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# Merton Council

## Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations Agenda

### Membership

**Councillors:** Eloise Bailey, Omar Bush, Joan Henry, Agatha Mary Akyigyina OBE, Marsie Skeete (Chair)

**Substitute Members:** Adam Bush, Hina Bokhari, Caroline Cooper-Marbiah

### Ethnic Minority Organisations

African Educational Cultural & Health Organisation (AECHO)	Revd Mrs H Neale
Deputy	
Ahmadiyah Muslim Association	Mr .H.Nawaz
Asian Diabetic Support & Awareness Group	Mrs N. Shah
Asian Elderly Group of Merton	Mr M S Sheikh
Asian Youth Association	
BAME Voice	Revd Mrs H Neale
Bangladeshi Association of Merton	Mr. N. Islam
Deputy	Mr J Choudhury
Bengali Association of Merton	Mr Rahman
Deputy	
Bengali Women's Association of Merton	Mrs M Ahmed
British Muslim Association of Merton	Mr B. Afridi
Ethnic Minority Centre	Mrs Sabitri Ray
Euro Bangla Federation	Dr Haque
Deputy	Mr Q Anwar
London South West Chinese Community Association	Ms L Saltoon
Merton African Organisation	Mr C J Lusack
Merton Somali Community	Mr A. Ali
Mitcham Filipino British Association	Ms Colquhoun
Deputy	Ms C Batallones
Merton and Lambeth Citizen's Advice Bureau	Ms S Hudson
Pakistan Cultural Association of Merton & Wandsworth	Mr M A Shah
Pakistan Welfare Association	Mr S U Sheikh
Deputy	
Positive Network	Ms G Salmon
Polish Family Association	Mr S Szczepanski
South London Somali Community Association	Mr A Musse
South London Tamil Welfare Group	Dr PArumugaraasah
Victim Support Merton and Sutton	Ms J Davidson
West Indian Families and Friends Association	Mr T Sandiford
Wimbledon Mosque	Mr N Din

**Date:** Wednesday 1 December 2021

**Time:** 7.15 pm

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

This is a public meeting and attendance by the public is encouraged and welcomed. For more information about the agenda please contact [diversity@merton.gov.uk](mailto:diversity@merton.gov.uk) or telephone [020 8545 4637](tel:020 8545 4637).

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## **Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations Agenda**

### **1 December 2021**

- |   |  |         |
|---|--|---------|
| 1 | Declarations of Interest   |         |
| 2 | Apologies for Absence  |         |
| 3 | Minutes of previous meeting  | 1 - 8   |
| 4 | Transforming How We Work With Communities - Naomi Diamond Collaborate CIC  |         |
| 5 | Working together to understand the impact of COVID-19 on BAME Communities and working together to reduce the risks - Dr Dagmar Zeuner, Director of Public Health Merton/Barry Causer, Head of Commissioning Public Health/Hannah Neale, Chair Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Voice/Slawek Szczepanski, BAME Voice |         |
| 6 | Developing Merton's Equality Diversity and Inclusion policy - Evereth Willis, Equality and Community Cohesion Officer  | 9 - 20  |
| 7 | Your Merton - John Dimmer, Interim Head of Corporate Policy and Improvement  | 21 - 32 |

#### **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.

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# Agenda Item 3

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH ETHNIC MINORITY  
ORGANISATIONS  
7 SEPTEMBER 2021

(Time Not Specified - Time Not Specified)

PRESENT Councillor Marsie Skeete (in the Chair), Councillor Eloise Bailey,  
Councillor Omar Bush and Councillor Joan Henry

Rev. Hannah Neale , Ms Stella Akintan, Mr Kaz Obuka, Mr  
Slawek Szczepanski, Mr Jerry Hall, Mr Sivapragasam  
Shivaranjith, Mr H Nawaz, Ms Beau Fadahunsi, Ms Evereth  
Willis, Ms Giusy de Grazia

## 1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 1)

## 2 APOLOGIES (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Councillor Akyigyna, Councillor Macauley, Dr Arumugaraasah, Mr Sheikh, Mr Dawson, Mr Islam, Mr Shimmens and Mr Lohendran.

## 3 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING (Agenda Item 3)

There were no matters arising.

## 4 IMPROVING KIDNEY CARE, CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP (CCG) OUTREACH - AMAN NATHAN, PATIENT & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT MANAGER, NHS SOUTH WEST LONDON CCG (Agenda Item 4)

Kaz Obuka, Head of Patient and Public Engagement presented the Improving Kidney Care item.

