

## **Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission**

**Date: 13 November 2019**

Wards: All

## **Subject: Community Plan 2020-25**

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

Lead member: Cllr Laxmi Attawar, Cabinet Member for Women and Equalities

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### **Recommendations:**

- A. Comment on the development of a new Community Plan for the borough and the links with other partnership plans and strategies – see **Appendix 1** for an outline of the Plan;
- B. Discuss how Members as leaders in their communities can provide leadership, support and guidance to the four thematic partnerships in helping them to deliver the priorities of the Community Plan; and
- C. Suggest collective activities that members of the community can get involved in, that will help to achieve the priorities of the Community Plan.

### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission of progress to date on the development of a new Community Plan for the borough. The Commission is asked to consider the recommendations and comment on the draft outline at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.2. The Community Plan will set the Merton Partnership's long term ambition for the borough. As well as a final written document, the Plan will have an online presence that will evolve alongside its development, and during the lifetime of the Plan. The aim is to provide an online resource for the community that is easily accessible. Final approval of the Plan will be through the Merton Partnership Executive Board and then the aim is for the Plan to be adopted by all of the individual partner agencies including the council.
- 1.3. The overarching goal of the Community Plan is to increase social capital in Merton as an underlying driver to improve resilience and wellbeing, and how a collective approach can help to achieve the ambitions that residents have for their borough and where they live.
- 1.4. The Plan will look at existing levels of social capital across the borough, the effect it can have on increasing positive outcomes for residents, and how it can be nurtured and built upon to support communities to become more resilient.
- 1.5. The Plan will have eight key priority areas on which it will focus; two each from the four thematic partnership boards that sit underneath the Merton Partnership umbrella (Children's Trust, Health and Wellbeing Board, Safer Stronger Partnership and Sustainable Communities and Transport Board)

and set out how collectively, the Merton Partnership can support our communities to grow social capital to meet these priorities.

- 1.6. The priorities were agreed at the Merton Partnership Executive Board's away day in June 2019, where board members looked at the evidence collected about social capital in the borough, and discussed the ways in which a social capital approach could be used to develop a narrative of ambition. The Board took four priorities to look at in detail, and developed outline narratives which have fed into the outline of the Plan.
- 1.7. It is important to note that agreement of the Plan by the Executive Board is the beginning of the implementation of the Plan. Each element of the Plan will be driven by the individual thematic boards and overseen by the Merton Partnership Executive Board.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1. The previous Community Plan runs from 2013-19. This plan is a standalone written document, containing a number of case studies that highlights projects delivered by the public, private and voluntary sector organisations. It also set out the aims for the partnership across the borough.
- 2.2. The plan's aims were split into six themes, these were:
  - Working on bridging the gap;
  - Merton: a place to work;
  - A healthy and fulfilling life;
  - Better opportunities for youngsters;
  - Keeping Merton moving;
  - Being safe and strong.
- 2.3. Each year the Merton Partnership produces an Annual Report setting out progress and achievements in delivering the objectives of the Community Plan.
- 2.4. An overview of delivery of the 2013-19 Plan will be included in the new Plan.

## **3 DETAILS**

- 3.1. The overarching goal of the Community Plan 2020-2025 is to build social capital in the borough as an underlying driver to improve resilience and wellbeing. Social capital can be broadly defined as 'the social networks, exchanges, obligations, and shared identities that in turn provide potential support and access to resources'. – see diagram below



- 3.2. Merton continues to have a thriving voluntary and community sector and a long history of partnership working across the public, voluntary and private sectors. There are already many examples of social capital in action, such as Mitcham Community Orchard, The Magic Club (Phipps Bridge), 1Way Project (Mitcham), Fayre and Square (Wimbledon), which showcase the types of activity that the Community Plan is further looking to develop.
- 3.3. Examples of social capital can also include more informal instances of sociability outside of more structured groups, for example the extent to which residents interact with one another on a day to day basis in their community. An area with low social capital might mean that people don't talk to, or know their neighbours, or feel more isolated.
- 3.4. Studies suggest that areas with higher levels of social capital are likely to have higher levels of volunteering, higher engagement with the council and other civic agencies, as well as lower levels of loneliness and isolation, and better community cohesion. In turn, evidence suggests a strong link between high social capital with lower crime rates, greater chances of early intervention, a reduced reliance on services, and better physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- 3.5. To support the development of the Community Plan, an evidence base has been produced that collates data from a series of indicators to measure the existing levels of social capital on a ward-by-ward basis and give us a baseline from which to work. This will enable the identification of areas with high social capital; existing community assets and good practice that can be tapped into as well as areas with lower social capital; places where the Merton Partnership can be proactive at trying to strengthen existing assets as well as developing new projects. It should be noted that ward councillors play an important role in developing social capital by acting as community champions, raising issues on behalf of residents and bringing different elements of the community together. Overview and Scrutiny Commission are asked to consider the role of ward councillors in relation to increasing social capital as part of the future development of the Community Plan.

