Appendix 2

Merton Civic Pride Fund: Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector 2023/26

Draft Prospectus

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This funding prospectus is for Merton Council's Civic Pride Fund: Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector 2023/26. From October the council will be seeking voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to work alongside us as strategic partners. Following an application process, grant funding will be provided to strategic partners and will begin from April 2023. This programme builds on the 2019/22 Strategic Partner Programme and aims to bring together wider funding opportunities to ensure that support is available for Merton residents.

Programme Aims
The aims of the programme are to:
- Invest in and support Merton's local voluntary and community infrastructure.
- Nurture a strong sense of community and reduce inequalities.
- Bring together preventative services that provide information, advice and support in the community to strengthen Merton resident's physical, social, emotional, and economic resilience.

Structure
In order to achieve these aims, the Civic Pride Fund: Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector is divided into four themes. These themes align with Merton council's new 'Working Better With Communities' Framework (see Appendix 2). They are specifically focused around areas where people may find help and support in Merton. Organisations will be able to apply for funding against one or more theme. The four themes are aligned to the ways of working specified within the Framework.

Theme One: Services that provide help
The services that provide emergency assistance to people in crisis and direct help to adults in need.

Theme Two: Services that grow strengths and capabilities
The services that provide good quality information, support and non-accredited advice, accredited advice and casework and specialist and/or legal representation where necessary.

Theme Three: Active, supportive communities
The services that co-design support and solutions with people and communities to help grow their relationships and connections and increase their level of activity. This will include low level preventative activities and Healthwatch Merton.

Theme Four: An enabling system and place
The services that help to support an enabling system and place. This will include voluntary and community sector infrastructure support and the provision of small grants via Merton Giving[1].

Being a Strategic Partner
Being a strategic partner on the programme means working together to meet individual needs and tackle the wider strategic challenges facing our residents and communities. By drawing on the diverse knowledge, skills and experience of the strategic partners the Civic Pride Fund: Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector will work constructively to deliver the best outcomes for Merton residents. The programme expects all partners to follow the values and principles of joint working. These include building and fostering trust, flexibility and adaptability, inclusivity, mutually supportive, evidence based, quality assurance, Compact working[2], and alignment with Merton's Strategic Priorities.[3]

Timeline
The Civic Pride Fund: Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector will be advertised to prospective providers in October and a funding panel will be convened in November. All applicants will be notified of the outcome in December, with funding beginning in April 2023.

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[1] Merton Giving - Local Business Supporting The Community
[2] Merton Compact
[3] These priorities are set out in the introduction on page 5

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INTRODUCTION TO THE CIVIC PRIDE FUND: SUPPORTING THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR 2023/26

We are pleased to confirm that despite the ongoing financial challenges facing councils, Merton Council will continue to provide the same level of investment to this refreshed programme as to the previous Strategic Partner Programme, with an increase in overall funding for 2023/26. Through this extra investment we recognise the increasing impact of the rising cost of living on our residents and the services that are there to support them.

Building on the 2019-22 Strategic Partner Programme, this refreshed prospectus brings together a wider range of funding opportunities under one programme. This programme also sits alongside other council funding opportunities open to the sector, including the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Fund.

In Merton, there is significant correlation between socio-economic inequalities and geography, with the east of the borough being more deprived than the more affluent west. Tackling inequalities, especially health inequalities and 'bridging the gap' between the east and west of Merton, is at the heart of the prevention agenda and needs to be taken across the whole life course so that all Merton residents can start well, live well and age well.

The new programme title reflects our commitment to putting Civic Pride at the heart of our borough. We want Merton to be a place where people are proud to live, work and study: where everyone can thrive, and where we embrace the strength and diversity of our communities.

This commitment to nurturing civic pride forms part of a new set of council strategic priorities, which have been informed by the outcomes of the borough-wide Your Merton engagement. The new priorities are:

- Nurturing Civic Pride
- Building a sustainable future
- Creating a borough of sport

This funding programme comprises four separate themes aligned with Merton Council's new 'Working Better With Communities' Framework, which is detailed in Appendix 2. The prospectus sets the outcomes and strategic delivery models that we are seeking. More detail on each theme is set out in the relevant sections of the prospectus.

We are looking to use this fund to support our local voluntary and community sector. Funding is open to new and previously or currently funded services. It is very likely that the applications for funding we receive will be more than the funding that is available. The prospectus will form the basis of the criteria we use to decide who will be our strategic partners. We are looking for organisations that have a track record of delivery which they can evidence. We want to work with organisations that can work collaboratively and constructively with us and the other strategic partners. We will look for organisations who have a strong track record in generating resources from a diverse range of sources.

Any organisation applying for funding must not use their grant to pay for publicity that is for or against any political party. We will consider bids from faith-based bodies and religious organisations for projects that are relevant to specific themes in the prospectus, however funding cannot be used to promote any religious activities and all services for which grant funding is used must be delivered in a way that is fully inclusive. Please note that some funding in this prospectus is specifically designated for adults and is indicated within each of the relevant themes.

We will also make judgements on the spread geographically and on the basis of needs, as well as the potential for addressing inequalities in terms of outcomes between the east and west of the borough and between different communities. The council also reserves its right of discretion.

We are extremely grateful once again for the work of our refreshed Collaborative Working Group who helped us develop these requirements (see Appendix 1). This group of people, drawn from the council, voluntary sector, and partners, came together to discuss, research, challenge, and debate all aspects of the new Programme. The timescales were very tight, and people gave very generously of their time and experience.

1.   SERVICES THAT PROVIDE HELP

Introduction

We are looking to commission services that provide direct help to people in need or crisis under the following key strands:
- Emergency Assistance
- Direct Help to support adults in need

Emergency Assistance

What service is this funding for?

The pandemic has shone a light on existing inequalities, both in terms of direct impact of infection but also the indirect economic and social impacts. We are also very aware of the increasing impact of the rising cost of living on our residents and the services that are there to support them. Again, this impact is likely to exacerbate existing inequalities.

The VCS are already working closely in partnership with the council to support residents with the increasing pressures of the cost of living in Merton. The rising cost of living and its impact locally has been a key theme of the partnership over the past few months.

This theme of Emergency Assistance aims to help people access support with basic needs at point of crisis. Emergency assistance in the form of a food parcel, voucher or cash grant is designed to provide short-term, emergency support during a crisis. The aim of emergency support is to relieve immediate pressure by providing practical immediate assistance such as food and provisions but also offering additional support, so people don't need to use the emergency support again in the future.

Consideration will be given to support the funding of infrastructure for services that provide emergency assistance in the form of vouchers, cash grants, provisions and practical support.

We are looking to fund the following types of support:

- Co-ordination, induction, training and support for volunteers
- Costs relating to transportation and storage of goods
- Supporting network of provision and assistance
- Administration of individual cash grants/vouchers

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- Improving the connectivity between voluntary and community sector activity, family networks and formal early help activity

What funding is available?

Emergency Assistance: £75,000 over the course of the programme

What time period will the funding run for?

2023/24 – 2025/26

What are the key ways of working for this theme?

Learn and Share Insights

The services that provide Emergency Assistance theme aims to support services that will learn together and share insights to continuously respond to the changing needs of residents due to the cost of living and the impact of the pandemic.

