CLIMATE SURVEY CONSULTATION REPORT

6th February 2020

INTRODUCTION

Background

The climate survey consultation was published to inform Merton's Climate Action Plan, following the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in July 2019. The survey formed a key part of the consultation for the action plan, which has also included the following activities: the Council has,

- carried out an evidence review[1];
- procured technical support from consultants to carry out a greenhouse gas inventory and advise on decarbonisation pathways to meet our targets to become a carbon neutral borough by 2050, and a carbon neutral council by 2030;
- set up the Climate Emergency Working Group[2] to steer the action plan;
- engaged with a wide range of individuals and organisations and partners inside and outside of Merton; and
- initiated a work programme undertaken by key officers across Merton Council with support from senior staff.

From all of these activities the Council has identified 143 suggested actions[3] (with numerous variations) to consider. The next step will be to identify which actions take priority for the action plan, based on their impact and deliverability. A key step will be bringing together businesses, community groups and Local Authority representatives in a major workshop at the end of February to gain some consensus on the most important actions.

Climate survey history

A survey was designed in conjunction with expertise from the Climate Emergency Working Group (see Annex A for a list of the questions). Survey questions were designed to understand Merton's attitude towards climate change, what steps residents have taken to mitigate climate change, and what barriers are preventing them from taking further steps. The survey also contained open text questions to enable additional views to be captured. Points raised in the open text boxes were recorded and reviewed to assess the key themes raised by respondents. The survey was structured by thematic area to capture the main sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Merton: energy and buildings, transport, products and waste, green spaces and finance.

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[1] A list of evidence will be published [add link]

[2] https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/sustainability-and-climate-change/climate-emergency-working-group

[3] [add link to action list]

As well as targeting residents, the survey was adapted to capture the views of organisations, including businesses, which was issued alongside the main consultation. The survey was also adapted and given to a sample of young residents.

The surveys were initially open between the 28 October and 9 December. The deadline was extended to 16 December, beyond the general election, in order to give additional time to individuals and organisations to respond.

The survey was promoted through the Merton Partnership including MVSC and the Merton Chamber of Commerce, Community forums, residents associations and a wide range of individual and organisational contacts including all Council staff and Councillors. It was also featured in My Merton, on the Council's social media channels and in the Wimbledon Times.

Survey respondents

560 residents (including 23 young residents) and 56 organisations provided responses. These included a high number of individual comments and suggestions. There were 19 substantive additional responses from organisations including detailed advice from the Climate Emergency Working Group, the Active Travel and Transport subgroup[4], Kagoo, the Wimbledon Society and Mitcham Cricket Green Community and Heritage Group.

The individual respondents ranged in age from under 18 to over 75, with the majority aged between 35 and 64. Two thirds of the respondents were female and 10% of respondents considered themselves to have a disability. 87% of respondents considered themselves to be White British, Irish or other, with 13% considering themselves to be of Black, Asian or mixed origin.

Responses received from organisations and young residents represent important parts of the community, but the lower number of responses means it is likely to be less representative. From the organisational responses, 24% came from businesses and the rest from a mixture of voluntary or community organisations and political parties. 63% were from organisations with under 10 employees, and 37% with over 10 employees. 86% of organisations that responded operate only in Merton. 93% of the surveys were completed on behalf of organisations by individuals that are responsible or have influence to take decisions to mitigate climate impacts.

[4] Which forms part of Merton Partnership's Sustainable Communities and Transport Partnership (https://www.mertonpartnership.org.uk/thematic-partnerships/sustainable-communities)

