

Merton Council

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH ETHNIC MINORITY ORGANISATIONS AGENDA

Councillors Edith Macaulay (Chair), Cllrs Stan Anderson, Laxmi Attawar, Logie Lohendran and David Simpson

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
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
Merton Unity Network
Mitcham Filipino British Association
Deputy
Morden Citizen's Advice Bureau
Pakistan Cultural Association of Merton & Wandsworth
Pakistan Welfare Association
Deputy
Positive Network
South London Somali Community Association
South London Tamil Welfare Group
Victim Support Merton and Sutton
Wimbledon Mosque

Revd Mrs H Neale
Ms E Idienumah
Mr S Ahmad
Mrs N. Shah
Mr M S Sheikh
Mr T Hassan
Mr. N. Islam
Mr J Choudhury
Mr M Rahman
Mr M Karim
Mrs M Ahmed
Mr I Rizvi
Mr A Savage
Mr M A Karim
Mr Q Anwar
Ms L Saltoon
Mr C J Lusack
Mr A. Ali
Ms P Anderson
Ms A Colquhoun
Ms C Batallones
Ms F Poku
Mr M A Shah
Mr S U Sheikh
Mr H Ejaz
Ms G Salmon
Mr A Musse
Dr P Arumugaraasah
Ms D Moseley
Mr I Khan

A meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations will be held on 17 January 2012 commencing at **7.15 pm** at **Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, in the Council Chamber.**

This is a public meeting and attendance by the public is encouraged and welcomed. For more information about the agenda and the decision making process contact democratic.services@merton.gov.uk or telephone 020 8545 3574.

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JCC with Ethnic Minority Organisations Agenda

17 January 2012

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Declarations of interest (see note1) Councillors and co-opted members must declare if they have a personal or prejudicial interest in any of the items on this agenda at the start of the meeting, or as soon as the interest becomes apparent to them.	
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Future meeting dates: 20 June 2012.

Note1: Declarations of interest

Councillors and co-opted members who have a personal or prejudicial interest in relation to any item on this agenda are asked to complete a declaration form and hand it to the Democratic Services Officer. Forms, together with a summary of guidance on making declarations of interest, will be available around the meeting table. If further clarification is needed members are advised to refer to "The Code of Conduct – Guide for members May 2007" issued by Standards for England, which will be available at the meeting if needed.

**JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH ETHNIC MINORITY ORGANISATIONS
01 NOVEMBER 2011**

TIME: 7.15 to 9.15

PRESENT: Councillor Edith Macauley (Chair), Councillors Stan Anderson, Councillor Logie Lohendran, Laxmi Attawar
Mr S.U.Sheikh, Mr Savage, Mr Rizvi, Mr Ejaz, Mr S Vukalic,

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Agatha Akyigyina
Evereth Willis, Equality and Community Cohesion Officer
Mark Lawrence, Chief Inspector
Dean Shoesmith, Joint Head of Human Resources Merton and Sutton Council
Mr B Navaratna-Rajah

Minute silence – At the start of the meeting the JCC observed a minute’s silence as a mark of respect for a member of the Tamil community who was killed in Mitcham the previous weekend.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from, Councillor David Simpson, Mr Shah, Mrs Shah, Mr Karim, Ms Colquhoun, Mr Islam and the Revd Mrs Neale, Ms Anderson, Ms Poku, Dr Arumugarassah.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 06 July 2011

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting are agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 MATTERS ARISING

Evereth reported that since the last JCC she has met with Mr Sheikh and Ms Anderson to review the Corporate Equality Scheme (CES) Action Plan.

RESOLVED: Update on the outcomes of the CES Action Plan review meeting to be given at the January JCC.

**JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH ETHNIC MINORITY ORGANISATIONS
01 NOVEMBER 2011**

5 CRIME STATISTICS

Chief Inspector Mark Lawrence presented the crime statistics and reported that overall crime in the borough had reduced. Violent crime has reduced by 20% however the increase in acquisitive crime (robbery, theft from motor vehicles and residential burglary) is a concern.

Residential burglary is a priority for the Police and the Chief Inspector highlighted that the figures were particularly high in April and July. He reported that the perpetrators were mainly from out of the borough.

Proactive operations are happening with Safer Neighbourhoods units doing reassurance work. The Autumn Nights Operation (which reminds people to take security measures such as leaving lights on when they are out) is happening and will hopefully have an impact to reduce the level of residential burglaries.

JCC representatives expressed concern that for the last 3 years the statistics have gone up. The Chief Inspector gave reassurance that the area teams are making burglary and robbery a priority.

A question was asked about whether the statistics could be broken down further by ward level. The Chief Inspector informed the meeting that resources were being targeted to vulnerable wards.

The Chief Inspector also reported that Racist and Religious offences are reducing and there have been no incidents of racially motivated crime. It was felt that this may partly be attributable to the fact that Merton is a cohesive borough.

Concern was expressed that it may be due to under reporting.

Homophobic crime and risk and harm crime are down also.

A question was asked about the recent murder at Pollards Hill. Chief Inspector Lawrence explained that he could not comment in too much detail due to the ongoing investigations. He informed the meeting that following the murder a Gold Group meeting was held and someone has now been charged and remanded.

Concerns were expressed that it took a murder to get the community together. There then followed a general discussion about issues affecting the Pollards Hill area including residents concerns about gangs of young people and poor lighting.

The Chief Inspector explained that Police resources are stretched and that the Safer Neighbourhood team was working with partners to make further improvements on Pollards Hill.

Concerns were raised that Racist and Religious crimes have increased from July to

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All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the committee/panel. To find out the date of the next meeting please check the calendar of events at your local library, online at www.merton.gov.uk/committee or by using the contact numbers at the end of this volume.

**JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH ETHNIC MINORITY ORGANISATIONS
01 NOVEMBER 2011**

September and the statistics do not tell the level of violence involved. The Chief Inspector confirmed that there are no serious violent racist crimes.

He further informed the meeting that crime trends are monitored and action taken as a partnership to tackle issues that arise. However, there are no religiously motivated crimes in the borough.

Councillor Macauley thanked Chief Inspector Lawrence for attending and the work done in the riots.

RESOLVED:

6 HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE ON THE WORKFORCE PROGRAMME AND THE IMPACT ON BME STAFF

Dean Shoesmith the Joint Head of Human Resources presented a report on the impact of cuts on the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff. He reported that following the recent council restructuring exercise there had not been a disproportionate impact on BAME staff. Although some staff redundancies were made there was no negative impact on BAME staff.