Kidney doctors from St Helier and St George's hospitals have put forward a proposal to build a brand new £80 million specialist kidney unit at St George's Hospital in Tooting to improve patient care and experience

The unit would improve care for kidney patients who need hospital (overnight) care - this is about 5% of a patient's contact with kidney services. There would be no change to 95% of treatment or care in kidney services in South West London and Surrey at local hospitals, units or at home. However some kidney patients would need to travel further for this specialist care in the new unit.

The proposed new unit based at St George's Hospital aims to improve care for kidney patients who need specialist inpatient (overnight) care. A small number of outpatient appointments would also be run from the unit.

The unit will provide more beds and more dedicated theatre sessions. Patients will also get 24/7 access to expert clinicians and a larger team will help patients get their treatment and go home faster. Also a larger team will strengthen local kidney services.

The proposed changes will come into effect in 2025 at the earliest.

Q: What is being done about kidney donations from BAME communities?

A: Mr Obuka will find out and report back.

Q: Is the aim to combine all the kidney services and deliver them from one point.

A: Inpatient will be at St Georges but most services will stay as they are.

Q: Has an Equality Impact Assessment been done.

A: Yes, an EIA has been done, transport issues particularly in Merton was highlighted and mitigation is being considered.

Q: Are we taking away key services from St Helier, have the views of these been canvassed?

A: There has been outreach to kidney care associations and patients, analysis is still be undertaken. Patients' views will be fed back.

Q: Could patients at St Helen be contacted directly to get their views.

A: Mr Obuka

undertook to make further enquiries but thought that this has probably been done.

Q: Why are the dialysis patients moving to St Georges? Improve the St Helier clinic is a good idea to prevent people having to travel. Leave people close to home.

A: 95% of service will remain the same, it is those with acute needs that will be going to St George's.

## 5 HATE CRIME UPDATE, KIRAN VAGARWAL, HEAD OF SAFER MERTON, LBM/ KATY SAUNDERS, COMMUNITY RESILIENCE OFFICER, SAFER

## MERTON LBM (Agenda Item 5)

Kiran Vagarwal and Katy Saunders presented the Hate Crime update.

Hate crime is defined, by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) as: "any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a personal characteristic; specifically actual or perceived race, religion, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identity"

Hate crime is a strategic priority for the Community Safety Partnership and Mayor of London as stated in the MOPAC Police and Crime Plan 2017-21.

Data from the MPS hate crime dashboard shows that for the financial year 2020-21 Merton saw 392 reports of hate crimes made to Police, an increase of 9% compared to 2019-20. For the MPS as a whole the rise was 16%.

Nearly 80% of hate crimes in Merton are under the racist strand.

Merton's Hate Crime Strategy Group continue to meet quarterly. The group is made up of organisations in Merton representing the different strands of hate crime. The Police South West BCU Hate Crime Lead also sits on the group.

A priority of the group is to continue to work on expanding Merton's Hate Crime Third Party Reporting scheme. AFC Wimbledon, Tooting and Mitcham FC and 10 Coaching Academies have signed up this year.

Hate Crime Advice Surgeries take place with partners including Tell MAMA, Polish Family Association, BAME Voice, Inner Strength Network and Merton CIL on a monthly basis (currently over the phone, moving back to face to face in Merton Civic Centre once restrictions allow).

A new strategy running 2022-26 and an annual work plan are being developed.

Actions on the work plan will be updated by the Hate Crime Strategy Group each quarter, with an annual report at the end of each year – highlighting key achievements and recommendations on what work continues/ stops. The aim is for this to be shared with the community.

The Hate Crime Strategy Group have recently finalised the work plan for 2021-22.

The work plan is based around the following four themes:

**Coordination** - Ensure that the response to Hate Crime is shared by all stakeholders, embedded into service plans, and coordinated effectively

**Prevention** - Preventing Hate Crime through a change of people's attitudes and proactive policing

**Provision** - Improve provision of specialist support and reporting centres

**Protection** - To provide effective response to perpetrators outside of and within the criminal justice system

### **Key work in the year ahead**

Hate Crime Awareness Week (HCAW) 2021 runs 9th-15th October 2021.

