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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

17 MARCH 2021

(7.15 pm - 9.15 pm)

PRESENT: Councillor Peter Southgate (in the Chair),
Councillor Peter McCabe, Councillor Ben Butler,
Councillor Brenda Fraser, Councillor Edward Gretton,
Councillor Paul Kohler, Councillor Nick McLean,
Councillor Aidan Mundy, Councillor Geraldine Stanford,
Mansoor Ahmad, Councillor Billy Christie and Roz Cordner

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors

Zoe Gallen, Cathryn James (Interim Assistant Director, Public Protection) and Kelly Marshall (Strategic Development Lead, Safer Merton)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

No apologies received.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4 BCU COMMANDER - CRIME AND POLICING IN MERTON (Agenda Item 4)

The Chair welcomed Liz Chapple, Borough Commander, to the meeting of the Commission.

The Borough Commander wished to acknowledge what an incredibly difficult week to ten days it's been. The events on Clapham Common are subject now to an HMIC review, that's welcomed by all parties, so please understand that I cannot answer any direct questions on the police handling of that particular incident.

In response we obviously have come together as a as a policing team now to make a very renewed effort on firstly re-establishing trust and confidence in our police officers in the area but also to look at revisiting what we're doing on the topics of violence against women and girls and seeing if there's any more we can do.

Looking ahead, our areas of focus include;

- Looking at those intervening periods between previous lockdown periods where violence occurred and putting our police officers and staff into targeted positions to try and prevent and mitigate any return of violence in those areas.
- As lockdown eases we are looking at our green spaces and making sure that we don't have a heavy amount of anti-social behaviour as it's those types of crimes that we know affect people very deeply in their communities
- Overall we want to increase our neighbourhood visibility and be out in the community

With regards to the crime figures for Merton, as you'll see under the offences percentage there has been a reduction in most of the major crime types. The areas where there hasn't been a reduction include anti-social behaviour, bicycle theft and domestic abuse.

In response to Commission Member questions, the Borough Commander provided further information;

Our officers receive a lot of continued professional development on vulnerable adults. Adults with mental health issues is the most prevalent issue that we come across on the streets at the moment. If officers do deal with an incident that involves a vulnerable adult, they will go back to the station or use their device to fill in an additional form that records the safeguarding concerns.

Following a Commission Member suggestion that providing search volume by demographic would be useful in future, the Borough Commander explained that the information available to help us understand the stop and searches at the moment is based on the ten year old census data. As you'll be aware there are new census packs out at the moment and so we hope that's going to give us more insight as it is what we can do.

There are five key areas that we are measuring ourselves on;

1. Having engaged and healthy people so they're well equipped to provide a service to the public
2. Increasing public confidence
3. Increasing victim satisfaction and we're doing some very good work to
4. Preventing and reducing violent crime
5. Improving our detection rates

There have been an extremely small number of dog thefts recorded (single figures) for our area for the year. It is a very emotive subject and has been reported and included in the national press but we're confident that it's not a significant issue in our area.

The Borough Commander agreed to provide written answers to questions received from the Commission prior to the meeting.

With regards to designing out crime it is very much a partnership effort because a number of the issues are within the remit of the council, such as additional lighting.

We do have specialist designing out crime officers who are working on a number of different projects and this is absolutely going to become an additional focus.

The Chair thanked the Borough Commander for her time tonight.

5 SAFER MERTON UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

The Assistant Director for Public Protection, along with the Domestic Violence Lead and Safer Merton Strategic Development Lead provided a presentation covering domestic violence and anti-social behaviour

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n response to Commission Member questions, the team clarified;

Following a discussion on Domestic Violence support information being added to supermarket receipts and posters in testing centres, a Commission Member suggested including leaflets in home testing kits, which Officers agreed to look into.

Merton signed up to the Safe Spaces initiative/UK says no more. In the early days of lockdown, it started with a small number of Boots pharmacies agreeing to use their consulting rooms as a safe space if someone walks in and they need to call the police, a friend etc. because they're in danger. That Safe Spaces project has now blossomed with nearly all of the Boots pharmacies across the whole of the UK signed up.

The UK says no more website enables you to look up all the national businesses (including Morrison's and Boots) that have signed up to the Safe Spaces initiative.

We are looking at getting Domestic Violence information into churches and schools.

With regards to Anti-Social Behaviour, we have now set up a number of area-based action plans for ASB issues. We have plans for Mitcham and Wimbledon and one is currently being developed for Morden.

The Chair thanked the officers for their presentation and attendance.

6 PLANNING THE COMMISSION'S WORK PROGRAMME 21/22 (Agenda Item 6)

The Chair invited suggestions to be put forward for the Topic Workshops in June to inform the scrutiny work programmes.

Suggestions included:

- Designing out crime
- Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy update
- Demographic profile of councillors and senior council managers