

## Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

**Date: 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

Wards: All wards

### Subject:

Lead officer: Kiran Vagarwal, Head of Community Safety

Lead member: Councillor Edith Macauley

Contact officer: Katy Saunders, Community Resilience Officer

### Recommendations:

- A. For the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to note the contents of the report in terms of community resilience work.

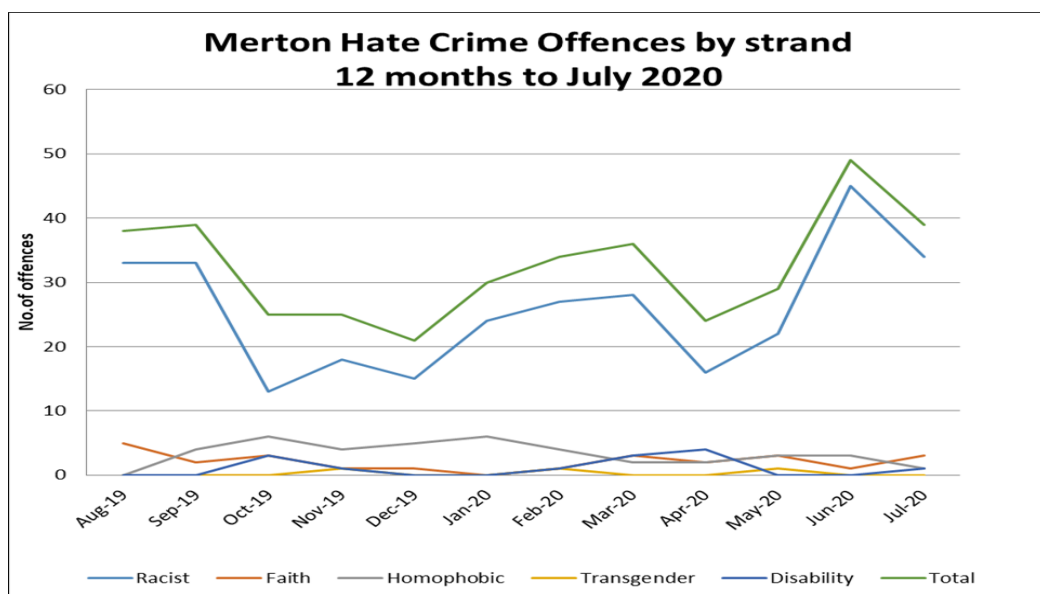
## 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. To give an update on the work progressed to contribute towards community resilience within Safer Merton specifically in relation to hate crime, Neighbourhood Watch and Merton's Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB).

## 2 DETAILS

### HATE CRIME

- 2.1. National hate crime figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) are only available up to FY 2018/19. However the figures showed an increase of 10% on the figures for the previous financial year.
- 2.2. For Merton the figures show a 9% increase on the previous year for all forms of hate crime offence, with racial incidents being the highest form of offence with an approximate average 23 offences reported a month.



2.3. Each year the Safer Merton service undertake a hate crime profile to better understand reported hate crime within the borough. **A copy of the 2020 profile can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.**

2.4. For the financial year 2019-20 Merton saw 359 reports of hate crimes made to police. This is an increase on the total of 330 for the previous year. These figures break down as follows:-

<b>Merton</b>	<b>2019-20</b>
<b>Racist</b>	275
<b>Faith</b>	23
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	45
<b>Disability</b>	11
<b>Transgender</b>	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	359

2.5. The most recent data to the end of July 2020 shows a surge in racist hate crime reporting which corresponds with the death of George Floyd and the emergence of the ‘Black Lives Matter’ campaign.

2.6. The Hate Crime Strategy Group continues to meet quarterly and has met virtually during the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time members of the group have been providing a weekly update on any emerging trends or areas of concern in their community, which is fed back in to the police. We have a strong relationship with the South West Police Basic Command Unit (BCU) partnership team, which provides a dedicated police BCU Hate Crime Officer who also sits on our Hate Crime Strategy Group. The police have been providing us with weekly hate crime figures and are picking up on any cases which may indicate a community tension.

**Key updates:**

2.7. ***Merton’s Hate Crime Advice Surgery in conjunction with Tell MAMA and partners*** - the surgeries take place on the second Tuesday of each month and are a drop-in service for victims of hate crime seeking advice and support. Due to social distancing, the surgeries have now moved to a phone based service, details of which are promoted via the council’s social media pages and website.

