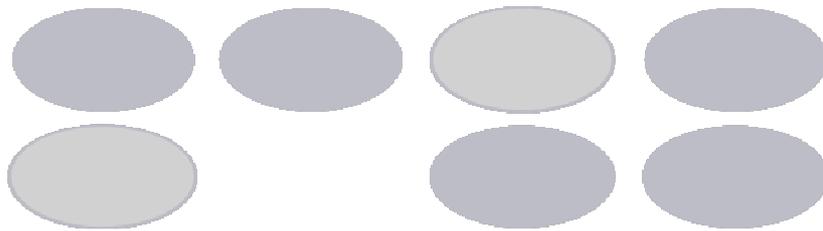


THE MINORITY ETHNIC FORUM
THE UNIFIED VOICE OF MERTON'S MINORITY ETHNIC
COMMUNITIES



Working strategically to increase the influence, representation and active engagement of all MINORITY ETHNIC organisations and their communities in Merton in the decisions and policies that affect them

Merton's MINORITY ETHNIC Forum Terms of Reference

Introduction

Merton's MINORITY ETHNIC Forum has been formally established in response to the need for an independent representative body to look at key local issues and their impact on minority ethnic communities who make up over 35% of Merton's population.

" Too often in the past we have devoted too much time and energy in analysing the problems and not enough time in developing and delivering practical solutions that connect with real lives"

Key Aims and Objectives

- To advocate on behalf of Merton's minority ethnic communities in their dealings with public sector agencies and other statutory and non-statutory organizations.
- To provide a unified and strategic voice within the Borough ensuring that the MINORITY ETHNIC communities are actively involved in strategic decision making and that services provided meet the needs of these communities.
- To identify commonalities, but recognise the need to work through the issues a particular community might have.
- Reach out to newly settled minority ethnic communities and assist them in setting up structures and gaining access to services as well as delivering good quality services to their Users.

The Forum also aims to promote and encourage mutual co-operation, assistance and the sharing of resources, expertise and information between its members. It wishes to ensure that the Forum's representatives are accountable to the communities they serve.

Priorities for Action

Specific areas of interests within the MINORITY ETHNIC communities are in the following eight thematic groups already identified in Merton's MINORITY ETHNIC Strategic Plan compiled and published in 2006 and refreshed in 2010.

1. *Education and learning*
2. *Health and Social care*
3. *Housing, Regeneration & The Environment*
4. *Employment, Skills and Enterprise*
5. *Older People*
6. *Children and Young People*
7. *Community Safety, Crime & Disorder*
8. *Stronger and Sustainable Communities*

Leadership and Management

The Forum will be formed as a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. It will have a board of directors with overall responsibility for the focus and work of the organisation. The board members will comprise two selected representatives from each registered MINORITY ETHNIC organisations and represent a range of MINORITY ETHNIC communities within Merton. It will select from its members, representatives to the various local Strategic Partnerships, the JCC and other bodies within Merton. The Board will meet at least four times a year, hosted in turn by each representative group. The Boards tasks will be principally to:

- Ensure that MINORITY ETHNIC voluntary sector groups are made aware of policy decisions
- and initiatives which will have an impact on their communities
- Give MINORITY ETHNIC organisations the opportunity to analyse issues, agree priorities with
- others and more crucially, have the power to instruct representatives to take the key priorities forward to the relevant bodies
- Monitor and update the MINORITY ETHNIC Strategic Plan and, where necessary, make
- representations when MINORITY ETHNIC communities/individuals are disadvantaged
- See that the Forum works in partnership with statutory and non-statutory
- organizations to advance equality of opportunity, promote cohesion and act
- as a reliable resource to public agencies.
- To improve communications, raise the profile of MINORITY ETHNIC groups and be a primary
- contributor to improving conditions for Merton residents as a whole.

An overall Chairperson will be elected. In the absence of the Chairperson another Member will be nominated to chair the meeting.

From the main Board, four groups will be formed from organisations whose primary work falls within particular themes. e.g. Education and Learning and Employment, Skills and Enterprise. Interested Forum members, invited guests from key agencies and influential local people could also be invited to attend.

These groups which will meet monthly will look in more detail at issues affecting the MINORITY ETHNIC community in each thematic area and relay suggested action to the Board.

Chairpersons will be nominated for each of the thematic groups.

The day to day running of the Forum will be carried out by volunteers until the organisation grows sufficiently to employ. These positions will function initially on agreed expenses based contracts. (Subject to the availability of funding, these posts could become paid positions).

Meetings of the Forum's Officers will be held every three months or as becomes necessary, to look at issues around the eight identified thematic groups. Any agreed action will require the full agreement of the Board.

Funding

The Board will facilitate funding streams for the Forum at local, national and international levels. Core funding will be requested from Merton Council, being the host Borough (time based) and from local commissioning agencies. The Forum will be proactive in bringing in funds to assist with various projects and activities e.g. Training to meet the specific needs of the different MINORITY ETHNIC communities and for the various community annual events e.g. Black History Month, (Oct) Gypsy Roma Traveller month (June) Refugee Week (June); Holocaust Memorial Day (Jan); other Merton cultural events.

Membership

There is no bar to membership. MINORITY ETHNIC individuals, groups, organisations and their communities will be encouraged to become members of the Forum and supported in any contributions they might wish to make to the Forum's programmes and activities. An agreed annual subscription will be required for membership.

Review

The Forum will review and update its terms of reference as well as the MINORITY ETHNIC Strategic Plan annually to reflect developments which might arise.

March 2015

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