

TERMS OF REFERENCE

MERTON'S CLIMATE ACTION GROUP

19th February 2021

Purpose of the Group

To develop community-led projects that reduce Merton's greenhouse gas emissions, where joint efforts are more effective than the actions of individuals or the Council alone.

The group's constitution and Governance structure will support and foster community-led action; by encouraging positive networks of people from all parts of the borough, and all walks of life, whose combined resources, skills and expertise can successfully develop and implement projects which reduce greenhouse gas emissions or help the borough adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The group structure (set out below) reflects the key areas of the Climate Strategy and Action Plan, with a particular focus on the major transitions that need to take place in the Economy, Buildings and Energy, and Transport, as well as the need to enhance Merton's green spaces to enable climate adaptation. It also recognizes that communications, behaviour change and increased funding are key to the success of any collaborative action to tackle climate change.

Due to limited resources, the Council is unable to allocate specific funding for this group but hopes, through the work of the Action Group, to help raise funding for climate projects that would not be able to progress otherwise. One of the aims of the Action Group will be to bring in funding from outside the borough to help fund the carbon reduction projects being taken forward by the group.

The Council's main role in this group is to enable Merton's community to develop climate change projects that go beyond what an individual or the Council can do alone.

Council officers and councillors may participate in the group, particularly where projects require the involvement of the Council and require their support.

Activities outside the Scope of the Climate Action Group

The Action Group will not duplicate the existing work of the Council where existing structures and processes are already in place – these would include:

- Decisions relating to the overarching strategy and delivery of the Climate Strategy and Action Plan. Any revisions relating to the overarching strategy will need to be dealt with by the Council.
- Oversight of the Delivery Plan will be monitored by the Sustainable Transport and Communities Partnership, the Sustainable Communities and Overview Scrutiny Panel and Cabinet. We will report feedback to the Action Group with a view to ensuring that projects being developed by the Group are in keeping with the objectives of the Climate Strategy and Action Plan, and associated Delivery Plan.
- Delivery of the Council's 2030 target – this will be dealt with through the Council's Delivery Plan.

- Council policies (e.g. the Local Plan, Parking Charges, etc.) will be managed through the Council's current structures along with any consultation on policy changes.
- Planning applications and their environmental impact will continue to be dealt with through the planning committee process and determined in line with existing structures.
- Council Financial Decisions – these will be dealt with through the Council's existing financial decision making processes.

Group Structure & Approach

The Action Group will be formed of four thematic sub-groups aligned with the themes covered in the Climate Strategy and Action Plan (Green Economy, Buildings and Energy, Transport, and Greening Merton), as well as a cross-cutting sub-group on Engagement and Funding to ensure that these areas are given due consideration.

Following an initial inception meeting, the Action Group will run on the following meeting cycle (to manage the limited resources of the Climate Change (CC) officers):

| | | |
|----------|------------------------|---|
| Month 1: | Cross-cutting session: | Engagement/ funding (inc. Behaviour change and coms) |
| Month 2: | Theme session: | Green Economy (inc. Goods, services, food, waste) |
| Month 3: | Theme session: | Greening Merton (inc. planting and habitat restoration) |
| Month 4: | Theme Session: | Buildings and Energy (inc. Fuel Poverty) |
| Month 5: | Theme Session: | Transport (inc. Public health and Air Quality) |
| Month 6: | Progress meeting: | All themed groups come together workshop style. |

Meetings will be open for anyone to attend and will be advertised through the Council's website, email updates and social media. We will encourage a wide range of Councillors, Council Officers and members from all parts of the borough to join the group.

Meetings are likely to run in a workshop style where participants will have the most important contribution. A Community Lead will be selected for each sub-group to chair the relevant meeting and coordinate the work stream. The thematic meetings will likely last around 2 hours.

For the first cycle of thematic meetings, at the start of each session CC Officers and relevant Council and community leads will provide an initial overview for the relevant theme to guide the discussion, but the Council will not be dictating the direction of the Group's work. The Community Leads will then run a brainstorming session where the sub-group will decide how they want to take action through the Action Group.

Each sub-group will meet with the climate change team and relevant Council leads twice per year as per the schedule above, or as and when needed.

Progress meetings will be an important opportunity to consider the extent to which the group is achieving its purpose, and the Chairs will decide whether to continue with the group or amend the function of the group as needed.

Once a year, one of the progress meetings will be run as a full-day workshop. This will be an opportunity to look back at what has been achieved over the course of the year, bring the different working groups together to consider what should be prioritised next, and provide an opportunity to engage with a wider group of stakeholders and bring them into the process.

Roles & Responsibilities

| Role | Council Rep | Community Rep | Responsibilities |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Co-Chair | Martin Whelton | Community Co-Chair Ramya Venkataraman | <p><u>Both Co-Chairs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steer the overall work programme Co-chair the progress meetings every 6 months (2 per year) Feedback on and address any cross-cutting issues across the thematic sub-groups. <p><u>Community Co-Chair:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair the cross-cutting group meetings on Engagement and Funding (2 per year). Steer the cross-cutting Engagement and Funding work stream (i.e. coordinate any sub-group activities between formal meetings). |
| Secretariat | CC Officers | - | Facilitate formal meetings (i.e. book meeting rooms, and take minutes of progress meetings every 6 months) |
| Thematic sub-group coordination | CC Officers with input from relevant Council Officer leads for waste, economy, transport, buildings and energy, green spaces and comms. | Community Thematic Leads: Transport – Mehmood Naqshbandi & Luke McCarthy Greening Merton – Kelly Gunnell | <p><u>Community Thematic Lead</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steer the relevant thematic work stream (i.e. coordinate any sub-group activities at and between the formal meetings) Chair the relevant thematic meetings (2 per year) Attend and report back at the progress meetings every 6 months (2 per year) |