Dean Shoesmith further commented that further staffing reductions still needed to be made but monitoring would continue to ensure there is no negative impact on staff. He added that there is a low staff turnover at the council and it would be difficult to change the staff profile due to budget constraints resulting in a recruitment freeze.

A discussion followed and the JCC representatives asked for more information to be presented to enable comparisons to be made. In particular the JCC wants to see the following information:

- the total staff profile,
- the percentage of each ethnic group,
- the grade and ethnicity of staff
- figures to be provided over a three year period
- severance details by ethnicity

It was agreed that information needed to show BME and Non BME statistics.

RESOLVED: it was resolved that Dean Shoesmith and Evereth Willis should meet to design a template for presenting the statistics in line with the comments made.

7 UPDATE ON THE COMMUNITY MAPPING PROJECT

Evereth Willis gave a summary of the key findings of the Community Mapping report that the Institute of Community Cohesion was commissioned to produce for the

**JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH ETHNIC MINORITY ORGANISATIONS
01 NOVEMBER 2011**

borough. The report's recommendations will be used to inform the refresh of the Merton Partnership Community Cohesion strategy.

She outlined that it was a management resource for colleagues across the Merton Partnership and would be made widely available.

RESOLVED:

8. REFRESH OF THE COMMUNITY COHESION STRATEGY

Evereth Willis outlined the approach to the refresh of the Community Cohesion strategy and invited comments and asked for volunteers to attend a focus group to develop the strategy. She highlighted that it would be linked to other key strategies such as the BAME Strategic Plan.

During the discussion the following key points were made;

- It is important for communities to keep their cultural identity and also mix with others to improve understanding of other cultures.
- It was felt that new migrants should be supported to integrate with the wider community.
- The strategy needs to be sustainable.
- The strategy should be monitored by the JCC.

Mr Sheikh and Mr Savage volunteered to attend the focus group.

RESOLVED:

Evereth Willis to contact JCC representatives seeking further volunteers for the focus group.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

Committee: Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations

Date: 17 January 2012

Agenda item:

Wards: All

Subject: Update on the Crime Statistics April 2011 to December 2011

Lead officer: Annalise Elliot, Head of Safer Merton

Lead Partner: Metropolitan Police

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

Forward Plan reference number:N/A

Contact officer: Evereth Willis(evereth.willis@merton.gov.uk)

Recommendations:

That the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations:

- A. Notes the crime statistics for the period April 2011 to December 2011 presented by Chief Inspector Mark Lawrence.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. To update the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) with Ethnic Minority Organisations on crime statistics for the period from April 2011 to December 2011.

2 DETAILS

2.1 The JCC has requested regular updates on race, faith and burglary statistics in the borough.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1 Not Applicable

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. Not applicable

5 TIMETABLE

5.1 Not applicable

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. None

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. None

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 Appendix 1 - Crime statistics for the period April 2011 to December 2011

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

13 CONTACTS

• REPORT AUTHOR

- Name: Evereth Willis

- Tel: 020 8545 4637

- E-mail: evereth.willis@merton.gov.uk

Merton JCC police data January 2012

Protective marking	Not protectively marked
Publication scheme	No
Title and version	Merton JCC police data January 2012, V1.
Summary	Merton Police Crime Statistics
OCU	Merton
Author	Merton Police
Date created	January 2012
Review date	January 2013

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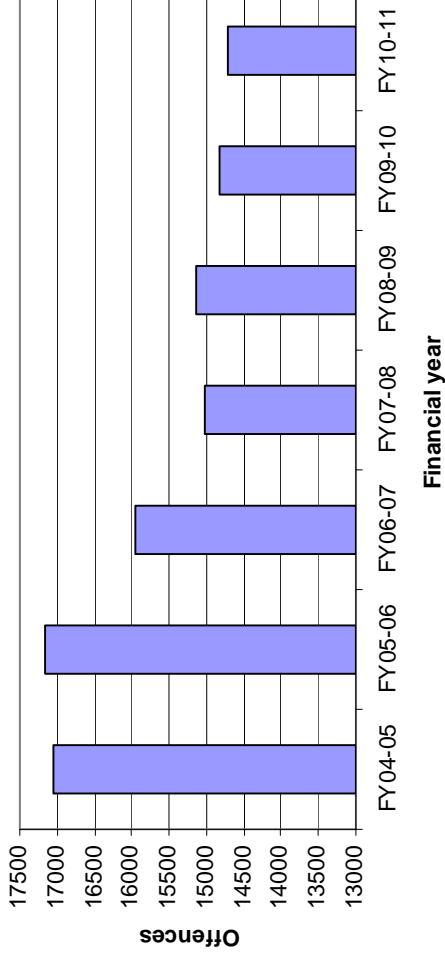
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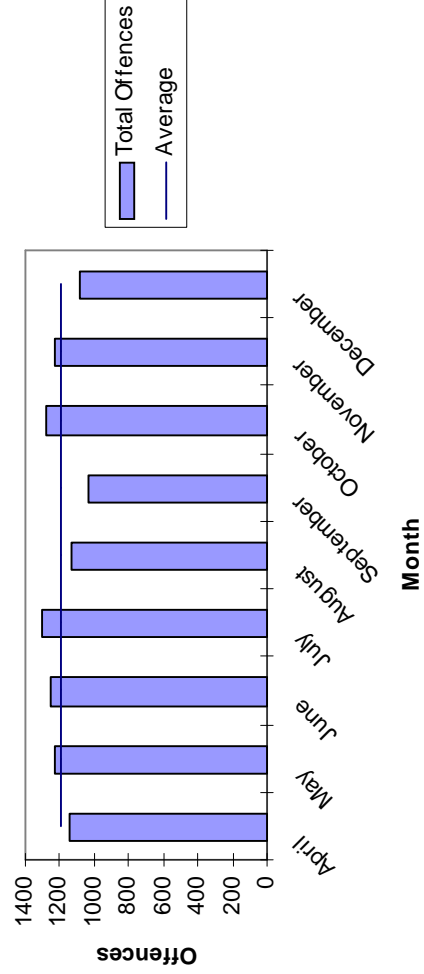
Merton JCC police data January 2012

Total offences in Merton by financial year



Financial Year	Total Offences
FY04-05	17058
FY05-06	17171
FY06-07	15959
FY07-08	15031
FY08-09	15126
FY09-10	14834
FY10-11	14721

