

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 4 July 2019

Wards: All

Subject: Merton Partnership Annual Report 2018-19

Lead officer: Ged Curran, Chief Executive

Lead member: Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Leader of Merton Council and Chair of Merton Partnership

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Recommendations:

- A. That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission discuss and comment on the progress of the Merton Partnership in 2018-19, as set out in the draft Annual Report at Appendix I
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The draft annual report of the Merton Partnership for 2018-19 is attached at Appendix I for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission. This includes a general update on the progress of the four thematic partnerships against the community plan themes over 2018-19. These updates are published on the Council's website once any comments have been reviewed by the thematic partnerships.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Merton Partnership was established in January 2002 as the overarching strategic partnership for the borough. Its aim is to work together with all partners on issues that are key to local people – including residents, workers and visitors – as reflected in the Community Plan.
- 2.2 The Partnership's primary objectives are to deliver the Community Plan along with other plans and strategies adopted by the Merton Partnership such as the Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Strategy.
- 2.3 Part of the Merton Partnership's governance is to produce an annual report setting out progress in delivering the priorities set out in the Community Plan. The draft plan is presented to Overview and Scrutiny prior to publication to provide oversight of the work of the Merton Partnership.
- 2.4 One of the recommendations from the LBM Internal Audit of the Merton Partnership, agreed by the Merton Partnership Executive Board in September 2014 was that the "Merton Partnership should produce an Annual Report, as indicated in the Governance Handbook, for review by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and subsequently publish it." Additionally, this report should outline performance over the previous year.

Structure of the Merton Partnership

- 2.5 The Merton Partnership consists of senior representatives from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. Members are recruited on the basis of their capacity to represent their organisations and not their individual interests.
- 2.6 The Partnership comprises an Executive Board drawn from the executive leaders for the public sector, business and voluntary and community sector as well as four thematic partnership groups:
- Health and Wellbeing Board
 - Children's Trust
 - Safer and Stronger Strategy Group
 - Sustainable Communities and Transport Board.
- 2.7 The thematic partnerships are tasked with delivering the priorities set out in the Community Plan. The Executive Board is responsible for the Community Plan, the vision for the borough and holds the thematic partnerships to account for delivery.
- 2.8 The voluntary and community sector is represented by 15 elected representatives from INVOLVE, the Community Engagement Network, who sit on a number of the partnership boards.

The work of the Merton Partnership

- 2.9 In May 2017 the Executive Board held an away day to consider its role and purpose in light of the increasing challenges faced by the public sector, particularly financial and demographic pressures. The Executive Board agreed that the Executive Board was more relevant than ever given these challenges. It confirmed its core purpose was articulate its ambition for the Borough through the Community Plan; commission Thematic Networks to deliver, and; hold thematic networks to account for delivering the vision.
- 2.10 As well as its oversight role of the thematic partnerships the Executive Board has also considered a number of cross-cutting issues in relation to:
- Budgets: the collective impact of public sector funding cuts, the implications for the next few years and opportunities to work together;
 - The next refresh of Merton's Community Plan in 2019 (see below).
 - How partners could contribute to the final stages of the development of the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-24.
- 2.11 Looking forward, the next Merton Partnership Executive Board members' event will take place on 24 June. The key focus for the day will be on the development of the new Sustainable Communities Plan, with additional partner sessions led by Public Health and the Police, which will focus on strategic, cross-cutting topics. This planning day will shape the future work programme for the Executive Board for the year ahead.

- 2.12 The last Merton Partnership conference took place on 3 July 2018 with over 100 members attending the event, which focused on opportunities to strengthen social capital. The next conference is planned for winter 2019.
- 2.13 Data analysts drawn from the members of the Merton Partnership have overseen the development of a new data hub. [Merton Data](#) has been live since January 2018 and is available publicly enabling voluntary sector groups to have access. Development of the site is managed through an analyst's network which includes representation from MVSC on behalf of the voluntary sector and a representative from MVSC has regularly attended meetings. A presentation of the site was made at a workshop hosted at MVSC on 1 November 2018 for voluntary sector groups. The workshop explored the ways in which the VS can use the site to support their work, most notably in putting together funding bids. It was agreed that a workshop relating to the ways in which community groups can use data and information in their roles is to be held annually.
- 2.14 Updates and future priorities for each thematic partnership are set out in the draft Annual Report 2018-19 – Appendix 1.

Sustainable Communities Plan 2019-25

- 2.15 The Sustainable Communities Plan will set the Merton Partnership's long-term ambition for the borough. It will replace the current Community Plan that was launched in 2013. As well as a final document, the Plan will have an online presence that will evolve alongside its development, and during the lifetime of the Plan. The aim is to provide an online resource for the community that is easily accessible.
- 2.16 The overarching goals of the Sustainable Communities Plan will be to increase social capital in Merton as an underlying driver to improve resilience and wellbeing across the borough, and to understand the ambitions that residents have for their borough and where they live. Social capital can be broadly defined as 'the social networks, exchanges, obligations, and shared identities that in turn provide potential support and access to resources.'
- 2.17 To support development of the Sustainable Communities Plan, an evidence base will collate data from a series of indicators to measure the existing levels of social capital on a ward-by-ward basis and give us a baseline from which to work. This will enable the identification of areas with high social capital as well as existing community assets and good practice that can be tapped into. It will also highlight areas with lower social capital: places where the Merton Partnership can be proactive at trying to develop new projects.
- 2.18 Developing the Plan will be based on a wide range of engagement activity to help ensure the views of as wide a cross section of the community as possible are heard and their ambitions for the borough captured. This will utilise the results of existing engagement work, such as the most recent Residents Survey and Children and Young People's Survey, and more targeted work with 'seldom listened to' groups. The Plan will be co-produced with the wider Merton Partnership (Thematic Networks and sub-groups) with the key priorities from each of the four thematic partnership boards – two from each - forming the eight overarching priorities of the Sustainable Communities Plan.

- 2.19 The plan will include a clear list of ‘you said, we did’ deliverables that can be reviewed during the plan’s lifetime to demonstrate its impact.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 We could not produce an Annual Report. However, this would breach the governance for the Merton Partnership as well as the council’s own governance framework.

4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1 Thematic Leads have been consulted on this report. The draft Annual Report was circulated to Merton Partnership Executive Board members for comment ahead of it being published with this report.

5. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

6. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal or statutory implications arising from this report.

7. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report. It should be noted that there is a legal requirement to have a Health and Wellbeing Board and a Crime Reduction Partnership Board (the Safer and Stronger Strategy Group fulfils this function). Overall, the work of the Merton Partnership as set out in the Annual Report contributes towards making the borough a fair and more cohesive place.

8. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None for the purposes of this report although the work of the Merton Partnership as a whole contributes towards making the borough a safer place.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Partnership working is one of the corporate risks and the Merton Partnership is a major opportunity for different stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sectors to come together to consider priorities for joint working and implementation.

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

- 10.1 Appendix I – Merton Partnership Annual Report 2018-19.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None.