This year there will be a mix of online events and engagement stalls. The launch event 'Challenging Transgender Hate Crime – Free to Be' will take place on Monday 11th October 2021 and will focus on the national theme for HCAW which is Transgender hate crime.

There will be a number of engagement events throughout the week covering the different strands of hate crime, including an event focusing on race hate crime, a coffee morning with Polish Family Association and ACT (Action Counters Terrorism training) with the Police.

During the week we will link in with the campaigns being led by the Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams, British Transport Police and Safer Transport. We will also work with the Safer Schools Officers to ensure hate crime is covered in their assemblies and presentations during the week.

We will continue to work to expand and promote our Hate Crime Third Party Reporting scheme and support those organisations taking part. This includes working with different groups in the community who may wish to join the scheme.

We will mark IDAHOBIT (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia) on May 17th 2022 with a rainbow flag raising ceremony at Merton Civic Centre.

It should be noted that following an amendment to the Domestic Violence Bill in April 2021, Police nationwide have been asked to trial recording Misogyny as a hate crime from the autumn.

Q: How many families or individuals are helped by the drop in centres? What is the social media reach?

A: Due to the pandemic the numbers accessing the Hate Crime Advice surgery have been low. Keen to start face to face again and this may help. We do have the statistics for social media, we usually do a video with the Borough Commander. The aim is to use social media more this year.

Q: The Race statistics highlight what is happening in society. Young people feel separated from what the council does, e.g. get young people to create a video or campaign. We need to interact with the people who are the victims. The Black Lives Matter protests were mainly attended by the under 30's. Young people are not reporting hate crimes.

A: Young People often don't report hate crime. The council has good links with Merton College and link in with the college during Hate Crime Awareness Week. People aged between 20 and 40 years are more likely to be hate crime victims.

Q: Before the pandemic a group of men were going into the barber shops handing out leaflets outlining the support available to victims of hate crime, will they continue?

A: Ms Saunders was not sure who they were, she and a colleague have in the past visited barber shops and nail shop and gave out Safer Merton leaflets.

Q: Lee Townsend from Croydon has worked with local people to address hate crime in the past, it was suggested that Safer Merton looks into working with him in the future.

Ms Vagarwal will take away the suggestion to work closer with young people. Consideration will be given to incorporating engagement with young people and community outreach into the communication plan.

Q: It is important to get people together and understanding both sides. It is good that attitudes are changing. Getting football clubs involved may be a way to get young people involved and communicating more. How is the recruitment drive going?

A: A report is going to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 8 September outlining Safer Merton's work and a hate crime update is included. We are working with football clubs for third party reporting sites.

Q: A successful Football Academy was set up in Pollards Hill by a previous PCSO, JJ and continues to do well with youth engagement.

## 6 REFRESH OF THE EQUALITY STRATEGY - EVERETH WILLIS, EQUALITY AND COMMUNITY COHESION OFFICER, LBM (Agenda Item 6)

Evereth Willis gave an overview of the approach to refreshing the Equality Diversity and Inclusion strategy.

Merton has a statutory duty to produce equality objectives (Equality act 2010) every four years. It is proposed to rename the new strategy, calling it an Equality, Diversity

and Inclusion strategy. This aligns with the Administration's current priorities and will incorporate actions that contribute positively to community cohesion in the borough.

An Equality Charter will be adopted that will be developed alongside the strategy, but will be a standalone document.

The refreshed strategy will outline 5-10 objectives. Each objective has equalities outcomes that are linked to service plans. This approach enables equalities outcomes to be aligned with departmental service plans and is the approach taken for the current strategy that has worked well.

It is proposed that the strategy be informed by:

1. Evidence of existing inequalities in the borough and opportunities to continue to narrow the gap in outcomes for disadvantaged residents.
2. The findings from the Your Merton engagement that will provide analysis of residents' experience of life in Merton, their experience of the pandemic and their aspirations for the future.
3. Learning from the Covid-19 pandemic that has highlighted issues such as:
  - a. Health inequalities
  - b. Digital exclusion
  - c. Food poverty
4. Findings from the research commissioned by the Health and Wellbeing Board looking at the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on protected groups, in particular ethnicity, age and disability.
5. Issues raised through the Black Lives Matter protests
6. Implementing the Local Outbreak Management Plan
7. The learning and recommendations of the Workforce Race Equality Standards pilot
8. The work of the Transforming How We Work With Communities project to increase community resilience and delay / prevent demand for acute services.

