



Liberal Democrats

Merton manifesto



We want a fresh start for Merton



We want a Council that acts in the interests of all residents in the decisions it takes. We want an honest and open conversation with people about what's going on locally.

The Lib Dem team will stand up for you on the big issues - against cuts to local police, for investment in our local NHS and care services, fairer funding for our schools and more affordable homes. We are also working hard for our area on the specific issues that make a real difference: making stations step-free, pushing the Council to keep on top of litter, fly-tipping and graffiti, and fighting to ensure that residents are listened to.

This manifesto sets out our priorities for Merton and outlines change we want to see. We hope residents will back us to bring that change at the local elections on 3rd May.



ANTHONY FAIRCLOUGH, MERTON LIB DEM CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR

Merton Liberal Democrats - Welcome



“We need real action to tackle rogue landlords and a genuine commitment to affordable housing. After years of failure by the Council it’s clear that only the Lib Dems can deliver on housing here in Merton.”
– Eloise Bailey, candidate for West Barnes

Housing

Fighting for a decent, affordable home for everyone.



THE CHALLENGE

- Merton is expected to have the 4th highest growth in numbers of households in England: to keep pace, thousands of new homes will have to be built over the next 10 years.
- A target of 40% affordable homes applies to all developments, but in 2016/17 only 13% of new homes build in Merton were affordable.
- Nearly 300 houses in the borough have been empty for over 2 years. Merton Council has powers to investigate and bring empty homes back into use, but it almost never uses them.
- No landlords have been prosecuted by Merton Council for years.

OUR PLAN

- Stand up to developers, and fight for at least 50% affordable housing in large developments.
- Ensure that Merton's new house building company builds at least 50% truly affordable homes.
- Take action to investigate empty homes and where appropriate, use Council powers to bring them back into use.
- Prosecute rogue landlords that lodge tenants in unsafe properties.



“We will end the complacency over the state of our streets”

– Anthony Fairclough, candidate for Dundonald

Cleaner streets, boost recycling



Keeping Merton clean is a basic requirement of a good Council

THE CHALLENGE

- Keeping the streets clean and collecting the bins is one of the Council's most basic services.
- Merton Council is "rubbish on rubbish". Streets aren't swept, there's a record amount of flytipping, and the company responsible – Veolia – is just getting away with it, week after week.
- A new system of wheelie bins and fortnightly collections is about to come in. There's no clear plan to increase recycling.

OUR PLAN

We want a waste collection service that works for people, is good value for money and increases recycling, so we will:

- Ensure real flexibility over wheelie bins to ensure people can opt out if they want.
- Provide weekly collection of nappies and other sanitary waste.
- Take strong action against flytippers and against Veolia when the streets aren't swept and the bins are overflowing.
- Install more public bins in our town centres, particularly in Morden town centre.

Air quality and congestion

An opportunity for a greener and healthier Merton



THE CHALLENGE

- London's dirty air is well known, as are its health impacts. Merton is no exception to this public health crisis. The people of Merton deserve better.
- It is a right for all to breathe clean air, and for children to attend school without inhaling high levels of air pollution.
- Traffic congestion is a significant concern every time the Council carries out its annual residents' survey.

OUR PLAN:

- Conduct more air quality monitoring, updating Merton residents in regular bulletins.
- Put in place anti-idling measures near schools and work with Transport for London to make all buses passing through Merton are low-emission.
- Build more cycling infrastructure across Merton.
- Promote car clubs, and investigate making 20mph speed limits the default on residential roads. Such schemes reduce traffic speeds, pollution and injury from accidents where they have been implemented.

Pollution and climate change

Doing our part to preserve our planet



THE CHALLENGE

- In the UK we now produce over 3 million tonnes of plastic waste every year, with 50% of all plastics used just once and thrown away.
- London's climate is changing. We're having hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters, and extreme weather more often. Scientists agree that this is caused by human activity that produces greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide. One of the biggest man-made causes of this is generating electricity.

