

Merton Council

Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations Agenda

Membership

Councillors: Edith Macauley MBE (Chair), Eloise Bailey, Omar Bush, Joan Henry, Laxmi Attawar

Substitute Members: Adam Bush, Hina Bokhari

Ethnic Minority Organisations

African Educational Cultural & Health Organisation (AECHO)

Deputy

Ahmadiyya Muslim Association

Asian Diabetic Support & Awareness Group

Asian Elderly Group of Merton

Asian Youth Association

BAME Voice

Bangladeshi Association of Merton

Deputy

Bengali Association of Merton

Deputy

Bengali Women's Association of Merton

British Muslim Association of Merton

Ethnic Minority Centre

Euro Bangla Federation

Deputy

London South West Chinese Community Association

Merton African Organisation

Merton Somali Community

Mitcham Filipino British Association

Deputy

Merton and Lambeth Citizen's Advice Bureau

Pakistan Cultural Association of Merton & Wandsworth

Pakistan Welfare Association

Deputy

Positive Network

Polish Family Association

South London Somali Community Association

South London Tamil Welfare Group

Victim Support Merton and Sutton

West Indian Families and Friends Association

Wimbledon Mosque

Revd Mrs H Neale

Mr .H.Nawaz

Mrs N. Shah

Mr M S Sheikh

Revd Mrs H Neale

Mr. N. Islam

Mr J Choudhury

Mr Rahman

Mrs M Ahmed

Mr B. Afridi

Mrs Sabitri Ray

Dr Haque

Mr Q Anwar

Ms L Saltoon

Mr C J Lusack

Mr A. Ali

Ms Colquhoun

Ms C Batallones

Ms S Hudson

Mr M A Shah

Mr S U Sheikh

Mr Rizvi

Ms G Salmon

Mr S Szczepanski

Mr A Musse

Dr P Arumugaraasah

Ms B Felinczak

Mr T Sandiford

Mr Z Khan

Date: Tuesday 8 September 2020

Time: 7.15 pm

Venue: This will be a virtual meeting and therefore will not take place in a physical location, in accordance with s78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020. This is a public meeting and attendance by the public is encouraged and welcomed. For more information about the agenda please contact diversity@merton.gov.uk or telephone [020 8545 4637](tel:02085454637). All Press contacts: communications@merton.gov.uk, 020 8545 3181

Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations Agenda

8 September 2020

- 1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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- 3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING 1 - 10
- 4 MERTON COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE HUB - Heather Begg, Business Process Lead, LBM 11 - 18
- 5 MERTON COUNCIL's RESPONSE TO BLACK LIVES MATTER - Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families/Liz Hammond, Head of Human Resources 19 - 24
- 6 LOCAL OUTBREAK CONTROL PLAN - Barry Causer, Public Health Commissioning Manager/Nick Steevens, Head of Regulatory Services Partnership
- 7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Note on declarations of interest

Members are advised to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting. If a pecuniary interest is declared they should withdraw from the meeting room during the whole of the consideration of that matter and must not participate in any vote on that matter. For further advice please speak with the Managing Director, South London Legal Partnership.

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH ETHNIC MINORITY ORGANISATIONS

30 JUNE 2020

PRESENT: Cllr Edith Macauley MBE (CHAIR), Cllr Laxmi Attawar, Cllr Joan Henry, Cllr Omar Bush, Cllr Eloise Bailey, Cllr Agatha Akyigyina OBE, Cllr Brenda Fraser, Cllr Natasha Irons, Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Revd Mrs Hannah Neale, Vijayan, Mr Jerry Hall, Mr Saleem Sheikh MBE, Mr Islam, Mr Tony Sandiford, Mr Fitzroy Dawson, Mr Abeyah Savage, Ms Nzingha, Ms Nuzhat Ali, Mr Slawek Szczepanski, Ms Naomi Martin, Ms Ethel Nadgwa, Ms Beau Fadahunsi, Ms Cynthia Olaitan, Brandie O, Js'Aubis Reiz, Ms Margeret Labinjo, Ms Sarah Amenyoy, Mr Paul Odell, Ms Gene Bovell, Mr Howard Baines, Ms Liz Hammond, Mr Ged Curran, Ms Rachael Wardell, Mr Logie Lohendran, Ranjit, Mr John Dimmer, Ms Evereth Willis, Ms Dagmar Zeuner, Ms Marilyn Massiah, Mr Simon Shimmens, Mr Barry Causer