SURVEY RESULTS – RESIDENTS' SURVEY

Summary and general themes

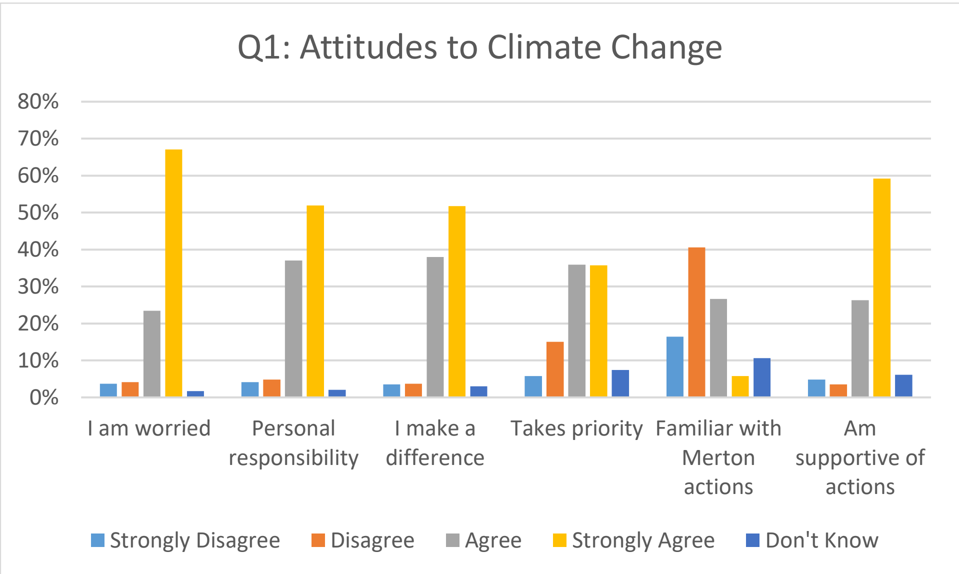
The survey respondents were overwhelmingly in support of strong action to reduce the impact of climate change in Merton. Many had already take tangible steps to reduce their emissions. Examples of common actions include reducing energy consumption in homes and adopting green energy, walking, cycling and taking public transport, appreciating the value of a green borough, making responsible choices about purchasing goods, investing money and avoiding waste.

Most respondents also recognised that there is much more to do, and suggested a wide range of actions to reduce the cost of low carbon home improvements, creating safer and more sustainable transport network, reducing waste, increasing tree cover and providing more information about responsible investments.

Major themes that cut across the sections of the survey included the need for a higher level of information and engagement to encourage individuals including young residents, organisations, and those in need of additional support to act. Planning policy was identified as a significant tool to ensure consistency with our new net zero targets. There is an expectation for the Council to take a strong roll and to lead by example with a clear plan. There was also a call to highlight the gaps in National Government policy, and provide more funding.

There were a few respondents who were against taking action, either because they felt that climate change was not important, or would not be effective, or that other things were more important. Some were opposed to existing proposals that may benefit climate change such as an increase in parking charges.

Attitudes to climate change



The majority (90%) of respondents were worried about climate change, felt personally responsible to act and believed that their actions could make a difference as part of a wider effort, with most (70%) feeling that actions on climate change should take priority over other issues. 85% supported the Council taking further action on climate change with 9% disagreeing. A lower proportion (32%) were familiar with actions that the Council were currently undertaking.

Buildings and energy

Most respondents had already taken steps to reduce energy consumption on their property; most (78%) with energy efficiency measures, just under half (41%) have a green electricity tariff. 15% had taken other measures such as installing solar PV, and 16% had taken no action.

The main barrier to reducing energy consumption and using green energy identified was the high cost of purchasing low carbon measures for properties (150), and respondents suggested introducing a wider range of grants, loans or scrappage schemes for a range of energy efficiency measures, heat pumps and on-site renewable technologies. Many (80) would like more information to help them to make informed choices about how to reduce energy consumption and convert to green energy, including advice on technologies, help to buy schemes, how to reduce bills and many others. Some respondents (19) felt that they had done all they could.

A number of respondents (27) highlighted the lack of control from rented properties and wanted to see more action to encourage landlords to invest in low carbon and energy saving measures on their properties. Some (18) were seeking policies or funding from national government to accelerate change or to influence others such as neighbours or businesses. Others (10) focused on ensuring there were strict standards for new developments. A few (4) respondents were looking for the Council to set an example and two respondents were against action to prevent climate change.

Transport

Nearly three quarters of respondents (74%) owned a car, of which 12% owned a hybrid or electric vehicle. A quarter (25%) did not use a car and 1% of respondents use a carpool service. Despite the high level of car ownership, respondents often walked, used public transport and chose sustainable long-distance travel (such as the train). Whilst many (44%) never cycle, just under half (41%) cycle often or always.

When asked what would encourage them to take more sustainable forms of travel, most respondents (190) expressed views around achieving a more affordable, better public transport system with a faster, more frequent service which is more accessible to those less able, and is supported by better transport infrastructure such as expanded or prioritised networks and better connections.

