

Committee: Council

Date: 6th April 2016

Wards: All

Subject: **Strategic Theme report - Safer and Stronger with a focus on equalities**

Lead officer: Ged Curran, Chief Executive

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

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Recommendations:

A. That Council consider the contents of the report

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Council at its meeting in March 2016 approved the Business Plan 2016-2020.
- 1.2. The Business Plan represents the way in which the council will lead the delivery of the Community Plan via a number of thematic partnerships and strategic themes. Performance against these themes, plus an additional theme of corporate capacity, is monitored by Council.
- 1.3. Each meeting of Council will receive a report updating on progress against one of these strategic themes. This report provides Council with an opportunity to consider progress against the priorities under the “Safer and Stronger” theme with a focus on equalities.

The Business Plan can be viewed at www.merton.gov.uk/businessplan.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. The Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires the local authority, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a “protected characteristic” and those who do not. “Protected characteristics” are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Merton’s Equality Strategy – key aims

- 2.2. The Equality Act 2010 also requires the council to publish equality objectives every four years to demonstrate how it will meet the PSED. Merton’s Equality Strategy outlines the council’s ‘Equality Objectives’ as the following five themes:
 - Tackling Inequality
 - Service Access

- Improving Engagement
 - Promoting Community Cohesion
 - Workforce Development
- 2.3. Council approved the Equality Strategy 2013-17 in February 2013. The four-year strategy sets out what we will do to tackle discrimination and inequality and promote equal opportunities in Merton. The Strategy also sets out the council's equalities objectives as required by the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.4. The Equality Strategy Action Plan sets out the actions we will take to meet our equality priorities both corporately and departmentally.
- 2.5. The approach of the Strategy is a departure from the structure of the previous Corporate Equality Scheme. Instead of including objectives against each protected characteristic, generic themes have been identified and they in turn were informed by using available statistical evidence and priorities highlighted in departmental service plans.
- 2.6. Delivery against the Equality Strategy Action Plan is monitored by an annual update to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, through the Corporate Equality Steering Group through regular updates from departmental equality representatives, and the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) with Ethnic Minority Organisations also monitors implementation of the strategy.

Merton's Community Cohesion Strategy

- 2.7. The results of the 2011 Census show that Merton's population has increased by 6.3% since 2001. A significant demographic change emerging from the Census 2011 is the overall increase in the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population and increases in the proportion of younger and older residents in the borough. In recent years the borough has seen the arrival of new migrant communities from Eastern Europe and an increase in the Tamil community.
- 2.8. The refreshed Merton Partnership Community Cohesion Strategy was endorsed by Merton Partnership in February 2012 and contains priorities that respond to the challenge to sustain the progress made on community cohesion and continuing to embed its principles into all aspects of service delivery.
- 2.9. To ensure the effectiveness of the refreshed Community Cohesion Strategy the development of its priorities were cross-referenced with the priorities identified in other strategies, such as the Community Plan. The learning from the Prevent projects was also incorporated. The priorities of the strategy are outlined below:
- Improving engagement with minority and new communities
 - Supporting and engaging with the Voluntary and Community Sector
 - Supporting employment and economic development opportunities
 - Engaging and supporting children, young people and families
 - Continuing interfaith dialogue
 - Improving health outcomes
 - Monitoring community tensions and maintaining community cohesion

- 2.10. The Community Cohesion Strategy is being refreshed and will continue with a similar focus. It is anticipated that the refreshed strategy will be approved by Merton Partnership Executive Board in Summer 2016.

Community plan – work of the Merton Partnership

The Community Plan was refreshed in 2013 and this underpins the work of the Merton Partnership. The Borough is defined by pockets of deprivation in the east and relative affluence in the west, e.g. female life expectancy is significantly lower in the east of the Borough than the west. Commitments in the Community Plan support the Partnership's continued commitment of 'Bridging the Gap' across the borough.

