

Committee: Council

Date: 12 July 2017

Wards: All

Subject: **Strategic Objective Review – Safer and Stronger Communities**

Lead officer: Ged Curran, Chief Executive /
Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration

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

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Recommendations:

A. That Council consider the content of this report.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Council at its meeting on 1 March 2017 approved the Business Plan 2017-2021.
- 1.2 The Business Plan sets out how the council will deliver the Community Strategy, which is grouped into five strategic themes: sustainable communities, safer and stronger communities, healthier communities, older people and children and young people. Performance against these themes, plus an additional theme of corporate capacity, is monitored by Council. Each meeting of Council will receive a report updating on progress against one of these strategic themes.
- 1.3 This report provides Council with an opportunity to consider progress against the priorities that are to be delivered under the theme of Safer and Stronger Communities.
- 1.4 The key outcomes set out in the Business Plan relating to this theme are reducing the fear of crime, reducing alcohol related violence and supporting those who are affected by alcohol misuse and reducing anti-social behaviour and its effects on communities as well as individuals. Also to empower local people to have a greater choice and influence over local decision-making and to increase community cohesion and integration.
- 1.5 This report focuses on progress in relation to Equalities and Hate Crime. The portfolio holder is Councillor Edith Macauley MBE.

- 1.6 The report sets out the council's partnership approach in regard to tackling hate crime, our four year strategic delivery plan and the local victim, offender and location profile within Merton. It also, sets out the council's approach to equalities, including how we meet our statutory requirements.

2 DETAILS

2.1 Equalities

- 2.1.1 The responsibility for meeting the council's Public Sector Equality Duty rests primarily with senior managers, the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet. The Director of Children, Schools and Families supported by the Equality and Community Cohesion Officer is the Corporate Management Team's equality champion and chairs the Corporate Equality Steering Group. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission undertake a regular review of the Council's Equality Strategy.

Progress in meeting objectives under the Equalities Strategy 2013-17

- 2.1.2 The previous Equality Strategy 2013-17 expired in March 2017. Over the past four years progress has been made towards embedding equality practice throughout the Council and promoting community cohesion. Notable successes include:

- improved educational attainment for Looked After Children;
- commissioned preventative services continue to be available for children and young people with disabilities including family-based overnight short breaks;
- establishment of BAME Voice and the refresh of the independent LGBT+ Forum;
- high quality civic events that promote community cohesion including the commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day, Interfaith quiz event and the commemoration event for George Cates VC in Wimbledon;
- high levels of civic involvement and volunteering enabled by the council's support of the Merton Voluntary Service Council;
- a thriving and growing voluntary and community sector supported by a new partnership Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Strategy agreed in February 2017;
- embedding Equality Analysis in service planning.

Equality Strategy 2017-21

- 2.1.3 The refreshed strategy setting out the council's new equality objectives meets the legislative requirements of the Equality Act 2010 to publish equality objectives every four years. Following the agreement of Cabinet, the refreshed strategy combines equality and community cohesion commitments into a single strategy. The strategy was adopted by Council on 12 April 2017.
- 2.1.4 Based on GLA trend-based projections, Merton's population is projected to increase by around 13,000 between 2014 and 2020. During this time the age profile is also projected to change, with the most notable growth coming in the numbers of those aged under 16 and those over 50. Merton's ethnic

composition is also forecast to change, with the proportion of BAME residents set to increase to 40%.

- 2.1.5 The borough's growing diversity is reflected in the number of people that live in the borough that come from different backgrounds. According to data collected from the 2011 Census the three largest migrant populations by country of birth are Polish (3.5%), Sri Lankan (3.2%) and South African (2.8%). 34.9% of school pupils in Merton have a first language known or believed to be other than English.
- 2.1.6 The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) were updated in September 2015 and ranks Merton as 7th least deprived out of the 33 London boroughs and 212 out of 354 local authority areas (where 1 is the most deprived) for the rest of England. This overall lack of deprivation does, however, hide stark inequalities in the borough between deprived wards in the east of the borough (Mitcham) and more affluent wards in the west (Wimbledon).
- 2.1.7 The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Merton highlights health inequalities that are based on gender, ethnicity and where people live. It is evident that there is a difference between the most and least deprived areas within the borough for life expectancy of 7.9 years for men and 5.2 years for women. Linked to deprivation, those in the east of the borough have a much higher chance of serious illness and early deaths from illnesses such as cancer and heart disease. In 2015 13.5% of residents in Merton that are of a working-age were recorded as having a disability or long-term health condition.
- 2.1.8 Although Merton is a diverse London Borough it has a strong, resilient and integrated community supported by a strong track record of partnership working. This is reflected in the results of the Residents Survey with 93% of residents who think people from different backgrounds get on well together. This is underpinned by the council's commitment to equality and diversity set out in the new Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy.
- 2.1.9 The Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy 2017-21 aims to address key issues such as:
- bridging the gap between the levels of deprivation and prosperity in the borough;
 - improving understanding of the borough's diversity and foster better understanding between communities;
 - improving understanding of 'hidden' disabilities and the challenges that disabled residents face in all aspects of their lives. We aim to work in a cross-cutting way and take a holistic approach to more effectively address the needs of disabled residents;
 - supporting those who do not usually get involved in decision-making to better understand how they can get involved and get their voices heard;
 - supporting residents to access on-line access services;
 - providing services that meet the needs of a changing population;
 - employing staff that reflect the borough's diversity.
- 2.1.10 Outlined below are the 6 Equality Objectives that have been developed to narrow the gap in outcomes between residents in the east and west of the borough:

