

Merton Voluntary Service Council

Strategic Review 2015-18

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1. Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC)

Merton Voluntary Service Council (MVSC) is a Registered Charity (No. 1085867) and Company limited by guarantee (No. 4164949). It was established in 1985, and led by Chris Frost until her passing in November 2013. Under her leadership, the organisation was recognised throughout the sector as a leader in supporting and implementing the Compact and won numerous awards for its work. MVSC has over 30 years' experience of enabling, supporting and developing the voice of local civil society organisations and providing quality and effective services. Our services and activities include building capacity and capability; providing development services, support and training; volunteer support, brokerage and management, including supported volunteering for young people and adults with disabilities and mental health issues; developing networks and strategic partnerships and providing and facilitating strategic representation and influence for local organisations. We work with new, emerging and established voluntary, community, faith-based and social enterprise organisations. We collaborate with statutory sector partners and engage with the wider voluntary and community sector in South London and beyond.

Our ongoing commitment to quality and standards is demonstrated by our NAVCA quality award, Compact Awards, Volunteer Centre Quality Standards (VCQA) and Investing in Volunteering. We are also a London Living Wage employer.

Over the past two years MVSC experienced significant change; taking up the Healthwatch Merton contract management, the passing of Chris Frost and a period of interim management under the capable guidance of Ian Beever during which he led the merger with the Volunteer Centre in June 2014, following a year of consultation.

The merger was undertaken to strengthen the core functions of both organisations and create a unified focal point for the voluntary sector in the borough. The merged organisation now provides a single point of entry for individuals, voluntary sector organisations and volunteers to access high quality, integrated services and advice about organisational development and volunteering. In January 2015, MVCS appointed Khadiru Mahdi as Chief Executive to lead the merged organisation.

Over this period of organisational change at MVSC, residents of Merton have been dealing with the impact of the austerity measures, including welfare reform, the work programme and proposed reduction in local authority services. The local voluntary and community sector has been experiencing increased demands for their services while funding has decreased. MVSC's strategic plan has therefore been developed within the context of continuing changes in public sector funding as well as policy and legislative changes. The Government's programme of deficit reduction impacts on the environment

in which we work, and deficit reduction is set to continue with the new national government elected in May 2015.

In the years to 2015/16, Merton Council's funding of the voluntary sector remained relatively stable while some service areas experienced new commissioning arrangements to ensure services reflect new ways of working and local need. This picture is changing due to Council proposed savings of £32 million over the next three years, affecting Children Schools and Family Services and Adults Social Care Services locally. There is recognition of the value of voluntary and community services and volunteering, both for the direct services that the sector and volunteers can offer, and also as a way to build "social capital." Potentially, increasingly, services and activities previously delivered by the public sector could be delivered by voluntary organisations and volunteers.

It was in this context that MVSC recognised the need for reflection and planning for the future. The process started with an independent **Governance Review** of MVSC by the Association of Chief Executives for Voluntary Organisation (ACEVO), and a successful **NAVCA re-accreditation** of our Infrastructure status by the National Association for Voluntary Action (NAVCA), and culminated in this Strategic Review.

2. The Borough of Merton¹

The People

- Merton has an increasingly young population
- The number of children (0-19 years) is forecast to increase by 2,200 (4.4%) between 2014 and 2020.
- The number of people aged over 65 is also forecast to increase by over 2,100 people (9.2%).
- As a whole, Merton is less deprived than the average for both London and England. However, three wards are more deprived than the average for London: Cricket Green, Figge's Marsh and Pollards Hill.
- Health outcomes are generally better than those in London and in line with or above the rest of England. However, there are inequalities between East and West, and within population groups.

Summary of demographics

Merton's 2014 population projection is 203,200 people living in nearly 80,400 occupied households. Population density is higher in the east wards of the borough compared to the west wards. Just over half the borough is female (50.6%) and the borough has a similar age profile to London as a whole. Greater London Authority (GLA) population data (2014) shows Merton's current BAME population is 76,188. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups make up 35.1% of the population, lower than London (40.2%). Based on GLA trend-based projections, Merton's population will increase by 13,245 people between 2014 and 2020. The age profile is projected to

¹ Merton JSNA 2015

change, with the most notable growth in those under 16 and over 50, and a decline in the proportion of people aged 25-35 years old. Merton's ethnic composition is also forecast to change, with the BAME proportion increasing from 37% to 40%.