2.8. ***Promotion of Merton’s hate crime service via social media*** – on a regular basis messaging is put out via the council’s social media pages that Merton does not tolerate hate in any form and signposting towards hate crime support services in the borough. There is also an article in the latest addition of My Merton and the Neighbourhood Watch summer newsletter around third party reporting. There will be a piece in the autumn edition of My Merton around Hate Crime Awareness Week.

2.9. ***Hate Crime Third Party Reporting Scheme Pilot*** – the scheme launched in March 2020 and recognises that members of some communities may feel more comfortable reporting a hate crime to groups they already have a

relationship with. Although many of these organisations cannot currently meet their clients face to face, the services have continued throughout the pandemic via an over the phone and email basis, and will be continued to be promoted via the development of a promotional video for social media.

- 2.10. **International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT)** - Unfortunately due to Covid-19, this year we were unable to gather together in person for a ceremony on 17<sup>th</sup> May. However we were able to mark this virtually by raising the Freedom flag over the council's social media channels. This was supported by a social media video featuring the BCU Commander Chief Supt Sally Benatar urging victims to come forward and get the support they need from police and partners.
- 2.11. **Hate Crime Awareness Week (HCAW) 2020** – during last year's HCAW Safer Merton, police and partners engaged with over 1,700 residents on a face to face basis through a series of events at locations throughout the borough. Planning has begun for this year's HCAW running 10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> October 2020, which will be delivered virtually. The national focus of HCAW this year is disability hate crime. Given the 'Black Lives Matter' movement, the Hate Crime Strategy Group have decided racial hate crime will also be a focus. A planning meeting has taken place with the members of the Hate Crime Strategy Group to ensure that, via partnership working, we can still deliver a thorough programme of engagement with our residents. This will largely take the place of online webinars and engagement events supported by a robust social media campaign.
- 2.12. **Bystander training** – the chair of our Hate Crime Strategy Group has been trained to deliver Bystander training on how individuals in the community can speak up or take action against unacceptable behaviour in a safe way. Delivering this training will be incorporated in our plans for HCAW.
- 2.13. **AFC Wimbledon 'Kick it Out' campaign** – the Diversity and Inclusion manager at AFC Wimbledon will be presenting at the next Hate Crime Strategy Group in September about how we can support and link in with their campaign around racism and discrimination.

#### **NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH**

- 2.14. Neighbourhood Watch is a community run scheme supported by the police and is the largest voluntary movement in the UK. Merton Neighbourhood Watch is managed two days per week by a Safer Merton officer, and is overseen by a committee currently made up of five Neighbourhood Watch coordinators and a police officer. The committee are volunteers who give up their time to ensure Neighbourhood Watch can function and continue to grow, something we acknowledge and are grateful for.
- 2.15. We are proud of the breadth and scheme in Merton and the commitment of our members. There are 478 coordinators and approx. 22,693 members in our scheme (see Appendix 2 of this report for coverage by ward breakdown). Coordinators are the link between the council and local police teams for the roads they cover and circulate the information sent from the Safer Merton Neighbourhood Watch lead to their members.
- 2.16. We work in partnership with the police, with a MET police volunteer helping to provide vital admin support. The coordinators and members act as the

'eyes and ears' of the community and intelligence they provide to police can be vital, and we always work to strengthen relationships with the local police teams. Their support from police in canvassing for members and promoting the NHW scheme to residents is key.

- 2.17. At a time when we are focusing more on our communities during the Covid-19 pandemic NHW has an important role to play.

**Key pieces of work undertaken and aims for 2020-21:**

- 2.18. ***To maintain and expand our membership*** – as NHW coordinators move on it is a challenge to maintain watches and keep residents engaged. We will continue to work with the Safer Neighbourhood Teams to refresh existing watches and set up new watches in areas particularly affected by crime. During 2019-20, this work has been aided by a MOPAC (Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime) funded door knocking project by Merton's police cadets. The cadets are targeting roads in the borough most affected by burglary (a strategic priority for the partnership), setting up new watches and refreshing existing ones. Whilst the project has paused due to Covid-19, the cadets will continue once it is safe to do so.
- 2.19. We have also secured a further round of MOPAC funding via Merton's safer Neighbourhood Board to continue with the door knocking project in 2020-21. This work will be led by the Neighbourhood Watch committee and will again target roads in the borough most affected by burglary.
- 2.20. ***Implementation of an effective system for Neighbourhood Watch communications*** - Currently communication with NHW members is done via email sent from Outlook. Over the past few months there has been difficulties in sending bulk emails via Outlook due to Microsoft changing their settings.
- 2.21. OWL (Online Watch Link) is the preferred recommendation for communications going forward. OWL is a shared secure platform for sending local crime alerts and provides management tools for maintaining and expanding watches. It is tailored for NHW and allows members to find and join a watch easily.
- 2.22. Within the BCU, Wandsworth and Richmond have rolled out OWL over the past 6 months and have doubled their membership so far. They have also trained up the BCU partnership team and their Safer Neighbourhood Teams on OWL so the local police teams are able to send messages out to their wards.
- 2.23. It is important that as we move towards autumn/ winter we have a reliable and sustainable messaging system so we can relay crime prevention messaging to our members during peak burglary season. OWL will provide a robust and effective structure for running NHW going forward. We are currently in discussions around implementing OWL in Merton.
- 2.24. ***National Neighbourhood Watch Association*** - we have strengthened our relationship with the National Neighbourhood Watch Association and now have a listing on their website. We are working collaboratively with them to share ideas and best practice and look to further develop this over the coming year. We are currently participating in a Covid-19 working group developing a communications campaign around engaging the volunteers