A large number of respondents (154) were seeking an improved cycle network to facilitate safe and more accessible cycling. Responses included a call for more connected, expanded, better maintained paths which are more clearly marked, and where possible segregated from other traffic with more secure places to lock bikes.

Many respondents (66) were looking to reduce the impact of fossil fuelled vehicles by reducing the overall number of road vehicles and better traffic-management. Recommendations included a reduction in parking spaces or higher parking charges, pedestrianised residential streets, better crossings and traffic lights to reduce congestion, more traffic-calming measures such as speed limits of 20mph, congestion charging, and greater enforcement of traffic infringements. 3 respondents were against higher parking charges.

Many (95) were looking for public spaces to offer a safer, easier and more pleasant experience when travelling. These included more pedestrianised zones and wide, accessible, better maintained and cleaner pavements. Some wanted longer or smarter crossings for pedestrians some a more pleasant walking environment with better local facilities. Many stated that improved air quality would encourage walking and cycling, calling for an acceleration of the air quality action plan[5] and restricted zones for high polluting cars.

There was a significant (47) call for a rapid transition to electric modes of transport such as electric cars, buses, taxis, bikes and scooters with some seeking financial support to overcome the higher costs of purchasing, or more electric scooter/bike/car share schemes. Many were seeking a more extensive electric vehicle charging infrastructure to support the transition including many low voltage charge points in residential areas and faster points at key locations such as town centres.

Many respondents (74) felt that they do everything they can to use sustainable and active travel, or are happy with the transport provision that is available in Merton, including dial-a-ride and freedom passes. Some respondents (20) were seeking more information or more action to influence the behaviour of others. A few wanted the Council to lead by example (5) or to lobby central government (1), wait for technological innovation (1) or were against getting rid of car parks (1).

Waste and products

Almost all (97%) respondents recycled regularly, with a slightly lower portion (82%) recycling food waste. 76% often or always correctly disposed of “hard to recycle” items such as electronics. Most (81%) often or always took steps to avoid unnecessary packaging. Less respondents often or always avoided purchasing non-essential items (66%) or bought

[5] https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/pollution/air-quality-and-air-pollution/local-air-quality-management

second hand products (34%) or chose UK manufactured products (45%) or avoided meat and dairy (29%).

Most respondents (175/ 361) supported a range of actions to reduce single-use plastics, including encouraging zero waste shops and re-use facilities, and taxing or banning single-use plastic. Many (128) were in favour of improving waste collection by expanding recycling services and providing clearer information about hard to recycle materials for example.

Many wanted green products to be cheaper (69) and more available (97), as well as information on where to buy sustainable products (13) and better labelling and information on the carbon footprint of products at the point of sale (26). A few proposed boycotting supermarkets with excessive packaging (2).

Some respondents highlighted the impact of food production on climate change, with (20) encouraging a high vegetable/ low meat diet and avoiding food waste and a few (3) to lobby Government to reduce junk food and increase tax on unhealthy foods. Others highlighted the impacts of the fashion industry and were seeking to reduce high consumption (1) and to encourage sustainable product development (1).

Greening the borough

The vast majority of respondents (93%) would like to see more trees in the borough, in parks (91%), on streets (89%), and on private land (65%). 74% of respondents would be willing to volunteer their time to help plant more trees.

Most respondents (89) were looking to the Council to plant more trees, replace lost trees and provide a high level of aftercare and maintenance, including taking a more strategic approach and/or setting planting targets. There was strong support (63) for the involvement of all parts of the community on public and private land. Roughly the same number (72) were happy with the level of greenery in Merton or felt they had already done want they can.

Many respondents (57) were seeking more space to plant through re-wilding, replacing car parks, parking spaces and roadsides, preventing further paving over of front gardens and the addition of green walls and roofs etc. Some (21) wanted more information about what to plant, where to plant and how to maintain green spaces for wildlife or food production. Some (33) wanted stricter planning policies, and other Council action to ensure more protection for existing green cover or adequate green cover in new developments. 6 respondents were in favour of less trees or less protection for trees.

Responsible finance/ investment

The majority of respondents care about whether their finances are invested responsibly (82%) and would be willing to change provider to do so (70%), but less (54%) actively seek sustainable alternatives.

