

## **Merton Partnerships Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Strategy**

The Merton Partnership has agreed the need to refresh and merge the Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Strategy to ensure they are relevant and reflective of the current climate. A steering group drawn from members of the Merton Partnership has been set up to oversee the development of the new Strategy that:

- Sets out the partner priorities for the sector and the resources available
- Sustains a thriving and dynamic sector by equipping them with the skills and support needed to adapt to the new climate
- Acknowledges and builds on the sector's social value in Merton.

### **Background:**

Merton has a vibrant and active voluntary and community sector working across a multitude of areas. The VCS in Merton is a strong asset for the borough providing a range of services particularly to vulnerable citizens, enhances community cohesion, contributes to wellbeing and enhances the skills of volunteering.

The sector and the Merton Partnership have a strong and mutually supportive relationship. A number of members of the Merton Partnership support the sector through substantial grants, commissioned services, notional funding and business rate discounts. However, it should be recognised that the sector draws substantial resources from other sources, in particular unpaid volunteers.

The shrinking state, cuts to public sector funding, challenges to the reputation and trust in which the voluntary sector is held and growing demand and the complexity of needs of the users have propelled the need to review and evolve the relationship between the funders, stakeholders and the voluntary sector.

In grappling with the financial and demographic challenges of the moment, commissioners are not only rationing resources, but increasingly changing the way they work with many looking at shared services or commissioning cross-borough working.

### **Timescales:**

The group will meet on a monthly basis and will provide a draft strategy by November 2016 to allow recommendations to be considered as part of the budget-setting priorities for 2017/18 and beyond. A draft strategy will be considered by the Merton Partnership Executive Board in November 2016.

Over the coming weeks, the board will proceed through the following stages to write the strategy:

1. Research
2. Engagement

3. Evaluation
4. Agreement and drafting of priorities
5. Consultation
6. Presentation to MPEB
7. Agreement of other governance bodies as appropriate
8. Amendments and final drafting of strategy