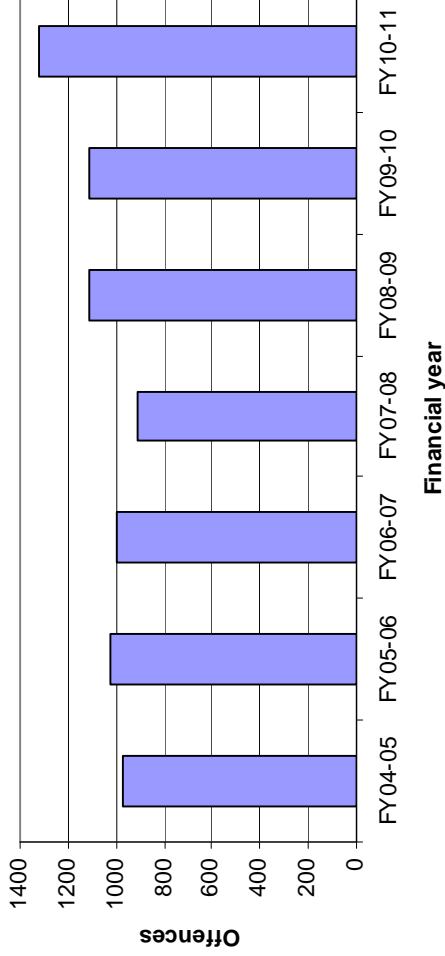
Total offences in Merton in FY11-12



Month	Total Offences
April	1149
May	1230
June	1257
July	1304
August	1137
September	1033
October	1273
November	1226
December	1085

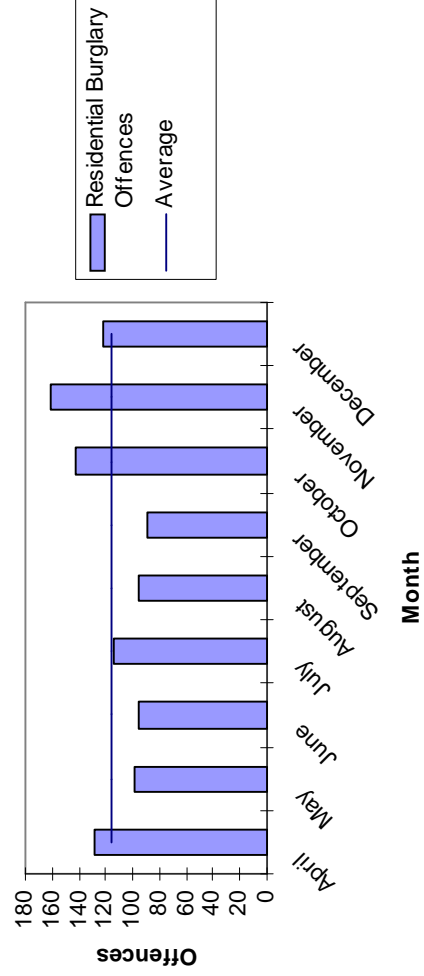
Merton JCC police data January 2012

Residential burglary offences in Merton by financial year



Financial Year	Residential Burglary Offences
FY04-05	975
FY05-06	1024
FY06-07	999
FY07-08	910
FY08-09	1110
FY09-10	1107
FY10-11	1318

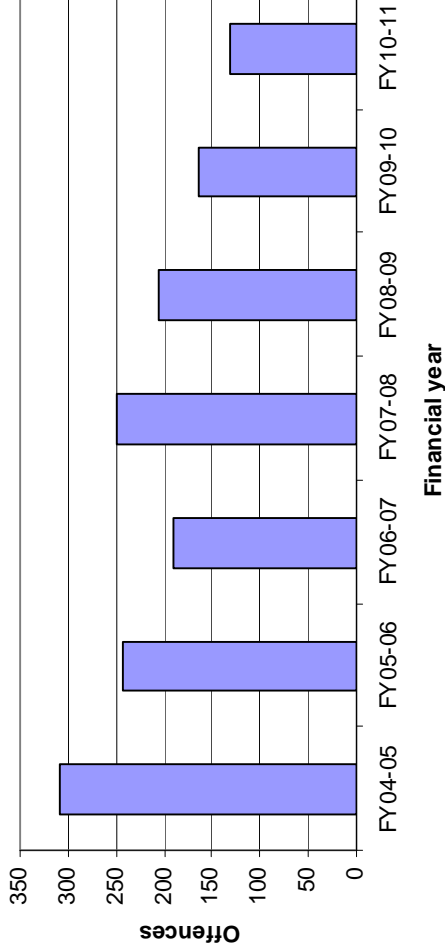
Residential burglary in Merton in FY11-12



Month	Residential Burglary Offences
April	128
May	99
June	95
July	114
August	96
September	89
October	142
November	162
December	122

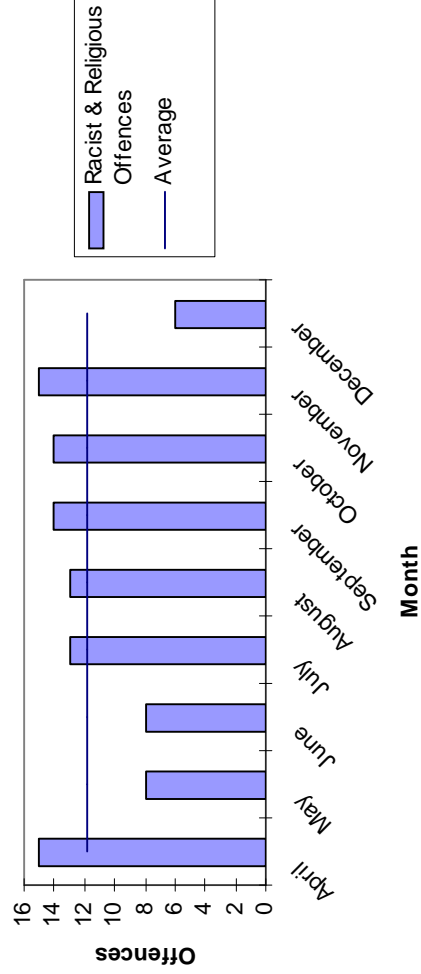
Merton JCC police data January 2012

Racist & religious offences in Merton by financial year



Financial Year	Racist and Religious Offences
FY04-05	309
FY05-06	243
FY06-07	191
FY07-08	249
FY08-09	205
FY09-10	164
FY10-11	132

Racist & religious offences in Merton in FY11-12



Month	Racist & Religious Offences
April	15
May	8
June	8
July	13
August	13
September	14
October	14
November	15
December	6

Committee: Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations

Date: 17 January 2012

Agenda item: Ethnic Monitoring of Lettings 2010-11

Wards: All

Subject:

Lead officer: Steve Langley, Housing Needs & Enabling Manager

Lead Partner:

Lead member: Councillor Martin Whelton, Cabinet Member for Community & Culture

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

Contact officer: Angela Chu, Housing Strategy Manager (angela.chu@merton.gov.uk)

Recommendations:

That the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations:

- A. Note and comment on the lettings outcomes by ethnicity, of vacant social rented homes to Merton households in housing need in 2010-11.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report updates the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) with Ethnic Minority Organisations on the outcomes of lettings to social housing owned by Registered Providers (RPs) in 2010-11 by ethnicity. As Merton Council has transferred all its housing stock to Merton Priory Homes in March 2010, all social housing lettings made were to homes owned by RPs.

