

**Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations**

**5 July 2017**

**SUBJECT: Merton's Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Strategy**

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**POSITION: Head of Policy, Strategy and Partnerships**

**ORGANISATION: Merton Council**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- That the JCC note the recommendations and draft action plan of the Merton Partnership's Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Strategy.
- That the JCC considers how it can support the implementation of the Strategy.

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 The JCC discussed the refresh of the Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Strategy in June 2016. In particular they were keen to see how the Strategy could be implemented against the backdrop of significant a reductions. This reports sets out the key recommendations and actions developed by a Steering Group drawn from the Merton Partnership and which form the basis of a new Strategy for the borough. These recommendations were approved by Merton's Cabinet in January 2018.

**2 DETAILS**

**BACKGROUND**

2.1 The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) is an integral part of the Merton tapestry and an important partner for the public sector. It provides a range of services on behalf of the public sector and a host of other activities that contribute to making the borough an excellent place to live. The social capacity that the Sector delivers also reduces demand for public services, particularly for vulnerable residents, by increasing resilience and self-support.

2.2 To oversee the development of the new strategy a steering group was drawn from the Merton Partnership and representatives from the voluntary and community sector. The group was chaired by Simon Williams, Director of Community and Housing at Merton Council. Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC) and the Council's Policy Team provided secretariat and research support.

2.3 A State of the Sector survey was commissioned to inform the development of the strategy. A combination of questionnaires, interviews and focus groups

provided the sector with an opportunity to share their views and discuss challenges. In total over eighty organisations were engaged through questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, one to one meetings and desk research.

- 2.4. Whilst the sector has actually grown over the last two years there are worrying signs of structural weakness that threaten the long term health and viability of the sector.

### **3. KEY ISSUES AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1. The steering group examined a number of key themes related to the strategy in turn at their monthly meetings. Each theme was intensively researched and a report was produced for discussion. The discussions and research reports together with the results of the Stat of the Sector Survey were distilled to produce strategic aims, followed by recommendations.
- 3.2. A list of actions to support the implementation of the recommendations was drawn up as detailed in Appendix 1. The draft recommendations were approved by the Merton Partnership Executive Board in November 2016 and the Merton Council Cabinet in January 2017.

### **4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

- 4.1. The strategy development was overseen by a steering group consisting of Merton Partnership members. The Terms of Reference were discussed at a number of forums including INVOLVE and The Faith and Belief Forum allowing the sector an opportunity to comment on the scope of the strategy at an early stage.
- 4.2. A State of the Sector Study was commissioned to provide further evidence to inform the strategy.
- 4.3. The 2016 Merton Partnership Conference in November discussed the draft recommendations in depth and this feedback has informed the final recommendations.

### **5. TIMELINE**

- 5.1. Merton Council Cabinet approved the recommendations in January 2017 and delegated the final sign off on the strategy to Simon Williams and Cllr Edith Macauley. The final strategy will be produced in July 2017.
- 5.2. The implementation of the Strategy will be overseen by the Compact Board and Merton Partnership Executive Board.

### **6. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Recommendations and actions in support of the Strategy

### **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- State of the Sector survey – see [link](#).

- Report to Cabinet 16 January 2017 Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Strategy – see [link](#)

**18. OFFICER CONTACT:**

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## Appendix 1: Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Strategy Draft Recommendations

Strategic priority	Steering Group recommendations	Examples of possible actions to implement the strategy
Support for the sector to help it adapt and change	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review the support offer to Merton's VCS organisations to improve their business planning, fundraising strategies and expertise, use of digital technology, underpinned by good governance and financial management;</li> <li>2. Support Merton's VCS organisations to improve collaboration and set up partnerships and consortia to extend their scope and reach, underpinned by due diligence, contract readiness, contract and performance management, evaluation and impact measurement;</li> <li>3. Review the support offer to smaller and more informal groups;</li> <li>4. Develop a joint approach to promoting the role of trustees and improving their skills to lead and govern VCS organisations;</li> <li>5. Support Merton's VCS to improve enterprise acumen to grow the social enterprise market, underpinned by structural/financial support to encourage business-like innovation and risk taking;</li> <li>6. Further develop the JSNA to become a dynamic tool for the VCS and decision makers in understanding and addressing local needs</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review priorities, resources and approach to commissioning support to the sector through the Strategic Grant programme to better reflect the issues identified in the State of the Sector survey.</li> <li>• Explore how the Wilson Centre can become a place where multiple organisations providing different services are located- an exemplar in partnership working and resource sharing.</li> <li>• LBM will engage the VCS and partners in the future development of the JSNA / Merton Observatory</li> <li>• Merton Partnership to look at opportunities through the One Public Estate programme to review how the public sector collectively uses its public estate and supports the VCS to deliver increased social value.</li> <li>• Support VCS management of community assets to enhance strategic planning, sustainability and service delivery.</li> </ul>