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|--|--|--|--|
| | | <p>Green Economy – Carola Grillo & Diana Sterck</p> <p>Buildings & Energy – Alban Thurston</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend and report back at the cross-cutting group meeting on Engagement and Funding (2 per year), or send a representative from the thematic sub-group. <p>CC Officers Support Community Thematic Leads.</p> <p>Other officers Provide input and support for specific projects on request.</p> |
|--|--|--|--|

The Community Co-Chair and Community Thematic Leads were selected through an application process. Their role is to be ambassadors for action on climate change in all parts of the borough, working effectively with the Council and with communities and individuals from all walks of life to foster collaborative projects that reduce the impacts of climate change. The Community Co-Chair and Community Thematic Leads will be expected to dedicate a minimum of 12 hours per month to the group. Community Thematic Leads are welcome to attend any other formal thematic meetings which will be open to the public.

Beyond that, the intention is to make the group as open as possible in order to engage with as wide a group of people as possible, and give individuals and organisations the opportunity to get involved after the group has been set up, as the climate action network grows.

If people are interested in getting actively involved in any of the work streams they can contact the relevant Community Lead(s) at the following email addresses:

| Work stream | Community Lead(s) | Email |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Engagement & Funding | Ramya Venkataraman | cag.engagement@gmail.com |
| Green Economy | Diana Sterck Carola Grillo | cag.greeneconomy@gmail.com |
| Transport | Luke McCarthy Mehmood Naqshbandi | Transport.CAG.Merton@gmail.com |
| Greening Merton | Kelly Gunnell | cag.greeningmerton@gmail.com |
| Buildings & Energy | Alban Thurston | cag.buildings@gmail.com |

People can also contact the Climate Change Officers at Future.Merton@merton.gov.uk if they have any questions, if they would like to discuss any ideas or if they need help connecting with the right people.

Council Input

The level of input required from the Council will depend on the project. If a project is on public land (e.g. in a park or on the street), it will likely need Council permission. And some projects might require Council action (e.g. installing a low traffic neighbourhood).

Projects that require all the action to come from the Council are not within the scope of the Climate Action Group, and will be covered elsewhere through the Council's Climate Delivery Plan.

If a project requires Council approval or action, the Community leads or climate action group participant should have an initial discussion with the Climate Change Officers to determine if the project is feasible.

The Council cannot guarantee support for all projects, but will endeavour to support the group where projects are feasible, where they are in keeping with Council objectives, and where resources allow.

Ways of Working

- Develop mutual trust and respect through working together, participating in constructive debate and valuing the contributions of different individuals equally.
- Work collectively to create solutions and empower communities to make change happen.
- Mobilise wider resources (across sectors) to achieve our purpose and aims.
- Promote innovation, be open to change in order to identify and share best practice.
- All community leads and other participants are expected to ensure that the Climate Action Group's business is discharged in a transparent manner and to the highest standards of conduct.
- Community leads are expected to:
 - Put the wider interests of Merton community ahead of their own personal, organisational or business interests, and see the big picture;
 - Ensure that any potential conflicts of interest are notified to the Secretariat as part of the application process. A Declaration of Interest will need to be completed once the community leads have been appointed and updated if any new conflicts of interest arise; and
 - Represent the Climate Action Group, and not their own personal or business interests, at any meetings or in any communications arranged for the purpose of the Climate Action Group's activities.
- The group welcomes people from all political persuasions but the group and the climate action it fosters should be apolitical.

Likely initial activities

The following sections set out some potential activities that the different sub-groups could consider which are in-keeping with the Climate Strategy & Action Plan. The aim of this is to give people an idea of the types of projects the different sub-groups might discuss, but not to limit or prescribe which activities are taken forward by the group.

Engagement and Funding:

Purpose: To support the work of all other themes and increase the reach of the Action Group.

Potential project ideas:

- Engage with Merton's residents, businesses and organisations to encourage them to reduce emissions (e.g. through the Council's climate comms campaign and other mechanisms), particularly those who are traditionally hard to reach.
- Work with thematic groups to identify funding opportunities which support climate projects.

Green Economy Theme:

Purpose: To drive a reduction in emissions from the consumption of goods and services in Merton.

Potential project ideas:

- Support the transition to a circular economy (e.g. zero waste, repair and re-use initiatives).
- Encourage residents and businesses to reduce waste and recycle.
- Encourage residents to adopt more sustainable diets (e.g. initiatives which promote plant-based diets, reduce food waste, encourage food growing).
- Encourage and enable residents and businesses to buy and sell sustainable products.
- Initiatives which develop low carbon skills and jobs in Merton.

Buildings and Energy:

Purpose: To encourage homeowners, landlords, businesses and organisations to retrofit Merton's existing building stock to be more energy efficient and to use low carbon heat and renewable energy.

Potential project ideas:

- Community energy projects.
- Support people at risk of fuel poverty.
- Help home owners, landlords and social housing providers to invest in energy efficiency, low carbon heating and renewable energy.
- Encourage residents and businesses to reduce their energy consumption.

Transport Theme:

Purpose: To support a reduction in petrol and diesel vehicles and an increase in active travel.

Potential project ideas:

- Encourage residents and businesses to reduce car use in favour of active and sustainable travel.
- Support a move to low emission vehicles (e.g. electric) where powered vehicles are needed.

Greening Merton Theme:

Purpose: To increase and enhance green spaces in Merton on public and private land.

Potential ideas:

- Planting, re-wilding, habitat restoration.
- Grey to green (removal of concrete in favour of planting).
- Encourage residents and businesses to plant more trees on private land.