2 DETAILS

Background

2.1 There is a shortage of social housing for rent in Merton. As of 1st April 2010, there were 6,354 households listed on Merton's Housing Register, of which 2,676 (42%) have 'reasonable preference' status as defined in Part VI of the 1996 Housing Act. However, only 369 social rented homes were available for letting in 2010-11. It should be noted that in January 2012, the number of households on Merton's Housing Register has risen to 7,057.

2.2 The council has a statutory duty to prioritise households with 'reasonable preference' in our Allocations Policy, although persons subject to certain immigration control are not eligible. Set out below are the 'reasonable preference' categories:

- People who are homeless (within the meaning given in Part VII of the Act), regardless of whether there is a statutory duty to house them (includes those who are intentionally homeless and those not in priority need)
- Homeless people who are owed a duty by any local housing authority or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority
- People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability

- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others)

2.3 Local authorities also have a statutory duty to permanently re-house people who are accepted as homeless, i.e. households that are eligible for housing in the UK, are homeless, in priority need and have a local connection.

2.4 In order to meet our statutory duty and to permanently re-house people accepted as homeless and to help prevent homelessness, a large proportion of social homes available for let each year are let to households who are either at risk of homelessness, or have been accepted as homeless, classified as Band B & E applicants under Merton's Allocations Policy respectively.

2.5 In 2010-11, 63% of vacant homes were let to homeless households. Re-housed homeless households often have complex needs and all have a 'priority need' due to factors such as pregnancy, have dependent children, vulnerable because of old age, physical disabilities or mental health problems.

2.6 Of the remaining lettings, 17% went to households with an overriding medical priority (Band A); 10% to older people (Band F); 7% to vulnerable people such as households with learning disabilities or mental health problems who were not homeless (Band D); and the remaining 3% were let to other applicants on the Housing Register (Band G).

2.7 With the introduction of the Choice-based Lettings system in Merton in 2006, housing applicants have the option to bid for properties of their choice that are available to their 'Band' through an online system. Properties are let to 'bidders' with the highest number of points.

2.8 Households with the highest housing priority but have difficulties bidding for homes through the online Choice-based lettings (CBL) system are offered a social home direct outside of the CBL system. These usually involve vulnerable households, households with disabilities and those with language difficulties. In 2010-11, 36 Direct Offers were made, of these 50% were made to ethnic minorities.

Lettings Outcomes by Ethnicity

2.9 In 2010-11, a total of 369 homes owned by Registered Providers (RPs) were let to households on Merton Council's Housing Register, down from 517 in 2009-10. These include homes let to existing social tenants on the Housing Register (Band C). In 2010-11, 39 existing RPs tenants transferred to another home, compared to 57 in 2009-10.

2.10 The number of 'true voids' available for let to new tenants in 2010-11 was therefore 330, down from 450 in 2009-10. This represents a 27% drop in supply of affordable homes available for let to households in housing need between 2009-10 and 2010-11.

2.11 Table 1 below shows all lettings in 2010-11 by ethnicity, and includes existing tenants transferring to another home owned by RPs. The table also includes ethnicity

profile of Merton households, and the profile of households waiting for social housing on Merton's Housing Register.

Table 1 – Lettings in 2010-11

	Percentage of Lettings	Housing Register 31 Mar 10	Merton Households (HNS 2005)
White	51%	49%	80%
Mixed	7%	5%	2%
Black	30%	28%	7%
Asian	12%	15%	8%
Other	0%	3%	2%
Total Households	369	4,987	80,521
All Ethnic Minorities	49%	51%	20%

2.12 Comparing our Housing Register information with demographic data shows ethnic minority households are more likely to be in housing need. 51% of households on the Housing Register are ethnic minorities, compared to only 20% of households in the population. In particular, there is high level of housing needs amongst the Black and Asian communities, with Black households making up 28% of housing applicants compared to their 7% share in the population, and Asian households make up 15% of housing applicants, compared to 8% in the population.

2.13 In 2010-11, 49% of all vacant social homes were let to ethnic minorities, close to their 51% representation on the Housing Register. Further breakdown shows that 30% of homes were let to Black households, compared to their share of 28% on the Housing Register, and 7% of homes were let to Mixed households, compared to their share of 5% on the Housing Register.

2.14 Asian households were under-represented in lettings outcomes, with 12% of homes let to Asian households in 2010-11, compared to their 15% on the Housing Register. It is however worth noting that within the Asian community, the Tamil group was the most successful in gaining access to social housing, as just over half of the lettings to the Asian community went to Tamil households, making up 5% of all lettings. Households whose ethnicity was classified as 'Other' make up 3% of housing applicants, but no let was made to this group in 2010-11.

2.15 Under-representation in letting outcomes can be the result of a number of factors. With nearly 5,000 households on the Housing Register, only those with the highest level of households needs and the higher number of points are likely to be let a social home. Some ethnic groups may have higher representation in the priority 'bands' that are more likely to result in successful letting outcomes, and housing applicants' option to bid for homes can also influence lettings outcomes by ethnicity. More detailed analysis by band and by points, as well as analysis of number of bids by ethnicity are needed to help understand the under-representation of Asian and Other ethnic groups in overall letting outcomes in 2010-11.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1 The Housing Strategy Team produces an annual equalities monitoring report on lettings that includes detailed analysis on lettings by bands by ethnicity, and the number of CBL bids by ethnicity. This detailed report is due for completion later this financial year. Analysis by number of points and ethnicity is also possible but will require a longer timescale for completion.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1 Not applicable.