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda item 1)

None

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda item 2)

Dr Aru

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda item 3)

Agreed

4. COVID 19 IMPACT ON THE BAME COMMUNITY (Agenda item 4)

Cllr Macauley introduced the item and informed the JCC that she had been contacted by the community regarding the disproportionate impact of COVID 19 on the BAME population. She felt it necessary to ask a question of Hannah Doody, Director of Community and Housing. The issue was raised with the council before Dr Fenton's report was published. Cllr Macauley felt that also, due to the publicity nationally on the issue, she felt it necessary to have a discussion at the JCC.

A presentation was delivered by Dr Dagmar Zeuner, Director of Public Health Merton. She explained that (1) the initial data is being presented – outlining the impact of infections and deaths (2) Some data is very preliminary and is regularly updated. The data is modelled and epidemiological

We can get a clear picture from the available data. April had low figures and only represented hospital testing. Only the severe end up in hospital.

The data showed that actual deaths from 1 April 2020 to 12 June 2020 is 197. During mid-April there was a spike in non-Covid19 deaths. Registered deaths are now under last year's death rate.

Previous data released by Office National Statistics (ONS) calculated that between 1st March and 17th April, the difference in death rate per 100,000 residents between East and West Merton was 17.7 however the difference is now 9.6. The ONS data does not state ethnicity.

Dr Zeuner shared a summary of Public Health England's report into disparities in Covid-19 mortality rates. People from BAME backgrounds are disproportionately affected by Covid-19. Not only deaths, but also rates of infection and hospital admission are increased compared to White people. The main underlying determinants are deprivation, high risk occupations, overcrowded housing, and increased prevalence of co-morbidities such as diabetes. Black males have x4.2 risk, and Bangladeshi/Pakistani males x3.5 risk of Covid-19 related death compared to White males. South Asian people are 20% more likely to die once admitted to hospital in the UK than White people. Other minority ethnic groups did not have a higher death rate in this study.

Dr Zeuner informed the meeting that more qualitative research is needed to understand the impact of Covid-19 on BAME Communities and outlined the future work that is planned:

1. Development of Local Outbreak Control Plan - actions for preparedness e.g. engagement with VCS and response e.g. plan for potential outbreaks in high risk settings e.g. care homes, schools, hostels etc.
2. Continuing data analysis (led by HWB) - including indirect Covid-19 health impact (with focus on health inequalities)
3. Lived experience (led by HWB) - qualitative action research & engagement with local voluntary sector & community there will be a focus on BAME, older people and learning disabilities, other (tbd)
4. Action planning
 - a) Immediate - to protect from Covid-19 in case of further outbreaks e.g. targeted diabetes work
 - b) Short-medium term - to mitigate main adverse health impacts from Covid response
 - c) Medium-term actions - to shape safe, fair and green recovery for Merton people and as a place in line with our Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Local Health and Care Plan

Questions/Comments

If there is a second wave, how will clients in care homes be protected? It was noted that the charts do not show more black people dying, they show a larger number of white people dying.

A comment was made that BAME people are in frontline roles and are therefore more exposed to risk. Some people don't go to seek medical attention because they don't get treated well, therefore, there is a need to improve the care for people and how they are treated.

Dagmar replied that there is a support scheme for care homes, though a multi-disciplinary support team. The borough has worked closely with Public Health England.

How will PHE's report be implemented – social determinants of why we are where we are?

What is the council doing to protect BAME staff and what can the council do to reach out to small businesses?

Another representative commented that there have been many reports such as McPherson, we have an equality strategy and yet nothing has changed over the years – what is the Leader, Chief Executive and the Head of Policy, Strategy and Partnerships going to do?

Ged replied that the Marmot report outlined social determinants – society drives ill health. These issues are higher up the agenda because of:

- a) Covid19 – disproportionate impact
- b) Disproportionate enforcement policy

George Floyd's death showed a disproportionate approach on policing. The council is responding through measures such as reinstating the BAME staff forum. Ged stressed that this is the start of the process and he has sympathy for those who have heard it all before.

Rachael Wardell replied that there is a report going to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) regarding the staff forum. Staff risk assessments have been focused on BAME staff and the additional risk that they face.

