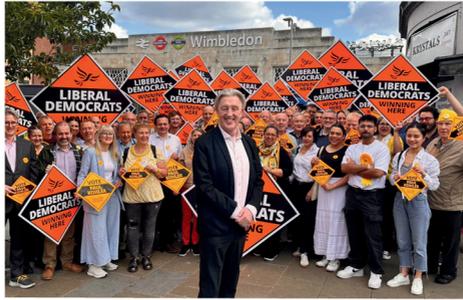


LOCAL ELECTIONS 2026



MERTON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS 2026 MANIFESTO

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Cllr Anthony Fairclough

Leader of the Opposition, Merton Council



Dear Merton

Choosing where we live is one of the most important decisions any of us make.

We believe that people should have the freedom, security, and opportunity to make that choice with confidence. We want Merton to be the place people choose to live – not because they have to, but because it's the community they want to be part of.

To make that a reality, **we are fighting for a Council that is open, competent, and caring**: one that listens, acts boldly, and puts residents first. **As the largest opposition group on Merton Council**, we are best placed to take control from Labour.

Merton Labour are not delivering. They spent £230,000 of public money redecorating two offices for Labour councillors but haven't built any of their promised 400 affordable homes, and stood by as the Mayor of London shut our police front counters. When we raise your complaints, they say they "prefer to talk about compliments".

Now, the Government's 'Fair Funding Review' has cut Merton's funding by £24m (£280 per household). Does that sound fair?

This manifesto sets out our positive plan for Merton – our 'Six to Fix' (pg. 2): **the six key outcomes we'll deliver if elected.**

Merton deserves better, and **our record** (pg. 3-4) **shows we are the team you can trust** to deliver these changes – with transparency, care, and a focus on real results.

Back the Liberal Democrats in 2026, and together we will build the Merton that people choose, proudly and wholeheartedly, to call home.

Anthony Fairclough

OUR VISION FOR MERTON

A Fairer and More Affordable Merton

Mitigating the cost of living crisis so that people can afford to live here – with Council bills kept under control, and where everyone gets the support they are entitled to.

A Thriving Local Economy

With lively high streets, thriving town centres, and Morden regeneration finally delivered, creating opportunity across the whole borough rather than leaving some communities behind.

A Healthier Merton

Bringing care closer to people, focusing on prevention as well as treatment, and helping everyone stay active and well.

A Safer, Cleaner Borough

With visible policing, safer streets, cleaner pavements and a council that gets the basics right, consistently.

A Great Place to Grow Up

With more places to play, opportunities to take part in sport and culture, and real support for families and young carers.

A Borough Fit for the Future

Fixing the Council's 'front door', getting better value for money, and preparing for the challenges ahead, from housing and transport to planning and climate change.

OUR RECORD

We are proud of our record of action. As councillors and campaigners – even from opposition – local Liberal Democrats and Wimbledon’s Liberal Democrat MP have achieved the following:

A Fairer and More Affordable Merton

- Persuaded the Council to provide free period products in all Council-owned buildings.
- Fought for fairer parking charges across the borough, tackling postcode lotteries.
- Forced a formal review of the Council’s decision to increase 257 fees and charges for 2026/27 above inflation.
- Pressed for blue badge application fees to be abolished.
- Uncovered that £71m of benefits go unclaimed in Merton and requested a Benefits Boost Strategy to improve uptake.

A Thriving Local Economy

- Made Merton a Living Wage employer, ensuring all contractors pay the London Living Wage.
- Saved Raynes Park Post Office from closure.
- Fixed a meeting with the Housing Minister to drive forward Morden regeneration and pushed for Council funds to be brought forward.
- Campaigned for toilets at Morden Underground Station, which have now been installed.

A Healthier Merton

- Secured a Council commitment to campaign for a breast cancer screening centre, although it has not been delivered by Labour.
- Saved the minor injuries unit at Queen Mary’s Hospital in Roehampton from closure.
- Urged the Council to become London’s first Healthy Weight Borough to tackle rising obesity, which Labour voted down.
- Saved Eastways Day Centre from closure.
- Raised concerns about Merton’s very low uptake of free NHS Health Checks, which is less than half the London average.

A Safer, Cleaner Borough

- Campaigned against the closure of Wimbledon and Mitcham police stations and fought front counter closures.
- Held the Council to account on e-bike bays, meeting with Lime and Forest and securing removal of poorly managed bays.
- Delivered our 2022 manifesto commitment to introduce 'pop-up' tips in neighbourhoods.
- Pushed for weight limit enforcement on residential roads, preventing HGV rat-running and keeping streets safer.
- Held the Council to account for failing to deliver on its promise to sweep "every street, every week."