5 TIMETABLE

5.1 Not Applicable.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Equality Act 2010 which came into force in October 2010 contains a public sector duty to tackle discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and encourage good community relations. Monitoring of social housing lettings outcomes by ethnicity helps inform housing policy to ensure fair outcomes for all sections of Merton's community.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Information on social housing lettings outcomes by ethnicity provides the transparency needed to help dispel 'myths' and misconception that certain sections of the community have unfair advantage over others in accessing social housing, and will help promote community cohesion.

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.

13 CONTACTS

• REPORT AUTHOR

- Name: Angela Chu, Housing Strategy Manager
- E-mail: angela.chu@merton.gov.uk

Committee: Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) with Ethnic Minority Organisations
Date: 17 January 2012

Agenda item:
Wards:

All

Subject: Findings of the Community Mapping project and refresh of the Merton Partnership Community Cohesion Strategy

Lead officer: Evereth Willis, Equalities and Community Cohesion Officer

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

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

Contact officer: Evereth Willis (evereth.willis@merton.gov.uk)

Recommendations:

That the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations (JCC) notes:

- A. The update on the Community Mapping project undertaken by the Institute of Community Cohesion
- B. The draft Community Cohesion Strategy and contributes to the development of priorities for action;
- C. The timetable for revising the Merton Partnership Community Cohesion Strategy

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. To update the JCC on the Community Mapping project, the refresh of the Merton Partnership Community Cohesion Strategy and expected timescales, and to seek input from JCC members.
- 1.2. Through the Community Tension Monitoring work undertaken in the borough, officers in partner agencies identified the need to have a clearer picture about the Merton's diverse community and the possible future challenges that needed to be addressed.
- 1.3. The council and police jointly commissioned the Institute of Community Cohesion (ICoCo) to undertake community mapping and identify emerging issues that needed a partnership response. It was intended to use the findings of the final report to inform the refresh of the Community Cohesion strategy. Additionally, the report would be a resource for the Partnership to use to inform service development in the borough.

2. DETAILS

Community Mapping

- 2.1 Merton has made good progress in promoting community cohesion but recognised that population changes were presenting new challenges. It was acknowledged that in addition to statistical evidence of the local population, the borough also needed a better understanding of the new migrant communities.

2.2 The Council and the Police jointly commissioned the Institute of Community Cohesion (ICoCo) to undertake a Community Mapping exercise. The brief was to:

- Identify and evidence issues and grievances that divide alienate and isolate different communities;
- Highlight challenges and key priorities to be tackled in promoting greater cohesion between the different areas and the diverse communities and the indigenous population;
- Identify best practice in Merton and from elsewhere, and propose how these could be mainstreamed where appropriate; and
- Focus on building resilience across the voluntary, faith and public sectors to anticipate and deal with tensions and conflict between communities.

2.3 The methodology included reviewing statistical information and key strategies, followed by one-to-one interviews and focus groups.

2.4 The final report that was presented to the Merton Partnership Executive Board on 29 November highlighted the following challenges:

- The diverse school population as it moves to adulthood may bring different challenges for the borough;
- New migrant communities about whom less is known than other more established communities;
- The increase in the Ahmadiyya community and the potential for increased tensions with the borough's Sunni Muslims;
- Tensions between and within other communities;
- The rate of turnover or 'churn' in the population – despite high levels of in migration net migration is negative;
- Intergenerational challenges facing people of all communities;
- The potential growth of extremism, particularly right wing activities;
- The impact of wide differences in affluence and deprivation across the borough; and
- Cuts in services.

2.5 The report's recommendations are outlined below:

- **Cohesion** – good progress has been made in this area and efforts need to continue to focus on promoting fairness and inclusion. The report emphasised that there is no room for complacency;
- **The BAME Strategy** – the need to deliver against the priority actions in the plan;
- **Engagement** – use the report findings to improve engagement with new and minority communities and consider encouraging grassroots residents, in particular women and young people. It is also important that staff are aware of the different cultures and cultural sensitivities;

- **The schools duty to promote cohesion** – this is no longer a statutory requirement, however, schools should be encouraged to continue to promote cohesion;
- **Areas of potential conflict** - in light of the loss of GLA funding tension monitoring arrangements may need to be reviewed;
- **Employment and Economic development** – amongst other things consideration should be given to developing a wider understanding of the structure and trading relations of minority businesses and seek ways of broadening contacts and engagement across the whole business community;
- **ESOL** – many new migrants need to be supported to learn English and integrate into the borough, it is important to consider increasing the availability of ESOL classes;
- **The Voluntary and Community Sector** – there is a need to supporting small and medium sizes Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to meet the future challenges of reduced funding and a changing commissioning framework;
- **Faith Communities** – continue to encourage inter faith dialogue to tackle common issues of concern, build bridges, trust and confidence between each other. It is also important to increase the involvement of young people; and
- **Prevent** – continue engagement developed through Prevent funded activities.

2.6 In addition to the report's recommendations being used to inform the refresh of the community cohesion strategy, the report findings will be also be a resource for other work in the borough.

Refresh of the Community Cohesion Strategy

- 2.7 To bring together in one document the Merton Partnership's commitments to community cohesion, the Merton Community Cohesion Strategy was developed and launched in 2006, along with a Community Cohesion Charter. The Strategy and Charter show the Partnership's commitment to making Merton a place where everyone benefits from equal opportunity and outcomes.
- 2.8 The partnership approach to the delivery of the strategy has led to notable achievements such as the establishment of the Youth Parliament, partnership meetings to identify and respond to potential community tensions, the opening of the Acacia Intergenerational Centre and supporting community cohesion events.
- 2.9 Additionally through the Preventing Violence Extremism grant funding, we sought to build resilient communities and supported projects such as the Muslimah Youth project and an After-School project working with refugee, asylum seeking and newly arrived migrants aged 12 – 18.
- 2.10 It is now time to take stock of delivery against the 2006 strategy and refresh the Partnership's priorities and planned action in light of this delivery and any changes in the national and local context since 2006. This will ensure that the revised strategy is fit for purpose and activity over the next few years is targeted appropriately.

- 2.11 To ensure the effectiveness of the refreshed community cohesion strategy the development of its priorities has been cross-referenced with the priorities identified in other strategies, such as the Community Plan and BAME Strategic Plan.
- 2.12 Additionally, the recommendations of the Community Mapping project (outlined above) have contributed to the refresh of the strategy. The learning from the Prevent projects has also been incorporated.
- 2.13 In developing the strategy we have to be mindful of the present economic climate. Therefore the strategy will focus on actions that are achievable and represent the best use of resources available.
- 2.14 The JCC is invited to consider the draft strategy, comment on the key priorities, contribute to the development of appropriate actions and consider its role in the delivery of the strategy.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 In the absence of a community cohesion strategy the Merton Partnership would need to ensure that community cohesion work is embedded in the delivery of services.