It is proposed to change the scope of the Equality Strategy slightly with a focus on equalities, diversity and inclusion which is in keeping with the priorities of the administration. This removes the focus on community cohesion but equality, diversity and inclusion are key drivers for a cohesive community. Equality, diversity and inclusion are terms that are clearly understood and align with our own in-house approach.

The strategy will be monitored by the Corporate Equality Steering Group, Corporate Management Team, Departmental Management Teams, an annual update to the JCC and to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

Q: How is the responsibility being shared so that the development of the strategy does not all sit with one person.

A: Ms Willis will be working with the departmental representatives of the Corporate Equality Steering Group. The representatives act as equality champions and will be working with Departmental Management Teams to identify equality priorities to include in the strategy.

Q: Can councillors help to spread awareness?

A: Councillors are encouraged to promote the public consultation.

Q: We need to have conversations about Cultural Awareness and competency.

Some people don't seem comfortable with the term 'Unconscious Bias'. What is happening within Merton and within the strategy to create a level playing field?

A: The Head of Learning and Development and Organisational Development has been meeting with the Race Equality Network to develop Anti-racist and Cultural competency training. Also London Councils is working to develop Leadership standards and a tool kit to support councils to be culturally competent. The strategy will include something about recruitment.

Q: How will be demographics be worked out? Does the data include Eastern European as BAME?

A: The data analysts in the borough are working to improve the quality of available data that may be used to inform policy development. We have a sizeable Eastern European population and locally we consider Eastern European as being part of the BAME community (however, nationally they are counted as White Other).

Q: Are you going to look at the Europeans with Settled Status?

A: The strategy will not need that much detail but we will use the data that shows the sizeable Eastern European population. The most up to date data will be used and referenced in the strategy.

Q: Things don't filter up to the top, could we look at that. There is a lot of filtering of information before it gets to the top. How do we stop the messages being watered down?

A: Perhaps regular direct meetings with the community leaders and senior staff is an effective way for issues to be presented and get messages across.

## 7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda Item 7)

None.

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# Developing Merton's Equalities Objectives for 2022 - 2026

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Agenda Item 6

# Current Equality Objectives

1. To ensure key plans and strategies narrow the gap between different communities in the borough
  
2. Improve equality of access to services for disadvantaged groups
  
3. Ensure regeneration plans increase the opportunity for all Merton's residents to fulfil their educational, health and economic potential, participate in the renewal of the borough and create a health promoting environment.

# Current Equality Objectives

4. Encourage recruitment from all sections of the community, actively promote staff development and career progression opportunities and embed equalities across the organisation
  
- P  
5. Promoting a safe, healthy and cohesive borough where  
→ communities get on well together
  
6. Fulfil our statutory duties and ensure protected groups are effectively engaged when we change our services.

## Community Insight

### Your Merton

Community

Impact of Covid-19

### Transforming How We Work With Communities

Addressing inequalities  
Investing in communities

Engagement, learning and sharing insights

### BAME Voice/Mencap/Merton CIL reports

Education  
Mental Health  
Employment & skills

Funding  
Digital Exclusion  
Cultural Competency

## Emerging and cross-cutting issues

Health Inequality

Access

Safety/hate crime

Mental Health/Isolation

Community

Employment and Skills/Staff

Young people/  
Education

Engagement

Data

Poverty/  
Financial  
Inclusion  
/Digital  
Inclusion

Funding

Cultural Competency

# Suggested draft Objectives

1. Improving Access
2. Encourage recruitment from all sections of the community, actively promote staff development and career progression opportunities
3. Promoting a safe, healthy and cohesive borough where communities get on well together

# Suggested draft Objectives

4. Improving our evidence base to inform our decision making
5. Community engagement

# Moving forward

1. Infrastructure – Departmental Equality leads to support DMTs to develop departmental priorities for draft objectives
2. Engagement with DMTs/Senior Leadership Team
3. Consultation – internal and external

# Timeline

- Agree draft objectives by 31 December 2021
- Public consultation January - March 2022
- Final draft strategy to Cabinet as a key decision - June 2022
- Strategy to be presented to Council for adoption - TBC

# Developing Equality Objectives

- Page 18
1. Do we have the right themes? Is there anything missing?
  2. What do you think about the suggested draft objectives?

