

Merton Council Overview and Scrutiny Commission



Date: 6 September 2023
Time: 7.15 pm
Venue: Merton Civic Centre

AGENDA

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**This is a public meeting – members of the public are very welcome to attend.
The meeting room will be open to members of the public from 7.00 p.m.**

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- Bus routes: 80, 93, 118, 154, 157, 163, 164, 201, 293, 413, 470, K5

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Agendas can also be viewed online in the Borough's libraries and on the Mod.gov paperless app for iPads, Android and Windows devices.

Overview and Scrutiny Commission membership

Councillors:

Edward Foley (Chair)
Mike Brunt (Vice-Chair)
Agatha Mary Akyigyina OBE
Laxmi Attawar
Billy Hayes
Usaama Kaweesa
Paul Kohler
Nick McLean
Stuart Neaverson
John Oliver
Tony Reiss

Substitute Members:

Sheri-Ann Bhim
Caroline Charles
Stephen Mercer
Thomas Barlow
Anthony Fairclough
Robert Page

Co-opted Representatives

Mansoor Ahmad, Parent Governor
Representative - Secondary and Special
Sectors
Becky Cruise, Parent Governor
Representative
Dr Oona Stannard, Catholic Diocese
Roz Cordner, Church of England Diocese

Note on declarations of interest

Members are advised to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting. If a pecuniary interest is declared they should withdraw from the meeting room during the whole of the consideration of that matter and must not participate in any vote on that matter. For further advice please speak with the Managing Director, South London Legal Partnership.

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny describes the way Merton's scrutiny councillors hold the Council's Executive (the Cabinet) to account to make sure that they take the right decisions for the Borough. Scrutiny panels also carry out reviews of Council services or issues to identify ways the Council can improve or develop new policy to meet the needs of local people. From May 2008, the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and Panels have been restructured and the Panels renamed to reflect the Local Area Agreement strategic themes.

Scrutiny's work falls into four broad areas:

- ⇒ **Call-in:** If three (non-executive) councillors feel that a decision made by the Cabinet is inappropriate they can 'call the decision in' after it has been made to prevent the decision taking immediate effect. They can then interview the Cabinet Member or Council Officers and make recommendations to the decision-maker suggesting improvements.
- ⇒ **Policy Reviews:** The panels carry out detailed, evidence-based assessments of Council services or issues that affect the lives of local people. At the end of the review the panels issue a report setting out their findings and recommendations for improvement and present it to Cabinet and other partner agencies. During the reviews, panels will gather information, evidence and opinions from Council officers, external bodies and organisations and members of the public to help them understand the key issues relating to the review topic.
- ⇒ **One-Off Reviews:** Panels often want to have a quick, one-off review of a topic and will ask Council officers to come and speak to them about a particular service or issue before making recommendations to the Cabinet.
- ⇒ **Scrutiny of Council Documents:** Panels also examine key Council documents, such as the budget, the Business Plan and the Best Value Performance Plan.

Scrutiny panels need the help of local people, partners and community groups to make sure that Merton delivers effective services. If you think there is something that scrutiny should look at, or have views on current reviews being carried out by scrutiny, let us know.

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Agenda Item 3

All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the committee/panel. To find out the date of the next meeting please check the calendar of events at your local library or online at www.merton.gov.uk/committee.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

5 JULY 2023

(7.15 pm - 8.55 pm)

PRESENT: Councillor Edward Foley (in the Chair), Councillor Michael Brunt, Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina, Councillor Laxmi Attawar, Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, Councillor Nick McLean, Councillor Stuart Neaverson, Councillor John Oliver, Councillor Tony Reiss, Mansoor Ahmad, Becky Cruise, Dr Stannard and Roz Cordner

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors

Polly Cziok (Executive Director of Innovation & Change), Dan Jones (Executive Director, Environment, Civic Pride & Climate), Calvin McLean (Interim Assistant Director Public Protection), Asad Mushtaq (Executive Director of Finance & Digital) and Katy Saunders (Safer Merton Business Support)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Cllr Paul Kohler and Cllr Billy Hayes.

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

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INTRODUCTIONS (Agenda Item 4)

The Chair invited the Executive Directors to introduce themselves to the Commission and give an overview of their priorities/challenges and what they would like to achieve in post.

Asad Mushtaq, **Executive Director for Finance and Digital**, covering accountancy, ICT, digital, commercial, and transactional services. Key priority is financial sustainability.

In response to questions from Commission Members, the Executive Director for Finance and Digital added:

My first impressions are that the Council is well run and ambitious.

I think the profile needs to be raised, not just on a London level but nationally, and we can certainly transform in some key areas, such as being more commercial in terms of varying our revenue and becoming more resilient.

The financial monitoring task group will be important and a critical piece for me in terms of understanding how scrutiny works. I will work with the Scrutiny commission over the next year to make sure Members have the necessary budget training internally, and potentially some independent advice as well, in terms of upskilling Members to ask the right questions.

With regards to the website, there's a wider piece of work planned around how we enable our residents to interact with us and a key area of that is accessibility, including digital deprivation and the use and functionality of the website. We want to provide a good digital offering to our residents and businesses.

Dan Jones, **Executive Director of Environment, Civic Pride and Climate.**

Key areas are waste collection, street cleansing, parking, highway maintenance, parks, regulatory services, leisure, culture, and libraries. As well as some areas that will be covered by this committee including community safety, CCTV and violence against women and girls.

My priorities will be the 'Borough of Sport' and bringing the street cleansing service back in-house over the next few years, as well as commissioning a new waste collection service and trying to deliver on the climate emergency agenda.

In response to Commission Member questions:

Street lighting - the energy efficient bulbs/ LED lights do save a significant amount of money but there are challenges in certain areas where the lighting is perceived to be not as good as it was before. The best thing to do with those, in my experience, is take them on a case-by-case basis. It might be there are contributing factors, such as overhanging branches that are cutting out light, or the general environment doesn't reflect back as well as it could in certain areas. There have been numerous occasions when I've looked at street lighting from a community safety aspect particularly around alleyways, parks and routes from town centres to public transport interchanges used late at night that are not as well-lit as they could be. In those cases, we have worked with community safety colleagues, the police and parks colleagues to see if we can improve those, which might mean changing the lighting from high to low or low to high depending on the situations or putting in different types of lighting. I am happy to take them on a case-by-case basis also when Members or residents raise them.

It is difficult for people who live in flats above shops to dispose of their waste if they don't have container areas at the back of their properties to keep waste outside their homes. Time-banded collections work quite well in these cases (residents are told what time and day they can put their waste out for collection) however having transient populations make this a challenge. Education and working with the

landlords and agents in terms of making sure that the messages get across to tenants are complied with is important and if that fails then you end up with enforcement. We are looking at increasing our enforcement in certain areas where there is deliberate fly tipping, and this includes domestic and commercial waste.

The ED agreed to investigate and respond separately to a Cllr question "Following the large-scale failing of all the lights, have all the lights now been replaced?"

Polly Cziok, **Executive Director of Innovation and Change.**

Department covers a range of the corporate services, including communications and consultation, HR, policy and strategy, legal and governance and also customer services.

My biggest initial focus will be around HR and our workforce. We are currently too heavily reliant on agency staff and need to recruit a permanent workforce.

In response to questions, the Executive Director of Innovation and Change provided further explanation:

Working jointly with the Executive Director of Finance and Digital on a properly organised corporate transformation program.

With regards to recruitment, we need to:

- Do more to reach out to Merton residents as a hugely untapped recruitment resource.
- Be better at providing opportunities to local young people.
- Develop the recruitment brand and look at our family friendly policies and those policy reviews that might attract people to work for us.
- Move to targeting our graduate program at local people, in particular our care experienced local people.

A real priority will be driving down agency spending and recruiting people into permanent roles because that's important for the council's financial sustainability but it's also important for the stability of the organisation.

5 PSPO SIGNAGE (Agenda Item 5)

The item was introduced by the Community Safety Team Manager.

The borough wide Public Space Protection Order was agreed by Cabinet, and we agreed to bring the signage to the Commission. The signs will be erected from the 10 July onwards and are designed around the ethos of making Merton a responsible drinking Borough as well as covering our legal requirements to make sure that we discharge the order correctly.

In response to comments and questions

- Legal team advised on the wording of the signs.

- Kingdom Officers will be giving out leaflets, which are written in plain English and clearly explain what the PSPO is.
- Street drinkers will be given a leaflet about a drug and alcohol and treatment service provider in Merton and how they can refer themselves to get some additional support.
- Members will have an opportunity to scrutinise the performance of the PSPO later in the year. Safer Merton to return on 6 September 2023 with summer feedback and results.

A Member raised the irony that at a meeting in which we're going to be praising the process of scrutiny, we are given an item to scrutinise that is un-scrutinisable.

6 ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda Item 6)

Members agreed they would like to see more public engagement at scrutiny meetings. Scrutiny to look at how we promote these meetings and encourage members of the public to get involved.

Young Inspectors feedback to be included in the annual report.

Investigate whether online version can include hyperlinks to reports.

Members agreed the Annual Report for 2022/23.

7 IDENTIFY QUESTIONS FOR THE BOROUGH COMMANDER (Agenda Item 7)

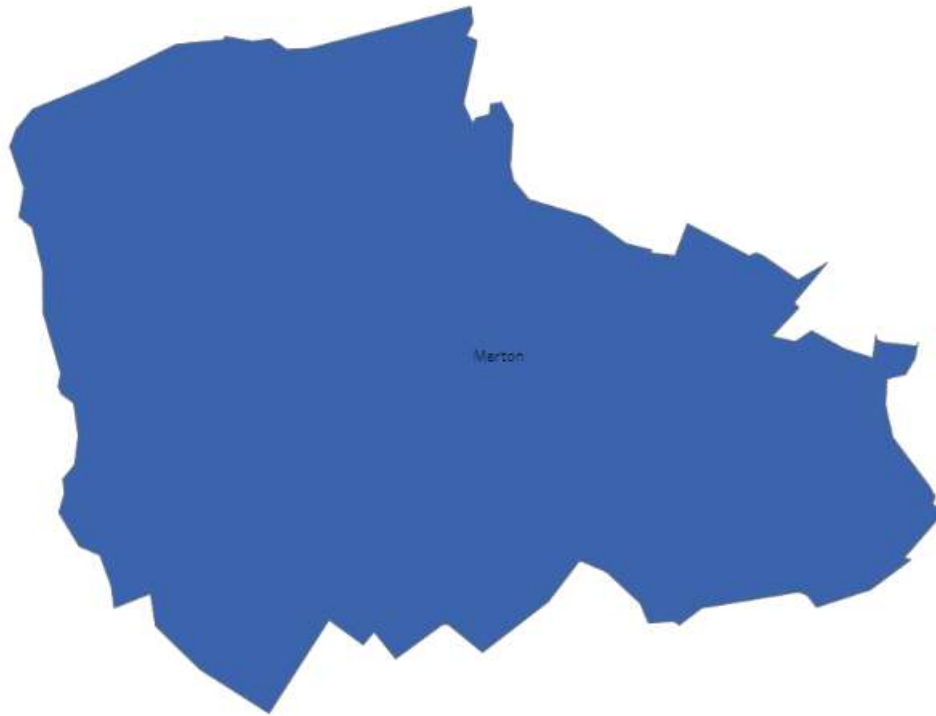
Please send to Scrutiny Officer by 24 July.

8 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)

The work programme was agreed.

The Financial Monitoring Task Group was re-established for 2023/24.

Merton Crime Pack



SW BCU Senior Leadership Team

SW BCU | Senior Leadership Team
June/July 2023



BCU Commander
Clair Kelland
Detective Chief Superintendent

PC Charlie Wiggins & PC Lee Regan
Staff Officer to the BCU Commander

Jess Perkins & Catherine Pintus
MOI SLT Support

MOI Service Delivery
Manager
Thomas Edwards

MO4 Forensic Manager
Jonathan Richards

Neighbourhoods
Wandsworth



David Dennister
Superintendent

PC George Sackley
SNT Staff Officer

Neighbourhoods
Merton



Luke Mooney
Superintendent

PC Danielle Fletcher
SNT Staff Officer

Neighbourhoods
Kingston



Josh Laughton
Superintendent

PC Ana Saviana
SNT Staff Officer

Neighbourhoods
Richmond



Roger Arditti
Superintendent

A/PS Olga Simalla
SNT Staff Officer



Barrie Capper
Chief Inspector



Chris Scammell
Chief Inspector

Emergency
Response



Wayne Matthews
Superintendent



Andy Starr
Chief Inspector



Rich Lloyd Ablitt
Chief Inspector

BCU
Headquarters



Steve Lemon
Superintendent

PC Hollie Barden
HG Staff Officer



David Lee
Chief Inspector



Mark Woodward
Chief Inspector

Local
Investigations



Daniel O'Sullivan
Detective Superintendent

PC Emma White
LI Staff Officer



Trevor Struthers
Detective Chief Inspector



Stuart McNaughton
A/Detective Chief Inspector

Public
Protection



Ian Cameron
Detective Superintendent



Clive Vale
Detective Chief Inspector



Amanda Prince
Detective Chief Inspector



Lesley Stewart
Detective Chief Inspector

Career
Development



Jacqui Davis
Chief Inspector



**METROPOLITAN
POLICE**

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Total Notifiable Offences MPS Comparison

TNO's include:

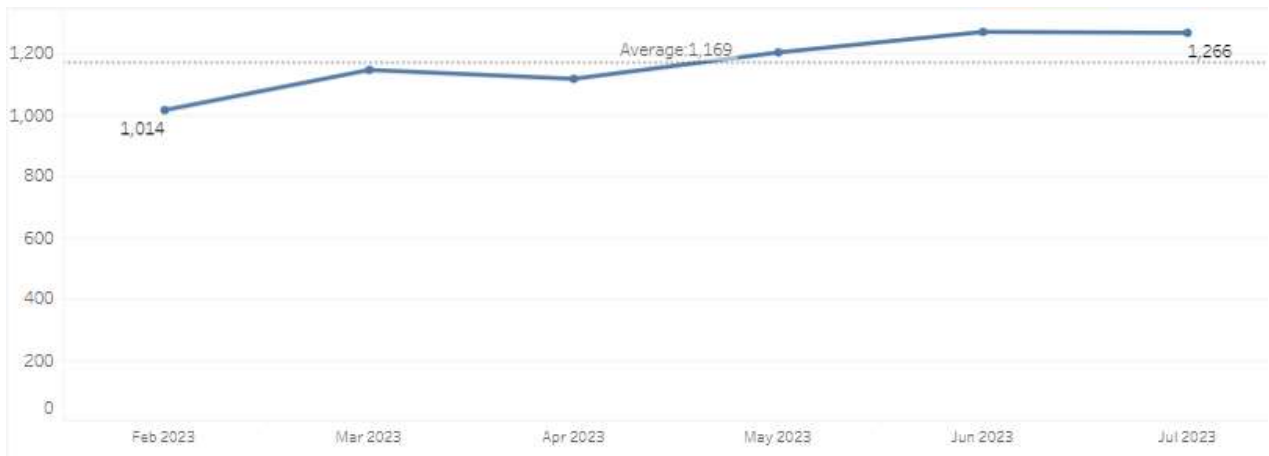
- Violence Against the Person
- Theft
- Vehicle Offences
- Arson and Criminal Damage
- Public Order Offences
- Burglary
- Robbery
- Sexual Offences
- Drug Offences
- Miscellaneous Crimes against society
- Possession of Weapons
- Historical Fraud and Forgery