4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1 Details of consultation undertaken as part of the community mapping project are contained in the report.
- 4.2 The report findings will be circulated across the Merton Partnership and made available on the community cohesion webpage.
- 4.3 The consultation timetable for the refresh of the Community Cohesion Strategy is outlined in 5.1 below:

5. TIMETABLE

- 5.1 The full proposed timetable is below:

Action	Date
General communications: articles on Merton Connected and Merton Together, press release, Merton website	
Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) Forum	5 October 2011
Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) with Ethnic Minority Organisations	1 November
Interfaith Forum	9 November 2011
Sustainable Communities and Transport board	8 December 2011
Safer and Stronger Strategy Group	20 December 2011
INVOLVE	25 January 2012
Black and Minority Ethnic Forum	January 2012
LGBT Forum	11 January 2012
Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations	17 January 2012
Children's Trust	20 January 2012
Citizenship and Inclusion Board	23 January 2012
Merton Partnership **DECISION**	21 February 2012

6. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None specific to the refresh of the community cohesion strategy. It is envisaged that identified priorities will be undertaken within existing resources.

7. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The borough faces future challenges as the community continues to change and become increasingly diverse. The refreshed community cohesion strategy will support Merton to focus promoting inclusion, fairness and cohesion and diminishing potential conflict.

9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The strategy will identify potential risks and suggest actions that can be delivered across the Partnership to prevent or reduce possible community tensions.

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 The draft Merton Partnership Community Strategy for comment

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 Community Mapping final report

<http://www.mertonpartnership.org/mp-home/information-library/abouttheborough.htm>

- 12.2 Community Cohesion Strategy 2006-2010

http://www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/equality-diversity/community_cohesion-3.pdf

- 12.3 Community Cohesion Charter

http://www.merton.gov.uk/community-living/equality-diversity/cohesion_cohesion_charter.pdf

13. CONTACTS

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Introduction

The London Borough of Merton's first Community Cohesion Strategy ran from 2006 to 2010 and resulted in a number of positive outcomes for Merton's many and diverse communities, which are detailed later in this document. But as the national context in which the strategy exists enters a new phase in 2011, Merton is looking to update its vision for community cohesion in the borough for the next four years.

In this spirit the Merton Partnership renewed its award-winning Compact in November 2011. The Compact is a partnership agreement between local public bodies, the business community and the voluntary and community sector to improve their relationships and provide a framework within which the sectors can understand what to expect from each other. The refreshed Community Cohesion Strategy takes the positive community energy behind the Compact and the other community work going on in Merton, and brings it together in a focused, priority-based, public commitment.

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion (CIC) published a report in 2007 that led to the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the Local Government Association (LGA) agreeing the following definition for community cohesion:

Community cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another.

So, with a population that is continually diversifying, it is important to work actively to identify changing issues, to maintain Merton's high levels of cohesion and to respond quickly and effectively when there are tensions to be addressed. Becoming complacent is one of the quickest paths to the breakdown of community cohesion, so this strategy focuses both on addressing the divisions that do exist – because as strong as Merton's community is, it is not perfect – and on building upon the excellent work that has already been done by residents and community organisations, in partnership with local authorities.

What has Merton achieved so far?

The 2006-2010 Community Cohesion Strategy was broadly successful in its aims to work with local communities to tackle common concerns and work as a partnership to reduce community tension. The council took the lead on some projects, while others were developed and managed by the private sector and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). These leading examples are the kind of initiatives that we hope to see more of in the future, and that the Merton Partnership will be proud to support. Some of their achievements included:

Building local pride and a sense of belonging

- A Community Cohesion budget was set up to provide for activities and projects aimed at furthering cohesion.
- Peace Week is celebrated annually to highlight Merton's commitment to a non-violent approach to community tension.
- The borough commemorates Holocaust Memorial Day annually.

Promoting knowledge and understanding between communities

- Community Forums were established, in which residents are encouraged to attend and state their views on council and other public services.
- A community tension monitoring mechanism was established.
- The Korean Chamber of Commerce in Merton opened up dialogue between Korean businesses and the wider Merton economy.
- Emergency Planning procedures were developed with the Interfaith Forum.
- The Acacia Intergenerational Centre, Britain's first ever purpose-built intergenerational centre for people of all ages to come together, opened in 2010.

Supporting young people

- Merton Council adopted the National Youth Agency's Hear by Right Standard, which provides a framework for children, young people and adults to work together.
- The council also established a Youth Parliament to encourage participation in democracy.
- The anti-bullying conference in November 2007 showcased a range of anti-bullying initiatives and strategies.

Addressing social tensions and conflict

- Close working relationships with Safer Neighbourhood teams were developed.
- The Stop Hate helpline was launched to provide a way of reporting incidents of intolerance quickly and easily.

Mainstreaming community cohesion

- Community cohesion considerations have been embedded in service delivery across Merton.

Why do we need a Community Cohesion Strategy?

By solidifying this commitment to cohesion in a single plan that covers a range of organisations, the strategy will fulfil a range of criteria that help increase cohesion in Merton. It is designed to enable a joined-up, integrated approach that will be reflected in Partnership initiatives for the future.

Improving community understanding

- Merton's population is growing and diversifying, with new communities arriving and the issues affecting established groups changing all the time. Reaching some of these sections of society can be difficult, particularly when a community representative is lacking or when communities exist across borough boundaries.
- Minority ethnic communities often have specific needs from health service providers and the local authority: there is a need to improve understanding and promote cultural competency and faith literacy in these organisations, ensuring that they can engage effectively with Merton's diverse communities.
- A further challenge is the need to embed health diversity considerations into the Clinical Commissioning strategy to bring about improved health outcomes for residents in the East of the borough.

- An emerging trend in the borough is the need to facilitate discussions between young people about differing cultures, faiths and sexual orientations in a safe environment. Colleges and local schools have an important role to play here, as well as in mentoring, training and leadership programmes.
- Faith organisations are a positive community asset, but without other opportunities and reciprocal engagement from those outside of the organisations, they can lead to isolated communities. By facilitating interfaith dialogue, a targeted community cohesion plan will provide differing faith communities with the means to co-exist peacefully within Merton.