A representative stated that they would like to see more effort to get Black groups to take charge of what needs to be done. They would like to see actions to bring in real change of what is needed, there is a need to empower people in the community.

Does the term BAME include Polish?

A request was made for a breakdown of the figures to see if Eastern European residents are at risk.

It was commented that Merton has a "culture of further research" and it was felt that "Black" should be separated from "BAME" to solve the issues identified. This is because Black people have a different experience to other minority groups. To date extensive research has provided no benefits to individuals. Also, the council should look at its own workforce because maybe there is an issue there, in terms of lack of BAME representation at the top. Merton should consider asking staff about the issues that they face.

Dagmar replied that the data showing the impact on all communities is not available, to get this information her team will analyse the death files. She acknowledged that

immediate action needed to be taken to protect people. Dagmar also shares the frustration about structural inequality.

Ged responded that there has been mixed progress but stressed that the Administration is committed to tackling the issues. However, the council has its hands tied behind its back, due to government imposed financial constraints. There has been a 50% decrease in resources due to central government funding cuts.

Ged recognised that it is not representative at senior levels and there has been reducing staffing levels due to having to make savings. He has been in post since 2004 and people stay in their roles for some time, therefore, there is little movement on the top and the lack of senior vacancies has an impact on representation.

A comment was made that the figures need clarifying and action needed to be taken.

What does BAME mean in real life – what criteria did we use?

A representative commented COVID19 has stigmatised Black people, it was felt that part of the problem is the lack of care nationally and locally – we are very reactive.

Dagmar clarified that “BAME” definition is based on Census ethnicity data.

5. IMPROVING REPRESENTATION OF BAME STAFF AT SENIOR LEVEL (Agenda item 5)

Cllr Macauley introduced the item and informed the meeting that this matter has been discussed numerous times at the JCC, most recently being 24 September 2014 and 5 December 2018

Liz Hammond presented a report regarding the top 5% earners in the council. Staff are regularly asked to update ethnicity data. In Merton 21% of the top 5% have not declared their ethnicity. An annual comparison with other London councils is done. There is a 17% Mean across London, Merton is at 14.1%. The proportion of BAME employed in Merton is 33.8%.

In terms of Recruitment and Selection (R&S) there is a low turnover at the top. Further monitoring of recruitment for posts graded MGC and above for the year 2018/19 covers 11 vacancies for which there were 46 applications. 44% of applicants were BAME, 40% of those shortlisted were BME and 33% of those appointed were BAME. It should be noted that there were just 8 appointments and with such small cohort variances of +/- one person can cause large percentage differences.

From the data that was available for posts graded MGC and above, the period of April to December 2019 covered 4 vacancies for which there were 19 applications. 15% of applicants were from BAME, 11% of those shortlisted were BME and 0% of those appointed were BAME. These figures cover such a small cohort of vacancies that even the difference of just one person can cause large percentage differences.

The new Applicant Tracking System (ATS), Hireserve, has an improved reporting functionality and therefore future reporting will be more readily available. Hireserve went live on 6th January 2020 and therefore data within the system is building up to enable meaningful reporting to be commenced. Since the Hireserve ATS was implemented on the 6th January we have advertised and recruited to two MGC posts, of which the successful applicants, one was BAME and the other was not = 50%.

Since March 2020, there have been no new roles advertised at grade MGC and above. The role of Head of South London Legal Partnership was being prepared to be recruited to, but the campaign was put on hold without being advertised due to Covid-19.

It is a requirement that all panel members and chairs who take part in the recruitment and selection process must have undergone the relevant recruitment and selection training; regularly refreshing their skills every 2 years. It is the responsibility of the 'chair' of the panel to check that all panel members have attended such training. In the case of member-level appointments (Director and Chief Executive posts) training is provided to all panel members.

Merton is currently in the process of designing and procuring a new on line recruitment and selection course which we will ensure addresses how to avoid unconscious bias in the recruitment process. Managers will be required to refresh this training every 2 years.

The Council have piloted at senior level Blind Recruitment where the name and any distinguishing characteristics have been removed from the candidate's CV so that the recruiting manager has no awareness of whether the candidate is male or female or their ethnicity. However at senior level this process fails because it is common practice for interested candidates to want to speak to the recruiting manager in advance of submitting an application to find out more about this role, the organisation and the aspiration the recruiting manager has for the post before applying. At the point of the telephone call the recruiting manager may find they know the candidate already, or – as the candidate will usually identify themselves and introduce themselves by name, current position and place of work – they may make inferences (correctly or incorrectly) about age, gender or ethnicity which could introduce bias to their selection.

