

Committee: Council

Date: 27 March 2013

Agenda item: 10

Subject: Equality Strategy and Action Plan

Lead officer: Ged Curran, Chief Executive

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

Forward Plan reference number: 1205

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Recommendations:

1. That Council endorses and adopts the draft Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2013-2017.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Council's current Corporate Equality Scheme will expire at the end of March 2013. Under existing equalities legislation, the Council is required to publish equality objectives every four years.

1.2 This report sets out a refreshed Equality Strategy and Action Plan for 2013-17 and asks that these documents are endorsed and adopted by Council. This will ensure the Council continues to meet its duties under the legislation.

2. DETAILS

2.1 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 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.

2.2 The Equality Act 2010 also requires the council to publish equality objectives every four years to demonstrate how it will meet the PSED. The refreshed Equality Strategy ensures that the Council continues to comply with this duty. The Corporate Equality Steering Group (CESG) identified issues that broadly fell into the following five themes:

- Tackling Inequality
- Service Access
- Improving Engagement
- Promoting Community Cohesion
- Workforce Development

2.3 The CESG agreed to use the five themes outlined in 2.2 as the refreshed 'Equality Objectives' for the draft strategy. The draft Equality Strategy 2013-

2017, attached at Appendix I, is a four-year strategy that sets out what the council will do to tackle discrimination and inequality and promote equal opportunities in Merton.

- 2.4 The approach of the draft strategy is a departure from the structure of the current Corporate Equality Scheme. Instead of including objectives against each protected characteristic, generic themes have been identified and they in turn were informed by using available statistical evidence and priorities highlighted in departmental service plans. The generic themes will be applicable to the protected characteristics, many of which fall into more than one of the themes.
- 2.5 The accompanying Action Plan (the delivery vehicle for the draft strategy is attached at Appendix II), sets out the actions we will take to meet our equality priorities both corporately and departmentally. Consultation on the draft action plan has taken place with equality leads in each department.
- 2.6 The activity in the action plan is much more closely linked to the council's performance framework. The aim is to set smart targets and, where no baseline information exists, improving data collection and analysis will itself become a target. The action plan will be reviewed annually and the targets refreshed as appropriate.
- 2.7 Note that reference to Census data in the strategy has been revised based on the information released in December 2012. However, more detailed ward statistics became available from the end of January and its analysis will be used to inform some of the activity in the action plan.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 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 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.
- 3.2 With effect from 12 April 2012 the Act requires the council to prepare and publish equality objectives and subsequently at least four-yearly. Failure to do so would mean the Council is not fulfilling its legal obligations and could be subject to legal action.

4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1 Extensive consultation was undertaken with a range of stakeholders which included attendance at partnership boards, meetings with user groups and a web based survey.
- 4.2 The Overview & Scrutiny Commission was consulted on the draft strategy and action plan on 28 November 2013. The documents went to Cabinet on 18 February 2013 and it was recommended that Council endorses and adopts the scheme and action plan.
- 4.3 Consultation feedback is outlined in appendix III.
- 4.4 During the consultation views were sought on the following:
 - the priorities we have identified

- what Merton can do as an employer to promote equality of opportunity in the workplace
- developing the action plan and;
- general views on the content of the strategy.

4.5 The draft strategy was well received and the themed approach was considered to be the right direction of travel.

4.6 Consistent comments emerged with concern expressed about:

- Unemployment – youth and long- term unemployment and in particular the difficulty faced by disabled residents (particularly those with a learning disability)
- The need to improve engagement and do more outreach work, especially with User groups
- Provide work experience that result in a job at the end
- The need for more diversity in senior management roles
- Improve publicity to young people by considering using schools and social media and text messages more effectively to promote information and available opportunities
- The increasing use of self service and reliance on the internet may discriminate against older people and disabled residents. Also not everyone can afford a computer
- Disabled residents are willing to work with officers to undertake audits of street furniture or give advice on proposed regeneration schemes
- Disabled residents are willing to work with officers to deliver training in the Social Model of Disability
- What is going to be different this time? The council has had an equality strategy for many years and some communities feel that inequality is still prevalent especially in the east of Merton.

4.5 The emerging issues have been discussed with departments and reflected in action plan.

5. TIMETABLE

Action	Date
Document to be presented to Council for adoption	27 March 2013
Launch and publicity for new objectives	April 2013

6. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Failure to implement equality legislation could result in the cost of discrimination claims being incurred.

6.2 The activity in the action plan is linked to departmental service plans and will be delivered within existing resources.

7. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 As a public authority the Council has a duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people of different backgrounds. The publication of an Equality Strategy setting out our equality objectives fulfils the Council's legal obligations relating to equalities legislation.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1 By developing and producing a new Equality Strategy, the Council is re-affirming 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.

9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

10. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There is a risk to the Council's reputation if it fails to produce and publish equalities objectives. Additionally there is a risk of claims of discrimination based on age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

11. APPENDICES – the following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report

- Appendix I: Draft Equality Strategy 2013-2017
- Appendix II: Draft Equality Strategy 2013-2017 Action Plan
- Appendix III: Comments and feedback from Consultation

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 Merton's Corporate Equality Scheme 2010-13

http://www.merton.gov.uk/council/plansandpolicies/corporate_equality_scheme_pdf.pdf

Equality Strategy
For
London Borough of Merton
2013-2017

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Draft Equality Strategy - Equality Objectives for 2013 - 17

1. Introduction

The Equality Strategy sets out the council's equality objectives in one document and outlines how we will embed equalities considerations into our day-to-day business.

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) came into force on 1 October 2010 and replaced previous anti-discrimination laws. The Act simplified the law making it easier to understand and comply with. It also strengthened the law to protect individuals from unfair treatment.

At the decision-making stage councils are required to assess how changes to policies and service delivery will affect different people. Therefore the Act requires that we provide accessible services to all our customers.

In 2011 the Act extended protection against discrimination to nine 'Protected Characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation. It also introduced a Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure that in exercising our functions and delivering services and partnership work we:

1. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation
2. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share a protected characteristic
3. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

Therefore, the Council has a key role to play to promote a fair and more equal society by putting equalities considerations central to the decisions we make about service delivery, contract arrangements and employment.

In producing this strategy we have taken a different approach from the previous Corporate Equality Scheme. The objectives that have been identified as priorities reflect the issues of concern in the borough.

The Equality Act underpins the strategy and the objectives apply to all the protected characteristics. Therefore, we will not tolerate discrimination and will endeavour consider all the protected characteristics in the delivery of our services.

We recognise that some people share more than one protected characteristic and as a result may face multiple disadvantage.

2. Merton the place

The Census 2011 shows that Merton has a population of 199,693, an increase of 13,093 compared to the 2001 Census (186,600). 49.3% of the population are male residents and 50.7% are female.

