

## **Committee:** Overview and Scrutiny Commission

**Date:** 19 September 2018

## **Subject:** Crime and policing in Merton

Lead officer: Chief Superintendent Sally Benatar, Borough Commander

Lead member: Councillor Peter Southgate, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Commission

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### **Recommendations:**

- A. That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission discuss and comment on the responses to its questions (see Appendix A) and the crime data provided by the Borough Commander (see Appendix B) and ask other questions as appropriate.
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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. The Borough Commander, Chief Superintendent Sally Benatar, has been invited to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Commission meeting to give a brief overview of any changes since Chief Superintendent Peter Laverick attended previously in March 2018 and to address the questions identified by Commission members in section 2 below. Her responses are set out in Appendix A.
- 1.2. She was also requested to provide crime data in the same format as that provided previously. This is set out in Appendix B.

## **2 DETAILS**

- 2.1. The Borough Commander has been asked to provide an overview of any changes since the last meeting and anything she wished to draw to the Commission's attention.
- 2.2. Commission members also identified a number of questions they would like to discuss with the Borough Commander. These were emailed in advance of the meeting so that the Borough Commander could prepare her answers. The questions and answers are set out in full in Appendix A. The questions are:

1. What lessons have been learnt from last year's pilot merger of BCUs?
2. What contingency plans are in place to deal with problems encountered in last year's merger pilots such as the very serious deterioration in response times that initially occurred?
3. According to information provided by MOPAC, at the recent Judicial review hearing challenging the decision to close Wimbledon police station, the plan after closure is to house police officers, currently stationed within Merton, outside of the borough in Wandsworth, Richmond and/or Kingston.

- Is this correct?
  - How many officers were there in the MERTON BCU before merger?
  - Has that figure changed post merger?
  - How many are due to be housed in Merton if Wimbledon police station closes?
  - Does the commander envisage some of the police resources currently employed within Merton being switched to other parts of the the enlarged BCU?
4. According to information provided by MOPAC at the recent judicial review hearing, MOPAC were under the mistaken impression that the MERTON BCU emergency rapid response team is already housed at Mitcham Police Station.
- How many police vehicles are currently stationed at Wimbledon Police station?
  - What is the police vehicle capacity of Mitcham police station?
  - What is the plan regarding police vehicles if Wimbledon police station closes?
5. According to the recent consultation on the closure of Wimbledon police station, response times will not be negatively impacted by its closure.
- Does the commander agree?
  - On what basis has this assessment been made?
  - Is it based on the fact that, whilst response times in Wimbledon will deteriorate, response times in Mitcham are expected to improve?
  - What proportion of emergency responses currently come straight from Wimbledon police station rather than from vehicles already out on patrol?
  - What figures exist detailing the proportion of emergency response destinations across different parts of the borough?
6. As the commander is doubtless aware the decision to close Wimbledon police station has been quashed by the High Court.
- Is the commander willing to meet with stakeholders prior to the Mayor of London reconsidering the closure?
  - Does the commander see any merit in the proposal for Merton Council to purchase Wimbledon police station?
  - Does the commander see any merit in maintaining some form of super hub in Wimbledon, with public access, as envisaged by Merton's previous acting BCU commander Steve Wallace in his evidence to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission, and at the Merton public meeting organised by MOPAC?
  - How does the commander plan to address public disquiet if Wimbledon police station is eventually closed?

7. What is the BCU intention with relation to supporting the local CPO and Councillors in dealing with low level issues relating to youngsters who annoy residents by gathering in groups as they have no where to go? The local church garden was set on fire, although it was small.
- 8a. What is the Borough Commander's strategy for dealing with illegal traveller campsites and any criminal action taken by people on those sites?
- 8b. What lessons has she identified from the application of that strategy over the past 12 months?
- 8c. What steps has she taken to ensure that those lessons are learnt and mistakes are not repeated?
- 8d. How can this strategy be improved?
- 8e. What more the council can do to assist the police in tackling illegal traveller campsites and any criminal acts commit by people on those sites?
- 8f. What further powers would assist the Borough Commander in tackling illegal Traveller campsites and any criminal action taken by people on those sites?
- 9a. What steps is the Borough Commander taking to 'backfill' community police officers on long term maternity leave or long term sick leave?
- 9b. Does the Borough Commander believe that two Police Officers and one PCSO provides a sufficient and resilient community policing presence?
- 10a. What plans does the Borough Commander have for tackling anti-social behaviour in Mitcham Town centre?
- 10b. How can the council further assist with those plans?
- 10c. What criteria are used to judge which anti-social behaviour 'hot-spots' (such a Mitcham Town Centre) get the greatest resources in terms of police numbers?
11. Will the Borough Commander confirm that no staff reductions will be made until the Mayor has made a decision on Wimbledon Police Station?
12. Will the Borough Commander confirm that Merton will continue to have a full complement of Police Officers in the event that Wimbledon Police Station is closed?
13. What action has been taken to combat levels of car crime and burglary in Wimbledon Village, Wimbledon Park, Abbey and Trinity wards?
14. What statistics do the police have for gang related knife crime, and what measures are being taken to prevent this?
15. What is the prevalence of moped related crime, and what actions are being taken to prevent this form of crime?