The Council have also reviewed whether blind recruitment could be conducted throughout all recruitment carried out. CMT agreed at their meeting on the 12th November that due to the limitations that blind recruitment brings to the recruitment process and the risk of potential unintentional discrimination that Merton will not adopt blind recruitment. However every effort will be made to ensure that our

recruitment processes remain free of any unintentional bias or discrimination as outlined in the actions section of this report.

Liz informed the meeting HR is currently exploring with CMT the viability of producing career pathways for existing staff so that they can clearly see what they would need to do and be able to demonstrate in order to progress, along with any training and support that would be available to them. This has been a large piece of work that is now nearing completion and career and learning pathways are in the process of being uploaded onto the Merton HUB.

The council continues to ensure that when appointing agencies for senior recruitment that we ask them to demonstrate their track record in producing BAME candidates and the number of successful BAME appointments. This is a practice that will continue.

The BAME profile amongst senior managers is still below that of the whole workforce. Therefore, actions are being taken to ensure we have good practices in place and that these are adhered to. Liz informed the meeting about some of the measures that are being implemented:

- a) Sample checks will be introduced to ensure all shortlisting and interview panel members have up-to-date recruitment and selection training. This check will be undertaken in all cases for appointments at MGC and above. This training will include awareness of unconscious bias in the recruitment process.
- b) Introduction of an on-line diversity and cultural awareness programme including training, with the aim to achieve a more cohesive workforce able to serve our communities better, this includes actions being developed at departmental level.
- c) Where external recruiters are used for senior appointments – they are instructed to conduct additional searches and through their channels encourage applications from BAME candidates.
- d) The Council will seek to introduce diversity in panel representation for senior appointments and this can be done by panel participation or introducing stakeholders' panels.
- e) The Council is currently reviewing its leadership development offer and will explore adopting cultural competency as an element within the programme.
- f) There are opportunities to offer mentoring to promising but unsuccessful candidates to assist them in their ongoing professional development. This has been taken up on one occasion in the past year to support an unsuccessful candidate, with a good eventual outcome.

- g) HR will continue to remind and encourage staff twice yearly to update their personal equality data on iTrent so that our monitoring can be 100% accurate.
- h) The BAME Staff Forum is being refreshed and the group will be used as a safe environment for BAME staff to raise issues and as a reference group for new initiatives.

Liz stated that 48% of training uptake is from BAME staff.

Questions/Comments

Why is there only 1 White councillor on the JCC membership? 99% of councillors are BAME – until we shift the conversation there will be no change- it is not just a BAME issue.

It was suggested that an audit of white councillors be done to see if they are doing anything about these issues. The issue needs to be brought to the next meeting.

Informed learning is important, they have been in the borough for 20 years, has the council considered learning from BAME staff and asking about their experience of working in the borough?

In which department have the 8 senior BAME officers been employed?

Liz replied that the information is not available to enable informed learning to take place. The council has to review exit interviews.

Rachael informed the meeting that the BAME Forum will be able to support staff, previously, staff had not had a forum to discuss racism and discrimination, Ged replied that Member representation needs to be thought out carefully.

It was suggested that a bottom up approach is needed to prepare communities to build resilience. The council needs to give the community confidence to speak to doctors and health professionals. Therefore if a second wave comes the community would be better prepared to deal with it by working with the council.

Why don't we mentor up and build on that? What are the blockers?

Liz said that there are 38% of BAME staff in junior roles. She outlined the difficulties associated with Blind Recruitment – HR would need to strip back things like the school attended etc. It is not just about removing a name, all clues to an applicant's background need to be removed to prevent wrong assumptions being made by the hiring manager.

Rachael reflected on her experience of R&S for an Assistant Director role. She knew the applicants because it is a small pool to recruit from. Diversity on the panel is important. Every effort has to be made to reduce bias, challenges exist but we should still stay to tackle them.

A comment was made about sitting on a Task Group to recruit Head Teachers – it has only been in the last 4 years that black heads have been recruited. The lack of progress on employing BAME staff in senior roles is embarrassing.

