



## A message from the Leader of the Council

### **COUNCILLOR MARK ALLISON**

Dear business owner,

As the new Leader of Merton Council, I wanted to write to you to extend my warmest wishes. It has been a tough year, but Merton is a great place and over the past year we have seen extraordinary acts of kindness and community spirit, with residents, businesses and the council working together to help those who need it most.

I know these have been difficult times. Many people have suffered illness or lost loved ones. Many people have lost their jobs or have seen their businesses suffer. I want to thank you for playing a part in keeping Merton great, and to celebrate the frontline workers, like our council staff, who help keep our borough safe.

#### **Business-like council**

The pandemic has been devastating for many of the 6,000 businesses in Merton, many of which are small businesses, family firms and local companies.

The council was responsible for implementing a number of Government relief and grants schemes and was named in Parliament as one of the top three London boroughs for how fast we distributed payments for small business grants and retail, hospitality and leisure grants. We wanted to do more, but, unfortunately, due to the Government guidance, we have not been able to help all the deserving businesses in the borough. However, we have awarded:

- £44 million in retail, hospitality and leisure relief
- £800,000 in nursery reliefs
- £28 million in small business grants and retail, hospitality and leisure grants
- £1.3 million in discretionary grants
- £9 million in Local Restrictions grants (some of these are ongoing)

#### **Helping you with your business rates**

The council does not set business rates – they are set by the Government. The council collects the business rates and in 20/21 will retain 30% of the rates and distribute the remainder to the Government and Greater London Authority. The rateable value of all business properties was recalculated by the Government with effect from 1 April 2017. To see how the changes have been calculated, go to [www.tax.service.gov.uk/view-my-valuation](http://www.tax.service.gov.uk/view-my-valuation).



Cllr Allison visits Metronome in Morden on Small Business Saturday

If you had difficulty paying your business rates during the last year, or anticipate difficulty in the coming year, we may be able to defer your monthly payments. Please speak to one of the team on **020 8545 3751** to discuss in confidence.

We can also check if your business qualifies for Small Business Rate Relief. You can apply at [merton.gov.uk/smallbusinessrelief](https://merton.gov.uk/smallbusinessrelief) to see if you are entitled to this discount.

Last year, the Government introduced the expanded business rates reliefs for retail, hospitality and leisure business rate payers. They also introduced nursery relief. In the Budget, the Government announced that these reliefs would continue at 100% for a further three months only.

Your business rates bill will show the relief for the whole year, but you will receive another bill towards the end of June 2021 which will reflect the revised relief from 1 July 2021, which will be 66%.

If you think you may be eligible for the discount and it is not already shown on your bill, firstly check the qualifying criteria at [merton.gov.uk/retaildiscount](https://merton.gov.uk/retaildiscount), and then call our business rates team on **020 8545 3751**.

## A great place

Because Merton is such a special community, we have fared better than most through this difficult year. We have worked with, funded and organised volunteers and charities, and have deployed staff from popular services like our libraries to go out into the community to ensure that shielding older and vulnerable residents got the food they needed during lockdown, received prescriptions or just had a friendly face to talk to. Many businesses have played a key role in getting help where it is most needed, or contributed to the Merton Giving campaign.

The past year has been exemplified by Merton coming together, with the help of the council, and one of my first tasks as Leader of the Council was to launch Merton Together, a campaign to encourage residents to get involved in helping friends and neighbours. I'm so proud of the response. I know that times are tough for many of us as a result of Covid-19, but the pandemic has brought out the best in the community, as well as the best of the council.



## Supporting businesses

The efforts of Merton's businesses during the last year to adapt the way they trade, including setting up online sales, making their premises Covid-secure and delivering essential supplies, have been instrumental in helping to support the borough through the pandemic. Residents are relying on their local high streets and Merton-based companies more than ever before.

The council is committed to continuing to support businesses and we will do everything we can to help boost the local economy as we emerge from the pandemic. Thank you for all you have done to support Merton this year. I look forward to a better 12 months ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mark Allison'.

**Councillor Mark Allison**  
**Leader of Merton Council**

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