Deprivation

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) set out the relative position of local areas in terms of deprivation. Updated indices of deprivation were released in September 2015. The IMD reflects the multidimensional nature of deprivation, with an overall score that is weighted most heavily on the domains of income (22.5%) and employment (22.5%), but also includes other domains (not just financial). East Merton and West Merton are less deprived than the average for both London and England. However, three wards are more deprived than the average for London: *Cricket Green*, *Figge's Marsh* and *Pollards Hill*. One ward, *Ravensbury*, is less deprived than the average for London, but more deprived than the average for England.

Health

Health outcomes in Merton are generally better than those in London, and in line with or above the rest of England. However, there is a difference between the most and least deprived areas within the borough of about 7.9 years for men and about 5.2 years for women. Between 2009-11 and 2011-13 this gap increased by about one year for women. Premature mortality (deaths under 75 years) is strongly associated with deprivation; all wards in East Merton are more deprived and have higher rates of premature mortality.

Education

Education is linked to life expectancy and inequalities, and has a direct effect on health and social outcomes. There is high overall adult educational attainment in the borough, however, two areas fell within the 20% most deprived for education (in 2010). These areas also fell within the overall most deprived areas in 2010, reflecting an inequality in educational attainment.

Employment

The relationship between health and low income exists across almost all health indicators. Merton residents who are in active full-time employment are distributed all over Merton. However, unemployed residents are concentrated towards the east of Merton, and self-employed residents are concentrated toward the west.

3. The Voluntary and Community Sector

The voluntary and community sector in Merton is very active. There are 917 voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations providing a wide range of services and activities for residents across the borough. 58.9% of those surveyed in 2013 were registered charities and 26.7% companies limited by guarantee. There are many small unincorporated organisations and a sizable number of faith based and social enterprise organisations. The sector is a vital part of the social capital of the borough and can be crucial in

its ability to reach parts of the community that statutory service providers struggle to serve.

MVSC's state of the Sector Research 2013 found that, in order to steer their way forward to manage change, the sector will need:

- Support and information to understand the changing policy, legislative and funding environment in which they operate
- Support to fundraise from public bodies and trusts and to generate unrestricted funds
- Support to work collaboratively to maximise opportunities for contracts and funding
- Support to maximise the social capital in the borough through volunteering and local business networks.

The Borough of Merton has a long history of positive partnership working and relationship with the voluntary sector. The Merton Partnership remains an important platform through which organisations from all sectors work collaboratively. The importance and value of the voluntary sector is reflected by its representation at all levels of the partnership structure, and MVSC being well regarded by statutory partners.

Merton Council is committed to working with the voluntary sector and to exploring new and innovative ways of commissioning services. The Council continues to recognise and value the flexibility and creativity of grant funding it can offer and until now has been a key source of funding for local VCS organisations. In 2013, almost half (46.8%) of organisations surveyed by MVSC were receiving council funding. In 2014-15, the Council's total grants, commissioned services and contracts awarded to the sector was **£13,584,757**. In addition, notional rent was **£272,804** and total discretionary rate relief was **£153,957** making the overall total of **£14,011,518**. This represented a 5.5% decrease from 2014-15 and the situation is changing dramatically over the next three years with actual and forecast funding cuts.

The Merton Clinical Commissioning Group (MCCG) which succeeded the Primary Care Trust (PCT) in 2013 is embedded in the partnership structures in Merton and has been engaging positively with the voluntary sector.

4. Executive Summary

The Strategic Plan 2015-2018 reinforces MVSC's role as an umbrella organisation providing infrastructure support and services, and our commitment to lead by example. Our primary focus continues to be the 'not-for-profit' sector in Merton, encompassing voluntary, community, faith-based and social enterprise organisations. It also recognises and endorses our role in representing the interests of the sector locally, regionally and in the national arena, as advocates and champions for the sector.

