

Committee: Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations

Date: 21 October 2009

Agenda item: 6

Wards: All

Subject: Revision of the Corporate Equality Scheme

Lead officer: Kate Martyn, Head of Stronger Communities

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

Forward Plan reference number: 788

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Recommendations:

That the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations:

- A. Considers and comments on the amended draft Corporate Equality Scheme and the draft Corporate Equality Scheme Action Plan.
 - B. Encourages Ethnic Minority organisations to give their views on the priorities set out in the draft Scheme and assess the extent to which the key activities and outcomes of the action plan support the delivery of the scheme.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Following on from the formal consultation period to give the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority organisations further opportunity to consider and comment on the draft Corporate Equality Scheme and draft Action Plan.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. Merton's draft Corporate Equality Scheme 2010-2013, is a three-year strategy that sets out what Merton will do to tackle discrimination and inequality and promote equal opportunities in Merton.
- 2.2. The draft Scheme sets out Merton's vision, aspirations and commitment to promoting equality, and lists key priorities against each of the six equality strands as drivers for improvement
- 2.3. Merton's current Corporate Equality Scheme will expire at the end of 2009. Under existing equalities legislation, the Council is 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.

- 2.4. The draft new Scheme incorporates a generic statutory approach across the various equality strands that reflects existing and emerging legislation. It makes links to key priorities and objectives as set out in Merton's Community Plan, Business Plan and the Local Area Agreement and takes account of the five performance areas as set out in the new Equality Framework for Local Government.
- 2.5. We have also identified a number of crosscutting priorities such as promoting community cohesion; access to information and services; community safety and educational attainment. This reflects an inclusive approach to promoting equalities on multiple levels across all equality strands.
- 2.6. The scheme underwent a ten-week consultation period that ended on 11 September. Disappointingly only six comments were received on the scheme. However, the low response rate may be due to the comprehensive consultation that was done prior to the new scheme being drafted.
- 2.7. One of the responses provided detailed feedback on community safety issues and as a consequence the community safety cross cutting theme has now been strengthened in the scheme.
- 2.8. Following feedback the scheme was also amended to incorporate mental health considerations. The action plan contains key activities and success criteria that will improve our staff understanding of mental health. From a service perspective we have included actions that will improve access to services and support for people with mental health needs.
- 2.9. The Corporate Equality Scheme Action Plan that sets out the actions we will take to meet our equality priorities both corporately and departmentally.
- 2.10. The Action Plan has been structured around the five priority areas of the Equality Framework for Local Government and contains key activities and success criteria that are outcome focused.
- 2.11. The JCC now has an opportunity to review the Action Plan and assess the extent to which its contents support the delivery of the scheme.
- 2.12. The draft Action Plan will form part of the final documentation that goes to full Council on 25 November 2009.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. Under current race, disability and gender anti-discrimination legislation public authorities have a legal 'general duty' to set out how they intend to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination
 - Promote equality of opportunity; and
 - Promote good relations between people of different backgrounds.

Failure to produce and publish an Equality Scheme and Action Plan would mean the Council is not fulfilling its legal obligations and could be subject to legal action.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. In developing the Scheme we have involved and consulted with a number of community and faith groups and equality groups.

External consultation already taken place with:

Ethnic Minority Centre
 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Community Forum
 Interfaith Forum
 JCC with Ethnic Minority Organisations
 Your Shout (Children and Young People with disabilities group)
 Disabled Go Forum
 Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Forum

Internal consultations planned with:

Staff groups
 Unions

5 TIMETABLE

Public consultation period	6 July 2009 - 11 September 2009
JCC with Ethnic Minority Organisations	21 October 2009
Leaders Policy Group	26 October 2009
Overview and Scrutiny Commission	5 November 2009
Cabinet	9 November 2009
Council – for adoption	25 November 2009
Published on Council’s website	December 2009

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

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

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 a new Corporate Equality Scheme 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 Corporate Equality Scheme, 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. A revision of the scheme 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 implement its statutory schemes for race, disability and gender. Additionally there is a risk of claims of discrimination based on race, disability, gender, age, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

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

- Draft Corporate Equality Scheme 2010-2013
- Draft Corporate Equality Scheme Action Plan 2010-2013

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. Merton's Corporate Equality Scheme 2006-2009
<http://www.merton.gov.uk/equality-sch-eme.htm>

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Corporate Equality Scheme
For
London Borough of Merton
2010-2013

Foreword

To be added

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1. Introduction

Merton Council is committed to making Merton a great place to live and call home, where citizens are also neighbours and take responsibility for improving their lives and neighbourhoods, supported by good value local services from Merton Council.

Treating people fairly and valuing diversity and difference is a prerequisite to achieving economic independence and prosperity, social harmony and sustainability.

One of the ways this can be achieved is by promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating unlawful discrimination for all our residents, service users, employees and visitors.

Merton's Corporate Equality Scheme sets out the council's approach to valuing diversity and promoting equality. We aim to ensure we deliver good quality services that meet the needs of all of the borough's communities and help to deliver value for money.

We will address the needs of people who have traditionally faced discrimination or received less favourable treatment based on their age, disability, gender, race and ethnicity, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

We will also address issues like socio-economic, health, educational status and availability of transport and the relationship this has with inequality.

By mainstreaming equality issues into all our policies, service planning and performance management frameworks the scheme demonstrates how equality is an integral part of our strategies and practices.

This is the council's third Corporate Equality Scheme that reflects our ongoing commitment to a generic equality scheme that covers the six equality strands that are recognised in law.

The Corporate Equality Scheme aims to:

- provide direction and leadership in demonstrating the council's commitment to equality;
- influence and promote equality through the Merton Partnership (LSP), the Compact, and work with our stakeholders;
- integrate equalities within our key strategies - in particular the Business Plan, Procurement and Human Resource Strategies;
- further improve service delivery and customer care so that customers receive parity in levels of access, experience, outcomes and satisfaction across all equality groups;

- support the council's work to comply with legislation and codes of practice designed to promote equality;
- set tangible objectives that address persistent inequalities and narrow the gap;
- ensure we conduct effective and inclusive consultation and engagement processes across all our functions so that our equality priorities, plans, service design and delivery are informed by our service users and the wider community;
- promote good relations between people of different backgrounds, equality groups and the wider community; and
- achieve a workforce that reflects our diverse population and promotes an inclusive working culture based on respect.

2. About Merton the place

The London borough of Merton is an outer-London borough, situated to the south-west of the capital. Its bordering neighbours are Wandsworth, Sutton, Kingston, Croydon and Lambeth. The borough is mainly suburban in character, and has significant amounts of green spaces, parks and open spaces that offer recreation, relief and contrast to the borough's built environment.

A striking characteristic of the borough is the difference between the poorer, more deprived areas in the east of the borough (Mitcham) and the wealthier, more prosperous west (Wimbledon). Bridging the gap between the east and the west of the borough is the major priority for the council, and the overarching theme of our Local Area Agreement (LAA).

2.1 Population

Merton has a population of 199,300 and is the ninth smallest London borough. Merton's population density is above the London average – with a population density of 5,257 people per square km, this makes it the fourth most densely populated outer-London borough.

Like many London boroughs, Merton has experienced high rates of migration and population change in recent years. Between 1992 and 2005 Merton had the largest increase in population of any outer-London borough, with the population growing by 13.93%. This growth is predicted to continue, with the population reaching 220,300 by 2025. In particular, the numbers of children and young people and over 85's are predicted to rise.

2.2 Ethnicity

Merton is the 18th most diverse borough in London out of 33 boroughs spread across the capital. 25% of Merton's population is from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups (BAME), and this rises to over 50% in schools. There are significant populations of mixed heritage, Black African, Black Caribbean and Asian origins. Recent figures have shown rises in Sri Lankan, South African and Polish residents. Despite the high levels of population change in

the borough, Merton's diversity is a strength, with over 80% of residents agreeing that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area.

2.3 Age

Merton has a younger population than the England average, with an average age of 36.6 years. The east of the borough in particular has a younger population than the west, with concentrations of young residents in Cricket Green, Figge's Marsh, Longthornton and Pollards Hill. There is less of a pattern for the older population, but the numbers of residents over the age of 55 is increasing steadily, with a projected rise of 39% in the over 85 population by 2028.

2.4 Disability

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. The number of employees with a disability in Merton is 6.9% compared with an average of 4.4% for our 14 comparator boroughs.

2.5 Gender

In Merton 50.4% of the population are female residents and 49.6% are male. There are slightly more male residents in almost every age band category, apart from the age band category in which men and women can retire. 17.3% of the female population are aged 60 and over, compared with 10.2% of males residents aged 65 and over. The female life expectancy in Merton is 83.1 years compared with 79 years for male.

2.6 Religion or Belief

Merton is home to people of many religious faiths and beliefs: 63.3% of Merton residents are Christians, 6% are Muslim, 5% Hindu, 0.8% are Buddhists, 0.5% are Jewish, and 0.3% are Sikh. 16.55% of residents are not religious, which is above the London and England averages. Merton has many places of worship throughout the borough including; churches, mosques, temples and centres. There are also several places of spiritual and religious significance where people go for quiet reflection and meditation.

2.7 Sexual orientation

Merton does have a Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual community, although there are no reliable statistics as to its size. The UK government estimates that between 5% and 7% of the population are lesbian, gay or bisexual. Information from the Office of National Statistics on Same-Sex couples does provide some evidence of numbers of those people in relationships. At 0.34% Merton has the 23rd largest number of people who identify as being in a same-sex couple in England and Wales. Local evidence suggests that although attitudes have changed

significantly, people are still reluctant to declare their sexual orientation as lesbian, gay or bisexual because of fear of being treated negatively.

2.8 Deprivation and Prosperity

Merton is the sixth least deprived London borough, and is ranked 222nd nationally (out of 354, where 1 is the most deprived). This relative lack of deprivation does, however, hide inequalities within the borough where pockets of serious deprivation do exist, particularly in the east of the borough. Eight of Merton's super output areas (SOAs) are in the 25% most deprived nationally, and thirteen of Merton's SOAs are in the 20% most income deprived nationally. All are located in the east of the borough.

Although unemployment in the borough is below the national average, 4.6% of the population is unemployed. The difference between the household income of the highest paid ward and the lowest paid ward is £17,521 per annum.

2.9 Community Cohesion and Social Capital

Community cohesion is what happens in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration and the relationships that are built to enable new residents and existing residents to feel they belong. Community cohesion can, therefore, be defined as a community where there is a shared future vision and sense of belonging for all. A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity can help to build strong positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.