The proportion of younger and older residents has increased and the average age of residents is 36.3 years.

The borough's growing diversity is complex and interesting but brings challenges because of the variety of people from different backgrounds. Issues of social class are also apparent and it is evident that there is affluence amongst some of the new migrant communities. The east of the borough has more diverse communities, some of which are still experiencing discrimination and tensions.

The Census 2011 figures also show that 48.4% of the population were white British, compared to 64% in 2001. 35% of Merton's population is from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) group. Further analysis indicates a 10% decrease in the overall White population, 6% increase in the Asian, 3% increase in the Black population and 2% increase in Mixed groups.

A report by the Institute of Community Cohesion (ICOCO) found that the BAME population was unusually diverse with significant numbers of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Black Caribbean, Black African, Korean, Thai, Gypsy Roma Traveller and mixed heritage. There are also significant Polish, Irish, and South African populations in Merton. It is also notable that 110 languages are spoken in Merton schools. A large and diverse school population (55.8% of secondary and 60.1% of primary pupils are BAME) is moving into adulthood.¹

There is some spatial segregation of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities in Merton: 61.4% of the total Black or Black British population live in just five wards.²

Merton is home to people of many religious faiths and beliefs: 56.1% of Merton residents are Christians (a decrease of 7.5% since 2001), 8.1% are Muslim, 6.1% Hindu, 0.9% are Buddhists, 0.4% are Jewish, and 0.2% are Sikh. 20.6% of residents are not religious (4.1% increase since 2001). There have been increases in the Hindu, Muslim and No Religion populations.

In Merton 13.8% of residents have a disability or long-term health condition, of which 4.2% receive disability allowance or disability allowance and attendance allowance combined. 1.3% of men are registered as having a disability compared with 1.4% of women (2001 Census data).

According to the 2009 Index of Multiple Deprivation, nationally Merton is ranked 239 out of 354, where 1 is the most deprived. This overall lack of deprivation does, however, hide stark inequalities in the borough between the more deprived wards in the east of the borough (Mitcham) and the more affluent wards in the west (Wimbledon).

¹ iCoCo Report: "The Merton Story".

² iCoCo Report: "The Merton Story".

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Merton highlights health inequalities that are based on gender, ethnicity and where people live. Although life expectancy at birth in Merton is higher than the England average, there is a difference of about 9 years for men and about 11 years for women between the most and least deprived areas within the borough. Low birth weight and infant mortality is below the national average but is high for Caribbean and Pakistani residents (8.4 and 7.9 deaths per 1,000 live births respectively). This is double the rate of babies born in the White British group, which is 4.2 deaths per 1,000 live births (ONS, 2009). This is of particular significance in Merton, where some wards in the east of the borough have ethnic minority populations exceeding 30% of the ward population. In the commissioning of health services there is a need for greater focus on services for younger people and ethnic diversity.

There are significant differences in skill levels between residents in the Wimbledon area and higher numbers of people in the east of the borough are in receipt of benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance.

The 2011 Annual Residents Survey results show that a minority of respondents (39%) feel that the council tackles racism (a 3% decrease on the 2010 results) and BAME groups are more likely to disagree with the statement than white respondents. This indicates that as a council we need to continue to ensure that we promote the positive things that we are doing to reduce inequality and raise public perception.

3. About the council

Merton is committed to delivering quality services, however due to the financial challenges we face we recognise that the way we currently provide services will have to change.

The economic climate and welfare reform is having an impact on service provision. With reduced resources now more than ever there is a need for more targeted services. We will deliver services that customers need and involve our customers in service specification and design.

Public health will become the responsibility of Merton Council in 2013 and a new Director of Public Health for Merton has been appointed. This is an opportunity to strengthen how Council services impact on the determinants of health and there is also scope for increasing community capacity to support health and wellbeing through prevention and self care initiatives.

Merton has an award-winning Compact³ and over the years we have developed effective partnership working and increasingly use this approach to deliver services.

We recognise that this strategy is a Council document but the delivery of many of the actions to improve outcomes for local people rely on partnership working and we will continue to work closely with our partners to achieve this.

4. What do we want to achieve?

The aim of the Equality Strategy 2013-17 is to address keys issues such as:

³ The Merton Compact is a partnership agreement between local public bodies 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.

- bridging the gap between the levels of deprivation and prosperity in the borough particularly focusing on:
 - raising educational attainment for all children and young people and reduce attainment gaps for target groups including children with special education needs or disabilities, those who are looked after in care, specific BAME groups, specific groups of White boys and those who are excluded from school
 - tackling rising unemployment particularly among young BAME communities and disabled residents and supporting those who are long term unemployed back into work
 - reducing health inequalities particularly the issues affecting some BAME communities, disabled and older residents
 - increasing education and economic opportunity in the east of the borough
- improving understanding of the borough's diversity and foster better understanding between communities.
- supporting those who do not usually get involved in decision-making to better understand how they can get involved and get their voices heard
- providing services that meet the needs of a changing population
- employing staff that reflect the borough's diversity

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5. Our achievements

Over the past three years progress has been made towards embedding equality practice throughout the Council. Outlined below are some of our successes:

- Community mapping work that has produced comprehensive data on the local community and identified areas of concern and suggestions for focusing resources. This data is a resource to assist officers in developing evidence for their equality analysis
- Partnership working has produced positive equalities outcomes. An example of this is the Heath Diversity Officer and Bi-Lingual Advocates Project funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The council and Merton Healthcare Practice Based Commissioning Group secured funding from the DCLG to deter newly settled communities from attending A&E with minor injuries and instead encourage them to register with local GPs. The projects have improved equalities data, provided equalities best practice guidance to GP staff and provided outreach to the Tamil and Polish communities in the borough.
- Our employment commitments are particularly encouraging and we have made good progress employing young people and have exceeded our target for the percentage of women in leadership roles.
- Pupil attainment at Key Stage 4 (GCSE) is now in line with the national average, and progress measures for target groups (economic disadvantage, Special Educational Needs without statement, White British, Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black groups) are positive. There is also good attainment and progress at Key Stage 2 (end of Primary) across all groups.
- A further achievement is Merton Adult Education has exceeded its target for the take up of English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) classes and the provision of a wide range of courses to support new migrants to settle in the borough.
- The take up of 'short breaks' by disabled children and young people continues to be on target, and the service works to ensure sufficient provision for those with moderate to severe needs. The refurbishment of Brightwell Respite Care Home is complete and has improved 'short break' facilities for those with higher level needs.
- Increased take up of children's centre services by families from the 30% most deprived areas, with 68% of targeted families taking up the service (2011/12).
- A peer translation project is running in 2 schools; resources are in place to roll this out to other schools. A pool of bi-lingual support assistants continues to be maintained to provide support to children in schools and to provide interpreter support to parents on school related issues.
- Implemented a Deaf Arts Group and specialist groups for visually impaired children operational at the adventure playground via the Short Breaks commissioned service
- Engagement mapping undertaken to identify gaps and develop a plan to encourage representation that reflects the borough's diverse communities.
- Living street audits have been undertaken to improve accessibility in town centres.