- The VCS are working in partnership to tackle the increasing pressures of the cost of living on Merton residents and are actively involved in Merton's Food Poverty Action Plan and Fuel Poverty Sub Group. This activity needs to be integral to the whole Civic Pride Fund going forward but in particular Emergency Assistance.
- Food poverty is defined as not having the resources or access to sufficient and/or appropriate nutritious food necessary for a healthy life. Food insecurity is not having access to sufficient food, or food of an adequate quality to meet basic needs; they are both closely linked with a wide range of other forms of disadvantage.
- Fuel poverty in England is measured using the Low-Income, Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) indicator. Under this indicator, a household is considered to be fuel poor if: they are living in a property with a fuel poverty energy efficiency rating of band D or below and when they spend the required amount to heat their home, they are left with a residual income below the official poverty line.
- Organisations who apply for this funding will be expected to work in partnership with other strategic partners and services to help people with short term support such as managing money, support with debt, budgeting, accessing benefits or other grants people may be entitled to.
- It is vital that services are person centred and look to involve customers in the design, implementation and monitoring of services to ensure that they are meeting the outputs and outcomes of the local residents in need.

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Address Inequalities

The Emergency Assistance theme aims to address inequalities by targeting resources and valuing community insight.

- Since the start of the pandemic, job or income losses, service closures and restrictions have led to increases in food poverty, food insecurity and fuel poverty. Now, with the cost of living increasing this has put significant pressure on some of our most vulnerable residents. Evidence suggests an over-representation of disabled people and carers are seeking this type of emergency assistance.
- This theme of Emergency Assistance aims to help people with the most need have access to basic needs at point of crisis. Services need to be accessible and make reasonable adjustments for anyone who may want to use them. Consideration should be given to opening times and the location of provision so that access can be improved.
- We recognise the disproportionate impact of the pandemic and the rising cost of living on Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and therefore services need to ensure inclusivity and actively promote emergency assistance to the diverse communities in Merton.
- Tackling inequalities, especially health inequalities and 'bridging the gap' between the east and west of Merton is a key priority. Therefore, any emergency assistance service needs to be able to recognise and respond to these health and wellbeing inequalities and have a targeted approach to providing support in locations with the most need.

Collaborate and integrate support

Emergency Assistance services will need to invest time in relationships, collaborate across professions and join up support and solutions as early as possible.

- Services will be required to work closely with referral agencies and frontline professionals (such as doctors, teachers, health visitors and social workers) to identify people who need emergency assistance.
- Services will need to consider how they collaborate and work together in partnership to meet the needs of residents living in poverty or in crisis.
- It is important that any emergency assistance service connects with other health and wellbeing providers to make every contact count: an approach to behaviour change that has a positive effect on the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities and populations.
- Services will need to ensure that all those in need are provided with up-to-date information and advice on other support and help available.

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Connect and grow relationships

The services that deliver emergency assistance will ensure people know where to get help by connecting to their local community and encouraging social action to support those in need.

- There are positive examples within Merton where the community responded to the needs of residents throughout the pandemic and beyond. Many communities mobilised together to support their neighbours and there was significant mutual aid. This theme intended to support the continued harnessing of this community effort and to maximise volunteering and social capital opportunities.
- Emergency Assistance services will encourage the redistribution of surplus or donated provisions where relevant. This could be through mobilising mutual aid with the use of social media and/or community collections.

Direct help to support adults in need

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, several local impact reports have been produced following engagement with Merton residents. This includes people with dementia and their carers, people with a learning disability and their carers and people from BAME communities. These reports highlight the significant impact of the pandemic on our residents, especially on mental health and wellbeing. For example, older people may be at greater risk of de-conditioning due to reduced physical activity and social isolation that can lead to loneliness. This has an impact on people's physical and mental wellbeing.

As the pandemic has been substantial for some of our more vulnerable and isolated residents, this theme of 'Services That Provide Help' will consider services that support adults in their own home and help to get them out and about where their needs are significant.

It is anticipated that these services will make best use of volunteers and wider social capital to support residents with significant needs. The VCS could support people with low level interventions such as:

- Help with shopping
- Help with correspondence
- Keeping in touch
- Help getting out and about in their local community, making best use of community assets including green spaces
- Activities that develop someone's confidence such as taking someone to an activity for the first time

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- Helping someone develop better balance

Some people may need ongoing additional support in their home or out and about due to their disability, illness or impairment and staff and volunteers will need the relevant training and experience to support individuals.

The aim of direct help is to improve an individual's wellbeing, maximise independence and help people live their fullest life possible. The services will aim to prevent, reduce and delay the need for social care services that encompass interventions:

- Before any dependency is imminent
- At the point that someone is showing signs of ill-health
- To recover a person's functional capability
- After someone has already presented at hospital or social care to de-escalate the immediate crisis
- To reduce their dependency on long term care and support

The services will need to be person-centred and innovative, which draw on the collective strengths, knowledge and capabilities of the wider VCS. Services should enable people to develop confidence about their lives now and in the future and have access to what is available locally to support them.

Services could support people to regain independence after hospital admission and prevent re-admission and will need to work in collaboration with health and social care services through restorative support which enables people to regain independence and promote self-care.

*Personal Care, as defined by the Care Quality Commission, is excluded form our definition of direct help.

What funding is available?

Direct Help: £165,000 over the course of the programme

What time period will the funding run for?

2023/24 – 2025/26

What are the key ways of working for this theme?

Learn and Share Insights

Services that provide Direct Help will learn together and share insights openly to continuously improve prevention, help and support in Merton

- It is imperative that the services provided have systems in place to measure outcomes achieved with customers. Quality assurance processes will need to demonstrate that services are fully utilised, are of a high standard and are

reaching, in an equitable way, the diverse population of Merton who need help to prevent, reduce and delay health and social care support.

- It is important to listen and learn from people who access the services. For example, through their stories, testimonials and case studies.
- Direct Help services will need to engage with customers in the design and delivery of the service. This could be in the form of surveys, questionnaires or focus groups, and services will need to demonstrate how they adapt their delivery models in response to learning from these engagements.
- Services will need to be able to share data and insights transparently (adhering to GDPR), so we can learn about any changes or key challenges where services may need to respond flexibly as context and circumstances change.
- Services that promote direct help need to be evidence-led on what works and responsive to national and local policy and trends. This may mean adapting services where appropriate.

Address Inequalities

We need to ensure that Services that provide direct help look for and address inequalities in and between communities, target resources and make support accessible and value community insight

- The aim of this theme is to develop appropriate services to respond to health and wellbeing inequalities, especially those exacerbated by the pandemic and cost of living crisis. Research by a number of agencies has highlighted the importance of eating well, reducing sedentary time and increasing physical activity to promote the mental and physical wellbeing of disabled people, older people and those with long term conditions. Physical activity can improve strength, balance, stamina and other elements of physical wellbeing and it can also have a significant impact on mental health, social connection and an ongoing commitment to self-care. It is important that direct help services promote healthy minds, reduce sedentary time and increase active lifestyles that builds on local evidence.
- We need to ensure that direct help is accessible, fun, welcoming, engaging and has a positive impact on a person's wellbeing.
- This way of working aims to target the barriers to resilience and the social determinant of health and wellbeing that come from structural inequalities and social conditions. Direct help services need to promote healthy minds and active lifestyles in a way that is tailored to the communities served.
- Organisations will also need to ensure that irrespective of where someone lives within the borough, there is equality of access to support and services. In addition, this theme aims to tackle the east-west divide in Merton and invest in accessible support with communities that don't traditionally access services.

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Collaborate and integrate support

Direct Help services will need to invest time in relationships, collaborate across professions, silos and sectors and join up support and solutions as early as possible.