Social capital can be described as the bonds or glue that brings people together, made up of factors such as respect and trust, participation and social engagement, perception and identification, commitment and control, and self-efficacy, which in turn promotes a more cohesive community.

The results from our Annual Residents Survey in 2008 showed the following for the borough:

- 75% of residents felt a strong sense of belonging to their local area;
- levels of satisfaction with the local area as a place to live is high at 82%;
- satisfaction with cultural opportunities in Merton is relatively high at 68%;
- 68% of people feel they are treated with respect and consideration by public services;
- over half the people surveyed (53%) felt they could influence decisions affecting their local area; and
- 85% of residents in Merton felt people from different backgrounds get on well together.

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3. About the Council

The borough is made up of 20 electoral wards each one represented by three ward councillors. These 60 councillors are elected every four years. All Councillors meet together regularly as the council, to agree the annual budgets and key plans that make up the council's policy framework. The council also appoints a cabinet each year that has a portfolio of responsibilities under their remit. The Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Engagement is the person responsible for equality and community cohesion issues.

All Councillors are required to have due regard to the statutory duties and codes of practice of the council relating to equalities, and to exercise these responsibilities when carrying out their public duties. Merton's code of conduct for councillors specifically requires councillors to recognise the Nolan principles of public life, namely, selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness and leadership, respect for others and, to promote equality of opportunity.

The Council delivers a wide range of services, both directly and indirectly to the whole of the borough as a service provider and service commissioner. It is also the largest single employer in the borough with approximately 5,000 employees, including teachers and school-based staff.

Our services are delivered through the following departments:

Children, Schools and Families Directorate – includes; children's social care services, access to education, early years, inspection and governor support, youth offending, youth service and research function;

Community and Housing – includes; adult social care services, housing policy and services, libraries and heritage services, heritage, and adult education services;

Environment and Regeneration – includes; street scene and waste services, regeneration, parks and open spaces facilities, planning, parking and food safety; Safer Merton¹

Corporate Services – includes; audit, corporate safety and risk, civic and legal services, communication, finance, customer services, human resources, emergency planning and business continuity, and IT support; and

Chief Executive's – incorporates; corporate policy, strategic partnerships, diversity, community engagement and cohesion, scrutiny, communication, Safer Merton performance and business improvement.

4. Strategic Context

4.1 National Factors

The new **Comprehensive Area Assessment** (CAA) will put the experience of residents, people who use the services, and local taxpayers at the centre of the new local assessment framework, with a particular focus on the needs of those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Reducing inequalities and discriminatory outcomes for all members of the community will be central to the new CAA regime. It will recognise the importance of effective local partnership working, the enhanced role of the Community Plan²², and the Local Area Agreement, and the importance of local authorities in leading and shaping the communities they serve.

The introduction of the **Equality Bill** seeks to harmonise all the different discrimination legislations, statutory instruments and regulations and duties into one Single Equality Act. It will mean there will be one single equality duty that will act as a generic duty to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation; promote equality of opportunity for all; and promote good relations between people of different ages, those who are disabled and not disabled, men and women, people of different races and ethnic groups, those of different religions or beliefs, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and heterosexual people. The Equality Bill also proposes a new public sector duty to reduce social economic inequality and provides additional protection to pregnant women, carers and disabled people.

4.2 Local Factors

The development of Merton's Community Plan, negotiation of our Local Area Agreement, and refresh of the Council's Business Plan have created opportunities to establish greater alignment of strategic priorities and objectives. The council recognises excellence can only be achieved by integrating priorities, targets and activity into its business planning processes.

The Community Plan 2009-2019 is the overall plan for the local area. It provides a framework for partners involved in the Local Strategic Partnership to establish priorities and targets for the next three years.

The Community Plan is supported by Merton's Local Area Agreement (LAA), which was approved by central government in 2008, and is refreshed annually. The central theme of the Merton's LAA is 'bridging the gap' which aims to narrow inequalities between the East and West of the borough. Each LAA priority will have a delivery plan that contains activities to support the achievements of these targets.

The Council's Business Plan 2009-2012 is our most important planning document. It sets out the organisations strategic objectives and priorities for improvement. It is underpinned by annual departmental service plans that describe the activities and targets needed to improve services and outcomes.

² Merton's Sustainable Communities Strategy

4.3 Partnership Working

In working to improve the quality of life, Merton Council recognises the need to work in partnership in effecting and managing the scale of change we anticipate and are planning. The council promotes equality within the Merton Partnership³ and will continue to work jointly with partners to tackle discrimination and promote equality and good relations between people of different racial, cultural, faith and religion, disabilities and gender and age groups. The Merton Partnership has developed an Equality and Diversity Policy that complements the work of this scheme, as well as the borough's Community Plan and Local Area Agreement (LAA).

5. Our Vision

Merton's Council's approach to equality and diversity is driven by its overall vision of Merton – as a great place to live and call home, where citizens are also neighbours and take responsibility for improving their own lives and neighbourhoods, supported by good value local services from Merton Council.

This vision is supported by the strategic themes that are set out in the Council's Business Plan 2009-2012:

Sustainable Communities – improving the environment, housing, economy and transport;

Safer and Stronger Communities – improving community safety and promoting diversity and community cohesion;

Healthier Communities – improving health, promoting well-being and reducing health inequalities;

Older People - engaging constructively with older people so they are able to play a full and active part in the life of the borough;

Children and Young People – improving the lives of children, young people and their families; and

Corporate Capacity – providing effective, value for money services.

Cross-cutting themes include:

Customer access, customer services and customer care – organising what we do and the way we do it around the needs of our customers;

Sustainable development – which reflects the council's role in helping to safeguard the environment;

Equalities, diversity and community cohesion – improving equality of opportunities and outcomes for all of Merton's diverse communities; and

Value for money - providing efficient and effective services with the resources available.

These strategic themes are linked to the themes and cross cutting issues in the Community Plan 2009-19 and Local Area Agreement 2008-2011.

³ Merton's Local Strategic Partnership

6. Our Commitment

Our Equality and Diversity Policy sets out our commitment to:

- promoting equal opportunity, social inclusion and human rights;
- eliminating unlawful discrimination;
- tackling harassment and victimisation;
- promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people and others;
- providing fair, accessible and appropriate services that meet the wide range of needs of everyone in the community;
- employing a diverse workforce at all grades and across all areas of the council;
- promoting good relations between people of different backgrounds between and within the community;
- encouraging participation in, and access to, community and civic life;
- making sure our policies and procedures do not have any unintended adverse impacts; and
- ensuring that our services give satisfaction to all.

The Equality and Diversity Policy (see Appendix 1), together with the Corporate Equality Scheme, sets out clearly what our customers can expect from the council as a community leader, service provider, employer and procurer of goods and services.

7. Achievements and improvements since 2006

During the last three years we have made good progress including:

- the council successfully achieved Level 4 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. This was verified by an external assessor from Edge Hill University who, along with the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) developed the Equality Standard;
- securing funding for the country's first purpose built intergenerational centre, aimed at providing a range of shared services and facilities under one roof for older people, children and young people is to be built in Eastfields, Mitcham. The centre is due to be opened in December 2009;
- a DVD film featuring independent travel for students with learning disabilities has received a commendation from The Prince Michael of Kent Trust;
- the first local authority to host an ambassadors' programme. The programme focuses on engaging with community organisations and seeking their support to act as ambassadors to promote Merton as an employer of choice;
- signing the London Child Poverty Pledge with the aim of reducing the proportion of children living in poverty to 17.5% by March 2010;

- a range of third sector organisations has been commissioned by the borough's early intervention, prevention and positive activities strategy, to deliver services that improve outcomes for vulnerable children aged 0-19 years;
- 91% of the borough's schools deliver a full core offer of extended services. This includes increased access to childcare activities, parent support, community facilities and specialist health and social care services;
- established a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Community Forum that is supported by the Police and the Primary Care Trust (PCT);
- increased the opportunities for gay and lesbian people to become foster carers and adopters as a result of a positive advertising and awareness raising campaign and, training of staff in assessment of gay and lesbian people as foster carers;
- Raynes Park High School is the first mainstream Secondary School in England to achieve the National Autistic Society's Accreditation Certificate. The Certificate was awarded for the schools Access Centre, and wider work across the school;
- eight of the borough's 11 designated children's centres are fully operational offering a range of accessible services for children and families. The remaining three are on track for completion by 2010;
- Mitcham Eastfields station was opened in July 2008, significantly improving the transport links to the east of the borough, one of the most deprived parts of Merton;
- the first Gypsy Traveller History Month was celebrated in Merton with an exhibition at the Heritage Centre. A DVD film celebrating the success of Traveller children at secondary school was also launched;
- developed 15 sheltered scheme units for African and Caribbean elders in Mitcham jointly with the London Boroughs' of Croydon and Wandsworth, which opened in 2006;
- achieved 81% of targets in the Ethnic Minority Housing Strategy Action Plan for 2006-2009;
- The Domestic Violence Project Board has secured funding for training, 2 additional IDVA's (Independent Domestic Violence Advocates) and additional services offered through children schools and families in regards to families experiencing Domestic Abuse and Violence.
- the Young People Stop Smoking Service was commended for the Health inequalities Award at the 2008 MJ Achievement Awards;
- 61.8% of pupils achieved five or more GCSEs grade A* - C in 2008 - this was the highest improvement rate in the country;
- a race equality action plan in the Youth Justice Service has been developed which, is overseen by the Youth Justice Board and Safer Merton;

- a review of equality impact assessments across the council and the development of an equality impact assessment toolkit;
- facilitating and supporting a number of disabled people to achieve vocational qualifications in management and advocacy;
- our Learning Disability Partnership Board is cited as an example of good practice by the Department of Health for involving disabled people in decision making;
- national Tilley Award finalist for our work in reducing crime related gang activity in 2007;
- put in place a strategy to support schools in meeting their duty to promote community cohesion; and
- Merton's youth services have increased take-up of the service by young women, and have introduced strategies to increase take up by other under represented groups.

8. Our Aim for Equality

Merton Council aims to be a leading authority for promoting equality in local services; an employer of choice for local people; and a place where staff can achieve their full potential. We aim to be accredited as 'excellent' for integrating equality and diversity into all parts of our business activities using the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG).