who have come forward during the Covid-19 pandemic with NHW, and looking at what roles these volunteers who play in assisting NHW.

- 2.25. **Junior Neighbourhood Watch** – Merton is the only borough in London which runs a Junior Neighbourhood Watch scheme. The scheme is run in partnership with police Safer Neighbourhood Teams and is a 6 week programme for year 5 pupils in Merton schools. The students learn about how to protect themselves and their homes from crime and helps to develop their relationships with the police from an early age. The scheme also includes visits to the local fire station and the CCTV department, and a chance for the students to meet with the Mayor to discuss what they have learnt. The scheme has very positive feedback from students and teachers and we aim to roll in out in schools which we haven't previously worked in during 2020-21. Note this work is currently on hold pending the reopening of schools following Covid-19.

### **Merton Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB)**

- 2.26 SNBs are the primary, borough level engagement and oversight mechanism enabling communities to hold their local police services to account. The meetings take place quarterly and are chaired by a representative from the community. Merton's SNB met virtually on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2020. There was good representation from community reps and senior police team.

### 2.26. **Key updates:**

- **MOPAC (Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime) Community Engagement Funding** - The Funding Committee gave an update on applications for 2020-21. There were a large amount of bids for funding this year – 21 in comparison to 5 in 2019.

6 projects have been selected to receive funding in 2020-21:

- ISN Hate Crime 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Reporting Project
- Karate Club Youth Project
- Polish Family Association Third Party Reporting Centre for Poles and Eastern Europeans
- Crime Prevention for Children and Young People (South London Tamil Welfare Group)
- Peer Press by Filmanthropy
- Neighbourhood Watch Door Knocking Project

- 2.27. Due to the financial pressures of Covid-19, we have been notified that MOPAC are reviewing discretionary funding budgets for 2020-21, with a view to identifying savings. Community Engagement funding applications are part of this process, however this does not necessarily mean the Community Engagement grant budgets will be affected. This information has been communicated to the successful grant applicants. At the time of writing this report MOPAC have said they will provide an update by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020.

- 2.28. As well as the updates given from the police on progress across the BCU and neighbourhood policing, the meeting also includes relevant updates from British Transport Police and the Met Contact Centre.

- 2.29. **Stop and Search** – It has been noted that one of the stated functions of the SNB is to ‘ensure the stop and search community monitoring function is delivered’ in the borough.
- 2.30. The chair of Merton’s Stop and Search panel has agreed to share the minutes from the panel with the SNB. If they cannot attend the SNB meeting in person, they will provide a report with any relevant updates or key discussion points to ensure the SNB can monitor the effectiveness of the panel. A member of the Stop and Search panel also sits on SNB.
- 2.31. The next SNB meeting will take place 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1. There are no alternative options as this report is an information update document.

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

- 4.1. N/A

### **5 TIMETABLE**

- 5.1. N/A

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

- 6.1. No financial implications arising from this report

### **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. N/A

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

- 8.1. Hate crime, support for Neighbourhood Watch and the successful functioning of the Safer Neighbourhood Board are all directly linked with community cohesion. Continuing to maintain the strong links we have with our community and letting them know the services we have to support them if they do become a victim of crime is vital in achieving our ambitions for more victims to report and for more friends, family and/or neighbours to report matters of concern.

### **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. Safer Merton oversee this work and ensures that all crime and disorder concerns are considered within this work.

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

10.1. As a response to the ongoing concerns re Covid-19 the Safer Merton service and our partners have developed business continuity plans to cope with the challenges the pandemic may place us under, with ongoing consideration as to continue to deliver services to the local community.

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

*Appendix 1: Hate Crime Profile 2020*

*Appendix 2: Neighbourhood Watch coverage breakdown by ward*

**12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1. N/A

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