our priorities.

### **9. Put Merton first in all economic and financial decisions**

We will look at how we can champion Merton in our financial decisions, especially our commissioning and procurement as a council and how it could best benefit our local communities and economy.

### **10. Look to the long term**

We will act with long term in mind to achieve sustainable and measurable change—using all opportunities and levers at our disposal to make progress in the short term but with a clear strategic direction for the future.

## **What we are doing now**

- Commissioning an external financial assessment to support a refreshed investment strategy
- Additional investment in IT to improve our digital capabilities and delivery of services to our residents
- Creating a workforce strategy to ensure the council has the right workforce, skills and support for staff with a focus on health and wellbeing
- Developing an equality and inclusion strategy for the council and investing in initiatives to strengthen our ability to be a fully inclusive and cohesive workforce
- Investing in additional communications and community engagement capacity, in including improvements to social media engagement with residents and support for Merton2030 rollout.



## APPENDIX 2: MERTON 2030 SHORT TERM DELIVERY – FURTHER INFORMATION

Deliverable	Summary	Timeframes for delivery	Information about funding	Service area
<b>PRIORITY ONE: MAINTAINING EXCELLENT EDUCATION AND SKILLS</b>				
<b>SEND strategy</b>	CSF are working on expanding our SEND places to provide excellent education for children in our borough with special educational needs, as part of our SEND strategy.	Expansions/new provisions are planned for each year between now and 2025/26 - the first cohort of children to be placed at Whatley Avenue/Melrose school in September 2022. Safety Valve Delivery Programme to be delivered up until 2027	Capital funding being sought from DfE. Safety Valve support for deficit also being sought from DfE.	Education
<b>Education recovery</b>	CSF is working with schools to support catch-up from Covid. This includes targeted additional mental health support for pupils and support for those at risk of falling behind.	Delivery is underway and ongoing through schools over 2021/22.	Funding is provided through the DfE for 2021/22. Wellbeing for education recovery grant for Merton is £23k	School improvement
<b>Towards Employment – learning disabilities support</b>	C&H are piloting a programme of support for young people with learning disabilities to support them towards employment and volunteering skills.	Six-month pilot being delivered over late 2021-22 with a view to scoping long term model.	This is funded through C&H Reserves as recovery investment – total of £87k	Disability Integrated Service
<b>Apprenticeships scheme for young carers</b>	CSF and Corporate Services are collaborating on a targeted Apprenticeship scheme for young care-leavers and other young people facing disadvantage in Merton to help them access employment opportunities	This is due to be delivered from April 2022-23 for one year initially.	This has been funded through the Your Merton Fund - £45k for 2022-23.	HR/Placements & Looked After Children

<b>Connecting Merton – tackling digital exclusion</b>	C&H are supporting digital skills and connection for those who are digitally excluded through the Connecting Merton project by offering laptops on loan through libraries and classes - working with Wimbledon Guild	Delivery is already underway across key libraries as of late 2021.	This has been funded through external grants related to the Covid-19 response.	Libraries & Merton Adult Learning
<b>Mindspace - libraries as digital, education and wellbeing hubs</b>	C&H will deliver a new innovative concept called Mindspace to establish small digital, education and wellbeing hubs in libraries. This includes adaptations to the building and purchase of VR equipment to create a multi-sensory experience to improve digital, education and health outcomes	Delivery is underway – commenced in October 2021. Completion date – August 2023	This is funded through C&H reserves as recovery investment – total of £132k with potential for future funding from Arts Council	Libraries & Merton Adult Learning
<b>PRIORITY TWO: PROMOTE A DYNAMIC, CONNECTED AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY AND ECONOMY WITH SAFE, VIBRANT HIGH STREETS AND JOBS FOR OUR RESIDENTS</b>				
<b>Virtual high street</b>	Future Merton are developing an e-commerce app as a digital platform to promote local independent businesses and online high streets to encourage people to shop locally.	A provider has been commissioned and development of platform underway for delivery in early 2022	This is funded through the Additional Restrictions Grant from BEIS - funding is limited to financial year 2021/22	Future Merton
<b>High Street Innovation lab</b>	Commissioning an innovation lab approach to develop ideas for the future of Merton's high streets in collaboration with the business sector and partners	Delivery is due to commence in January 2022 – an innovation partner will be commissioned to support this approach	This is being funded from Recovery and Modernisation Programme Fund - £50k	Policy, Strategy & Partnerships Team/Future Merton
<b>Parklets and public realm improvements</b>	Delivering improvements to the public realm to support the hospitality sector including parklets, outdoor seating and spaces for events	Delivery underway, parklets have been installed across the borough.	Estimated £100k from previous CMT report	Regulatory Services Partnership?