The EFLG replaces the Equality Standard in Local Government, which was established in 2001. The new EFLG is designed to reflect recent demographic changes and emerging thinking on the nature of equality and diversity. It has been built on existing work by providing a simpler framework, reducing the amount of process and introducing a more outcome-focussed approach. By integrating public duties on race, disability, gender, including age, religion or belief, and sexual orientation it will provide a common performance framework for compliance, and enable authorities working with the Local Strategic Partnership to identify and analyse their Local Area Agreements (LAA) and delivery plans which are aligned to the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

The EFLG consists of five themes, which relates to the new performance regime and Comprehensive Area Assessment. These themes are designed to improve services, life chances and outcomes for local people and are integral to the council's equality priorities, which include:

- knowing our local community and understanding its needs;
- providing strong leadership and partnership;
- engaging with the community and improving satisfaction;
- providing efficient responsive services and excellent customer care; and
- being an exemplary employer with a modern and diverse workforce.

We will use these themes as building blocks for each department to work towards excellence and support the council's aim to be accredited for embedding equality into all business activities as set out below.

We will Know Our Local Community and Understand Its Needs by:

- improving our knowledge and understanding of the community, service users, employees, contractors and partnerships;
- using a range of techniques to collect and analyse equalities profiles of our communities to assess and set equality objectives; and
- monitoring and evaluating equality objectives and outcomes to provide an evidence base for identifying needs and tackling persistent inequalities.

We will Provide Strong Leadership, Partnership and Organisational Commitment by:

- developing equality champions amongst councillors and senior officers;
- setting out a clear vision of equality, which is shared and owned by the council, our partners and the local community;
- having clear organisational and partnership equality priorities that are set and owned by all key stakeholders, including the voluntary sector and community sector;
- establishing a prioritised programme of equality impact assessments by mapping the council's functions and services;
- integrating equality impact assessments into service, partnership, programme and project planning;
- embedding equality and diversity into the development of all employment; procurement; service plans and strategies, including LAA delivery plans; and
- enabling internal and external scrutiny of our own and the Partnership's performance against equality objectives, outcomes and impact.

We will Engage With the Community and Improve Satisfaction by:

- creating accessible and inclusive ways for people to participate in community and civic life;
- celebrating a variety of cultures, lifestyles and faiths within the borough;
- involving and consulting with all our communities, including vulnerable and marginalised groups, before priorities are agreed, to ensure their views are taken into account;
- ensuring effective forums are in place to enable all equality groups, individuals and representatives to challenge, scrutinise and evaluate priorities; and
- ensuring all communications meet the needs and preferences of individuals and can be accessed by all communities and equality groups.

We will Provide Responsive Services and Excellent Customer Care by:

- ensuring service providers have an understanding of different cultures and needs, and customers and citizens are treated with dignity and respect;
- developing systems to collect, analyse and measure data on how all sections of the community are able to access services;
- integrating equality and diversity into tendering, commissioning and contracting processes;
- increasing the role and capacity of the third sector in providing services;
- designing services that take account of the different needs of user groups; and
- monitoring take up of services and complaints to identify negative impact or discrimination.

We will Become an Employer of Choice With a Modern and Diverse Workforce by:

- creating an inclusive workforce reflective of the borough's community;
- understanding the barriers equality groups face to employment and develop strategies to mitigate this;
- operating fair employment practice by reviewing guidance, pay, and terms and conditions to ensure they are fair and address any gaps;
- monitoring and analysing employment data to identify adverse trends in recruitment, promotion, training and development, bullying and harassment and grievance procedures;
- integrating equality and diversity programmes into staff learning and development programmes and appraisal systems; and
- attracting, retaining and developing the diversity of staff at all levels across the council.

9. Our equality priorities as a provider of services

9.1 Developing our priorities

Since 2006, the Council and its partners has organised a number of forums, focus groups and public consultation exercises to understand the needs and concerns of the different diversity groups living in the borough. These have included:

- Staff Survey 2008;
- Annual Residents Survey 2006, 2007 and 2008;
- Young Residents Survey 2006, 2007 and 2008;
- Safer Merton Joint Strategic Assessment 2007 and 2008;
- Merton's Review of Youth Activities 2008;

- Childcare sufficiency assessment 2008;
- Ofsted Tell us Survey in Schools;
- Scrutiny review of youth engagement 2008;
- Older People's Strategy consultation 2007;
- Black and Minority Ethnic Strategy 2007;
- Play and Leisure Survey for children with disabilities 2006;
- Cultural Strategy 2006;
- Merton as an employer of disabled people 2006;
- Gypsy and Traveller conference 2006; and
- Merton's Children's Council and Merton's Youth Parliament;
- SEN and Inclusion Strategy 2007-10
- SEN and Inclusion Strategy 2010-20

This information has been used to inform the development of the Corporate Equality Scheme and ensure the activities of the council eliminate discrimination and remove barriers, and are relevant to the issues for these communities.

We have also met with community and faith groups that work on diversity issues to make sure we had input from experts and professionals in this field.

Our priorities were also informed by national and local statistics and research undertaken by the council and other public and statutory authorities on equalities issues.

The priorities identified for the Corporate Equality Scheme 2010-2013 follow the equality strands covered by current equalities legislation. These are set out below.

9.2 Race Equality

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 was enacted in response to the MacPherson Report recommendations emerging from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. The Act provides a legal framework for public authorities to promote race equality and eliminate all forms of unlawful discrimination. This means making race equality a central aspect of our activities and decision-making processes.

Merton has long been a borough known for tackling issues of race and equality. Merton's commitment to challenging prejudice and discrimination is a product of its history, responses to social injustices, and the energy of its community and faith leaders. We have established events that celebrate Black History Month; the development of the BME Strategic Plan for Merton, and the establishment of a Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations, which together have increased awareness and understanding of race equality.

Whilst we have made significant progress in tackling racial discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for all Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) individuals and communities in Merton, societal problems still exist. People from BAME communities still experience multiple inequalities: they are more likely to live in deprived areas, with lower incomes spread across larger household sizes, have less social mobility, and some ethnic groups continue to underachieve in educational attainment at Key Stage 4 (GCSEs). They also continue to experience discrimination, prejudice, stereotyping and racism in employment and service provision, face health and housing inequalities, and are subject to race hate crime and harassment.

Gypsies and Travellers and new immigrants face particularly acute problems in accessing information and services as many public services have low awareness of the needs of these communities.

Our successes to date include:

- narrowing the attainment gap between the borough average and specific ethnic groups by introducing initiatives like 'Black Boys Can' project;
- reducing the number of pupils from BAME groups who are excluded from school;
- improving the school attendance of traveller children through the work of the Traveller Education Service;
- through effective publicity campaigns, increasing the diversity of foster carers to match the needs of the borough's looked after children;
- setting up a Hate Crime Project Management Board to tackle racial incidents and improve reporting;
- celebrating the diversity of the borough through key events like Black History Month, Traveller History Month, Chinese New Year;
- increasing the take up of adult learning amongst BAME people;
- setting up a BAME Housing Forum to understand and address the specific housing needs of BAME residents; and
- increasing our Translation Service provision through drop in sessions at Merton Link.
- Increase awareness of Honour Based Violence, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation
- Winning the regional problem solving award for reducing Anti-Social Behaviour (the only borough to be a finalist three years in a row)

Our priorities for the next three years are to:

- close the school attainment gap for all underachieving groups;
- reduce health inequalities for BAME communities;
- increase the number of volunteers from BAME communities;

- reduce the proportion of pupils from specific ethnic minority groups who are excluded from school;
- increase take up of services provided by Merton's Family Support Team to BAME groups;
- continue to provide support to people whose first language is not English through use of our Translation Service and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes.
- support BAME businesses and organisations;
- celebrate the borough's diversity;
- engage and involve BAME groups and organisations in meaningful dialogue and consultation;
- tackle race hate crime; and
- increase the levels of satisfaction with public services amongst BAME residents.

9.3 Disability Equality and Mental Health

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 has placed a 'specific and general duty' on public authorities to actively seek ways to ensure that disabled people are treated fairly and equally in accessing information, in the provision of goods and services, and in employment. In broad terms this means eliminating discrimination and harassment of disabled people, promoting equality of opportunity between disabled people and others, encouraging participation by disabled people in public life, and taking steps to meet the needs of disabled people.

Merton Council recognises its role as an employer and community leader in promoting equality of opportunity towards disabled people. Merton adopts the 'social model of disability' when thinking about the design and access to buildings, transport systems, jobs, and in the provision of goods and services, and social and cultural activity. We are committed to promoting independence, well-being and choice for disabled people by addressing the social and holistic needs of disabled people, rather than focusing on the 'medical model' which only looks at a person's impairment. Merton's aim is for disabled people to be able to contribute to the community as equal citizens.

The definition of a disabled person as set out in the DDA is someone with a 'physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities'. This includes physical impairments such as sight, hearing, heart disease, diabetes and epilepsy, also mental impairment including learning disabilities and mental health problems. Merton Council recognises that people cannot be put into single categories, and that we all identify and define ourselves in different ways. We will work to ensure we do not exclude people on account of unnecessary labelling and categorisation.

Research has shown that disabled people are more likely to experience disadvantage and exclusion from day to day activities because of their

impairment. This disadvantage takes place through environmental, attitudinal and organisational barriers created by society. The latest figures from the Office of National Statistics show that the poverty rate among those who are disabled is twice the rate for those who are not.

Mental Health

Mental Health is still surrounded by myths and stigma in society. Statistics show that at one in four people will experience a mild to moderate mental health issue during their lifetime.

We at Merton are committed to promoting mental health awareness and tolerance in the borough and will train staff give them a better understanding and appreciation of mental health and mental illness. We are also committed to working with local agencies delivering services that meet the needs of mental health sufferers in the borough

Our successes to date include:

- increasing the range of accessible resources available for people with disabilities through the Adult Education Service;
- securing funding for specialised housing units for people with mental health problems and learning disabilities in Mitcham;
- creating structures to support the engagement of disabled young people in the decision making process through forums and networks;
- establishing the Your Shout group to give disabled young people a political voice;
- implementing the recommendations from the scrutiny review of Merton as an Employer of Disabled People in 2006;
- ensuring that all children centres in Merton are accessible and compliant with the DDA;
- providing support to all schools to ensure DDA compliance;
- joining the Mencap Pathway London pilot scheme;
- Introduced Soundfield systems for the hearing impaired into some of our schools
- Mobility training for the visually impaired is delivered by Merton Vision
- ensuring that GPs in Merton now offer annual health checks to all people with a learning disability in order to overcome the health inequalities highlighted by the government's independent inquiry;
- increasing the the range and provision of support for special educational needs (SEN) in Merton with the aim of improving educational outcomes for these pupils;
- introducing a number of DDA adaptations to Merton's public buildings, including;
 - ramps;
 - stairlifts;

- electronic door opening systems;
- induction loops; and
- sign video links systems in the Civic Centre and Chapel Orchard;
- improving our intranet and web-pages facility for disabled users;
- ensuring that all online recruitment packs are available in large print or Braille; and
- running a number of workshops with disabled individuals and voluntary sector groups to explore how the PCT and Merton could improve the support provided to people with a range of long-term disabilities. As a result of this work new support pathways were devised and the development of a user led 'Centre for Independent Living' was proposed.
- We have been commended by the National Strategies SEN Senior Adviser for our approach and support given to schools and were used as a model with regards Equality and Diversity.

