

**The purposes of the charity as set out in its governing document:**

To promote for the benefit of the public in and around the London Borough of Merton:

- (a) the conservation, protection and improvement of the environment, in particular but not exclusively by encouraging the prudent use of natural resources, and raising awareness of environmental issues;
- (b) the advancement of education of the public in the subject of sustainable development, in particular, but not exclusively by raising awareness of the issues associated with peak oil and climate change and the consequent need to develop a low carbon, sustainable future.

**Summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit**

**Dig Merton** activities continued on gardens previously established across the borough. Local residents benefit from opportunities for physical exercise, learning about gardening, and using locally grown organic produce. SM participated in regular work days held during the year. The Big Dig at **Phipps Bridge Community Garden** on 22/4/18 engaged around a dozen local residents who prepared ground ready for vegetable growing by a regular group of weekly volunteers. During the course of the year nearly three quarters of a tonne of fruit and vegetables were harvested. The large amount of vegetables surplus to volunteers' requirements were donated to a variety of local groups feeding people in need, including the Salvation Army, Wimbledon Guild, Age Concern and others.

SM volunteers participated in regular work sessions at the **Mitcham Community Orchard** and ran a barbecue at their winter wassail event, which raised funds and rewarded local volunteers.

**Rose Avenue Tamworth Farm** allotments established by SM have become a thriving community asset. Plot holders benefit from physical exercise and access to fresh, locally grown organic produce. SM volunteers worked with Tamworth Farm Allotment Society and the Council to facilitate a successful handover of the plots to the Allotment Society in October 2017, in accordance with SM's planned exit strategy, freeing resources up for the charity to work on other projects.

In May 2018 SM volunteers attended a training session run by the Living Wandle project to learn about the role **Rain Gardens** can play in sustainable urban drainage. A hands-on session created a rain garden for South Mitcham Community Association playgroup.

The **Community Champions** project has the ultimate aim that all residents of the borough should benefit from lower energy and water bills and a cleaner environment. Lower CO2 emissions and increased awareness of sustainability issues will provide public benefit. The number of volunteer Community Champions engaged continued to rise, with a particular focus on encouraging plastic free lifestyles, centred around the #PlasticFreeMerton campaign. The Champions supported Sustainable Merton's activities across the borough, engaging and educating local residents in all aspects of sustainability. Funding was secured from a variety of organisations. Partnership working continues to be an important feature of the project, which has become the charity's major focus. SM volunteers have worked with other local groups to lobby for improved air quality, raising awareness of the reasons for and impacts of poor air quality. Community Champions have benefited from conferences providing training to assist them in passing on their knowledge to local residents at events where SM had a presence.

**Awareness raising** of issues related to climate change, and actions individuals can take to lead more sustainable lifestyles was a key aim of events where SM was represented in 2017/18:

Fete of the Earth 13/5/17  
Morden Hall Park Bioblitz 3/6/17  
Mitcham Carnival 10/6/17  
Morden Family Fun Day 13/6/17  
Putney Commons event 10/9/17  
Abundance Fruit Day 16/9/17  
Colliers Wood Community Fair 14/10/17  
Mitcham Orchard Fruit Day 21/10/17  
Pollards Hill Energy Efficiency event 25/10/17

Sustainable Merton again supported the week-long educational enrichment **Shine Project** for 60 selected primary school children (9 and 10 year olds) held in July 2017, teaching them about food growing and nutrition while giving them the opportunity to benefit from outdoor physical exercise. SM contributed 10 sessions covering gardening and healthy eating.

Sustainable Merton partnered Colliers Wood Residents' Association in their Heritage Lottery funded **Hyper project** (Heritage, Young Persons and Elderly Persons) which aimed to teach children about life in the 1940's. At weekly gardening sessions we taught children to grow some of the crops which would have been common on allotments during WW2.

A **Food Poverty Action Plan** commissioned by LB Merton, was published, with the overall aim of relieving food poverty in Merton.

### **Contribution made by volunteers**

SM is grateful for the many hours of unpaid work over 60 volunteers have put in to run projects. In addition the CEO, ICEO, Trustees and other volunteers have spent many hours in meetings with Merton Council officers and councillors, Registered Social Landlords and other groups pressing for actions to combat climate change and introduce sustainability initiatives for the benefit of local people, as well as seeking further funding for the charity's activities. Trustees' expertise in data protection and website maintenance was generously shared to enable Sustainable Merton to move forward in these areas.

### **Financial Review**

Expenditure for SM's activities has been covered by grants specifically obtained in relation to each project and general donations. SM receives no core funding, but has paid sessional fees for essential office support from its own funds, in addition to project funding provided for this purpose. Income came from funding for the Community Champions project, Public Health's Food Poverty Action Plan, the Shine project, the Hyper project funded by Colliers Wood Residents' Association, and RSL funding (Clarion Housing) for work in a local park, plus donations. Care has been taken not to incur additional costs for the charity as the funds we have are limited. Further fund raising for Community Champions continues to be a significant priority to ensure the sustainability of this major project.

SM's policy is to maintain reserves of £1,500 or 3 months estimated running costs, whichever is the larger in order to ensure the sustainability of the charity. £32,420 unrestricted funds were available at the end of the period

### **Structure, Governance and Management**

SM is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Trustees are selected on the basis of their skills and experience either by direct approach or through public advertisement. Trustees are appointed by SM's Board of Trustees and stand for election at the next AGM. The trustees have regard to the

guidance on public benefit issued by the Charity Commission when exercising any powers or duties to which the guidance would be relevant.

Due to the illness of the CEO an Interim CEO was appointed in October 2017. The post was externally advertised and a formal appointment process followed. Coincidentally around the same time the Treasurer stood down and a new volunteer Treasurer was appointed after the post was externally advertised. In line with the Trustees' strategy the ICEO and Treasurer worked together to enable Sustainable Merton to become an employer from the start of the financial year 2018/19, rather than engaging staff on a sub-contractor basis as had previously been the case. Staff and trustees also reviewed data organisation and prepared for implementation of GDPR in May 2018.