A Great Place to Grow Up

- Put forward fully funded proposals to open splash pads and paddling pools four weeks earlier so families can enjoy them from the start of summer.
- Called out the Government for cutting Merton's school funding by £210 per pupil.
- Proposed a School Energy Bills Support Fund to support schools with energy costs using budget underspends.
- Urged the Council to cancel plans to cut social workers from schools.

A Borough Fit for the Future

- Fought successfully to make Motspur Park Station step-free, and advanced Raynes Park Station closer to step-free access after a decade-long campaign.
- Forced the Council to double the rate of street tree planting to 500 per year.
- Held the All England Club (AELTC) to account for historic promises over Wimbledon Park, arranging meetings between AELTC and residents to seek compromise.
- Secured a Council commitment to cross-pavement EV charging trials, later blocked by Merton Labour.
- Persuaded the Council to report regularly on exposure of Merton's pensions fund to companies potentially involved in human rights abuses.





Fairer and More Affordable

Everyone deserves the means to lead a healthy and fulfilling life. However, in the current climate with the high cost of living, this feels increasingly further from reach for many people. Energy bills and food prices are up, and the average Merton Council Tax has passed £2,000 for the first time.

In Mitcham & Morden, almost 4 out of every 10 children live in relative poverty – a figure that’s stayed the same for a decade. To make matters worse, Merton Labour are applying inflation-busting increases to many Council services, like parking and garden waste collection.

For those who choose to live and work here, the Liberal Democrats are committed to a fairer and more affordable Merton, supporting residents through the cost-of-living crisis.



“

Merton Council shocked residents with 257 above-inflation increases to service fees this year. They’ve hiked Council Tax up 20% in just four years – a £364 increase per household.

We know the cost of living is already sky high, so we’ll keep bills low and spend much more wisely.

Our Plan

Keep council bills as low as possible, including fighting for national funding so that councils are properly resourced and Council Tax increases can be kept down. We will review Merton Labour's above-inflation hikes for hundreds of services and tackle unfair differences between postcodes.

Deliver high-quality modular homes for better value emergency housing. Merton Labour spent £19m on nightly-paid housing, including B&Bs and hotels, this year. Modular housing is cheaper, better quality, and safer.

Launch our *Benefits Boost* campaign to help residents access £71m of income-related benefits and social tariffs that are expected to go unclaimed in Merton this year. We'll raise awareness, provide hands-on support, and tackle stigma around claiming vital financial support.

Proactively reimburse overpaid Council Tax by improving how residents are informed when they move home. Merton Council currently holds £2.5m in overpaid Council Tax.

Expand support to help those on the lowest incomes, including a strategy to tackle furniture poverty, a modernised Council Tax Support Scheme, and a clearer, more accessible website. We oppose the local Conservatives' plan to reintroduce a version of the 'poll tax', charging those on the lowest incomes hundred of pounds in Council Tax.

Stand up for leaseholders hit by outrageous service charges from housing associations. Some residents face annual bills £1,200 higher than estimates. We'll demand fair, transparent charges.





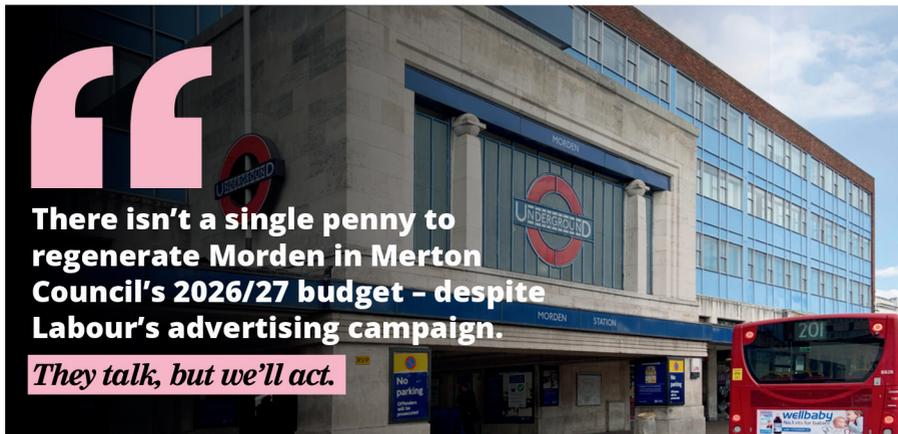
A Thriving Local Economy

Merton's town centres and shopping parades have suffered from neglect, with empty shops, poor paving, and high streets choked by traffic. Nowhere is Merton Labour's failure clearer than in Morden, where regeneration is always promised and never delivered.