Our priorities for the next three years are to:

- review and improve access to services for disabled people of all ages;
- increase choice and control in the provision of social care and support services;
- increase disability access to and within council buildings, and improve roads and pavements;
- review and improve transport services for disabled people;
- raise the attainment and achievement of children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD);
- increase the participation of children and young people with SEN/LDD in mainstream services;
- implement phased integrated service for children with disabilities;
- increase the access to post-16 provision for disabled young people and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN);
- increase the voice of disabled people in the community through the numbers who vote in local elections and improve representation on the Local Strategic Partnership and in our democratic structures;
-
- increase involvement of disabled people in planning, service design and delivery;
- provide more sport and leisure activity for disabled people;
- create mechanism for engagement with disabled people and external public service providers;
- Increase understanding of disability equality and social model of disability and its application and

- improve housing services for disabled people.
- Working in partnership with Merton Mind to deliver staff training on mental health

9.4 Gender Equality

We want Merton to be a vibrant, thriving community where all citizens have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and where disadvantage and discrimination are challenged and rooted out.

The Council is committed to combating sex discrimination and sexism and promoting the equality of men and women. Women make up the majority of the borough's population and the Council's workforce and we recognise that, while women and men make a positive contribution to the community, they can experience discrimination, social and economic disadvantage, lack of recognition, inferior status and negative attitudes.

This inequality is experienced across the range of public services - in employment and training, access to services, access and take-up of health care services, protection from crime and domestic violence, and the provision and availability of leisure and cultural activities.

We also recognise that society has stereotypes for both women and men, and both women and men can lose out on opportunities because of these stereotypes.

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and the Gender Equality Duty introduced in the Equality Act 2006 places a 'general and specific duty' on Merton Council to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment; and
- promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

The Council is also committed to ensuring the rights under the Gender Recognition Act 2005, which ensures the right of transgender people (who have Gender Recognition Certificates) to be recognised in their re-assigned or social gender.

Gender re-assignment is a process which enables people whose gender identity differs from their biological sex to be recognised in their acquired (new) gender. The term 'trans' man/women or 'trans people' is the preferred term used by those people who might be described as broadly falling within this context.

Although the Sex Discrimination Act and the Gender Equality Duty already apply to trans people who have undergone or intend to undergo gender reassignment, the new Equality Bill proposes to broaden this so that gender equality and the gender duty apply to trans people who are not necessarily intending to undergo gender reassignment.

Our successes to date include:

- promoting single sex provision in leisure activity to respect cultural needs;
- developing and commissioning services to address women's safety and domestic violence;
- increasing take up of children's centre services by fathers and lone parents;
- increasing take up of the youth service provision by young women; and
- increasing the number of female councillors involved in local politics in Merton since 2006.

Our priorities for the next three years are to:

- work to combat stereotypical attitudes that lead to gender segregation in occupational groups and discrimination in accessing jobs, training and services;
- increase the educational attainment of boys from low income families at all Key Stages, and girls at Key Stage 2;
- increase the take up of youth service provision by Asian young women;
- work in partnership with other organisations to combat sexual harassment and domestic violence;
- increase the take up of youth services by girls and young women;
- ensure trans customers, service users and staff are treated with respect and dignity in accordance with the gender in which they present, are treated in a non-discriminatory way, and have full access to employment, goods and services;
- celebrate International Women's Day;
- improve the health and well-being of women and men with a focus on reducing health inequalities; and
- increase the safety of young women and young men in the local area.

9.5 Age Equality

We recognise that both younger people and older people face discrimination because of their age. This is largely due to stereotypes and perceptions.

Negative attitudes, assumptions associated with age, and myths about youth and ageing can lead to both younger and older people being socially and economically disadvantaged, excluded and marginalised. We believe that younger and older people have the right to equality of opportunity, and make a significant and valuable contribution to the community.

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 outlaws discrimination on the grounds of age in the areas of employment and vocational training. We believe that age equality means securing the equal participation of people of every age across all areas of society, securing a balance between equal citizenship, equality of opportunity and equality of outcome.

Merton is committed to going beyond the requirements set out in legislation to focus proactively on integrating age equality into all areas of the council's work, including employment practice, policy development and service delivery. With an ageing population we believe delivering services to meet the needs of all age groups is a vital mainstream concern, not a marginal 'minority' issue.

Our successes to date include:

- securing funding for the country's first Intergenerational Centre to be built in Mitcham;
- organising a range of events as part of Merton's Celebrating Age Festival for over 50s;
- establishing an Older People's Housing Forum to give older people a voice in housing needs;
- establishing a Youth Parliament and Children's Council to involve young people in local democracy;
- reducing the number of young people who are not in education, training or employment;
- introducing age equality into recruitment and selection training programmes;
- establishing a successful graduate training scheme programme; and
- developing the Hear by Right Standard for engagement with children and young people

Our priorities for the next three years are to:

- work to challenge age related stereotypes;
- involve older people and younger people in the development of major council initiatives and policies;
- create opportunities and initiatives that promote greater understanding of, and interaction between, different age groups;
- improve the cohesion among different groups of young people by tackling the negative issues associated with gangs;
- continue to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training;
- increase young people's understanding of local democracy and encourage their participation;
- ensure that the 'participation promise' is implemented in all children's services; and
- improve safety for younger and older people.

9.6 Religion and Belief Equality

We recognise that faith plays an active part in the lives of individuals and communities and is often central to an individual's identity. To hold a religious or other belief is a basic human right that should be treated with respect and tolerance. However, there is still widespread indifference and ignorance towards religion and belief.

Religion and belief is defined as being any religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief, such as humanism. It does not include any philosophical or political belief that is not similar to a religion.

The Equality Act (Religion and Belief Regulations) 2007, makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone because of their religion or belief (or because they have no belief). This applies:

- in any aspect of employment;
- when providing goods, facilities and services;
- when providing education;
- in using or disposing of premises; or
- when exercising public functions.

Merton recognises that people can face discrimination because of attitudes in society towards the faith communities to which they belong, and that belittling someone's beliefs or unreasonably promoting your own faith can be offensive.

We also acknowledge that society is becoming increasingly aware of the intricate relationship between faith and religion, race, economic inequality and extremism.

The council is committed to eliminating harassment, discrimination and exclusion on the basis of religion or belief. We recognise our role in promoting understanding, mutual respect and acceptance of diversity between people of faith and no faith.

Our successes to date include:

- respecting religious diversity by, where possible, avoiding setting meeting dates and times that clash with significant dates through use of our Festival of Faiths Calendar;
- implementing advice and guidance to schools on meeting their duty to promote community cohesion;
- through the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) ensuring schools provide a balanced religious education syllabus;
- establishing an Interfaith Forum that works to promote shared learning and understanding of different faiths and beliefs in Merton;
- involving faith groups in addressing issues as part of our safe-guarding children agenda; and

- delivering Interfaith projects through our community cohesion programmes, such as the Peace Garden in Mitcham, and Faith Awareness Day in libraries.

Our priorities for the next three years are to:

- improve communication, involvement and engagement of faith and belief groups across all council activity;
- ensure information is communicated in ways accessible to faith and belief groups in Merton;
- promote better cross-cultural and inter-faith dialogue and engagement with faith groups and others;
- ensure that schools are meeting their duty to promote community cohesion;
- provide services that are religion and belief-sensitive;
- work to eliminate all forms of religious hatred and harassment and faith hate crime and build a culture of understanding and respect;
- celebrate religious and cultural days and festivals;
- create opportunities for interfaith dialogue in schools and colleges; and
- develop young faith Community Ambassadors.

9.7 Sexual Orientation Equality

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) people are represented across every community and equality group in Merton, and they make a significant cultural, social and economic contribution to the borough, yet they face discrimination, victimisation and harassment on multiple levels on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Negative social attitudes and injustices to LGB people can lead to isolation, exclusion and inequalities in service provision, and employment.

Sexual orientation is the term used to define whom we are attracted to sexually and emotionally. Orientation towards the same sex is commonly referred to as lesbian woman or gay man; orientation towards the opposite sex is commonly referred to as straight or heterosexual; and orientation towards the same and the opposite sex is commonly referred to as bi-sexual.

Merton is committed to promoting equality of opportunity to all of our diverse residents and communities. We aim to provide accessible and non-discriminatory services that are inclusive of the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people. We are committed to tackling homophobic hate crime, harassment and abuse directed towards LGB people. We are also keen to increase the visibility of LGB people to encourage their engagement and participation in public life.

Recent changes in law and have provided the local LGB community with a greater degree of legal protection and has helped to promote their well-being and sense of equality.

The Employment Equality Sexual Orientation Regulations 2003, and the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007 makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation in employment, in the provision of goods, facilities and services, in education and in the exercise of public functions.

The Civil Partnership Act 2004, allows same sex couples to make a formal, legal commitment to each other by forming a civil partnership. It also gives rights to same-sex couples that are comparable with those of married couples. This means they are entitled to equitable treatment regarding tax (including inheritance tax), employment and pension benefits, income-related benefits, applying for parental responsibility for the child of a civil partner, and birth and death registration.

Our successes to date include:

- establishing a Lesbian Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Community Forum;
- celebrating LGBT History Month in February 2009;
- achieving high satisfaction rates in Civil Partnership ceremonies;
- increasing opportunities for gay and lesbian people to become foster carers and adopters;
- setting up a youth project to support lesbian, gay and bisexual young people;
- simplifying third party reporting procedures to encourage reporting of LGB hate crime;
- increasing diversity monitoring in service provision to establish take-up of services and identify barriers;
- working with the PCT to promote health and well-being amongst LGB people; and
- producing a housing benefit guide for people in same sex relationships.