- By working in close partnership, direct help services can achieve a more integrated and co-ordinated approach to service delivery and achieve a seamless approach to supporting people.
- Organisations should consider how they deliver services to avoid duplication such as establishing partnership arrangements such as joint working or collaborative funding bids.
- Direct Help Services will align with the other Civic Pride Strategic Partners and the wider Merton prevention offer. Successful bidders will be expected to work in collaboration with the strategic partners, and other care navigation initiatives to ensure that these link closely together, creating clear referral pathways to support our residents with significant needs.
- A network will be established with all strategic partners to give an update on the services they provide, any issues faced and provide peer support to each other. Successful applicants would be encouraged to work collaboratively with social prescribers/care navigators to provide a co-ordinated approach that adds value for our residents and communities.

Strengths-based, person-centred support

Services that provide direct help need to provide information and help earlier in empowering, accessible and person-centred ways which build on the strengths of people and communities

- Support should promote an asset-based and person-centred approach in accordance with an adult's individual needs and circumstances. This can be achieved through facilitating people and communities to come together to achieve positive change using their own knowledge, skills and lived experience of the issues they encounter in their own lives.
- Services need to build on social capital which promotes volunteering, social infrastructure, trust, sociability and civic participation. This theme aims to empower organisations to provide direct help in a way that make sense to the individual so that they improve their wellbeing, activity, confidence, independence and resilience.
- Services should feel free to help in the best way they can and to solve problems alongside the person that needs direct help. This also may involve working in a way that is tried and tested and known to deliver positive outcomes for particular communities or designing new ways of responding to novel challenges.

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Connect and grow relationships

Direct Help services aim to help people to connect and grow relationships in their community to enable them to find and offer support and know where to find help.

- Services should encourage social interaction and build connectedness through community and neighbourhood assets. This could be through helping people keep in touch with their local community and the people that matter to them.
- Services need to recognise that everyone can make a contribution and should promote volunteering activities that involve spending time, unpaid with residents.
- Services will need to be flexible and adapt according to any Government guidance so people can live safely and fairly.
- We know that many residents face digital exclusion, so any service needs to consider accessibility and by working with partners enable digital inclusion and connectivity.

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2. SERVICES THAT GROW STRENGTHS AND CAPABILITIES

What service is this funding for?

We are looking to fund services that grow people's strengths and capabilities and enable them to live independent lives. These services are inherently asset based, they recognise and build on what matters to people and their interests and needs.

We are looking to commission a number of organisations in the provision of services that grow strengths and capabilities.

This provision should be a continuum of support across a tiered model: good quality information, advice, and support, non-accredited advice, support and casework, accredited advice and casework and specialist and/or legal representation where necessary. We would therefore welcome a collaborative partnership approach for information, advice and support services as we feel that this would offer the best model to meet the features we are seeking.
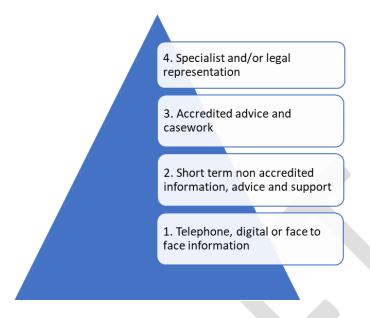
Some funding available within this theme is specifically to support adults with the aim to prevent, reduce and delay the need for social care services.

The outcomes being sought and the aspects of the provision model are set out below. Although provision can be viewed in these categories, a customer's[4] journey will often not make the distinction between these levels and may require a number of different levels of assistance throughout their interaction with the voluntary sector. For example, a customer may initially approach an organisation asking for information, however the complexity of the case may require more specialist legal representation. A customer does not need to seek the first level of support before being able to access the other levels of provision. Support needs to be accessible at the appropriate level to the customers' needs / complexity of the issue.

Organisations also need to detail who their service will support including customer age group, whether this is targeted at a particular community, reach a specific area or have a borough-wide reach.

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[4] In this document we are referring to the term customer as this term is Care Act 2014 compliant, however we acknowledge that some organisations use the other terms such as client or service user.

Tiered model of information, advice and support

The tiers are explained in more detail below:

1. **Telephone, digital or face to face information and advice**
    Fact-based provision of information and advice which may be delivered over the phone, digitally (e.g. video chat such as Zoom/Skype) or face-to-face. This tier will cater for those who need a steer on a topic and once supplied with the advice can take the matter forward on their own behalf. This provision will be fast, provide high quality advice, and will enable the customer to take further action to address the issue themselves.

2. **Short term non accredited information, advice and support**
    This tier of information advice and support provision could be provided over the telephone, digitally (e.g. video chat such as Zoom/Skype) or face to face. There must be a place in the system for short-term information, advice, and support for people who need help on more than one issue. This preventative support might include holistic wellbeing assessments, person-centred plans, capacity building, mentoring, one to one peer support. Although this tier is focussed on short-term interventions, some support may take longer due to the level of need or complexity of issues and there will need to be a level of flexibility.

3. **Accredited advice and casework**
    This tier of accredited advice and casework could be provided over the telephone, digitally (e.g. video chat such as Zoom/Skype) or face to face. This support is likely to be more ongoing due to the level of the person's needs and/or the complexity of the issue. The goal is still to enable customers to support themselves however in these cases it may require more comprehensive and longer-term wrap-around support.

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Organisations providing this level of advice and/or casework will have reached a recognised organisation quality standard for legal advice services operating in the area of social welfare law, such as the Advice Quality Standard (AQS).[5]

4. **Specialist and/or legal representation**
   The system must also include capacity for specialist knowledge and legal representation for those cases which require professional intervention or court appearances, such as formally appealing a benefits pay-out.

The purpose of providing high quality information, advice and support should be to prevent people, where possible, requiring more intensive services or support. All organisations should have this as a goal.

Through regular engagement with the VCS we know that the key areas of concern continue to be debt, benefits, housing, social care and now the cost of living crisis. Services will need to be able to respond to this.

Disabled people or those facing challenging life events e.g. through illness or impairment, may well require high quality and timely advice and support to promote their health and wellbeing, such as advice on what support, care and help is available.

With regards to housing, whilst any preventative service will be tenure neutral, priority will be to those individuals / households in the most acute housing need. The most acute form of housing need is homelessness or threat of homelessness. The main cause of homelessness in Merton is from private sector tenants and it follows therefore that priority will be given to this group.

Registered Provider (RP) tenants (Housing Associations) are not excluded but a recognition is made that these tenants benefit from a preventative support framework by their own landlords which private sector tenancies do not. It will be expected that providers will ensure that, where reasonable, RP tenants will have exhausted their own landlord's complaints and preventative services mechanisms in the first instance before embarking upon detailed casework and preventative work.

People will often approach those they know or feel comfortable around for assistance, and so there needs to be consideration for those who might present to their support networks. These less formal channels of assistance should be supported and enabled to correctly refer people in need who they encounter.

Often, those who have some of the most challenging needs will be those who are least inclined to approach an advice organisation, and so the provision of information, advice and support services needs to effectively target these people and provide

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[5] https://asauk.org.uk/about-the-advice-quality-standard/

services which are accessible and welcoming. This may include measures such as offering BSL, foreign language interpreters, digital advice sessions, or having easy-read information available.

All services should ensure that they adopt a 'Think Family' approach[6] where relevant, to ensure that the information, advice and support provided by the programme is coordinated and takes account of how individual problems affect the whole family.

What funding is available?
£2,894,979 over three years 2023-26 (of this funding, £1,232,679 is allocated specifically for adults 18+ and the remaining funding for all ages)

What time period will the funding run for?

2023/24 – 2025/26

What are the key ways of working for this theme?

Learn and share insights

The Services that Grow Strengths and Capabilities theme aims to learn together and share insights openly to continuously improve trust, relationships and the quality of information, advice and support services in Merton.

