

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 21st March 2022

Wards: All

Subject: Merton Hate Crime Strategy 2022-26

Lead officer: Peter Clifton, Interim Head of Community Safety

Lead member: Councillor Agatha Akyigyina

Contact officer: Katy Saunders, Community Resilience Officer

Recommendations:

- A. For Cabinet to review and sign off Merton's Hate Crime Strategy 2022-26.
- B. For Cabinet to note the content of the report in terms of work being undertaken on the hate crime agenda and consider how this work can be supported going forwards.

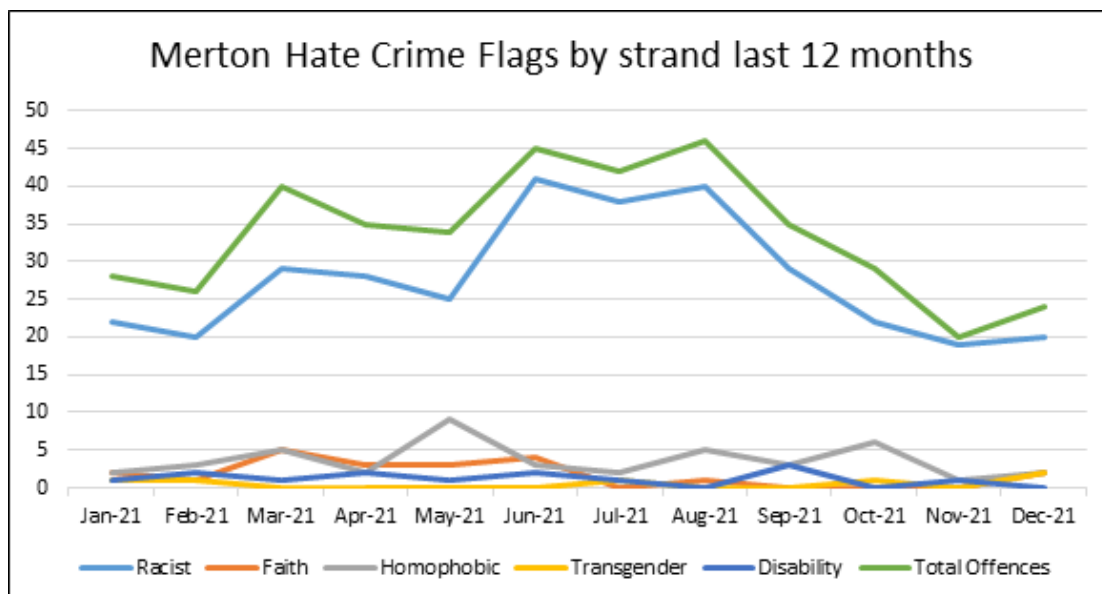
1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. To update the Cabinet on Merton's Hate Crime Strategy to cover 2022-26 and the work being undertaken on the hate crime agenda.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. Hate crime is defined by the CPS as *"any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice, based on a person's disability or perceived disability; race or perceived race; or religion or perceived religion; or sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation or transgender identity or perceived transgender identity."*

2.2.