Performance relating to Children, Schools and Families

- 2.11. Merton School Improvement service continued its programme of support and challenge to schools to identify, track and accelerate progress made by individual pupils from target groups. Identified secondary schools have been supported to implement English support targeted to Bangladeshi and Asian-Other pupils. The achievement of Bangladeshi and Asian Other pupils improved in the 2014 outcomes - there is a three year upward trend in outcomes at KS2 and at KS4 which are well above national averages. Expected progress made by Bangladeshi pupils in English rose from 63% in 2013 to 92% in 2014; similarly 'Asian Other' pupils expected progress improved from 76% to 87%. These two cohorts achieved higher levels of expected progress in English between KS2 and KS4 compared to all Merton pupils in 2014 (81%).
- 2.12. In 2013-14 20% of Looked after Children (LAC) achieved 5 GCSEs A*-C or equivalent (including English and Maths) which is above the national LAC average of 15%. The Virtual School for LAC continues to monitor pupil level progress on an at least termly basis through the collection of data and attendance at Personal Education Plan meetings. The service has started to analyse the impact of its 1:1 funded tuition to ensure that resources are maximised to improve pupil outcomes.
- 2.13. Children's Centre services showed good take-up by families from deprived areas (77.7%) exceeding the 75% minimum target. Families from the target areas engaged with a wide range of activities including access to play and stay and early education groups, job club, child health services, midwifery and antenatal as well as targeted home visiting services. Over 2014-15, 917 children accessed the central government funding for disadvantaged 2 year-olds. This significantly exceeded the target of 705 with the steady increase a result of assertive outreach and targeted campaigns. The Early Years service's work with providers increased the number delivering funded 2 year-old places to 98 at the end of the year. The Early Years service also continued to work with nurseries in target schools to implement strategies to support boys and children from deprived areas to improve outcomes, maintain improvements and further close gaps in attainment. Results for 2013-14 (reported in 2014-15) showed that 44% of children eligible for free school meals achieved a 'good level of development' in the Early Years Foundation Stage – an 11% increase on last year. 45.8% of boys from deprived areas achieved a 'good level of development' - a 7.8% increase compared to last year.

- 2.14. The Recruitment and Assessment Team recruited 10 in-house foster carers in 2014-15 of which 6 were from target groups. The largest need for carers centred on teenagers and siblings. The carers recruited for teenagers were directed to the service through three targeted recruitment campaigns including a demographically targeted door drop, print advertising and the use of internal recruitment materials. All three campaigns had a strong message in accordance with the need for carers for the 11+ age group. During the year, an analysis of LAC placement stability identified that boys aged 10–15 of white British heritage were most likely to disrupt in their placements. Learning from this report was cascaded to continuously improve practice.

The 'Your Shout' group for children and young people with learning disabilities has fed into management discussions around aspects of the Children and Families Act including the Local Offer and preparation for adulthood. The group also made a short-film to show people what it is like to be a young person with a disability for which they won a 'Positive for Youth' award.

Performance relating to Health and Wellbeing

- 2.15. The Health and Wellbeing Board has decided as a priority to focus its efforts on reducing the stubborn health inequalities that are persisting between west and east Merton. The project is called the East Merton Model of Health and Wellbeing, in recognition of the importance of non-medical factors in reducing health inequalities. An essential feature of the work is community engagement, i.e. solutions to the persisting challenges are co-produced with the community instead of expert led/imposed and the whole model relies on mobilising and making best use of the wide range of existing community assets.
- 2.16. The East Merton Model will be used as a blue-print of transformation for the whole of the Merton health and care system to make it more sustainable. A priority for the Health and Well Being Board for 2016/17 to translate the vision of the East Merton Model into reality is to develop 'social prescribing' - a means where primary care professionals are connecting patients with existing non-medical support.
- 2.17. Developing a facility on the Wilson site is also part of the project but it is important to stress that the model will determine the facility rather than the other way round. However, we are excited to work with NHS property developers to explore options of an innovative and creative use of the site that fully embraces and is owned by the community and reflects the vision of the model of health and wellbeing.
- 2.18. Progress has been made in reducing the 'gap in readiness for school'- a measure of the quality and combined impact of services supporting early years development (including children's centres, health visiting, and early education). 2015 data shows a reduction in the gap from 18% (2014) to 14% (2015) in achieving a good level of development among pupils eligible for free school meals compared to their peers at 5 years of age.

