

Terms of Reference – Merton’s Climate Action Group - April 2022

Purpose of the Group

To support the development and implementation of community-led projects, events and knowledge exchange 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.

The meeting structure for 2022 will be as follows:

- One large annual progress meeting: Open invitation, including all Climate Action Group Leads, residents, businesses, community groups and partners.
- Ad Hoc public engagement events and webinars: Open invitation, held throughout the year in conjunction with subject matter experts and local partners.

The CAG community leads will also meet with the Council’s climate change team on a regular basis to discuss and progress CAG projects.

Annual Progress Meeting

The annual progress meeting will be advertised through the Council’s website, newsletters and social media. We will encourage a wide range of Councillors, Council Officers, community groups, businesses, residents, and CAG members from all parts of the borough to attend.

The annual progress meeting will be run as a 2-hour session. 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.

This will also be an important opportunity to consider the extent to which the group is achieving its purpose, and whether to amend the function of the group as needed.

Ad Hoc Public Engagement Events & Webinars

These will be open for anyone to attend and will be advertised through the Council’s website, newsletters and social media. They are intended to:

- Showcase the work of partners and organisations in Merton (and beyond) who offer support to residents, which will ultimately support them to live more sustainably. This could include advice

on saving energy; installing solar panels; learning new skills in repairing and reuse; green skills training; or horticulture to support biodiversity (to name just a few examples).

- To spotlight amazing residents who are already ‘doing climate action’, to act as inspiration for others.

Community Lead and Project-Specific Meetings

The Council’s climate change team will meet with the CAG Community Leads and CAG participants on a regular basis to progress the delivery of existing CAG projects and to discuss new project ideas.

Each sub-group will meet with the climate change team and relevant Council leads on a schedule agreed with the relevant CAG leads, as and when needed. The climate change team may also arrange meetings with all the community leads to discuss any crosscutting items as and when needed.

Roles & Responsibilities

Role	Council Rep	Community Rep	Responsibilities
Co-Chair	Martin Whelton	Community Co-Chair TBC	<p>Both Co-Chairs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steer the overall work programme • Co-chair the annual progress meeting • Feedback on and address any cross-cutting issues across the thematic sub-groups <p>Community Co-Chair: Steer any cross-cutting work (i.e., coordinate any sub-group activities with the Engagement & Funding Lead(s), or large events which include all thematic areas).</p>
Secretariat	Climate Engagement Officer	-	Facilitate formal meetings (i.e., book meeting rooms, and take minutes)
Thematic sub-group coordination	CC Team 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	<p>Community Thematic Lead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steer the relevant thematic work stream (i.e., coordinate any sub-group activities) • Attend and report back at the annual progress meeting

		<p>Greening Merton – TBC</p> <p>Green Economy – Diana Sterck</p> <p>Buildings & Energy – Jodi Anderson, James Stettler and Asha Newsum</p> <p>Engagement – Asha Newsum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend, chair, and report back on any relevant sub-group meetings. <p>CC Officers Support Community Thematic Leads.</p> <p>Other officers Provide input and support for specific projects on request.</p>
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The Community Co-Chair and Community Thematic Leads are 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 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	Asha Newsum (engagement) TBC	cag.engagement@gmail.com
Green Economy	Diana Sterck TBC	cag.greeneconomy@gmail.com
Transport	Luke McCarthy Mehmood Naqshbandi	cag.transportmerton@gmail.com
Greening Merton	TBC TBC	cag.greeningmerton@gmail.com
Buildings & Energy	James Stettler Jodi Anderson Asha Newsum	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.

Project Strands & 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 homeowners, 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.