- 3.6. The evidence base uses 24 ward based indicators which have been aggregated to give a score for each ward across 5 measures of social capital:
- Social infrastructure
  - Civic participation
  - Volunteering
  - Informal sociability
  - Social trust
- 3.7. Scoring wards in this way enables us to recognise that different areas have different strengths.
- 3.8. It is proposed that the identification of opportunities to improve and nurture social capital could help to guide local projects which Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies can be used on and which the thematic boards can help to co-ordinate and support bids for.

### **Priorities**

- 3.9. The Plan will have eight key priority areas on which it will focus, setting out how collectively the Merton Partnership can increase community participation, and support and enable our communities to grow social capital to make Merton a better place to live and work. These priorities were agreed by the Merton Partnership Executive Board at their away day in June 2019.
- 3.10. The eight priorities are:
- Priority 1 – Climate change (Sustainable Communities and Transport Partnership)
  - Priority 2 - Building social capital to improve the environment of the borough (Sustainable Communities and Transport Partnership)
  - Priority 3 - Tackling Diabetes as a Whole Systems Approach (Health and Wellbeing Board)
  - Priority 4 - Healthy Workplaces (Health and Wellbeing Board)
  - Priority 5 - Serious violence with a focus on drugs and a public health prevention model (Safer Stronger Partnership)
  - Priority 6 - ASB enforcement (Safer Stronger Partnership)
  - Priority 7 - Getting involved, having a say – promoting the voice of children, young people and families as active contributors to the borough (Children’s Trust Board)
  - Priority 8 - My Merton - connection with family, friends and the community (Children’s Trust Board)
- 3.11. The approach of taking existing priorities from each of the four thematic boards is to ensure that the Community Plan is not creating competing or additional activity, but instead helps to galvanise and drive the members of the wider Merton Partnership, voluntary sector and the community to get involved in communal activity to help achieve them. The Plan will set out the

case for change, what the council can do and what residents can do. It would be helpful if the Overview and Scrutiny Commission could consider what councillors part councillors could play in helping to deliver the priorities.

- 3.12. Taking existing priorities from the thematic boards also means there will be ownership of the actions in the Community Plan and mechanisms to help ensure their delivery. The development of the Community Plan comes at the same time as both the Children and Young People's Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy have been refreshed in 2019, and therefore these priorities are based on recent engagement with different sections of the community and in line with their views.
- 3.13. The Plan will include a series of case studies, linked to each of the priorities. These 'spotlights' will detail the work an existing project, community group or individual is doing and how that work is having a positive impact on the community. The aim is to make the Plan more engaging and also to inspire and encourage others to get involved in communal activity by highlighting what can be achieved collectively.
- 3.14. It will be the responsibility of each thematic board to take forward the 8 priorities with support and oversight from the Merton Partnership Executive Board.

### **Online presence**

- 3.15. It is intended that alongside a short summary document, that as much as is possible, the Community Plan will be in an online format so that it can act as a resource for the community that encourages greater participation in communal activities. This will include links to voluntary and community organisations, details of social infrastructure, data and information about the borough and where people live, all of which will enable the plan to have a live and ongoing presence.
- 3.16. It is proposed that the Community Plan will sit on the Merton Partnership's website, with a clear link on the home page. From there each of the plan's priorities will have a page that will include;
- The call to action and why this is a priority
  - Activities that will be carried out by the council and wider partners
  - Suggestions for things members of the community can do to help us achieve the priority
  - 'Spotlight on' to highlight any existing good practice or case studies of community based activity already going on related to the priority
- 3.17. Work is also ongoing looking at options for developing an interactive map that would collect community assets, groups and activity to encourage and publicise their use, in line with the aim of the Community Plan to increase community participation. This would provide an organic resource for residents to discover community spaces across the borough and highlight groups and activities that people can get involved with.
- 3.18. There will also be clear links to the Digital Hub currently under development that will provide residents and professionals with links to a number of different portals that offer help and support.

## **Draft outline**

- 3.19. **Appendix 1** sets out a draft outline for the Community Plan. It is important to note that this is still in the early stage of development, and is provided to allow Overview and Scrutiny to comment on progress to date.
- 3.20. Following feedback from the Merton Partnership, the Community Plan reference group, the CMT Lead and the Community Plan lead on behalf of the Partnership, it was agreed that the level of detail in the version at **Appendix 1** will be retained for officers and partners delivering the plan, but that a shorter, more concise version will be published for resident engagement. Having a series of web pages devoted to the Plan will also enable us to have more flexibility around putting up more detail where required and without word limits.
- 3.21. The plan will include a clear list of 'you said, we did' deliverables; these will be reviewed as the document is updated, in order to demonstrate the impact the plan has on the borough.
- 3.22. Subject to the views of Overview and Scrutiny alongside the views captured at the Merton Partnership Executive Board in October, a more complete version of the Plan will be submitted for agreement at the next meeting of the Merton Partnership Executive Board in January 2020.