Our priorities for the next three years are to:

- develop more accessible and user-friendly ways of engaging with LGB people;
- tackle and reduce homophobic crime in Merton;
- encourage and support the setting up of support networks and self-organised LGB groups to reduce feelings of isolation;
- equip teachers with the skills and confidence to address homophobic bullying in schools;
- provide better health care provision for LGB people;
- increase visibility of LGB role-models in the community;
- create more opportunities for social activity between LGB people and others;

- improve the collection of data of LGB people in order to access the needs, experiences and volume of LGB service users and employees;
- increase the take-up of youth service provision for young LGB people;
- celebrate LGBT History Month and raise awareness of homophobia as part of International Day Against Homophobia to help change attitudes and behaviours; and
- continue to increase the number of LGB people who are registered as suitable foster carers and adopters.

9.8 Cross-cutting priorities

Socio-economic background: Merton has signed the London Child Poverty Pledge with the aim of reducing the proportion of children living in poverty to 17.5% by March 2010, we are currently at 19.5%. Key to this work is supporting lone parents into employment, reducing the number of socially inactive young people by supporting them into further and higher education and training, reducing teenage pregnancy rates, and increasing childcare provision.

Access to services: Accessing information can be affected by a person's circumstances or condition. Older people, those who are disabled, and people who's first language is not English are likely to face barriers in accessing services compared with other groups. Trend data from council monitoring information provides evidence that these groups are underrepresented in accessing a number of council services, particularly those related to health and recreational services.

Educational attainment: Narrowing the attainment gap between some ethnic groups and their peers, and supporting our most vulnerable groups such as looked after children, children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those from low income families, to achieve improved educational outcomes remains a key priority in Merton. Raising the educational attainment of white British boys from low income families is a particular area of focus.

Consultation, engagement and participation: Involving local residents and customers is a major part of Merton's policy and decision-making processes. How we engage with communities in order to hear their views about current services and to share ideas on how these can be improved to meet current and emerging needs, is crucial in delivering services tailored to meet diverse customer needs.

Communications and access to information: A crucial part of promoting equality of opportunity is to ensure that communications and information is accessible to all, and is available in the right places at the right times. Feedback from customers, relevant community representatives, and older and disabled people has shown that not knowing about services, opportunities and support, or information being in an inaccessible format, has put them at a disadvantage. A key challenge for the council will be to develop better

communication methods that meet the needs of minority groups like disabled people and people whose first language is not English.

Community Cohesion: Merton enjoys strong community relations, with 85% of local people stating that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area. The increasing diversity of Merton's communities, particularly in schools, responding to the needs of new and emerging communities, and helping them to integrate with established communities will be a vital role for the council. The threat of extremist activity against a backdrop of increasing tension worldwide will also call for stronger local leadership to help build resilient communities.

Community Safety: Merton has one of the lowest crime rates in London. . However fear of crime remains a top concern for local people. Equality is embedded in all of the work undertaken and disadvantaged groups such as vulnerable victims, rehabilitating offenders and ex drug users (as well as their dependants) feature heavily within our work as well as ensuring that we have a victim and detection/resolution focus. Each year the partnership undertakes a survey and assessment of priorities in order to establish which areas of work they should focus on. In 2008/09 the strategic priorities were: Anti-social behaviour (including environmental crime, geographic crime and mixed tenure resolutions), Alcohol (abuse and related night time economy crime), residential burglary (including car key burglary), Domestic Violence and Abuse (including sexual abuse and gender based crime), Hate Crime (Race, Religion, Disability and LGBT groupings). The most serious violence is amongst Young People who in particular have concerns about bullying and anti-social behaviour, and many feel unsafe in certain neighbourhoods due to territorial boundaries

Customer Insight: Merton aims to be an organisation that is customer-focussed, with a deep knowledge of our residents and service users so we can understand the breath and depth of their needs. The council is working to serve all our customers equally and having customer insight is of particular importance in achieving this. By developing customer journey maps and using other sources of customer data we will be able to structure our thinking, decision making, service design and delivery to best fit the expectations of our customers. One particular strand of this work is the aim to achieve Customer Services Excellence (CSE) accreditation for all its frontline services by 2011.

10. Our Equality Priorities as an employer

The London Borough of Merton employs approximately 5,535 people including schools-based staff. The Council is constantly changing and adapting to reflect business needs. We recognise that a workforce that is well-led, motivated, developed, diverse, flexible and focused on the services we provide is a key priority for us.

Our annual Workforce Development Plan details the current workforce profile and identifies workforce issues and needs, setting out a medium to long-term strategic direction.

To serve a diverse community well, we recognise that our staff need to come from a wide range of backgrounds that reflect the local community. Our recruitment procedure provides equal opportunities and helps us to have a diverse workforce.

Three quarters of Merton's staff are female, with 59.1% of women in the top 5% salary bracket. In the 2008 staff survey, 76% of respondents agreed that employees at Merton Council are treated fairly regardless of gender.

Our successes to date include:

- being the first local authority to host an Ambassadors Programme, focusing on engaging with community organisations and promoting Merton as an employer of choice;
- increasing the number of staff from BAME backgrounds employed in the council;
- increasing the number of leadership posts within Merton that are occupied by women to 50%;
- achieving a rating of 'significant improvement' in our Workstep provision when inspected by Ofsted;
- implementing Single Status across the council, ensuring equal pay for staff doing the same jobs;
- creating flexible working opportunities for staff and carers;
- ensuring transparent staff progression, secondments and appointments based on skills, experience and knowledge;
- putting in place a comprehensive learning and development programme for staff at all levels in equality and diversity;
- including equality and diversity in induction, appraisals, and team meetings;
- achieving Investors in People (IIP) accreditation;
- achieving Job Centre Plus accreditation;
- achieving Two Ticks accreditation;
- consulting with staff, trade unions and staff support groups;
- introducing comprehensive people management procedures dealing with bullying, harassment and victimisation;
- providing staff support via Occupational Health Services, Mediation and our Employee Assistance Programme;
- supporting staff support groups such as the Disabled Employees Forum, Carers Group, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Network;
- providing clear guidelines on reasonable adjustments to support staff to stay in work should they become disabled;
- developing a Carers Charter;

- including equality impact assessment as part of business planning and budget setting processes;
- joining the Mencap Pathway London pilot scheme 'Workright';
- increasing placements for people with disabilities by having a Mencap Co-ordinator placed in HR to promote job carving;
- seeing an improvement in overall perception of LBM as an organisation that promotes equality of opportunity, values diversity and ensures equal application of policies and procedures in the 2008 Staff Attitude Survey results;
- carrying out an anonymous staff audit to update HR records on diversity indicators;
- producing quarterly workforce data monitoring that is proactively used by Departmental Equality Steering Groups; and
- achieving a percentage of employees with a disability in Merton of 6.9% against an average of 4.4% for our 14 comparator boroughs.

To inform our priority areas for improvement we have gathered evidence from our equality monitoring data, equality impact assessments and consultation with staff, including our staff survey.

Our priorities for the next three years are to:

- re-establish the Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic Staff Group and continue to support all other staff support groups;
- continue to monitor the diversity of the workforce using workforce data, Merton's socio-demographic data, and borough trends;
- continue to promote the Ambassadors Programme to attract a diverse workforce and engage with under-represented groups;
- embed an apprenticeship programme to increase opportunities for young people in the borough and work with partner organisations such as Kingston Merton, Education Business partnership, Connexions, Youth Service and Merton College;
- review current recruitment processes to ensure that it is still relevant, transparent and accessible to all groups;
- continue to embed a culture of embracing diversity through learning and development opportunities;
- maintain our current 'good' rating from the Ofsted Workstep inspection;
- keep up to date with emerging legislation and ensure employees understand their obligations through learning and development activities;
- ensure that positive images of older people and an age diverse workforce are promoted in the workplace;
- achieve customer excellence through embedding a culture which embraces and includes all aspects of diversity in service delivery; and

- recognise that Merton's diverse workforce will have different faiths and beliefs and ensure that HR policies take these into account.

11. How we will achieve these priorities

11.1 Responsibilities

Merton's elected Members have overall responsibility for the Council's Corporate Equality Scheme. The cabinet member for Community Safety 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 Scheme, including making sure that equalities is central to all work done by the council, communicating and promoting the Corporate Equality Scheme 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. Departmental teams will be responsible for the delivery of the Corporate Equality Scheme, through service, teams and personal development plans.

All managers must be familiar with the Scheme 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.

11.2 Core processes

The Council has adopted a structured approach that systematically integrates equality and diversity into its main business planning activities among all staff at all levels, and with those working in partnership and providing goods and services on our behalf. The council will strive for excellence through the rigorous implementation of the Equality Framework for Local Government.

Merton's Corporate Equality Scheme will be translated into action plans at corporate and departmental level and will be integrated into other policies and plans for service delivery, employment and partnership working.

12 Our specific legal duties

Under current race, disability and gender anti-discrimination legislation we have a 'general duty' to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and good community relations between people of different backgrounds. This

general duty is supported by a number of ‘specific duties’. These duties require us to set out our arrangements for:

- how we involve different equality groups in developing the Scheme;
- identifying relevant policies, functions and services that are equality relevant across the six equality strands;
- assessing and consulting on the likely impact of existing and proposed policies, functions and services;
- monitoring policies, services and functions for adverse impact, including workforce data;
- publishing consultations and assessment results;
- ensuring public access to service information and to services;
- training staff to understand equality implications;
- procuring goods and services; and
- monitoring and reviewing the Corporate Equality Scheme.

Our approach to each of these is set out in the table below.