- Capacity developed in the voluntary and community sector to lead community cohesion events, e.g. Lesbian Gay Bi-Sexual and Transgender History Month and Holocaust Memorial Day
- The Muslimah Project successfully increased the number of Asian young girls participating in youth services
- Youth service provision for the Pollards Hill area has expanded to provide football coaching in order to meet the needs of all young people in the area
- The Anti-Bullying Strategy is in place, and in the Young Resident Survey 2011 there was a significant decrease in the number of young people reporting bullying as a concern. Merton is part of Stonewall's Education Champion programme - we are recognised by Stonewall for our support to schools to implement good anti-homophobic bullying practice. For our first submission we were ranked 24th out of 42 local authorities. This is reassessed annually.
- The Lesbian Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Forum is working well and increasingly the forum is making a positive to the wider community.

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6. Equality Objectives

Not everyone receives the same start in life and this can significantly shape their opportunities in life. As a council we recognise that understanding this difference is key to addressing some of the complex issues that create barriers and exclusion for some of our residents. Therefore we are committed to working toward:

- Everyone having an opportunity to fulfil their potential
- Individuals having choice and control to improve life chances and outcome⁴
- Everyone having ways to tackle the barriers that lead to inequality

It is evident⁵ that some families experience inter-generational disadvantage that results in individuals experiencing inequality throughout their lives. Some disadvantaged people often lack basic information and skills. The challenges of disadvantage is felt by a range of people including teenage pregnancy, those who experience difficulty in the transition from being a young people to adulthood, gypsies and travelers, the long-term unemployed, disabled people and young adults leaving care.

The council's equality objectives have been developed to improve the life chances of our residents and create a more level starting point for all.

The equality objectives (our priorities) have been developed from work in the departments. The use of Equality Analysis to assess how changes to our policies and service provision affect different groups of people has identified gaps and particular issues to focus on.

Additionally, we have used the findings of commissioned work, such as the Community Mapping report produced by the Institute of Community Cohesion, analysis of statistical data and survey results to inform our work.

The equality objectives are grouped into five themes, which are: tackling inequality, service access, improving engagement, promoting community cohesion and workforce development.

6.1 Tackling Inequality

Merton remains committed to addressing the economic inequality that exists between the east and west of the borough. The number of young unemployed people who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) has risen over the past few years. Reducing youth unemployment by supporting young people into employment is vital if the borough is to avoid young unemployed people becoming disengaged from the labour market in the long term. A disproportionate number of people who are NEET are disabled and/or black and minority ethnic residents.

⁴ Dimensions of equality as defined by the Equality Review published in 2007: longevity, health, physical security, education, standard of living, productive and valued activities, individual and family life, participation, influence and voice, identity, expression, and self-respect, legal security.

⁵ Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), (2010) How fair is Britain? equality, human rights and good relations in 2010: the first triennial review.
Marmot (2010). The Marmot Review: Fair Society, Healthy Lives. Strategic review of health inequalities in England post-2010

We want equal access to services for all our residents and equal service outcomes for all. We know that inequality of access currently exists and will work with local communities to improve knowledge of the services that exist and the routes to access them.

The borough has a number of anti-poverty initiatives aimed at tackling multiple deprivation and supporting families to access services and improve their skills to contribute to improved life chances. We will undertake targeted work to focus on improving service outcomes for under performing groups and support some of these groups into employment.

Even prior to the recession Merton had issues with long-term unemployment. Many people who have been unemployed for significant periods of time have significant barriers to overcome and require intensive support. We are therefore committed to working in partnership with other organisations to develop effective pathways into employment.

What do we want to achieve?

- Schools attainment – improving attainment levels for all and narrowing the gap in achievements for some groups
- Improving outcomes – targeting services to improve the outcomes for those most in need.
- Anti-poverty initiatives – to reduce deprivation and inter-generational disadvantage
- Health inequality – reducing health inequality and the issues affecting particular communities
- Economic development – supporting business during the economic recession and encourage economic growth
- Access to employment – developing the Employment and Skills plan to develop pathways to employment for local people

6.2 Service Access

We aim to not only improve service access to those currently under represented. We are committed to taking a needs based approach to service provision and will use available evidence to inform service development. We recognise that there are gaps in evidence and we need to improve data collection and analysis. As we review services we will embed equalities commitments to ensure that we deliver services that meet identified needs.

There are some areas of the council's functions where we aim to reduce the disproportionate number of people coming into contact with a service. Preventative work is key and we will work with the more vulnerable members of our community to support them to improve their access and in some cases reduce them coming into contact with the service, i.e. a reduction in the number of BAME children in the Looked After Children statistics.

The more control we have regarding our own lives, the more independent, self sufficient and satisfied we will be. When major changes in life are faced it is important to support people at the earliest stage to maintain their freedom and independence.

Service development or reduction will be assessed using equality analysis to support our members to have all the available facts required to make difficult decision.

Each year, the Council enters into contracts worth millions of pounds buying goods, services, and works on behalf of the people of Merton. The Council's commissioning and procurement function is subject to the statutory duties of the Equality Act 2010 to make sure public money is spent in a way that advances equality of opportunity, promote good community relations and eliminate unlawful discrimination as well as ensuring services, goods and works are value for money.

We will ensure where appropriate that equality obligations are part of the terms of a contract and that they are brought to the attention of suppliers of goods, services or works on our behalf. Contractors will be expected to monitor the impact on service users and staff.

What do we want to achieve?

- Undertaking Equality Analysis (EA) and targeting the gaps identified
- Ensuring that savings proposals all have thorough EAs
- Prevention and independence (Direct payments)
- Building equality considerations into Public Value Reviews
- Building equality considerations into the Commissioning process – ethical issues in contracts, e.g. encouraging contractors to employ more disabled people

6.3 Improving engagement

The council has a Community Engagement Strategy that informs much of the work that we do in this area and over the past three years much progress has been made to improving engagement. However we want to do more to get a wider range of our residents involved in the decision making process and contributing to policy development and service delivery.

We have undertaken engagement mapping and identified some gaps. Through this policy we aim to give every one an opportunity to get their voice heard. We will develop new engagement models and work with our residents and encourage and support those groups who have not always been represented, to get involved in decision-making.