## **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1. Previously the Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on local authorities to develop a strategy/plan for the local area in partnership with the community. This statutory duty was removed in 2010, so there is no requirement to develop a Community Plan. However it was agreed by the Merton Partnership that there is significant value in setting out a collective vision for a local authority's area, and ensuring that there are actions and commitments in place to further economic, social and environmental well-being.

## **5 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 5.1. Development of the activity to achieve the Plan will be based on a range of engagement to help ensure that a wide cross section of the community has been involved. The plan has so far been shaped by:
- 2019 Annual Residents Survey - 1,000 responses incl. questions specifically inserted relating to social capital
  - 2018 Children and Young People's Survey - 1,300 responses incl. questions specifically inserted relating to social capital
  - Workshop with voluntary sector and community groups held in June 2019
  - Engagement with Merton Partnership – via all four of the thematic partnerships and the Merton Partnership Executive Board away day in June 2019
  - The priorities from the Children's Trust Board and Health and Wellbeing Board taken from strategies based on multiple borough wide consultation activities

- Survey and engagement work currently being carried out, or due to be carried out, related to specific priorities which will feed into developing the actions of the Plan, such as the Climate Change Consultation and Community Safety Survey

- 5.2. In October 2019 M.E.L. Research started fieldwork on a piece of commissioned community engagement that is focussed on engaging 'seldom listened to' groups. This recognises that there are groups whose voices are not always heard, and that can find themselves excluded from civic processes, so the targeted engagement is to ensure the Community Plan reflects the aspirations that members of these groups have for their local area. It is also to understand the ways that these groups think social capital can be developed to help achieve the plan's priorities and the barriers that need to be removed that would enable them to get involved in communal activities.
- 5.3. Further engagement is then planned to ask residents for their thoughts and ideas, on how the members of the Merton Partnership can enable greater community participation in helping to achieve the priorities of the Community Plan and support communities to be more resilient. This is in line with the goal that the Community Plan evolves during its lifetime where information gathered through further engagement can be published on the web pages that will form the online version of the Plan.

## **6 TIMETABLE**

- 6.1. Draft Community Plan outline and structure to be reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny – 13 November 2019
- 6.2. Community Plan branding agreed with designer – December 2019
- 6.3. Analysis and reporting from results of commissioned engagement with seldom listened to groups delivered – December 2019
- 6.4. Establishment of Community Plan web pages – January 2020
- 6.5. Revised Community Plan outline and structure to be reviewed by Merton Partnership Executive Board - 28 January 2020
- 6.6. Community Plan to Cabinet – February 2020
- 6.7. Community Plan to Council for adoption – February 2020

## **7 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. There will be no additional resources required to implement the Plan and it will be the responsibility of the thematic boards to consider how resources can best be co-ordinated to achieve the priorities set out in the Plan. The thematic boards can help to identify and support bids to different funding streams that they may choose to utilise, including bids to use the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for example.
- 7.2. There will be a small cost for printing a limited number of copies of the Plan but in the main it is anticipated that people will read the Plan online. There will be a small cost for developing the online presence. The cost of the commissioned work on community engagement with seldom listened to groups is £14,838 and is funded from existing 2019/20 revenue budget.

## **8 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. Previously the Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on local authorities to develop a strategy/plan for the local area in partnership with the community. This statutory duty was removed in 2010, so there is no requirement to develop a Community Plan. However it was agreed by the Merton Partnership that there is significant value in setting out a collective vision for a local authority's area.

## **9 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. The overarching goal of the Community Plan 2020-2025 is to build social capital in the borough as an underlying driver to improve resilience and wellbeing. Studies suggest that areas with higher levels of social capital are likely to have higher levels of volunteering, higher engagement with the council and other civic agencies, as well as lower levels of loneliness and isolation, and better community cohesion.
- 9.2. A piece of commissioned community engagement is being carried out as part of the development of the Plan that will focus on engaging 'seldom listened to' groups. This recognises that there are groups whose voices are not always heard, and that can find themselves excluded from civic processes, so the targeted engagement is to ensure the Community Plan reflects the aspirations that members of these groups have for their local area. It is also to understand the ways that these groups think social capital can be developed to help achieve the plan's priorities and the barriers that need to be removed that would enable them to get involved in communal activities.

## **10 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. Two of the priorities: Serious violence with a focus on drugs and a public health prevention model and ASB enforcement have been out forward by the Safer Stronger Partnership
- 10.2. The overarching goal of the Community Plan 2020-2025 is to build social capital in the borough as an underlying driver to improve resilience and wellbeing. Evidence suggests a strong link between high social capital with lower crime rates, greater chances of early intervention and better physical and mental health and wellbeing.

## **11 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1. N/A

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

- Appendix 1 - Draft Community Plan Structure and outline October 2019

## **13 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 13.1. [Merton's refreshed Community Plan 2013](#)