MPS February 2022 to July 2022 TNO Total = 433,161

MPS February 2023 to July 2023 TNO Total = 460,875

Merton February 2022 to June 2022 TNO= 7,136

Merton February 2023 to July 2023 TNO= 7,012



Total Robbery Offences MPS Comparison

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Total
Merton 22	25	36	43	35	43	43	Total – 225
Merton 23	39	34	40	30	51	49	Total –243
MPS 2022	2,089	1,980	2,080	1,935	2,463	2,411	Total – 12,958
MPS 2023	2,665	2,708	2,711	2,583	2,881	2,868	Total – 16,416

This data shows the comparison between January 2022- June 2022 and January 2023-June 2023

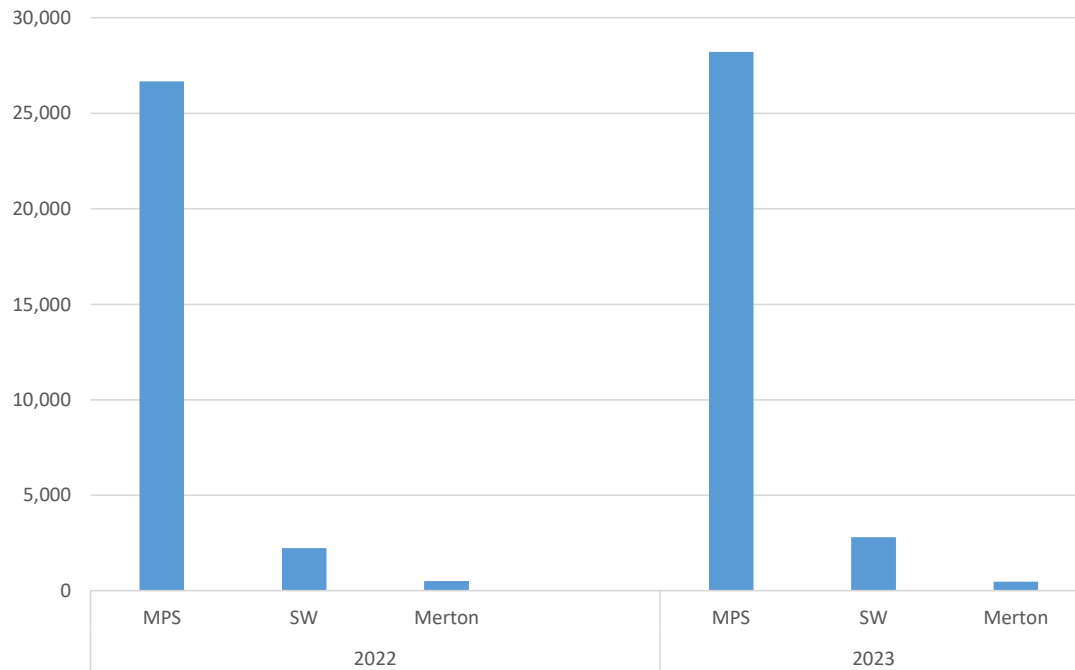
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MPS wide we have seen an overall increase in Robbery offences which has spilled into the Merton borough.



Total Burglary Offences MPS Comparison

Burglary Comparison 2022-2023



MPS offences January 22 - June 22 – **26,675**
 MPS offences January 23 – June 23 – **28,227**

SW BCU offences January 22 – June 23- **2,233**
 SW BCU offences January 23- June 23 – **2,797**

Merton offences January 22 – June 23 - **505**
 Merton January 23-June 23 - **472**

Although there has been an MPS and SW wide increase in burglaries Merton has seen a decrease

12 months (ending June 2023)
 compared to previous 12 months (ending June 2022):

▼9.2%

Knife Crime

January 2022- June 2022

Merton saw 138 knife enabled crimes

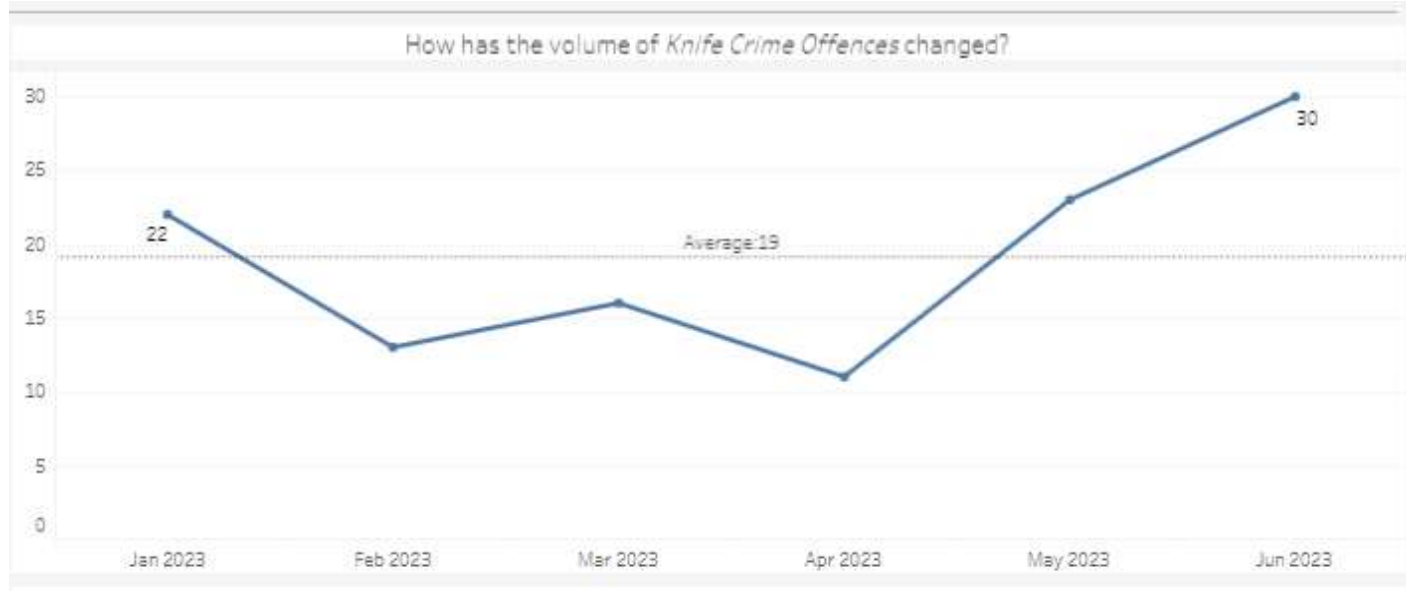
January 2023- June 2023

Merton saw 115 knife enabled crimes

Increases

The biggest **rise** in knife crimes was between April 23 and May 23

The month with the **highest** number of knife crimes in Merton was June 2023



June 2023 compared to
May 2023:

▲ 30.4%



METROPOLITAN
POLICE

Theft from Motor Vehicle

Merton: January 2023-June 2023

Offence Count:

445

Offences per 1,000 pop.

2.2

12 months (ending June 2023)
compared to previous 12 months (ending June
2022):

▲0.9%

June 2023 compared to May 2023:

▲2.7%

Overall there has been a decrease in thefts from motor vehicles between January and June 23 compared to January – June 22 in Merton.

Merton: January 2022-June 2022

Offence Count:

458

Offences per 1,000 pop.

2.2

12 months (ending June 2022)
compared to previous 12 months (ending June
2021):

▼5.4%

June 2022 compared to May 2022:

▲4.4%



**METROPOLITAN
POLICE**

Theft or Taking of a Motor Vehicle

Merton: January 2023-June 2023

Offence Count:

239

Offences per 1,000 pop.

1.2

12 months (ending June 2023)
compared to previous 12 months (ending June
2022):

▼7.7%

June 2023 compared to May 2023:

▼4.8%

Overall there has been a decrease in thefts or taking of motor vehicles between January and June 23 compared to January – June 22 in Merton.

Merton: January 2022-June 2022

Offence Count:

349

Offences per 1,000 pop.

1.7

12 months (ending June 2022)
compared to previous 12 months (ending June
2021):

▲42.9%

June 2022 compared to May 2022:

▲8.1%



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POLICE**

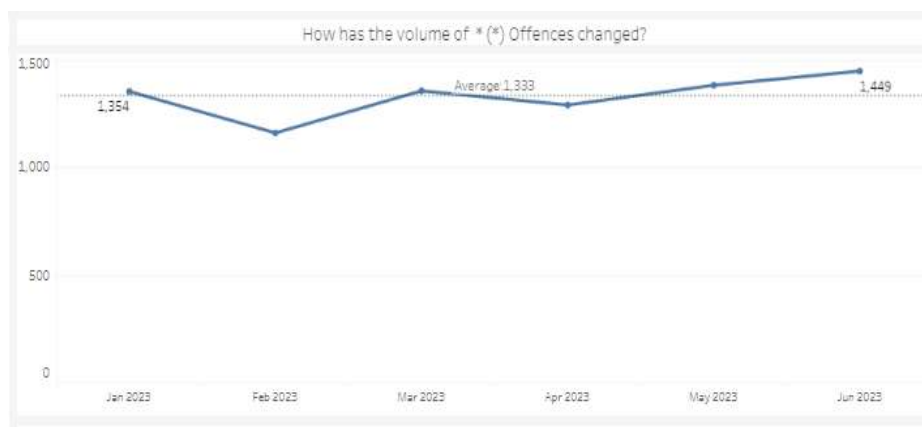
Merton Stats Overview

February 2022 to July 2022

Stop and Search
volume:
1,566
410 were
positive

February 2023 – June 2023

TNO's
7,012



Merton	I calls	In target	% in target
2023	3146	2529	80.4%
2022	3379	2713	80.3%

Data covers Jan-Jun

MPS	I calls	In target	% in target
2023	189927	152896	80.5%
2022	192978	156520	81.1%

Data covers Jan-Jun

February 2023 to July 2023

Stop and Search
volume:
931
271 were
positive

Total Merton TNO's over financial year
Apr 2021/Apr 2022 – 14,424

Total Merton TNO's over financial year
Apr 2022/ Apr 2023 – 15,073

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Borough Commander Questions – September 2023

Can the Borough Commander provide update with regard to the future of Wimbledon Police Station.

Unfortunately, I have no further news on this matter and await a decision from MOPAC.

What are the plans to upgrade PC and PCSO numbers in Merton's SNT's?

The Strongest Ever Neighbourhood Policing project team are working out the allocation of an initial uplift of 500 PCSO numbers across London and we hope to be in a position to provide more details soon.

How many vacancies are there now for Dedicated Ward Officers?

Currently Merton SNT has no vacancies.

What are the plans and timetable for implementing the proposed Metropolitan Police plans for Merton's neighbourhood policing.

Commander Helen Harper has recently taken over as lead for Neighbourhood policing and work is being undertaken centrally around allocation of additional PCSO numbers into ward teams. This piece of work is complex and we expect timescales to be released in due course. Further information will be provided as soon as it becomes available.

Under the New Met For London plan community crime fighting and putting what matters most to communities first is a high priority and we will be listening more than ever ensuring that we are responding to the crimes and ASB issues that are affecting those that live, work and visit the borough of Merton most. We have already seen Superintendent Luke Mooney take up his position as dedicated Neighbourhood Superintendent for Merton to work alongside partners and the public to drive down crime, increase trust and deliver the high standards that our communities deserve.

We are also currently arranging public events within the borough to provide an opportunity for us to better engage and listen to residents the first of which is planned for 7th September.

Can the Borough Commander provide update on the progress/actions to stop MOPED related thefts across the BCU?

Our teams across the BCU, including: proactive local investigations, safer neighbourhood teams and emergency response teams, utilise Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology to target suspicious vehicles, intercept lost or stolen vehicles and arrest offenders.

Safer Neighbourhood teams are often engaging with local communities, offering crime prevention advice, on how best to secure their vehicles; in

Borough Commander Questions – September 2023

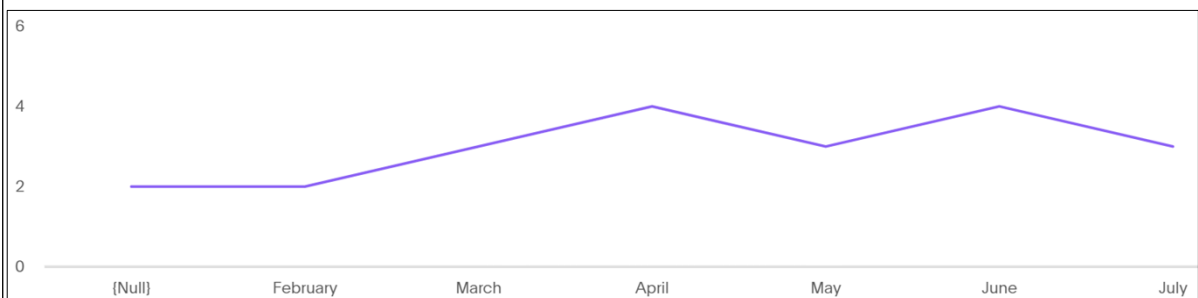
pop up street events, most recently during the national week of Neighbourhood Policing across the MET we engaged with lots of communities with crime prevention events/street pop-ups.

Operation Nightingale is an active crime tackling operation utilised across London. This is a crime mapping, hot spot and intelligence led function, to statically post a collection of officers to an area of focus. This acts as a visual deterrent, ensures that local officers are available in a vicinity to act on active calls from the public and proactively intercept criminality.

Regular sweeps on public land and estates uncover lost or stolen mopeds which are then seized by Police or returned to the lawful owner to prevent vehicles being used in crime.

Please see the below statistics which display the number of crime reports related to moped thefts in Merton:

Jan 2023 – 2
Feb 2023 – 2
Mar 2023 – 3
Apr 2023 – 4
May 2023 – 3
Jun 2023 – 4
Jul 2023 – 3



Can the Borough Commander provide an update on the initiatives to tackle vehicle damage or car and catalytic convertor theft? This type of crime appears to be increasing and is making residents feel unsafe.

Officers are using a new, targeted, database called Met Insights to develop a local understanding of their focused areas. SNT Officers will amend their patrol times and locations to prioritise these areas when and where possible. We will also carry out planned proactive operations and pool resources to tackle problems such as this.

With regard to our preventative measures, officers often hold a number of 'Catalytic Converter Marking' engagement events. Members of the public are invited to these events and their vehicles catalytic converters are marked with a toolkit, this marks it with a forensic marker and 'target hardens' for thieves to dispose of the catalytic converter.

Borough Commander Questions – September 2023

In the period between Jan-June 2023 only 6 Catalytic Converter thefts have been recorded in Merton.

Can the Borough Commander provide an update with regard to the growing incidents of balaclava clad gangs mugging and stealing mobile phones and watches from school children and what actions are being taken.

Prior to local schools breaking up for summer holidays, officers were deployed in a mixture of uniform and covert patrols to target the areas affected by this issue.

SW Safer Schools are devising a return to school plan which will include dedicated patrols to prevent and/or disrupt the activity. Preventative advice is also given to staff, children and parents.

Various units across the BCU are tasked to work on this issue jointly, including (SSO) Safer Schools Officers, (SNT) Safer Neighbourhood Teams, (VSU) Violent Suppression Unit, (ERPT) Emergency Response Patrol Team and the Robbery Team.