One challenge that we face is how we ensure people feel their voices are being listened to. We aim to demonstrate that the views expressed by our residents actually make a difference and influence what we do.

What do we want to achieve?

We are particularly keen to improve engagement in the following areas:

- Young people – building on existing groups and processes that enable young people to take part in the local authority governance of services, to ensure that the needs of all young people are represented.
- Disabled people – encouraging more disabled people to get involved
- Carers/Links and other groups, Older People – improving the mechanisms to reach these groups
- BAME engagement e.g. BAME Governors

- Voluntary and Community Sector support for engagement
- Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender community – promote the LGBT forum

6.4 Promoting Community Cohesion

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 community leaders are not prominent lacking or when communities exist across borough boundaries.

Improving cross-community relations will help to reduce this discrimination and lead to a more cohesive borough. We recognise the need to improve understanding and promote cultural competency and faith literacy in the council and other public agencies, ensuring that they can engage effectively with Merton's diverse communities and provide services that meet the changing population needs.

The 2011 Residents Survey showed that 87% of respondents feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together, and this is the case for both White and Asian respondents. However, only 76% of Black respondents agree with this statement. We therefore have work to do to improve experiences of some of our Black residents.

We are proud of the diversity in the borough and the rich cultural mix and will work with communities to celebrate that diversity and foster better understanding between communities.

What do we want to achieve?

- Celebrate diversity
- Partnership work with each other in the community
- Delivery of Community Cohesion Strategy action plan
- Using the Annual Residents Survey results to inform service delivery and improving perceptions
- Address demographic change
- Equal access to volunteering opportunities

6.5 Workforce Development

As the largest employer in the borough, the council is committed to recruiting and retaining staff that reflect the diversity in the borough. We recognise the need to reduce barriers to work, tackle long-term unemployment, reduce the number of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and offer more apprenticeships to young people.

As an employer we want to support staff to progress in their careers and will continue to support them to understand the diverse population that they serve and to give them the skills to provide a high quality and efficient service.

We value our staff and want to develop a culture where staff feel valued and safe to raise sensitive issues such as their mental health, without fear of being victimised.

We recognise that some managers may need support to give them the skills to confidently hold difficult discussions with staff.

What to do we want to achieve?

- Be an employer that recognises diversity and the talents that being different brings to the organisation and service delivery
- Learning and Development - Developing staff from under-representative groups for senior managers
- Pathways into employment for disabled residents i.e. work experience/mentoring
- Apprenticeships for young people (Looked After Children, mental health, offenders)
- Raise awareness of mental health
- Valuing staff diversity / staff appreciation of diversity in the community

7. Making it happen

Leadership – responsibility and accountability

Merton's elected members have overall responsibility for the Council's Equality Strategy. The Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Equalities and Engagement has the executive responsibility for promoting equality and diversity across the partnership and all council services, including those delivered on its behalf by businesses, voluntary, community and faith organisations.

Our Corporate Management Team and project management boards will have responsibility for the strategic implementation of the strategy. This includes making sure that equalities is central to all work done by the council, communicating and promoting the strategy to others inside and outside the council, setting out what we aim to achieve in terms of equality and diversity, and holding departments to account through performance reviews.

All managers must be familiar with the strategy and be responsible for ensuring equality and diversity is an integral part of any policy development, service design and delivery, employment practices; and procuring and commissioning of goods and services.

All staff including those we work in partnership with, and who are contracted or commissioned to work on our behalf, have a responsibility to promote equality, eliminate discrimination in their day-to-day work, and recognise and respect the different backgrounds and circumstances of people.

Monitoring the strategy

The strategy will be monitored through the governance structure outlined below:

Corporate Equality Steering Group is comprised of the CMT equalities champion (the Director of Children Schools and Families) and departmental representatives. The group will take the lead in monitoring the delivery of the strategy's commitments and where necessary highlight issues of concern and make recommendations to CMT for further improvements.

Departmental Equality Steering Groups - each department has a steering group comprised of representatives from across the department. They will be responsible for local delivery of the corporate objectives and will review and revise the priorities based on assessment of service need

Reports to Departmental Management Teams - departmental teams will be responsible for the delivery of the strategy through service, teams and personal development plans.

Corporate Management Team - will receive progress reports twice a year.

Overview and Scrutiny Commission - will receive annual updates on our progress towards achieving the priorities identified in the strategy.

8. Performance Management

We will develop a range of robust equality and diversity related performance indicators that we will use to help us monitor our performance. This will help us identify if there are any areas of our performance that are notably different when looking at particular groups (for example, overall satisfaction related to ethnicity or disability).

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Equality and Diversity Policy Statement

Policy statement

Merton Council is committed to promoting equal opportunity and valuing diversity in the community, as an employer and as a provider of services to the people of the borough and its visitors.

The London Borough of Merton is committed to carrying out our legal responsibilities including:

- promoting equal opportunities, social inclusion and human rights;
- eliminating unlawful discrimination and disadvantage;
- eliminating harassment and victimisation;
- promoting a positive attitude towards people of different backgrounds, disabled people and others;
- encouraging participation by people of all backgrounds in public life;
- valuing diversity and promoting good relations between individuals, communities and employees of all backgrounds; and
- taking the necessary steps towards meeting the needs of disabled people and others.

Our aims and values

As a **Community Leader** we are committed to creating a socially inclusive and cohesive community by:

- working with others to ensure that Merton is a safe place in which to live, work, study or visit;
- promoting equal opportunity and equal access to employment, services, information and facilities;
- listening and responding to the views of our communities through appropriate and widespread consultation and participation mechanisms which are accessible to all;
- encouraging and supporting people to be active in social, cultural and political life;
- ensuring the information we produce and the events we hold positively reflect and promote the diversity of our communities; and
- ensuring organisations and businesses that provide goods and service on behalf of Council have appropriate equality procedures in place.

As a **Service Provider** we are committed to ensuring that our services are responsive and accessible to all by:

- providing fair and appropriate services that meet the wide range of needs of everyone in the community;
- making it easy for, and encouraging people to use our services, including people who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or harder to reach;
- ensuring our buildings and open spaces are accessible to everyone, making reasonable adjustments where appropriate;
- consulting and involving all sections of our community in the design, development and monitoring of our policies and services;

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- monitoring take-up and evaluating services to ensure they do not discriminate or exclude individuals or groups;
- making sure our policies and procedures for giving grants, and for commissioning and buying in goods and services follow this policy; and
- making sure that we always consider equality and diversity when planning and delivering services.