Facing future funding issues together

- The public, voluntary and community sectors are facing an era of reduced resources and now more than ever are required to target those resources towards actions that will have the biggest impact and the most effective outcomes.
- With the increased expectations of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) that come with Localism, VCS organisations are increasingly going to play an important role in service delivery in the near future. Infrastructure support for community organisations will be a key part of Merton's cohesion strategy.

Increasing opportunity

- Merton remains committed to addressing the economic inequality that exists between the east and west of the borough. A disproportionate number of people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) are disabled and/or black and minority ethnic (BAME) residents. A lack of job opportunities and economic instability can be one of the biggest obstacles to community cohesion.
- People from minority groups frequently have specialist needs to get into employment, ranging from formal qualifications to language courses and informal skills that focus on improving confidence, ambition and economic mobility. Businesses can be reluctant to hire employees with such needs, often being unaware that support is available and that diversity and employee training can increase competitiveness in today's tough economic climate.
- Recruitment and trading practices in minority communities are often confined to their own community. These can leave entire business networks vulnerable if just one business fails. By encouraging them to open up across the borough, we hope to encourage a more stable economic environment throughout Merton.
- Some young people are discouraged from participation in civic life through lack of confidence in the system, or through fear of being labelled troublemakers or activists by older generations. By enabling young people to voice their concerns and opinions and to feel that they are genuinely being listened to, a community cohesion strategy can instil a sense of meaningful engagement across the generational divide and between young people and statutory agencies.
- Established religious leaders in the community can be strong figureheads, but can also make members of their faith over-reliant on them in communicating with authorities and service providers, resulting in a lack of new leadership from younger generations. By involving all residents in community cohesion activities, minority voices within religious communities can make themselves heard.

Merton's vision for the refreshed strategy

Our aim for the coming years is to continue to encourage communities to respect one another, tolerate differences, take pride in their local community, work together better and support the wider community. Through increasing understanding, exploring shared values, supporting community-driven projects and encouraging more active participation in civil society among residents from all different backgrounds, we believe that this will be achieved. Our vision for Merton's future is one in which age, disability, ethnicity, faith, gender and sexual orientation have no negative impact on a person's opportunity to participate in society, education or employment.

The Localism and Decentralisation Act gives Merton's 2011-2015 Community Cohesion Strategy an opportunity to embrace localism's positive aspects, in promoting community-led services and initiatives. Moreover, one of the underlying themes of the strategy is the importance of involving the community in its development, setting the agenda in what they want from Merton.

Merton's strong existing community networks, such as the BME Forum, the Interfaith Forum, Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC) and the Merton Unity Network, will provide the Partnership with a wide delivery platform, and we anticipate that these organisations will be embedded in the design and delivery of the strategy's objectives.

Finally, when putting a community cohesion strategy into practice it is important to remember that the strategy is a long-term one. It is not enough to just list objectives and put policies into place. The strategy will give the Merton Partnership a practical framework for monitoring the impact of its community cohesion commitments to ensure that they are being delivered effectively.

Local issues

From our partnership work, community consultation and a range of reports and surveys commissioned by the council and partnership organisations, some key issues that affect cohesion in Merton have been identified:

Diversity

- Some minority groups and different communities are still experiencing discrimination and tensions.
- There are new communities about whom little is known regarding cultural, social and health issues. These communities need to be supported to access services.
- There is some spatial segregation of BAME communities in Merton: 61.4% of the total Black or Black British population live in just five wards.
- Some new migrants and Muslim women need ESOL opportunities.
- Senior management positions across the borough are not representative of the borough's ethnic diversity.
- A large and diverse school population (55.8% of secondary and 60.1% of primary pupils are BAME) is moving into adulthood.
- Some tension and exclusion exists between Merton's diverse religious groups and denominations.
- Despite fostering cohesion between the Elders of Muslim denominations, incidents in schools and colleges continue.

- Merton's high level of cohesion must be maintained as diversity increases.
- Far Right extremism in some areas is potentially a threat to community cohesion.

VCS/funding

- Smaller VCS organisations, often those with specialised priorities, lack resources and support

Deprivation

- Deprivation is considerably more prevalent in Black/Black British residents than Asian/Asian British residents in Merton.
- Merton's low-pay economy and London's porous economy mean skilled workers tend to find work outside Merton.
- Focusing on providing opportunities for residents of the east only in the east can increase a sense of segregation.
- Different minority groups have different skill levels and economic needs: tailored support is needed.
- Local job opportunities are declining and often poorly paid, making it difficult for local SMEs to compete against larger companies.
- Employers can be unaware of their staff's individual faith values and needs.
- BAME children show higher rates of exclusion and expulsion in schools, leading to a disproportionate lack of attainment.
- Young refugees and asylum seekers have poor access to employment, housing, education and services.

Awareness and communication

- Many new minority communities are unaware of the services that the council provides and are inactive in civic life.
- The Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) community frequently experiences discrimination and can be hard to reach through official channels.
- Engaging with the LGBT community in Merton, particularly those within other minority communities, can be difficult.
- Some minority groups feel that consultation on previous initiatives was superficial.
- Stop and search policy is reinforcing negative attitude in BAME young people towards authority.
- 31% of BAME residents feel the council does not treat them fairly and 25% of black residents feel the council does not tackle racism (2010 result).

Key priorities

We have identified six key priorities for Merton's Community Cohesion Strategy, listed below, along with the main approaches that might be taken to tackle them.

Improving engagement with minority and new communities

- Raising awareness and fostering understanding in and between minority communities
- Identifying tensions and differences within minority communities
- Ensuring that minority communities are actively involved in the Community Cohesion Strategy
- Supporting and integrating new communities

Supporting and engaging with the Voluntary and Community Sector

- Promoting the benefits of volunteering
- Supporting small and medium sized voluntary and community organisations through changes in the sector
- Sharing information between local government and the VCS

Supporting employment and economic development opportunities

- Encouraging skills development in disengaged areas of the community
- Encouraging communities to move away from self-contained trading practices

Delivery and monitoring strategy

The Safer and Stronger Communities Thematic Partnership will lead and coordinate the delivery of this strategy by:

- Advising and supporting partners on what could be done to minimize the risk of community tension and help to build stronger and more cohesive communities.
- Assisting in taking immediate, appropriate and coordinated action should an incident occur that could cause tensions in the community.

- Developing cross-community infrastructure and opportunities for minority groups.