- The provision of information, advice and support needs to be adaptable to any changes to the landscape of need and demand and so an organisation should be able to demonstrate how its staff and volunteers are kept up to date with the latest information and training.
- The voluntary sector should be aware of upcoming changes to policy which might change the demand for information, advice and support services. Policy announcements or large-scale shifts can drastically change the demand for services. Merton Council will continue to work closely with strategic partners and the wider VCS to ensure any concerns or unmet need are addressed.
- Other national and local trends can also have implications for information, advice and support needs in the borough, such as the recent pandemic or the current rise in the cost of living, resulting in higher demand for relevant advice. There needs to be a proactive approach to identifying trends and reconfiguring services where appropriate.
- Partners should seek opportunities for delivering information, advice and support as vital services that wrap around related services (e.g. health) and

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[6] The Think Family initiative was introduced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in 2008. The basis of the Think Family approach is to encourage services to deal with families as a whole, rather than responding to each problem, or person, separately.

deliver from any new facilities that may be developed over the lifetime of the grants programme.

- There must be a level of quality assurance built into the system to ensure that customers are not only getting timely advice on the appropriate topic, but also that the advice is of a high standard. This will involve regular training of staff, and access to appropriate materials and online tools for caseworkers.
- Those who are providing advice must be well trained in the appropriate field and be aware of shifts in funding and policy in order to best advise customers.
- There needs to be a consistency of advice. Customers should be able to receive the same high quality advice regardless of which organisation they approach.
- Organisations which provide advice should be properly regulated; for example, debt advice is regulated under the Financial Conduct Authority and immigration under the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner or the Solicitors Regulation Authority.
- It is appropriate that those giving advice in tiers three and four operate under a recognised quality assurance scheme; the main schemes for this include Advice Quality Standard, Specialist Quality Mark, or Lexcel. Organisations that don't have these quality marks are encouraged to do so as the auditing process gives some assurances of standards and quality.

Address inequalities

The Services that Grow Strengths and Capabilities theme aims to support services that are accessible to all, as a required feature of any funding bid

- Service design needs to be accessible and make reasonable adjustments for anyone who may want to use them. Many advice-giving organisations report an over-representation of disabled people in seeking this kind of support.
- Consideration should be given to the accessibility of services, including opening times, location of provision and a blended approach to support. This accessibility might take the form of easy-read and translated documents, wheelchair-accessible facilities, interpreters, or the provision of digital sessions as well as regular telephone calls.
- The programme will need to ensure that all services identify informal carers, including young carers and ensure that they are supported in their role and referred to the appropriate agency where required.
- In order to promote people remaining independent in their own homes, some information, advice and support services will need to adopt a flexible and asset-based approach, making every contact count. This could be through the use of outcomes-based assessment tools. Some services will need to visit people in their own homes and other support services may be accessed via community hubs.

- Some person-centred information, advice and support interventions will be responsive on the presenting need, where others take a more holistic and longer-term approach to supporting individuals with other underlying needs and complex issues.
    - Short term interventions could include referrals to other agencies that can assist someone in their own home to promote independence, supporting people to access community-based activities, identifying assisted travel options, or help to complete forms and organise someone's life.
    - Longer term interventions support people to meet their personal aspirations so they can continue to live independently with confidence. This could include coaching and peer support programmes to support some to build their confidence and motivation, help to work through complex issues such as low-level hoarding, mental health or substance misuse issues, refer for counselling support, help to access training, work and volunteering initiatives.

Collaborate and integrate support

Under the Services that Grow Strengths and Capabilities theme, organisations are encouraged to consider collaborative partnership bids. The providers should assist one another as and when necessary and build strong relationships. Organisations are expected to ensure their services are clearly advertised and signposted.

- Organisations should think about creative ways in which they can work together and support one another, by sharing learning and support, understanding the needs of Merton (with sharing of data from the council); and the possibility of partnerships/collaborative working through joint funding bids to grow the information, advice and support offer in Merton. This could be through a dedicated Advice Forum or another mechanism with a focus on strengths and capabilities for all tiered levels of information, advice and support.
- The voluntary sector is strongest when it works together. With regards to funding, smaller organisations should consider joining with others to put forward more robust bids to any relevant funding authority. There should be a commitment and intention to cooperate with other organisations.
- Customers seeking advice, information or support need to receive the right help at the right time from the right people.
- Customers should be able to determine quickly and easily which organisation is the most relevant to approach. The organisation which someone initially approaches may not be the most appropriate to deal with their needs, and so effective referrals and handoffs are essential. This might involve a 'warm handoff' where introductions are made to the referral organisation by the referring agency to ensure a smooth transfer between providers.

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- An organisation's focus should not solely be to operate from its own premises, but should be to have some form of outreach, such as home visits, or working in community spaces such as libraries, job centres, or GP surgeries. The provision of information, advice and support should be operated with an element of outreach embedded in the model. Organisations which are fixed in a certain premises rely on people approaching them and thus risk overlooking the most vulnerable residents who might require the most support.

Connect and grow relationships

The Services that Grow Strengths and Capabilities theme aims to support customers being enabled, wherever possible, to take further action themselves and to improve their own circumstances. Some customers may simply need a steer in the right direction whilst others may require longer term support to build their resilience.

- The goal of providing information and advice is to see an improvement in a customer's circumstances and, if possible, enable them to help themselves. In a majority of cases customers will simply need a steer in the right direction for them to take further action themselves. Where further intervention and casework is required the goal is similar, although there are more steps in achieving it.
- The voluntary sector must support people in building their resilience – the ability to bounce back from tough times and having the capacity to overcome issues.
- Customers should be empowered, giving them the authority or power to do something, supporting their options to make stronger and more confident decisions, and being in control of their life and claiming their rights.
- We would like people to be assisted to use technology to access information and advice through digital information hubs, learn new skills, access online community networks and purchasing aids, equipment and telecare to promote independence.

3. ACTIVE, SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

Introduction

Under this theme, we are looking to co-design support and solutions with people and communities to help grow their relationships and connections and increase their level of activity.

We are looking to commission services that help to support active, supportive communities under the following key strands:

- Preventative activities
- Healthwatch Merton

Preventative Activities

What service is this funding for?

We are looking to commission a number of organisations to provide low level preventative activities. These services will help adults 18+ to socially connect, to develop and use their talents and passion. These services will aim to promote wellbeing and independence to prevent, reduce and delay the need for health and social care services. This could be through helping people keep in touch with their local community and the people that matter to them through:

- Eating together
- Going out and about together in their local community
- Sharing an interest or activity together
- Accessing local community activities (such as exercise classes, shopping, walking groups, adult learning, shared interest groups)
- Supporting to access leisure facilities (local leisure centres, libraries, local parks, cinemas, restaurants).

The Active, Supportive Communities Programme will support and empower adults who have no social care needs, although could be at risk of frailty and/or a long-term condition or have a disability/impairment or mental health condition, or be caring for someone who is ill, frail, disabled or has a mental health or substance misuse issue.

This programme aims to provide preventative activities that prevent, reduce and delay the need for health and social care services that encompass interventions:

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- Before any dependency is imminent
- At the point that someone is showing signs of ill-health
- To recover a person's functional capability
- After someone has already presented at hospital or social care to de-escalate the immediate crisis
- To reduce their dependency on long term care and support

What funding is available?

£600,000 over the course of the programme

What time period will the funding run for?

2023/24 – 2025/26

What are the key ways of working for this theme?

Learn and Share Insights

The Active, Supportive Communities theme promotes person centred, good quality services where partners, customers, carers and officers can learn together and share insights to continuously improve prevention, help and support in Merton.