As an **Employer** we value the diversity of our workforce and are committed to ensuring fair practice in employment by:

- making sure our workforce is representative of the local community;
- ensuring recruitment and selection processes are non-discriminatory and encouraging applications from all groups in the community;
- providing a safe and accessible working environment that values and respects the identity and culture of each person;
- creating a culture and working environment free from discrimination, harassment and bullying;
- ensuring that all staff has access to learning and development opportunities so that their contribution and potential are maximised;
- supporting disabled staff to carry out their work and making reasonable adjustments where appropriate to do so;
- applying fair and equitable processes to pay and reward schemes, ensuring equal pay for equal work;
- providing support and training on equality and diversity to all our employees and Councillors; and
- monitoring the diversity of the workforce with regard to, age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, sex, religion and belief, sexual orientation, and salary.

Action Plan

Glossary

BAME

Term currently used to describe a range of minority ethnic communities and groups in the UK – can be used to mean Black and Asian and Mixed racial minority communities and can be used to include all minority groups, including white minority communities such as Gypsies and Travellers

Compact

The Compact is the agreement between the government and the voluntary and community sector, which sets out key principles and establishes a way of working that improves their relationship for mutual advantage. Merton has a local version of the compact which is a partnership agreement between local public bodies 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.

Deprivation

Deprivation is not just about poverty but also the social and economic problems caused by a general lack of resources and opportunities

Disability

Disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term effect on an individual's ability to undertake normal day-to-day activities

Discrimination

Treating an individual or group differently and/or less favourably than others under comparable circumstance. It may be based on a person's race, ethnic origin, disability, age, religion or belief, or their sexual orientation.

Diversity

Is about all the ways in which people differ and about recognising that differences are a natural part of society. Diversity is about treating people, as individuals and making them feel respected and valued.

Duties

These are things the law says a public body must do.

Equality

This means everyone having the same chances to do what they can. Some people may need extra help to get the same chances.

Equality Act 2010 or the Act

This is the Government's new law to make sure all people are treated fairly.

Equality Analysis (Equality Impact Assessment)

Is a tool used to identify the potential impact of a new or revised policy, service or function on different stakeholder groups. This exercise also helps the council to ensure it fulfils the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Equality Duty

This is a law for public bodies telling them they must think about how they can make sure their work supports equality. For example, in their services, through their jobs, and through the money they spend. Public bodies already needed to think about

treating people of different races, disabled people, and men and women fairly and equally.

Gender reassignment

The process of changing or transitioning from one gender to another

Harassment

This is unwanted behaviour, which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, gender, disability, age, religion or belief or sexual orientation.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual

Lesbians are women who are attracted to other women. Gay men are attracted to other men. Bisexual people are attracted to women and to men.

Marriage and civil partnership

Marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a woman'. Same-sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must be treated no less favourably than married couples.

Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

NEET is a government acronym for young people aged 16- 24 currently "not in education, employment, or training".

Pregnancy and maternity

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Protected characteristics

These are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful. The characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Victimisation

Treating an individual less favourably than another because they have brought or supported a complaint of discrimination.

Vulnerability

A combined range of factors could make people more vulnerable or place them in situations that lead to greater vulnerability. For example some people are vulnerable due to a particular condition such as mental or physical illness as well find themselves placed in vulnerable situations such as living in a poor area with a lack of access to jobs, healthcare or housing. It is a combination of social and economic factors that place them at a disadvantage.

Appendix II Draft Equality Strategy Action Plan

Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
Equality Objective 1- Tackling inequality			
1.1 Schools attainment - improving attainment levels for all and narrowing the gap in achievements for some groups			
1.1.1 Deliver support to schools to narrow gaps in progress and achievement.	Deliver training, and provide support, including pupil tracking, to improve the progress and outcomes of all pupils, including those from target groups: those from Black and minority ethnic groups, those eligible for free school meals, non statemented pupils with Special Educational Needs, and Looked After Children.	--Key stage progress measures for target groups. -Key stage outcomes for target groups.	Children Schools and Families - Merton School Improvement
1.2 Improving outcomes - targeting services to improve the outcomes for those most in need.			
1.2.1 Continue to develop a spectrum of short break provision for children and young people with SEND/challenging behaviour.	Continue to commission and contract manage service providers ensuring that provision has the capacity to meet the range of needs of Merton's disabled children and young people, from moderate to severe. Ageing Well Projects	Take up of short breaks.	Children Schools and Families Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service.
1.2.2		Project outcome measures	Community and Housing - Commissioning

Appendix II Draft Equality Strategy Action Plan

Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
1.2.3	Ensuring Services for adults in most need are effectively delivered in a culturally appropriate way	Annual sample of customer support plans and annual review of customer complaints and complements	Community and Housing – Access and Assessment
1.2.4	Monitoring and responding to learner achievements and outcomes at MAE	Learner Surveys and analysing achievements via exam results	Community and Housing – Merton Adult Education
1.2.5	Managing the delivery of drugs services and ensuring high quality interventions	As defined by the planning grids and performance targets set for the project	Environment and Regeneration - Safer Merton
1.2.6	Ensuring equal access and services for those experiencing domestic abuse	As defined in the DV action plan for the SM partnership	Environment and Regeneration - Safer Merton
Increase the independence and mobility of disabled people by improving accessibility in the public realm in Merton	Progress issues identified by the Corporate Public Transport Liaison Group meetings Ensure that all new development complies with mobility requirements in respect of Planning and Building Control	TBC	Environment and Regeneration - TBC
1.3 Anti-poverty initiatives			

Appendix II Draft Equality Strategy Action Plan

Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
<p>1.3.1 Increase take up of children's centre services by families (with 0-4 year olds) from 30% most deprived areas.</p>	<p>-Improve completion of parenting programmes, and take-up of children's centre services and early years provision, by the most needy families through targeted outreach.</p> <p>-Continue to roll out strategy for funded childcare places for identified 2 year olds</p>	<p>-Increase take up of children's centre services by target families.</p> <p>-Increase the proportion of parents completing parenting programmes.</p> <p>-Ensure good take up of 2 year old places.</p>	<p>Children Schools and Families - Early Years and Children's Centres Service.</p>
<p>1.4 Health inequality - reducing health inequality and the issues affecting particular communities</p>			



Appendix II Draft Equality Strategy Action Plan

Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
<p>1.4.1 Deliver an integrated approach to improving health and wellbeing, targeting areas and communities with the greatest health inequalities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Achieve the target number of people receiving an NHS Health Check -Increase the number of health improvement outcomes via the LiveWell service -Continue delivery of the East Merton Health and Wellbeing Community Fund -Reduce smoking among target groups including routine and manual workers and unemployed people Reduce late diagnosis of HIV by improving awareness and access to HIV testing in high prevalence areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % take up of Health checks -Number of reported health outcomes Number of health outcomes Increase in number of 4 week quits Reduction in number of people diagnosed late for HIV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community & Housing -Public Health Community & Housing -Public Health Public Health/Merton Voluntary Services Council Community & Housing -Public Health Community & Housing -Public Health
<p>1.5 Economic development – supporting business during the economic recession and encourage economic growth</p> <p>1.5.1</p>	<p>Implement the Economic Development Strategy</p>	<p>As defined by the action plan referenced in the Economic Development Strategy</p>	<p>Environment and Regeneration – Future Merton</p>
<p>1.6 Access to employment - developing the Employment and Skills plan</p>			

