

TERMS OF REFERENCE
MERTON'S CLIMATE ACTION GROUP
May 2023

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.

The Council's main role in this group is to provide an enabling environment to support residents to developing climate change projects that go beyond what an individual or the Council can do alone. Please see 'Council Input' section of the document for more detail on what the council's role entails.

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



Ways to Join

The section below outlines the ways that residents can become a part of Merton's Climate Action Group.

Route 1: Volunteers

Residents are encouraged to join to connect with like-minded residents and begin developing local carbon reduction and climate adaptation projects. Residents who have ideas for projects do not have to become Community Leads to join the group (see section below).

The group is designed to be 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.

Route 2: The Community Co-Chair and Community Thematic Leads

Are selected through a short 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. There can be up to three Community Leads per theme.

Expectations of the Role (*in addition to the role of a volunteer)

The Community Co-Chair and Community Thematic Leads will be expected to:

- Dedicate 8 hours per month to the group
- Reach out to residents through their own networks to encourage participation in the group.
- Help coordinate the relevant thematic work stream (i.e., work with volunteers to arrange any activities, sub-group meetings and project meetings independently of the council)
- Attend and report back at the annual progress meeting.



Voluntary Contributions: Expected Roles & Responsibilities

Involvement in MCAG is voluntary, but the roles and responsibilities are listed to help focus the work of volunteers and clarify expected time commitments.

Role	Council Rep	Community Rep	Responsibilities
Co-Chair	Councillor Natasha Irons	Community Co-Chair TBC	<p><u>Both Co-Chairs:</u></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><u>Community Co-Chair:</u> 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.	<p>Community Thematic Leads:</p> <p>Transport – Luke McCarthy Mehmood Naqshbandi</p> <p>Greening Merton – TBC</p> <p>Green Economy TBC</p> <p>Buildings & Energy – Jodi Anderson, James Stettler and Asha Newsum</p>	<p><u>Community Thematic Lead (*in addition to the role of volunteers)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reach out to residents through their own networks to encourage participation in the group. Help coordinate the relevant thematic work stream (i.e., work with volunteers to arrange any activities, sub-group meetings and project meetings liaising with the council if projects require council permission) Attend and report back at the annual progress meeting <p><u>CC Officers</u> Support Community Thematic Leads as detailed in the Council Input section</p>

		Engagement – Asha Newsum	Other officers Provide input and support for specific projects on request, as detailed in the Council Input section.
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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	TBC TBC	future.merton@merton.gov.uk
Transport	Luke McCarthy Mehmood Naqshbandi	cag.transportmerton@gmail.com
Greening Merton	TBC TBC	future.merton@merton.gov.uk
Buildings & Energy	James Stettler Jodi Anderson Asha Newsum	cag.buildings@gmail.com

People can also contact the Climate Engagement Officer 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.



Group Structure & Approach

The Action Group is 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 2023 will be as follows:

- Internal Progress Review with Community Leads
- One large public annual progress meeting: Open invitation, including all Climate Action Group Leads, residents, businesses, community groups and partners.
- Ad Hoc public engagement events and webinars: As desired and developed by volunteers, these will be open invitation, held throughout the year in conjunction with subject matter experts and/or local partners.
- Community leads and volunteers are expected to meet to develop projects independently of the council, but can request meetings with Council Climate Officers, to discuss project ideas as detailed in the Council Input section.

Internal Progress Meetings

An opportunity for Community Leads to feedback to the council and for the council to feedback to volunteers about the partnership and to consider the extent to which the group is achieving its purpose, and whether to amend the function of the group as needed. This will be run in Winter/Spring each year, before the public review.

Annual Public Progress Meetings

The annual progress meetings are advertised through the Council's website, newsletters and social media. We 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 are run as a 1-2 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, provide an opportunity for like-minded residents to network, and engage with a wider group of residents, opening the floor to new project ideas.

Ad Hoc Public Engagement Events & Webinars

MCAG will be supported by the council to run webinars and events of interest, that support in overcoming informational barriers and encourage behaviour change for climate action. The council will provide the administrative function, but residents are encouraged to use their networks and connections to find speakers and set the objectives of the event/webinar.

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 help them 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). Example – Canons Summer Fair.
- To spotlight amazing residents who are already 'doing climate action', to act as inspiration for others.

