

Committee: Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations

Date: 21 October 2009

Agenda item: 5

Wards: All

Subject: Refresh of the BME Community Plan

Lead officer: Kate Martyn, Head of Stronger Communities

Lead Partner: Merton Unity Network (on behalf of Merton's BME Forum)

Lead member: Councillor Henry Nelles, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Engagement

Forward Plan reference number: 788

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

Recommendations:

That the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations:

- A. Note the proposed refresh of Merton's Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Strategic Plan (2010 -2013) and the timetable for its development
 - B. Encourages all Ethnic Minority organisations to participate, again, in the Plan's development; and to widely consult among their communities for a collective view.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. To consult the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations, giving the Committee the earliest opportunity to consider and comment on the approach to be adopted in the refresh of the BME Strategic Plan.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1 Merton's second BME Strategic Plan (2010-2013) will set out what Merton's diverse communities can do to promote equal opportunities and community cohesion in Merton.
- 2.2 The new BME Strategic Plan will set out Merton's ethnic minority visions, aspirations and commitment to promoting equality, and lists key priorities as drivers for improvement. A detailed report is attached as appendix 1.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Not Applicable

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. In developing the refreshed BME Strategic Plan, the Forum will involve and consult with a number of community, faith and equality groups.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1 See Appendix 1

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council's financial constraints may impact on the development of the refresh of the BME Strategic Plan.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The BME Strategic Plan will contribute to the Council meeting its legal obligations relating to equalities legislation.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The BME Strategic Plan contributes to the Council meeting its statutory duties set out in the Corporate Equality Scheme and the proposed requirements of the Equality Bill.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. There is a risk to the Council's reputation if it fails to support the Plan.

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

- 11.1 BME Strategic Plan

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 Merton's BME Strategic Plan 2006-2009 (summary)
http://www.mertonunitynetwork.org.uk/events_files/finalsummary.pdf

13 CONTACTS

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Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations

Date: 21 October 2009

Report from the Chair, Merton's BME Forum

Contact person: Patricia Anderson (patricia@mertonunitynetwork.org.uk)

BME Strategic Plan (2010-2013)

PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is for the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations (JCCEMO) to:

- I. Note the proposed refresh of Merton's Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Strategic Plan (2010 -2013) and the timetable for its development;
- II. Encourage all ethnic minority organisations to participate, again, and to widely consult among their communities for a collective view in the Plan's development;
- III. Give all ethnic minority organisations the earliest opportunity to consider and comment on the approach to be adopted in the refresh of the BME Strategic Plan.

1. Background

- 1.1 Merton's current BME Strategic Plan (2006-09) was an innovative community initiative which was successful in articulating the actions needed to bring about meaningful change for Merton's BME communities. The Plan not only elicits an awareness of BME organisations and communities' aspirations but also highlights the challenges and needs they disproportionately experience within society.
- 1.2 Most needs, however, that were identified in 2006 in the development of the current BME Strategic Plan have not changed. The new Plan will need to adopt an approach which takes account of current environment and emerging trends. For example, Merton's school population is more diverse than the wider community, with 55% of children and young people in Merton's schools coming from BME groups. Since 2003 the BME school population has risen from 45.9% of the roll to 52.3% in 2008 and in the primary population the BME rate has increased by 10% to 53% over the last five years.
- 1.3 Since the current BME Strategic Plan was produced in 2006, there have also been a number of legislative changes. Through the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, there is increased emphasis for Merton Council to involve local communities and people in the design and delivery of local services, in particular through the new 'duty to involve'. Merton Council is also bound by a 'general and specific duty' to have statutory schemes in place for race, disability and gender. With the publication of the Equality Bill that was introduced to parliament on 27 April 2009, it is proposed that this 'duty' is extended to the three other areas covered by equalities legislation to include; age, religion and belief and sexual orientation. A new duty called Socio-economic Duty will also seek to address inequalities based on a person's social class and background.

