Volunteering Strategy

1. What is volunteering?
Volunteering is unpaid and entered into freely for the benefit of others and the environment.

People get involved through a process of community engagement. It is not work experience, enforced or entered into in the expectation of reward.

2. Volunteering in Merton
Volunteering in Merton is extremely diverse, with volunteers active at the local level through the many Merton community and faith groups, and borough-wide within larger voluntary organisations. Some volunteers support voluntary and community groups to provide commissioned services, and others give their time in schools, parks and community centres within public sector organisations. They give their time to support community, environmental, sports and cultural programmes, advice and advocacy services, consultative forums and many other local services that depend on volunteers.

Volunteering makes a significant contribution to ‘bridging the gap’ between the east and west of the borough and strengthens links between public services, the voluntary and community sector, local business and local people. These relationships enable us to achieve more together for Merton.

Much volunteering in the borough is informal and takes place without the support of funding from partners through localised special interest groups – such as Friends of Parks – and/or within national frameworks – such as many sports groups.

As partners move increasingly to commissioning services it will become ever more important to ensure that any volunteering activities funded by partners match partners’ priorities, as expressed for example through the Community Plan and individual bodies’ business plans.

We recognise the contribution volunteering makes to the borough and we are committed to support the development of volunteering in Merton.

3. Vision
Our vision is for Merton to be a place where volunteering:

- is recognised, encouraged and undertaken by a high proportion of people across diverse backgrounds, and
- adds value to public services and brings about positive benefits to local people and service users.
4. Key objectives

To achieve this vision, we will work to deliver the following objectives:

- To continue to promote and raise the profile of volunteering for all citizens of Merton, where appropriate by taking a shared and collective approach;
- To improve the process of recruiting and matching volunteers to opportunities through the efficient management of different routes to volunteering, making full use of an upgraded web-based platform;
- To support volunteer-involving organisations to define their needs, develop more opportunities, and offer support to their volunteers;
- To offer volunteers appropriate recognition which is suitable for the different types of motivation;
- To ensure that there is appropriate infrastructure arrangements to support volunteering; and
- To ensure that there are the required levels of funding and support to meet these objectives.

5. Action plan

An action plan has been drawn up that sets out key areas of activity and recommended actions against resource availability under five headings:

- Marketing and promotion
- Recruitment and placement
- Support and recognition for volunteers
- Support for volunteer-involving organisations
- Volunteering infrastructure

6. Targets

- [To be added]

July 2011
Volunteering Strategy 2011 Action Plan

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**Objective one: To continue to promote and raise the profile of volunteering for all citizens of Merton, where appropriate by taking a shared and collective approach**

1.1 Agree whether to take a shared approach between voluntary, faith and statutory organisations

1.2 If there is agreement, agree what branding and marketing would be appropriate

1.3 Launch

**Objective two: To improve the process of recruiting and matching volunteers to opportunities through the efficient management of different routes to volunteering, making full use of an upgraded web-based platform**

2.1 Review national and London web-enabled platforms to build on links through the VCM website to Do-it.org and the Merton ‘Volunteer Bank’, and confirm what would be most appropriate for local purposes

2.2 Agree how local organisations can improve their use of this platform

2.3 Review and agree how such a channel is enhanced by face to face interviews or phone conversations, and in what circumstances these would be required

2.4 Review and agree our shared local policy to managing risk, including the use of CRB checks, to ensure that this is proportionate to the risks and that any checks are co-ordinated and managed as efficiently as possible

2.5 Review approach to employers, as sources of volunteers, as potential beneficiaries, and as assessors of the relevance of voluntary work for paid employment

**Objective three: To support volunteer-involving organisations to define their needs, develop more opportunities, and offer support to their volunteers**

3.1 To agree the format for how volunteer-involving organisations set out their requirements for volunteers, depending on the development of the web-enabled system

3.2 To agree an approach to the support of volunteers, ensuring that this support meets core minimum standards, and that it is proportionate to the tasks being undertaken

3.3 To review the outcomes from projects and schemes which seek to recruit ‘special needs groups’ into volunteering
| Objective four: To offer volunteers appropriate recognition which is suitable for the different types of motivation |
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| 4.1 | To consider the concept of a certificate of volunteering, which at one level will give assurance of basic reliability and trustworthiness |
| 4.2 | To review Award Ceremonies and the role of the Merton Partnership (and specifically the Mayor’s office) in supporting them |
| 4.3 | To consider what recognition to offer to employers who support volunteering |

| Objective five: To ensure that there is appropriate infrastructure arrangements to support volunteering |
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| 5.1 | To agree the level and type of infrastructure required within the voluntary sector to continue to support volunteering and maximise outcomes |

| Objective six: To ensure that there are the required levels of funding and support to meet these objectives |
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| 6.1 | To submit a bid to the performance reward grant to fund the delivery of this strategy |
| 6.2 | To confirm the role of the Volunteering Board within the Merton Partnership and revise the terms of reference for the Board accordingly. |
| 6.3 | To task a body within the Merton Partnership to oversee the delivery of the Volunteering Strategy and report into the Safer & Stronger Partnership on progress (recommended that should be Volunteering Board) |