

Council

Date: 18 November 2015

Wards: All

SUBJECT: STRATEGIC THEME – SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES UPDATE WITH FOCUS ON POLICING

Lead officer: John Hill (Head of Public Protection)

Lead member: Cllr Edith Macauley, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Equalities

Contact officer: John Hill

Recommendations:

- A. That Council note and consider the contents of this report.
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Council at its meeting of March 2015 approved the Business Plan 2015-2019.
- 1.2 The Business Plan represents the way in which the Council will deliver the Community Plan via a number of thematic partnerships and strategic themes. Performance against these themes, plus an additional theme of corporate capacity, is monitored by Council.
- 1.3 Each meeting of the Council will receive a report updating on progress against one of these strategic themes. This report provides Council with an opportunity to consider progress against the priorities that are delivered under the 'safer and stronger' theme with an emphasis on policing.
- 1.4 The ambition for this theme as outlined in the council's Business Plan 2015-19 is for everyone in Merton to feel safe in their community so we aim to prevent and reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and misuse of drugs and alcohol. To make our communities strong, we also want residents to play an active part in the life of the borough and to feel truly valued.
- 1.5 The portfolio holder is Cllr Edith Macauley
- 1.6 The Business Plan can be viewed at www.merton.gov.uk/businessplan.

2 POLICE PERFORMANCE DATA – PERFORMANCE UP TO 22/10/2015

- 2.1 Crime as recorded by Total Notifiable Offences reported to the Police has increased in Merton over the last 12 months. However, there has been an increase in reported crime across London so that despite this Merton remains one of the safest boroughs in the capital. The figures for this report have been extracted from the Met Police’s Daily Dashboard for 22nd October 2015. Data is also retrieved from the Public Attitude Survey measuring public confidence and the User Satisfaction Survey measuring satisfaction levels for victims of crime.
- 2.2 There are two areas of focus on the dashboard. The first and the primary challenge for this performance year is the MOPAC 7, the MOPAC target to reduce seven key crime types by 20% from the 2011/2012 baseline. The second area of focus is the year on year rolling performance.
- 2.3 Total Notifiable Offences (TNOs) - Merton is currently on track to achieve the MOPAC 7 target. Rolling year performance does not look as promising overall but the rise can be attributed to a limited number of crime types. The number of total notifiable offences for the current rolling 12 months is 12,584 at the time of writing. TNOs for the previous 12 months were 11,480, which represents an increase of 9.6%.
- 2.4 MOPAC 7 - Seven crime types are included within MOPAC’s crime reduction target of reducing crime by 20% from 2011/12 to 2015/16. Merton is currently enjoying an overall reduction of 21.4% and is predicted to finish the performance year (April 1st 2015 – March 31st 2016) with a reduction over 26% .

MOPAC Crime	Offences Change	Standard Detection Rate
Burglary	-31.1%	13.2%
Criminal Damage	-11.9%	10.1%
Robbery	-60.4%	17.5%
Theft from motor vehicle	-36.3%	1.2%
Theft/Taking of motor vehicle	-8.8%	7.9%
Theft from person	-5.5%	0.8%
Violence with injury	20.9%	31.5%

- 2.5 The overall picture is therefore a positive one with continued reductions in most areas. However, whilst there has been a significant reduction in theft from motor vehicles, this is partly offset by a slight rise in theft of motor vehicles. In addition there has been a more significant percentage rise in violence. The increase in theft of motor vehicles is attributed to a rise in the theft of mopeds. For violence with injury it is not necessarily the fact that we have seen a rise in violence but more a change in the way we record and classify this crime type. The trend for domestic violence and non-domestic violence is improving.

- 2.6 Performance on reducing Burglary remains strong. We have seen a very health reduction in non-residential burglary with a slight increase in residential burglary. The challenge is now in stemming burglary offences as we enter the peak annual period for burglary catalysed by the clocks changing and nights drawing in. Plans have been put in place to address the potential for seasonal increases including a bespoke pro-active car, targeted patrols in 3 year hotspots and prevention work including delivery of 'Smart water' to addresses in Longthornton ward.
- 2.7 **Domestic Violence** - The Met currently continues to run Operation Dauntless to tackle DV. This includes a concentration on key repeat offenders. This is an area of sustained focus for the MPS with close daily scrutiny on response times, arrest rates and quality of outcomes. The borough is now actively pursuing the use of Domestic Violence Protection Orders where insufficient evidence exists to reach a judicial disposal.
- 2.8 **Response Times.** The target for attending emergency calls, 'I calls' is 15 minutes. During the current 12 months this target was met 90.3% of the time, which is just above the 90% target. 'S' calls, requiring a response within 60 minutes have been met for 85% of incidents. (The target for this measure is 90%) This represents a fall of 5.3%. This can be attributed to a rise in demand and with an increasingly young workforce with a lower proportion of trained drivers. There has also been a drive to concentrate on the quality of what officers do at the scene rather than how quickly they get there.
- 2.9 **Confidence.** Confidence as measured by the Public Attitude Survey remains high in Merton although it has fallen 3% since the last quarter and 8% from the same quarter last year. This is an area of concern. Reading through the results of the survey the sense is that people are less confident that the police understand local issues and also feel less informed.
- 2.10 **User Satisfaction** – Through the delivery of the Total Victim Care action plan and sustained supervision around complying with the Victim's Code of Practice, (VCOP) Merton continues to see excellent performance in the overall satisfaction levels for victims of crime in Merton. Satisfaction levels have dipped slightly over the course of the year but have since stabilised and improved to an overall satisfaction level of 81%. This is compared to 83% for previous year.
- 2.11 The User Satisfaction Survey now measures satisfaction for victims across just three crime types, namely burglary, motor vehicle crime and violent crime. Satisfaction for violent crime and motor vehicle crime has improved but there has been a recent dip in satisfaction for burglary. This is an area our 'burglary squad' have been tasked to work to improve.
- 2.12 **ASB** - Overall ASB calls are down an encouraging 15.6% and repeat callers are down 15.4%. The highest repeat caller is now 7 calls in a 24 week period, which is a vast improvement and shows the benefit of partnership problem solving. The benefit of placing police officers into LBM to work alongside the Safer Merton Team is also paying benefits as new legislation is bedded in.