Local businesses now face extra costs and challenges due to the Government's national insurance hikes and employment law changes.

Despite these challenges, our borough is rich in independent shops, pubs and restaurants. There are many start-ups, an award-winning National Trust site, and a creative economy stretching from William Morris' workshops, through the film industry of the 1950s and 60s, and on to today's tech sector – not to mention three wonderful theatres and seven public libraries!

For those who choose to live and work here, the Liberal Democrats want Merton's economy to thrive: with culture, diversity and creativity at the heart of it.



Our Plan

Create distinct local identities for our high streets and town centres by upgrading shopfronts and public spaces, rooted in Merton's cultural heritage. We'll use new High Street Rental Auction powers to bring empty shops back to life quickly.

Supercharge Morden redevelopment (and actually deliver it). Labour have taken people for fools for too long, constantly re-launching plans and announcing funds, but they've secretly pushed the project back to 2041.

Expand the Community Toilet Scheme to offer clean, safe facilities across the borough. The successful Lib Dem scheme in Richmond has four times as many toilets as Merton, with some open until 1am.

Explore better transport links to the east of Merton, where poor connectivity holds our borough back. We'll investigate options such as Very Light Rail or a new Thameslink station to benefit Colliers Wood and St George's Hospital.

Make Merton vibrant and welcoming after dark by improving lighting, creating safer public spaces, and promoting independent businesses. We'll also champion Merton's creative economy, culture and diversity, building on the historic legacy of William Morris and Merton Park's film studios.

Launch a Merton Enterprise Relief Fund to give life-saving support for local businesses hit hardest by the Government's business rates and national insurance hikes. We'll also review Merton Labour's 400% increase to al-fresco dining charges.



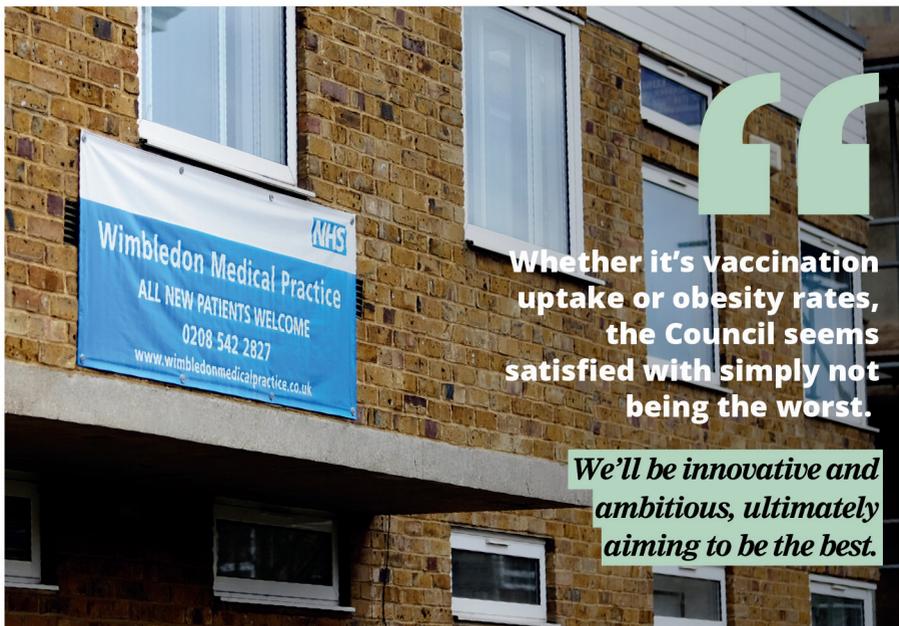


A Healthier Merton

Our health is the foundation for a thriving community, and key to a strong economy. It is fundamental to our wellbeing, and determines our ability to reach our full potential, and live the lives we choose.

We must switch our focus to prevention in local healthcare to reduce reliance on overstretched services. This will go hand-in-hand with preserving the environment, which has a significant impact on the health of residents.

For those who choose to live and work here, the Liberal Democrats want a healthier Merton – thriving neighbourhoods where everyone can stay active and well.



Whether it's vaccination uptake or obesity rates, the Council seems satisfied with simply not being the worst.

We'll be innovative and ambitious, ultimately aiming to be the best.

Our Plan

Open Merton's first breast cancer screening centre to catch cancer earlier and save lives. In Merton, only 6 in 10 eligible women are screened each year – below the national average – because Merton is the only borough in Southwest London without a dedicated screening centre.