1. Ensure key plans and strategies narrow the gap between different communities in the borough;
2. Improve equality of access to services for disadvantaged groups;
3. Ensure regeneration plans increase the opportunity for all Merton's residents to fulfil their educational and economic potential and participate in the renewal of the borough;
4. Promote a safe, healthy and cohesive borough where communities get on well together;
5. Encourage recruitment from all sections of the community , actively promote staff development and career progression opportunities and embed equalities across the organisation;
6. Fulfil our statutory duties and ensure protected groups are effectively engaged when we change our services.

- 2.1.11 The activity that populates the accompanying action plan has been closely linked to the council's performance framework so that commitments are aligned with departmental service plans to ensure effective implementation.
- 2.1.12 In developing the strategy extensive consultation was undertaken with a range of stakeholders which included meetings with user groups and a web based survey.
- 2.1.13 The implementation of the strategy will be monitored by departments and annual monitoring report will be given to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) with Ethnic Minorities and CMT.

2.2 Tackling Hate Crime

The Merton hate crime profile

- 2.2.1 Hate crime is defined, by the Mayors Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) as, *"any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a personal characteristic; specifically actual or perceived race, religion/faith, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identity"*
- 2.2.2 In the four years of 2012-2016 Merton saw an increase in hate crime reporting levels which were higher than the London average.
- 2.2.3 Merton's increase was higher than London as a whole due to low level reporting initially
- 2.2.4 In order to better understand the Merton picture a detailed profile was completed for the 12 month period 01/10/15 – 30/09/16. For these 12 months we found 310 reports of hate crime were made to Police. These figures break down as follows
- 76%, or 236, racial hate;
 - 11%, or 34, faith based hate;
 - 8%, or 25, homophobic hate;

- 4%, or 12 disability hate crime;
 - 1% or 3, transgender hate crime.
- 2.2.5 These numbers suggest that there is still more to do in terms of how we engage our disabled and LGBT+ communities to encourage reporting.
- 2.2.6 The Merton Centre for Independent Living (CIL) undertook a piece of work to look at disability hate crime and their report estimates that there are 500 crimes a year. The 4% figure above represents 12 crimes so Safer Merton and the Merton CIL are working closely together to explore how to better increase the reporting rate
- 2.2.7 When analysing matters such as peak months, days and times over the 12 month period we found there were no sufficiently evidenced patterns of reporting to allow us to design “targeted campaigns” during the peak demand periods.
- 2.2.8 Our analysis also showed that there were, however, clear correlations between notable hate crimes taking place such as the murder of Lee Rigby and the Charlie Hebdo shootings. Following these, a short time period where reports of hate crime surged. Following such surges reported offences then returned back to “normal” after two or three months. At the time of writing there were no noticeable increases in reports following the London Bridge terror attack in June 2017.
- 2.2.9 When looking at the wards which voted to leave the EU, and the wards where hate crime offences occurred, it should be noted that there is no strong correlation between the two.
- 2.2.10 The national focus on hate crime is becoming ever more focused. The UK has seen three terror attacks in as many months and as such we, as a partnership and as a community must stand together to condemn those who perpetrate such crimes and support those whom are victims of the ramifications of such matters.
- 2.2.11 Merton has a strong community and the Safer Merton service, as too the council as a whole, are fortunate to have excellent partners in the voluntary and community sector who are helping us drive this agenda forward.
- 2.2.12 We must ensure we respond appropriately, swiftly and in a co-ordinated fashion. We will work with colleague across the council and externally to provide that support and guidance to our communities, work to ensure communities feel safe and seek to achieve a safe, cohesive borough which is not immeasurably impacted upon by the few but is, rather, celebrated by the majority.