- 2.3. In December 2021, hate crime offences in Merton rose slightly, with 26 separate hate crime flags, of which racial hate crimes accounted for 20 offences.
- 2.4. Overall, hate crime offences in Merton were up by 19 offences (5%) in the calendar year 2021 compared to 2020. Nearly 80% of recorded hate crimes in Merton are racially motivated. *A more in depth analysis of statistics can found in Merton's Hate Crime Profile 2021, which is refreshed on an annual basis.*
- 2.5. Whilst the number of reported hate crimes is increasing year on year, it is acknowledged that there is likely to be under reporting, particularly within certain groups such as the disabled community. Many victims may not recognise what happens to them as a hate crime, feel a sense of shame in coming forward to report or do not understand what can be done to address the issue. Therefore raising awareness of hate crime and giving victims the confidence to report is a key pillar of our work.
- 2.6. Hate crime is a strategic priority for Merton's Community Safety Partnership and a Mayoral priority for London, with the Mayor of London taking a zero-tolerance approach to hate crime.
- 2.7. As a result, hate crime is a strand of work within the Mayor's Police and Crime Plan 2017-21 and draft plan for 2021-25. This focuses on the following elements; promoting integration and standing in solidarity with London's diverse communities against hatred and abuse, ensuring victims receive specialist support and offenders' behaviour is addressed, working with the MPS to identify and eliminate barriers to reporting and improving training and awareness of hate crime issues and justice outcomes.
- 2.8. 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.
- 2.9. A strategic work plan was developed which ran 2017-21 and developed a solid base from which to continue this important work going forwards.
- 2.10. Key pieces of work included:
- *The formation of Merton's Hate Crime Strategy Group. The group has membership from voluntary and community sector representatives covering each strand of hate crime, police and relevant council departments. It is independently chaired by a representative from a community organisation, which ensures real community engagement and direction.*
 - *Launch of tailored hate crime branding, including an information leaflet and wallet card.*
 - *Refresh of the hate crime page on the Safer Merton web page, with clear signposting to relevant services.*
 - *Funding the production of a video 'Protect Yourself from Hate' on hate crime and how it affects young people developed, scripted and produced by students at Merton College.*

- *Launch of Merton's Hate Crime Advice Surgery, a monthly drop in service run in partnership with Tell MAMA and other community partners offering help and support to victims.*
- *The formal marking each year via community engagement events led by Safer Merton for National Hate Crime Awareness Week and IDAHOBIT (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia).*
- *The launch in March 2020 of Merton's Hate Crime Third Party Reporting Scheme, providing additional avenues of reporting to victims who may feel barriers reporting directly to the police.*

2.11. **Merton's Hate Crime Strategy 2022-26**

- 2.12. Following discussion with the Hate Crime Strategy Group, it was agreed going forward to split the document into a separate strategy and annual work plan.
- 2.13. An updated strategy has been drafted to cover 2022-26. This uses the previous strategy as a basis and builds on the work completed during the previous four years. It has been developed in consultation with membership of the Hate Crime Strategy Group and their community contacts.
- 2.14. It also incorporates findings from the council's Residents Survey, Your Merton consultation and Safer Merton Community Safety Survey, all conducted in 2021.
- 2.15. The strategy is based around four strategic aims:
- *Preventing hate crime*
 - *Protecting the victim and reducing repeat victimisation*
 - *Providing suited support to people who have experienced or are supporting victims of hate crime*
 - *Developing and implementing an integrated, robust, and coordinated approach to tackling suspected perpetrators*
- 2.16. The strategic aims will be delivered via an annual work plan. The work plan for 2021-22 was finalised in May 2021 and its actions reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Hate Crime Strategy Group.
- 2.17. Based on these actions, an annual report will be produced at the end of each financial year illustrating the work done and the priorities going forward. This will be circulated to the community to raise awareness and provide reassurance that hate crime is a priority in Merton.
- 2.18. The work plan for 2022-23 will be produced in consultation with members of the Hate Crime Strategy Group and their communities and finalised in April 2022.
- 2.19. Following the murder of Sarah Everard in London in March 2021 and campaigning by women's groups, the Government announced that police forces in England and Wales will be asked to record crimes motivated by hostility based on sex or gender on a trial basis from autumn 2021. The Government is in consultation with the National Police Chiefs' Council on how to take this forward in light of an independent review that recommended

misogyny should not be classed as a hate crime. In February 2022, the House of Commons voted against making misogyny a hate crime as part of the Police, Crime and Sentencing Courts Bill.