## **Draft Equality Charter**

### **We are committed to making a real difference by:**

- Making Merton a welcoming borough where everyone feels they belong
- Inspiring trust and confidence in all the borough has to offer
- Recognising, valuing and celebrating diversity
- Listening to and understanding the diverse needs of all people
- Building good relations and understanding between people
- Creating a fairer borough through promoting inclusion, participation and equal access
- Challenging discrimination, harassment, bullying, hate crime and victimisation
- Eliminating barriers, encouraging a growth mind-set, raising aspirations and creating opportunities for growth beyond limit.

### **As an organisation we will:**

- Actively promote equality
- Work with partners and the community to make our information, services and products more accessible and inclusive
- Put equal opportunity at the heart of our recruitment, employee development and service delivery
- Continually review the diversity of our workforce and ensure it's representative of our local community across all levels
- Address all allegations of discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation
- Promote good relations between people from different backgrounds
- Share good equality practice with our partners
- Measure and share our progress and success.





October 2021

*Engaging Merton*  
Executive Summary



## Engaging residents in a place-based vision for Merton

To support its recovery plans Merton Council wants to develop a place-based vision with residents, businesses and local stakeholders. This vision will establish a shared purpose that will assist the council in meeting the key challenges around Covid-19 response and recovery, and the financial challenges currently facing the council.

To shape this long term vision, **Merton Council wanted to understand the views, experiences and ambitions of local people** - that includes residents, and also those who work and study in the borough.

Merton commissioned Traverse to deliver four separate engagement activities to ensure a broad mix of the community were involved in different ways:

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- A **representative survey of the borough gathered the views of 1,000 residents** to provide quantifiable trends in priorities and experiences.
- An **open access Commonplace platform (<https://engagingmerton.Commonplace.is/>) provided a space for around 500 engaged residents** to provide stories of their experiences and aspirations for the Borough.
- **Thirteen Focus groups with local community groups ensured we heard from seldom heard voices** and understood their particular experiences.
- **A two stage deliberative workshop with 25 residents** from across the borough enabled us to explore themes from the survey and Commonplace in more depth.