Data of School children robberies from ages 11yrs – 16yrs:

Jan 2023 – 23

Feb 2023 – 11

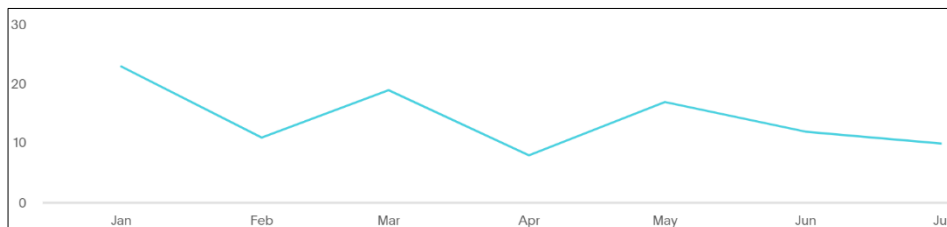
Mar 2023 – 19

Apr 2023 – 8

May 2023 – 17

Jun 2023 – 12

Jul 2023 – 10



Rise in theft from vehicles, what action is the police taking to reduce this?

Officers are using Met Insights to target known, priority, offenders in this area and reduce this crime type.

The offenders and this offence type are often linked to the use of Class A drug use, so we continue to work collaboratively with our partners to offer support and intervention to drug users in the area. Police will continue to seek to identify addresses where drug supply and use takes place, i.e. by executing warrants authorised at Court and using our powers under the ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to close down addresses linked to Class A supply (Closure Orders).

Crime prevention advice is also shared with the community at our street events for highlighting target hardening and preventative tactics.

Borough Commander Questions – September 2023

The number of crime reports, in Merton, for this offence are shown as below:

Jan 2023 – 66

Feb 2023 – 87

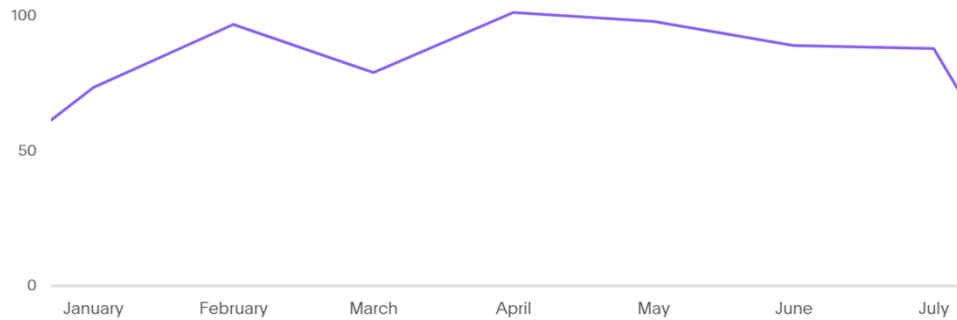
Mar 2023 – 71

Apr 2023 – 91

May 2023 – 88

Jun 2023 – 80

Jul 2023 – 79



What action is the police taking to detect cannabis farms, following the recent one set ablaze in Hillside?

We focus on an evidence based approach and will continue to disrupt and dismantle serious organised crime through the various operations currently ongoing across the MET.

Our intelligence ranges from external and internal sources. We receive crucial information from the local community via ‘crimestoppers’ and direct calls to the control room; this is vital in support of future operations and a developing portfolio against this crime type.

Reactive policing operations -

The MPS recently carried out Operation Millie which was the coordinated response into serious and organised criminality, linked with the production of Cannabis across London.

We executed two S23 MDA (Misuse of Drugs Act) warrants during this operation and on one occasion shut down a large scale factory.

Proactive partnership work -

Project adder is a partnership working strategy and aims to strengthen the relationships between all organisations combating drug misuse. Project Adder has been piloted across the met, initially funded by the Home Office, as an investment in a holistic response to the threat of the drugs trade.

Borough Commander Questions – September 2023

Distraction theft, of phones especially, appears to be on the up, mostly between young people but also thugs using e-bikes to sneak up on people. How are the police tackling this?

Offenders using bicycles/electric scooters in aid committing criminal offences can create a challenge for officers. Using an evidence based approach, officers will be deployed to our emerging crime hotspots, especially during peak hours (often established during TTCG (Tactical Tasking Coordination Group)). This helps us develop an understanding on where to appropriately deploy our resources, with a view to preventing offences and ensuring that our officers are appropriately equipped to respond.

Police work closely with our partners and often link in with local CCTV control rooms, to effectively respond to active crime incidents (such as those as detailed in this question); SNT Officers have access to bicycles to enable them to deploy efficiently to these types of incidents.

We also deploy Plain Clothed Patrol assets across the BCU, enabling us to develop our intelligence picture, identify areas of concern and intercept ongoing crime.

Prevention advice is also key, which is circulated through the SNT Officers to their community contacts.

Over the Summer holidays both the Police and Council are running various activities for children to provide a safe space for them whilst the schools are closed.

The number of crime reports, in Merton, for the offence of ‘theft from the person of another’ are shown as below:

Jan 2023 – 24

Feb 2023 – 30

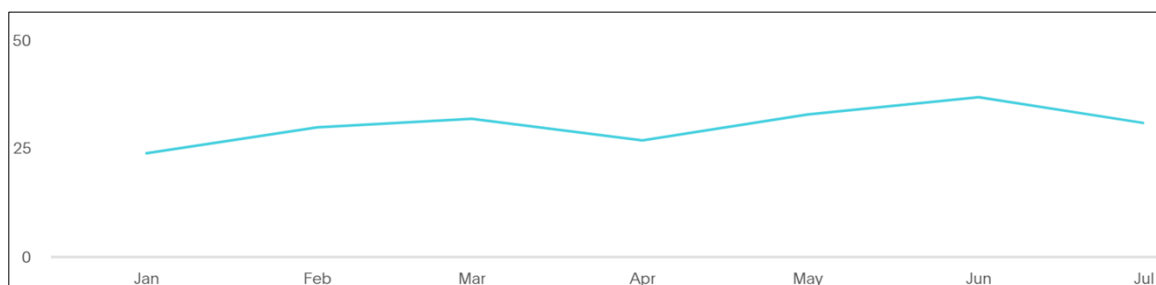
Mar 2023 – 32

Apr 2023 – 27

May 2023 – 33

Jun 2023 – 37

Jul 2023 – 31



Borough Commander Questions – September 2023

There have been incidents this past academic year secondary school kids going home have been mugged. I would like to know what the Met is planning to do for this coming academic year to make school kids walking home from school as we want to encourage them to walk home.

Our schools team attend schools to speak with students and parents advising on measures that can be taken to keep them safe and to raise awareness for preventive and reactive measures children can take.

Letters are sent to parents through schools and via the Next Door media platform to reinforce the message.

After school patrols are conducted by our Schools officers alongside Neighbourhood Policing teams. Road and Transport Policing command (RTPC) officers assist the BCU and Merton by identifying high crime and linked Anti-Social Behaviour on bus routes/ bus stops and patrol these at the relevant times.

Schools Officers also identify known perpetrators with engagement and diversion activity. These strategies are run throughout the year but intensify at peak times and concentrated on hot spots (both historical and emerging.) Cameras can also be used to monitor emerging hotspots.

Another hazard on the pavements is e-scooters and cyclists riding on pavements coming at speed endangering pedestrians. What enforcement is there to stop this practice?

We have not received any particular information or intelligence relating to riding / cycling on the pavements in Merton. We proactively stop and seize illegally ridden E-Scoters whilst out on patrol as part of Vision Zero / road safety. In 2022 the Roads Transport Policing Team (RTPC) seized 174 E-Scoters and so far this year 40 have been taken off the streets.

In relation to cycling on the pavements, RTPC PCSOs give warnings in the first instance. In the case of persistent offenders or riding that causes danger to pedestrians, a Penalty Notice for Disorder (PND) will then be given, the RTPC do not keep a record of these and will be low in number in any case.

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 6th September 2023

Wards: All

Subject: Safer Merton – Anti-Social Behaviour Update

Lead Officer: Calvin McLean, Interim Assistant Director, Public Protection

Lead member: Councillor Eleanor Stringer, Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

Contact officer: Megan Hatton, Head of Community Safety, Katy Saunders, Community Safety Team Manager, Anthony Cole, ASB Team Manager

Recommendations:

A. *That the Committee note and support the work undertaken to tackle anti-social behaviour in Merton.*

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report provides the Committee with an update of ASB patterns and trends, and knife crime, in Merton and the steps being taken to address these.
- 1.2. Addressing anti-social behaviour (ASB) and tackling knife crime are strategic priorities of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) as they remain a concern for residents and can impact greatly upon our communities' quality of life, as well as potentially leading to more harmful criminal behaviour.
- 1.3. Community Safety Partnerships are a requirement of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The partnership is made up of representatives from the police, local authorities, fire and rescue authorities, health services, and probation services (known as the 'responsible authorities'). The partnership is responsible for setting and overseeing the strategic direction for community safety and the community cohesion agenda in the borough, and to fulfil the statutory requirements of the CSP in Merton.
- 1.4. The legal definition of ASB according to the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014¹ is '*conduct that has caused or is likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress to any person.*'
- 1.5. The Safer Merton ASB team consists of three ASB Officers who each cover a geographical patch of the borough, overseen by an ASB Team Manager.
- 1.6. The team focuses on coordinating a multi-agency response to ASB issues. This is via a targeted neighbourhood problem solving approach, using enforcement tools and powers, and delivering interventions to support the most vulnerable victims and locations.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12/contents/enacted>

- 1.7. Knife crime is any crime involving a knife or sharp object. This includes carrying a knife, owning a banned knife, trying to buy a knife if you are under 18, and/or threatening, injuring or fatally wounding someone with a knife.
- 1.8. An offensive weapon is defined as any item that has been made or adapted for the intention to cause hurt or harm to another person, under the Offences Weapon Act 2019.
- 1.9. Safer Merton have a Violence and Vulnerability Strategic Development Lead and a Serious Violence Strategic Lead, who work closely with partners to oversee the strategic and operational response to violence including knife crime. This includes leading on the Serious Violence Duty and Violence and Vulnerability Action Plan and overseeing external grant funding towards initiatives used to tackle violence and support those impacted.
- 1.10. The work done by Safer Merton and our partners to deliver a safer borough contributes to the fact we are currently 4th safest borough in London² (*based upon the rate per 1,000 per population for total notifiable offences*).
- 1.11. The main sections of this report are as follows:
- 1.12. ***Voice of the residents*** – a summary of feedback received from the residents of Merton about the ASB issues which concern them the most.
- 1.13. Whilst the biannual Community Safety Survey is still open for consultation until the 7 September, the most recent LBM Annual Resident Survey (2021) results showed that 91% of residents felt safe in their local area during the day and 84% at night.
- 1.14. The last Community Safety Survey (2021) identified graffiti and vandalism as being the top type of ASB concerns, with residents also expressing concerns about street drinking and the presence of drug paraphernalia (cannisters). Whilst Merton ranks as the 4th safest borough in London, there are differences highlighted between different areas of the borough, with people feeling less safe in the east of the borough. Crime and gangs were also raised as concerns by young people.
- 1.15. ***ASB and knife crime data*** – an overview of trends and patterns in the reported ASB and knife crime data.
- 1.16. Data shows the volume of calls of ASB complaints received by Safer Merton between July 2022 – June 2023 increased during the summer holidays and peaked in August and there was a secondary surge around Halloween/ fireworks season. This is a typical pattern we see with there being seasonal increases which is not unique to Merton.
- 1.17. The wards with the highest volume of reports were Cannon Hill, Lower Morden, and Cricket Green, with most of the complaints being neighbour disputes, and noise complaints.
- 1.18. Post the pandemic and the easing of any restrictions in March 2022, levels of ASB calls to police have reduced. Overall crime levels during 2023 have been slightly higher than the previous 12 months: There were 13,952 Total Notifiable Offences (TNOs) recorded by the Police in Merton in the 12 months to June 2023. This is 2.3% (313 offences) higher than the 12 months

² As of July 2023

to June 2022. The three wards with the highest levels of ASB calls during 2022-23 were Cricket Green, Lavender Fields, and Wimbledon Town and Dundonald which was created by the changes in ward boundaries in May 2022.

- 1.19. In the 12 months to June 2023 there were 264 offences flagged as knife enabled showing an increase of 14.8% (34 offences) on the previous 12 months. This compares to an increase of 20.3% across the Met as a whole. Robbery (65%) and Violence Against the Person (33%) were the main types of offence and the top three wards were Cricket Green (36), Pollards Hill (29) and Figges Marsh (28), collectively 35% of all knife offences.
- 1.20. The Violence and Vulnerability Action Plan captures the effort made by partners to support the reduction and prevention of violence in Merton and using the data and trends feeds into the partnership response to ensure that we are targeting resources and delivery accordingly.
- 1.21. ***What have we been doing*** – an overview of the work being undertaken in connection with Merton’s Community Safety Partnership to tackle ASB and violence.
- 1.22. To ensure a holistic response to addressing crime and ASB, a range of multi-agency work is taking place to continue to monitor, respond and enforce regarding ASB and crime related matters. This includes several partnership meetings that discuss these issues, hot spot locations and how jointly these can be tackled including providing support and intervention to those in need, installing additional CCTV cameras and using enforcement when appropriate.
- 1.23. We conduct Days of Enhanced Visibility to address specific concerns and provide community engagement and reassurance. These days involve working in partnership to meet residents, visit businesses, offer advice, and carry out enforcement activities. We work closely with Youth outreach and Children Social Care to ensure safeguarding matters are addressed and a contextual safeguarding approach is taken and have commissioned services that provide dedicated provisions to young people and schools to address young violence and exploitation.
- 1.24. Data and trends from partners, police and resident’s survey is used to help direct the strategic and operational plan to the issues and allows the partnership to take a targeted and hyper local approach where needed.
- 1.25. The overall approach aims to ensure that there is a sufficient multi-agency focus of resources and interventions towards the locations suffering from the highest levels of persistent ASB and crime, and towards the individual cases causing the greatest risk of harm towards individual victims.

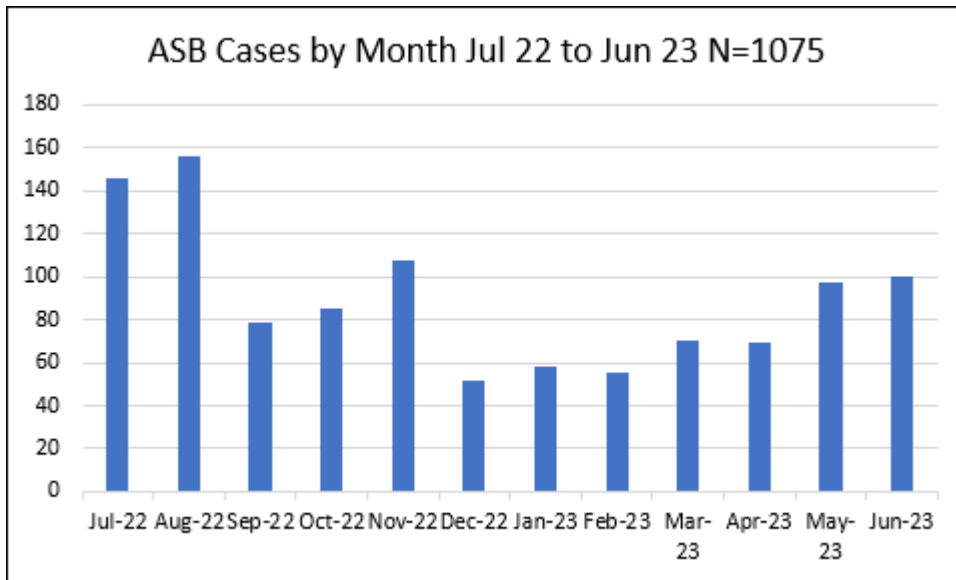
2 THE VOICE OF THE RESIDENTS

- 2.1. The **Community Safety Survey** is carried out biannually. The current consultation is open between 3rd June 2023 and 7th September 2023, therefore the information in this report relates to the last consultation which took place during 2021.