The majority (162) were looking for more and clearer information from which to make an informed decision about where to invest money. Many were not specific about what information should be provided or wanted companies themselves to provide clearer information about the extent to which they are sustainable. Some were looking for general and impartial advice and information whilst others would support a certification or accreditation scheme to make it easier to make choices.

A significant proportion (35) are more likely to invest if green alternatives are cheaper. Some (19) felt that they already invested responsibly whilst others (24) had no money to invest or would not seek sustainable financial products. A few (10) wanted to see more choice of sustainable businesses, called for better regulation from national government (5) and for the Council to lead by example (5).

Barriers to reducing greenhouse gas emissions

Under half of respondents felt they lacked the knowledge and information to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions (29%), or felt that they lacked time to research (36%). Nearly half felt they lacked time to participate in voluntary or community activities. A low number (8%) felt it was not their responsibility to take action. Half of the respondents (52%) thought that green alternatives were too expensive.

SURVEY RESULTS – ORGANISATIONS/ YOUNG RESIDENTS

The broad pattern of response for the organisation and young resident's surveys were similar to the main resident's survey.

Respondents to the organisation survey felt that tackling climate change was important and felt a high level of personal or organisational responsibility to act. Most organisations had a good understanding of appropriate actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the main barriers (responsibility, time, cost) were not insurmountable. Most had already taken action where they could: to improve their energy efficiency and switch to a green electricity tariff; to take public transport, walk or cycle; to recycle and avoid excess packaging; to think about the extent to which products were sustainable, local, recyclable; to expand green cover on their own site; and would consider helping to increase tree cover by volunteering/ sponsoring.

Organisations want more of a joined up effort with the local community and the Council, better local policies and for the Council to lead by example. Their main challenges included a lack of control (for rented accommodation); cost; weak policies; the need for better cycling facilities at work; the need for more information about recycling or sustainable purchasing; changing habits within the office culture; the need for more volunteers/ others taking responsibility; and more leadership, maintenance and enforcement from the Council.

Young residents shared similar concerns about climate change and were seeking opportunities for greater involvement of young people in actions to mitigate climate change. They took actions to recycle, reduce energy and use active transport. They raised similar views about actions that could be taken to improve climate change, including raising awareness on climate change; developing apps to encourage sustainable transport; using less packaging and improving accessibility and affordability to sustainable products; and planting more trees.

ANNEX A – CLIMATE SURVEY QUESTIONS

Residents Survey

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about climate change?
    - I am worried about climate change
    - I feel a personal responsibility to reduce the impacts of climate change, even if it means making personal sacrifices
    - My actions can make a difference as part of a wider community effort
    - Climate change takes priority over other issues
    - I am familiar with the actions that Merton is already taking to mitigate climate change
    - I am supportive of Merton Council taking action on climate change
2. Have you already done any of the following to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with your energy use?
    - I have taken steps to make my home more energy efficient (e.g. insulation, efficient lighting/appliances)
    - I use a green electricity tariff
    - I have replaced gas-based heating with efficient electric heating (e.g. heat pumps)
    - I have installed renewable energy (e.g. solar panels)
    - Other
    - None of the above
    - Please Specify [Open Text Box]
3. Please tell us what would make it easier for you to lower your energy consumption and utilize green energy? [Open Text Box]
4. Which best describes your car use?
    - I don't own a car
    - I use a carpool service
    - I have either a hybrid or electric car
    - I own a petrol or diesel engine car
5. What is your preferred mode of transport? (Never, rarely, sometimes, often, always)
    - I cycle
    - I walk
    - I use public transport
    - I use my car
    - When I travel further afield, I try to use sustainable forms of transport (e.g. use the train instead of flying)
6. What would encourage you to take more sustainable modes of transport? (e.g. walk, cycle, public transport) [Open Text box]
7. Please tell us how often you do the following (Never, rarely, sometimes, often, always)

- I recycle paper and card
- I recycle plastics, tins and glass
- I recycle food waste

