



## Merton CIL's Response to Merton Council's Consultation on 2024/2025 Budget

December 2023

Merton Centre for Independent Living is committed to improving the lives of Deaf and Disabled people in the borough. We value inclusion, independence, equity of opportunity, and choice. We are pleased that Merton Council are asking residents, businesses, and community organisations for their views on what the Council's priorities should be in the 2024/2025 budget. Below is what we would like to see foregrounded. If you have any questions, please contact our Policy and Campaigns Manager, Pippa Maslin, at [pippa@mertoncil.org.uk](mailto:pippa@mertoncil.org.uk)

1. Research by Scope reveals that living costs are more for Disabled people than for non-Disabled people<sup>1</sup>. Households with at least one Disabled adult or child face, on average, extra costs of £975 a month. Households with one Disabled adult, one non-Disabled adult and at least one child face, on average, extra costs of £634. And households with two Disabled adults and at least two children face, on average, extra costs of £1,248 a month. In light of this, we believe that the Council should be doing all that it can to help Disabled residents to meet these extra costs.

One sensible way forward would be to provide or start to take steps towards providing free care in people's homes, like Hammersmith and Fulham Council<sup>2</sup>, or - at the very least - raise the default figure of £10 a week for disability-related expenditure in financial assessments for adult social care charges, which has been static for years.

2. As detailed in our contribution to Councillor Stephen Mercer's and Honorary Alderman Peter Southgate's June 2023 report on public toilet

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/extra-costs/disability-price-tag-2023/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/living-independently/care-and-support/financial-support/care-and-support-costs>

provision in the borough<sup>3</sup>, we would like to see more accessible public toilets (including Changing Places Toilets) across the borough, especially in the east. One step towards improving provision would be to resurrect and improve the Community Toilet Scheme. It is arguable that just 1p per resident would comfortably pay for this.

3. As is evident in our housing casework with service users whose lives are made significantly more difficult because their current accommodation fails to meet their access needs, the borough has a dearth of social housing meeting the M4(2) standard (accessible and adaptable dwellings) or M4(3) standard (wheelchair user dwellings)<sup>4</sup>. Whilst we understand that all social housing in the borough is currently owned by a variety of housing associations, we urge the Council to make the lack of accessible housing an explicit consideration when it comes to their financial planning for the 400 homes to be built on council-owned land.
4. According to our Access Champions, who are a group of Disabled people united by the agenda to make Merton as accessible as possible, illegal pavement parking is a significant problem for people with mobility difficulties. Whether using a stick or sticks, a crutch or crutches, a walker, a wheelchair, or a mobility scooter, being forced into the road brings the risk of being injured or killed by road traffic, meaning that a detour or cessation of one's journey are the only options. Whilst we understand that illegal pavement parking can be reported to the Council, we think that employing more Civil Enforcement Officers would help to address this issue.

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<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/documents/g4442/Public%20reports%20pack%20Monday%2026-Jun-2023%2019.15%20Sustainable%20Communities%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Panel.pdf?T=>

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[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7f8a82ed915d74e622b17b/BR\\_AD\\_M1\\_2015\\_with\\_2016\\_amendments\\_V3.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7f8a82ed915d74e622b17b/BR_AD_M1_2015_with_2016_amendments_V3.pdf)