Appendix II Draft Equality Strategy Action Plan

Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
1.6.1	Implement the Employment Skills Plan	As defined by the action plan referenced in the Employment Skills Plan	Environment and Regeneration – Future Merton
Equality Objective 2 Service Access			
2.1 Undertaking Equality Analysis (EA) and targeting the gaps identified			
2.1.1 Increase the number and range of in house local foster carers, as identified by the LAC sufficiency assessment (2012-15).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increase capacity and local placement choice to meet the needs of older children and teenagers. -Target recruitment of carers from an Asian background. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Recruit 3 x carer households per year -Recruit at least 1 x Asian carer household per year. 	Children Schools and Families - Access to Resources Team.
2.1.2	All Heads of Service in will ensure that EAs lead to equality of service delivery	All reviews to be held at DMT each October prior to the new savings code commencement	All departments - Heads of Service across
2.2 Business Planning			
2.2.1	Savings all have Equality Analysis	100%	Corporate Services – Business Planning
2.3 Prevention and independence (Direct payments)			

Appendix II Draft Equality Strategy Action Plan

Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
2.3.1	All Adult Social Care customers will have a personalised budget and plan	Data collected as a department performance target	Community and Housing – Access and Assessment
2.4 Building equality considerations into Public Value Reviews (PVRs)			
2.4.1	PVRs all have Equality Analysis	100%	Corporate Services – Business Improvement
2.5 Building equality considerations into the Commissioning process			
2.5.1	The evaluation process includes an assessment of equalities	100%	Corporate Services - Commercial Services
2.5.2	Hold workshops with Small/Medium Enterprises and BAME organisations to advise on the borough's commissioning process	1 annual event	Corporate Services - Commercial Services
2.5.3	Improved equality measures within ASC and Housing tender and provider specifications	Equality report following all tenders to the Department Equalities Group	Community and Housing - Commissioning
2.5.4	To monitor the outcomes of all housing nominations panels	Quarterly report to Department Equalities Group	Community and Housing – Housing Needs
Equality Objective 3 – Improving engagement			
Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
3.1	Young people – to ensure that the needs of all young people are represented.		

Appendix II Draft Equality Strategy Action Plan

Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
3.1.1 Continue to support and develop participation/governance opportunities for young people age 13-19.	<p>-Continue to support Merton's Youth Parliament and Young Advisors to input into the planning and governance of services for children and young people.</p> <p>- Support delivery and development of the Your Shout Group and its contribution to the work of the Transition Partnership Board (TPB).</p> <p>-Establish clear and age appropriate material and accessible media to promote membership and attendance of Merton's Children in Care Council.</p>	<p>No of young advisors trained and active.</p> <p>No of members of Merton Youth Parliament.</p> <p>-Your Shout to be represented at all Transition Partnership meetings.</p> <p>-Improved levels of participation in Merton's Children in Care Council.</p>	Children Schools and Families Youth Inclusion
3.2 Disabled people			
3.2.1	To ensure library staff have deaf awareness training	Annual Training report to Department Equalities Group	Community and Housing Library and Heritage Services
3.2.2	To maximise the development of wheelchair, accessible and Life Time Homes	Annual Review of developments	Community and Housing – Housing Needs

Appendix II Draft Equality Strategy Action Plan

Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
3.2.3	To continue to operate and attend the Learning Disability Partnership Board, Your Shout and Speak Up groups	Minutes re attendance	Community and Housing - Access and Assessment Heads of Service
3.2.4	To conduct the annual Carers Survey and act on outcomes To maintain	Published results	Community and Housing - Commissioning
3.2.5	Conduct a survey of disabled clients' use of transport services, analyse the results to produce an action plan	Annual survey	Environment and Regeneration – Transport Services
3.3 Carers/Links and other groups, Older People			
3.3.1	To ensure that Healthwatch which starts in April 2013 reflects the diverse population of Merton	Contract award and specification 2012-13.	Community and Housing – Public Health
3.3.2	To review adult social care engagement with older people as Health and Wellbeing Board comes into effect	Review done by end of 2013.	Community and Housing – Public Health
3.4 BAME engagement e.g. BAME Governors			
3.4.1	Work in partnership with MUN to ensure BAME engagement embedded in service improvement	BAME Plan link in thematic partnership plans	All Departments – Heads of Service
3.5 Voluntary and Community Sector support for engagement			
3.5.1	To ensure that Merton Adult Education open days and events are effectively promoted to all members of the diverse learning community	Quarterly report to Departmental Equalities Group	Community and Housing – Merton Adult Education

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Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
3.5.2	To ensure that all posters and information briefings used in MAE celebrate and respect the diverse population	As above	Community and Housing – Merton Adult Education
3.5.6	Improve engagement with the community and the work delivering crime and disorder interventions. Setting up new partnership engagement methods	Number of meetings number of attendees	Environment and Regeneration – Safer Merton
3.6 Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender community			
3.6.1	Increase the civic participation of the LGBT community Regular consultation and involving the LGBT forum in discussions about strategies and changes to council policy.	Quarterly meetings to be attended by officers cross the council to consult service issues	All departments – Heads of Service
3.6.2	To consult with the LGBT Community regarding their library needs by regularly attending the LGBT Forum	Minutes of LGBT Forums	Community and Housing – Libraries and Heritage Services
Equality Objective 4 – Promoting Community Cohesion			
Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
4.1 Celebrating diversity			
4.1.1	To formally celebrate significant events such as Black History Month in MAE and Libraries	Report re initiative to Departmental Equalities Group	Community and Housing –Libraries and Heritage Services
4.1.2	To ensure that all local demographic changes are fed into the service plans, user surveys and customer charters to improve service delivery		All Departments – Heads of Service
4.2 Maximising the opportunity to work in partnership with each other in the community			