- It is imperative that the services provided have systems in place to measure outcomes achieved with customers. Quality assurance processes will need to demonstrate that services are fully utilised and beneficial to the customers that access them.
- It is important to listen and learn from people who access the services. For example, through their stories, testimonials, case studies and customer satisfaction surveys.
- A system will be built into the grant monitoring to ensure that support and services are of high quality and are reaching the diverse population of Merton who need help to prevent, reduce and delay health and social care support.
- It is important to be able to sharing data and insights transparently, so we can learn about any changes or key challenges where services may need to respond flexibly as context and circumstances change.
- Activities that promote active and supportive communities need to be evidence-led on what works. The programme will look to build on what we have already got within Merton, stretching and developing the best of our current offer and disinvesting where we cannot evidence gain.
- It is imperative that there is a level of flexibility with all bids so if the demand for services changes, organisations can adapt and respond to the needs of Merton residents who would benefit from preventative activities.

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Address Inequalities

The Active, Supportive Communities theme aims to address inequalities in and between communities by targeting resources, make support accessible and value community insight.

- This way of working aims to target the barriers to resilience and the social determinant of health and wellbeing that come from structural inequalities and social conditions. Support and activities need to promote healthy minds and active lifestyles in a way that works for local communities.
- Better health and wellbeing is associated with building resilience and the ability to bounce back from adversity. Therefore, this theme aims to invest in social infrastructure in communities with the worst outcomes and co-designing accessible support with communities that don't traditionally access services.
- Research by a number of agencies has highlighted the importance of eating well, reducing sedentary time and increasing physical activity to promote the mental and physical wellbeing of disabled people, older people and those with long term conditions. Physical activity can improve strength, balance, stamina and other elements of physical wellbeing and it can also have a significant impact on mental health, social connection and an ongoing commitment to self-care. It is important to have a diverse range of activities that promote healthy minds, reduce sedentary time and increase active lifestyles that builds on local evidence.
- The Active, Supportive Communities theme aims to engage with people to improve their access to wellbeing and physical activities in their lives and increase participation whatever someone's circumstances.
- We need to ensure that activities are accessible, fun, welcoming, engaging and have a positive impact on a person's wellbeing.

Collaborate and Integrate Support

The Active, Supportive Communities theme aims to invest time in relationships, collaborate with across professions and sectors to join up support and solutions as early as possible

- By working in close partnership, communities can achieve a more integrated and co-ordinated approach to service delivery and achieve a seamless approach to supporting people.
- Organisations should consider how they deliver services to avoid duplication such as establishing partnership arrangements such as joint working or collaborative funding bids.
- People in need of support will present where they feel comfortable so we would require partners to be aware and understand the wider needs of the community. Organisations will also need to ensure that irrespective of where

someone lives within the borough, there is equality of access to support and services.

- Active, Supportive Community Services will align with the other Civic Pride strategic partners and the wider Merton prevention offer. Successful bidders will be expected to work in collaboration with the strategic partners, and other care navigation initiatives to ensure that these link closely together, creating clear pathways to support residents.
- Providers of the Active, Supportive Communities theme will seek opportunities to work in an integrated way with other services (e.g. primary care and social care) and deliver in part from any new facilities that may be developed over the lifetime of the grants programme, e.g. the Wilson Wellbeing Hub.
- A network will be established with all strategic partners to give an update on the services they provide, any issues faced and provide peer support to each other. Successful applicants would be encouraged to work collaboratively with social prescribers / care navigators to provide a co-ordinated approach across the borough.

Strengths-based person-centred support

The Active and Supportive Communities theme aims to promote services that offer a more person-centred approach to activities that recognise the whole person and their context, circumstances, needs and assets.

- This theme aims to trust services to deliver activities in a way that make sense to their local communities and work with individuals so that they improve their wellbeing, activity, independence and resilience.
- This approach may involve trying new things through prototypes and pilots to understand the impact of moving to a new way is working.
- Staff in services feel free to help in the best way they can and to solve problems alongside the person that needs help.
- It also may involve working in a way that is tried and tested and known to deliver positive outcomes for particular communities.
- By working closely in a co-produced way, relationships between partners, customers and carers will be strengthened.

Connect and Grow Relationships

Preventative activities aim to help people to connect and grow relationships in their community and to reduce isolation and loneliness

- Services should encourage social interaction and build connectedness through community and neighbourhood assets.
- People may need support to access activities for the first time as there may be a fear of going alone, or lack of confidence with getting to an activity. Some people may also need ongoing additional support due to their disability, illness or impairment.
- Some community activities provide accessible platforms for people to make new friends and receive peer support. This could be through a shared interest, shared culture or shared circumstances.
- For people who struggle to get out and about, we would look for activities that help people to feel comfortable, safe and less isolated such as online community networks.
- Support should promote an asset-based approach, which is an integral part of community development. This is achieved through facilitating people and communities to come together to achieve positive change using their own knowledge, skills and lived experience of the issues they encounter in their own lives.
- Services need to build on social capital which promote volunteering, social infrastructure, trust, sociability and civic participation.
- Services need to recognise that everyone can make a contribution. Services should promote volunteering activities that involve spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives.
- Any activity or service needs to create places, opportunities and events where people connect. This includes face to face in buildings or green spaces, online activities, or a blended approach. Services will need to be flexible and adapt according to any Government guidance so people can live safely and fairly.
- We know that many residents face digital exclusion, so any service needs to consider accessibility and by working with partners enable digital inclusion and connectivity.

Healthwatch Merton

What service is this funding for?

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 replaced the previous public and patient engagement mechanism, Local Involvement Network (LINk), with a new body called Local Healthwatch (LHW). The Act requires local authorities with adult social care responsibilities to commission a Local Healthwatch from 1 April 2013. This prospectus is for the continued provision from April 2023 of a local Healthwatch in the London Borough of Merton: hereinafter called Healthwatch Merton.

Healthwatch Merton has been provided since April 2013 and the provider from 2023 is expected to coordinate and build upon on all of the existing mechanisms for engaging users of health and social care services, both those established by Healthwatch Merton to date and the wider networks of user-led organisations. It will also be expected to maintain and develop the relationships that engage communities, patients, service users, and carers, bringing a strong voice to the Health and Wellbeing Board, which Healthwatch Merton is a member of.

Healthwatch Merton must continue to be accessible and accountable to all who wish to engage with it. We expect Healthwatch Merton to continue to be a robust and credible organisation by demonstrating that it has the appropriate level of skills and competencies required to deliver its functions to the highest possible level and to achieve the outcomes required.

Healthwatch Merton must also collaborate locally, regionally and nationally with other organisations including other local Healthwatch organisations and Healthwatch England. We will expect Healthwatch Merton to contribute to the wider network's engagement with the new Southwest London Integrated Care System (ICS).

Background

Healthwatch Activities[7] -
The Health and Social Care Act 2012 sets out that local Healthwatch will:

- Provide information and advice to the public about accessing health and social care services and choice in relation to aspects of those services;
- Make the views and experiences of people known to Healthwatch England helping it to carry out its role as national champion;

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[7] DH publication gateway ref 17286 title: "Local Healthwatch: A strong voice for people – the policy explained" section 4. http://healthandcare.dh.gov.uk/healthwatch-policy/

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- Make recommendations to Healthwatch England to advise the Care Quality Commission to carry out special reviews or investigations into areas of concern;
- Promote and support the involvement of people in the monitoring, commissioning and provision of local care services;
- Obtain the views of people about their needs for and experience of local care services and make those views known to those involved in the commissioning, provision and scrutiny of care services and
- Make reports and make recommendations about how those services could or should be improved

What funding is available?