- 2.2. In addition to considering the results from the Community Safety Survey (CSS) the section below also considers results from other consultations such as Merton Council's **Annual Residents Survey** (ARS – last conducted in 2021) which have relevance to the topics of ASB and community safety.
- 2.3. For the evidence base upon which the summary is based please see *Appendices - Public Consultation Results*.
- 2.4. **Summary of survey and consultation results**
- 2.5. Encouragingly, most residents feel safe in their local areas (91% of ARS respondents reported feeling safe during the day and 84% at night). However, there has been some decline since the surveys undertaken in 2019. Both the CSS and ARS highlight the differences in perceptions between wards in the borough.
- 2.6. In relation to the types of ASB: In the CSS, graffiti (42% of respondents expressing concern) and vandalism (42%) were the top types of ASB concerns. Residents also expressed concerns about alcohol related ASB (38%), street drinking (37%) and the presence of drug paraphernalia (canisters) (39%) and drug use (38%).
- 2.7. The **Your Merton** survey (conducted 2021) highlighted the impact of ASB on local communities and the associated links with alcohol. Safety in parks was also highlighted as an issue in the Your Merton Survey and the CSS.
- 2.8. The ARS highlighted that people felt less safe in the east of the borough. In particular, the ARS highlighted that ASB related issues, as well as drug dealing and groups hanging around, were perceived as a problem.
- 2.9. According to the ARS residents living in east Merton, Mitcham, south Mitcham, and Morden areas had the highest percentage of residents who saw ASB and people using and dealing drugs as a problem. Residents in the east Merton and Mitcham areas also saw being drunk or rowdy as a problem.
- 2.10. Crime and gangs were also raised as problems by young people in the Young People ARS.
- 2.11. **PSPO Consultation**
- 2.12. To determine if the alcohol related Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) should be extended borough wide, Safer Merton conducted a public consultation in December 2022, a summary of findings is below:
- 2.13. *- 47% of respondents felt that street drinking was a fairly or very big problem. 75% felt litter was a problem.*
- 2.14. *- 76% of respondents had witnessed ASB related to street drinking in Merton in the last year. 18% had witnessed ASB related to street drinking more than 10 times in the last year.*
- 2.15. *- Respondents felt less safe in Merton at night.*
- 2.16. *- Many respondents said that alcohol related ASB affected their quality of life.*

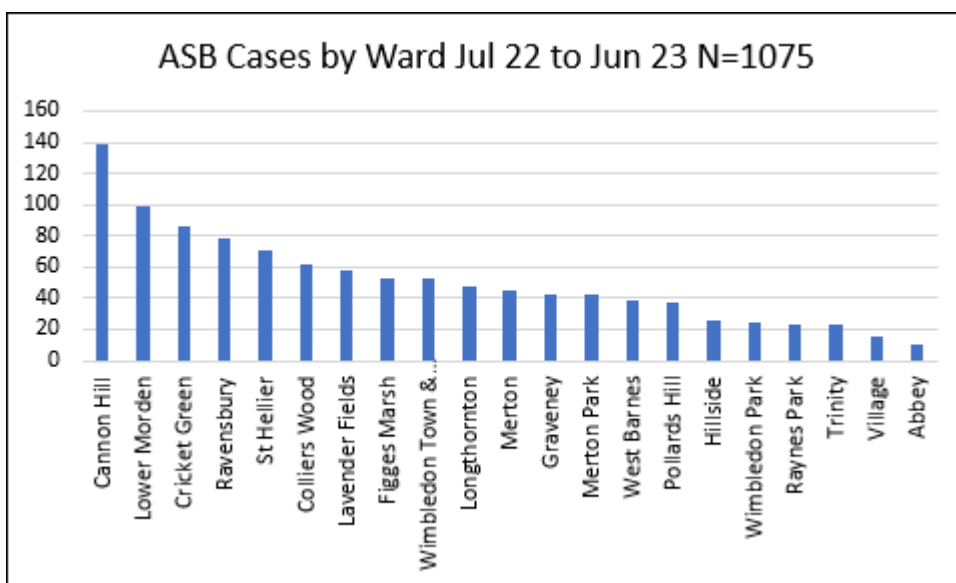
3 ASB DATA

- 3.1. The section below focuses on what the data shows about ASB trends and patterns in Merton.
- 3.2. The Safer Merton ASB Team record cases reported to them via emails and phone calls from residents, businesses, and Members.
- 3.3. *Reports to London Borough of Merton ASB Team*

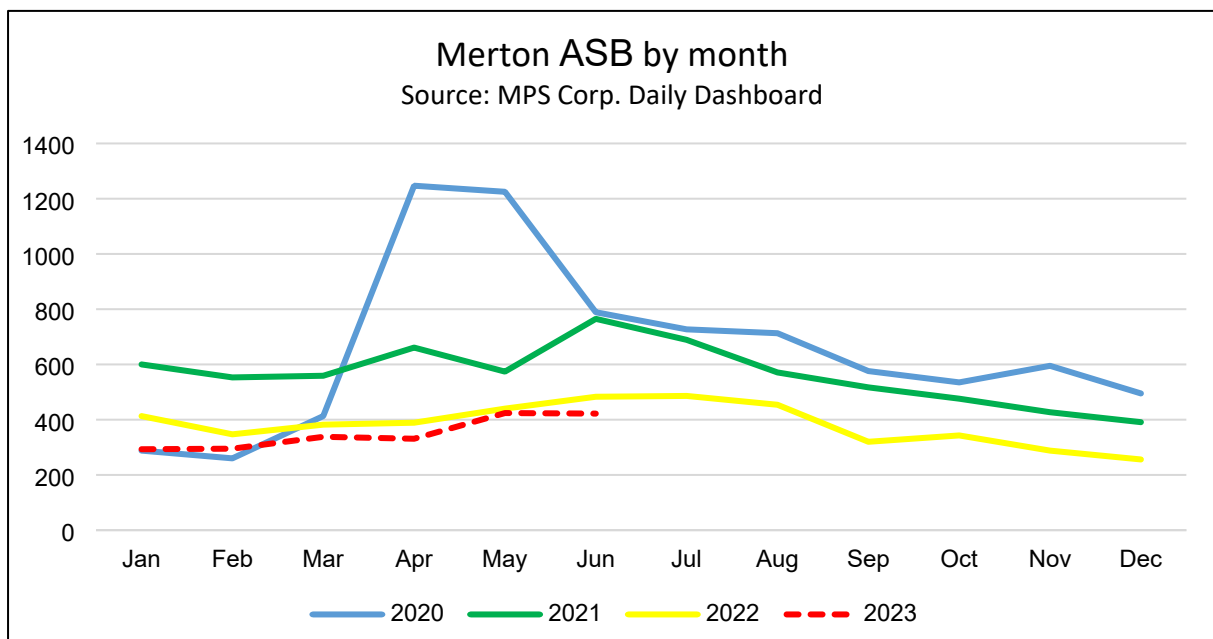


- 3.4. The chart above shows the volume of ASB complaints received by Safer Merton between July 2022 – June 2023. Calls increased during the summer holidays and peaked in August. There was a secondary surge around Halloween/ fireworks season. Reports of ASB and crime tend to increase during seasonal periods such as the summer and autumn months.

- 3.5. *Reports by ward to London Borough of Merton ASB Team*



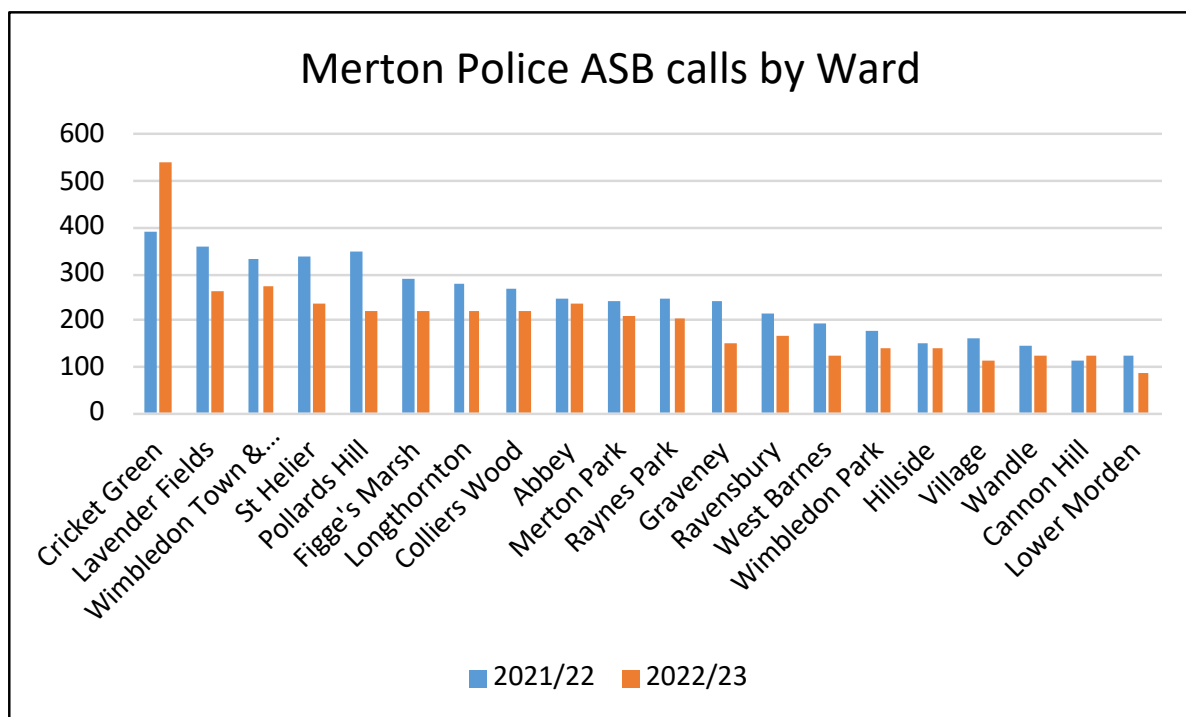
- 3.6. The wards with the highest volume of reports were Cannon Hill, Lower Morden, and Cricket Green. As this is in relation to Safer Merton ASB cases, the data will have been taken from the case management system which has only recently been updated to reflect the new wards going forward, so as the data is for 12 months, this is why it is based on the old wards.
- 3.7. Many complaints are neighbour disputes and noise complaints. Rubbish/ littering is the next most populated category, followed by vandalism/ graffiti and vehicle nuisance.
- 3.8. It's important to note that some of the wards with apparently high numbers have multiple reports related to specific sites. In Cannon Hill, 51 of the 139 calls relate to an ongoing neighbour dispute in a residential road. 17 reports relate to Joseph Hood Recreation Ground and 15 to Hillcross Avenue car park. In Lower Morden, 22 calls relate to Morden Park and 15 calls to King Georges playing fields. The issues in these areas are being addressed accordingly via a partnership approach such as being discussed at the monthly partnership tasking meeting and agreeing joint actions to respond, the youth outreach team patrolling the carpark and Morden Park to provide positive diversion activities to young people and adding additional CCTV cameras.
- 3.9. **Police ASB calls**
- 3.10. Post the pandemic and the easing of any restrictions in March 2022 levels of ASB calls to police have reduced.
- 3.11. Overall crime levels during 2023 have been slightly higher than the previous 12 months: There were 13,952 Total Notifiable Offences (TNOs) recorded by the Police in Merton in the 12 months to June 2023. This is 2.3% (313 offences) higher than the 12 months to June 2022.



- 3.12. The chart above shows that during first lockdown period there was an increase in calls to Police which were classified as ASB. Many of these

additional calls were Covid regulations related. In the 12 months covered by this report, call numbers have fallen compared to the previous year and are much lower than 2021.

3.13. Breakdown by ward



3.14. The breakdown of MPS ASB calls by ward is shown above. The three wards with the highest levels of ASB calls during 2022-23 were Cricket Green, Lavender Fields, and Wimbledon Town and Dundonald which was created by the changes in ward boundaries in May 2022.

4 KNIFE CRIME DATA

4.1. In the 12 months to June 2023 there were 264 offences in Merton flagged as knife enabled. This is an increase of 14.8% (34 offences) on the previous 12 months, which is lower than the increase of 20.3% across the Met as a whole. Whilst any rate of knife crime is concerning, in relation to rate per 1000 population for the same rolling 12 month period to June 23, the rate for Merton was 1.2 which is lower than the rate of 1.6 recorded for the whole of the Metropolitan Police.³

4.2. Most knife enabled offences were Robbery (65%) and Violence Against the Person (33%). The top three wards were Cricket Green (36), Pollards Hill (29) and Figges Marsh (28), collectively 35% of all knife offences.

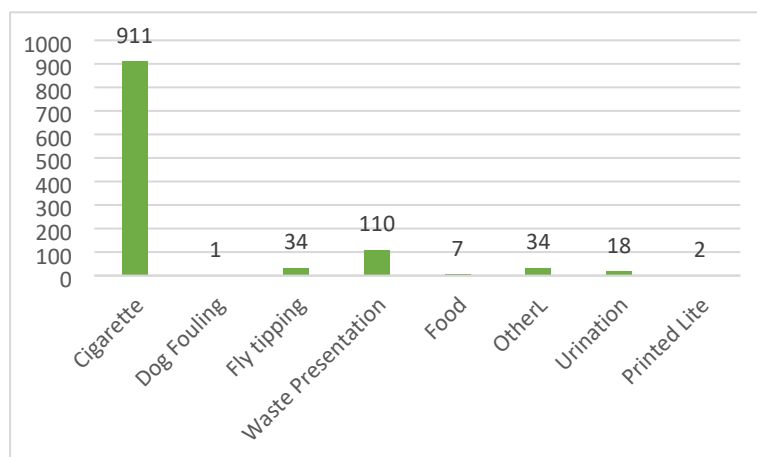
4.3. 59% of all knife crime victims were aged under 25 and three quarters of victims were male.