We will work closely with the London Borough of Merton, Clinical Commissioning Group and other public and private sector partners to address

the effects of reduced public sector funds and services and to seek joint solutions for residents through **co-production**.

The **vision, mission, values and strategic objectives** set out the guiding principles and framework for everything that MVSC does whilst maintaining the flexibility to respond positively to the needs of our sector and stakeholders in an ever changing environment. Our core activities will continue to provide a stable and effective base but we need to clearly define and specify the 'offer', and be focussed.

Development support for organisations, **volunteering** and **community action** will be at the heart of our core services and activities.

We plan to strengthen the sector's voice, representation and influence through **INVOLVE**, with additional **thematic** forums such as Health and Social Care; Training, Employment and Enterprise; Mental Health, and Small Organisations. An annual **Voluntary and Community Sector Conference** will combine celebration and promotion of the of the sector's services with information, learning and networking.

We will facilitate and support **partnerships and consortia** and contract management, to enable local organisations to work collaboratively, share expertise, pool resources, extend their reach and scope and win contracts to deliver public services for local residents.

When appropriate, we will undertake other identified key activities to further our mission to inspire a voluntary, community sector in Merton which offers choice and quality of services to the people of Merton.

We will seek resources and commence income-generating activities to sustain our support of local voluntary and community sector organisations, including enterprise opportunities for MVSC's and the sector's sustainability. We intend to be proactive in developing new products and markets including exploring the business case, options and viability of public sector **asset transfer** and a **Voluntary Sector Resource Centre/Hub**.

5. The Planning Process

5.1 Policy and Strategy Drivers

A number of policy and strategy drivers informed our strategic planning, including:

- The State of the Sector 2014, MVSC research of the VCVS in Merton
- Merton Community Plan 2009-19
- The Merton Volunteering Strategy
- Merton Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- Merton Healthwatch Plan
- "Right care, right place, right time, right outcome" Merton CCG 2014/2016 Operating Plan and Commissioning Intentions

- Merton Compact
- Merton Community Engagement Strategy 2014-17
- LBM Corporate Asset Management Plan
- Change for Good - NAVCA's Independent Commission on the Future of Local Infrastructure
- Big Lottery research into Building capabilities in the voluntary sector.

