

<b>JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE FOR ETHNIC MINORITY ORGANISATIONS</b> <b>Date of meeting – 22 July 2009</b>	Agenda Item: 6 Public Session Ward:
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**SUBJECT:** Development of Merton's Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy 2010-2013

**LEAD OFFICER:** Jo Williams, Head of Housing, Community & Housing Department

**LEAD MEMBER:** Linda Scott, Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Services

**KEY DECISION REFERENCE NUMBER:** n/a

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1 The JCC for Ethnic Minority Organisations to note the achievements and progress made since the implementation of Merton's Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy, as highlighted in Section 2 in the report attached as Appendix 1.
- 2 The JCC for Ethnic Minority Organisations to note and comment on the proposed timescales and process for developing a new Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy and Action Plan for 2010-2013, as set out in Section 4 of Appendix 1.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report sets out details of a review being undertaken on the progress made since the implementation of Merton's Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Action Plan 2006-2009, and the proposed timescales and process for developing a new Strategy and Action Plan for 2010-2013. The report also outlines latest government policy on race equality, and the key issues that will need to be considered as part of the development of the new strategy.

**DETAILS**

The details of the proposed timescales and process for developing a new Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy for Merton is contained in the report attached as Appendix 1.

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

Not Applicable.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND STATUTORY PROVISION**

None.

**HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

The development of a new Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy for Merton aims to ensure that the council continues to meet its statutory duty set out in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, as well as the proposed requirements set out in the Equality Bill recently published by the Government.

**CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

Extensive consultation was undertaken when the original Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy for Merton was developed, involving most of the voluntary sector BME organisations and other key stakeholders operating in the borough. It was overseen by the multi-agency Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team and considered by the Council's Housing Strategy Review Group. Members of the Ethnic Minority Housing

Strategy Team are now actively involved in the review and development of a new strategy and action plan.

**APPENDICES** – The following appendix forms part of this report:

Appendix 1 – Developing Merton’s Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy 2010-2013

**BACKGROUND PAPERS** – The papers used to compile this report were:

- Government Race Equality Strategy – Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society (Home Office)
- Equality Bill April 2009
- Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines- Handling Cases of Forced Marriage- FCO-2009
- Managing the Impact of Migration: Improvement & Innovations. CLG-2009
- Social Housing Allocation & Immigrant Communities, IPPR, EHRC, 2009

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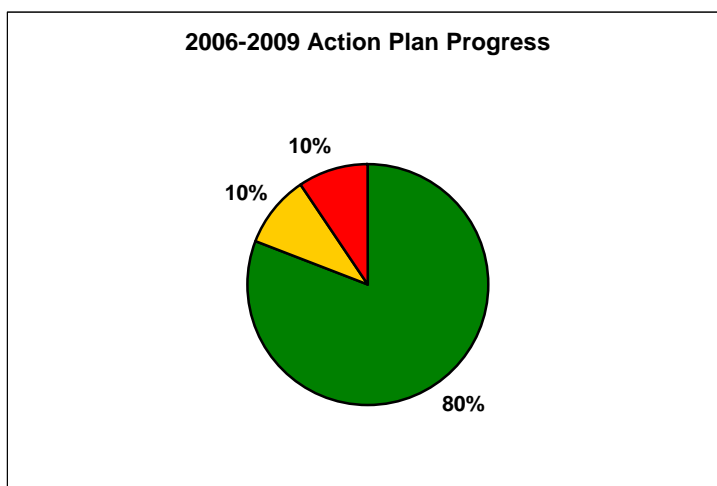
## DEVELOPING MERTON'S ETHNIC MINORITY HOUSING STRATEGY 2010-2013

### 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Merton Council and its key partners published the borough's first Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy in May 2004, following consultation and engagement with stakeholders. A three-year action plan was produced as part of the strategy and its implementation was overseen by the multi-agency Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team (EMHST). The strategy was assessed by HouseMark, a national benchmarking organisation for housing organisations, as an example of good housing practice.
- 1.2 A review of the original strategy was undertaken in 2006, again involving key stakeholders. On completion of the review, the EMHST recommended that the six objectives of the original strategy be retained and a new three-year action plan for 2006-2009 was produced to ensure that the strategy will continue to fulfil its strategic purpose. The six objectives of the strategy are:
- Promote Race Equality through Partnership Working
  - Identifying and Responding to Housing Needs
  - Ensure Community Cohesion & Fair Access to Social Housing
  - Delivering Quality & Inclusive Housing Services
  - Tackling Exclusion
  - Investing in a Diverse Workforce
- 1.3 This report sets out details of a review being undertaken on the progress made since the implementation of Merton's Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Action Plan 2006-2009, and the proposed timescales and process for developing a new strategy and action plan for 2010-2013. The report also outlines latest government policy on race equality, and the key issues to be considered as part of the development of the new strategy.