8. Please tell us how often you do the following (Never, rarely, sometimes, often, always)
    - I avoid products with plastic packaging and take my own shopping bag
    - I limit the number of non-essential items that I buy
    - I buy second-hand items
9. Please tell us how often you do the following (Never, rarely, sometimes, often, always)
    - I properly dispose of difficult waste materials like electronics
    - I choose products made or grown in the UK
    - I avoid meat and dairy
10. Please tell us what would make it easier for you to buy more sustainable products and reduce your household waste? [Open text box]
11. What is your opinion on improving Merton's green cover? (Never, rarely, sometimes, often, always)
    - I would like to see more trees on streets
    - I would like to see more trees in parks
    - I would be willing to plant a tree on my private property
    - I would be willing to join a neighbourhood volunteer effort to maintain public tree saplings (watering, checking-on etc.)
12. What would help you increase green cover in your area? [open text box]
13. How do you feel about the sustainability practices of services or organizations that you put your money towards? (Strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree, don’t know)
    - I care about whether my money is invested in a business with sustainable practices (e.g. my pension fund, money in my bank account, any personal investments that I make.)
    - I would be willing to change where my money is invested to a more sustainable alternative even if returns are slightly less
    - I actively research whether businesses or organizations are sustainable
14. What would make me more likely to invest in sustainable businesses or support sustainable organizations? [open text box]
15. Which of these challenges do you agree or disagree make it harder to reduce your greenhouse gas emissions? (Strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree)
    - I don't know how to reduce my greenhouse gas emissions
    - I don't have time to do research on green alternatives
    - I don't have time to participate in community groups or projects
    - I don't think it is my responsibility to reduce my emissions
    - Green alternatives are too expensive
16. Do you have other comments or suggestions for developing Merton's Climate Action Plan? [open text box]

Organisations Survey

1. Please tell us what kind of organisation you are responding on behalf of
   - Commercial organisation
   - Voluntary or community organisation
   - Statutory organisation
   - Other
   - I am not replying on behalf of an organisation
2. What size of organisation are you replying on behalf of?
   - Fewer than 10 employees
   - Between 10 and 50 employees
   - 51-100 employees
   - 101-250 employees
   - More than 250 employees
3. Please tell us what best describes where your organisation works?
   - In part of Merton
   - Across the whole of Merton
   - Within London only
   - London and the south east of England
   - Across the UK
   - Outside of the UK
4. What is your role within the organisation?
   - Chair
   - Committee members
   - Coordinator
   - Founder
   - Member of Planning & environment committee
   - RA Planning & Licensing officer
   - Volunteer Trustee
5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about climate change with regards to your organisation? (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree, don’t know)
   - My organisation is worried about climate change
   - We feel a responsibility to reduce the impacts of climate change, even if it means changing what we do
   - Our actions can make a difference as part of a wider community effort
   - Climate change takes priority over other issues
   - We are familiar with the actions that Merton is already taking to mitigate climate change
   - We are supportive of Merton Council taking action on climate change
6. Are you responsible for making decisions about energy use for your organisation
   - I am solely responsible
   - I am responsible as part of a team
   - I have no responsibility

7. Have you already done any of the following to reduce your organisation's energy use?
    - We have taken steps to make our workplace more energy efficient (e.g. insulation, efficient lighting/appliances)
    - We use a green electricity tariff
    - We have replaced gas-based heating with efficient electric heating (e.g. heat pumps)
    - We have installed renewable energy (e.g. solar panels)
    - Other
8. Please Specify [open text box]
9. Please tell us what would make it easier for your organisation to lower your energy consumption and utilize green energy? [open text box]
10. Are you responsible for making decisions about travel and transport in your organisation?
    - I am solely responsible
    - I am responsible as part of a team
    - I have no responsibility
11. What best describes your organisation's travel and transport arrangements? (Never, rarely, sometimes, often, always)
    - We never use petrol or diesel vehicles
    - We sometimes use petrol or diesel vehicles but mainly use other types of vehicles
    - We mainly use petrol or diesel vehicles but sometimes use alternative vehicles
    - We only use petrol or diesel vehicles
12. How often do you use these types of travel to get to or from work?
    - I cycle
    - I walk
    - I use public transport
    - I use my car
    - I use a car provided by my organisation
13. What would encourage you to take more sustainable modes of transport? (e.g. walk, cycle, public transport) [open text box]
14. Are you responsible for the purchasing of products and materials on behalf of your organisation?
    - I am solely responsible
    - I am responsible as part of a team
    - I have no responsibility
15. When making purchasing decisions to what extent do you consider the following issues?
    - The amount of packaging used in delivery
    - If products are made from recycled materials
    - If products can be recycled at the end of their use
    - If products are produced locally
    - The sustainable practices of the supplier

