

Response to the scrutiny task group review of volunteering in Merton

It is welcomed that the volunteering scrutiny panel made recommendations to ensure that volunteering is recognised as a key component of a healthy and successful community.

A particular highlight of the report is that through the various meetings the review was broadened to volunteering outside of the Council and that some recommendations refer to those who give their time in Merton as a whole.

Please note that throughout the report the terminology is 'involving volunteers', not using volunteers.

Action Plan

Recommendation	Response and Action	Who	Timescale start	Timescale end
<p><u>Recommendation 1</u> We recommend that data on volunteering, collected in 2012 from the annual residents survey and the council's staff survey, should be analysed to plot variations in volunteering and to build a more detailed profile of volunteering activity in Merton.</p>	<p>1.1 Annual Residents Survey (ARS) It was proposed in the Merton Partnership's Volunteering Strategy that the ARS would include volunteering questions biennially.</p> <p>1.2 Following the Commission's recommendation, the Consultation and Community Engagement Team were approached to include the questions in 2013, however, the deadline for the survey had passed and the survey was at capacity.</p> <p>1.3 Questions can be submitted for inclusion alongside other demands on the survey in June 2014 for the ARS 2014 survey.</p> <p>1.4 Staff survey The same volunteering questions are included in the 2013 staff survey which takes place at the end of the year.</p>	<p>Hayley James (MVSC) and Community and Engagement Team (LBM)</p> <p>John Dimmer (LBM)</p>	<p>May 2014</p> <p>September 2013</p>	<p>November 2014</p> <p>December 2013</p>

<p><u>Recommendation 2</u> We recommend that future Mayors consider continuing to give out a Mayoral crest pin badge to residents and staff who have made a significant contribution to the community, including those who have made a significant impact through volunteering. Clearly this will be at the discretion of the Mayor. We would, however, recommend that the Mayor has a simple set of criteria for giving out these badges.</p>	<p>2.1 The current Mayor supports the recommendation.</p> <p>2.2 The challenges of defining ‘significant contribution’ and possible inconsistency with the annual change in Mayor are noted.</p> <p>2.3 To consider whether the Council’s website will set out a simple criterion and individuals will be invited to email or write to the Mayor’s office, describing why an individual should receive the Mayoral crest pin badge.</p> <p>2.4 To consider as part of the Mayor’s attendance at events, the Mayor’s Office will promote the opportunity of receiving a Mayoral crest pin badge.</p>	<p>Hayley James (MVSC) and Mayor’s Office (LBM)</p> <p>Mayor’s Office (LBM)</p>	<p>August 2013</p> <p>August 2013</p>	<p>October 2013</p> <p>October 2013</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 3</u> We recommend that the Cabinet consider the provision of a certificate to recognise the volunteer’s service to the Council and to provide a form of reference for prospective employers. It is proposed that there would be regular award ceremonies at which these certificates would be given out by the Mayor.</p>	<p>3.1 Volunteers involved in Council services References are good practice and will need to continue to be promoted as such to Council staff who are involving volunteers.</p> <p>3.2 A brief guide about involving volunteers to be designed and circulated to LBM staff as part of the shift to involving volunteers in adding value to public services.</p> <p>3.3 To investigate a ‘thank you’ certificate for Council volunteers that will be signed by the Chief Executive of LBM and the Mayor.</p> <p>3.4 To investigate an annual ‘thank you’ evening to which all Council volunteers will be invited and will receive the certificate and the Mayoral crest pin badge. The current Mayor supports this recommendation.</p>	<p>Hayley James (MVSC)</p> <p>Hayley James (MVSC)</p> <p>Hayley James (MVSC) and Mayor’s Office (LBM)</p>	<p>December 2013</p> <p>September 2013</p> <p>September 2013</p>	<p>January 2014</p> <p>October 2013</p> <p>October 2013 (late notice and so possibly</p>