Actions to reduce the gap in alcohol related harm between east and west Merton include proposed changes to the Statement of Licensing Policy, based on a Public Health review. Mitcham Town Centre is recommended to

be a Cumulative Impact Zone giving greater scrutiny and control on the availability of alcohol.

Performance relating to crime and anti-social behaviour

- 2.19. Neighbourhood Watch - currently the areas being concentrated on are mostly in Mitcham where residents' fear of crime is higher than other parts of the borough. The Safer Neighbourhood Watch Board has funded two youth projects, one on the High Path Estate and one in Pollards Hill, both to reduce the risk of offending in young people at risk. Funding was also given to Woman's Aid for outreach work in the community around domestic violence.
- 2.20. In respect of Neighbourhood Watch the total number of properties now covered by NHW in borough is recorded at 36.3%. This represents a slight drop of 2% in overall coverage when compared to the same quarter for the previous year. However, there has also been a large increase in the number of email contacts following successful door-stepping operations which is expected to result in an increase of new schemes and numbers of co-ordinators by end of quarter 4.
- 2.21. Domestic Violence (DV) - this includes: Stalking, Harassment, Honour Based violence and Forced Marriage. For the 12 month period from January 2015, 274 cases presented to the DV One Stop Shop. On average 6 cases per week attend the One Stop Shop for support and advice. Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) is the government's overarching strategy to tackle these forms of violence. Within Merton this will include male victims of domestic violence.
- 2.22. In the last 12 months the borough has implemented a VAWG strategy and the VAWG strategic board continues to work through a work plan. The VAWG practitioner's group main theme was to have training so they fully understood the other subjects within VAWG (see above).
- 2.23. Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) – The ASB team and Police are in the process of implementing a Community Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), this is designed to help and support those individuals whose mental illness may impact on alcohol consumption, drugs, rough sleeping and their general behaviour.
- 2.24. There was a 32% reduction in First-Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System compared to last year. The 2014-15 outcome was 60 First Time Entrants against an anticipated number of up to 80. The rate of re-offending remains in line with the national average. Work on youth crime prevention concentrated on early intervention and prevention methods centred on working in a more holistic way addressing both young people's and families needs. This was delivered through a range of group and 1:1 interventions which included a focus on parenting capacity, mental health and other environmental factors. The work within Transforming Families and the Youth Justice Team, in particular, meant that interventions could be provided as early as possible in order to ensure that escalations in a young person's behaviour and/or offending are dealt with as quickly as possible. Geographically, there has been a focus on areas in the East of the borough which are generally more deprived.

2.25. The Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB) has successfully engaged with local representative groups to seek co-opted members to increase the diversity across the board. To date the SNB has representation from Merton CIL, the Interfaith Forum, the BAME community, and Youth Parliament/ Youth ambassadors.

Employment

Unemployment - the rise in employment has been accompanied by falls in unemployment and this trend has continued in recent months. The unemployment rate for those aged 16 and over in England is 5.4% (LFS, February to April 2015), lower than the overall UK rate of 5.5% and lower than the EU average of 9.7%. The fall in unemployment is happening alongside welfare reform, where some claimants are being moved off 'inactive' benefits (with no requirement to seek work) and moved onto 'active' benefits such as Jobseeker's Allowance (where they are obliged to seek work). Employment is lower among groups at a disadvantage in the labour market, including young people, disabled people, people from some ethnic minorities and older people.