Our response

- 2.2.13 In order to create a true partnership approach to tackling hate crime, ensuring that the community were at the forefront of this work, a task and finish group was formed. The group, involving a range of statutory and community partners, worked together to create a four year strategic work plan to run between 2017-21. The plan works to four key themes:
- (i) Co-ordination – Designed to ensure that we develop an understanding of the victims’ needs and their journey through the criminal justice system to ensure that Merton’s residents can access reporting and support services easily and efficiently.
 - (ii) Prevention - Provide our residents with the knowledge and skills to stay safe, whilst challenging those who identify with the perpetration of hate crime. Developing and strengthening community cohesion through unifying our residents.
 - (iii) Provision - Work with partners and the community to provide a range of support services which assist in a practical sense with regards to the reporting (and potentially trial) procedures while also providing emotional support to victims.
 - (iv) Protection - Ensure that the police and partners are given equalities and diversity training and so can identify factors which could flag a regular crime as being motivated by hate, in the process ensuring these are taken seriously and acted upon accordingly.
- 2.2.14 Safer Merton secured additional resources to undertake this work utilising the graduate management trainee programme. Following that resource coming to an end after the six month attachment period, we have replaced it with a new resource, this time from the Police for three months. It is to be noted that this work is being driven forward in partnership with community organisations but without fixed LBM employees which presents a risk in regard to continuity and service delivery moving forward. This will require careful attention.
- 2.2.15 Alongside the work to develop and commit to a four year strategic hate crime plan the partnership has undertaken some key community engagement work:
- Hate Crime Awareness Week (HCAW)* – running between Saturday 08 and Saturday 15 October 2016 HCAW saw nine engagement events held and a strong social media campaign delivered. Through HCAW we engaged many people from a range of backgrounds across all strands of hate crime and provided a strong reassurance message to all residents that Merton’s partnership takes hate crime seriously and that we will take action against those whom perpetrate hate crime.

International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT). IDAHOT was held for the first time in Merton and was marked, on Wednesday 17 May, via a flag raising ceremony and speeches from a range of key personal. The event was following by the publication of the partnerships hate crime strategy

- 2.2.16 Alongside the Merton strategic plan we are now working with the MOPAC Police and Crime Plan and the details contained within for hate crime. The Mayor of London is committed to providing safe reassurance for victims to come forward and to ensure that robust enforcement action is taken. In May 2017 he launched the Mets new online hate crime team who will be working with local borough police to tackle cyber hate crime. The Police and crime plan runs until 2021 dovetailing nicely into our work.
- 2.2.17 As we move forward and work with MOPAC, London Councils and others it is hoped that Merton will have a key role to play in setting out visions and the London context as the Head of Safer Merton performs a dual role as London lead for victims and hate crime for all 32 London Community Safety units.

Next steps

- 2.2.18 Over the coming year we plan to deliver all of year one milestones within the hate crime strategic plan and we believe that these are all achievable given the timelines and resources we currently have available. We do, however, face some challenges.
- 2.2.19 Third party reporting – an aspirational aim for the hate crime working group. How third party reporting looks and will be delivered remains unknown and this could become quite an unwieldy piece of work should we not deliver a clear, refined and concise vision for this
- 2.2.20 Support for victims – in the draft MOPAC police and crime plan hate crime IDVAs were proposed. In the finalised document these have disappeared and now we have to understand what offers of support Victim Support and/or other charitable organisations can offer those victims of crime
- 2.2.21 Development of a zero tolerance approach to offending with our social landlord colleagues. We want to explore the routes forward to ensure that any social tenant who commits hate crimes is held to account for his/her actions and that the social landlord explores further sanctions up to, and including, tenancy breach powers
- 2.2.22 Annual refreshing of the hate crime profile. It is important to understand who our victims are and where the crimes are taking place. We will continue to track and monitor this to ensure we can respond via an intelligence lead approach
- 2.2.23 Whilst Article 50 has been triggered there remains much that is uncertain about the terms of the UK's exit from the EU. It is important that we, as a collective, prepare for the exit from the EU and any further impact this may have on EU nationals residing within Merton.