Duty	Arrangements
Involving people in producing the scheme	Merton has a statutory duty to engage and involve people (particularly those who have a disability) in the development of this Corporate Equality Scheme. In producing this document the council has worked with equality organisations within the voluntary and community sector and members of the public who identify themselves as being from a recognised equalities group to ensure the priorities for the council and the actions that arise from these are relevant and will address their needs and concerns.
Identifying relevant policies and functions	In accordance with the requirements of relevant anti-discrimination legislation Merton has assessed its policies, functions and services for their relevance to promoting and delivering equality of opportunity in relation to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief through its service and policy reviews, equality impact assessments, and internal audit processes. However, it is recognised that the degree of relevancy will not necessarily be the same across all the six equality strands.
Assessing and consulting on likely impact of policies, functions and services	Over the next three years, we will use numerous tools such as scrutiny reviews, service monitoring and surveys, focus and forum group meetings, our Annual Residents Survey and Young People’s Survey, Resident Panels, Partnership Boards, and network groups to consult with customers and residents on existing and proposed new policies, functions and services. We will also make effective use of relevant information including population and census data, benchmark authorities with similar policies, survey results, equality and customer data

	<p>and commissioned research.</p> <p>We will ensure all new and significantly changing policies, functions and services are subject to a rigorous Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process to identify any adverse impact on the promotion of equality and community cohesion.</p> <p>We will make managers responsible for ensuring EIAs are carried out routinely and pro-actively on existing policies and when changes take place. The council’s service planning template explicitly requires managers to address equalities when reviewing their service and resource plans.</p> <p>Every year we will review our EIA policy, assess our findings and monitor progress.</p>
<p>Monitoring policies, functions and services for adverse impact</p>	<p>Knowing whether the Council’s policies, functions and services are achieving the aims of the Corporate Equality Scheme is largely dependant on having efficient, up to date and relevant monitoring systems in place.</p> <p>Heads of Service will be responsible for the collection, monitoring and analysis of equality data to ensure that any adverse impacts are dealt with as quickly as possible at service level.</p> <p>All Departments will produce regular progress reports that will tell us what actions have been taken to address any inequalities. This information will be shared with relevant partners through a range of protocols to improve knowledge of the community and enable all agencies to respond more effectively to local needs.</p> <p>We will regularly monitor our employment policies and practices to make sure we put our commitment to equality and diversity into practice and identify if there are any adverse impacts on different equality groups.</p> <p>Our workforce profile will include monitoring of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ job applications; ▪ promotions; ▪ performance; ▪ the reason for staff leaving; ▪ training and; ▪ our disciplinary and grievance procedures; and ▪ staff survey results.
<p>Publishing consultations and assessment results</p>	<p>The results of consultations will be communicated to service users and residents in accordance with the Council’s Consultation and Involvement Strategy. Information will be communicated using a range of different media’s including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ‘My Merton’ magazine;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Merton’s website; ▪ the local Guardian newspaper; ▪ JC DeCaux and other posters and banners; and ▪ postcards, leaflets and newsletters. <p>The results of EIAs carried out each year will be summarised and published in an annual report to Elected Members on the Council’s equality performance. This will also be published on the Council website. Departmental equality action plans that are developed as a result of the assessment process will be available upon request.</p>
<p>Ensuring public access to service information and services</p>	<p>Merton has a Communications Strategy and is developing an Involvement Strategy that together articulate the Council’s aim to inform and engage with internal and external customers in an open and transparent way by providing accurate, timely, accessible and relevant information.</p> <p>The council’s Inclusive Consultation Strategy is an integral part of ensuring the public are able to access information and services in appropriate formats and languages. The strategy provides guidance to officers on how to respond to and initiate contact with people with differing needs.</p> <p>The council also has written and visual style guides for the production of letters, leaflets, posters and web-page design.</p>
<p>Training staff to understand equality implications</p>	<p>The council is committed to mainstreaming equality and diversity into all council activity and promoting equality of opportunity and good community relations. All staff will be required to attend diversity, cultural awareness and disability awareness training programmes so they have an understanding of how equalities fits into the council’s overall business priorities and there day to day work.</p> <p>Those staff involved in the consultation, design and assessment of policies, functions and services will be given training and support in completing EIAs so they are aware of their responsibilities in response to equalities legislation.</p>
<p>Procuring Services</p>	<p>Merton is committed to ensuring that those contractors whom we procure goods and services from and we commission services to, share and implement our equality vision and values.</p> <p>As part of our Contract Standing Orders procedures we will expect contractors and suppliers to demonstrate that all practicable steps are being taken to eliminate discrimination, promote equal access and equal treatment in employment, and service delivery for all and promote good community relations.</p>
<p>Monitoring and Reviewing</p>	<p>The Corporate Equality Scheme identifies a number of actions, which will be monitored on a regular basis. Our performance will be reported annually to elected Members through our</p>

the Corporate Equality Scheme	<p>Executive Committee, and communicated to the Council's Chief Officers through the Corporate Management Team, which will be cascaded down to Heads of Service and Divisional Managers. The annual report of our equalities performance will be published on our website.</p> <p>The Scheme will be reviewed regularly to keep it current and relevant to Merton's communities. It will also be reviewed in light of future legislation.</p>
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Appendix I

Equality and Diversity Statement and Policy

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;
- 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 race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation and religion and belief, and salary.

Monitoring the policy

- This policy forms part of the Corporate Equality Scheme (CES). To measure the effectiveness of this policy, we will monitor service targets and employment practices taking action where necessary.

- The Corporate Equality Steering Group, the Corporate Management Team, and Councillors will monitor the CES in line with the Performance Management Framework.

Corporate Equality Scheme Action Plan

The Corporate Equality Scheme Action Plan lists all the activities the Council plans to undertake over the next three years to ensure that Merton becomes a borough that is a great place to live and call home. It is a living document and will be reviewed and reported on at least once a year. The actions have been divided into five sections that reflect Merton's aims under the Equality Framework for Local Government and sets out corporate and departmental improvement priorities that support the delivery of the scheme.

The activities in this action plan were developed to address the themes identified in Section 9 and 10. We involved and consulted with a number of voluntary, community, faith and equality groups in formulating the action plan. All activities in this plan form part of the Council's directorate and team's service plans and will be delivered as part of normal business activities.

The Corporate Equality Scheme Action Plan continues on next page.

Corporate Equality Scheme Action Plan 2010-2013

Key: Race (R), Disability (D), Gender (G), Age (A), Sexual Orientation (SO), Religion and Belief (RB)
Cross cutting themes: Socio-Economic (SE), Access to services (AS), Educational Attainment (EA), Consultation, Engagement and Participation (CEP), Communications and access to information (CA), Community Cohesion (CC), Community Safety (CS), Customer Insight (CI)

Equality Framework themes: Knowing your communities/equality mapping

- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and customer care
- A modern and diverse workforce

Ref no.	Equality Strand	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
Knowing our community and equality mapping							
1	All CI	Analyse information on the profile and needs of the community	Set up systems to collect, share and use customer profiles to identify inequalities and disadvantage within communities and groups	CAA EFLG	2010	All	Information is stored centrally and used locally to assess and determine needs
2	All CI	Use customer data to identify equality priorities across the authority	Develop equality journey maps to analyse customer experience, identify key equality gaps and set equality objectives	CAA EFLG	2010	All	Customer experience is evidenced and used to improve and raise equality standards
3	All CI	Make use of soft and hard data intelligence to develop a accurate picture of the	Use national, regional and local data to assess the changing profile of local	CAA EFLG	2010	All	National, regional and local data can be analysed and

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
4	All CI	community Review departmental arrangements for collecting and monitoring equality data across the council	people and their needs Carryout an equality audit across the council. Update the equality monitoring process in line with current best practice.	EFLG	2010	CEX	disaggregated and equality gaps identified. Equality monitoring data is collected consistently across all departments and used in line with best practice Service delivery equality monitoring reports are produced at specific and regular intervals and circulated to all designated groups
5	R CA	Review the demographic profile for newly emerging communities to support the development of support services	Develop and provide a range of ESOL courses in response to the borough profile Review the provision of Translation Service and ESOL programmes in the borough Establish a work programme for regularly updating	CAA EFLG	2011	CS/CH	Better gateway to services for newly emerging and arrived communities and those whose first language is not English
6	All	Improve the Merton Observatory as an evidence		LSP	2010	CEX	A reliable database for accurate and up

Ref no.	Equality Strand	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
	Key/Cross cutting theme	base to support planning within the council and Local Strategic Partnership	information				to date information
7	All	Use Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process to ensure we understand the impact of our work on people from different equality groups	Identify the functions which should undergo an EIA and produce a three year programme	Departmental Plans EFLG	2010	All	EIA's routinely used across the council including GMT. Evidence of implementation of equality actions/improvement arising from reviews and EIA's
8	D CI	Increase understanding of disability equality and the social model of disability and its application amongst managers, councillors and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness through articles in staff magazine (XChange) and My Merton • Organise staff briefing sessions with disabled people as facilitators • Review corporate diversity training for staff and councillors • Produce guidance on the Social Model of 		2010	CEX/HR	Better awareness of disability equality, parity of treatment in planning, design and delivery of services Increased dialogue with disabled people about their needs

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
9	R SO CI	Improve the collection of data of harder to reach groups like LGBT people and Gypsies and Travellers in order to assess their needs, experiences and impact	disability and Two Ticks symbol Develop mechanisms for obtaining information that is accurate and reliable.	Departmental Plans	2010	All	Better collection of data to inform service needs of harder to reach groups
10	All	Ensure all procurement and commissioned services take account of the differing needs of service users and residents	Ensure staff involved in commissioning and procuring services are familiar with and follow corporate guidance on the equality and diversity requirements, contract specifications and clauses	EFLG	2011	All	All procurement and commissioned services comply with equality requirements in respect of service delivery and the employment of staff
Place Shaping, Leadership and organisational commitment							
11	All	Promote the Equality and Diversity Policy	Develop a promotional campaign to promote values and raise awareness		2011	CEX/All	Increase in the percentage of residents who agree that the Council is an authority which treats people in a fair and non-discriminatory way Greater scrutiny of equality
12	All	Embed equality practice into the decision-making	Identify training for senior officers and scrutiny		2010	CEX	Greater scrutiny of equality

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
		and scrutiny review processes	members to ensure equality is incorporated into key decisions and reviews				considerations in decision-making and review processes
13	All	Strengthen the corporate and departmental structures for managing equality	Review the corporate and departmental structures and implement improvements, including delivering effective equalities training to staff		2010	CEX/AII	Staff feel better equipped to manage equality and deliver improvements
14	All	Conduct self assessment for each department using the new Equality Framework for Local Government	Produce departmental equality improvement plans by March 2010	EFLG	2010	CEX/AII	A gap analysis that identifies strengths and weaknesses against EFLG
15	All	Make departmental equality objectives and targets part of corporate performance management systems	Produce quarterly performance reports on equality objectives and targets linked to service plans, LAA targets and National Indicators.	Departmental Service Plans	2011	All	Performance targets used to drive better equality outcomes
16	All SE	Develop an employment and skills strategy	Produce a programme of social enterprise/training and enterprise support targeted at the most deprived communities in the borough		2011	ER	Improved match between job opportunities and skills in the community
17	All	Achieve "excellent" authority status under the	Use a range of web-based resources, online evidence tools and help from peers in	EFLG	2010/1 1	CEX/AII	Gain 'Excellent' accreditation against EFLG