Another person felt that BAME voices are not being heard. The BAME organisations have not been receiving funding and so have no voice and have not been making headway. Without funding and support the organisations are on a “path of slow death”. There was a request for John Dimmer, Head of Policy, Strategy and Partnerships and the Chief Executive to give support.

Why don't we promote BAME people when positions come up?

Liz replied that staff have the same opportunities to apply for roles. She undertook to provide recruitment statistics at a future meeting.

Rachael stated that there are no overt reasons why BAME applicants would not apply for roles. Is Merton a place where BAME colleagues feel they can be appointed at a senior level and succeed? Rachael shared the fact that she is aware that in CSF some middle management have felt unsupported to apply for senior roles.

Action

Liz Hammond to present R&S statistics at the next JCC meeting

6. WINDRUSH (Agenda item 6)

Cllr Macauley updated the meeting on the council's actions to celebrate and support the contributions of the Windrush generation. In 2019 Merton celebrated over 3 days, including Windrush day. She thanked BAME Voice and WIFFA for organising and supporting the events.

The Leader of the Council responded to the Windrush Inquiry. Cllr Macauley received an enquiry from a resident who had seen information on the council's website about the EU Settlement Scheme and asked for Merton to take a similar approach for Windrush.

Cllr Macauley confirmed that there is now a dedicated page giving details of how residents affected by the Windrush scandals can get advice and support.

For Windrush Day 2020, Merton's Heritage had a display showcasing the contributions of the Windrush generation.

The Home Secretary has accepted all the recommendation of the Windrush review. All those who have applied for compensation will be paid in full.

Questions

The Windrush scandal is an example of Institutional Racism that affected a lot of people, primarily of Caribbean descent. Actions need to be monitored to prevent a reoccurrence.

It was suggested that Merton considers using the model followed by the Metropolitan Police to improve diversity in senior roles. The Police had similar problems and the council should consider the internal workings of why people are not applying for promotion and why are they not selected. The police looked at issues such as Supervisors' attitudes e.g. not seeing BAME officers as part of a team. BAME officers found themselves isolated and treated less favourably. There are lots of tools that can be used, including Positive Action.

Rachael welcomed the suggestions and acknowledged that the council's culture is different to that of the police, but some aspects could be tried. Work is being done across London to look at BAME leadership in CSF.

Look at changing the narrative, be colour-blind and represent modern Britain. We need to understand each other better and start to address issues from within. Understand what BAME people are bringing to the table. There is a lot of unintentional bias.

There was a suggestion to look at the structure of the JCC and make it more meaningful. People are not interested in the JCC, it needs to be balanced.

There was a comment about Unconscious Bias in society being that could be addressed through training to eliminate discrimination.

Consider looking at Conscious Bias and undertaking training.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda item 7)

None,

Meeting closed at 5.09 pm

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Merton Covid-19 Community Response Hub

Joint Consultative Committee
8th September 2020



Merton COVID-19 Community Response Hub

Are you isolated, at risk from COVID-19 and need help with any of the following?

- Support with shopping and basic supplies
- Access to prescription and medication
- Telephone befriending
- Advice and practical help to stay active
- Support to stay independent at home

How do I get help?

Email help@mvsc.co.uk or call **020 8685 2272**
Between 10am and 4pm, Monday to Friday





1930

individual contacts logged



1205

residents sought help for themselves

229

isolated households got access to prescription and medication with thanks to the Merton Social Prescribing team



715

offers of help from local volunteers



£199,612

awarded to 71 local organisations through the Merton Giving Coronavirus Fund



725

concerned individuals requested help for isolated parents, neighbours and/or friends



585

Emergency care packages delivered to local households

Merton Covid-19 Community Response Hub

- Funding from Merton Council to continue the Hub – **July-Sept + 3 months**
- Ongoing partnership delivery model led by **Age UK Merton, Wimbledon Guild, MVSC**
- Continues to provide centralised point for residents seeking help
- Model will provide **enhanced and rapid response** for borough residents
- Providing more **ongoing support** and linking residents to services and support across the borough
- 3 Tiers of Support to address both **immediate** and **longer-term** needs
- Responding to queries about **shielding** - supporting hospital admission, prehabilitation & discharge
- Seeking to promote the service more widely

Merton Covid-19 Community Response Hub

First contact person-centred assessment

- Basic information
- Consent
- Assessment of need
- Immediate needs (food, health, safeguarding etc.)
- Identify wider client needs for follow up (food, wellbeing, isolation, finances, physical/mental health, housing, care etc.)
- Advice
- Action planning
- Onward referrals
- Navigation

Urgent needs?