2.26. The table below shows Merton's unemployment benefit figures:

Merton's Unemployment Figures				
Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) Claimants			Employment Support Allowance (ESA)/Incapacity Benefits (IB) claimants	
January 2016	January 2014		August 2015	August 2013
Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) count 2,055 (1.5%) of the working age population 18-24 year old equate to 14.8% on JSA claimants (310)	JSA count 3,070 (2.2%) of the working age population 18-24 year old equates to 20.4% of JSA claimants (635)		ESA/IB claimants – 5,180 1,190 lone parents on income support	ESA/IB claimants – 5,130 1,350 lone parents

2.27 Outlined below are key performance indicators from the Employment Skills action plan:

- To reduce the number of JSA claimants at Mitcham JCP: target of 1.7% by March 2017 (¹average for most deprived wards is 2.77%)

¹ NOMIS June 2015 Figges Marsh 3.1%, Cricket Green 2.8%, Pollards Hill 2.8% and Ravensbury 2.4% JSA claimants

- Apprentices: 100 placements in Year 1 (April 2015-March 2016)
- Employment: 58 through employability schemes in Year 1 (April 2015-March 2016)
- Number of residents receiving financial guidance in Year 1 (April 2015-March 2016): 70% of clients accessing employment and skills initiatives

2.28 Many residents in the east of the borough have complex needs and need pre-employment support before being ready to apply for a job. The Economic Welfare Group priorities are to try and work with those hardest to reach residents such as lone parents, over 50's, care leavers, ex-offenders and long-term unemployed. Many of these groups are claiming ESA. Merton has in place programmes aimed at supporting residents into employment:

- Employability Programme; currently there are 4 employability programmes running focusing on the hardest to reach target groups. The groups receiving support; Care leavers, ex offenders, lone parents, carers, long term unemployed and the over 50s. These programmes are due to finish in June 2016 and to date has produced 21 sustainable job outcomes.
- London Councils ESF programme (Pending EU sign off to start); this programme will work with 200 residents to up skill and promote work experience and volunteering opportunities. In addition to the soft skills training, initial advice and guidance and basic skills, the project will look at producing a number of employment outcomes including 70 apprenticeship outcomes.
- Take One: this programme has been extended beyond just young people to encouraging local businesses to take one Merton resident for work experience, an apprenticeship or employment. The Merton Chamber of Commerce have a business engagement officer who meets local businesses and matches a suitable person to their needs. This is funded through a grant from the council.

2.29 There is further embedding of employability within the Adult Education provision. Groundwork will be leading the specific employability programmes including family learning and the neighbourhood learning for deprived communities grant.

Performance relating to community cohesion and integration

- 2.30 The borough has numerous consultative mechanisms to engage with young people and the voluntary and community sector many of who represent minority communities. These include:
- Youth Parliament
 - Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minorities
 - Faith and Belief Forum
 - Compact Board
 - Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender (LGBT) Forum
- 2.31 Activities to support and develop participation and governance opportunities continued to take place over 2014-15 to enable children and young people to have a voice in service delivery and design. Some highlights included:
- A group of young people from a range of youth forums and the youth service were supported to take part in the re-commissioning process for the new risk and resilience service by visiting providers and interviewing young people, users and adults. This influenced contracts and fed back into the decision-making process and is an excellent example of services shaped with reference to young people's views.
 - The Children in Care Council (CiCC) were involved in helping to refresh the Children in Care and Care Leavers charter, inputting into the Care Leavers Strategy 2015-18, reviewing the LAC Pack and identified specifications for a new information website. CiCC also took part in reviewing the LAC review forms and 'Let's Talk' booklets.
- 2.32 The LGBT Forum has recently been revitalised and officers are working with the committee members to produce a work programme that priorities the key issues for the community. The Forum celebrated LGBT History Month (in February) by holding a series of Film Nights and a Sunday Brunch to round off the month.
- 2.33 The Faith and Belief Forum continues to promote community cohesion and integration in the borough. Faith representatives came together to deliver events in Inter Faith Week. The events brought people of different backgrounds together and helped to highlight the similarities between the faiths of Islam and Judaism. The Winter Night Shelter has been supported by the inter faith communities in the borough to provide venues and volunteers to work with Faith in Action and the YMCA to assist those faced with homelessness in Merton. The Faith and Belief community also continues to support Food Banks in the borough.
- 2.34 Black, Asian and Minority Voice was launched on 4 February and will provide a strategic voice for the borough's BAME community. The organisation is developing priorities to discuss with the council and partner agencies. BAME Voice representatives are also members of the JCC and will work with officers to ensure that service development and commissioning decisions adequate

consider BAME issues and concerns. The Council has supported the development of BAME Voice.