<p><b>The Workery – co-working space in Mitcham library</b></p>	<p>C&amp;H are supporting the introduction of a co-working space for local start-ups, entrepreneurs and freelancers in Mitcham called the Workery - building on the successful model of Wimbletech CIC.</p>	<p>Delivery is underway – commenced in November 2021. 6-month pilot delivery phase – February to July 2022 Extension of service (subject to successful pilot) – August 2022 onwards.</p>	<p>This is being funded from internal reserves - £25k. Model intended to generate income as with Wimbletech CIC</p>	<p>Libraries</p>
<p><b>Health on the High Street</b></p>	<p>Public Health are working with the NHS on trialling 'Health on the High Street' which will be a pop-up health and wellbeing service based in Mitcham High Street</p>	<p>Delivery is due to commence from December 2021/early 2022 once a PM is appointed.</p>	<p>Funded through COMF - £50k. The CCG are also investing in the project management side, and we are working on bids for evaluation.</p>	<p>Public Health</p>
<p><b>Market Manager for Mitcham market</b></p>	<p>Future Merton are working on setting up a market management offer based in Mitcham to support successful street trading, develop best practice and support the local economy in Mitcham.</p>	<p>The procurement process is underway with view to having partner on board early 2022.</p>	<p>This is funded through the Additional Restrictions Grant from BEIS - funding is limited to financial year 2021/22</p>	<p>Future Merton</p>
<p><b>Business register</b></p>	<p>Revenue and Benefits are working with the business sector on setting up a local register of medium size businesses in Merton - this network will improve engagement and intelligence about the local business sector.</p>	<p>This has been set up and registrations are open.</p>	<p>This is funded through the Additional Restrictions Grant from BEIS - funding is limited to financial year 2021/22 - £136k.</p>	<p>Revenue and Benefits</p>

<b>Community Banking</b>	C&H are working with Barclays to bring in a community banking service and debt advice into libraries in the east of the borough so businesses and residents can access local community banking.	Negotiations are underway with Barclays, due to commence in January 2022.	No funding provided - this is a partnership with Barclays.	Libraries
<b>Street Pastors - safety of women and girls</b>	Safer Merton are investing in extra capacity for street pastors in high streets and night-time economy with focus on safety of women and girls.	This will be delivered from December 2021 as it is an increase in current capacity and training.	This is being funded from Your Merton fund - £15k	Safer Merton
<b>Safety of women and girls in Merton – engagement and awareness raising</b>	Comms and Safer Merton will work together on carrying out a communication campaign and engagement to seek views and raise awareness around the safety of women and girls in the borough	This will be progressed in early 2022 but not likely before May 2022	This is being funded internally through Your Merton Fund - £15k	Comms & Safer Merton
<b>PRIORITY THREE: SUPPORTING AND CARING FOR RESIDENTS WHO ARE MOST IN NEED AND PROMOTE THE SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF OUR COMMUNITIES.</b>				
<b>Recommissioned community response hub</b>	C&H have worked with the voluntary sector to re-commission our Community Hub for a further year to build on the local support offer from our voluntary sector partners for residents who are most need.	Delivery is already underway – expected to run until 2022	The re-commissioning of the hub is being funded from the Better Care Fund - £198k.	Adult Social Care Commissioning
<b>Health in all Policies</b>	Public Health will lead on refreshing the Health in All Policies action plan with a view to developing this approach as a Council to help with tackling health inequalities – potential research partnership through	Work on a refreshed plan would be carried out over the next 8-9 months.	Funding bid submitted for partnership with NIHR, no internal funding identified.	Public Health