2.3 Proposed changes to borough territorial policing

- 2.3.1 As Council may be aware the Metropolitan Police are currently undergoing a revision to their service delivery structure.
- 2.3.2 For a significant period of time Police have operated along with local authorities on a model of splitting London into 32 areas. Each area has its own senior leadership team, its own response officers, investigatory officers and neighbourhood officers. Each borough sees variations in policing numbers which is calculated using various formulas.
- 2.3.3 Due to the current economic climate, as has been well publicised, the police are facing significant financial reductions. For London, following in excess of £400m of savings being made already they now must save a similar amount again.
- 2.3.4 To help achieve these savings, the police are now seeking to create cluster areas which will reduce London from 32 police command areas to 12. A Metropolitan Police briefing pack is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.3.5 Merton will become part of the southwest cluster alongside Kingston, Richmond and Wandsworth. This will create a policing area of some 650,000 residents and a police force of approximately 1,500 based on current levels. This ratio is in line with other cluster areas.
- 2.3.6 Currently there are two pathfinder areas working to this cluster model. There is one pilot in the East of London – Redbridge, Havering with Barking and Dagenham alongside a second, in North London, Islington and Camden. Early, anecdotal feedback is mixed but the Police, and MOPAC, are to undertake a full evaluation of the pathfinder boroughs over the summer months.
- 2.3.7 With the pathfinder boroughs yet to be evaluated, a new police commissioner in post and, due to recent terror attacks across the country, there are no timescales attached, currently, to further rollouts. However, it is foreseeable, and reasonable to suggest, that due to the burgeoning savings police need to achieve that we may see full deployment and implementation of the revised model by the end of financial year 2018-19 at the latest (should the model be fully implemented).
- 2.3.8 The new structure will see a different management command structure implemented with one borough commander covering four boroughs and with one superintendent per borough responsible for delivery of work, partnership engagement alongside holding a thematic portfolio such as safeguarding. The relationship between local government and local police will, by default, change.
- 2.3.9 The pathfinders will soon be in a position to highlight what works well, what does not work and how problems have been resolved. This feedback will form the evaluation to shape next steps and will, most likely, dictate the timescales to which police work for these changes. Members will be constantly updated on progress for this work.

3. REPORTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSIONS/PANELS

3.1 Safer Communities

- 3.1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission has continued to hold the Police and safer Merton to account in relation to crime, policing and anti-social behaviour. The Borough Commander has attended twice-yearly and has been asked questions on a wide range of issues including the model of policing and deployment of officers in Merton, hate crime, traffic speed enforcement, street drinking and the work of police officers in local schools.
- 3.1.2 The Commission has examined and discussed crime data with the Borough Commander and was pleased that crime rates continue to remain low in Merton and are on a par or better than most neighbouring boroughs. The Borough Commander has explained in detail the steps being taken to address the spike in motorcycle crime, and the impact of stricter recording standards on levels of violent crime.
- 3.1.3 The Commission also discussed the Mayor of London's policing priorities with the London Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth. They also discussed the operation and performance monitoring arrangements for the proposed four-borough Basic Command Unit model of policing.
- 3.1.4 The Commission welcomed the work being done by Merton Centre for Independent Living to identify, measure and draw attention to the problem of disability hate crime. It was assured that the Safer and Strong Partnership Board, comprising the Council, Police and partner organisations, would receive and respond to Merton CIL's report.
- 3.1.5 The Commission heard from the Probation Service and the London Community Rehabilitation Companies about how low, medium and high risk offenders are managed locally and requested an update to show the progress being made.

3.2 Stronger Communities

- 3.2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission has continued to take a close interest in Merton Partnership's equality strategy and to review the action plan on an annual basis. A draft of the new equality and community cohesion strategy was shared with the Commission and changes were made in response to Members' comments.
- 3.2.2 The Commission has also championed volunteering and the voluntary sector for many years. The Chief Executive of Merton Voluntary Service Council attended in November 2016 to discuss the voluntary sector and volunteering strategy. The Commission endorsed the strategy's direction of travel and made some comments on the draft that were taken into account in producing the final document, notably on the development of definitions for social value and updated guidance in the council's contract standing orders.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1 None for the purposes of this report.

5 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The work to drive forward the council's contributions to hate crime sits within Safer Merton. The resources to drive this work do not come from existing provision as the service is too small to take on this additional work rather; it comes via Police officers who are attached to the service. These attachments, three months in duration, are reliant on Police being able to service this need. As Police resources constrict in the future delivery of hate crime may become more challenging

5.2 Safer Merton, along with numerous other services and departments within the council, benefit from police providing onsite resource, for free. The MASH has a team of several officers, the YOS one, Safer Merton three, all of whom work to support the delivery of safeguarding and enforcement. There is an unknown risk in regard to how such posts may be filled within the new proposed Policing structures

5.3 The Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy will be delivered within existing resources.

6 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 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 unlawful 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 and, in relation to the duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination only, marriage and civil partnership.

6.2 With effect from 12 April 2012 the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulation 2011 requires the council to prepare and publish equality objectives and subsequently at least four-yearly. The objectives must be specific and measurable. The Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy fulfils these requirements.

7 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

7.1 By developing and producing a new Equality Strategy, the Council has re-affirmed its commitment to human rights, equality and community cohesion. Merton's approach to equality and diversity is driven by its overall vision of Merton – a great place to live, work, learn and visit. The draft strategy will encourage a wider public debate about equalities in Merton and the actions needed to address inequality.

8 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There is a risk of increased hate crime activity directed towards certain groups if there is no commitment to eliminate discrimination and harassment.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None for the purposes of this report.

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

- 10.1 Appendix 1: Strengthening Local Policing, Metropolitan Police, November 2016

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 The hate crime strategic work plan 2017-21
11.2 The Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy 2017-21 report to Full Council 12 April 2017

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