

## Committee: Overview and scrutiny

**Date: Wednesday 21 March 2018**

Wards: All wards

### **Subject: Hate crime strategy**

Lead officer: Neil Thurlow

Lead member: Edith Macaulay

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### **Recommendations:**

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1. Overview and scrutiny panel to note the contents of the report and consider how they may be able to support our work on hate crime moving forward
  2. Overview and scrutiny panel to note the dates of key events for hate crime work in 2018 (section 5) and consider how they may be supported
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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. Strategic delivery and oversight of hate crime has been within Safer Merton's portfolio since September 2016 and has, due to challenges faced nationally and internationally, been an increasing area of focus and attention
- 1.2. Hate crime is defined as *"any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a personal characteristic; specifically actual or perceived race, religion/faith, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identity"*
- 1.3. The UK saw five terrorist attacks in 2017 with four taking place in London. These attacks were all claimed by ISIS and received national and international media attention
- 1.4. The impact on our communities following such attacks, and the links with racial and religious hate crime in particular, has been subject to two detailed analytical profiles within 18 months.
  - 1.4.1 This practice will be repeated annually to ensure we, the community safety partnership, always know who is affected by hate, who is perpetrating hate crime, where crimes are occurring and how we, as a partnership, are responding.
- 1.5. Hate crime is a priority for the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan and has cross party support in City Hall. This political position is reflected locally with all parties in Merton supportive of this work
- 1.6. As a result of the London Mayors focus hate crime is a bespoke strand of work within the London Police and Crime Plan (PCP) 2017-21. Locally, the Safer Merton service has overseen the creation and delivery of a hate crime strategy which runs concurrently with the PCP
- 1.7. For the calendar year 2017 much has been achieved. The Safer Merton service, Community Safety Partnership and hate crime steering group have

come together to develop and deliver clearer, and more robust, community engagement and awareness raising across the hate crime agenda.

- 1.8. Together we have developed a broader support offer for victims but more needs to be done to raise awareness and there is a real need to drive effective change when targeting perpetrators of these crimes
- 1.9. As we enter the second year of our four year hate crime strategy the focus on perpetrator work, along with establishing and embedding third party reporting processes will be key to our work

## **2 DETAILS**

- 2.1. Hate crime is defined as *“any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a personal characteristic; specifically actual or perceived race, religion/faith, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identity”*
- 2.2. There are five classification types of hate crime. These are (1) Race, (2) Religion/faith, (3) Sexual orientation, (4) Disability and (5) Gender identity – Merton has adopted the term “gender identity” as opposed transgender identity within the legislation following consultation with our LGBT+ group and due to the changing landscape and terminology of gender
- 2.3. The definition of the legal parameters of what constitutes a hate crime is particularly interesting due to the statement that *“any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person”*. The latter point in this law being that anyone can report crimes of hate if they perceive that offence to be motivated by one of the five characteristics. This perception element is key for us locally as we seek to drive forward third party reporting processes which will allow us to support more victims and improve their perceptions of crime which may prohibit their reporting at this time.
- 2.4. As we reflect on the last 12 months work it is fair to suggest that the Community Safety Partnership have achieved a great deal. As we work through the four year strategy, and as we worked to improve community engagement, cohesion and reassurance (following the terrorist attacks) we have delivered the following:
  - 2.4.1 Merton’s first, formal, recognition event for the International Day against Homophobic Abuse. Delivered via a ceremony at the Civic Centre in excess of 30 people attended and we achieved good media outreach
  - 2.4.2 Provided strategic support and partnership with voluntary sector partners to secure additional funds for our partners – Merton CIL along with Housing4Women both secured grants to expand work in their respective fields for victims of hate crime
  - 2.4.3 We launched hate crime branding and a new hate crime leaflet. The brand, and literature, will be built upon to ensure victims understand how they can access support, from whom and how
  - 2.4.4 Relaunch of the hate crime pages on the Merton website. This work, again, is designed to ensure continuation of messaging and reassurance to victims
  - 2.4.5 We participated in the consultation process prior to launch of the Metropolitan Polices online reporting hub for hate crime