2.35 Promoting volunteering opportunities is a commitment in the community cohesion strategy. Key performance highlights this year include:

- The development and launch of Volunteer Merton, a new online portal that seamlessly links up volunteers with volunteer opportunities through a digital platform. This will make it much simpler and quicker to link volunteers to actual volunteering opportunities;
- Identifying and developing a wider range of more informal and 'light touch' volunteering opportunities for citizens who want to volunteer but perhaps have more limited time and availability;
- Identifying and advising 2,203 new volunteers;
- Assisting 850 volunteers who require specialist support to enable them to volunteer;
- A new quality standard, Youth Approved Volunteering Award (YAVA), to improve the standard of volunteering opportunities and experience for young people;
- Value You: a new accreditation scheme to recognise individuals who have delivered over 100 hours of volunteering and offer them discount cards at local businesses;
- An on-going joint programme to promote volunteering which will culminate in National Volunteers Week and Merton's Volunteering Awards in June 2016.

Performance relating to workforce development

2.36 The Workforce and Practice Development Team have overseen delivery of mandatory training around ethnicity and diversity for permanent and agency staff, Frontline staff s and as optional for students. Information on impact will be reported at the end of 2015-16.

2.37 Children, Schools and Families has launched its Social Work Academy which is part of the London's Best Council work programme. CSF also participates in the Bringing on the Talent programme to support motivated and talented people within the department to develop their potential as future managers and leaders.

2.38 Much work has been done to support local residents into work and this reflected in the following targets:

- Promote and provide a work experience programme for vulnerable and local young people - 50 per year
- Promote and manage traineeships within the Council – 50 per year

2.39 HR will be supporting managers to ensure the development of apprenticeships is considered as part of their workforce planning process. The Bringing On Talent Programme has mentoring as one of its elements. This is to ensure that

talent is developed in the organisation and will assist with retention. The Council is committed to retaining the two tick symbol and continues to provide appropriate support to disabled staff.

- 2.40 Consideration is being given to refreshing the Disabled Staff Forum and initiating others such as BAME and LGBT forums.

Challenges ahead

- 2.41 Merton's Welfare Reform and Financial Resilience Group continues to monitor the impact of policy and legislative changes impacting residents in receipt of welfare benefits. The group is composed of representatives from council departments and relevant partners agencies. The group has met quarterly since 2012 and has developed an action plan which will next be refreshed in Spring/Autumn 2016. Key objectives in the current action plan include:

- Support households affected by the benefit income cap – Housing staff continue to visit households affected by the cap with an emphasis on debt advice, homelessness prevention, and helping tenants to maximise their income and looking into their personal finances.
- Prepare and support new claimants of Universal Credit – the Department of Work and Pensions started to roll out Universal Credit in Merton from January 2016. The council's welfare benefits team are working proactively with Mitcham Job Centre and Merton & Lambeth Citizens Advice Bureau to ensure clients have access to effective budgetary advice. Merton Library Staff and other frontline staff have also been trained to support residents in managing their UC claims online.
- Under-occupancy Tax – Revenues and Benefits and Housing Need staff continue to monitor households affected by the 'under-occupancy tax' with a view to minimising the likelihood of homelessness. Circle Housing Merton Priority tenants account for over half of all households affected by the under occupancy tax, and the council continues to work closely with CHMP and other RSLs to ensure appropriate support is delivered to vulnerable households.

Feedback from OSC

- 2.42 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission has continued to monitor the Council's equalities commitments through scrutinising the equalities action plan and priorities for the coming year. In addition it has focussed on equalities as part of its work on a number of issues including:
- Policing – when questioning the Borough Commander about policing, the Commission asked for information about training that the police receive on issues such as mental illness and questioned him about the ethnic profile of the police compared to the local community. The Commission also examined data from the Chair of Merton's Independent Stop and Search Monitoring Group and asked a number of questions about their work with young people.