Engaging and supporting young people

- Improving support to vulnerable and disaffected young people
- Encouraging participation in mainstream society, and engagement with service providers and statutory agencies
- Supporting schools and colleges to address intolerance and bullying

Continuing interfaith dialogue

- Supporting interfaith activities and projects
- Increasing the involvement of younger people

Monitoring community tensions and maintaining community cohesion

- Ensuring a no-tolerance approach to instances where the rights and customs of others are not respected
- Developing protocols to improve relations between statutory agencies and the community.
- Ensuring that community cohesion is actively and effectively monitored

- Providing a vehicle for conflict resolution between groups within the community.
- Identifying and sharing good practice, key policy issues and innovative thinking relating to community cohesion.
- Publicising and raising the profile of community cohesion and celebrating diversity in the borough.
- Monitoring and evaluating the implementation and impact of this strategy.

However, partner agencies will also be equally responsible for contributing to the delivery of the strategy.

Monitoring the strategy as it continues through to 2015 will be crucial, and will be dealt with through a number of channels.

These include the Merton Partnership, Merton's Community Forums, the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations and finally the annual Residents' Survey, which will give us a sense of how Merton's residents perceive cohesion in their area.

Sharing evaluations and analysing findings will provide a detailed and balanced view of the progress being made towards the delivery of the community cohesion agenda in Merton.

Action plan

Outcome required	Action and key tasks	Target date	Lead agency / agencies	Financial implications
Improving engagement with minority and new communities				
Identify ways to consult and engage beyond umbrella groups and traditional community leaders by encouraging grassroots residents to participate in consultation.	Having the council be more active in reaching out to disengaged areas of society to promote services and events.		LBM	
	Producing a 'welcome pack' for new arrivals which offers advice about services available and potential problems (e.g. risks of casual work)		LBM LSP	
Use information on faith and community to develop improved approaches to engagement with the Borough's new and minority communities.	Providing a 'faith literacy' course for public sector workers, in particular teachers, council officers and carers.		LBM (HR, Learning & Development)	
Continue to focus efforts on promoting inclusion, fairness and cohesion and diminishing potential conflict	Continue work to promote an inclusive and positive sense of local pride and belonging.		LBM LSP	
	Support the Disabled Go accessibility guide project		LBM LSP Disabled Go	
Supporting and engaging with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)				
Working with Volunteer Centre Merton and the Merton Voluntary Service Council to promote the				

Outcome required	Action and key tasks	Target date	Lead agency / agencies	Financial implications
opportunities of volunteering and the achievements of the VCS.				
Encouraging VCS organisations to pool their resources and recognise shared needs and opportunities.	Launching the VCS funding database.		LBM	
	Putting in place a framework to enable collaboration between VCS groups		LBM MVSC VCM	
Using the refreshed Merton Compact to raise the already high levels of integration between the council and Merton's VCS organisations.				
Supporting employment and economic development opportunities				
Working in partnership with the Merton Chamber of Commerce to inform businesses of the case for diversity and training provisions.	Developing a programme of engagement and dialogue with businesses to encourage them to promote more diverse workforces and manage diversity.		LBM Merton Chamber of Commerce	
Supporting colleges in providing vocational and 'soft' skills training.				
Ways of increasing the availability of ESOL classes should be	Proactively advertising ESOL courses in My Merton and at markets, libraries, and places of worship.			

Outcome required	Action and key tasks	Target date	Lead agency / agencies	Financial implications
explored between the Council, the Business Sector, PCT, Police and Fire Service	Using children's centres to provide ESOL support for mothers, bringing English language skills into households.		LBM (CSF)	
Working with regional minority ethnic business associations to strengthen BAME businesses and networks.				
	Working with businesses to increase the number of apprenticeship programmes.			
Ensuring that the council's workforce is representative of the community at all levels of management.				
Engaging and supporting young people				
Working with schools and VCS youth groups to provide mentoring services that instil self-esteem, confidence and ambition.	Set up focus groups with youth groups – including BAME youth groups – to identify issues affecting young people in Merton.			
Using new technology to increase representation and meaningful consultation with young people.	Discuss the possibilities of technology in increasing engagement with youth groups and young people.			
	Encouraging schools to use third-party resources in tolerance work, e.g. the BMAM teaching packs for teaching about Islam.			
Encouraging tolerance and biculturalism in schools.	Developing programmes in schools to monitor and combat anti-LGBT bullying and homophobia.			
Learning from other boroughs' examples in these areas.	Continuing to offer support to schools on how to most effectively promote cohesion.		LBM (CSF/Yvette Stanley)	

Outcome required	Action and key tasks	Target date	Lead agency / agencies	Financial implications
Continuing interfaith dialogue				
Faith groups should be supported and encouraged to further develop activities and events that bring different faith groups together to tackle common issues of concern, build bridges, trust and confidence between each other				
	Working with Merton's Interfaith Forum to encourage cross-faith projects that help people of different beliefs to recognise shared values.		LBM Interfaith Forum	
	Support the interfaith group being worked on.		LBM Interfaith forum AW SS	

Outcome required	Action and key tasks	Target date	Lead agency / agencies	Financial implications
Monitoring community tensions and maintaining community cohesion				
Encouraging VCS organisations to work with the private and statutory sectors to both ensure that policies are inclusive and monitor their impact.				
	Work with youth groups and police to lessen the negative cohesion effects of stop and search procedures.			
Ensure that there is systematic monitoring of the agreed actions of the Cohesion Strategy and BAME Strategy at the LSP or its sub groups (Stronger Communities, Safer and Stronger, Sustainable Communities and Transport,				
	Tension monitoring arrangements and structure to be reviewed taking into account the joint iCoCo and Met Police toolkit.		LSP	
	Using the council's community monitoring pages to transparently report on the status of the strategy's objectives and targets.		LBM	
	Promote and publicise the Stop Hate helpline to residents.			

Appendix

- Partners – detail partners

- Schools – detail schools/schools contact
- Voluntary and Community Sector – specific contacts (roles not people)
- **Glossary**

BAME – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
BME Forum – Black and Minority Ethnic Forum
CIC – Commission on Integration and Cohesion
CSF – Children, Schools and Families
ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages
GRT – Gypsy Roma Traveller
ICoCo – Institute of Community Cohesion
IDeA – Improvement and Development Agency
LGA – Local Government Association
LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LSP – Local Strategic Partnership
LBM – London Borough of Merton
MUN – Merton Unity Network
MVSC – Merton Voluntary Service Council
NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training
PCT – Primary Care Trust
VCM – Volunteer Centre Merton
VCS – Voluntary and Community Sector

- References / Resources