### 2. REVIEW OF PROGRESS SINCE 2006

- 2.1 Progress against targets set out in the Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Action Plan were monitored regularly, using a traffic light system to indicate progress. Monitoring showed that 80% of targets in the Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Action Plan for 2006-2009 were met (see chart below):



2.2 Key achievements since 2006, building on the work already undertaken as part of the 2004-2006 strategy action plan, included the following:

- Developed 15-unit Pathway Lodge sheltered scheme for African & Caribbean elders in Mitcham jointly with LB Croydon & LB Wandsworth, which opened in 2006
- Secured £140k Government funding and £35k match funding from Thames Valley Housing Association to refurbish and improve Merton's permanent Gypsy and Traveller caravan site in Brickfield Road.
- Delivered BME Video Research Project:
  - Obtained £48k funding from the CLG in 2007 to deliver the project
  - Engaged 50 young people to undertake research and produced 4 films focusing on homelessness prevention, one of which won an international film award for students
  - Film launch event in January 2008 attended by 150 young people
  - Merton's Research Report and the 4 films have been sent to all local authorities in England by the CLG
  - Peer Education Programme which aims to reduce homelessness commenced in 2008
  - Merton's project is highlighted in the Government's latest Race Equality Strategy as an example of good practice in promoting race equality by a public authority
- Successfully established Youth Housing Forum in September 2008 as part of the BME Video Research Project
- Provided financial and other support to BME community organisations through housing grant programme
- Outreach work to engage hard to reach group undertaken by housing advice team through talks held with BME community groups
- Introduced compulsory diversity training for all tenants and residents groups as part of a training programme, to ensure wider involvement in the Merton Tenants & Residents Federation by hard-to-reach groups
- Introduced evaluation of equalities practices to the procurement and scoring process for the responsive repairs partnering contract award
- Full set of Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) reviewed in 2006 and EIAs completed for new policies, strategies and services
- Successfully adhered to the CRE Code of Practice for Rented Housing and the Guidance for Social Landlords in Tackling Racial Harassment
- Completed review of equalities monitoring categories in 2006:
  - Introduced additional ethnic categories for Gypsies & Travellers
  - Amended categories on 'Academy' IT system
  - Amended categories on housing application forms

### **3. RECENT LEGISLATION & GOVERNMENT POLICY INITIATIVES**

3.1 This section sets out the latest developments that are taking place at a national and local level with reference to race relation policies and the potential impact areas that need to be considered when devising the new Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy for Merton 2010-2013. Some of the key documents are outlined below.

3.2 **Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society: A Third Progress Report on the Government's Strategy for Race Equality & Community Cohesion- Vol 1. Feb 2009 (CLG)** - Aims to highlight key areas where the Government feels race equality policies in the UK should be focusing on and where improvements need to be made, these include:

- Increasing race equality, improving community cohesion, by achieving positive outcomes and reducing the discriminatory gaps
- Community cohesion approach to reach a new level with a targeted support approach to areas experiencing the biggest challenges, bringing people of different backgrounds together to build cohesive, empowered and active communities
- The **Inter-Faith Framework-Face to Face & Side by Side report, July 2008** which has already begun to stimulate inter-faith dialogue and build understanding among people of faith (supported by £7.5m investment). Engaging with faith communities is central to the Government's community cohesion agenda
- Highlights that whilst good progress is being made towards the Decent Homes target for social housing, which will have a major impact on BME households, more still needs to be done
- The challenges of the shortage of supply of housing and how the Government believes that by taking measured action to address this will be a key way to improve integration and cohesion in some areas
- Emphasis on community engagement and how the newly established Home & Communities Agency aims to address issues such as neighborhood renewal, community empowerment and BME issues
- Changes in migration trends and the impact this has on communities is an area that the report raises and needs to be considered
- Tackling Islamophobia and preventing violent extremism have also been cited in the report. In July 2008, CLG launched **Preventing Violent Extremism: Next Steps for Communities Prevent Agenda**. The report highlights how the Government aims to tap in to the various communication outlets such as media, newspapers, education, colleges and universities to meet the cohesion challenge. A toolkit has been set up for this issue

3.3 The new **Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy for Merton 2010-2013** will need to consider how to take on board the developments highlighted by the Government's Race Equality Strategy to show areas where improvements have been made and areas where more work and new policies need to be devised to achieve the Government's objectives