16. When looking at levels of reported crime, Merton is one of London's safest boroughs. What is it that we have done in the past to achieve this and with the merger, how will the Borough Commander ensure crime levels remain low?
17. In which parts of the borough do officers spend most of their time dealing with incidents?
18. Given the relatively recent murders of a man in Morden Town Centre and a young man in Mitcham Town Centre, what is the Borough Commander's strategy for combating violent crime in the East of the borough?
19. What more can the Borough Commander do to support residents in Mitcham who feel they are locked in a constant battle against street drinking and anti-social behaviour?
20. Which services (outside of policing) have the biggest impact on levels of crime? And has there been any reduction to those services which has increased pressure on policing?
21. What assessment has she made of the scale of county lines operations in Merton, in comparison to other outer London boroughs, and what action is she undertaking to tackle gang violence of this nature?
22. According to the Metropolitan Police year end crime statistics 2017 / 2018, murder increased by 120 % from 2016 / 17 in the South West Area Command Unit. What strategies are being undertaken to lower the incidence of murder and violent crime in Merton?
23. What effect is enforcing the PSPO in controlling street drinking, particularly around hotspots in Mitcham town centre?
24. Can the Borough Commander please provide a comparison of recorded crimes and other incidents involving the police for the EE festival in 2017 and 2018, and say what lessons can be learned from the comparison?
25. Please tackle beggars around Colliers Wood station who are often aggressive to passengers.
26. What are the police doing to tackle the rise in crime, particularly burglaries in Merton. Residents feel unsafe in their own homes. Concern re lack of police presence

2.3. The Borough Commander's responses to these questions are set out in Appendix A.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

Commission members may choose to ask questions about other aspects of policing in Merton.

- 4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**
- 4.1. Not applicable.
- 5 TIMETABLE**
- 5.1. Not applicable.
- 6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**
- 6.1. There are no property or resource implications at this time.
- 7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**
- 7.1. None for the purposes of this report.
- 8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**
- 8.1. None for the purposes of this report.
- 9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**
- 9.1. None for the purposes of this report.
- 10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**
- None for the purpose of this report.
- 11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**
- Appendix A – Borough Commander’s response to questions posed by members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission
- Appendix B – crime data for Merton and surrounding boroughs
- 12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 12.1. None

## Appendix A

1. What lessons have been learnt from last year's pilot merger of BCUs?

Answer:

The BCUs needed more time to plan and implement the mergers. Each new BCU now has a minimum of six months to do this. Staff needed enough time and support to get used to their new roles. South West BCU started the planning in October and merged in May.

Whilst operating within the framework of a consistent design for all 12 BCUs, the BCU Commanders needed more flexibility and scope to tailor their BCU blueprint and design to the needs of their BCU. This has been achieved in the case of South West through regular dialogue with the Transformation team and Senior Responsible Owner for the Programme.

More consistent communication and engagement, both internally and externally was needed, and this has happened on South West, through a range of forums with partners and staff.

More assistance was required from the Transformation team post go-live and throughout the stabilisation period and regular monitoring of stabilisation performance was needed to identify and act upon and issues. This support is still in place on South West BCU.

Learning on command and control factors across a larger geographical area has also been considered. On South West the BCU moved from four parade sites to three, and from four despatch channels to two – rather than moving from four to one.

2. What contingency plans are in place to deal with problems encountered in last year's merger pilots such as the very serious deterioration in response times that initially occurred?