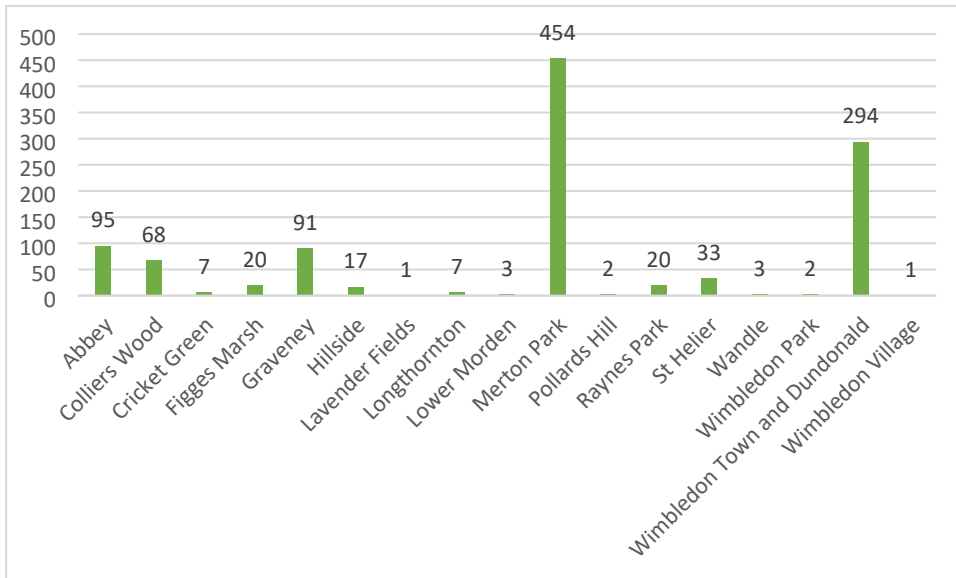
³ <https://data.london.gov.uk/mopac-pcp-dashboard/violence-is-prevented-and-reduced-dashboard/>

- 4.4. In terms of victim ethnicity, 39% were described as White, 21% Black and 18% Asian.
- 4.5. London Ambulance Service data for violence related incidents from the Safe stats data portal for the period July 2022 to June 2023 showed 62 records, of which 5 were knife or gunshot wound related. The top wards with the highest volume of calls were Figges Marsh (7) and Pollards Hill (6).

5 ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME DATA

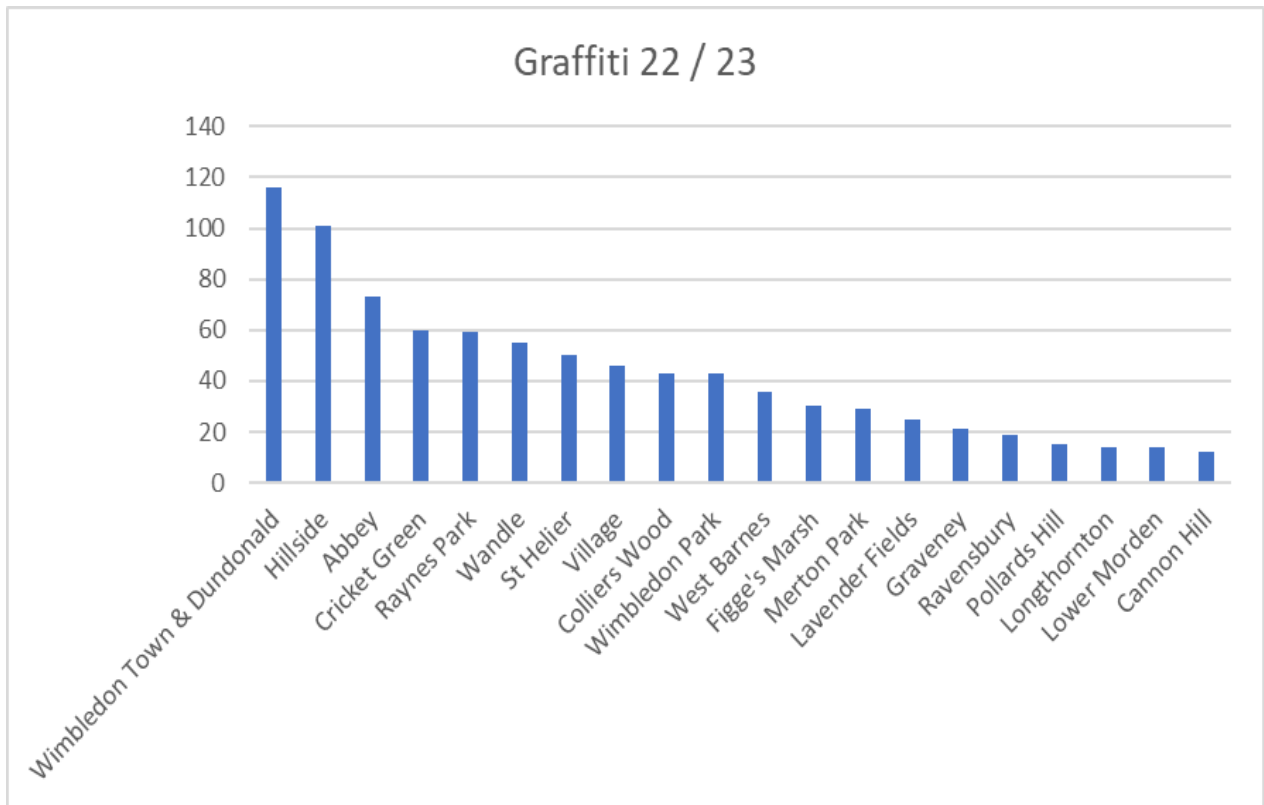
- 5.1. Whilst environmental crime is a separate strand within the council, there are clear links between these matters and the areas of ASB dealt with in Safer Merton and the need to ensure there is a strong partnership response. A good example of this is the joint action plan for Mitcham town centre where numerous complaints are made regarding graffiti and littering alongside issues of street drinking and drug dealing. It is important that these are tackled jointly as part of a Council wide response and that we understand the concerns collectively as there can be links between environmental crime being a pathway into other forms of ASB and crime, as explained in the “broken window theory” that visible signs of disorder and misbehaviour in an environment encourage further disorder and misbehaviour, leading to serious crimes.
- 5.2. The Council’s Waste Enforcement Team lead on tackling environmental crime such as fly tipping and graffiti. Vandalism in terms of criminal damage is a criminal offence and as such dealt with by the Police.
- 5.3. Between September 2022 and July 2023, **4,605** Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) were issued in relation to environmental crime. The majority are for littering and fly tipping, with a smaller amount for business non-compliance.
- 5.4. Whilst this is not the same period as above, to give an indication of where the FPNS have been issued, the below graph shows this from April 2023- June 2023 and for what reasons.
- 5.5.



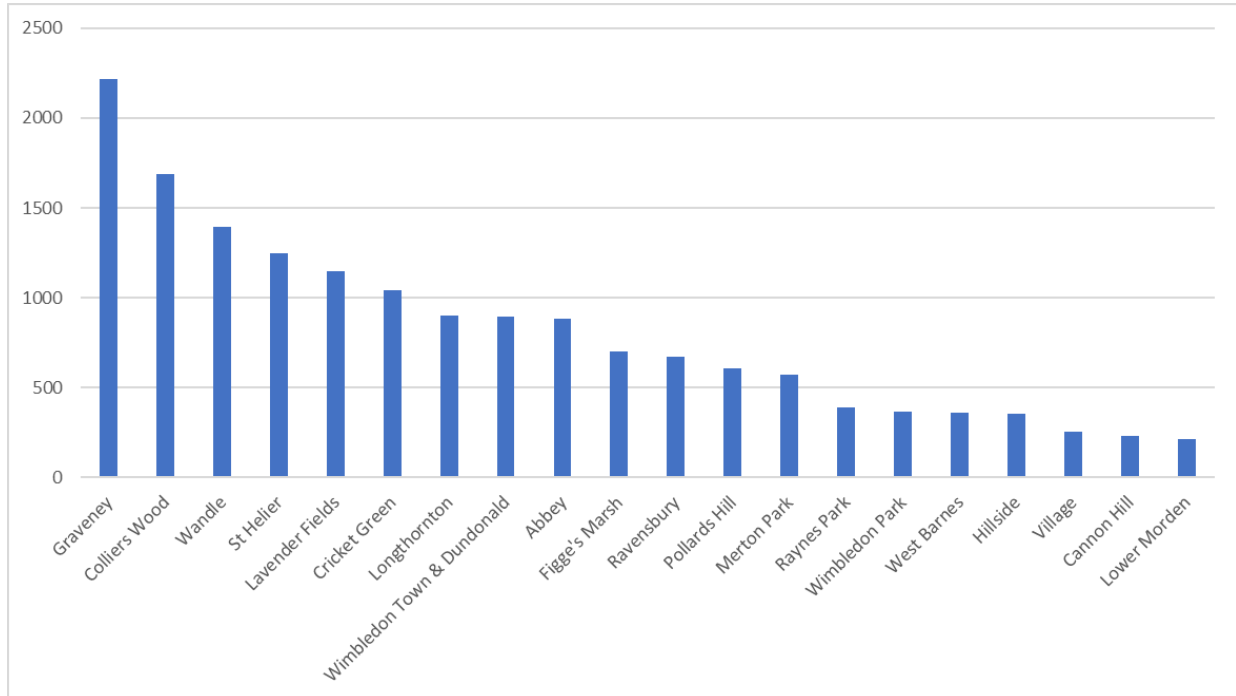


5.6.

5.7. *Reports of graffiti by ward September 2022 - July 2023*



5.8. *Reports of fly tipping by ward September 2022 – July 2023*



5.9. From September 2022 – July 2023 there were **16,120** fly tip reports received compared to 11,954 in the previous year of 2021/22. As with some of the other crime types, a few wards in the east of the borough appear to be most affected.

5.10. Graveney is the ward with the highest fly tips reported, followed by Colliers Wood. These two wards are neighboured with Wandsworth borough. Also both wards have a high number of transient residents, short term lets and HMOs – both registered and unregistered.

6 WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING

6.1. ASB is a concern for local residents and as surveys have shown, impacts greatly upon their quality of life. As a result, it is a priority across several local strategies and plans:

- Reducing ASB is one of the Community Safety Partnership's strategic priorities.
- Tackling ASB is a local ward priority for each of the police Safer Neighbourhood Teams.
- Tackling ASB plays a key role in achieving the Council's ambition to nurture Civic Pride and *ensure residents, businesses and visitors will enjoy clean, safe, and welcoming places across the borough.*
- The implementation of a borough wide PSPO to tackle alcohol related ASB is one of the Council's corporate objectives.

6.2. **Tackling ASB as a Community Safety strategic priority**

6.3. The priorities set by the Community Safety Partnership for 2023-24 set out several objectives in relation to tackling ASB:

- Develop a targeted multi-agency response to locations subjected to persistent ASB.
- Continue to investigate reported cases, supporting victims and considering wider approaches to address incidents of ASB.
- Develop multi-agency processes for using the ASB tools and powers and problem solving via the Partnership Tasking Group.
- Ensure a consistent and balanced approach to engagement and enforcement of the PSPO powers going forward.
- Keep our communities and victims informed of the action taken to address ASB in their neighbourhood via quarterly Days of Visibility.
- Maintain a collaborative approach with the Police.
- Address high risk cases via the borough's Community Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (CMARAC).
- Maintain links with the borough's Integrated Offender Management (IOM) scheme.

6.4. **ASB Action Plan**

6.5. In March 2023, the Home Office published the ASB Action Plan⁴. The plan outlines several key areas for action, including improving the reporting and response mechanisms for ASB, increasing community involvement in

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/anti-social-behaviour-action-plan>

tackling ASB, and ensuring that the police and other agencies have the necessary powers and resources to effectively tackle ASB.

6.6. **Tackling Violence as a CSP priority**

6.7. **Violence and Vulnerability Action Plan**

6.8. The Violence and Vulnerability Action Plan captures the effort made by partners to support the reduction and prevention of violence in Merton.

6.9. The plan is overseen by the Mayor's London Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). The purpose of the plan is to ensure that the borough has a range of up-to-date actions focused on reducing violence (including knife crime) and vulnerability. Progress on the plan in Merton is monitored via quarterly updates provided to the VRU.

6.10. VRU London Crime Prevention Fund) LCPF funding has been utilised for a **Serious Violence Strategic Lead** post to coordinate work on the plan, identify gaps and develop effective working relationships relating to violence with internal and external partners.

6.11. The **Serious Violence Duty**⁵ is a new statutory duty that came into effect on 31st January 2023. It places a legal requirement on public sector organisations to reduce violence and focuses on a partnership approach to reducing and preventing serious violence. The responsible authorities are the Police, Local Authority, Fire and Rescue Authorities, justice organisations (including Youth Offending Teams and Probation) and Integrated Care Boards.

6.12. Boroughs have 12 months to implement the duty requirements, with the Community Safety Partnership agreeing to take the lead on coordinating. This work will include a serious violence strategic needs assessment to indicate local priority issues and development of a delivery plan for partners to collectively work on to reduce violence and support those vulnerable to being involved in violence.

6.13. **Met Turnaround Plan – A New Met for London**⁶, July 2023

6.14. One of the three priorities of the Met's Turnaround plan is 'community crime fighting' which includes taking a community first approach to tackling and reducing neighbourhood crime, ASB and serious violence. There is an aim to reduce the number of ASB incidents and number of calls to repeat locations. There is acknowledgement that these aims can only be achieved via partnership working with local authorities and other agencies.

6.15. **Partnership response in tackling ASB**

6.16. *Why a partnership approach is important for addressing ASB*

6.17. Individual organisations and agencies may receive reports or complaints about ASB. It is important that agencies work together so that information can be shared to help with the early identification of risk and so that interventions aimed at reducing ASB and supporting victims and enforcing against perpetrators can be coordinated effectively.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-violence-duty>

⁶ <https://www.met.police.uk/notices/met/a-new-met-for-london/>

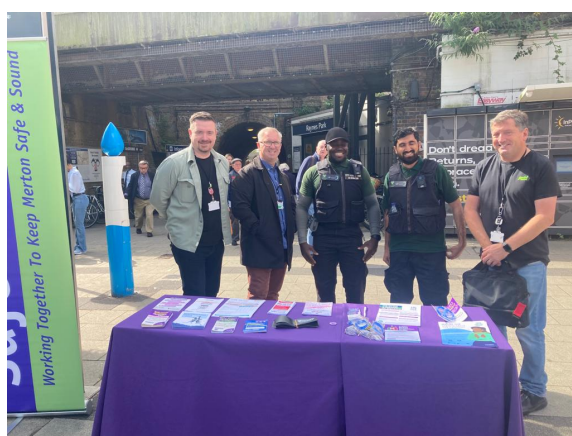
- 6.18. We recognise that often ASB does not exist in isolation but may be a symptom of wider criminal or contextual safeguarding issues. For example, complaints relating to noise and disturbances at an address could turn out to be a result of a vulnerable resident having been intimidated and coerced into allowing people to use their address to supply drugs (known as ‘cuckooing’). By working together in partnership, we are better able to identify situations where ASB is linked to other risks and harms such as these.
- 6.19. The overall approach aims to ensure that there is a sufficient multi-agency focus of resources and interventions towards the locations suffering from the highest levels of persistent ASB and towards the individual cases of on-going ASB causing the greatest risk of harm towards individual victims.
- 6.20. As highlighted above, the Met Turnaround Plan also focuses on the importance of working in partnership to reduce crime and ASB to promote the safety and wellbeing of our communities. Locally, this is reflected in the establishment of a **borough level Superintendent and co-location of Merton’s Police ASB Lead** one day per week in the Safer Merton office. Work is ongoing to further develop co-location opportunities to further strengthen relationships and improve information sharing.
- 6.21. **Overview of partnership activity coordinated by Safer Merton to tackle ASB**
- 6.22. **Promoting awareness of ASB, addressing complaints, and informing residents of how to report ASB issues.** The Safer Merton ASB Team review and respond to every complaint received to their service, with **278** reports dealt with in Q1 2023-24 and **98%** responded to in the target timeframe.
- 6.23. In addition to ensuring complaints are responded to in line with KPIs, an action plan is developed for each case, with the ASB Team Manager undertaking regular audits of cases with the relevant ASB Officer to review processes and ensure consistency.
- 6.24. Information on how to report ASB and apply for an ASB Case Review⁷ (formerly known as the Community Trigger) is on the ASB page of the Merton Council website and leaflets explaining how the service can support victims are circulated at community engagement events. This includes marking **ASB Awareness Week**, which in 2023 focused on the ASB Case Review process.
- 6.25. When dealing with complaints, in addition to working with the Police, work is undertaken with partners such as Housing, Environmental Health, Licensing and Waste Enforcement to support victims and take enforcement action where appropriate.
- 6.26. The LGO recently released a report assessing how Local Authorities deal with complaints of ASB.⁸ Since September 2022 Merton has not received

⁷ <https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/anti-social-behaviour>

⁸ [Focus report - Antisocial behaviour - August 2023 \(lgo.org.uk\)](#)

any complaints from the Ombudsman regarding ASB however any complaints would be reviewed and learnings incorporated into relevant processes where necessary.