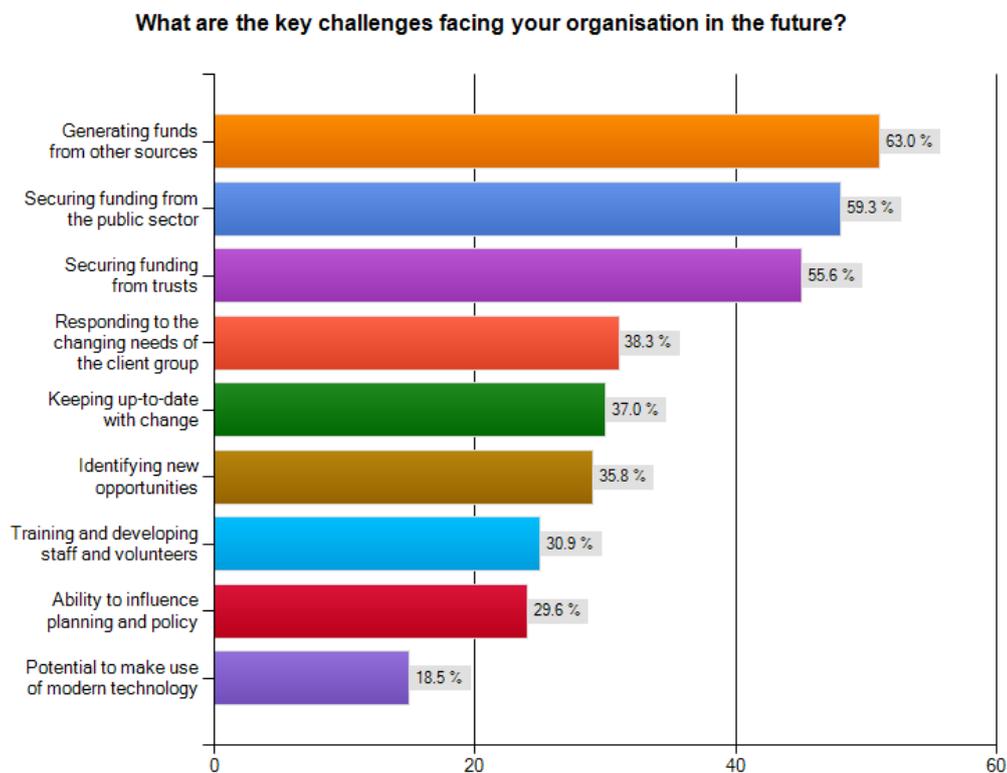
5.2 Methodology

MVSC engaged an independent consultant to undertake the strategic review. The State of the Sector Report 2014 provided the profile and priorities of the local voluntary and community sector which informed review and planning sessions with the Senior Management Team, staff, volunteers and trustees, and an Away Day for the Trustees and Staff.

Key public sector and other strategic partners provided input through a stakeholders' questionnaire survey and one to one interviews.

The Board of Trustees approved the draft outline for further briefings with the VCS INVOLVE Forum, London Borough of Merton's Corporate Management Team and the Merton Partnership.

The graph below from **The State of the Sector Report** highlights the key challenges for the local VCS.



These informed the report's conclusions and recommendations on:

- Funding and fundraising

- Networking
- Volunteering
- High calibre trustees
- Support, training and information
- Future planning
- Grants and commissioning.

Stakeholders' feedback from our public sector partners, Circle Housing Merton Priory and Chamber of Commerce reaffirms MVSC's umbrella role in fostering cross-sector strategic partnerships, based on sound Compact principles. Other messages include:

- MVSC and local VCS well embedded in strategic partnerships and will be required to be actively involved in shaping strategic commissioning priorities in a co-productive way.
- Would welcome bold and innovative ideas from the sector in taking on former public services.
- As Local authority funds reduce, MVSC and the VCS would have to lever in new money/resources from external sources.
- The importance of volunteering
- The importance of partnership working, particularly in areas such as safeguarding, young people, elderly, wellbeing and community cohesion.
- Sees the value of partnership working and developing consortia to bid for contracts.
- In relation to tackling poverty, welcomes the engagement with the business sector and the establishment of the community fund.
- MVSC has a role in quality assurance of the sector and facilitating Kite marks.
- The need to address health inequalities.
- Awareness of the equalities issues of the East/West divide in the borough; the capacity and capability issues for some organisations.
- Collective objective for making Merton a better place to live, work and do business.

Concerns raised by stakeholders include:

- Too many voluntary organisations? Issues of duplication and sustainability
- Historic issue that MVSC is perceived by BAME organisations of not providing them with full support. This links to a perception that MVSC prefers to support/ work with organisations in the West of the borough and of being too close to some established organisations.
- A perception that MVSC might be too close to the Local Authority.

Recent legislation and public sector changes affecting communities and the sector have also informed our review. The Localism Act was introduced in November 2011 with the aim of devolving more decision making powers from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils. It seeks to place the needs of the community, the regeneration of the borough and the effective delivery of public services right at the heart of what public agencies and their partners do. The Merton Partnership has

responsibility for the implementation of the Community Plan and it is essential for VCS representatives to play an effective role within the partnership.

In 2013, as a result of the Health and Social Care Act, the new Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) replaced the Primary Care Trust. The Public Health Department was transferred from the NHS and into Merton Council. The Act led to the development of the Health and Wellbeing Board to improve integrated working between local health care, social care, public health and other public service practitioners so that patients and service users experience more joined-up care. The Local Involvement Networks (LINK) have been replaced with Healthwatch, as the new “consumer champion” for health and social care service users. Merton’s independent Healthwatch is managed by MVSC.

Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities took on new functions to make sure that people who live in their areas receive services that prevent their care needs from becoming more serious, or delay the impact of their needs; can get the information and advice they need to make good decisions about care and support; and have a range of providers offering a choice of high quality, appropriate services.

MVSC also took cognisance of NAVCA’s Independent Commission on the future of local infrastructure ***Change for Good Report in 2015*** which recommended that local infrastructure needs to be redesigned and creatively resourced to meet the challenges of tomorrow, and made specific recommendations which have informed our planning.

6. The Way Ahead

6.1 MVSC’s Charitable Objectives

- (1) To promote any charitable purposes for the benefit of the public, principally but not exclusively in the local government area of the London Borough of Merton and its environs (the “area of benefit”) and, in particular, build the capacity of third sector organisations and provide them with the necessary support, information and services to enable them to pursue or contribute to any charitable purpose.
- (2) To promote, organise and facilitate co-operation and partnership working between third sector, statutory and other relevant bodies in the achievement of the above purposes within the area of benefit.

6.2 Our Vision

A thriving Merton community where people’s lives are enriched by voluntary and community action.

6.3 Our Mission

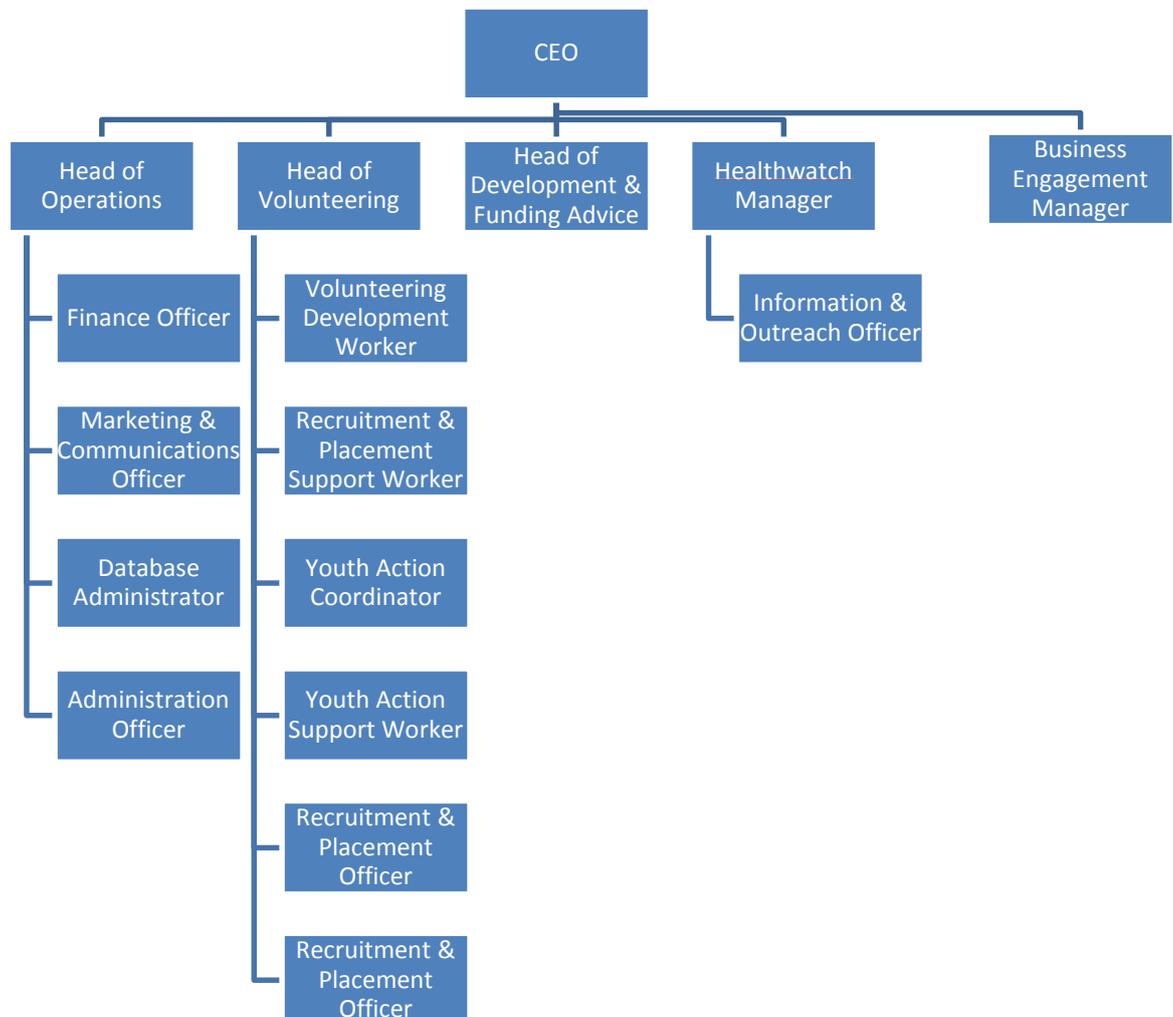
To inspire and develop an excellent voluntary and community sector in Merton

