

TERMS OF REFERENCE
MERTON'S CLIMATE ACTION GROUP
February 2025

Purpose of the Group

Engage with Merton-based stakeholders to foster and support community-led climate action to reduce the borough's greenhouse emissions. Build resilience to the impacts of climate change, where joint efforts are more effective than the actions of individuals alone. Stakeholders include residents, community groups, community and voluntary sector organisations including faith groups, businesses, educational establishments, and health services.

Encourage positive networks from all parts of the borough to support the development and implementation of place-based events, knowledge exchange and community-led climate action projects.

The council's main role in this space is to provide an enabling environment to support the group's engagement with individuals and groups outside the council on 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 and/or support of the Council as set out in the 'Council Input' section below.



How to Join

People are encouraged to join the group to connect with like-minded individuals, to help promote climate action, and to help develop local carbon reduction and climate adaptation projects.

If a resident already has a particular project in mind, this group could help them connect with a network of people from a range of backgrounds to help develop their project. If they don't have any specific project ideas, the group would welcome their energy, enthusiasm and support in developing existing ideas. Residents can get involved in as many projects as they like.

The group is designed to be as open as possible to engage with a large range of people, giving individuals and organisations greater opportunity to get involved as the climate action network grows.

People can contact the Engagement Lead for the Climate Action Group at cag.engagement@gmail.com or the council's Climate Team at rob.potter@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.

Projects generally align with the key themes of Merton's Climate Strategy and Action Plan: Buildings & Energy, Transport, Green Economy, Greening Merton, as well as Funding and Engagement. See Project Strands and Activities section below to get an idea of the types of projects this could include.

MCAG members are encouraged to read Merton's latest annual Climate Delivery Plan available at <https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/sustainability-and-climate-change/strategy>, to understand what the council has planned and avoid areas that the council is already working on.

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 to identify and share best practice.
- Ensure that the Climate Action Group's business is discharged in a transparent manner and to the highest standards of conduct.
- Put the wider interests of Merton community ahead of their own personal, organisational or business interests, and see the bigger picture.
- Ensure that any potential conflicts of interest are notified to the council's Climate Engagement Officer.
- 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 volunteers from the group if they do not value our ways of working together (see ways of working section), or exhibit poor behaviour towards council officers, or other volunteers.



Council Input

This section outlines the guidance that the council's Climate Team can offer to empower stakeholders to develop local community climate action projects.

Operational

Helping to guide Merton Climate Action Group's (MCAG) strategic direction by organising annual progress meetings and internal review meetings.

Projects

Helping stakeholders understand if their project is feasible. For example, whether 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.

The council can also share funding opportunities for non-council grant funds.

For council grant funds, the council can share guidance and provide answers to frequently asked questions which will be available to everyone who is eligible to bid.

Communications and Outreach

- The council's Climate Engagement Officer and MCAG's Engagement Lead can help arrange public webinars, to overcome informational barriers and encourage behaviour change, based on recommendations of topics and speakers from stakeholders.
- 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.

- 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 stakeholders 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 the relevant community stakeholders.
- Review project proposals that will be submitted to council grant funds.
- Connect community stakeholders with other council officers, for support in working out the details of their project proposal, unless the project requires council permissions (i.e. 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 community stakeholders 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 group 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 group might discuss, but not to limit or prescribe which activities are taken forward by the group.

Engagement and Funding:

Purpose: Cross cutting partnership working 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 seldom heard.
- 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.



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TOGETHER

merton.gov.uk/climatechange