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
18	All	Equality Framework for Local Government regime Strengthen the Merton Partnership's commitment to equality	I&DEA to prepare for accreditation process Produce a partnership action plan for equality, cohesion and social inclusion	LAA Merton Partnership Equality and Diversity Policy	2010	CEX	Pooling of evidence and resources to narrow equality gaps
19	D A SO CEP	Increase the voice of underrepresented groups/people in the community through their involvement and participation in democratic processes	Promote community forums, local democracy week, and develop new routes to involvement.		2011	CS/CEX	Annual survey of community forums will show any change Increase in NI 4 for 2010 Place Survey
20	All CA	Regularly communicate to residents our equality and cohesion objectives, how we have responded to community needs and promote good relations	Articles in My Merton Press releases Periodic messages of commitment from the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council	EFLG Community Cohesion Strategy	2010-2013	CEX	Increase in % of people that feel the council treats people in a fair and non-discriminatory way – via Annual Residents Survey
21	All CC	Support a wide of community events to bring people of different backgrounds together	Develop and implement a coordinated cross council approach to celebrating diversity and promoting cohesion in the borough	Community Cohesion Strategy	2011	CEX/All	Increase attendance at community events Increase in the % of people who believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
22	A RB R CC	Embed the importance of intergenerational work and continue to promote community cohesion and positive relationships amongst and between young people and their communities	<p>Create opportunities for intergenerational interaction and engagement through use of intergenerational centre facilities and developed programmes</p> <p>Joint community forum/youth parliament/student council events</p> <p>Promote engagement opportunities to young people including Local Democracy Week</p>	Community Cohesion Strategy	2010	All	<p>(NI 1)</p> <p>Increased attendance of younger people at community forums</p> <p>Joint events well attended and repeated.</p> <p>Evaluation of Local Democracy Week by participants.</p>
23	All	Achieve Customer Service Excellence throughout the council by embedding a culture which embraces and includes all aspects of diversity in service delivery	Prepare and support teams for assessment process	Business Plan	2012	CEX/AII	Accreditation across the council
24	R RB CS	Increase the resilience of the community to challenge and counter the threat of extremist activity	Develop an action plan and undertake a programme of activities to prevent extremist activity	PVE Action Plan	2011	CEX	Voluntary and community groups play an active role in building cohesive communities resilient

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
25	All SE	Reduce child poverty in Merton by delivering Merton's child poverty implementation plan	Roll out the 'employability toolkit across services in the borough	CYPP	2011	CSF	to extremism – NI35 Reduce the proportion of children living in poverty to 16.5% - NI116
26	All CC	Promote community cohesion in schools	Ensure all schools implement and regularly review an equality, diversity and community cohesion policy. Increase the number of schools with quality assured anti-bullying policies	CYPP Community Cohesion Strategy	2011	CSF	Increase pupils' confidence in their school's ability to tackle bullying. Improve Ofsted rating
27	D CEP	Increase the independence and mobility of disabled people by improving accessibility in the public realm in Merton	Set up Mobility Forum with internal and external road and transport providers and disabled people Improve Bus stop accessibility Review the accessibility of disabled car parking bays in council car parks and ensure they are all DDA compliant Ensure that all new development complies with		2011	ER/CS	Greater independence in getting about in the borough

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
28	R A	Create more opportunities for young people and ethnic minority communities to volunteer within their local communities	Work with Local Strategic Partners, voluntary and community groups in developing and promoting opportunities for volunteering		2012	CEX/AII	Increase in the numbers of people volunteering in the community – NI 6
29	G, CS	Work in partnership with other organisations to combat sexual harassment and domestic violence, Increase awareness about forced marriages, honour based crime and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)	Delivery of a number of action plans	Adult Treatment Plan 2008/2009 All service level agreements Partnership Sexual Violence action plan Domestic Violence Strategy and action plan	2011	ER (Safer Merton)	Reduction in numbers of incidents of abuse as a result of targeted work
30	A G	Work to challenge gender and age related stereotypes	Promote enterprise and the role of women in local business during International		2012	CEX/AII	Increase business opportunities for women

Ref no.	Equality Strand	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
	Key/Cross cutting theme		Women's month				
31	RB CC	Promote better cross-cultural and inter-faith dialogue and engagement with faith groups and others	Support the work of Merton's Interfaith Forum in bringing about interfaith dialogue and community activities to communities of faiths and beliefs	Community Cohesion Strategy		CEX	Capacity building between communities to deliver joint initiatives
32	SO	Increase visibility of LGB role-models in the community	Cultural services to both celebrate LGB people and ensure activities are inclusive of their needs		2011	CEX/AII	Better engagement with LGB people as part of local democracy
33	All	Publish Cultural Strategy incorporating Olympic and para-Olympic programme	Work with partners and community groups to develop new Cultural Strategy 2011 to 2014 to include Olympics and Para-Olympic framework		2011	ER	A Cultural Strategy that is inclusive of all Merton's diverse communities and incorporates our Olympic aspirations
Community engagement and satisfaction							
34	All CEP CI	Promote and deliver our customer service standards	Involve customer groups and partners in identifying areas where satisfaction rates are low and implement improvement plans	Customer Care Strategy	2010	CEX/AII	Increase in customer satisfaction rates
35	All CEP	Publish a Community Engagement Strategy	Map engagement channels, ensure Strategy includes considerations on engaging and involving customers from different equalities		2010	CEX/AII	Engagement Strategy to be adopted by Merton Partnership

Ref no.	Equality Strand	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
	Key/Cross cutting theme						
36	R CEP CC	Support new communities to integrate in the borough	backgrounds Promote a Welcome Pack for new residents and those undertaking citizenship ceremonies	Community Cohesion Strategy	2011	CS	Information on local services and support organisations is available at point of contact
37	R D A CEP	Involve disabled people, older people, younger people and BAME people in the development of major council initiatives and policies	Include equality groups in the design, testing, appropriateness and delivery of new policies and functions at local and partnership level		2011	All	Increase in NI 4 for 2010 Place Survey and 2011 Annual Residents Survey
38	R CEP	Empower residents and service users to be able to challenge, scrutinise and evaluate equality decisions and prioritises	Use existing forums and networks, partnership boards and equality review processes		2011	All	Council and LSP is held to account on decisions that affect local people
39	All	Improve participation rates particularly amongst under-represented groups	Review community engagement approaches across all council activity to ensure processes are inclusive of and actively engage all equality strands		2011	CEX/All	Engagement Strategy to act as driver for improvements
40	A CEP	Increase young people's understanding of local democracy and encourage their participation	Work with schools, youth centres, FE colleges in developing campaigns that raise awareness		2011	CEX,CS,CSF	Evaluate success of activities like Local Democracy Week, Youth Parliament and

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
41	A CEP	Empower young people to have a say in decisions that directly affect them	All departments to undertake a 'hear by rights' self audit		2010	CEX/All	Mayor's youth programme Evidence of young people influencing decisions that affect them
42	A CEP	Implement the 'participation promise' in all children's services	Advice and guidance to all agencies about how to implement the participation promise to children and young people in all services. Promotional posters and leaflet in place in all relevant services	CSF Service Plan	2012	CSF	Targets to be included in all relevant team service plans
43	RB CEP	Improve communication, involvement and engagement of faith and belief groups across all council activity	Increase links with faith and belief groups at service and operational level particularly in areas like health and social care		2011	All	Provide services that take account of religion and belief requirements
44	R D A AS CEP	Increase access to the full range of library and information services for targeted groups or where take up is low	Develop campaigns that encourage disadvantaged or harder to reach groups to make use of library services. Support people to access learning opportunities.		2011	CH	Increase take-up amongst harder to reach groups

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
45	D A CEP	Continue to support advocacy projects that involve people with learning disabilities in policy development	Continue to support the 'Your Shout' group of 14-25 year old disabled children to feed into policy development Ensure delivery of contracts with Advocacy Partners across all care groups, continue support of People First and Speak Out groups	CYPP		CSF/CH	Improve services for disabled children – NI54 Clear evidence of representation and participation from these groups on decision making.
46	R G AS CEP	Increase take-up of Youth Service provision by young Asian women	Develop campaigns to encourage participation by young Asian women.	CYPP	2010	CSF	Increase take-up by 10%
47	A EA	Increase the participation level of children and young people with SEN/LDD in mainstream education	Implement the SEN and Inclusion Strategy 2008-2010, including developing additional provision in schools to support children with SEN	SEN and Inclusion Strategy 2008-2010	2011	CSF	Increase the proportion of children and young people with statements of SEN who are educated in their home borough. Set baseline of take-up in 2009/10 and improvements and targets thereafter.
48	SO AS CEP	Increase take up of Youth Service provision by young LGBT people	Continue to run the young LGBT people's group. Consult with LGBT young people in developing services in mainstream provision.	CYPP	2010	CSF	

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
49	D	Increase take up of Youth Service provision by young disabled people	<p>Continue to run youth activities for disabled young people.</p> <p>Continue to develop services to encourage greater participation by these young people in mainstream settings.</p>	CYPP	2010	CSF	Set baseline of take-up in 2009-2010 and improvements targets thereafter.
50	D	Implement an integrated service for children with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Establish a co-located multi-disciplinary team. - Implement the 'Aim High' short breaks project to increase access to after school, overnight, weekend and school holiday play schemes and respite care. 	CYPP	2012	CSF	Co-located team in place.
51	A SE	Support all young people, including those from specific groups to engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school	<p>Implement the Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) reduction strategy.</p> <p>Work in partnership with all sector agencies to improve young people's employability by providing access to work placements, apprenticeships and employment.</p>	CYPP	2011	CSF	<p>Increase the number of 19 year old care leavers who are in EET to 60%</p> <p>Increase the number of young offenders who are in EET to 85%</p>

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
52	All CI	Use customer feedback mechanisms to inform and shape future policy and service development/changes	Develop processes that analyses survey results, comments and complaints to better understand customer needs.	Departmental Plans	2011	CEX/AII	Set a local target to increase the number of teenage parents who are in EET Services delivery is more relevant to customer need.
53	R SO CC	Ensure that children and young people are placed with foster carers and adopters that can meet their needs related to ethnicity, religion, language, culture, disability and health.	Continue with advertising and awareness raising campaign to increase the pool of suitable foster carers and adopters from all equalities groups, with a focus on black and ethnic minority groups and LGBT people	CSF Equalities Plan	2011/1 2	CSF	-Number of looked after children adopted each year – 10% - Number of looked after children in long term placements (2.5 years) – 55%
54	D R G A	Provide appropriate, efficient and cost effective community transport service provision to diverse groups to facilitate their participation in community activity	Review the current provision		2011	CH	Service is cost effective and meets the needs of diverse groups

