

Merton's New Pocket Parks

Merton Liberal Democrats' Consultation Response

Pocket parks can transform forgotten corners of our borough, improve biodiversity, and provide attractive outdoor spaces for residents to meet and relax. This project has real potential, but a clear management plan is needed for every pocket park to thrive.

The success of the programme should be measured by the quality and longevity of pocket parks, not simply by how many are opened.

We visited pocket parks across the borough and found dead / dying plants, litter, fly-tipping, graffiti, and damaged equipment – in most cases only a few months after their opening.



Broken pétanque equipment in Wimbledon Park's pocket park.



Littering in Wandle's pocket park.



Damaged bug home in Abbey's pocket park.



Graffiti in Wimbledon Park's pocket park.



Unwatered plants in Cricket Green's pocket park.



Struggling plants in Hillside's pocket park.

We want to see excellent pocket parks that residents can be proud of. To that end, we have set out the steps we believe are needed to make both the expansion of the programme and the existing pocket parks a success.

Here is what we would like to see:

1. Proactive management and maintenance

Every pocket park should have a clear management plan before it is built, setting out who is responsible for looking after it and what maintenance will take place. This should include a clear schedule for watering, planting, and litter picking.

To quote a member of Council staff, “maintenance requirements should have been given greater consideration when these areas were originally planned and implemented.”

2. Council responsibility

We welcome the involvement of local community groups, but the Council cannot assume that residents will always have the time, resources or appetite to maintain pocket parks. The buck stops with the Council, and the Council should accept ultimate responsibility for ensuring that every pocket park receives the regular watering, planting and maintenance it needs. A pocket park should not be allowed to deteriorate simply because a volunteer group cannot be found to take on its upkeep.

3. Climate-resilient design

We appreciate we are in the middle of a drought, but we need to be realistic about Merton’s changing climate. Pocket parks should be designed around beautiful, biodiverse and climate-resilient planting and design elements, with the watering and maintenance requirements considered from the outset. We should be asking which plants will thrive in Merton’s future climate, rather than having to replace dead planting after a particularly hot or dry summer.

4. FixMyStreet Reporting

Residents should have an easy way to report problems, with every pocket park properly integrated into FixMyStreet.

Currently, residents cannot use FixMyStreet to report issues such as overflowing bins, litter, fly-tipping, or graffiti. We first raised this issue with the Council in May 2026 and are still waiting for a resolution. Every new pocket park should be fully integrated into FixMyStreet from the day it opens.

Final Comments

The Council describes pocket parks as “vibrant spaces that brighten up neighbourhoods”, but our visits show that this ambition is not yet being realised everywhere. Litter, graffiti, dead planting and damaged equipment can quickly turn an attractive new space into an eyesore.

We don't want to see that happen. We want Merton's pocket parks to be places that residents are proud of, which means designing them for our changing climate, giving them the maintenance they need, and making sure there is clear responsibility for looking after them.

The opportunity is there to make the pocket park programme a real success. We hope the Council will take these suggestions in the constructive spirit in which they are intended and put long-term quality at the heart of the programme.

Merton Liberal Democrats