Improve access to specialist women's health services with our *Her Health Matters* Strategy, cutting through red tape that delays diagnosis and treatment of endometriosis, menopause, and other chronic conditions which disproportionately affect women.

Support young people's mental health by re-opening the social prescribing service, finally delivering the Eating Disorders and Self-Harm Task Group's recommendations, and hosting a youth-led action summit to tackle body image and online harms.

Fight for St Helier hospital and investment in our local NHS, pushing the Government to provide the tens of millions needed to resolve St Helier's repairs backlog and make the hospital safe for patients.

Deliver a *Health on the High Street* programme, making diagnosis and vaccinations accessible in our town centres.

Re-focus the Council's 'Borough of Sport' ambitions so they are more than a slogan, instead delivering measurable improvements in participation and facilities, and expanding opportunities for women and girls.





A Safer, Cleaner Merton

In 2018, we went to court to save Wimbledon police station when the Mayor of London was trying to close it. Now, both Mitcham and Wimbledon police stations are at risk once again.

The Mayor of London has broken his election promise, leaving us with no publicly accessible front desks in our borough to report crimes at, or to seek other help from the police.

Residents tell us that their streets haven't been swept for months. With Merton ranked fourth worst for missed bin collections and ninth worst for fly-tipping in London, it's no surprise that our borough has been labelled "Mucky Merton" – a result of Labour's failure to keep our streets clean and tidy.

For those who choose to live and work here, the Liberal Democrats want Merton to be safe and spotless. We'll get the basics right, making sure your Council Tax funds visible improvements.



Our Plan

Protect community policing by opposing police station cuts and launching new Community Safety Hubs, giving officers a base in town centres. We'll properly resource the Council's Safer Streets Team, so neighbourhood wardens are active and visible in every area.

Build confidence in community safety by pushing for town centre police teams so that neighbourhood officers can focus on their communities. We'll also encourage the Met Police to implement Baroness Casey's recommendations and create better opportunities for local groups to review policing constructively.

Undertake a "Clean Sweep" of street cleaning services, with fixed-schedule street sweeping and a residents' reliability guarantee. We'll work with residents to identify fly-tipping and graffiti hotspots and ultimately improve our performance against other London boroughs. We'll expand our successful pop-up tips initiative, bringing them closer to people's homes.

Take a common-sense approach to enforcement with new warnings and a sliding scale of fines. Residents acting in good faith will be treated differently from criminal fly-tippers – not hit with £1,000 fines for neighbourly freecycling. We'll review the Council's current practices, which result in harsh fines for 'low-hanging fruit'.

Establish designated parking for food delivery bikes in town centres, keeping pavements clear for prams and those with mobility needs while reducing hazards for road users.

Make streets safer for cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers by enforcing HGV weight limits on residential roads, installing new pedestrian crossings, and carrying out speed safety surveys.





A Great Place to Grow Up

The Liberal Democrats believe that everyone is entitled to a good and equal start in life. Young people should benefit from open and equal access to parks and green spaces. Sporting opportunities should be high quality and affordable, helping to promote wellbeing, healthy development and strong relationships.

For those growing up here, the Liberal Democrats want Merton to be a place where they can flourish - a great place to grow up with opportunities to learn, engage and belong.



Merton Labour dodged scrutiny to force through £1.7m of cuts to services for vulnerable children. They've thrown our young people under the bus.

We'll invest in vital services and support our young people – the future of Merton.



Our Plan

Break down barriers to sport and the arts by launching a new bursary fund for young people who can't afford club fees. We'll help children who wouldn't otherwise swim to access lessons through schools and local pools, and we'll upgrade sports grounds with water points, toilets, and changing rooms.

Give children the best start in life with our 'Baby Box' scheme, so parents in emergency housing have the essentials they need. We'll also invest in Family Hubs, bringing 'early help' services together under one roof.

Create better places to play by opening paddling pools and splash pads four weeks earlier, right at the start of summer. We'll upgrade playgrounds with new adventure equipment, fix long-overdue repairs, and make them accessible to every child. We'll even transform the Civic Centre into a welcoming, family-friendly space.

Invest in education and learning by helping to fund urgent safety repairs in school buildings and extending library opening hours where they are currently closed mid-week.

Ensure no child misses out on healthy meals by auto-enrolling eligible children for Free School Meals, expanding free breakfast clubs in primary schools, and making family cooking fun with in-person and online 'Cook and Eat' activities.