6.4 Our Values

Our Core Values are embedded in everything we do:

- Quality and commitment to continuous improvement and change
- Led by the needs and aspirations of individuals and organisations
- Empowering and supporting communities
- Promoting diversity and tackling inequality
- Embracing technology and innovation
- Promoting and demonstrating excellent leadership
- Embracing and promoting participation, partnership and collaboration
- Being enterprising.

6.5 Organisational Structure



6.6 As an infrastructure organisation, MVSC is accredited by the National Association for Voluntary Action (NAVCA) and Volunteering England, part of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. We deliver our activities in line with their quality standards.

NAVCA Standards	Volunteer Centre Quality Standards (VCQA)
<p>1. Development The organisation supports the identification of needs in the local community and facilitates innovation and improvements in service provision to meet those needs.</p>	<p>1. Strategic Development of Volunteering Outcome: Through the activity of the Volunteer Centre and its engagement with local networks and decision makers there is a positive environment in which volunteering is flourishing.</p>
<p>2. Support The organisation supports local voluntary organisations and community groups to fulfil their missions more effectively.</p>	<p>2. Good Practice Development Outcome: Through the activity of the Volunteer Centre; organisations from all sectors (involving or providing volunteers) improve or attain positive consistency in their volunteering programmes.</p>
<p>3. Collaboration The organisation facilitates effective communication and collaboration amongst local voluntary organisations and community groups and between different sectors.</p>	<p>3. Developing Volunteering Opportunities Outcome: The Volunteer Centre's development activity increases and improves the quantity, quality, and diversity of volunteering locally.</p>
<p>4. Influence The organisation supports local voluntary organisations and community groups to influence policies, plans and practices that have an impact on their organisations and beneficiaries.</p>	<p>4. Voice of Volunteering Outcome: Through the Volunteer Centre's activities there is an increased awareness of the issues impacting on volunteering.</p>
	<p>5. Brokerage Outcome: Through the Volunteer Centre's activities the general public and all sectors are better informed about and have access to an effective and efficient brokerage service. Matching both individuals and groups interested in volunteering with appropriate opportunities in the local community. Volunteer Centres hold information on a comprehensive range of opportunities and offer potential volunteers support and advice matching their motivation to volunteer with appropriate volunteering opportunities.</p>

6.7 Our Strategic Objectives

MVSC will:

- i) Provide support to voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations
- ii) Build social capital by supporting and developing volunteering and community action
- iii) Identify changing and emerging need and respond with development
- iv) Promote, support and develop liaison, advocacy, joint working and strategic partnership between sectors
- v) Promote quality through standard setting
- vi) Ensure sustainability.

7. Delivering the strategic aims

7.1 Support to voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations:

We aim to develop small and emerging organisations and strengthen existing organisations by providing advice and support on a range of development, management and governance issues, including financial management and fundraising.

We will provide for the basic needs of organisations through information and service promotion, training and access to resources including IT/internet, desk space and equipment loan, and develop a resource hub as a centre of excellence.