- Food
- Food Hub
- Health
- NHS 111
- Emergency Services
- Safeguarding
- First Response
- Emergency Services

Possible interventions & referrals –Longer-term support

Food

- Age UK Food & Welfare
- Community Fridge
- Foodbank LAG
- Food bank
- Meal Clubs / home delivery
- Volunteer shopper

Mental / Emotional Health

- Alcohol / drug support
- Dementia support
- Grief / bereavement support
- Imagine Independence
- Merton Uplift
- Talking Therapy

Physical health

- Activity Programmes
- Falls Prevention Service
- Foot care
- Medication - Pharmacy
- One You Merton
- Primary Care

Advice, Legal & Financial

- Age UK Merton
- Carers Support Merton
- Citizens' Advice
- Disability (MCIL, Deaf+, MV)
- South West London Law
- Grants (W. Guild etc.)

Safety & independence

- At Home - Age UK Merton
- Handyperson
- Home visit (Living Well etc.)
- LFB
- Mascot
- Occupational Therapy

Social connection

- Activity programmes
- Befriending / Keep in Touch

Other

- Digital access / training
- Energy top-up
- Transport

Follow-up

- Action plan review & re-assessment
- Follow-up outstanding issues
- Feedback progress (referrer & client)
- Capture monitoring information

Monitoring, Research & Evaluation

- Assessment of client numbers, needs, demographics & wider context
- Evidence for future commissioning / services
- Future engagement with partners
- Informed

MVSC & Volunteering Development

Focussing on how the development of the Community Hub integrates further:

- Volunteering capability going forward, including working with Mutual Aid Group and other community networks

Page 16 Links to social prescribing and Community Champions

- How the developing community fridge food network and local foodbanks work seamlessly with the Community Hub

- Using hard and soft data from hub activity to evidence future Community Hub structure and need (or not).

- Additionally helping to provide intelligence for community based action and activity.

Partnerships & Engagement

How can JCC help?

- Ideas for future partnership working with all communities in Merton
- Ideas for engagement
- Help to communicate service and offer to wider community of Merton
- Strengthen referral pathways
- To help ensure the Hub meets the needs of the diverse communities in Merton

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Committee: Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) with Ethnic Minorities

Date: 8 September 2020

Wards:

Subject: Merton's response to Black Lives Matter

Lead officer: Rachael Wardell, Director of Children, Schools and Families

Lead member: Councillor Edith Macauley, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Equalities and Engagement

Contact officer: Evereth Willis, Equality and Community Cohesion Officer

Recommendations:

-
1. That Members of the JCC note and comment on the contents of the report.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. To provide an update on Merton Council's response to Black Lives Matter.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1 The issues highlighted by Covid-19 and the death of George Floyd have led to a challenge from our own BAME staff and residents to ask whether we could do more to tackle the injustices and racism that they see in their everyday lives.
- 2.2 The Council is committed to supporting Black Lives Matter and has taken some immediate steps to demonstrate this including:
 - Developed an individual risk assessment for staff which specifically addresses the Covid risk for BAME colleagues;
 - Prepared the Employee Assistance Programme to respond well to staff whose concerns encompassed structural injustice and racism;
 - Reminded all staff that Equality and Diversity training is mandatory for all staff;
 - Worked to re-establish a BAME staff forum, which had operated in the past, but which had ceased to function several years previously.
- 2.3 The Council is committed to taking practical steps to reduce inequalities and to continue the fight against racism within the council itself and in the communities we serve. We want get a better understanding of the issues that affect our staff and residents and to engage them in the practical steps we can take.
- 2.4 We are working closely with the new BAME Staff Forum to develop a Medium-Term strategy and in particular how we improve the diversity of our senior management team and develop our own BAME staff as future leaders in the sector. Also, we have commissioned BAME Voice, to understand the lived experience of BAME communities in relation to Covid-19 and the practical measures that those communities can take to make themselves

more resilient and how the council working with its partners can enable and empower our BAME communities.

2.5 **Governance**

2.5.1 The Cabinet Member for Women and Equalities Women has overall responsibility for the Council's Equality Strategy. The JCC will have oversight of the development and implementation of the Council's response to Black Lives Matter.