- 1.4 Merton's second BME Strategic Plan (2010-2013) will set out Merton's ethnic minority organisations' visions, aspirations and commitment to promoting equality. It will also set out what Merton's diverse communities can do, collectively, to promote equal opportunities and community cohesion; taking on board the new statutory duties and other drivers for change.
- 1.5 The new BME Strategic Plan will review the needs and objectives that were identified in 2006 and list key priorities and actions as drivers for improvement. This will include making relevant links to the priorities and actions as set out in Merton's Community Plan, the Corporate Equality Scheme, Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy, Business Plan, Local Area Agreement and Compact; with the support of the London Borough of Merton and other partners within Merton Partnership.
- 1.6 Merton's BME Forum has already identified a number of key challenges and priorities for ethnic minority organisations, such as the sourcing and pooling of resources; promoting community cohesion; access to information and services; community safety, educational attainment, housing and health.
- 1.7 The next stage in the development of the new BME Strategic Plan will be to consult fully on the priorities and set out actions that will be needed to meet the objectives of the Plan. The Plan will also identify the agencies with 'lead responsibility' for meeting specific objectives.
- 1.8 This work will form a draft Plan which the JCC will have an opportunity to consider at its meeting in April 2010 and a final document by July 2010.

2.0 CONSULTATION PROPOSED

- 2.1 In developing the refreshed BME Strategic Plan, the BME Forum will involve and consult with a number of community, faith and equality groups.

2.2 PROPOSED TIMETABLE

JCC with Ethnic Minority Organisations	21 October 2009
Consultation period	October – May 2010
BME Forum & JCC – Ethnic Minority Orgs. – Draft BME Plan	April 2010
Final Draft Plan	May 2010
Adopted by BME Forum	June 2010
Submission to JCC followed by launch of Plan	July 2010

3.0 IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES

- 3.1 There are a number of implications not only for the BME Forum and ethnic minority organisations but also for key partner agencies such as the Council and these are outlined briefly below. There is also an element of risk, to reputations, through failure of organisations to participate or commit any support in the Plans development, particularly where lack of their support is perceived to impact adversely on the delivery of the plan.

3.2 Lack of resources for the refresh of the BME Strategic Plan will impede its development and hence the successful delivery of this innovative community initiative, which is also a “deliverable” under the Stronger Communities theme within Merton’s Community Plan 2009-2019.

3.2 As a public authority Merton Council has a duty to promote good relations between people of different backgrounds and has legal obligations in respect of the equality agenda. A refresh of the BME Strategic Plan during the revision of Merton’s Corporate Equality Scheme (2010-2013) and the Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy (2010-2013) should encourage a wider debate about equalities in Merton and the actions needed to address inequality.

3.3 Merton’s approach to equality and diversity is driven by its overall vision of Merton – a great place to live, work, learn and visit. By developing and producing a refreshed BME Strategic Plan, the BME Forum and the JCCEMO in partnership with the Council and other Merton Partners will ensure that there is truly a **commitment to human rights, equality and community cohesion.**

4.0 **PRESENTATION OF 20 MINUTES – FORMING PART OF THE CONSULTATION EXERCISE**

A PowerPoint presentation on an update of the current BME Strategic Plan will be provided at the meeting. Handouts will be tabled.

5.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Merton’s BME Strategic Plan 2006-2009 (summary)

http://www.mertonunitynetwork.org.uk/events_files/finalsummary.pdf

6.0 **CONTACTS & REPORT AUTHOR**

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Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority
Organisations – 21 October 2009

REFRESH OF MERTON'S BME STRATEGIC PLAN

Presented by Patricia Anderson
for the BME Forum

BME Strategic Plan 2006-09

Two documents were produced:

1. A summary version – for everyone to use to promote the plan.
2. A full version - for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) organisations to use as a working document; a source of detailed information to support projects and organisations' development.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) and Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environment (PESTLE)

– identified by BME VCOs at 2006

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Customer Care skills
- BME organisations add value
- BME organisations have contact and close relationship with BME communities
- BME organisations provide needed services that would otherwise not be available