	National Institute of Health Research if successful with funding bid.			
<b>Refreshed Local Health and Care Plan</b>	C&H are working with health and voluntary sector colleagues on developing more joined up health and care services whilst tackling health inequalities through a programme of work set out in the refreshed Local Health and Care Plan.	Refreshed plan approved by Health and Wellbeing Board in November 2021. Delivery to commence from 2022.	Funding for services is through standard NHS and social care routes.	Public Health/NHS
<b>Mockingbird Foster care project</b>	CSF are introducing the Mockingbird model to support local foster carers so that more young people can be placed in foster care closer to home.	Delivery is already underway – commencing from June 2021	The Mockingbird Project is funded through the Merton Improvement Board - £55k for three years, commencing in 2019.	CSF/ Placements & Looked After Children
<b>System wide approach to early intervention and prevention</b>	Collaborate CIC have been commissioned to develop a new framework and approach for how we work with our communities. our Transforming How We Work with Communities approach in Early Years and Young People's mental health services	In development – commenced in 2021 and expected to run throughout 2022	This new project is being funded through the RMP - £64k	Recovery and Modernisation Programme/C&H and CSF
<b>Youth Fund</b>	Establishing a Youth Fund to be jointly managed by young people and the children trust to target projects that meet the needs evidenced in the Merton Youth survey and builds on the proposals from the youth parliament	This will be implemented from January 2022 – Merton Youth survey will be published in January.	This will be funded by £10k from the Your Merton fund.	Youth Inclusion

<b>PRIORITY FOUR: ENSURE A CLEAN AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE BOROUGH WITH INCLUSIVE OPEN SPACES WHERE PEOPLE CAN COME TOGETHER AND THERE IS A VARIETY OF NATURAL LIFE</b>				
<b>Cleaner Greener Street scene improvements</b>	E&R is bringing additional resources into street scene cleanliness as part of our Cleaner Greener Merton Programme – supported by Your Merton fund investment.	This will be delivered from December 2021.	This will be funded by £250k from the Your Merton Fund.	Waste management and cleansing
<b>Don't Mess with Merton – enhanced enforcement</b>	E&R is introducing a range of enhanced enforcement activity, including piloting a park ranger service and increased street cleansing capacity - – supported by Your Merton fund investment.	This will be delivered from December 2021	This will be funded by £415k from the Your Merton Fund.	Waste management and cleansing
<b>Air quality monitoring</b>	E&R is leading on installing air quality sensors in priority locations around the borough to support our ambition to tackle toxic air pollution – this is part of an Internet of Things pilot project.	Delivery is underway – air quality monitors have recently been installed in November	Funding from London Councils as part of a South London partnership project 'InOvate'	Public Protection
<b>Schools active travel policies</b>	Promoting active travel and air quality through schools by engaging with parents and young people on school active travel policies and introducing School Streets.	Delivery is already underway across the council – developed during Covid-19 emergency response	A Healthy Streets Officer provided by TfL helps deliver the Stars School Travel. Cycle training for school children and adults - £60k from TfL. Walk4life – no funding allocated, volunteers lead on the walks.	Transport & School improvement