2.6 **Merton as an employer**

2.6.1 The Council is committed to the following measures:

- The re-establishment of Merton's staff BAME Forum that gives an opportunity for direct communication with the Corporate Management Team (CMT).
- A programme of cross-council anti-racist education and action will be led by CMT
- The Council has agreed to adopt a suggestion from the BAME Forum that the NHS's Workforce Race Equality Standards (WRES) be adapted and adopted to measure and monitor performance on race equality
- A Medium term strategy (3-5 years) will be developed to ensure that there is ongoing commitment to this agenda and that the council builds the confidence and trust of its BAME staff

2.7 An initial focus will be a proposal for the CMT on practical measures to increase the diversity of the Council's senior leadership including CMT itself. The Head of HR has developed proposals in the following areas:

- Improvements to equalities monitoring information to present a comprehensive picture in relation to all areas of employment.
- Initiatives to increase the number of BAME applicants applying and being shortlisted for vacancies at senior management level.
- Increasing BAME representation on recruitment panels and practical proposals for how this can be achieved in Merton.
- Training and development for BAME staff and consideration of the following: reverse mentoring, leadership development programmes, talent management, succession planning, unconscious bias training. This is in addition to the Equalities and Diversity Training which has already been rolled out to all staff.

2.8 **Merton as a Leader of Place**

2.8.1 At the JCC meeting held on 30 June there was a feeling from participants that the BAME community should be empowered to develop and take forward initiatives, working in partnership with the Council and other statutory bodies.

2.8.2 Having reflected on this the Council has commissioned BAME Voice to develop a Community Resilience Programme to help reduce the risk of infection and improve health outcomes for BAME communities. As part

of the borough's Local Outbreak Control Plan (LOCP) BAME Voice will work closely with the Council, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and BAME communities if there is a spike in infection levels in Merton. This project will specifically undertake the following actions:

1. Design and deliver a 'bottom- up" Community Resilience Programme for people of all ages, across Merton's BAME communities.
2. Target the following seven communities as they represent those most affected by COVID-19 - Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Caribbean, Sri Lankan/Tamil and communities from East, West and Southern Africa.
3. Understand the impact that COVID-19 has had, and build resilience among the communities
4. Identify any stigma or structural barriers experienced by the communities and help
5. Identify practical policy responses or local actions to address specific concerns, including opportunities to support and work with BAME communities on these responses.
6. Be an intervention in its own right, helping support building of trust, signposting to appropriate support programmes and to identify community leaders who could have a wider role in the approach.
7. Provide taster training and support for BAME key workers to tackle workplace bullying, racism and discrimination
8. Work with partners across Merton to increase engagement with and the reach of communications to vulnerable and higher risk communities on key COVID-19 related issues
9. Work with key health promotion and disease prevention services and programmes to understand barriers to accessing services, expand the reach of these services and increase the take up of prevention services to assist BAME communities to improve their health and wellbeing thereby improving their resistance to Covid-19 e.g. Healthy weight, flu, physical activity, smoking cessation, mental wellbeing and effective management of chronic conditions including diabetes, hypertension and asthma.

2.9 The disproportionate impact of Covid-19 underlines the importance of small community led voluntary groups in Merton both to support and engage with more marginalised communities. As part of our response to Black Lives Matter we commit ourselves to recognising the contribution of small community groups to tackling inequalities and that we will change the way

that we award funding through the Strategic Partner Grant Programme to ensure a fair and balanced distribution of resources. We will work closely with the voluntary and community sector to create a more collaborative and cooperative approach where larger organisations are working in partnership with smaller organisations to deliver better outcomes for our residents.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

No other options have been considered as the Council recognises the importance of addressing the issues raised by Black Lives Matter.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. The discussion at the JCC will inform a Cabinet report outlining the Council's response to Black Lives Matter.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. A report outlining the Council's response to Black Lives Matter will be discussed at Cabinet on 12 October 2020.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The BAME Staff forum will be given an annual budget of £5,000.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. On 6 April 2011 the Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires the Local Authority, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not. "Protected characteristics" are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.2. Implementing measures to respond to Black Lives Matter contributes to the council delivering the Equality Duty.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Implementing measures to respond to Black Lives Matter contributes to Bridging the Gap and tackling inequality.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. None

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

11.1 None

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. None

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