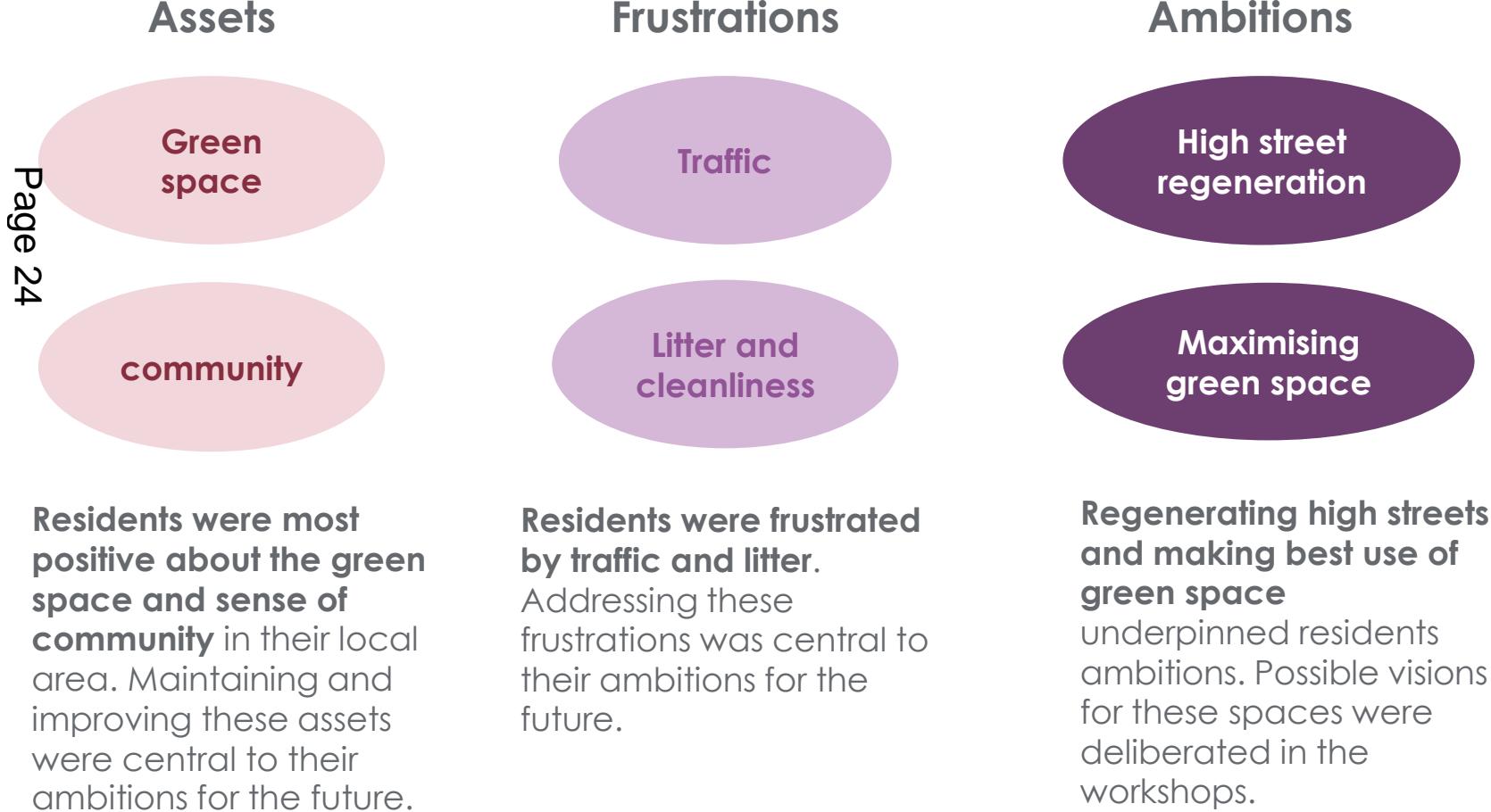
## *Headline findings*

Themes across all four engagement activities



## **Common assets, frustrations and ambitions**

Through the survey, Commonplace and focus groups shared assets, frustrations and ambitions were identified. These were then deliberated in detail in the workshops.



## **Green space and sense of community were key assets to strengthen**

**Green space and a supportive, vibrant sense of community were the things that residents most liked about their local area. Residents grew to appreciate these more during the pandemic, and wanted the vision for the borough to be built upon them.**

- **Green space** and parks in Merton were important spaces that helped residents maintain their physical and mental wellbeing.
  - They were also at the heart of **Merton's identity as a 'leafy' borough** – residents felt the parks marked Merton out as distinct to neighbouring boroughs.
  - Residents reported an increased appreciation for their local parks during the pandemic. **Maintaining parks as clean, inclusive spaces was a priority for residents in the future.**
- Community** was also important to residents but more difficult to define. In the survey residents reported an increased appreciation for their community during the pandemic. In Commonplace this was described at a **hyper local level** – the support offered through mutual aid groups and neighbours. It led residents to want the **vision to maintain and foster this sense of 'community spirit'**.
- Volunteering and community action was another theme. Community groups respondents highlighted the positive support they accessed during the pandemic from volunteers, and expressed a desire for increased community activities. This was also present on Commonplace and in the deliberative workshops where residents wanted **community action and ownership to be part of the future**.
  - Finally, it was clear throughout the engagement that '**sense of community' was felt by residents in the built environment** – through accessible, vibrant high streets, clean parks and attractive housing developments.

## **Litter and traffic were key frustrations to be acknowledged and addressed**

Litter and traffic congestion were the most common frustrations for residents. Anti-social behaviour was an additional issue in some parts of the borough. All these frustrations reduced the strength of Merton's assets – reducing the quality of green space and putting strain on a sense of community.

- **Litter** was a key concern for residents. It negatively impacted the way they felt about living in the borough – it made them **feel like fellow residents and the Council didn't take pride in the area**. They wanted a vision that addressed this problem.
- **Page 26** Many felt that **current Council services were not maintaining good quality public space**. Community groups highlighted that pavements and road provision did not support them to easily navigate local streets.
- For **East Merton and Mitcham residents anti-social behaviour and safety** were higher concerns in public space. They often cited public alcohol consumption as an issue.
- **Traffic congestion** was a frustration for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. No one was happy with the status quo.
- The **reduction of traffic during the pandemic highlighted to many residents the benefit of less congestion** to their daily life – making their local area a more pleasant place to walk and cycle.
- **Car users expressed frustration with current initiatives to manage traffic flow** (such as low traffic neighbourhoods). The provision for residential and high street parking was also viewed negatively in the survey and Commonplace.
- Residents on Commonplace and in the deliberative workshops wanted a **vision that encouraged more active travel initiatives and a reduction in local traffic**. This involved cycle lane provision and the pedestrianisation of town centres.