Support those often overlooked by fixing the transition from Children's to Adult Social Care, signing the Young Carer's Covenant to support every child with caring responsibilities, and re-opening the Council's social prescribing service.





A Borough Fit for the Future

Merton is feeling the strain of decisions that failed to progress or plan ahead. Housing is the clearest example. The number of households waiting for a secure home has climbed above 11,000, while tens of millions of pounds are being spent each year on expensive, nightly-paid temporary accommodation that offers neither stability for families nor value for taxpayers. At the same time, opportunities to build affordable, energy-efficient homes have been delayed or dismissed.

Modernising Merton should make life easier, not harder. Yet residents are told to make greener choices – like switching to EVs – without the infrastructure to support them, and too many services remain slow, confusing or inaccessible.

For those who choose to live and work here, the Liberal Democrats want Merton to be fit for the future with a comprehensive plan to become a 21st Century borough.



Too often, residents don't receive quick, clear support from the Council. They're treated like an inconvenience.

We'll right those wrongs, fix the 'front door', and put customer service first.



Our Plan

Fix the Council's 'Front Door' so residents and businesses can access services quickly. You'll be treated with respect, not as a hassle. We'll cut long delays, and make sure you get the help you need the first time you ask.

Secure better value for taxpayers by building modular homes to reduce spending on expensive nightly-paid temporary accommodation. We'll also buy new Council homes to provide much-needed housing and cut social housing waiting lists.

Deliver our 'Parks Promise' for Merton's green spaces, investing in playgrounds, toilets, and water fountains; improving accessibility; restoring biodiversity; keeping parks clean and tidy; and upgrading walking and cycling paths, lighting, and signage. There must be genuine engagement with local residents on the number, type, and duration of large commercial events in parks, ensuring they bring communities together while taking good care of our green spaces.

Double the number of ultra-fast EV charging points and overturn Merton Labour's ban on cross-pavement charging trials to make EV charging easier and cheaper for those without off-street parking.

Work towards making local stations and transport hubs 'step free' by producing 'shovel-ready' proposals – a key component in securing Government funding. We'll also work to improve public transport in the east of the borough, ensuring everyone is connected across Merton.

Protect and revive heritage assets such as Burn Bullock and Dorset Hall, which have failed to flourish with private owners. We'll enforce planning rules to stop 'Cowboy' developers in their tracks, and our new one-stop shop for planning and environmental health will make it easier for residents to report issues.





BACKING OUR NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

As Liberal Democrats, we believe in building a fair, free, and open society where everyone can succeed, and where no one is held back by poverty, lack of opportunity, or discrimination. These values shape our approach – locally and nationally.

Health and Social Care

The NHS is the heart of Britain, but it's broken. We back our campaigns for cross-party talks to fix the care crisis once and for all, and to give patients the legal right to see a GP within a week.

Crime

Proper community policing keeps neighbourhoods safe and cuts crimes like shoplifting. We back our campaigns to put more bobbies on the beat and a staffed police desk in every community. The Government's plans to slash jury trials are an insult to victims.

Freedom and Equality

A liberal society embraces diversity, freedom of expression, and freedom of speech for all. We back our campaigns to strengthen protections against discrimination, improve access to inclusive healthcare, and deliver a new LGBTQ+ Action Plan.

Business and Growth

Strong economic growth is the best solution to the cost-of-living crisis, but businesses are under extreme pressure. We back our campaigns to make business rates fairer, cut VAT for hospitality, and repair our broken relationship with the EU to 'Get Britain Growing Again'.

Environment

Our environment is under attack from billionaire bosses, while Britain's natural resources also hold the key to future growth. We back our campaigns to end the sewage scandal and supercharge the green economy to create well-paid jobs for the future.

Future Generations

Every young person deserves the opportunity to achieve greatness. We back our campaigns to put mental health professionals in every school, expand free school meals, and introduce film-style age ratings to protect children online.

Britain Abroad

Britain must remain committed to peace, human rights, and the elimination of poverty. We back our campaigns to deliver a new EU customs union, stand firm against Donald Trump's bullying, and build a fair asylum system. The Liberal Democrats were the first UK-wide party to accuse the Israeli government of committing genocide in Gaza and to call for a full ban on all military exports to Israel.



“
We are one of
London's *most*
marginal
Councils
”
- Merton Labour Party

Something missing?

We're sorry - we can't fit everything into this booklet.

If you've got a question about our plan, please email:

hello@mertonlibdems.org.uk

**Or use the QR code and address below to go to our website,
which has more detail.**

This manifesto can be found online at:
www.mertonlibdems.org.uk/manifesto

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