	<p>3.5 Note that the deadline of October in the above two recommendations is to coincide with Compact Week.</p> <p>3.6 Volunteers in Merton A 'thank you' certificate for volunteers giving the time in Merton will signed by the Chief Executive of LBM, the Mayor and the Chair of Merton Voluntary Service Council.</p> <p>3.7 There are the Mayor's Civic Awards (April) and the Merton Partnership Volunteering Awards (June) each year. A Mayoral crest pin badge will be given to the winners and highly commended in each category.</p> <p>3.8 The voluntary and public sector will be encouraged to nominate volunteers.</p> <p>3.7 To investigate with LBM's CMT the possibility of including a volunteering award in LBM's Staff Excellence Awards.</p>	<p>Hayley James (MVSC) and Joseph Dance (LBM)</p> <p>Mayor's Office (LBM)</p> <p>Sophie Matthews (MVSC) Abby Burford (LBM)</p> <p>Simon Williams (LBM)</p>	<p>September 2013</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>November 2013</p>	<p>2014)</p> <p>October 2013</p> <p>March 2014</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 4</u> We recommend that Cabinet give consideration to the provision of an offer from Merton Adult Education for those volunteers who need support with CV writing and interview skills, as well as the opportunity to gain an</p>	<p>4.1 Note that voluntary groups carry out this service e.g. Grenfell.</p> <p>4.2 A list of organisation's with this offer to be compiled and circulated to LBM and the voluntary sector.</p> <p>4.3 Investigate possible volunteering accreditation / qualification options for further discussion.</p>	<p>Hayley James</p> <p>Hayley James</p>	<p>December 2013</p> <p>December 2013</p>	<p>February 2014</p> <p>February 2014</p>

accredited qualification in community volunteering.				
<u>Recommendation 5</u> We recommend that Cabinet should investigate the costs and benefits for volunteers who make a significant contribution to council services receiving reduced prices for some library and leisure services.	5.1 The challenges of defining 'significant contribution' and the administrative resource required to deliver this recommendation are noted. 5.2 Investigate the feasibility of this recommendation.	Hayley James (MVSC) and Joseph Dance (LBM)	February 2014	
<u>Recommendation 6</u> We recommend that the web-based approach to advertising volunteering opportunities should be complemented by the use of My Merton and other low-tech mechanism for those who do not access the internet, including banners and touch points.	6.1 As part of the Merton Partnership Volunteering Strategy and merger discussions between MVSC and VCM, one access point for volunteering in Merton will emerge. 6.2 There is a move to less-reliance on paid staff given the need for savings across all sectors. This coincides with a cultural shift that is about enabling people to be involved in their community with fewer barriers and without creating dependency. 6.3 Supported volunteering and volunteering for young people continue to receive separate funding for more focussed support. 6.4 The online presence will have clear contact information for those requiring face-to-face support.	Hayley James (MVSC)	October 2013	April 2014
<u>Recommendation 7</u> We recommend that Volunteer Centre Merton and the Council encourage volunteers to use social media (such as Twitter and Facebook) to share their	7.1 As part of the Merton Partnership Volunteering Strategy and merger discussions between MVSC and VCM, volunteering communications will become increasingly more co-ordinated. 7.2 MVSC recruited a Marketing Communications Manager in April 2013 who has developed a MVSC	Communications Team (LBM)	Ongoing	

<p>experiences of volunteering in order to raise public awareness and to encourage a wider range of people to become volunteer</p>	<p>Facebook page and increased tweets to engage more followers. Conversations between MVSC and LBM through social media are underway and will continue to engage more followers.</p> <p>7.2 For information, the Council and MVSC have previously discussed a volunteering specific Facebook page and it was decided this was not currently the way forward.</p> <p>7.3 January 2013's SHOUT ABOUT YOUR VOLUNTEERING encouraged those featured to talk about their volunteering on their personal social media. It was met with resistance by some volunteers.</p> <p>7.4 Encouraging volunteers to talk about their volunteering is part of the ongoing communications of the MP volunteering strategy.</p>	<p>and Sophie Matthews (MVSC)</p> <p>Hayley James (MVSC)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	
<p><u>Recommendation 8</u> We recommend that the Council work with Merton Voluntary Service Council to continue to support voluntary sector groups' volunteering activities by identifying and signposting potential sources of funding</p>	<p>8.1 It is testament to the successful Compact that a grants system has been retained, administered in partnership and the amount has been increased during austere times.</p> <p>8.2 Funding opportunities in and outside of the Borough are promoted on Merton Connected and support available if required. This will continue.</p> <p>8.3 MVSC are committed to identifying new sources of funding for the voluntary sector, are founder members of United Way London and have recently launched the Merton Community Fund (see response to recommendation 12).</p>	<p>Chris Frost (MVSC)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	
<p><u>Recommendation 9</u> We recommend that Merton</p>	<p>9.1 Merton Connected is MVSC's website.</p>			