Weaknesses

- Lack of proactiveness
- Lack of involvement – communication and effective consultation
- Skills to fundraise
- Lack of cross-cultural understanding
- Low visibility of some groups, including some African and Chinese groups
- Lack of statistical information on BME communities
- Barriers to services – access and cultural appropriateness
- Lack of quality control mechanisms – time management, lack of resources
- Under-funding
- Heavy dependence on limited sources of funding
- Towing the funding line

Opportunities

- To engage in meaningful partnerships
- To support and enable BME organisations to position themselves to 'win' contracts and deliver services
- To identify and further develop specialisms of BME organisations
- To improve involvement – communication and effective consultation
- To improve cross-cultural understanding
- To improve learning
- To monitor quality of services provided
- To challenge barriers on both sides

Threats

- Human Resource and Customer Care skills
- Education standards – education systems failing
- Poor/lack of investment in education and services
- Failure to justify funding
- Lack of statistical information on BME communities
- Under-funding
- Over dependence on limited sources of funding

PESTLE Analysis

Political

- Hostile – following 7/7
- Harsh immigration policies
- Poor BME representation
- Political change at local and national levels

Economic

- Very limited access to finance and other resources
- High level unemployment and poverty in BME communities and organisations

Social

- Many diverse groups with diverse needs
- Disorganised BME sector
- BME communities and organisations not well networked and coordinated

Technological

- Need for infrastructure
- Skills to make maximum use of technology
- Need to improve use of IT to improve performance
- Need to improve knowledge and access to ICT

Legal

- Changing legal landscape with new legislative burdens on the 'sector' and organisations e.g. Human Resources and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

- Race, religion and human rights legislation.

Environment

- Ever changing and challenging.
- Perception of no control over priority setting.

Key Priority Needs identified by BME individuals and organisations at 2006

For BME Organisations

- Ability to engage with key decision making structures and influence policies.
- Improve effectiveness: For the BME 'sector' to unite and speak with a collective 'voice': a BME 'sector' that is innovative, robust and aspirational.
- Coordinated service planning and delivery.
- Access to funding and improved relationship with funders.
- Access to appropriate support – other than funding, for example, ICT and premises.
- A BME 'sector' that is networked into borough-wide and region-wide structures; engaging with strong enabling partnerships.

Key priority needs identified by BME organisations at 2006

For BME Communities

- Better access to education (for young people and adult development); for example, in deprived areas of East Merton
- Economic development – sustainable improvement; access to better employment and training
- Access to appropriate and affordable housing
- Better access to preventative health and social care
- Safer environment
- Greater take-up of, and access to, services
- Promotion of self-respect and independence
- Challenge the negative perceptions whereby BME people feel that policy makers and mainstream service providers view them as ‘a problem, as people in need and not able to do anything for themselves’. In fact, BME organisations want to be seen as part of the solution with processes that enable them to meaningfully engage.

The key strategic objectives, priorities and actions at 2006 and achievements:

Strategic Objectives	Strategic Priorities	KEY ACTIONS	Achievements/Gaps (locally)
1 Improve Community Engagement	Establish appropriate BME representation and contribution in decision making processes	<p>1.1 Select a model of representation that enables and supports BME organisations to take part in decision making structures and processes to enable effective engagement and promote meaningful needs identification and response.</p> <p>1.2 Establish and develop partnerships with local, regional and national agencies to raise awareness of BME issues, develop good working relationships and lobby as necessary.</p> <p>1.3 Specialist BME organisations to support the BME sector. Specialism recognised and promoted and BME organisations enabled to win contracts and deliver services.</p>	<p>A number of BME organisations have gained access, indirectly, to the policy decision making processes and structures, for example, through the ‘conduit’ of the BME Forum and Community Engagement Network, membership of the Joint Consultative Committee for Ethnic Minority Organisations, and Faith forums, etc.</p>
2 Improve Effectiveness and Access to Appropriate Support	Improve effectiveness and access to information and services - those provided by BME organisations and those providing support services to BME organisations	<p>2.1 Map BME communities and services in Merton.</p> <p>2.2 Map funding allocations to and on behalf of BME organisations - by the London Borough of Merton and other funders.</p> <p>2.3 Merton BME Forum to be developed so as to adopt a proactive approach to needs identification and response.</p> <p>2.4 Establish meaningful partnerships between BME organisations and other agencies in order to improve service delivery</p> <p>2.5 Establish a peer support centre to improve networking between BME organisations and enable the sharing of resources, knowledge, skills, expertise, etc. among groups/ organisations and communities.</p>	<p>The BME forum has taken a proactive approach to needs identification by mapping BME resources and service provisions. Through the leveraging of external funding from Big Lottery, a peer support network (PSN) project and drop-in centre have been established. There are nevertheless gaps: in obtaining meaningful response to needs identification through existing processes and structures and in obtaining the support of strong partnerships to enable, improve and sustain the services of the BME sector ⁶</p>