Answer:

Performance monitoring and early intervention; scope to deploy resources more flexibly across the BCU; continued assistance from Transformation post go-live; leadership training for our frontline supervisors; daily contact with Command and Control colleagues.

3. According to information provided by MOPAC, at the recent Judicial review hearing challenging the decision to close Wimbledon police station, the plan after closure is to house police officers, currently stationed within Merton, outside of the borough in Wandsworth, Richmond and/or Kingston.

3A Is this correct?

Answer:

No. The plan after closure is for Response officers to start their shifts from Mitcham. Neighbourhood officers will stay within Merton Borough at the Dedicated Ward Officer bases that are in the process of being identified.

3B How many officers were there in the MERTON BCU before merger?

Answer:

Before the boroughs merged, there were 324 officer posts allocated to Merton Borough.

3C Has that figure changed post merger?

Answer:

Officers are no longer allocated to individual boroughs so a direct comparison doesn't exist. Overall there are fewer posts on the BCU than there were across the four boroughs combined (1112 posts now compared to 1376 prior to the merger.)

3D How many are due to be housed in Merton if Wimbledon police station closes?

Answer:

The same number.

3E Does the Commander envisage some of the police resources currently employed within Merton being switched to other parts of the enlarged BCU?

Answer:

No.

4. According to information provided by MOPAC at the recent judicial review hearing, MOPAC were under the mistaken impression that the Merton BCU emergency rapid response team is already housed at Mitcham Police Station.

4A How many police vehicles are currently stationed at Wimbledon Police station?

Answer:

30. This includes vehicles used by staff on emergency response, neighbourhoods, safeguarding, CID and scenes of crime officers.

4B What is the police vehicle capacity of Mitcham police station?

Answer:

45 vehicle spaces

4C What is the plan regarding police vehicles if Wimbledon police station closes?

The vehicles will be based at Mitcham Police Station.

5. According to the recent consultation on the closure of Wimbledon police station, response times will not be negatively impacted by its closure.

5A Does the commander agree?

Yes.

5B On what basis has this assessment been made?

Answer:

Response officers start and finish their shifts at a parade site and are out on patrol for their shift. They don't stay within a police station waiting for a call. Whilst emergency response officers start their shifts at a parade site, they are available to be despatched to calls across the BCU area based on demand.

5C Is it based on the fact that, whilst response times in Wimbledon will deteriorate, response times in Mitcham are expected to improve?

Answer:

No. There won't be a reduction in response officers due to the closure of Wimbledon Police Station therefore I don't anticipate an impact on response times.

5D What proportion of emergency responses currently come straight from Wimbledon police station rather than from vehicles already out on patrol?

Answer:

This data isn't measured.

5E What figures exist detailing the proportion of emergency response destinations across different parts of the borough?

Answer:

From 1st August 2017 to 31st July 2018:

Calls graded as Immediate Response:

Wimbledon – 2466 calls

Morden – 1717 calls

Mitcham – 3024 calls

Total calls:

Wimbledon – 6553 calls

Morden – 5429 calls

Mitcham – 9868 calls

6. As the Commander is doubtless aware the decision to close Wimbledon police station has been quashed by the High Court.

6A Is the commander willing to meet with stakeholders prior to the Mayor of London reconsidering the closure?

Answer:

I am willing to meet with stakeholders as part of my role as BCU Commander. However the reconsideration around Wimbledon Police as a result of the judicial review is for the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime (DMPC), and not for the Metropolitan Police or for me. The Metropolitan Police will support the process by offering any further operational/logistical information that is required by the DMPC.

6B Does the Commander see any merit in the proposal for Merton Council to purchase Wimbledon police station?



Answer:

The Metropolitan Police is politically neutral and therefore will not comment on with the council's proposals. If the council has a proposal around the MOPAC estates strategy, that proposal should be submitted to MOPAC to assess its viability.

6C Does the Commander see any merit in maintaining some form of super hub in Wimbledon, with public access, as envisaged by Merton's previous acting BCU commander Steve Wallace in his evidence to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission, and at the Merton public meeting organised by MOPAC?

Answer:

I can advise a proposal that a proposal to form a super hub with public access in Wimbledon has already been reviewed by the Metropolitan Police and that assessment concluded there was no operational value in proceeding with this idea.

6D How does the Commander plan to address public disquiet if Wimbledon police station is eventually closed?