16. Please tell us to how often your organisation does the following?
    - We recycle paper and card
    - We recycle plastics, tins and glass
    - We recycle food waste
    - We avoid products with plastic packaging
    - We limit the number of non-essential items that we buy
    - We buy second-hand items
    - We properly dispose of difficult waste materials like electronics
    - We choose products made or grown in the UK
17. Please tell us what would make it easier for your organisation to buy more sustainable products and reduce waste? [open text box]
18. How willing is your organisation to help improve Merton's green cover? (Would be unwilling or unable to do, would be willing to consider, would be willing to do, already have plans to do this, don't know)
    - Plant more trees on our land
    - Sponsor new trees on streets near our organisation
    - Sponsor new trees in local parks
    - Volunteer to look after new trees planted near our organisation
19. What would help you increase green cover in your organisation? [open text box]
20. Which of these challenges do you agree or disagree make it harder for your organisation to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions?
    - We don't know how to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions
    - We don't have time to participate in local community groups or projects
    - We don't think it is our responsibility to reduce emissions
    - Green alternatives are too expensive
21. Do you have other comments or suggestions for developing Merton's Climate Action Plan? [open text box]

Young Residents Survey

1. What are your thoughts on climate change? (Strongly disagree; Disagree a little; 3. Partially agree; 4. Mostly agree; 5. Strongly agree)
    - I am worried about climate change.
    - I feel a personal responsibility to reduce the impacts of climate change even if it means making personal sacrifices.
    - My actions can make a difference as part of a wider community effort.
    - Climate change takes priority over other issues.
    - I am familiar with the actions that Merton is already taking to mitigate climate change.
2. Energy use (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always)
    - I close the fridge door quickly.
    - I switch the lights off when I leave the room.
    - I turn the heating down when it’s too warm.
    - I take other steps to reduce my energy consumption.

3. What would encourage you to consume less energy and use green energy? [open text box]
4. Transport (yes, no)
    - My family does not own/ use a car.
    - I try to carpool when possible.
    - My family has a hybrid or electric car.
    - My family belongs to a car club (e.g. zip car).
5. What is your preferred mode of transport? (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always)
    - I use a car.
    - I use public transport.
    - I walk.
    - I cycle.
    - When I travel further afield, I try to use sustainable forms of transport (e.g. use the train instead of flying)
6. What would encourage you to take more sustainable modes of transport? (e.g. walk, cycle, use public transport) [open text box]
    - Waste Materials and Consumption
    - I recycle paper and card.
    - I recycle plastics, tins and glass.
    - I recycle food waste.
    - I buy second-hand items.
    - I avoid buying new things unless I need to.
    - I properly dispose of difficult waste materials like electronics.
    - I choose products made or grown in the UK.
    - I avoid meat and dairy.
7. What would make it easier for you to buy more sustainable products and reduce your household waste?
8. Green Spaces (Strongly disagree; Disagree a little; 3. Partially agree; 4. Mostly agree; 5. Strongly agree)
    - I would like more trees planted in the borough.
    - I would like to see more trees on streets.
    - I would like to see more trees in parks.
    - I would be willing to plant a tree on my private property.
    - I would be willing to join a neighbourhood volunteer effort to maintain public tree saplings (watering, checking-on, etc.).
9. What would help you increase green cover in your area? [open text box]
10. Which of these challenges do you agree or disagree make it harder to reduce your greenhouse gas emissions? (Strongly disagree; Disagree a little; 3. Partially agree; 4. Mostly agree; 5. Strongly agree)
    - I don’t know how to reduce my greenhouse gas emissions.
    - I don’t have enough time to do research on green alternatives.
    - I don’t have time to participate in community groups or projects.
    - I don’t think it is my responsibility to reduce my emissions.

- Green alternatives are too expensive.

11. What other challenges prevent you from doing more? [open text box]
12. Any recommendations on what you think the Council could do to engage with young residents on climate change
13. Other comments or suggestions for developing Merton's Climate Action Plan