OUR PLAN:

- Become a "Single Use Plastic Free" area, and support local businesses and organisations to reduce their use of single-use plastics.
- Install public drinking fountains across the borough's parks, stations and public areas.
- Promote recycling, green energy, car clubs and cycling to new residents.
- Accelerate the switching of Merton's street lights to super-efficient LEDs.
- Renew our green spaces, particularly those that have fallen into disrepair in Morden.



“Developments like Crossrail 2 must be made to work for everyone, including Merton businesses”
– Simon McGrath, candidate for Dundonald

Crossrail 2

Making sure we plan properly for new railway, Crossrail 2



THE CHALLENGE

- Wimbledon town centre is the social heart and a major shopping and leisure location for our community. The proposed Crossrail 2 building works will threaten many local businesses and buildings.
- Some existing train stations are being left in a poor state of repair - as they will be replaced by Crossrail 2, which will take years to complete.
- Merton must plan for a future with Crossrail 2 and more housing, with train and tube stations that are well-designed and accessible.

OUR PLAN

- Set up a review panel to look at the impact Crossrail 2 will have on our town centres, including looking at other ways of building the line.
- Fight to ensure that existing stations like Raynes Park and Motspur Park are not left in a state of disrepair during the 15–20 years it will take to build Crossrail 2. Make these stations fully accessible.
- Develop clear planning policies and a vision to guide and manage the significant development and building that is going to follow this major scheme.



“The safety of Merton residents is being put in jeopardy by Tory cuts and Labour centralisation”

– Paul Kohler, candidate for Trinity

Crime & policing

Opposing cuts to our local police.

THE CHALLENGE

- Crime, particularly violent crime, is on the increase across London and affects some 10% of Merton households annually .
- Merton is about to be hit by a triple whammy: losing Wimbledon police station, its Borough police commander, and some 15% of its police officers.
- Although Merton is doing better than some other boroughs, crime is still rising and Tory cuts and Labour intransigence risk making the problem worse.

OUR PLAN

- Fight to maintain a police station within Wimbledon town centre.
- Campaign against the Conservative Government's cuts to the Met police and the Labour Mayor of London's unimaginative response to the funding crisis.
- Use funding available from central government to prioritise restorative justice within Merton, giving victims of crime the chance to meet perpetrators and cut both fear of crime & reoffending.



Standing up for the local NHS

We must stop social care cuts, and fight for local health services.



THE CHALLENGE

- NHS services in south west London face a massive funding gap of £828m by 2020-21, owing to Conservative Government cuts. The funding crisis is likely to be made worse by Brexit.
- Labour Council bosses have repeatedly cut local care services, like meals on wheels, and recently rejected our plan to pay care workers the London Living Wage.
- People's independence is undermined by the cuts. It's also about the type of support we would expect for our own loved ones.

OUR PLAN

We will fight for local health and care services, by:

- Campaigning for a new “walk-in” doctors surgery to replace the one closed in Mitcham.
- Opposing damaging Labour cuts to Council care services – people's independence is at risk if they're not properly funded.
- Fighting to fund the NHS properly. Only the Liberal Democrats are being upfront with people that to protect our NHS and care services, we may all need to pay a little more in tax – ringfenced for these services.



“As the mother of two young children, I want my kids to have access to free organised physical activities in their local parks. People shouldn't be charged to use free public parks.”

– Hina Bokhari, candidate for West Barnes

Education & schools

Backing and investing in our local schools

THE CHALLENGE

- Merton has some of the best schools in the country, but a lack of capital funding from government has meant many now struggle to repair their buildings and facilities.
- Spending cuts mean that children have fewer chances of going to after-school and weekend activities. Making matters worse, Merton Council has contracted a private firm to maintain some of the borough's parks. They now want to charge parents when their children take part in currently free activities like Little League football.

OUR PLAN

- A new "schools bonus", requiring developers to pay an amount into a special fund when they get planning permission. This would give our local schools a much needed additional resource to support children's learning.
- Keep Little League and other recreational activities for children free, by scrapping any charges for the use of Council parks and playing fields.
- Fight for fairer funding for all schools, calling on the Government to increase the schools budget so that no school loses out.