- 6.27. **Monthly Partnership Tasking Meeting** co-chaired by Safer Merton and Police – a problem solving forum for different Council teams and partners (including CCTV, Homelessness, ASB, Waste Enforcement, Licensing, Clarion Housing, Green Spaces, Youth Outreach, Drug and Alcohol Services) to collaborate to identify locations that are hotspots for crime or ASB and work together to solve them.
- 6.28. Quarterly **Locations Board** meetings with local political leaders ensure that teams dealing with locations based issues are held to account for their actions. Going forwards these will be arranged into specific meetings for the Mitcham and Morden and Wimbledon areas.
- 6.29. A **weekly meeting** with the Police **Neighbourhoods Inspector** to feedback on key issues and identify areas requiring partnership working.
- 6.30. **Multi-agency Task and Finish Groups** to look at complex problem locations. This includes working in partnership with Police Designing Out Crime Officers where ASB is impacting on the community. Safer Merton led on **15** Task and Finish Groups between April 2022 – March 2023. At the time of writing a key piece of work includes the coordination of a multi-agency Task and Finish Group addressing ASB issues in Graveney ward, leading on the "top 20 street drinking" group to ensure those are identified, supported or if needed enforcement taken, and a project around designing out crime in the area around St Mark's Primary School in Mitcham in conjunction with Public Health.
- 6.31. Leading on quarterly **Days of Enhanced Visibility** at targeted locations to address specific concerns. So far in 2023 these have taken place in Mitcham and Raynes Park town centres, with the next taking place in Morden in September 2023. These involve working in partnership with Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams, Trading Standards, Licensing, Parking Services, Waste Services, Drug and Alcohol Outreach and Homelessness teams to meet residents, visit businesses, offer advice, and carry out enforcement activities. There is also a community engagement aspect to the days, with information stalls run by the ASB Team and Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams offering crime prevention initiatives such as bike marking and Neighbourhood Watch.



Day of Enhanced Visibility in Raynes Park town centre, July 2023

- 6.32. Partnership working between Police and the ASB Team to utilise **ASB tools and powers**. This includes using Premise Closure Orders to close premises that are causing ASB and disturbance to local residents. (Detail on the use of one tool, Public Space Protection orders to curb ASB, is below in Section 7).
- 6.33. For example in November 2022, the ASB Team led on the closure of a piece of land in Tamworth Lane, Mitcham, which was consistently being used to fly tip, with reports of street drinking and drug taking and dealing taking place too.
- 6.34. The ASB Team successfully obtained a Premises Closure Order in court after working in conjunction with the Council's Planning Team. The site was boarded up to prevent further incidences and help the community feel safer.
- 6.35. Other examples of the use of ASB tools and powers include:
- 6.36. <https://news.merton.gov.uk/2022/03/16/safer-merton-shuts-down-unlicensed-premises-in-mitcham>
- 6.37. <https://news.merton.gov.uk/2022/04/12/safer-merton-shuts-down-another-premises-over-anti-social-behaviour/>
<https://news.merton.gov.uk/2022/06/20/safer-merton-supports-police-closure-of-premises-over-asb-concerns>
- 6.38. Leading on the **ASB Case Review** process for victims of persistent ASB which is not being addressed effectively by relevant agencies. During April 2022 - March 2023 Merton received five ASB Case Review applications.
- 6.39. Regular meetings with our largest housing provider **Clarion Housing** to work in partnership and share information to aid casework and support those impacted by ASB and take enforcement action where appropriate.
- 6.40. Joint working with the Police on the **Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Panel** which coordinates a multi-agency response to the most prolific offenders on borough to prevent reoffending threats to the community.
- 6.41. Working closely with the **Homelessness Team** to ensure a coordinated response to rough sleeping.
- 6.42. Co-chairing the **Community MARAC (CMARAC)**, a multi-agency meeting where high-risk cases involving vulnerable victims or perpetrators of ASB are discussed. The CMARAC develops action plans to address problematic behaviour affecting the community and safeguard victims. In the last year between April 2022 - March 2023 **53** cases were discussed, and risk assessed.
- 6.43. **Use of CCTV**. During the last 12 months, Merton Public Spaces CCTV operators recorded **3228** incidents. Of these **718** resulted in footage being downloaded for investigative or evidential purposes to support the Police, Council Enforcement team or other relevant agency.
- 6.44. The types of incidents, which have most commonly resulted in footage being captured to support investigation or enforcement, are fly tipping, road traffic

collisions, robbery, incidents relating to a vulnerable person, drug offences, and alcohol related ASB offences. Together these types of incidents account for **61%** of all evidence captured by CCTV. The team also assists the Police by gathering intelligence to assist with their planned operations.

- 6.45. **Deployment of CCTV to ASB hotspots.** Merton CCTV has 10 deployable cameras which are tasked to hotspots to gather intelligence. Taskings on where the cameras are to be located is coordinated via the monthly Partnership Tasking Meeting. There is a plan to purchase more deployable cameras to meet increasing demand.
- 6.46. A wide range of activity carried out by the **Regulatory Services Partnership (RSP)** helps tackle ASB. This includes the work of the Noise Nuisance Team who respond to over **3,000** noise complaints a year as well as the work of the Licensing and Trading Standards Teams.
- 6.47. The ASB Team work to support residents most in need by arranging a home visit if visiting the Civic Centre is not possible, and via referrals to Victim Support for further support if required.
- 6.48. The ASB Team also supports businesses in the community, for instance arranging leaflet drops to gather intelligence and evidence about ASB issues affecting them.
- 6.49. **Partnership work to tackle public space violence including Knife Crime (excluding Domestic Abuse)**
- 6.50. The Serious Violence Duty strategic needs assessment and delivery plan are currently in development, with a deadline set by the Home Office for these to be completed by 31 January 2024.
- 6.51. A small amount of funding assigned to the Duty for 2022-23 was utilised for a **Youth Integrated Offender Management (IOM)** pilot initiative, working with the Police and mentors from St Giles Trust SOS+ Service to support two young people who presented high levels of risk via an intensive mentoring programme. Funding for 2023-24 will be assigned to a contextual safeguarding intervention focusing on the Pollards Hill area, identified as a high violence area of the borough.
- 6.52. **Other violence interventions**
- 6.53. Safer Merton has also worked with Children, Schools, and Families Dept to secure funding from London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) for **St Giles SOS+ Service** to deliver contextual safeguarding work in schools within the highest violent crime areas in the borough. The work is delivered via preventative sessions on violence, vulnerability and exploitation and mentoring of young people at raised risk of gang-involvement, criminal child exploitation and violence with young people currently being mentored in six Merton schools. An example of positive feedback so far is below:
- 6.54. *"There was a boy who was refusing to attend school. He was worried about leaving his house because of what he was involved in. We did a gradual re-integration programme. He met with the mentor for an hour and we gradually increased it. It really helped."* Merton Schools Inclusion Co-ordinator.

- 6.55. Prevention and awareness raising sessions will also be provided to year group cohorts via school assemblies, with 400 students reached this FY so far.
- 6.56. In addition, professional sessions are being provided to schools so teachers have the knowledge to deal with issues they encounter with students around child criminal exploitation and gangs, and sessions are hosted for parents and carers on how to spot the signs of grooming. This intervention supplements the approach being delivered by the Council based Contextual Safeguarding Team.
- 6.57. A **CrimeStoppers Fearless** campaign ran in autumn 2022, encouraging young people to come forward and report violent crime confidentially. The campaign aimed to build trust and confidence in reporting and increase the number of reports to Police. The campaign ran for six weeks and was aimed at young people aged 13-17yrs. The campaign covered social media channels relevant to young people such as Instagram and Snap Chat, with adverts on Instagram reaching 29,032 individuals within the target demographic and on Snap Chat 99,814 individuals within the target demographic.
- 6.58. The campaign was promoted at key locations such as Merton College. Two awareness raising sessions were also held for professionals to understand the importance of signposting young people to this service and to understand the resources available. Over the campaign there were two reports made to CrimeStoppers from Merton borough.
- 6.59. At the time of writing, a campaign for autumn 2023 to launch to coincide with the return to school and darker evenings is being planned. This will focus on issues such as robbery, knife crime and snitching.
- 6.60. During 2022-23, **Bystander** training for professionals and the community also took place, with 9 sessions training 46 individuals on how to intervene safely during potentially violent incidents in public places. Following the sessions, 100% attendees said they would have the right tools to intervene in the future as a bystander.
- 6.61. Children, Schools, and Families dept are coordinating **Growing Against Violence (GAV)** knife crime interventions in one year group per secondary school in Merton. These workshops aim to counter youth violence and weapon carrying and protect young people against exploitation by gangs.
- 6.62. Work continues on Merton's **Violence and Vulnerability Reduction Plan**. The plan is reviewed by the London Violence Reduction Unit and ensures that actions to reduce violence remain up to date and have a focus on violence, vulnerability, and a public health approach. The plan captures the work of partners to support the reduction and prevention of violence in Merton. This includes initiatives such as weapons sweeps with a sweep held



in Morden Hall Park by Merton Police and partners in February 2023 resulting in an axe being recovered.

- 6.63. A monthly **Violence Communication Strategy Meeting** chaired by the Police and attended by Safer Merton and the Youth Offending Team. This discusses violent crimes of note on borough and how partnership working can put in place plans to mitigate and safeguard individuals involved.



- 6.64. Safer Merton assist with **contextual safeguarding** work, which seeks to respond to harms posed to young people outside their homes. This is via inputting into partnership meetings which focus on young people at risk. We work closely with the Council's Detached Outreach Team where there are areas of concern linked to violent crime and exploitation. For example, we are currently working with the Contextual Safeguarding Team on an designing a preventative initiative focusing on the Pollards Hill area which is a violence area of concern.

- 6.65. Following a significant spike in knife enabled robberies in late 2022, partnership working was utilised to identify nominals involved via regular **Borough Conflict Meetings**. A reduction in robberies was achieved through a combination of prevention and enforcement with this continuously being monitored through data and intelligence.

- 6.66. VRU **Critical Incident Funding** - Local Authorities can request a grant of up to £5,000 following incidents involving serious violence, or to support delivery which aims to prevent incidences from taking place. So far in 2023, Merton has successfully applied for nine grants to fund interventions such as parents sessions, school engagement sessions and family support following an attempted stabbing near to school premises, increased CCTV provision at a community centre affected by a violent incident and an autumn programme of detached youth work and workshops at key violence hotspots in the borough.

- 6.67. **Test purchasing** - In Merton during 2022/23 over 100 test purchases took place, covering the sales of knives, tobacco, vapes, alcohol and fireworks. So far in 2023/24, over 40 advisory visits and test purchases have taken place. Following legal guidance and carefully monitoring by **Trading Standards Officers** the underage volunteers attempt to buy restricted products. This type of activity helps ensure that all businesses are adhering to legal standards, protects children, and works to stop anyone under the age of 18 from buying age restricted products.

- 6.68. Data is received from residents, businesses, and multi-agency partners. Where premises or areas of concern are noted proactive visits are carried out to give targeted advice and/ or enforcement on the sale of age restricted products.

- 6.69. It should also be noted that businesses that sell fireworks must be registered and obtain a licence from the Council. Each year Trading Standards Officers carry out annual inspections within all business that sell fireworks, where operators are reminded of responsible operating and underage sales.

7 ALCOHOL RELATED PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO) – MAKING MERTON A RESPONSIBLE DRINKING BOROUGH

- 7.1. **Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)** are one of a range of measures introduced by the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), Crime and Policing Act 2014 to combat ASB and its impact on individuals and communities.
- 7.2. A PSPO identifies a public space and prohibits certain activities within that area and/ or requires certain things to be done by persons engaging in certain activities within that area. PSPOs focus on identified problem behaviour(s), rather than targeting specific individuals or properties. A breach of a PSPO is a criminal offence.
- 7.3. In July 2023, the Council looked at available evidence, the results of a consultation with the public, Police and community representatives and an equalities impact assessment and implemented a borough wide PSPO to address alcohol related ASB. This replaced the existing PSPO which operated in five wards in the east of the borough (Cricket Green, Figges Marsh, Graveney, Lavender Fields and Ravensbury). The borough wide Order will be in place until July 2026.
- 7.4. It is important to note that the PSPO only applies to ASB related alcohol consumption. *Officers only enforce this prohibition when people drinking alcohol are currently or likely to cause ASB.*
- 7.5. If an individual is found to be breaching the restrictions, the Police or Council Enforcement Officers (Kingdom Security) can request they either stop drinking or surrender the alcohol. Anyone who does not comply with the request to stop drinking, or surrender the alcohol, will be issued with a £100 fixed penalty notice.
- 7.6. A PSPO is not solely an enforcement tool, importantly it is also an opportunity to provide pathways to access support for those vulnerable individuals for whom alcohol has become a challenge. This support is provided via signposting and referrals to the borough's drug and alcohol treatment service provider Via. During the 6-week judicial appeal period, officers are focussing on education engagement only. After this period enforcement can be used where appropriate.
- 7.7. To give an indication of the number of fines issued as part of the previous PSPO, between 01/01/2020-31/07/2023 across 3 of the 5 wards, there were 33 FPNS issued in total.
- 7.8. It also links with the Government's 10-year drugs strategy 'From Harm to Hope' which focuses on tackling drug supply, reducing drug demand and improving drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services. The Strategy states 'local partnerships should ensure that their plans sufficiently address alcohol dependence and wider alcohol-related harms.'

- 7.9. Making Merton a responsible drinking borough will help to ensure our public spaces such as parks, open spaces, and town centres are places for our communities to enjoy safely.
- 7.10. It should be noted the prohibition will only be exercised when *individuals are currently or likely to cause ASB*. Those wishing to enjoy alcohol in a public place sensibly without causing ASB can continue to do so.
- 7.11. **Partnership work to support the PSPO**
- 7.12. Partnership work is key to support the implementation of the PSPO. This work includes:
- 7.13. Tasking of Kingdom Enforcement Officers to hotspots to engage and educate. Where possible these patrols have been combined with the Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams and recently established Via drug and alcohol 'Assertive Outreach' worker.



Joint PSPO patrol with Kingdom, Pollards Hill SNT and Via, July 2023

- 7.14. New signage has been erected at locations across the borough reflecting the borough wide PSPO. These will be reviewed and refreshed where necessary, with the introduction of larger metal signage in town centre and hotspot areas.
- 7.15. Leaflets explaining the PSPO and referrals to Via drug and alcohol services have been produced in English and Polish and will also be translated into Tamil.
- 7.16. A multi-agency street drinking working group to identify the top 20 street drinkers in the borough and ensure they are offered relevant holistic support and enforcement where required continues to meet monthly.
- 7.17. Briefings held in August 2023 for Police, Members, and partners to understand the PSPO and its use.
- 7.18. Monitoring of the PSPO via the monthly Partnership Tasking Meeting.
- 7.19. Officers from the Licensing Team carry out proactive and reactive compliance visits to licensed premises selling/ supplying alcohol to ensure compliance with conditions of premises licences and responsible retailing ensuring that staff at licensed premises are not selling/ supplying alcohol to street drinkers or customers who are already drunk.