So far, three Criminal Behaviour Orders have been issued with 4 more in progress. Significant numbers of Community Protection Notice warning letters have also been issued in response gang related crime and disorder issues in Mitcham.

2.13 **Other Policing Issues**

- 2.14 Autumn Nights. With Halloween, Fireworks nights, shorter days and the run up to Christmas, we are now entering the peak crime period. A substantial plan supported by central funding is in place to provide a targeted response based on analysis of crime trends over the previous three years. If the tactics are successful then the borough has an excellent opportunity to improve both its year on year performance and its MOPAC 7 targets.
- 2.15 Knife crime remains a challenge for both the MPS and the borough. Officers are being encouraged to increase the numbers of targeted stop and searches for weapons. The proportion of overall stop and searches conducted for weapons rose 8% to 18.1% from August to September with the ratio of search to arrest for weapon's searches sitting at over 30%. Operation Sceptre is being conducted in response to knife crime. This will include pro-activity, prevention messages and the use of tactics such as weapons sweeps and knife arches.
- 2.16 The MPS is preparing itself for further efficiency savings required as a result of the latest Comprehensive Spending Review. Confirmation is expected in December 2015 where it is anticipated that the MPS will have to save at least a further £800m. There are a number of considerations on the table, which have been widely publicised. These include 'basic command units' made up of several boroughs, a reduction in senior officers, a reduction, (total or partial) in PCSO numbers and further rationalisation of the MPS estate. No decisions have been made nor will be made until the exact extent of the savings is known. In the interim, MOPAC remain committed to retaining 32,000 police officers until May 2016.
- 2.17 Overall policing performance is positive with significant reductions around most crime types and ASB. The challenges sit around improving confidence, reducing violence and adding more focus on the quality of outcomes rather than rudimentary performance data. Longer term the focus will be on implementing change arising from the Spending Review and the consultation the police will need to engage its Partners to stimulate a smooth transition through the change processes that are agreed.
- 2.18 **Summary of current financial challenges facing the Police**
Until the details of the efficiency savings the Police need to make are released by the Home Office in December then no decisions will be made. The commitment from the Commissioner is that whatever changes are made then 'Neighbourhood', in other words 'borough based' policing, will remain the bedrock of policing in London. The relevant considerations are:

- Reductions in numbers of senior officers
- Reducing middle managers by rationalising supervisory ratios e.g. currently 1 sergeant to around 6 constables, which could move to 1:10 for example
- Either PCSOs removed altogether or reduced to 629 across London, (1 per ward).
- New basic command unit, (BCU) structures but no decisions made at this stage. Reduction in estate
- Outsourcing/reducing support services e.g. finance, HR etc
- Reductions in budgets for overtime, transport etc

As referred to in the Scrutiny Feedback section further on in this report, there have been two meetings of the O&S Commission this year that have examined in detail crime data. This has involved extensive questioning of the Borough Commander regarding deployment of Police officers in the borough and assessing the impact on the local community of the financial challenges facing the police (referred to above). Further information is attached as appendix 1 which is a copy of the report presented by DCS Stuart Macleod (Merton Borough Commander) to the July 14th 2015 meeting of the O&S commission.