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Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
4.2.1 Continue work to prevent First Time Entrants (FTE) to the Youth Justice system.	Implement diversionary programmes and out of court disposals.	-Reduction in FTE to the Youth Justice system. -No of out of court disposals.	Children Schools and Families - Youth Justice Service
4.3 Community Cohesion Strategy			
4.3.1	Monitor the delivery of Community Cohesion Strategy action plan	Achieve annual targets	Corporate Services Policy, Strategy and Partnerships
Using the Annual Residents Survey (ARS) results to inform service delivery and improving perceptions			
4.4.1	Analyse ARS results to inform publicity campaign	Report produced and made available on the intranet	Corporate Services Communications
4.5 Addressing demographic change			
4.5.1	Ensure Census 2011 information is made available locally	Briefings provided internally and to partners.	Corporate Services Communications
4.6 Equal access to volunteering opportunities			
4.6.1	Promote volunteering opportunities using a variety of media	Quarterly	All Departments - Heads of Service
4.6.2	To ensure that all volunteering schemes demonstrate valuing diversity	Data collection re diversity of volunteers	Community and Housing Library and Heritage Service Heads Of Service
Equality Objective 5 – Workforce Development			
Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
5.1 Be an employer that recognises diversity and the talents that being different brings to the organisation and service delivery			

Appendix II Draft Equality Strategy Action Plan

Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
5.1.1	Implement and utilise the self service element of Learning and Development module	Mini survey issued to the workforce to gather feedback on how the organisation utilises the skills they possess Relationship to results from Staff Survey on Question 65 (It's your ability that counts)	Corporate Services - Human Resources
5.2 Learning and Development - developing staff from under-representative groups into senior management roles			
5.2.1	To ensure recruitment strategy has strong focus on delivering staff profile more reflective of the communities we serve at all levels.	Short and long lists that are representative of all the equality strands where possible	Corporate Services - Human Resources
5.2.2	To deliver the departmental mentorship programme for BME staff	Outcome report of trial programme to DEG	Community and Housing - Commissioning
5.2.3	To deliver equalities training to all staff	Annual Training Report	All Heads of Service

Appendix II Draft Equality Strategy Action Plan

Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
5.2.4	To support employees known to have disabilities via a formal annual review of reasonable adjustments and support	Report to DMT and Departmental Equalities Group	Community and Housing - Access and Assessments
5.3 Pathways into employment for disabled residents i.e. work experience/ mentoring			
5.3.1	Work with partners and disabled residents to raise awareness of employment pathways across all directorates	Taster sessions to be run in February 2013. Success of taster sessions evaluated and action plan developed and in place	Corporate Services - Human Resources Chair of Disability Employees Forum, All Heads of Service
5.4 Apprenticeships for young people (e.g. looked after children, those with mental illness, young offenders)			

Appendix II Draft Equality Strategy Action Plan

Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
5.4.1	Increase the number of young people in apprenticeships with sustainable jobs	<p>Work with both internal and external partners to ensure recruitment processes are effective and efficient</p> <p>Incorporate evaluation from apprentices, partners and appointing managers to develop an action plan to support the sustainability of the programme.</p>	Corporate Services - Human Resources
5.5 Raising awareness of mental illness			

Appendix II Draft Equality Strategy Action Plan

Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
5.5.1	Raise awareness of mental health issues to ensure all employees and managers have an understanding of the impact in the workplace	<p>Bite-size sessions established to raise awareness for managers and employees</p> <p>The feedback from managers and employees incorporated into a programme that meets the needs of the organisation.</p> <p>Evaluation to take place up to and including Level 3</p>	<p>Corporate Services - Human Resources</p> <p>Chair of Disability Employees Forum</p>
5.5.2	To provide awareness training across the Council	Uptake Report to Adult Social Service Managers meeting	Community and Housing – Mental Health Team
5.6 Valuing staff diversity / staff appreciation of diversity in the community			
5.6.1 Improve capacity of managers to operate effectively as leaders of a diverse workforce, delivering services to a diverse customer base.	Deliver values driven leadership programme to managers.	Completion of programme.	Children, Schools and Families - Commissioning, Strategy and Performance.

Appendix II Draft Equality Strategy Action Plan

Priority Area	Key activity	Performance Measure	Department/Division
5.6.2	Develop a programme to give all staff diversity training.	Evaluate the impact of the diversity training	Environment and Regeneration - Merton Transport Services

Appendix III

Draft Equality Strategy Summary of comments received during consultation

Source	Comment	Response
Corporate Management Team	The report was well received. It was suggested that the order of the themes be changed.	Order changed as suggested.
Citizenship and Inclusion Board	The narrative needs to say more about disability and the barriers that disabled people face. Adult disability needs to be given some priority in terms of employment and health. Disabled people are more likely to be unemployed or have poorer health. Consideration needs to be given to how to get older people involved – more work needs to be done. The increase in using the internet to access services excludes older people who do not have access to computers. Also some people on low incomes can not afford computers. Carers are being affected by poverty	The narrative has been amended to include more information. Comments noted. Comments noted. Comments noted. Comments noted.
Corporate Services Equality Steering Group	Consider adding 'Improving Information/Corporate Capacity' as an additional objective.	The strategy currently has themes that are enablers but improving information is internally focused and does not need to be separate. Actions based on improving information have been added to the existing objective.
Go Forum	Officers from Environment and Regeneration need to meet members of the Go forum to discuss service needs. Forum members are willing to assist officers to conduct audits, e.g. of street furniture and review highways issues. Disabled people have higher unemployment rates some priority should be given to supporting them into work	To be included as an action in the action plan To be included in the Employment Skills Plan

Source	Comment	Response
	Disability employment training and not awareness is required. The forum is willing to work with the council to provide the training.	Comments noted
	Access to buildings, streets is still a problem. Advertising material on pavements act as barriers. The council should consult and seek the advice an input of disabled residents when proposing regeneration.	Representatives of the Go Forum are to be contacted for future consultation.
	NEET disabled young people need support to get jobs.	Comments noted
	The narrative on disability is not strong enough. It needs to discuss multiple forms of discrimination, e.g. the BAME and Disability. Needs disability statistics.	Comments noted and amendments made to narrative.
	Disabled people are more likely to suffer from deprivation. In the current economic climate disabled people are increasingly living below the poverty line.	Comments noted.
	Improve engagement – the web is a barrier for some groups of people for getting information. How do we ensure that those who need serves more get it?	Comments noted.
	There is evidence of people moving into poverty and this may become more polarised over the next four years. The effects of the cuts need to be monitored to see how they affect residents.	Comments noted.
	For young people the quality of provision needs to be inclusive. How inclusive are play clubs ?	Comments noted.
Centre for Independent Living	Social Model of Disability – Disabled people are the experts – engagement with disabled residents to change the attitudes of officers needs to be stronger.	Comments noted.
	Environmental/attitudinal barriers still exist – as the use of online self-service increases; some disabled people could become d prisoners in their homes.	Comments noted.
	A designated Access Officer is required.	The Council does not have the resources to do this.
	Access is wider than physical access. Disabled people are part of the community and wider engagement and participation of disabled people is required.	Comments noted.