Answer:

By providing a 24/7 emergency response service to respond to emergencies across the borough and by promoting the range of methods for the public of Wimbledon to make contact with the public – this includes community contact sessions on each ward, telephone and online reporting as well as a 24/7 front counter within the borough of Merton.

7. What is the BCU intention with relation to supporting the local CPO and councillors in dealing with low level issues relating to youngsters who annoy residents by gathering in groups as they have nowhere to go? The local church garden was set on fire, although it was small.

Answer:

Through the Safer Stronger Partnership, we work closely with the council enforcement officers to enforce the Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) to reduce anti-social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour is subject to a joint response from the council and police in the form of a Community MARAC to prioritise interventions for repeat victims. With regard to opportunities for diversion, we support the council and partners with a number of schemes and also run a number of Volunteer Police Cadet units across the borough.

8a. What is the Borough Commander's strategy for dealing with illegal traveller campsites and any criminal action taken by people on those sites?

8b. What lessons has she identified from the application of that strategy over the past 12 months?

8c. What steps has she taken to ensure that those lessons are learnt and mistakes are not repeated?

8d. How can this strategy be improved?

8e. What more the council can do to assist the police in tackling illegal traveller campsites and any criminal acts commit by people on those sites?

8f. What further powers would assist the Borough Commander in tackling illegal Traveller campsites and any criminal action taken by people on those sites?

Answer:

I will answer all the questions relating to unauthorised encampments together:

Our strategy is to consider each unauthorised encampment on an individual basis, to engage fully with all parties involved and to use the powers that we have appropriately. We work closely with the council to discuss options relating to people who have committed offences and those who have not. We are aware that the council is considering a borough-wide injunction in the same way that some other boroughs have done. We work proactively with the council's environment team to address fly tipping. There are legal limitations regarding encampments on private property.

9a. What steps is the Borough Commander taking to 'backfill' community police officers on long term maternity leave or long term sick leave?

Answer:

Resourcing of neighbourhood police officers (ward officers and police community support officers) is regularly reviewed in order to balance vacancies and carry out succession planning, so that there is cover across all wards. Our target is to have two operationally deployable ward officers and one PCSO per ward, but when that is not achievable due to pregnancy or sickness, we balance the gaps across the wards – we do not have a pool of extra DWOs or PCSOs to fill gaps. Officers who are not operationally deployable work in the BCU Local Resolution Team which reduces demand for front line officers. DWO posts, along with Response and Safeguarding posts, are always the priority to be filled at our Resource Planning meetings.

9b. Does the Borough Commander believe that two Police Officers and one PCSO provides a sufficient and resilient community policing presence?

Answer:

Yes I believe our ward teams do provide a resilient community presence supported by the 24/7 response teams and adjoining ward teams.

10a. What plans does the Borough Commander have for tackling anti-social behaviour in Mitcham Town centre?

10b. How can the council further assist with those plans?

Answer:

I will answer both questions together:

We work with the council, CCTV, enforcement and licensing teams to address issues and tackle anti-social behaviour. The ward officers hold community contact sessions each week to meet residents and they are able to flex across their wards to tackle issues. We take action in a variety of ways ranging from warnings to criminal proceedings. We work closely with the council enforcement

officers to enforce the Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) to reduce anti-social behaviour and have discussed future ticketing options with the council ASB team. Anti-social behaviour is subject to a joint response from the council and police in the form of a Community MARAC to prioritise interventions for repeat victims.

10c. What criteria are used to judge which anti-social behaviour 'hot-spots' (such as Mitcham Town Centre) get the greatest resources in terms of police numbers?

Answer:

The Mayoral promise of two dedicated ward officers and one police community support officer per ward means that these resources are allocated to each ward in Merton Borough; in addition response, safeguarding and CID officers and Special Constables are tasked according to demand. The Community Safety lead for Merton Council attends our BCU tasking when intelligence on crime, anti-social behaviour and safeguarding issues is reviewed and actioned. As from Monday 10th September, members of the public have been able to report anti-social behaviour online via the Met's website, and we encourage residents to do this so that issues can be addressed by the ward teams.

11. Will the Borough Commander confirm that no staff reductions will be made until the Mayor has made a decision on Wimbledon Police Station?

Answer:

Yes.

12. Will the Borough Commander confirm that Merton will continue to have a full complement of Police Officers in the event that Wimbledon Police Station is closed?