Priorities

- Capacity & capability building:
 - Guiding and developing small organisations
 - Supporting growth of established organisations.
 - Enabling organisations to measure and demonstrate Impact
 - Providing 24 hour support through our online Virtual Development support facility.

- Training programme
- Financial management & systems
- Good Governance/ trustee support
- Helping organisations with fundraising plans and applications.

- Merton Means Business - Continue to build on our working relationships with local businesses and the wider business sector through our partnership with the Merton Chamber of Commerce.

7.2 Encourage, support and develop volunteering and voluntary and community action.

Volunteering - We aim to enhance the recruitment, promotion and management of volunteers in Merton. Raise awareness of volunteering, gain recognition for the contribution of volunteers and highlight issues affecting volunteers; deliver good practice support for organisations involving volunteers in their work and provide information and advice about volunteering alongside training for organisations and volunteers.

Priorities

- Play a lead role in implementing the Volunteer Strategy Action Plan
- Youth volunteering
- Libraries and public sector volunteering programme
- Supported volunteering
- One stop portal and mobile friendly version.

Community Action – We will support people involved in community development in local communities and estates by working closely with social housing landlords to explore the priorities of local people and empower them to shape and deliver the solutions.

Priorities

- Phipps Bridge Project
- Health Champions.

7.3 Identify changing and emerging need and respond with development

We aim to identify changing and emerging social and community needs and work with communities, the sector and public and private agencies to address them.

We will do this through:

- Annual MVSC customer service survey
- State of the sector survey and report every two years
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
- Reviewing and informing policy and strategy.

7.4 Promote, support and develop liaison, advocacy, joint working and strategic partnership between sectors

We aim to continue leading, facilitating and developing the voluntary sector's roles in strategic partnerships and strengthening the sector's voice, representation and influence with the public sector and funders, in Merton and externally.

We will play a key role in bringing together VCS organisations to strengthen collaboration and working for their mutual benefit; supporting joint working between sectors and accessing new funding.

We will seek to enhance co-production with the public sector and apply the Social Value Act in public sector commissioning.

Priorities:

- Healthwatch Merton – to ensure that it fulfils its role as an effective local consumer champion for health and social care in Merton.
- INVOLVE/ CEN representatives:
 - Elections, induction, training and support.

- Develop and support thematic VCS networks e.g. Health & Social Care; Training, Employment & Enterprise; Mental Health; BAME; Small Groups & Leadership.
- Collaboration, partnerships and consortia development.

7.5 Promote quality through standard setting

We aim to set and raise standards in the voluntary and community sector by promoting organisational quality assurance systems and volunteer management quality standards.

Priorities

- Embed quality assurance at MVSC
- Support continuous improvement and quality assurance in local VCS
- Promote PQASSO and other quality standards
- Promote volunteer management quality standards.

7.6 Sustainability

We aim to undertake sound planning in order to continue the furtherance of MVSC's work supporting the voluntary and community sector in Merton. We will also support the sector's sustainability through diversification of its income streams.

Priorities

- Sector sustainability:
 - Levering funds from external sources
 - Explore the Council's asset transfer and promote VCS asset management with sound business plans
 - Business Engagement
 - Managing Funding Programmes.
- MVSC:
 - Consultancy
 - Social enterprise activities – e.g. Fayre & Square
 - Contract management
 - Premises /seedbed office management
 - Training and membership offer and fees.

7.7 Information and events

We will continue to keep the sector informed and share knowledge and learning through the MVSC Website, Merton Connected:

- Regular e-bulletins
- Seminars and consultation events
- Annual Merton Partnership Volunteer Awards
- Annual Voluntary and Community Sector Conference.

8. Conclusion

The diagram below gives an indication of the focus of our work in 2015-2018 and on what we expect to apply our resources. 60% of our work will focus on supporting organisational development and individuals (through volunteering and community action). These will be underpinned by other key activities including partnerships and consortia development and strategic partnership, supported by research. Our commitment to Fund Management is equally strong.

Our strategic intention is that MVSC will have diversified its income and achieved stability, sustainability and be fit for purpose by 2018.