***“We have to protect the rights of non-British EU citizens – our friends, neighbours, colleagues, loved ones – who after the referendum are finding themselves in an uncertain position they didn’t ask or vote for”
– Klaar Dresselaers, candidate for Cannon Hill***

Supporting EU nationals

Assisting our EU-citizen neighbours in continuing to make Merton home



THE CHALLENGE

- EU nationals living in the UK are going through a time of great uncertainty since the referendum and don't feel welcome anymore in the country they call their home.
- Many EU nationals are finding that the permanent residency and/or naturalisation applications processes are burdensome and complicated.
- More and more EU nationals are leaving the UK due to their uncertain position. This is disrupting the NHS, and our businesses, schools, families and communities.

OUR PLAN

We will use our position to speak out for the rights of EU nationals and:

- Keep EU nationals informed of developments related to their rights and residency options.
- Dedicate resources to support EU nationals where needed with permanent residency, naturalisation and settled status applications.
- Continue to push local MPs and the Government to reassure EU nationals that their rights will be protected after Brexit. This is the best way to ensure the rights of British people abroad too.
- Continue our campaign for an Exit from Brexit.

Promoting diversity

A vibrant and thriving Merton



THE CHALLENGE

- Diversity and inclusion are key to the strength and success of society, yet our country and specifically our borough, suffers from divisions between different groups and communities.
- There is not enough, if any, clear and visible efforts by the Council to develop a strategic plan to tackle this challenge, to create a sense of belonging to the borough and to bring the communities together.
- Community groups are not supported enough and do not have any forum to get to know and support each other or undertake joint projects.

OUR PLAN

- Review the Council's strategy and develop a strong vision for a more open, tolerant and united Merton.
- Create a forum by of local groups, charities and businesses and help them to develop joint projects to bring our community together.
- Make our borough more accessible for mobility impaired residents by using planning rules and funding upgrades.

Creative Merton

Building a local economy for the future

THE CHALLENGE

- Creative industries have shaped our borough. Sadly not enough has been done to protect our connection to the past.
- The creative industries are worth more than £84.1 billion a year, employing over 3 million people in the UK.
- There are many cultural assets in our borough, from Merton Abbey Mills, to Wimbledon Theatre to the University of the Arts London.

OUR PLAN

- Support a vibrant creative sector, from start-ups to established businesses. We need to learn from best-practices, and listen to those who work in the creative industries about what the Council can do to help.
- Build on Merton's success in the London Borough of Culture competition, developing the framework established by local groups and businesses.
- Seek to develop incubator sites for start-ups, and examine other barriers to establishing new businesses through a review of planning policies.
- Work with local groups to attract funding to promote our heritage and encourage visitors.





“We want to put the community at the heart of decision-making. As councillors we will give residents a voice and a real say, not impose our views on them.”
– Tamara Kohler, candidate for Trinity

Democracy & transparency

Opening the doors to the town hall



THE CHALLENGE

- Merton Council is supposed to act in the interests of all residents in the decisions it takes. Merton needs to explain to the public everything they do and why they do it.
- Private companies now run many public services such as parks and waste collection. How do we hold them responsible when things go wrong?
- Other organisations play a huge role in our local area – the Mayor of London, transport companies, the NHS and private developers.

OUR PLAN

- Establish “Budget Open Days” so everyone can participate in financial decisions on local services.
- Champion people’s views to those providing services to our community. Outsourcing contracts should be made public.
- Create Neighbourhood Plans to give people real control over the development in their area, by turning residents’ views into planning rules.
- Keep Council Tax as low as possible whilst maintaining services that support people to live their lives as they choose.



Liberal Democrats

Merton manifesto



This manifesto sets out Merton Liberal Democrat policies and priorities for the borough of Merton for the 2018 local elections. Published and promoted by Matthew William Payne on behalf of Merton Liberal Democrat candidates, all at Flat 5, 131 Palmerston Road, London, SW19 1PB