£375,000 over the course of the programme

What time period will the funding run for?

2023/24 – 2025/26

What are the key ways of working for this theme?

The expectations we have for Healthwatch Merton are based the "Quality Framework Guidance[8]" produced by Healthwatch England in 2019. These are divided in to six domains:

Leadership and Decision Making: This looks at the importance of having clear goals and a rationale for the work you prioritise. It also looks at the strength of your leadership and governance, both of which are key to successfully navigating a complex environment whilst maintaining independence and accountability.

People: This recognises the importance of staff and volunteers. It can help you understand whether your board, staff and volunteers have the right knowledge, skills and support to deliver an effective, consistent service.

Sustainability and Resilience: This focuses on a business model that enables you to plan and operate effectively, as well as adapting to the changing needs of communities.

Collaboration: This recognises the value of working in partnership, and of learning from other Healthwatch.

Engagement, Involvement and Reach: This focuses on our main statutory activities. It looks at how you go about reaching out to all sections of your community, gathering people's views, providing advice and information, and involving people in your work.

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[8] https://network.healthwatch.co.uk/guidance/2019-10-15/quality-framework

Influence and Impact: This focuses on our purpose by looking at the difference you make by ensuring those in charge of health and care services hear and act on people's views.

Leadership and Decision Making

An effective Healthwatch Merton should be able to demonstrate it is a well-managed and well-lead organisation. This will include a clear vision, an understanding of strengths and weaknesses and have set strategic objectives for an appropriate timescale. A workplan and aligned budget should flow from published decision-making and prioritisation policy that involves local people, staff and volunteers. This workplan should also reflect a commitment to independence that operates at all levels of the organisation.

A clear governance process will need to oversee compliance with legal and regulatory requirements including safeguarding, data security and equalities duties.

You should set out how your Healthwatch Merton will address the following requirements:

1. What will be your approach to strategy and business planning?
2. What will be your approach to the decision-making process?
3. How will you demonstrate your independence and your ability to hold health and social care services to account?
4. How would you describe your governance processes?
5. How will a Board/Advisory group oversee your effectiveness and management of resources?
6. How will your Healthwatch approach safeguarding, confidentiality and data security?
7. What will be your approach to your equality duty?

People

The role of staff and volunteers is crucial to the success of Healthwatch Merton and at the core of its culture, values and behaviours. Roles, competencies, policies and procedures, lines of accountability and decision-making levels will need to be clearly outlined and understood throughout the organisation. Healthwatch must actively promote diversity and equality of opportunity, treat everyone with dignity and respect and be compliant with relevant legislation around employing staff and supporting volunteers.

You should set out how your Healthwatch Merton will address the following requirements:

1. How will you ensure staff and volunteers understand your approach and what people should expect from you?

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2. How will you ensure people understand their roles and responsibilities in the organisation and feel supported and valued?
3. How will you recruit, induct, support and develop your staff?
4. How will you ensure volunteers feel supported, valued and involved in your work?

Sustainability and Resilience

An effective Healthwatch Merton will know how to deliver the outcomes of the contract and deliver value for money with the financial resources provided. This will include having good evaluation and reporting mechanisms in place to support contract monitoring. Healthwatch will need to provide a safe working environment for staff and volunteers.

Healthwatch Merton will have a clear policy in place for taking on additional funded work. This will include ensuring that this work will add value and does not conflict with or dilute the organisational objectives or compromise the independence of the organisation.

You should set out how your Healthwatch Merton will address the following requirements:

1. How will you understand and engage with the commissioning process?
2. How will you develop and sustain relationships with key individuals?
3. How will you monitor your finances?
4. How will you consider potential changes in relation to your sustainability?
5. How will you provide a suitable working environment for staff and volunteers?
6. If you generate additional income, how will you plan, manage and account for it?

Collaboration

Healthwatch Merton will need to develop relationships and collaborate with other organisations such as universities, Academic Health Science Network, voluntary and community groups, where this will lead to better outcomes. We expect Healthwatch Merton to be sought out by statutory and voluntary sector organisations for joint working and/or guidance and support.

Healthwatch Merton will need to collaborate with other local Healthwatch organisations and Healthwatch England. This may include joint working, sharing resources, sharing learning and sharing data where appropriate. We expect this to include working alongside other southwest London Healthwatch organisations to participate in Integrated Care System structures.

You should set out how your Healthwatch Merton will address the following requirements:

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1. How do you prioritise and work with key local and regional partners?
2. How do you collaborate with other Healthwatch?
3. How do you work with Healthwatch England and CQC?

Engagement, Involvement and Reach

Healthwatch Merton will need to know our borough and its key demographics and health inequalities and know where it can make the biggest impact. Healthwatch's decisions must be informed by the views of local people and in particular Healthwatch will need to be effective at reaching and working with protected characteristic groups and other seldom heard sections of our community. Healthwatch will need to involve children and young people with appropriate safeguarding in place. All research should involve the use a robust and ethical methodology. Healthwatch will need a clear plan for increasing it's reach over the course of the contract.

You should set out how your Healthwatch Merton will address the following requirements:

1. How will you understand, prioritise and reach different sections of your community?
2. How will you gather the views of local people?
3. How will you involve local people in the work of Healthwatch and support partners to involve local people?
4. How will you provide local people with the Healthwatch statutory advice and information they need to navigate and access health and social care services?

Influence and Impact

We want local people to see Healthwatch as an organisation that represents their views and experiences to achieve positive change, and as a champion for patient/public voice. We also want local stakeholders including providers, commissioners and senior leaders to be clear about the role of Healthwatch and involve you appropriately and effectively in their decisions and their work

You should set out how your Healthwatch Merton will address the following requirements:

1. How will you ensure Healthwatch is known and trusted as a credible voice on behalf of local people?
2. How will you ensure stakeholders in the local health and care system recognise Healthwatch as a system leader and credible partner?
3. How will you help local people and stakeholders understand what Healthwatch does and the value you bring?
4. How will you know and measure whether you've had an impact?

Organisational Structure

Legislation requires a Local Healthwatch to be a not-for-profit organisation, which will be able to employ its own staff, involve volunteers and subcontract if it chooses to do so. Healthwatch Merton must also make it clear how individuals and organisations will be able to influence the decisions taken by Healthwatch.

Healthwatch Merton must comply with both the General Data Protection Regulations and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and ensure that Healthwatch participants are aware of their responsibilities under both of these measures. It will also be subject to public sector duties such as the Equality Act 2012.

Healthwatch must be committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of adults, children and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment, and to be effectively trained in all aspects of safeguarding legislation and practice. This will include provision for enhanced DBS checks for all staff and volunteers.

Healthwatch Merton will use the official branding provided by Healthwatch England under license from the council. This will include a website for which the organisation will be expected to make arrangements for design, hosting and maintenance.

4. AN ENABLING SYSTEM AND PLACE

Introduction

An 'enabling system and place' includes the physical and social infrastructure that enables listening, connection, collaboration, giving and neighbourliness. We are looking to commission services that help to support an enabling system and place under the following key strands:

- Voluntary and community sector infrastructure support
- Small grant support programme via Merton Giving (annual funding)

Voluntary and community sector infrastructure support

What service is this funding for?

We are looking to commission services which provide support to Merton's large and thriving voluntary sector. These services should meet the ways of working set out below and should act as a hub which supports the voluntary sector through training, advice, and capacity building.