- 2.4.6 A successful week of events held during Hate Crime Awareness Week which saw in excess of 1000 people engaged face to face and significant online media presence running into the several thousands
- 2.5. The Head of Safer Merton now carries London wide responsibilities in regard working with MOPAC, and on behalf of all 32 London borough community safety partnerships, in helping shape a London wide response to hate crime and victim care. Whilst this work is in its infancy in regard development and scope following Claire Waxman's appointment as MOPACs victims tsar this work will develop at pace and Merton will be a key partner within this response.
- 2.5.1 The formation of a hate crime steering group which is chaired and run by third sector agencies to ensure real community engagement and direction
- 2.5.2 Hate crime training was delivered to all front line police officers to ensure wider understanding of hate crime and its manifestations i.e. where hate crime is an underlying factor in more easily identifiable crimes such as ASB or domestic abuse
- 2.6. As a result of our work, and with the impacts which we would expect to see following the terrorist attacks, we had expected to see increased reports of hate crime year on year.
- 2.7. Hate crime in Merton, however, reduced minimally in 2017 compared to 2016 as the table below shows.

<b>Category</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>change</b>
Racist	245	247	-2
Faith	32	41	-9
Homophobic	24	29	-5
Transgender	8	2	+6
Disability	4	16	-12
<b>Total</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>-22</b>

- 2.8. Due to the minimal changes in reporting levels year on year our work will continue as it currently is planned to for the coming 12 months
- 2.9. However, looking at the figures, one area of reporting which may require more work, and which is identified as the biggest percentage shift, is the increased reports of transgender hate crime.
- 2.10. As with any significant change in reporting patterns a review of these reports has found that:
- 2.10.1 Of the eight reports there were five different victims as one victim is a repeat victim of crime with three offences reported.

- 2.10.2 The repeat victim pertains to a neighbour dispute and the local policing team are aware and working on this
- 2.10.3 There were no repeat locations or type of offence – offences ranged from verbal assault, malicious communications and harassment
- 2.10.4 All victims were offered emotional and practical support from Victim Support and/or other specific support services
- 2.11. Whilst the overall change is minimal as part of our work during hate crime week last year we wanted to understand the barriers to reporting.
- 2.12. Across the partnership we undertook a survey of some 300+ persons who were willing to speak about this matter and/or where they had been victims themselves. From the surveys we identified the main barriers in reporting as:
  - 2.12.1 Perception - whether the crime would be progressed by CPS and, where the perpetrator was known there were concerned in regard to them receiving any recriminations should a case reach court
  - 2.12.2 Perception of police and their response to hate crime reports. There is also a lack of understanding as to what action is likely to be viewed as hate crime
  - 2.12.3 Ability to report whether at a police station or via appointment. Linked to this was wider concerns over police station closures
  - 2.12.4 Shame – some victims stated they felt shame when they were subjected to hate crime so would rather forget it than report it and expose themselves to further trauma
  - 2.12.5 Belief in reporting – we know some victims, particularly front line staff, such as cab drivers, do not believe in reporting as verbal insults are seen as being “part of the job” and there is uncertainty in regard to their employers approach
  - 2.12.6 Uncertainty – young people are unsure of what a hate crime is and what can be done to support them and/or address the issue. Homophobic bullying and sexting/revenge porn are particular areas of concern
  - 2.12.7 Over the coming months we will be working with the hate crime steering group to look at how we can address this moving forward to improve confidence, improve understanding and to continue our calls for action and unity around this agenda
  - 2.12.8 As we approach academic year 2018-19 we will also approach school head teacher forums and school police officers to look at how we can educate young people. All of these concerns will be worked through and action plans assigned.
- 2.13. Aside from Merton centric issues we are due to face wider challenges in our approach to tackling crime and ASB. As the panel may be aware the Metropolitan Police are moving to a new Borough Operational Command Unit (BOCU) model which will help towards the £440m savings that are required.
- 2.14. From May 2018 Merton’s policing will be merged with three other boroughs in the Southwest, These boroughs will be formed of Kingston, Richmond and Wandsworth. Hate crime will be a primary focus for the police, as highlighted

due to the Mayor of London's Policing and Crime Plan and will remain so in the new model. As Merton has achieved so much over the last 12-18 months we will be working hard to ensure that we do not fall back in outcomes and progress within the hate crime agenda.