- Violence Against Women and Girls – update and discussion of work carried out by the Strategic Board and progress made to improve performance of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference.
 - Traveller protocol – reviewed the draft protocol and recommended that a number of changes be made, such as including the responsibility to provide regular updates to ward councillors about unauthorised encampments as well as explaining the council’s responsibilities in regard to safeguarding the welfare of Travellers. These changes were subsequently agreed by Cabinet.
- 2.43 As part of the budget scrutiny process, equality impact assessments were provided for all proposed savings and were carefully considered by the Commission and the three Overview and Scrutiny Panels at both rounds of budget scrutiny meetings.
- 2.44 The Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the results of the consultation on adult social care savings and was addressed by speakers from Adults First, Carers Partnership Group, Merton Centre for Independent Living and South Thames Crossroads, an individual service user and a carer. The Chief Executive of Merton Voluntary Service Council spoke at the subsequent meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny commission.
- 2.45 The speakers all expressed concern at the proposed savings in adult social care and gave examples of the impact that these would have on vulnerable older people and disabled service users and their carers.
- 2.46 The Panel therefore asked Cabinet to reconsider a number of the proposed adult social care savings. Cabinet responded by:
- setting up a Savings Mitigation Fund of £1.3m to enable it to offset the effects on the most vulnerable people in the borough
 - finding £164,000 to fund South Thames Crossroads for Carers for 2016/17.

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

- 2.47 In addition to the overall progress and achievement in Merton’s schools, the Panel continues to have regard to educational outcomes for individual cohorts of children. This is scrutinised through the annual schools report which provides detailed information by criteria such as gender, disadvantage, attainment levels, ethnic groups and special educational need. Comparison is made for each group against national and London averages, allowing discrepancies to be highlighted and become a focus. This year’s scrutiny review highlighted two points; 1) there is a need to continue to work on the inclusion of black Caribbean children; and 2) there is a correlation between special educational

need and subsequently becoming classified as not in education, employment and training.

- 2.48 Children in care are a specific focus for the Panel with outcomes scrutinised through the annual corporate parenting report. In addition to focusing on placement provision, educational progress and achievement is reviewed as well as levels of participation.

Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

- 2.49 The Panel works to ensure the borough is a good place to live for all its residents. Over the last year, it has focused on providing access to affordable housing through its Task Group review. This made recommendations on how to free up much needed social housing and encouraging private landlords to let to residents on the Housing Register and in receipt of Housing Benefit. Additionally, it continues to monitor the performance of Circle Housing Merton Priory and this year has looked at the repairs and maintenance service provided to residents.
- 2.50 Its role in pre-decision scrutiny has allowed the panel to ensure the needs of residents are considered before any change in service provision. With regard to the move to a commissioning model for the provision of adult education services, the Panel recommended to Cabinet the need to ensure all user groups are appropriately consulted during the commissioning process. In response to the wheeled bins pilot, the Panel highlighted consideration of the needs of disabled residents in its reference to Cabinet.

Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

- 2.51 The Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel maintain a keen interest in work to reduce the health inequalities between the East and West of the borough. The public health team attended a meeting to discuss the projects they have put in place to promote healthier lifestyles. These include; cookery classes, healthy schools initiatives, smoking cessation and healthy weight programmes. The Panel will continue monitor the progress with this work.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. Not applicable – this report is for information only.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. None for the purposes of the report

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. N/A

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. There are no direct financial implications from this report

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. On 6 April 2011 the Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires the Local Authority, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a “protected characteristic” and those who do not. “Protected characteristics” are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Delivery of the commitments in the Equality Strategy action plan and the publication of an Equality Strategy setting out our equality objectives fulfil the Council’s legal obligations relating to equalities legislation.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

By setting out its equalities commitments in the Equality Strategy the Council is re-affirming its commitment to human rights, equality and community cohesion.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

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

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

None

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. Business Plan - 2016-20
- 12.2. Equality Strategy 2013-17
http://www.merton.gov.uk/council/plansandpolicies/equality_strategy_2013-17_final_v2.pdf
- 12.3. Community Cohesion Strategy 2012-15
http://intranet/120612_community_cohesion_strategy_v13.pdf

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