## *Experiences of the pandemic*

**Residents highlighted the impact of isolating and social distancing on their wellbeing, which was particularly challenging for community groups. Health, education, finance and work were also concerns for some residents. Accessing support from the local community was the main positive aspect that residents wanted to build upon in recovery.**

- **The negative impact of not seeing friends and family:** Across Commonplace and the survey the restrictions on seeing friends and family had the largest negative impact on residents alongside fear of catching the virus.
- **Increased isolation for community groups:** Focus groups with community groups highlighted the increased isolation experienced by these members of society. The lack of face to face community meetings combined with digital exclusion made the pandemic particularly isolating.
- **Education and work concerns:** The children and young person survey showed that education was a very significant concern for young people in the borough. For adults finance and job security was a concern for a some, but not a theme that emerged on Commonplace.
- **A ‘community-led’ recovery:** The increased appreciation of the local community during the pandemic, alongside the change in people’s lifestyles to being more local contributed to residents desire to maintain ‘community spirit’ in the pandemic recovery.

## ***Shared ambition for a regenerated high street at the heart of the community***

**High street regeneration was a shared ambition for residents across the borough. When we spoke to residents in more depth to understand what regeneration meant to them, they emphasised a high street that delivered a community hub and a sense of pride.**

- **Revitalised high street:** Across Commonplace and the survey residents were negative about their local high street's shopping provision, and saw high street regeneration as a key priority for the future.
- **A community hub high street:** In the deliberation, residents explored what type of high street they wanted in the future. Residents across the borough prioritised high streets that provided space for residents to socialise and connect with each other.
- **Pride and identity:** Residents also spoke about the potential source of pride and identity that comes from a vibrant high street. In the deliberation, possible futures that did not support this were rejected. On Commonplace, frustrations with the high street often stemmed from a feeling that local high streets used to be places residents could take pride in.
- **Accessible and traffic free:** In the deliberation, residents preferred high street futures that prioritised pedestrian and cycle access over car access, provided this helped to establish a high street that was 'worth it' – i.e. an attractive community hub with a strong offer and its own identity.

## ***Shared ambition to maximise Merton's green assets***

**As Merton's perceived main asset, residents wanted well-maintained parks and green space to be central to the future vision. They wanted parks to support individual wellbeing, foster a sense of community, generate income and help tackle climate change.**

- **Maintaining parks as safe and accessible:** Across all the engagement it was clear the green space and parks were sources of pride for all residents, and many expressed frustration that they were not always well maintained. Underpinning all ambitions for the future of parks was the importance of maintaining them as safe, clean and accessible shared space.
- **Shared spaces for community activity:** Parks were important for residents during the pandemic partly because they provided local space to connect with residents. In the deliberation residents wanted this trend continued in recovery – to maximise the community events when residents connect with each other.
- **Attracting visitors and generating income:** In the deliberation residents also thought parks could be used to generate more income for the borough.
- **Protecting the environment and tackling climate change:** Finally residents wanted their green spaces protected to provide access to nature. This was partly for individual wellbeing – to provide tranquil space to relax in the borough, and partly to support the Borough's commitment to tackling climate change.



## *Concluding principles*

Next steps towards a resident-led vision



## Towards a place-based vision for Merton

Looking across the findings, we see an overarching ambition for a future Merton where people feel safe, included and connected. To achieve this, the Council's vision needs to:

- **Bring people together and build community:** Residents want to maintain a 'sense of community' that they have felt during the pandemic. Engaging, well-maintained high streets and parks will support this, providing places where they connect with each other.
- **Acknowledge the frustrations about public space:** Residents don't always enjoy being in public space and some community groups feel actively excluded. Residents need spaces that are clean, traffic-free, safe and welcoming.
- **Nurture character, identity and sense of ownership:** Residents want to feel proud of their local high streets and parks, and these are central to how they experience and feel about where they live. But protection, improvement and regeneration needs to happen in ways that involve local people and foster a sense of ownership.
- **Manage trade-offs in possible futures:** Residents acknowledge the tensions and challenges facing Merton in promoting active travel, economic growth, accessibility and tackling climate change. They need to be involved in how these trade-offs are managed so that difficult decisions have more credibility and are better understood.

Our engagement showed that residents were passionate about the potential of their local area and were keen to be involved in decisions around its strategic direction.



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