- 2.15. Within the new BOCU Merton will become the second highest crime borough within it behind Wandsworth. O&S panel should note however that we remain in the top four safest boroughs London wide.
- 2.16. When looking at hate crime figures for the four boroughs we see reporting levels of:
  - 2.16.1 Wandsworth – 479 (+144 compared to Merton)
  - 2.16.2 Merton – 335
  - 2.16.3 Richmond – 223 (-112 compared to Merton)
  - 2.16.4 Kingston – 213 (-122 compared to Merton)
  - 2.16.5 Analysis of these figures show over two thirds of each boroughs total come within racist and religious classifications. This alignment, in regard to the bulk volume for offence type presents us all, potentially, with areas of joint work which can be explored in the coming months and years
- 2.17. The work of hate crime is abundant. Safer Merton benefits from great partnership work in this area. The Police invest an officer, embedded in the Safer Merton service to lead on the delivery aspects of this work. We have partners, Merton CIL, Victim Support, MVSC and others whom commit time and effort to working together on this agenda. Merton is very fortunate to have such close alignments and shared approaches to hate crime
- 2.18. Our work is just starting. We know that with Brexit fast approaching, the uncertain environment we live in regarding terrorism and the changing face of online presence means that we cannot rest on our laurels. Hate crime affects many and, it is most likely, many victims will never report or, like with domestic violence, only report after numerous offences have taken place.
- 2.19. We will continue to take a stand, continue to raise awareness, encourage victims to come forward and work with partners to widen our victim care offer. We will also start to shape how we may use Anti-social behaviour legislation to take action against perpetrators when CPS will not pursue a case.
- 2.20. I would like to ask O&S members to support our work on hate crime and work to champion what Merton has to offer our victims so that they feel assured and safe to come forward and make that report.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1. N/A this report is for information and update only

### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1. N/A this report is for information and update only

### **5 TIMETABLE**

- 5.1. There are no timeframes in regard decision making however there are dates which the O&S panel may wish to note in regard hate crime milestones:
- 5.2. 12 April – Holocaust Remembrance Day
- 5.3. 17 May – International Day against Homophobic Abuse (IDAHO)
- 5.4. 14-21 October – Hate Crime Awareness Week
- 5.5. 20 November – Transgender Day of Remembrance
- 5.6. 08 December – Disability Awareness Day
- 5.7. As plans are drawn up for these days members will be advised of what work will be undertaken to mark them

## **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. Hate crime work is funded out of core Safer Merton budget
- 6.2. In 2017, to facilitate investment in Hate Crime Awareness Week, and to fund the design and launch of the new hate crime leaflet, Safer Merton secured some funds from partners to support this

## **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. N/A

## **8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. Hate crime sits at the core of community cohesion. The five attacks last year have all impacted on community cohesion, to lesser or greater extents, across the country
- 8.2. As a borough, and partnership, we will continue to engage our communities, support of places of worship, seek to identify marginalised and silent groups to encourage them to come forward, seek our support and know that the right support will be delivered at the right time for their needs

## **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. Safer Merton discharges the council’s statutory obligations as set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and its subsequent amendments. As such all work is governed accordingly

## **10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. N/A

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

- Hate Crime Profile 2017
- Hate Crime Leaflet 2017

## **12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 12.1. Hate crime strategy 2017-21
- 12.2. London Police and Crime Plan 2017-21