

A message from the Leader of the Council
COUNCILLOR MARK ALLISON



Dear business owner,

I am writing to thank you for helping make Merton a great place. It has been another tough year for us all, but we live in a great community that has come together to keep each other safe and make sure those who need help get it.

Because you have stuck to the rules and supported our council workers and NHS, our volunteers and charities, we can begin to look forward to slowly emerging from the shadow cast by COVID-19. However, there are more challenges ahead with the cost of living crisis and rising energy prices.

It will not be easy to pay bills this year, but I promise to make sure every penny you pay that the council can keep, goes towards keeping our friends and neighbours safe, and providing the services you need and protect the parts of our great borough.

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 continues to be responsible for implementing a number of Government relief and grants schemes, and since December 2021 the following have been implemented:

- Discretionary scheme awarded £481,000 in direct grants to businesses affected by Omicron

- Government Omicron Hospitality and Leisure grant scheme

Additionally, we will soon implement the COVID Additional Relief Fund – £4.7 million in business rates reliefs for businesses that have not previously received any help with their business rates bills.

Helping you with your business rates

The council does not set business rates – they are set by the government, which instructs councils to collect the money on

its behalf. The rateable value of all business properties were 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.

If your new rates have either increased or decreased by a large amount, then this will be phased in over several years. If this affects you, your bill will have been automatically adjusted.

If you had difficulty paying your business rates during the last year or anticipate the coming year, we will see if your monthly payments can be deferred. You can fill in a form online at merton.gov.uk/hardshiprelief or speak to one of the team on 020 8545 3751 to discuss an alternative payment option in confidence.

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

The Government have confirmed that the expanded business rates relief for retail, hospitality and leisure business rate payers will continue in 2022/23. The relief will be limited to 50% with a cap of £110,000. Your new bill will already show this relief. If you think you may be eligible for this relief and it is not already shown on your bill, firstly check the qualifying criteria at merton.gov.uk/retaildiscount, and then call our business rates team on 020 8545 3751.

Your Merton

During 2021 we ran the widest-reaching community engagement programme in the council's history. As we prepare for life after COVID-19, I wanted to hear how your priorities had changed. We listened to over 5,000 residents, giving us unprecedented insight into what you love and value most about Merton, like our parks and town centres, as well as the challenges of spending more time locally.

The result of listening to you is a new community-led plan for the borough – Merton 2030 – a set of initiatives that support the new normal.

We'll be investing in local high streets, and updating our CCTV to help you feel safe there; and providing free space for small business start-ups to help them keep costs down.

We're also investing an extra £400,000 this year on street cleaning to keep Merton clean – and cracking down on those who litter or fly-tip, on top of the £250,000 spent last year. We now fine more people for littering than any other council in the country.

Supporting businesses

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.

Councillor Mark Allison Leader of Merton Council
London Borough of Merton Merton Civic Centre London Road
Morden SM4 5DX

020 8545 3424

@cllrallison

mark.allison@merton.gov.uk