A thriving voluntary sector is a key priority for local government given the role that the VCS increasingly plays in meeting demand as council services reduce or tighten eligibility criteria. It should be recognised that the funding available from Merton Council will not cover all the activities listed below, or the rest of the programme. The role of the support organisation is to work with the sector to grow and build capacity. The infrastructure service should provider a universal offer to the voluntary sector free-of-charge, while some additional services may be paid for.

We have identified three categories of support needs necessary to sustainably and effectively meet the needs of residents.

1. Support including provision of good quality advice and guidance to organisations on certain topics
2. Longer term assistance provided to voluntary sector organisations, including:
   - Ongoing training including specialist training e.g. safeguarding
   - Reaching accreditation
   - Capacity building support

   There should be a resource available to 'health check' voluntary sector organisations and assist them in ensuring their governance structure is up to the required standard, including training. This is also the case for the organisations' wider systems, processes, and policies.

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3. Crisis management. This category of required support might involve planned / managed closure of an organisation or could involve recovery through a closely managed process.

What funding is available?
£807,300 over three years 2023-26.

What time period will the funding run for?

2023/24 – 2025/26

Wha**t are the key ways of working for this theme?**
Learn and share insights

The Enabling System and Place theme aims to learn together and share insights openly to continuously improve trust, relationships and the quality of voluntary and community sector services in Merton.

- Organisations will need advice and assistance to ensure the correct systems are in place to provide assurance of the quality of their services and processes and support to achieve external accreditation where relevant.
- The provider will need to support delivery of low-cost courses of general interest to volunteers and paid staff within the sector e.g. safeguarding, health and safety, volunteer management, quality assurance etc, and accredited training where relevant.

Invest in community support

Under the Enabling System and Place theme, we aim to invest in community support to create an environment for community help and volunteering to thrive. By investing in community infrastructure, the VCS can help us solve challenges we face in Merton and mobilise community action.

- Good governance needs to be in place for recourse to public funds, along with high quality trustees and board members. The support organisation will provide a support programme which could include advice, templates, governance reviews, organisational health checks, training programmes and mentoring.
- The support organisation should also provide access to up to date and relevant funding opportunities and ways of generating income, such as fundraising/crowdfunding, etc.
- The support organisation should work in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce to increase its work on community giving in the borough. This includes working in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce to manage community grants via Merton Giving. This will also involve engaging with Merton businesses and developing and implementing policy and strategy.
- The voluntary sector's enterprise acumen needs to be developed and supported to grow the social enterprise market. Organisations need to be supported in risk-taking and encouraging a business-like approach.

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- Organisations, in particular smaller organisations, will require a range of support with bid writing, including help with demonstrating outputs and outcomes and preparing budgets for bids.
- Organisations will require a range of communications advice and support. This support could involve assisting with branding and social media presence which can aid in attracting and recruiting volunteers.
- In line with the third category of support provided to the voluntary sector, crisis management support should be provided. This crisis management could involve mediation or intervention, or support with planned closure.
- There may be particular sections within the sector that need development support. These needs will arise from time to time and may relate to a particular cohort of people, policy priority or a geographic area. We would be looking to the provider to support this type of development need as identified by the commissioner.

Inspire and mobilise

The Enabling System and Place theme is about organisational and strategic leadership that inspires the VCS to work together, and mobilising citizen and community efforts to improve services that support people.
- Voluntary sector organisations are passionate about their work, often forming because of a drive to make a difference. However, there needs to be caution for the sector not to replicate its work across multiple organisations, causing inefficiency and dividing much-needed funding between small groups. When a new organisation begins to form it should consider whether it has a different offer to the work currently being done by the sector.
- The infrastructure organisations should consider ways to facilitate the creation of collaborative partnerships, consortia, and mergers of voluntary sector organisations
- The support organisation should help to facilitate the development of partnerships. Forming a partnership or consortium to bid for funding can make larger funding opportunities more achievable to smaller organisations as it avoids duplication, provides economies of scale, and can provide wider reach.
- The sector's voice needs to be effectively represented on the various boards which discuss and decide on policy. The sector needs to be a part of the conversation which influences policy and strategies. The representatives on these boards should be regularly reviewed to ensure the most relevant person attends and is making the most of the opportunity. Attending all the relevant boards and meetings is a large undertaking, however they provide opportunity for networking, forming partnerships, and career development (be this informal, or through a formal qualification such as CPD).
- Merton has a large and diverse voluntary sector with over 700 individual organisations. Any infrastructure support organisation will need to demonstrate

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how many of these organisations it is reaching, as this should be a universal offer to the sector.

- The infrastructure services should work to facilitate opportunities for voluntary sector leaders to network and provide peer-to-peer support. Additionally, this network could be useful if a particular organisation is lacking a resource or requires short-term assistance with a problem, with other parts of the sector lending a helping hand.
- There should be facilitation of a peer-to-peer scheme in which leaders of the voluntary sector can consult one another for advice.

Collaborate and integrate support

Under the Enabling System and Place theme, the infrastructure services should work to unite the borough's voluntary sector and facilitate strong networks. Capacity to efficiently provide support services at a local level may be lacking and so there should be effective signposting between support services to guide an organisation to the most relevant or available resource for them to utilise.

A range of forums and networks are important for the voluntary sector to communicate and organise itself. The facilitation of these forums would form a crucial role for any infrastructure organisation receiving funding.

Connect and grow relationships

The Enabling System and Place theme aims to support recruitment, induction, ongoing training, development, recognition, and making clear what the expectations of the volunteers are. Volunteers also require support and space for reflective learning – a network of support.

- There should be a centralised resource for the recruitment of volunteers, which would be readily accessible by both potential volunteers and the organisations looking to hire them, via a brokerage system.
- The support organisation has a role in providing information, advice and resources to organisations for induction, training, development and supervision of volunteers.
- There is scope to create a support network for volunteers and volunteer co-ordinators across the borough which could provide a space for idea sharing and reflective learning. The possibility of a 'volunteer passport' could be considered, which credits a volunteer's time and helps them build their CV.
- The support organisation will have a key role in recognising the role of volunteers in Merton, in line with Merton's Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Strategy. This might be provided or facilitated by the council and/or the support organisation.

Small grant support programme (annual funding)

Learning from reports such as the State of the Sector Report and the BAME Impact Report, smaller organisations can struggle to compete with the larger local organisations when applying for funding. To support and develop Merton's small, volunteer and community led organisations, including diversity-led groups, the Civic Pride Fund: Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector, will allocate funding for smaller groups to build in opportunities and address challenges around infrastructure and capacity.

Therefore, a small grants programme will be incorporated within the Civic Pride Fund, Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector to ensure that a fair and equal system of support is available to Merton's communities which can be aligned with the local needs of the voluntary and community sector.

Under the theme 'enabling system and place', this programme will provide funds to the Merton Giving Fund on an annual basis. Merton Giving is a charitable initiative in partnership with Merton Connected, Merton's Chamber of Commerce and Merton Council. Through donations and fundraising activities from its supporters, Merton Giving awards grants to charitable organisations working locally to tackle inequality and change lives for the better in Merton.

The Merton Giving Fund is targeted at small charities. Under the remit of this fund, a 'small charity' is defined as voluntary or community organisations with an annual income of less than £1m.

Over the past couple of years, Merton Giving has gone from strength to strength, providing a platform for smaller grass roots and community organisations to access much needed funding. The small grants programme will ensure that a fair and equal system of support is available to Merton's communities which can be aligned with the local needs of the voluntary and community sector. The fund will aim to build capacity and resilience, address gaps in services and support available and support innovation and testing of new approaches.

The funding application process for this part of the Civic Pride Fund will be separate. VCS organisations will be informed when they are able to apply.

What funding is available?