<b>Urban Tree Challenge</b>	E&R is leading on planting more trees through the Urban Tree Challenge to progress towards our targets for increasing tree canopy cover by 2050 - part of the Cleaner and Greener programme.	Delivery is already underway – 283 standard trees to be planted across 28 parks and open spaces	This is funded internally and externally for three years: £118k Forestry Commission £35k GLA £83k LBM	Parks and Green Spaces
<b>Improving feelings of safety in borough (part of Don't Mess with Merton)</b>	Investing in a pilot for a park ranger service to improve safety in our parks and green spaces.	Delivery from December 2021 onwards	£125k from the Your Merton fund - as part of £415k invested in greater enforcement (see above)	Safer Merton
<b>PRIORITY FIVE: WORK TO MAKE MERTON A FAIRER, MORE EQUAL BOROUGH AND SUPPORT THOSE ON LOWER INCOME BY TACKLING POVERTY AND FIGHTING FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING.</b>				
<b>Council Tax Support Scheme</b>	The Council will continue to provide financial support to those on lower income through the Council Tax Support Scheme – recognising the current pressures on household finances	This will be delivered from 2022 following Cabinet approval in late 2021.	This funding has been identified in the MTFS - £11,058k.	Revenue & Benefits
<b>Household support grant</b>	The council is continuing to provide financial support to those on lower income through the household support grant – administering central government grant funding.	Delivery is underway – short term funding to be delivered by end of financial year.	This is funded by grant funding from central government - £499k for: payments to working age CTB recipients, local welfare support scheme and admin.	Revenue & Benefits

<b>Free School Meals and holiday activities – Winter 2021</b>	CSF are supporting the administering of additional financial assistance targeted to those on low income during Winter 2021 including free school meal provision over the holidays and a range of holiday activities for children.	Delivery is underway – expected to continue through spring 2022	This is supported through the Household Support Grant - £612k	Education Inclusion
<b>Refreshed Equalities Strategy</b>	The Council will be refreshing our Equalities strategy to tackle inequalities and disadvantage in the borough in the wake of Covid-19.	This strategy is in development and consultation with key stakeholders underway – expected for April 2022	Specific investment requirements will be picked up through departmental budgets	Policy, Strategy & Partnerships
<b>Capital Letters</b>	The Council is increasing the supply of temporary accommodation through joining the pan-London Capital Letters' scheme to procure properties	Delivery is underway – commenced in late 2021	This funding is from the council allocation of the Homelessness Prevention Fund.	Housing Needs
<b>Insight to Intervention – Transforming use of data in Supporting Families</b>	CSF are leading on a pilot project to improve our use of data with the aim of building an accurate picture of hardship and vulnerability as part of our Supporting Families programme, drawing on cross council intelligence.	Project is underway as of Dec 2021 with commissioned partner – for delivery in early 2022	This project has been funded through the Supporting Families Programme – specific funding allocation for data transformation	Family & Adolescence Service
<b>ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE</b>				
<b>Investment Strategy</b>	Corporate Services are commissioning an external financial assessment to support a refreshed investment strategy – link to future resourcing of Merton 2030.	Procurement process underway and partner appointed for scoping & delivery from Jan 22	Funded from Recovery and Modernisation Programme	Recovery and Modernisation Programme & Finance team
<b>Comms and community</b>	Investment in additional communications and community engagement capacity will support the rollout of the Merton ambition and its	This will be delivered from January 2022, in line with publication of the ambition	Funded from Your Merton Fund £250k	Communications Team



<b>engagement capacity</b>	components, including improvements to social media engagement with residents, support for the five key priorities and guiding principles			
<b>IT and digital capabilities</b>	Additional investment in IT is underway to improve our digital capabilities and more effective delivery of services to our residents	Work underway to prioritise delivery	Currently under discussion at CMT	IT and Recovery and Modernisation Programme
<b>Workforce wellbeing</b>	HR will lead on creating a workforce strategy which will ensure the council has the right workforce, skills and support for staff, with a focus on health and wellbeing as a response to the impact of the pandemic on the workforce.	Work to begin from January 2022 – existing workforce strategy takes council up to 2021.	This is to be funded through Your Merton Fund - £45k	HR
<b>Workforce Equality and Inclusion</b>	HR will be working with the Council's Race Equality Network on developing an equality and inclusion strategy for the council and investing in initiatives to strengthen our ability to be a fully inclusive and cohesive workforce	This will be implemented from January 2022	This will be funded through Your Merton - £95k	HR

This page is intentionally left blank