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
Responsive services and customer care							
55	D A	Review mobility access in all council buildings	Undertake a review of accessibility within council buildings		2011	CS	Improve mobility within council buildings for disabled people
56	D AS	Improve communication and access to information and services for people with sensory needs	Work with RNID to identify most appropriate hearing devices.		2011	CS	Hearing loops in all venues used by the council for public meetings
57	R A SE	Reduce health inequalities within BAME communities	Work with PCT to review services and policies to identify if they are disadvantaging people from BAME communities and implement necessary action to improve service delivery Support organisations and groups that provide help to people with specific health needs like sickle cell and lupus		2012	CH/CEX	Parity of health provision within BAME communities
58	D R G	Increase awareness and support to people with mental health problems	Work with partner organisations to destigmatise mental health to include running information		2011	CEX/CH	Easier access to services and better signposting of help and support

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
	SO		workshops, exhibitions etc. Work with PCT to ensure that early intervention services are available to people with mental health problems				
59	D AS	Support disabled people and people with mental health problems accessing social housing	Set annual social housing lettings quota for people with special needs and make direct offers outside of the CBL process where appropriate	Housing Strategy Homelessness Strategy Allocations Strategy	2011	CH	Utilise in full the annual lettings quota for people with special needs
60	D	Review the nature and supply of suitable housing accommodation to meet the current and future needs of disabled people	Complete research on gaps in housing provisions for disabled people through a supply and demand analysis	Housing Strategy	2011	CH	Review completed and recommendations for actions made
61	D	Continue to develop integrated and commissioning services for Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS)	Develop the Emotional Well-Being and Mental Health Strategy in line with the CAMH National Review, that includes improving service provision to vulnerable groups	CYPP	2010	CSF	Progress towards a comprehensive CAMHS service (NI 51) Score 16/16 on assessment scale
62	R A SE	Tackle the high levels of family poverty experienced by low income families and lone parents	Implement the employability project and childcare affordability programme to help parents back into work	CYPP	2011	CSF	Reduce the proportion of children living in poverty to 16.5% - NI116

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
63	R D G SE	Increase the proportion of families from specific equalities groups accessing services at children's centres	through information, advice and guidance about training, employment, childcare and benefits Targeted promotional campaign to increase the take-up of formal childcare by low income families Implement Action Plans by 2010 with a focus on take up by identified groups	CSF Equalities Plan	2012	CSF	Increase the take-up of formal childcare by low income families to 25% by 2010 Set baseline in 2009/10 and improvement targets thereafter for these specific groups
64	R EA SE	Reduce the proportion of pupils from specific ethnic minority groups who are excluded from school	Continue to increase secondary school participation in the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme. Continue to implement Secondary School Behaviour and Attendance Partnership Action Plan		2011	CSF	Reduce school exclusion of BME groups to 7.7% (fixed period) and 0.15% (permanent)
65	R A	Increase take up of services provided by Merton's Family Support Team to BAME groups	Monitor take-up of services by BME groups and implement change strategy to increase take-up	CSF Equalities Plan	2011	CSF	Set baseline in 2009/10 and improvement targets thereafter

Ref no.	Equality Strand	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
66	Key/Cross cutting theme G EA	Raise the educational attainment of girls at Key Stage 2	Provide comprehensive support and challenge to schools promote improvements in attainment of all children and targeted groups. As above	CYPP	2011	CSF	Set baseline in 2009/10 and improvements thereafter
67	G R SE	Raise the attainment levels of white working class boys from low income families	As above	CYPP	2011	CSF	Set baseline in 2009/10 and improvement targets thereafter
68	R SE	Raise educational attainment of Black Caribbean young people at Key Stage 4	As above	CYPP	2011	CSF	Increase the proportion of Black-Caribbean young people achieving 5 A*-C grades at GCSE and equivalent including English and Maths to 40%
69	D EA	Raise the attainment and achievement level of children and young people with SEN and LDD	As above Implement the SEN and Inclusion Strategy 2008-10	CYPP	2011	CSF	Reduce the SEN/non SEN gap in achieving L4+ to 50% by 2009/2010 Reduce the SEN/non SEN gap in achieving 5+ GCSE A*-C to 36% by 2010-2011
70	D	Increase the access to	Use the findings of the	CYPP	2010	CSF	Increase the number

Ref no.	Equality Strand	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
	Key/Cross cutting theme						
	A	post-16 provision for disabled young people and young people with SEN	provision analysis (2009) to improve post-16 opportunities for this group	14-19 Strategy			of young people with SEN/LDD who are in education employment or training to 92.8% by 2010
71	A CS	Increase perceptions of safety amongst young people	Ensure that bullying and the fear of bullying is tackled Tackle the negative issues associated with gangs		2011	CSF/Safer Merton	Improve the data on bullying to measure the proportion of children and young people affected
72	All	Provide positive activities for young people	Continue to deliver the 'positive activities' Commissioning Strategy 2009-12 Deliver play pathfinder programme to develop new and refurbished play spaces in the borough	CYPP	2010	CSF	Increase participation in positive activities to 75.5%
73	R G	Continue to provide culturally appropriate leisure facilities for women	Work with contractor Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) in providing women only swim sessions and women only sauna sessions at all 3 Leisure Centres.	Cultural Strategy		ER	Increase the take-up of culturally sensitive facilities for women
74	A	Promote and provide healthy living activities for older people	Continue to provide a wide range of activities in different venues in the borough	Older People Strategic Plan	2012	CH	Increase in numbers taking part in all activities

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
75	RB CC	Provide services that are religion and belief sensitive	Make pray mats readily available in care homes and provide culturally/religious meals Ensure all service users are asked about their religion or belief as part of their initial assessment		2012	CH	Services cater for the needs of diverse groups
76	R G	Assist 'hard to reach groups' take up benefits, access advice and maximise their income	Undertake a programme of Benefit take-up	Departmental Service Plan	2011	CS	Ensure services support those whom are unemployed and on low incomes.
77	D	Make Merton's website accessible to people with disabilities	Ongoing improvement and testing of accessibility of the website, through external sources and review webpages			CS	Increase the number of disabled people using the website
78	G	Increase opportunities for parents/carers to gain employment	Implement the childcare sufficiency action plan Implement the employability project and childcare affordability programme to help parents back into work Implement Carers Strategy	CYPP	2011	CSF/CH/HR	Reduce the proportion of the children living in poverty to 16.5% Increase the take up of formal childcare by low income families to 25% by 2010 100% of schools to
79	RB	Support multi-cultural	Continue to review multi-	CYPP	2011	CSF	

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
	CC	activities and promote multi-faith dialogue in schools and colleges	cultural materials and disseminate good practice in schools	CSF Equalities Plan			be judged by Ofsted as satisfactory or higher and 50% as good in their contribution to community cohesion
80	SO	Provide services that are sensitive and aware of LGBT issues	Develop a training programme to increase staff awareness		2011	All	Staff feel better informed of issues and service delivery needs
81	SO AS	Provide better health care provision for LGB people	Work with PCT on targeted health promotion campaigns.		2011	CH	Services that are sensitive and appropriate and address health care needs of LGB people
82	SO CC	Create more opportunities for social activity between LGB people and others	Deliver programme of events during LGBT History Month		2012	CEX/CSF	LGB people feel more socially included in the community
A modern diverse workforce							
83		Re-establish the Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic Staff Group and continue to support all other staff groups	Establish remit of Minority Ethnic Group, set up regular meetings, and appropriate support from HR.	Business Plan	2011	HR	Staff forums have an input in the development of new and reviewed policies/services and procedures. Annual workforce data to include
84		Continue to monitor the diversity of the workforce	Ensure manager use the information to inform	Business Plan	2011	HR	Annual workforce data to include

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		using workforce data, Merton's socio-demographic data, and borough trends	decisions in relation to service delivery				breakdown in all categories to identify trends for action
85		Continue to promote the Ambassadors Programme to attract a diverse workforce and engage with under-represented groups	Arrange quarterly meetings Measure the impact of the programme	Business Plan	2011	HR	Increase in the number of employees from three specific groups – Asian background, disabled people and young people
86		Embed an apprenticeship programme to increase opportunities for young people in the borough and work with partner organisations such as Kingston Merton, Education Business Partnership, Connexions, Youth Service and Merton College	Promote modern apprenticeship scheme in the organisation	Skills Pledge 14-19 Strategy	2011	HR	30 apprentices within the organisation
87		Review current recruitment processes to ensure that it is still relevant, transparent and accessible to all	Use workforce data to develop recruitment strategies	Business Plan	2011	HR	Merton Council is recognised as an employer of choice within the borough

Ref no.	Equality Strand Key/Cross cutting theme	Priority Area	Key Activity	Link to other Plans/strategies	When	Lead	Success Criteria
88		groups Maintain our current 'good' rating from the Ofsted Workstep inspection	Develop user friendly guide for participates Promote the programme within the organisation	Merton as Employer of Disabled People	2011	HR	Maintain 'Good' rating and seek to improve movement into unsupported employment E-learning packages used to increase staff understanding.
89		Keep up to date with emerging legislation and ensure employees understand their obligations through learning and development	Design and develop E-learning programmes so that employees have a better understanding of new and existing equality legislation and its application Provide a full range of diversity programmes for staff	Business Plan	2011	HR	
90		Ensure that positive images of older people and an age diverse workforce are promoted in the workplace	Continue to monitor workforce data to ensure it reflects the makeup of the community	Business Plan	2011	HR	Older employees feel able to contribute to the organisation and feel valued. Result of staff survey.
91		Recognise that Merton's diverse workforce will have different faiths and beliefs and ensure that HR policies take these into account	Celebrate and recognise difference in the workplace by providing a religious calendar, and consider time off for staff for religious days. Provide quiet space for pray and contemplation		2010	HR	Staff feel that Merton Council actively promotes equal opportunities and values diversity

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92		Work to identify and develop strategies to overcome gender barriers in the workplace and promote gender equality	Support events such as Black History Month, Mela, LGBT History Month Review HR policies to ensure the support of work life balance, family friendly policies	Performance indicator	2012	HR	50% of leadership roles occupied by women

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