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	7. Develop a more strategic approach across the Merton Partnership to increase the provision of affordable, flexible premises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen VCS strategic representation and co- production, including for small groups</li> </ul>
Maximising funding and income generation	8. Revive and market the Merton Community Fund to attract funding from local residents and businesses; 9. Encourage and foster collaborative working and the sharing of resources in the sector 10. Support VCS organisations to look at alternative approaches to income generation 11. Ensure that there is clarity from the public sector on funding priorities and how funding is allocated 12. Strengthen our partnerships with business in order to increase their support via corporate social responsibility pledges; 13. Seek opportunities to develop and access social investment opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify capacity to re-launch the Merton Community fund and review the approach to securing CSR contributions from businesses and community giving.</li> <li>• Ensure that commissioners publish information about grant levels and priorities as early as practicable to allow the sector to plan ahead.</li> <li>• Explore a social investment vehicle for the development of the Wilson Centre.</li> <li>• Contact significant funders to better understand how Merton VCS can be more competitive in winning bids.</li> <li>• Ensure that business rate relief to charities is well publicised</li> </ul>
Commissioning and social value	14. Secure political and executive backing from members of the Merton Partnership to seek additional social value through the commissioning process and to identify and recognise the social value delivered by Merton VCS organisations 15. All commissioners, where appropriate, to provide guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure agreement to the approach from LBM's Cabinet in January 2017 and the CCG Executive Board. Update the Council's Standing Orders accordingly.</li> <li>• Produce guidance and training for commissioners on the use of the Social</li> </ul>

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	<p>to organisations through training, soft market testing and one to one meetings to encourage them to apply and to sign up to our procurement framework;</p> <p>16. All commissioners, where appropriate, to engage and meet with organisations at the early stages of the commissioning process and ensure Social Value is considered at the design stage and built into the tender process;</p> <p>17. Make it an option to include Social Value as part of the bid evaluation process through its inclusion in the scoring criteria;</p> <p>18. Ensure that opportunities to seek Social Value are reviewed at all levels of governance</p>	<p>Value Act including the development of a model approach for measuring and evaluating social value.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review mechanisms built in at departmental and corporate levels, and through the thematic partnerships such as the Sustainable Communities Board</li> <li>• Engage early with the VCS to prepare them to bid for services where they strongest e.g. address the alcohol and drug dependence issues in the borough</li> <li>• Use the Social Prescribing pilot to commission VCS organisations to improve health outcomes in the east of the borough.</li> </ul>
Increasing volunteering	<p>19. Promote and support the recruitment of volunteers across the Merton Partnership</p> <p>20. Develop models of public service delivery that create additional volunteering opportunities</p> <p>21. Continue the recognition of volunteers and volunteering programmes and promote them throughout the borough</p> <p>22. Develop further the communications plan to raise the profile of volunteering &amp; community action in Merton</p> <p>23. Promote a consistent model of evaluating the contribution and value of volunteers for the VCS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and utilise the Volunteer Merton online volunteer recruitment hub (one stop shop) to ensure individuals, groups and organisations have a single access point to volunteering and community action in Merton.</li> <li>• Ensure that new initiatives such as Merton social prescribing pilot include the development of volunteers as an element for its sustainability.</li> <li>• Merton Council's Health Champions</li> </ul>

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	<p>24. Maximise and promote the benefits of volunteering for volunteers, in particular seeking routes into paid employment.</p> <p>25. Ensure local public and private sector organisations are engaged and supported to creatively deliver their corporate social responsibility agenda and actively promote their employee volunteering programmes.</p>	<p>programme, run in partnership with Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC) and LiveWell Merton, encourages individuals in the borough to volunteer their time motivating other residents to make realistic health changes to benefit their long term health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers undertake a wide variety of roles in Merton Libraries including meeting and greeting, supporting children’s activities, helping customers use the IT facilities and helping to promote libraries in the community.</li> <li>• Ensure that large contracts include a commitment to CSR such as employee volunteering schemes.</li> <li>• Continue to promote the ValueYou 100 hours volunteering discount card scheme.</li> <li>• Hold an annual Merton Partnership Volunteer Awards ceremony</li> <li>• Explore the potential of volunteering ‘passports’ to demonstrate volunteers’ experience and skills and encourage employers to involve volunteers in their work, to the mutual benefit of the</li> </ul>

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		<p>volunteer and the business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the Merton Partnership to promote their employee volunteering programmes</li> </ul>