£50,000 each year and £150,000 over the course of the programme

What time period will the funding run for?

2023/24 – 2025/26

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF JOINT WORKING

Joint working and collaboration

To meet individual needs or tackle a wider strategic issue we will need to work and think together, drawing on the diverse skills, knowledge and experience of the Strategic Partners. It means working constructively to deliver the best outcome for Merton residents and sometimes putting organisational interests to one side to consider what's best for all. This means good communication, taking responsibility, mutual respect and looking to how we can all contribute to the wider objectives of the Civic Pride Fund. It also means individual Strategic Partners stepping forward to take the lead on behalf of others. Collaboration between all Strategic Partners is encouraged and those taking part should feel comfortable to reach out/ receive invitation to work with each other in a joined-up way. Points of concern should be raised with the Merton Partnership in a timely and appropriate way, in line with the council's formal escalation procedures.

Building and fostering trust

Working in ways that foster trust between Strategic Partners and within the wider Merton Partnership and that actively supports a collaborative working relationship. Similar to the ways of working following the pandemic, partners will be empowered to work as equals with the wider Merton Partnership, sharing knowledge and advice where suitable.

Flexibility and adaptability

We know that needs will change and that best practice in terms of what works is constantly evolving. The resources available to the public sector will likely continue to reduce year on year for the foreseeable future. The Programme and the Strategic Partners, within finite resources, must be prepared to adapt to best meet the needs of residents. The programme needs to be flexible to ensure all partners can engage equitably.

Inclusivity

Partners must recognise and respond to the needs of local communities within Merton ensuring services are relevant, responsive and accessible to local population. This would include a focus on co-production with communities and using existing data to inform services.

Mutually supportive

The situation our organisations face is increasingly complex and potentially stressful for our people – paid staff and volunteers. We need to be supportive of each other and the individuals who work in those services. This needs to be reflected in how we treat each other and how we look after our staff by giving them good quality training, opportunities for learning and to support them through difficult/stressful situations. Resources can differ between Strategic Partners and therefore partners will be encouraged to support each other when and where possible.

Evidence-based

The design, delivery and evaluation of services must be evidence based. We need to ensure that evaluating and demonstrating impact and delivering value for money is built into the fabric of the Civic Pride Fund itself. Where services cannot demonstrate impact or someone has a better way of delivering outcomes we must be prepared to change how and what we deliver.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance mechanisms need to be built into to service delivery to ensure the best standard of support is being consistently delivered. However, this approach should reflect the individual needs of each service in order to ensure the best outcomes for our residents.

Compact working

Working in ways that meet and support the principles enshrined within the Merton Compact.

Merton's Strategic Priorities

Merton's new set of overall council strategic priorities are:

- Nurturing Civic Pride
- Building a sustainable future
- Creating a borough of sport

TIMELINE

September 2022

The prospectus will be taken to Cabinet on 19th September 2022, who will agree to the proposed framework and awarding process.

October 2022

The Civic Pride Fund: Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector will be advertised to prospective providers from 3rd October.

November 2022

The deadline for funding bids will be 11th November after a six-week period. Merton Council will convene a funding panel which will meet after the 11th November.

December 2022

All applicants will be notified of the outcome by 31st December.

March 2023

Funding agreement and monitoring arrangements will be finalised between Merton Council and the chosen providers.

April 2023

The newly funded services will begin and Merton Council will publicly promote the new Strategic Partners.

APPENDIX 1 – COLLABORATIVE WORKING GROUP

We would like to thank those who have taken part in the Collaborative Working Group, providing insight into the voluntary sector and assisting in shaping this document. The group have been incredibly enthusiastic and have worked hard to ensure that what will be commissioned best reflects the needs of residents and maximises the opportunities for joint working. The group has shown how co-production can deliver a really positive set of outcomes and has set the benchmark for how the strategic partner programme is delivered on the ground. We would like to give a special thank you to the following individuals who have given their time and enthusiasm to this process to date:

Simon Breeze, Community Action Sutton (Chair)
Keith Burns, Merton Council
John Dimmer, Merton Council
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Stacey Edgar, South West London Law Centres
Wendy Pridmore, Wimbledon Guild
Stephanie Phillips, SMC
David Jenkins, Merton CIL
Sharon Ashby, Home-Start Merton
Gemma Dawson, Merton Health and Care Together
Barry Causer, Merton Council
Dave Curtis, Healthwatch
Annette Bunka, NHS South West London Integrated Care Board
Keni Thomas, Merton Council
Sarah Goad, Age UK Merton
Jen Goddard, Age UK Merton
Mark Connor, Merton Health and Care Together
Simon Shimmens, Merton Connected
Beau Fadahunsi, Merton Connected
Hannah Neale, BAME Voice
Jackie Watkins, Merton Youth Partnership
Sabitri Ray, Ethnic Minority Centre
Maureen Bailey, Inner Strength Network
Heather Begg, Merton Council
Amanda Roberts, Merton Council
Kris Witherington, Merton Council
Grace Aldis, Merton Council

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APPENDIX 2 – THE WORKING BETTER WITH COMMUNITIES FRAMEWORK

The Vision

We want Merton to be a place to be proud of, where everyone can thrive, and where we embrace the strength and diversity of our communities and businesses.

By listening to and trusting each other, sharing resources and decisions, and empowering everyone to solve the challenges we face, together we can build a better Merton.

The Framework

To help us deliver our vision, we have developed the Working Better with Communities Framework which provides a set of principles and practical ways of working to help us all to think and act differently, to build trust and relationships, unlock resources and create better solutions.

Where can we work differently to create better outcomes?

We have identified four places - or domains - where people may find help and support in Merton.

Services that provide help: The services that provide direct help to people in need or crisis.

Services that grow strengths and capabilities: The services that provide advice and guidance, advocacy, capacity-building, community learning, peer-to-peer support, mentoring, buddying and coaching and employment support.

Active, supportive communities: The voluntary, community and faith organisations and businesses that glue communities together, provide services and help people do what matters to them and help others.

An enabling system and place: The physical and social infrastructure that enables listening, connection, collaboration, giving and neighbourliness.

How can we work differently with communities to create better outcomes?

We have pinpointed 8 ways of working that can help us work better with communities to help people thrive. Taken together, this is the Working Better with Communities approach.

We listen and learn

Listen without judgement and involve residents, staff and communities in co-designing support and solutions and shaping decisions which affect them
Learn together and share insights openly to continuously improve trust, relationships and help in Merton

We support communities

Look for and address inequalities in and between communities, target resources, make support accessible and value community insight
Invest in community support (volunteers, hubs, workers, activities) so that communities can develop and support people and places

We work together

Think holistically, ask for help and mobilise everybody you can in solving challenges
Invest time in relationships, collaborate with across professions, silos and sectors and join up support and solutions as early as possible

We empower people

Provide information and help earlier and in empowering, accessible and person-centred ways which build on the strengths of people and communities
Connect people into their community and enable them to find and offer peer support, and know where to find help

APPENDIX 3 – APPLICATION WEIGHTING

The following table represents the weighting given to each feature of the application:

Criteria	Demonstrates	Weighting
Meets Requirements	Alignment with ways of working set out under each theme in the funding prospectus	**40%**
Value for Money	Evidence based methodology Outcomes, outputs and impact Prevents / delays public sector costs	**20%**
Track Record	Delivery / impact Fundraising / income generation Partnership and collaborative working / constructive relationships	**20%**
Addressing Inequalities	Meets demonstrable needs Helps deliver LBM equalities duties Reaches priority customer group Involves customers in design	**20%**

APPENDIX 4 – INDEX

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