Continues...

Strategic Objectives	Strategic Priorities	KEY ACTIONS
3 Improve Service Co-ordination & Planning: Organisational and Sectoral	Improve marketing and promotion of services: those provided by BME and non-BME organisations	3.1 As 2.1 above - mapping services. 3.2 Develop a BME Information and Communication Technology (ICT) network which will raise awareness about BME needs and organisations, and provide the opportunity to share information and learn from each other and from best practice. 3.3 Showcase the work of Merton's BME organisations to raise awareness about the contributions made.
4 Learn from Good Practice	Improve collaboration and sharing good practice: between BME organisations, and between BME and non-BME organisations	4. Conduct research into the major causes of challenges experienced by BME communities in Merton.

Achievements/Gaps

The PSN and drop-in resource, referred to above, include an ICT Hub and a Library. Support was also received from Communities and Local Government (CLG) through the Community Development Foundation to produce the film “Our Merton” (2007) which showcases the contributions of a number of Merton’s BME organisations.

The establishment of the BME Strategic Plan and BME Forum has led to other opportunities for BME organisations to network across the sector, for example, working in partnership with a number of sub-regional networks, for example, the South London BME Partnership.

With limited resources, researches are being carried out, systematically, through the thematic sub-groups of the PSN.

However, more resource is needed to support the PSN to finalise these researches; aimed at finding solutions to address the challenges facing BME organisations

Current Environment and key drivers for change

The landscape is continually changing. Currently:

- Funds have drastically reduced and new funding structures, criteria and allocations impact adversely and disproportionately on BME organisations;
- The demographics of Merton's BME communities have changed. This sector of the population is growing which will further impact on service design and delivery.
- An influx of legislation and policies are being used to drive change. A very successful BME Forum Seminar (2008) titled 'Change must have purpose' was very succinct in promoting meaningful change.
- The current recession has resulted in the closure of many key service provisions for BME communities. The BME Forum, in partnership with regional and sub- regional BME networks have assessed this issue and are doing their best to campaign to help reduce the impact of the recession.

Under-resourced local BME organisations are doing their best to work collaboratively and innovatively through the BME Forum, JCC, faith forums, etc. and with key agencies to help bring about purposeful and meaning change for the benefit of all the local community.

Proposed next steps for the refresh of the BME Strategic Plan (2010-2013)

- 1. Obtain agreement to a joint approach in the Plan's development, for example, the use of focus groups, seminars, outreach activities for consultation;**
- 2. Consult widely to re-assess needs and priorities of BME organisations (and of their communities);**
- 3. Obtain consensus to key strategic objectives and priorities;**
- 4. Consult on draft plan with key actions;**
- 5. Finalise and launch plan**

How, where and when can you, personally, have your say?

- Attend quarterly meetings of the BME Forum and JCC with Ethnic Minority Organisations between December 2009 to July 2010.
- Participate in a number of consultation activities, e.g. focus groups, seminar; either facilitated by a consultant or external partners.
- Write to Patricia Anderson, MUN, to request a consultant's attendance at one of your Trustees/ Board meetings.

For further information

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