7.20. Multi-agency meetings are held to discuss complex licensing matters and action plans are devised to resolve issues. However, in some cases, a premises licence is reviewed, and the matter is referred to the Licensing Sub-Committee (LSC) to determine the best course of action. Actions taken by the LSC can include - modifications of the conditions of the licence, exclusion of licensable activity from the scope of the licence, removal of the Designated Premises Supervisor from the licence, suspension of licence for a period not exceeding three months or revocation of the licence.

7.21. The borough wide PSPO went live on 25th July 2023. During the first six weeks focus is on education and engagement. At the time of writing, during the first three week period, Kingdom Enforcement Officers had 23 engagements with individuals regarding the PSPO, advising what the Order means and routes to services via the support leaflets.

7.22. **Hate crime**

7.23. We recognise the negative effect hate crimes can have on not just individuals but their families and communities and that some may feel uncomfortable reporting these crimes directly to the Police. Therefore, Merton's **Hate Crime Strategy**⁹ centres on preventing hate crime and working with the community to increase confidence in reporting and encourage victims to come forward and obtain the support they need to prevent issues escalating.

7.24. Work on the hate crime agenda is driven by Merton's Hate Crime Strategy Group, made up of members from the Council and community partners representing each strand of hate crime.

7.25. Key initiatives include the promotion of the 24hr, 7 days a week **Stop Hate UK Helpline for Merton**, monthly **Merton Hate Crime Advice Surgeries** held at locations across the borough, and the development of a network of **Hate Crime Third Party Reporting Centres**. Major organisations in the community such as AFC Wimbledon and Tooting and Mitcham FC and Merton Libraries have signed up to be hate crime Third Party Reporting Centres. Safer Merton also lead on **Hate Crime Awareness Week** each October which includes several community events including engaging with young people via schools.

7.26. **Merton Neighbourhood Watch**

7.27. Safer Merton also coordinates Merton Neighbourhood Watch, with over 400 watches across the borough. The aim of neighbourhood watch is to assist in reducing crime and the fear of crime. We work in partnership with the Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams to support the watches, providing crime figures, crime prevention advice, and updates from the Police and Community Safety



⁹ <https://www.merton.gov.uk/system/files/Merton%20Hate%20Crime%20Strategy%202022-26.pdf>

Team. Regular information is circulated regarding how to report crimes such as ASB via the correct channels.

- 7.28. In 2022-23, Merton Neighbourhood Watch also successfully applied via Merton's Safer Neighbourhood Board, for MOPAC Community Engagement Funding to run a crime prevention project which focused neighbourhood crime using initiatives, such as bike marking, and catalytic convertor marking events across the borough and shed alarm distribution to burglary hotspots. Funding has also been secured to carry out a further crime prevention project during 2023-24.



8 INTERVENTIONS TO TACKLE GRAFFITI AND FLY TIPPING

- 8.1. The Waste Enforcement Team will arrange for removal of offensive/ racist graffiti from properties and public areas within 48 hours. Other graffiti is removed from public and council owned areas within five days. Graffiti can also be removed from private properties provided prior permission has been granted by the property owner.
- 8.2. There is a current project ongoing to tackle graffiti on private property and land and which being conducted under the London Local Authority Act 1995, Section 12 and 13. This is a working process and is currently under review.
- 8.3. **Smart CCTV cameras**
- 8.4. There are 30 cameras in place across 10 locations, these camera units capture images of people dumping waste on our streets. The Waste Enforcement Team then conduct investigations based on any useable images, especially where vehicles are used in fly tipping.
- 8.5. **Monthly fly tipping group**
- 8.6. The Waste Enforcement Team hold a monthly meeting with colleagues from Veolia, Kingdom LAS, Comms and Public Space. It allows the teams to look at issues across the borough and what actions everyone can do to assist with tackling fly tipping, setting out potential working group tasks for the multiple agencies involved.
- 8.7. **Communications**
- 8.8. Over the last year the Waste Enforcement Team, CCTV and Comms have been working on regular monthly episodes of the 'Wall of Shame.' This features footage and images of individuals who are caught on

CCTV dumping waste and furniture on our streets. There has been 12 episodes released to date.¹⁰

8.9. Intel received from residents has resulted in several Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) being issued against those identified from episodes. The Waste Enforcement Team has also been targeting hotspot areas by stencilling the floor relating to dumping waste. An example can be found at Links Avenue in Mitcham, near the clothing bank bin. These stencils are not permanent so will fade over time. Should they need to be reinstated Officers have relevant tools to carry out this requirement.

8.10. **Role that Kingdom LAS play in littering enforcement and fly tipping/ time band waste**

8.11. Kingdom Officers are tasked with regular activities based on intel gathered and producing heat maps from Fix My Streets. Officers are deployed to various points across the borough, carrying out litter patrols in our town centres, assisting with Merton's time-banded collection areas. Regular twice weekly meetings are held with the team leader and area manager to ensure the tasks set are being met and to discuss any issues.

9 RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee notes and continues to support the work undertaken to tackle ASB in Merton.

10 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Not relevant for this report.

11 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

The 2021 Safer Merton Community Safety Survey, the 2021 Annual Residents Survey and Your Merton Survey and the 2022 PSPO Consultation.

12 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

13 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

None for the purposes of this report.

14 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

None for the purposes of this report.

¹⁰ <https://www.merton.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/litter-fly-tipping-and-street-cleaning/wall-shame>

15 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report. Safer Merton in partnership with all Council departments, continue to ensure that the Council remains compliant with our duties under the Crime and Disorder Act.

16 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None for the purpose of this report.

17 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

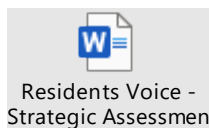
Annual Residents Survey 2021

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/system/files?file=202120residents20survey20report.pdf>

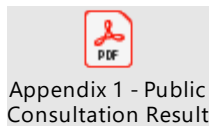
Your Merton Survey 2021

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/council-and-local-democracy/get-involved/yourmerton>

Community Safety Consultation 2021



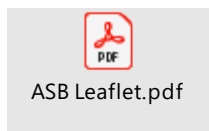
PSPO Consultation 2022



ASB web page

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/anti-social-behaviour>

ASB leaflet



PSPO web page

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/Public-Space-Protection-Order>

PSPO leaflets



PSPO Leaflet July
2023.pdf



Via Merton Referral
Leaflet July 2023.pdf

Hate crime web page

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/crime-prevention-and-community-safety/hate-crime>

Merton Neighbourhood Watch

<https://www.mertonnhw.co.uk/>

18 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

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Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Date: 6th September 2023

Subject: Analysis of the Annual Member Scrutiny Survey 2023

Lead officer: Stella Akintan, Scrutiny Officer

Lead Member: Councillor Ed Foley, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Contact officer: Rosie Mckeever; Rosie.Mckeever@merton.gov.uk; 020 8545 4035

Recommendations:

- A. That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission considers the findings arising from the 2023 Member Survey.
 - B. That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission agrees the proposed actions to be taken forward to improve the effectiveness of scrutiny (actions run throughout the report and are listed in Appendix 3).
-

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. For the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to consider the findings from the 2023 Member Survey and the proposed actions to be taken forward to improve the scrutiny function.

2. DETAILS

Background

2.1. Each year the scrutiny team carries out a survey to collect the views of Merton councillors and co-opted scrutiny members about how scrutiny is working - where things work well, where things do not work quite so well, and how they can be improved. The survey also evaluates the effectiveness of the scrutiny function as a whole and with the different workstreams that make up overview and scrutiny.

Key findings

2.2. Here are the headline results from this year's survey:

- Overall effectiveness: Regarding the overall effectiveness of scrutiny, 44% of respondents rated scrutiny as completely or somewhat effective
- Task groups: Task group work was once again rated the most effective element of scrutiny with 60% rating it as completely or somewhat effective
- Scrutiny team: Satisfaction with the team and each aspect of its work is positive with respondents giving the team an overall satisfaction rating of 84%.

2.3. This is the first survey since the 2022 elections and will provide some insight into members views and experience of the scrutiny process. It is also interesting to note that 68% of respondents are newly elected and this is their first year in scrutiny at Merton.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1. Whilst there is no statutory requirement to undertake an annual member survey, the findings enable members' satisfaction with the scrutiny process at Merton to be

measured against previous years and to develop actions to improve the scrutiny process year on year.

4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. The member survey is conducted for a minimum of three weeks each year.

5. TIMETABLE

6. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. None directly relating to the member survey itself. However, some actions arising from the findings of the survey year on year may have resource implications that need to be taken into consideration. The cost of this would be met from existing budgets.

7. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. None relating to this report.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. It is a fundamental aim of the scrutiny process to ensure that there is full and equal access to the democratic process through public involvement and engagement. The findings of the member survey are reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission that is open to the public.

9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None relating to this report.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. None relating to this report.

11. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

11.1. Appendix 1: Member Survey 2023 – analysis and detailed findings

11.2. Appendix 2: Verbatim comments from Members

11.3. Appendix 3: List of proposed action points

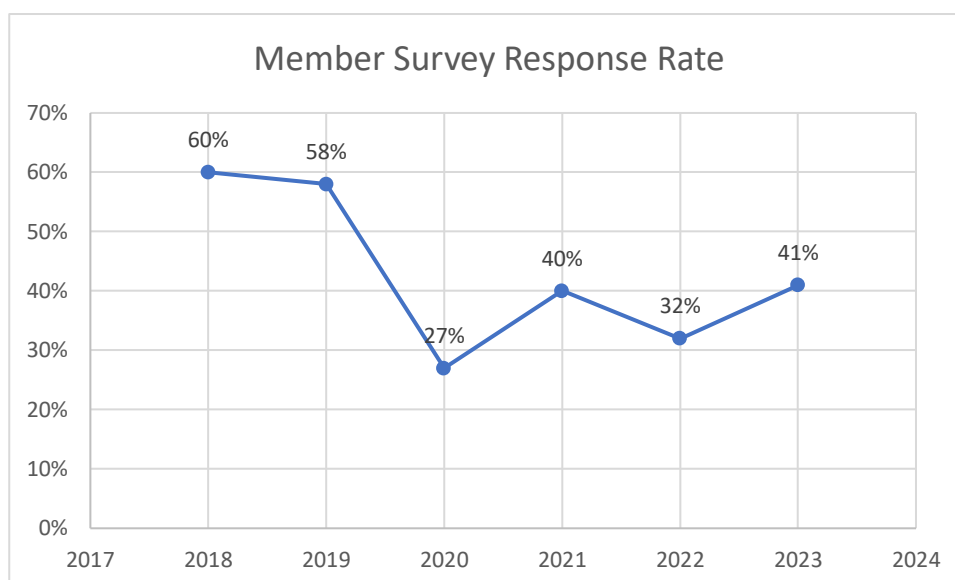
Member Survey 2023

Survey respondents

1. The 2023 member survey was sent out to fifty seven councillors and four co-opted members giving a survey cohort totalling 61 members.

Response rate

2. The survey was completed by 24 councillors and 1 co-opted member, giving an overall response rate of 41%. In 2022 the survey response was particularly low, perhaps due to a focus on the impending local elections. It was completed by twenty councillors and one co-opted member, giving an overall response of 32%.
3. **ACTION POINT:** The feedback from this survey is the basis for the scrutiny improvement plan. The Commission may wish to suggest ways to increase the response rate to this survey, in order to gather the views from as many councillors as possible.

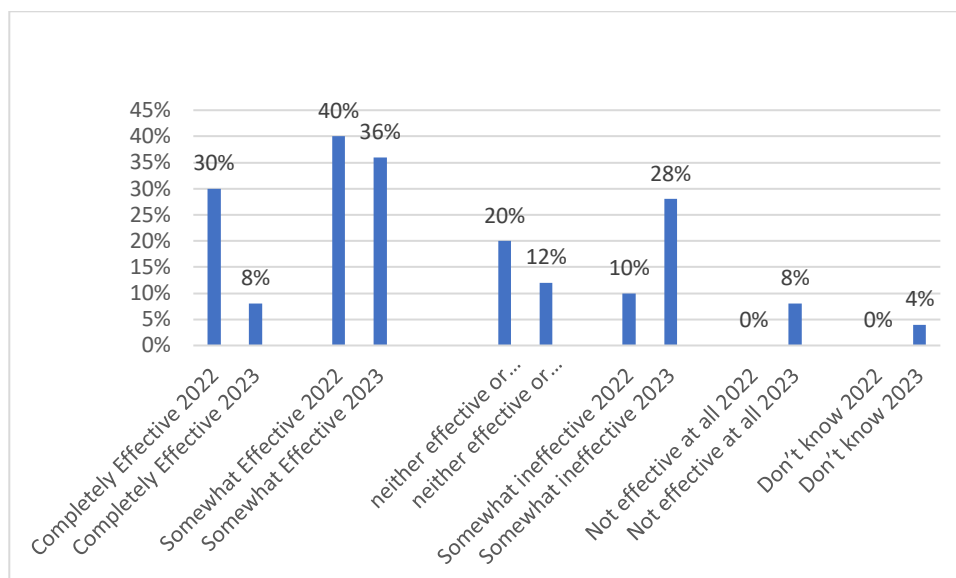


4. The majority of respondents have been actively involved in the scrutiny process over the past year:
 - 21 are members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission or a scrutiny panel
 - 1 co-opted members
 - 3 are Cabinet Members
 - 48% of respondents have sat on a Task Group
 - 44% have attended a scrutiny meeting as a visiting member to observe/make a contribution
 - 4 respondents have had no involvement with scrutiny this year (nonetheless, their contribution is welcome)

Effectiveness of the scrutiny function

5. The survey asked respondents to consider the overall effectiveness of scrutiny. proportion of respondents who consider scrutiny to be effective overall stands at 44%

The overall effectiveness of scrutiny



6. **Pre-decision scrutiny** 44% rated the effectiveness of pre-decision scrutiny as completely or somewhat effective in 2023. This is often seen as the most effective way to influence the decision making process. Pre-decision scrutiny was rated as 70% effective in 2022
7. **Call-ins** Call-in was rated at 28% continues to be an area with the lowest rates of satisfaction. It is the most political element of scrutiny and does not usually result in a request to Cabinet to review its decision. There were two call-ins in the last municipal year.
8. **Task group work** was rated the most effective element of scrutiny with 60% of respondents finding this completely or somewhat effective. In 2022 this rate was 80%
9. **Budget Scrutiny** There was almost an even split on the response on the effectiveness of budget scrutiny with 44% finding it effective and 40% saying that it is ineffective.
10. **Performance monitoring** The effectiveness of performance monitoring was rated at 40%. The 2022 rate was 65%.
11. **Development of the Commission/Panel Work Programmes** This year respondents were evenly split on the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Commission and Panel work programmes with 60% agreeing they had influence and 64% did not feel they had the opportunity. Last year 79% of respondents agreed they had the opportunity to contribute.
12. **Scrutiny Agendas/Workload** There were 52% of respondents who agreed that Commission/Panel agendas are the correct length.
13. **Scrutiny impact on decision making by the Cabinet** This year councillors feel decision-making by the Cabinet has been influenced to some extent by comments from the Commission is 28% in 2022 and 41% in 2023. For the Panels this was 32% in 2023 and 43% in 2022.