Community Lead and Project-Specific Meetings

Community Leads and Volunteers are expected to meet and develop project ideas independently of the council. Community Leads can see what people in other areas across the country are already doing to inspire climate action using Carbon Copy's helpful directory of [Green community initiatives & sustainable development](#).

Community Leads and Volunteers are encouraged to read [Merton's Climate Delivery Summary Report for Yr3](#), to understand what the council has planned for 2023, so volunteers don't develop projects that the council are already working on.



Council Input

The section outlines the guidance that the council can offer to empower volunteers to develop local community climate action projects.

Operational:

Helping to guide MCAG strategic direction by organising annual progress meetings and internal review meetings.

Projects

Volunteers can get in touch with the Climate Engagement Officer to understand if their project is feasible. For example, if their project idea:

- aligns with Merton strategies,
 - is already being developed or carried out by other organisations in the borough (to our knowledge),
 - requires council permissions (i.e. it is located in a park, or the street), or
 - actually falls within the scope of council responsibility and is already being handled by a council team, to prevent residents from duplicating the work of the council.
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- The council can offer general project guidance and a standardised project document template to help guide project development. This can then be used as a foundation from which volunteers can bid for council or external funds.
 - The council can offer volunteers an initial discussion with the Climate Engagement Officer to brainstorm their project idea to help guide bid writing (covering main objectives, target audience, location, feasibility), where there is no conflict of interest with the council e.g. the funding is not sought from a competitive council grant fund (as this would constitute a competitive advantage to MCAG volunteers in securing council funding).
 - The council will share funding opportunities for non-council grant funds.
 - For council grant funds, we can share guidance and provide answers to frequently asked questions which will be available to everyone who is eligible to bid.

Communications and Outreach

- To overcome informational barriers and encourage behaviour change, volunteers can suggest webinar topics and use their networks to find guest speakers. The Climate Engagement Officer can then arrange public webinars, open to everyone, on topics of interest, which contribute to the main themes of the Climate Strategy and Action Plan (Buildings and Energy, Greening Merton, Transport and Green Economy).
- To engage new audiences in the borough on climate action, the Council may be able to cover the cost of hiring event space to run in person meetings by MCAG volunteers, with the support of the Climate Engagement Officer. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis.
- The Climate Engagement Officer will ensure that Community Leads are invited to Sustainable Communities Transport Partnership meetings, to stay updated about council work across the four main themes and hear from key partners progressing action towards net zero across, Buildings and Energy, Greening Merton, Transport and Green Economy.
- Where in keeping with council objectives, the Climate Engagement Officer will review MCAG case studies, or communications materials to share through council communications channels, including the council's website and Climate Action Newsletter. The council may also provide funding to print climate communications materials on a case-by-case basis.

Outside the scope of council input

We cannot support volunteers with the following points, as they may constitute a perceived competitive advantage to MCAG volunteers, over other individuals or organisations who are also eligible to bid for council grant funds.

We cannot:

- Develop project proposals or ideas, this has to be led by residents.
- Review project proposals that will be submitted to council grant funds.
- connect residents with other council officers, for support in working out the details of their project proposal, unless the project requires council permissions (if a project is on public land e.g., in a park or on the street).

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.

Due to limited resources, the Council is unable to allocate specific funding for this group but hopes that volunteers bid for council or external funds to develop local projects.



Activities outside the Scope of the Climate Action Group

The Climate 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 Climate 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 Climate 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 Climate Delivery Plan.
- Delivery of the Council's 2030 target – this will be dealt with through the Council's Climate 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.



Project Strands & Activities

The following sections set out some potential activities that the different sub-groups could consider which are in-keeping with Merton's 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: Cross cutting partnership working with all other themes to increase the reach and impact of the Climate 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 and ill health.
- Help homeowners, renters, landlords and social housing providers to understand the benefits and make the most of opportunities for energy efficiency improvements, 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 to realise better air quality and health benefits of being active.
- 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.



Ways of Working

Please read the ways of working that we expect residents to adhere to when working with other volunteers and the council.

- 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 and volunteers 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 (the Council's Climate Engagement Officer) as part of the application process. For Community Leads 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.

The council reserves the right to remove Community Leads and volunteers from the group if

- Community Leads show little to no engagement with the council, or other volunteers over a period of four months.
- If volunteers do not value our ways of working together (see ways of working section), or exhibit poor behaviour towards council officers, or other volunteers.



MERTON
NET ZERO
TOGETHER

merton.gov.uk/climatechange