Answer:

Yes. No staff reductions linked to the closure of Wimbledon Police Station are anticipated

13. What action has been taken to combat levels of car crime and burglary in Wimbledon Village, Wimbledon Park, Abbey and Trinity wards?

Answer:

Officers patrol in the most prevalent areas and times. We issue crime prevention advice in the form of leaflets and advising owners of vehicles that have property left on view in them. We have been target hardening through a variety of methods. We forensically examine the majority of burglary scenes (unless there is a strong indication that there will not be forensic opportunities). We prioritise forensic identification for early arrest and make efforts to place suspects before the courts when possible.

14. What statistics do the police have for gang related knife crime, and what measures are being taken to prevent this?

Answer:

Knife crime statistics are included in the data provided to the Commission. The knife crime action plan coordinated by the Safer Stronger Partnership includes enforcement, prevention and diversion measures including arrests, stop and search, weapon sweeps, test purchase and covert operations, multi-agency offender management meetings including intensive mentoring of young people at risk of gang and knife crime activity. We gather and share intelligence on gangs and habitual knife carriers with partners to ensure our resources are directed at the groups causing the most harm.

15. What is the prevalence of moped related crime, and what actions are being taken to prevent this form of crime?

Answer:

In the last 8 weeks there have been 21 offences of moped enabled crime in Merton Borough, compared to 25 in Sutton and 66 in Wandsworth. We are working with the Met's Violent Crime Task Force and Roads Policing colleagues to target offenders through enforcement with a variety of tactics being used.

16. When looking at levels of reported crime, Merton is one of London's safest boroughs. What is it that we have done in the past to achieve this and with the merger, how will the Borough Commander ensure crime levels remain low?

Answer:

We balance resources across the Response, Neighbourhoods, Safeguarding and CID, work closely in partnership with the council and other agencies and we prioritise early intervention and prevention wherever possible.

17. In which parts of the borough do officers spend most of their time dealing with incidents?

Answer: This has been answered in the response to Question 5E

18. Given the relatively recent murders of a man in Morden Town Centre and a young man in Mitcham Town Centre, what is the Borough Commander's strategy for combating violent crime in the East of the borough?

Answer: To follow

19. What more can the Borough Commander do to support residents in Mitcham who feel they are locked in a constant battle against street drinking and anti-social behaviour?

Answer:

This has already been answered in the response to Questions 10A and 10B

20. Which services (outside of policing) have the biggest impact on levels of crime? And has there been any reduction to those services which has increased pressure on policing?

Answer: to follow

21. What assessment has she made of the scale of county lines operations in Merton, in comparison to other outer London boroughs, and what action is she undertaking to tackle gang violence of this nature?

Answer: to follow

22. According to the Metropolitan Police year end crime statistics 2017 / 2018, murder increased by 120 % from 2016 / 17 in the South West Area Command Unit. What strategies are being undertaken to lower the incidence of murder and violent crime in Merton?

Answer: to follow

23. What effect is enforcing the PSPO in controlling street drinking, particularly around hotspots in Mitcham town centre?

Answer: to follow

24. Can the Borough Commander please provide a comparison of recorded crimes and other incidents involving the police for the EE festival in 2017 and 2018 and say what lessons can be learned from the comparison?

Answer:

In 2017 there were 5 recorded reports of anti-social behaviour and 1 report of sexual assault by touching.

In 2018 there were 7 recorded reports of anti-social behaviour on police indices, 1 report of common assault, 4 of theft, 1 of possession of drugs and 3 of possession with intent to supply drugs.

We will contribute fully to the debrief for this year's EE event when it takes place and have already contributed to a decision by the council not to authorise a licence for another event at the same location in September.

25. What is the response to beggars around Colliers Wood station who are often aggressive to passengers?

Answer:

A joint approach with our colleagues in British Transport Police who will deal when the begging is taking place on the forecourt of the station. Several individuals have been identified and issued with Community Protection Notices.

26 What are the police doing to tackle the rise in crime, particularly burglaries in Merton. Residents feel unsafe in their own homes, there is concern re lack of police presence?

Answer:

I have provided information on burglary and police resources in previous answers and will conclude by saying that Merton is one of the safest boroughs in London with a rise in crime (2.2% over the past year) lower than the average across London. I am happy to take questions on other aspects of policing at the Commission.