<p>Voluntary Service Council provide information (or a link) on its Merton Connected website to help local volunteering groups make contact with other groups within the borough, to encourage them to share experiences and for advice and support.</p>	<p>9.2 MVSC are currently redeveloping their website which will include opportunities to be more interactive. Making links, advice and support are key functions of MVSC and this will improve further with the new website.</p> <p>9.3 In response to demand, MVSC are also producing a new printed edition of the Directory of Community Organisations which will also aid communication between groups,</p>	<p>Jon Stone (MVSC)</p> <p>Jon Stone (MVSC)</p>	<p>July 2013</p> <p>July 2013</p>	<p>Stage 1 – September 2013</p> <p>December 2013</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 10</u> We recommend that councillors should get involved with volunteering groups in their wards, promoting the work that the groups do and helping them to forge links with other groups doing similar work.</p>	<p>10.1 In the review of the Councillor Handbook, consider including a guide on how a Councillor can support voluntary groups.</p>	<p>Chris Frost (MVSC) and John Dimmer (LBM)</p>	<p>September 2013</p>	<p>May 2014</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 11</u> <i>We recommend that the Council's Communications Team contact Merton University of the Third Age to discuss how they can help with publicity. Options to consider should include My Merton, resident association magazines and ward newsletters.</i></p>	<p>11.1 It is positive that the Council's Communications Team will support U3A.</p> <p>11.2 U3A will continue to be supported by the Ageing Well Community Connector at MVSC to promote its activities and to develop in the east of the borough.</p> <p>11.2 There is a volunteering communications group which meet regularly and includes voluntary and public sector partners. The aim is to co-ordinate communications to raise the profile of volunteering and ultimately encourage more individuals to give their time.</p> <p>11.3 Whilst recognising the high demand for space in</p>	<p>Abby Burford (LBM)</p> <p>Bec Yusuf (MVSC)</p> <p>Hayley James</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>September</p>	<p></p> <p></p> <p>February</p>

	<p>My Merton, the volunteering communications group is to consider a proposal to dedicate space in each issue highlighting volunteering.</p> <p>11.4 This will be done in partnership with the Compact team are considering a proposal to have dedicated space for the voluntary sector.</p> <p>11.4 Communications will continue be a key part of the Merton Partnership Volunteering Strategy and volunteering infrastructure. This will include broadening communication channels.</p>	(MVSC)	2013	2014
		John Dimmer (LBM) and Chris Frost (MVSC)	September 2013	February 2014
		Hayley James (MVSC)	Ongoing	
<p><u>Recommendation 12</u> We recommend that Cabinet support work to explore the feasibility of developing a “United Way” in Merton so that there is one-stop-shop approach to making charitable donations, whereby a fund it built up which can then be used to give grants to local good causes.</p>	<p>12.1 United Way London was launched in May 2013 at the Tower of London and Merton is one of 6 founding boroughs.</p> <p>12.2 A Community Fund was launched on 17th May and contributions are being regularly made and the aim is to increase this and continue with publicity.</p> <p>12.3 LBM are supportive of the Community Fund. All staff received an e-bulletin in June/July with an e-form so that they could sign up to donate.</p>	John Dimmer (LBM)	July 2013	
<p><u>Recommendation 13</u> We recommend that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission continue to monitor the implementation of the Merton Partnership’s Merton Volunteering and Community Action Strategy 2012-2014 and beyond.</p>	<p>13.1 The Volunteering Strategy Implementation Group currently consisting of Simon Williams (LBM), John Dimmer (LBM), Chris Frost (MVSC) and Hayley James (MVSC) meet quarterly to monitor progress.</p> <p>13.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission are welcome to receive copies of the reports provided by Hayley James if required.</p>	Julia Regan (LBM)	As required	
<p><u>Recommendation 14</u></p>	<p>14.1 Hayley James (MVSC) met with all Directors in</p>			

<p>We recommend that the Council's Corporate Management Team continue to look for new and innovative ways to involve volunteers in order to supplement service provision. Progress on this should be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on a regular basis.</p>	<p>February/March 2013 to discuss adding value to public services by involving volunteers.</p> <p>14.2 A report drafted by Simon Williams (LBM) and Hayley James (MVSC) has been discussed on two occasions at CMT in March and July 2013.</p> <p>14.3 Progress is underway across the council with a selective list of initiatives.</p>	<p>Simon Williams (LBM) and Hayley James (MVSC)</p> <p>LBM Departments</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	
<p><u>Recommendation 15</u> We recommend that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission should take an ongoing interest in progress on volunteering and should ask the lead Director (currently the Director of Community and Housing) to bring an annual update on behalf of the Council's Corporate Management Team and the Merton Partnership</p>	<p>15.1 Agreed.</p> <p>15.2 Hayley James (MVSC), as lead for strategy delivery on behalf of the Merton Partnership will attend also.</p>	<p>Simon Williams (LBM) and Hayley James (MVSC)</p>	<p>April 2014</p>	

Conclusion

Merton is at an interesting time in relation to volunteering. MVSC and VCM will be making a decision regarding the Transforming Local Infrastructure (TLI) merger by the end of September.

The above recommendations and resulting changes to involving volunteers in Merton will have a positive impact on residents and communities.

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