3.4 **Single Equality Bill & Current Legal Framework- Framework for a Fairer Future** - A new Single Equality Bill has been published by the Government in April 2009 and is likely to receive Royal Assent by Spring 2010. Key proposals of the Bill include:

- A new public sector duty to consider reducing socio-economic inequalities. Public bodies will need to make strategic decisions about spending and service delivery, to help narrow gaps in outcomes resulting from socio-economic disadvantage
- New Equality Duty on public bodies: builds on the three existing equality duties on race (2000), disability (2005) and gender (2006). The new duty will cover age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity explicitly & gender reassignment in full, and will require public bodies to consider the needs of diverse groups when

designing and delivering public services

- 3.5 The new Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy for Merton 2010-2013 will need to take into considerations the changes that are envisaged in the Single Equality Bill and the ramifications it will have on housing policy strategy for BME's in the future.
- 3.6 **Managing the Impacts of Migration: Improvements & Innovations (CLG), March 2009, London** – This report sets out the challenging pressures of migration in the current economic climate. Key findings and recommendations of the report include:
- Points out the positive benefits that migration brings to the UK in the current climate, but at the same time highlighting that there are still growing concerns about public perceptions and issues revolving around community cohesion at a local level
  - In a Housing context, the report provides useful data to dispel some of the common perceptions about migrants, and considers the pressures created by the shortage of housing supply along with migration pressures - net migration is estimated to account for around two-fifths of household growth
  - The direct effects of immigration on house prices are relatively small and the effects on house prices differ over the regions – i.e. London and surrounding areas. there is no evidence to suggest that migrants gain priority over other residents when it comes to social housing
  - The Government should re-examine the criteria for the selective licensing of all privately rented property in designated areas to make it easier to crackdown on rogue landlords; and there will be new immigration teams to increase partnership working on immigration issues at a local level. Housing of illegal immigrants also needs to be looked into
  - The Government has renewed its commitment to end rough sleeping by 2012. Tackling rough sleeping particularly from A10 nationals from new EU Accession countries will be critical as part of the homeless support strategy
  - A Migration Impact Fund has been set up to deal with the transitional impacts of migration
- 3.7 For the new Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy for Merton 2010-2013, it is paramount that the migration statistics for Merton are updated and take on board some of the key initiatives with reference to housing policy that the Government's policies may have at a Merton level. This will resonate further into issues about addressing community cohesion and social exclusion and extremism.
- 3.8 **Jill Rutter & Maria Latorre - Migration, Equalities & Citizenship Team, IPPR- Social Housing Allocation & Immigrant Communities- EHRC 2009** - This is a key report produced by the Institute of Public Policy Research that helps dispel many of the myths with reference to immigrant communities and the allocation of social housing in the UK. The study examined some of the key contentions by asking three questions: who is entitled to social housing; who receives social housing in England; & do some groups have unfair access to social housing.
- The study found that less than 2% of all social housing residents are people who have moved to Britain in the last five years and that 9/10 people who live in social housing were born in the UK
  - Cites how myths are often the core reasons for discriminatory behaviour and contribute to tension and violence in many areas

- Recommends that public concerns about the effects of migration on housing should be addressed at a local level. More needs to be done to increase people's understanding of entitlement to social housing as the lack of transparency in the process may perpetuate the belief that the system itself is unfair. This approach concurs with the CRE viewpoint

**3.9 Multi-Agency Guidelines- Handling Cases of Forced Marriage 2009-HM Government –**

The Government has introduced this document to address the issue of forced marriage at multi-agency level.

- Highlights the various roles required by a range of departments to ensure that the issue of forced marriage and domestic abuse is dealt with appropriately, including honour-based violence, which can involve many BME groups
- Provides guidelines on housing for local authorities in terms of how they should respond to issues revolving around domestic violence, forced marriage and honour-based violence

3.10 It is important that the new Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy for Merton 2010-2013 considers to incorporate the key elements of this report to ensure that all stakeholders and departments are clear as to how to deal with such sensitive cases.

**4. PROPOSED MILESTONES & TIMESCALES**

4.1 The table below shows the proposed milestones and timescales for the development of Merton's Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy for 2010-2013:

<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Team to discuss key issues and objectives of new Strategy	22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2009
First draft of new Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy 2010-2013	End of September 2009
Public Consultation	October / November 2009
Second draft of new Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy 2010-2013	End of January 2009
Final draft of new Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy 2010-2013 and publication	End of March 2010