2.20. Other key updates and work in the year ahead

- 2.21. Merton's Hate Crime Strategy Group continue to meet quarterly. Since 2019 the group was chaired by Maureen Bailey of Inner Strength Network. Thanks are noted to Maureen, whose leadership has played a key part in steering the work of the group. In December 2021 a new chair was elected, Naomi Martin of Commonsense Community Development Trust and Trustee of Polish Family Association.
- 2.22. Hate Crime Awareness Week 2021 took place 9th-16th October 2021, with a variety of online and face to face community engagement events led by Safer Merton and partners in the Hate Crime Strategy Group. These covered the different strands of hate crime and included the national theme of Transgender hate crime. There was also a social media campaign to pledge support including a video from the captain of AFC Wimbledon.
- 2.23. Work continues on the expansion of Merton's hate crime Third Party Reporting scheme, with AFC Wimbledon, Tooting and Mitcham FC and 10 Coaching signing up to the scheme during 2021.
- 2.24. On 3rd December 2021 the Stop Hate UK Helpline was launched in Merton. This is a 24 hour, seven days a week helpline for victims and witnesses of hate crime to get support and advice, including making a third party report to police. The service is fully charitably funded for three years and will add to the capacity of our existing Third Party Reporting Centres within the community. Awareness raising sessions for residents and councillors in partnership with Stop Hate UK are planned for 2022.
- 2.25. Merton's monthly Hate crime Advice Surgeries continue to take place over the phone and it is planned that during 2022, once social distancing allows, this will return to a face to face format in Merton Civic Centre.
- 2.26. Continued reassurance messaging will take place using the Council's social media channels that hate in any form is not tolerated in Merton and by promotion of the support services available in the borough via the #MertonStopsHate.
- 2.27. IDAHOBIT (International day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia) 17th May 2022 – it is hoped the marking of this important day to show solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community will return to an in-person event, with the raising of the rainbow flag at Merton Civic Centre alongside our partners in the police and community. Other key dates for the first quarter of 2022 which the Hate Crime Strategy group will be linking with in terms of hate crime: Holocaust Memorial Day, LGBT+ History Month and International Women's Day.
- 2.28. Safer Merton benefits from great partnership work in this area. Alongside the police, our partners include BAME Voice, Inner Strength Network, Polish Family Association, Merton Centre for Independent Living, Merton LGBT+ Forum, Merton Connected and Tell MAMA, who commit time and effort to working together on this agenda. The south west BCU have a dedicated

Hate Crime Officer who sits on the Hate Crime Strategy Group and ensures those who report to the police receive adequate support.

- 2.29. We would like to ask Cabinet Members to support our work on hate crime and champion what Merton has to offer our victims, so that they feel encouraged to come forward to make a report and get the support they need. This will include the planned formal launch of the new hate crime strategy in June 2022, details of which will be shared in due course.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. None for the purpose of this report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. The strategy and work plan have been developed in consultation with members of the Hate Crime Strategy Group and their contacts in the community. They also take into account the findings from three pieces of public consultation carried out in 2021; Safer Merton's Community Safety Survey, Merton Council's Residents Survey 2021 and Your Merton.

5 TIMETABLE

Action	Date
<i>Overview & Scrutiny Committee</i>	16 th February 2022
<i>Cabinet</i>	21 st March 2022
<i>Final sign off Hate Crime Strategy 2022-26 and work plan 2022-23 by Safer Stronger Executive Board</i>	27 th April 2022
<i>Official launch of Hate Crime Strategy 2022-26 and work plan 2022-23</i>	June 2022

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. None for the purposes of this report. Safer Merton's Community Resilience Officer being resourced to work on the hate crime agenda two days per week continues in place and is funded for through the existing revenue provisions.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. No legal implications arise from the recommendations in this report..

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. Hate crime is 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.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. 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

11.1 Merton Hate Crime Strategy 2022-26.

11.2 Hate crime work plan 2021-22.

11.3 List of Merton Hate Crime Third Party Reporting Centres.

11.4 Launch of Stop Hate UK Helpline for Merton – press release 03/12/2021.

<https://news.merton.gov.uk/2021/12/03/stop-hate-uk-helpline-to-launch-in-merton/>

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. MOPAC Draft Police and Crime Plan 2021-25

<https://www.london.gov.uk/publications/police-and-crime-plan-2021-25>

12.2. Merton Hate Crime Profile 2021