14. **Better organisation** The survey provided a list of actions that could be taken to improve the organisation of scrutiny business and respondents were asked to tick all the items that they supported:

In what ways do you think the Commission/Panel business might be improved?

Survey Question	Response rate
More frequent meetings to accommodate more items on the agenda	20%
Commission/panels to be more selective when setting agendas	48%
Councillors supported to conduct their own individual reviews	56%
Background policy guidance provided	44%
Guidance provided on possible questions to be asked at meetings	44%
Cross party pre-meetings to agree lines of questioning for some agenda items	32%
More use of external experts to provide context and challenge	64%
Other (please specify)	

15. **Action Points:**

Two successful councillor led reviews took place in 2022-23. Commission could agree that Panels can commission Councillors led reviews as appropriate.

Commission to agree that Scrutiny officers work with the Panel to identify suitable experts to attend meetings as witnesses for the topic being scrutinised.

Support from the Scrutiny Team

- Overall satisfaction with the scrutiny team is at 84%. Last year the response rate was 92%. There were a number of positive comments made about the team including “ They are professional, effective and approachable.” One respondent said “ it is too soon to judge” which may reflect a wider view given this is the first year of scrutiny for many respondents.

Satisfaction with scrutiny team

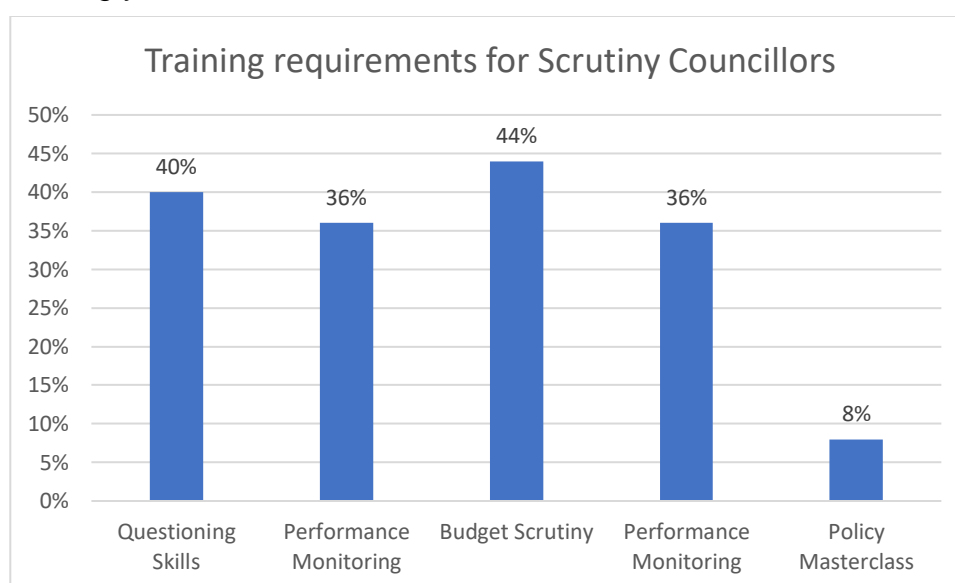
	completely satisfied	somewhat satisfied	neither satisfied/dissatisfied	somewhat dissatisfied	completely dissatisfied	Don't know
Speed of response to enquiries	44%	32%	8%	0%	0%	8%
Quality of response to enquiries	36%	36%	8%	0%	0%	8%
Quality of email communications	44%	32%	8%	0%	0%	8%
Quality of verbal communications	48%	16%	12%	4%	0%	12%

ACTION POINT

16. Any specific feedback from members on how the performance of the scrutiny team could be improved would be gratefully received by the Policy and Scrutiny Manager.

Members' training and development needs

17. The skills and knowledge, which members bring to the overview and scrutiny process, are crucial to its effectiveness, so the survey asked what scrutiny related training and development opportunities they would like to have provided in the coming year:



ACTION POINT The Scrutiny team will put forward a suggested programme of training for scrutiny councillors based on the responses received.

Verbatim comments from Members

Question 7: Please give examples of where the Commission and/or Panels have had a demonstrable impact e.g. recommendations leading to a service improvement (other than on than on Cabinet decision-making)

- On housing issues regarding Clarion
- Sustainable communities in early 2022 resolving to create a role of tenant's champion.
- Sustainable Communities Panel publishing it's action plan Clarion Housing regarding their response to repairs.
- Youth in scrutiny initiative – having a young inspector on each scrutiny panel including OSC.
- Sustainable communities now regularly sends ideas and proposals back to cabinet to consider, such as around clarion housing, policy areas such as waste policy. Task groups but not sure how many have gone through cabinet yet.
- Various recommendations in relation to health services and cost of living crisis.
- I don't think there are examples

Question 9: In what ways do you think the Commission/Panel business might be improved?

- Particularly in relation to budget scrutiny, this should be completely re-organised. The first round should be used to set out and scrutinise the priorities of the cabinet members in relation to the budget. The second round should be to scrutinise whether the budget proposals meet those priorities. This means we can't have the controversial budget left to the January budget so they can avoid panel meetings and are only considered by the Commission, the administration group members of which owe their position and SRA to the administration.
- Chairs and vice chairs should be elected by back bench councillors. This could be done on the grounds of proportionality or it could be a free and secret ballot of all backbenchers, or indeed by the panel themselves. This give these roles real legitimacy and independence which currently they lack.

- I think the Chair of scrutiny panels would be drawn from the opposition to make them more effective, otherwise the administration is marketing its own homework with protection ?? from consequences.
- More time to read prepare for scrutiny meetings. More data on value for money from actions. More comparative data vs other boroughs.
- Reduce number of topics for any, one meeting to allow for more thoroughness and time for topics to be added in when necessary.
- Reporting back annually which recommendations have been implemented.
- More witness statements and testimonials from service users/beneficiaries
- Separate youth scrutiny panel where young panel members set the agenda and work programme to scrutinise areas which are a priority for them.
- Arrange visits to service providers.
- Agendas and reports being published at least a couple of weeks in advance.
- More visits to services covered in the report to see how they operate in person.

Question 10: Please tell us of any other training suggestions.

- Doesn't need training/ development
- Needs more openness transparency and a different attitude
- There is a lot to monitor and a very little time to understand the performance measures
- Finances – especially government settlement to local authorities
- Training in SharePoint and modern gov so documents are more accessible

Question 11: Please use this box for any further comments/suggestions you have about the overview and scrutiny function, including how it can be improved.

- Generally, the overview and scrutiny is effective.
- We're asked to cover too much policy without proper guidance as to what the policy decision or objective.
- I feel on occasion certain decisions by the cabinet have already been communicated to the public even before the scrutiny committee has discussed it. Surely, this at least puts the whole scrutiny process into doubt.
- The Administration should not mark its own homework.

- Allow scrutiny well in advance and listen to committee panels.
- There needs to be a measure of actions and whether advice is taken.
- For example, the electric vehicle charging task group resolved to have more electric vehicle charges in car parks. Then two were resurfaced in Wimbledon with none.
- I think it is good that the opposition groups have at least one vice-chair or chair position. This should be maintained. In an ideal world it might be good to have more opposition group councillors as actual chairs. Such as keeping Daniel on as chairman or vice-chair of sustainable communities O&S Panel.
- Might be good to keep progress of task groups moving as sometimes it can drag and peter out.
- Receive better feedback from cabinet on if/when/how recommendations sent to them have been incorporated and actioned. By inviting cabinet back to explain the outcome.
- More in-depth questioning allowed, i.e. follow-up questions. Need performance monitoring on health.
- Chair of committees from the opposition party
- Targets on climate change impacts
- Equality Impact Assessments included in decision making

Question 12: Do you have any suggestions for issues/themes that you would like to see explored as part of the overview and scrutiny work programme 2023/2024

- Vaping
- Knife crime
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policies and Procedures in everything
- A restructure of scrutiny panels to realign with the new directors. A review of Cabinet member roles thereafter to align with that. And a rebrand of parts of departments to clearly align.
- Task group exploring the effectiveness of the youth in scrutiny initiative and what the future initiative could look like.
- OSC meeting led by Young Inspectors involved in the youth in scrutiny initiative – agenda set by inspectors.
- Section 20 notices issued to lease holders by housing associations to cover cost of renovations – call in clarion to answer questions on this.
- Street maintenance policy review
- Parking enforcement policy(how to reduce entrapment)

- Cycling infrastructure (making existing routes fit for purpose)
 - School meals – do children like them and do they meet diverse needs
 - Childrens playgrounds
 - Public health – how to help people stay out of hospital and healthier.
-
- School budgets
 - SEND provision/funding
 - Pupil place planning
 - Preparation for falling pupil numbers.

Question 13: How would you rate the support provided by the scrutiny team?

- Always helpful, prompt feedback and efficient distribution of papers. Thank you
- They are professional, effective and approachable.
- Stella is superb.
- Documents could be circulated earlier so we have enough time to go through them. Especially combining it with a full-time job means there is not enough time to go through them all.
- Too soon to judge.
- Need to work with Dem Services to prevent timetable clashes but always responsive.
- Stella is very supportive and responsive to my scrutiny needs.
- Improvements:
 - Reports sent over at least 2 weeks in advance of the meeting.
 - More-in person visits to service providers or testimonials from service users/beneficiaries.

Question 14. Please provide any specific feedback or comments on the support offered by the scrutiny team.

- Approachable and caring
- The support given by the scrutiny team is very helpful
- Too soon to judge
- This form should be completed as an online form
- Stella and Rosie do a sterling job, covering off so many committees and task groups. On task groups it may be helpful to have information sent to panel members sooner by email. Scrutiny officers need backing up by the relevant departmental managers when seeking external guests/info when panels have asked for this.
- Don't get notification of committee papers a week in advance. Don't get notification of committee meeting online a week in advance. Need time to read the papers (health).

List of proposed action points

1. The feedback from this survey is the basis for the scrutiny improvement plan. The Commission may wish to suggest ways to increase the response rate to this survey, in order to gather the views from as many councillors as possible.
2. Two successful councillor led reviews took place in 2022-23. Commission could agree that Panels can commission Councillors led reviews as appropriate.
3. Commission to agree that Scrutiny officers work with the Panel to identify suitable experts to attend meetings as witnesses for the topic being scrutinised.
4. Any specific feedback from members on how the performance of the scrutiny team could be improved would be gratefully received by the Policy and Scrutiny Manager.
5. The Scrutiny team will put forward a suggested programme of training for scrutiny councillors based on the responses received.

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Overview and Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2023/24



This table sets out the draft Overview and Scrutiny Commission's Work Programme for 2023/24 following discussions at the topic workshop on 7 June 2023.

The work programme will be considered at every meeting of the Commission to enable it to respond to issues of concern or to request new pre-decision items ahead of their consideration by Cabinet/Council.

Chair: Cllr Ed Foley

Vice-chair: Cllr Mike Brunt

Scrutiny Support

For further information on the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission please contact: -

Rosie McKeever, Scrutiny Officer

Tel: 020 8545 4035; Email: rosie.mckeever@merton.gov.uk

For more information about overview and scrutiny at LB Merton, please visit www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny

Meeting date: 5 July 2023 (**Deadline for papers:** 5pm, 26 June 2023)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Executive Director introductions	Verbal update with Q&A	Dan Jones (ED Environment, Civic Pride and Climate) Polly Cziok (ED Innovation & Change) Asad Mushtaq (ED Finance & Digital)	To understand current priorities in relation to Panel work programme
Scrutiny Annual Report	Report	Cllr Ed Foley, Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Commission	
Scrutiny Member Survey	Report	Cllr Ed Foley, Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Commission	
Identify questions for the Borough Commander	Discussion	Cllr Ed Foley, Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Commission	Plan line of questioning for 6 September meeting
Overview and Scrutiny Commission work programme 23/24	Report	Cllr Ed Foley Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Commission	Discuss and approve work programme and re-establishment of the FMTG

Meeting date: 6 September 2022 (*Deadline for papers: 5pm, 28 August 2022*)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Questions to the Leader of the Council - priorities and challenges for 2023/24	Verbal update with Q&A	Cllr Ross Garrod, Leader of the Council;	To understand current priorities in relation to Panel work programme
BCU Commander – crime and policing in Merton	Report and in-depth discussion	BCU Commander	To hold BCU Commander to account on crime and disorder. (Include Community Policing)
Safer Merton - Antisocial Behaviour	Report	Community Safety Team, Katy Saunders, Megan Hatton	Report to focus on ASB and Knife Crime (Include graffiti and vandalism)
Scrutiny Member Survey	Report	Cllr Edward Foley	Results of survey
Work programme 2023/24	Written report	Rosie McKeever, Scrutiny Officer	To agree the work programme.

Meeting date: 8 November 2023 (*Deadline for papers: 5pm, 30 October 2023*)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Business Plan - budget update	Report	Asad Mushtaq, Executive Director of Finance & Digital	
Cabinet Member priorities	Report	Cllr Eleanor Stringer, Cabinet Member for Civic Pride	
Delivery of the Civic Pride fund		Cllr Eleanor Stringer, Cabinet Member for Civic Pride	
Customer Service and the Council Website		Polly Cziok, Executive Director of Innovation and Change	
Work programme 2023/24	Written report	Rosie McKeever, Scrutiny Officer	To agree the work programme

Meeting date: 24 January 2024 (**Deadline for papers:** 5pm, 15 January 2024)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Business Plan Update – budget scrutiny	Report – common pack for Panels and Commission	Asad Mushtaq, Executive Director of Finance & Digital	To report to Cabinet on budget scrutiny
Scrutiny of the Business Plan; comments and recommendations from the overview and scrutiny panels	Report	Asad Mushtaq, Executive Director of Finance & Digital	To send comments and recommendations from the overview and scrutiny panels to Cabinet
Identify questions for the Borough Commander	Discussion	Cllr Ed Foley Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Commission	Plan line of questioning for meeting on 26 February
Work programme 2023/24	Written report	Rosie McKeever, Scrutiny Officer	To agree the work programme.

Meeting date: 26 February 2024 (*Deadline for papers: 5pm, 16 February 2024*)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
BCU Commander – crime and policing in Merton	Report	BCU Commander	To hold BCU Commander to account on crime and disorder. (Include Community Policing)
Safer Merton - VAWG Strategy / Safety of women & girls	Report	Safer Merton	Include lighting
Night-time Strategy	Report	Sarah Xavier	What can the council do to develop an overarching strategy to bring various safety measures together to keep residents safe and support the economy.
Work programme 2023/24	Written report	Rosie McKeever, Scrutiny Officer	To agree the work programme

Meeting date: 13 March 2024 (*Deadline for papers: 5pm, 4 March 2024*)

Item/issue	How	Lead member and/or lead officer	Intended outcomes
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion strategy	Report		
People and Culture Plan	Report	Peter Little, Head of Organisational Development	Update on Workforce Strategy (renamed as People & Culture)
Decision Making: Review the current structure of the scrutiny panels and restructure to re-align with new directors.	Report	Scrutiny Team	Include Young Inspectors.
Planning the Commission's 2024/25 work programme	Report	Cllr Ed Foley Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Commission	To review 2023/24 and suggest ideas for 2024/25

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