Source	Comment	Response
	<p>Support in employment is key and needs to be linked to the Economic Development Strategy.</p> <p>Libraries need alternative provision</p> <p>In the introduction of the strategy more needs to be said about the cross over of the Protected Characteristics, people fall into more than one box.</p> <p>Add more narrative about disabled people and be specific about the groups we are talking about.</p> <p>Is there money to deliver the strategy?</p> <p>Could meeting be set up with different groups coming together to talk about issues affecting people of different backgrounds. The meeting would be in addition to any existing forum.</p> <p>Access is fundamental and should be accepted as a given.</p> <p>Proposed cuts will disproportionately affect those in the East of the borough. How do we measure the impact of changes, e.g. the impact on disability, increased poverty or the numbers going into the criminal justice system?</p> <p>Is there real commitment for the voluntary and community sector to have the capacity to monitor and question the Council?</p> <p>Make the distinction between the voluntary sector and user led organisations such as Merton Platform, CIL and the Go Forum.</p> <p>Concern was expressed that there is insufficient support to empower disabled people.</p> <p>A example of empowerment could be the Council assisting CIL by paying for Criminal Records Bureau checks</p> <p>Could the council assist CIL to visit disabled people in their homes and seek their views on the quality of service? This a more effective way of monitoring outcomes</p> <p>The strategy was well received.</p>	<p>Amendments made.</p> <p>Comments noted.</p> <p>The strategy will be delivered with in existing resources</p> <p>Comments noted.</p> <p>Comments noted.</p> <p>Comments noted.</p> <p>Comments noted.</p> <p>Comments noted.</p> <p>Comments noted.</p> <p>Comments noted.</p> <p>Comments noted.</p>
<p>Health and Wellbeing Board</p>		

Source	Comment	Response
	There needs to be emphasis on older people and older workers to stay in the workplace.	Comments noted.
	Individuals with disabilities should have the independence to access services without support.	Comments noted.
Leaders Strategy Group	The report was well received.	No action required
Sustainable Communities and Transport Board	The report was well received.	No action required
Safer and Stronger Strategy Group	The draft was well received	No action required
Safer and Stronger Executive Board	Promote volunteering opportunities in the public agencies. Consider introducing speed interviews with senior representatives of the public agencies interviewing residents and providing feedback. Consider holding an event in February/March.	Comments noted Comments noted
Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minorities	Outreach work is important and more needs to be done. The strategy is good but what will be different this time? How will the outcomes be monitored? Not everyone wants to integrate; some communities are not tolerant of others.	Comments noted Monitoring will be done as outlined in the strategy; JCC will also receive regular updates and have the opportunity to monitor progress. Comments noted
Interfaith forum	The draft was well received.	No action required

Source	Comment	Response
<p>Overview and Scrutiny Commission</p>	<p>It was suggested that legal responsibilities should be set out clearly</p>	<p>The narrative has been amended to reflect this.</p>
	<p>It was suggested that terminology should be reviewed to explain the different strands of work with different groups to enable equal access and that this should be evidence and not based on assumptions about those groups</p>	<p>Comments noted</p>
	<p>Consider re-wording in paragraph 6.4 to replace “improve perceptions” with “improve experiences”</p>	<p>Amendment made.</p>
<p>Youth Parliament</p>	<p>Having discussions in schools is a better way to get the views of larger numbers of young people.</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>
	<p>Those on apprenticeships and work experience need a job at the end. Getting the experience is great but what is really needed is paid employment.</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>
	<p>Examples where given illustrating that some young people are discriminated against and feel the effect of negative stereo typing, resulting in them being unsuccessful in gaining employment. More needs to be done to break down barriers</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>
	<p>More needs to be done to support young people to be job ready.</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>
	<p>A skills bank should be developed and used to match skills against job opportunities.</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>
	<p>Publicity – sports clubs, schools websites and any where that young people gather should be used to provide information on services and opportunities.</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>

Source	Comment	Response
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Forum	Why is there reference to the staff group needing more diversity when they already reflect the borough's diversity?	This point referred to making senior management roles more reflective of the borough's diversity.
	The East/West divide has not changed over the last 18 year, what will be different this time? It was suggested that less resources should be put in the West and concentrate resources on improving outcomes in the East.	The proposed regeneration of Mitcham, Troubled Families project and the East Merton Community Health and Wellbeing Fund (which aims to deliver innovative and sustainable health improvement activity to reduce health inequalities in the East of the borough) demonstrate how resources have been targeted to East Merton to improve outcomes.
	Does the strategy mirror the Community Plan?	The Community Plan is still being developed but emerging themes will be incorporated into the equality strategy.
	In the achievements section add a bullet point outlining how well the LGBT Forum works, highlight its continued growth and sustainability and the positive contribution it makes to the whole community.	An additional paragraph has been added.
Public consultation - IConsult	The equality strategy is not widely broadcast to Merton residents, many will never have heard of it.	The strategy will be publicised using the council's website, social media and will be featured in My Merton.
	The financial challenges faced by the council and other local authorities are only going to get harder. Even though all savings proposals have EA's which include action plans, it would be good to detail how issues raised through the EA's will be mitigated and monitored to ensure the council does indeed stay on track in terms of the identified priorities.	Comments noted.

Source	Comment	Response
	<p>Make L&D more about what the organisation needs than rewarding those whose face fits</p>	<p>Learning and Development is linked to organisational need and analysis of staff appraisals.</p>
	<p>There really does need to be a lot more diversity at the most senior management level. Public sector workforces are relatively representative at the front line. The challenge however is at the most senior level. A lack of diversity at this level, does not facilitate diversity in terms of ideas and experiences, and therefore strategies developed to take the business forward is not reflective of the demographic, and is almost counter active to the organisation's equalities ambitions.</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>
	<p>As above making access to L&D opportunities more transparent. Use of twitter and social media to promote elements of the plan and let those who might be interested know what is going on We want to improve youth employment prospects, could the council commit to providing a certain number of work experience placements each year to help young people get experience of the work place, and what a career with the council can offer</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>
	<p>It would be good to see a clear strategy on how the council will engage with those groups that historically do not engage. Especially in this financial climate, how will the council ensure that those organisations that are funded will actively engage with groups they may historically have no relationship with?</p>	<p>The council has a Community Engagement Strategy that should address some of these issues. Organisations funded by the council are monitored to assess how they deliver the outcomes that they set out to achieve.</p>
	<p>The strategy is pretty clear. It will be important, however that the council is really able to demonstrate progress against the objectives. As well as the lessons learnt from those areas where things don't go so well.</p>	<p>The strategy will be monitored through CMT, DMTs, Overview and Scrutiny Commission and consultative forums.</p>