3 ANNUAL RESIDENTS' SURVEY 2014/15 DATA

- 3.1 Crime is a lower concern for Merton residents when compared to the London average. In 2013 the Annual Residents survey found that crime remained one of the top concerns for residents. However, 2014/15 has seen a slight drop to 30% from 32% and crime is no longer the joint top concern. The level of concern score is significantly below the London average of 36%.
- 3.2 Crime again features as a concern for Young people. However, there has been a significant drop of 11% from 46% in 2013 to 35% in 2014/15 survey mentioning crime in their top three concerns. This figure is significantly below the London average of 47%.
- 3.3 The Annual Residents' Survey also asks for opinions about Policing. For 2014/15, 62% of respondents stated that they thought it was Excellent, Very Good or Good. This is a significant increase of 5% from 2012 and Merton scores remain consistently above London-wide scores.
- 3.4 One of the key questions that the survey asks is how concerned residents are about crime. Whilst the Merton average was 50% there were variations with residents in Area 6 (Colliers Wood, Graveney and Longthornton wards) significantly more worried about crime (61%).
- 3.5 The consultation also asked residents how safe they felt in their local area. Reflecting that crime continues to be a concern to residents, feeling safe in your local area is clearly the most important factor to residents with 63% rating it as important to their sense of health and wellbeing. 52% of residents feel that this could be improved. Residents in Area 3 (Cannon Hill, Merton Park, West Barnes, Lower Morden wards) rate feeling safe as significantly more important than the average, whilst residents in Area 5 (Ravensbury, St Helier and Cricket Green wards) and Area 6 (Colliers Wood, Graveney and

Longthornton wards) are significantly more likely to say that this could be improved to increase their sense of health and wellbeing.

- 3.6 In terms of confidence in the police, with 75% Merton had the 7th highest confidence in London (Richmond had the highest confidence with 86%) and was above the MPS average of 68% but saw a fall of 1% compared to Quarter 1 2013/14.
- 3.7 At 81%, Merton police user satisfaction was the joint 8th highest in London and above the MPS average for 80%. The figure was 4% behind the joint highest boroughs (Hammersmith & Fulham and Kingston) on 85% and saw a fall by 2% compared to Q1 2013/14.
- 3.8 A new neighbourhood confidence tool is currently being trialled by the Police, which maps the confidence survey data to neighbourhood policing areas. The results for Merton are as follows: Wimbledon: 80% (6th highest confidence in London, Morden: 76% (17th highest confidence in London), Mitcham: 70% (41th highest confidence in London). There are a total of 108 neighbourhood areas in London. This performance places Merton's neighbourhood policing area in the top 38% across London.

4 STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT AND PRIORITIES

- 4.1 Every year the Safer Merton Partnership has a statutory responsibility to undertake a strategic assessment (SA) of the borough. The aim of an SA is to present and interpret the summary findings of intelligence analysis and its purpose is to assist the partnership in identifying the major issues within the local area, to allow resources to be allocated and activities prioritised. The SA is a restricted internal document that does not need to be published and is designed to assist the partnership in developing and updating a three-year rolling Partnership Plan.
- 4.2 The Strategic Assessment process in Merton was changed last year to use a model proposed by the Jill Dando Institute of Security and Crime Science at University College London. This model is based around the problem solving model and seeks to look at the borough from a victim, offender and location perspective, rather than by crime type. As such, the priorities selected were more cross-cutting in nature than the previous years. The priorities for the CSP for 2014-15 are as follows:
- Supporting our communities – assessing the needs of the borough's vulnerable locations to see how the partnership can start to make real changes in these areas. Look at the differences between the day-time and night-time needs of the town centres, which are amongst the biggest crime generators on the borough.
 - Building confidence – how can we better reassure and inspire confidence in our communities that Merton is a safe place to live and work? Can we ensure that both our communication methods and messages are more targeted to those in which we are trying to reach?

- Supporting our victims – how can we better support victims of crime in Merton? In what ways can we reduce the numbers of repeat victims and how can we better support those who do not necessarily feel confident in reporting?
- Management of offenders – examine our work on borough with regards to offenders, particularly with regards to Integrated Offender Management and the Transforming Rehabilitation agendas.

4.3 The Strategic Assessment for 2015/16 is underway.

5 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

5.1 One of the key questions that the Annual Resident Survey (2014) asks is how concerned residents are about anti-social behaviour.

5.2 The proportion of residents who felt informed about measures to combat anti-social behaviour rose to 35%, reversing the fall seen in 2012 where the figure fell to 29% from 36% in 2011. Residents in Area 4 (Lavender Fields, Pollards Hill and Figges Marsh wards) felt significantly more informed (43%) than the Merton average (35%).

5.3 For 2015/16 Q1 and Q2, 166 complaints of ASB were received in Q1, and 166 again in Q2, compared to the previous year 147 and 192 respectively, a reduction of 2.1%. Overall the total number of complaints of ASB reported 2014/15 was 609 compared to 547 in 2013/14, an increase of 11.3% in the last F/Y.

5.4 2015/16 Q1 achieved 95.7% first contact within the agreed timeframe for Level 2 cases. With 100% for Level 1 (priority) and Level 3. For Q2 it was 94.5% for Level 2 and 100% for Level 1 and Level 3.

5.5 Under the new ASB legislation, the ASBU received one activation of the Community Trigger (CT), upon investigation it did not meet the criteria as it was first complaint rather than a request for a case review, and subsequently dealt with as such. However, it did test the CT process and found to be in working order. The police have led on, and have been successful with, 3 Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBO) granted by the courts to address persistent street drinking/begging/shoplifting and, burglary/robbery. The new powers have also allowed for 12 Community Protection Notice (CPN) warnings to have been issued, with more being prepared to be issued, in joint Police/ASBU operations to address the increasing problems with a Tamil gang in and around Figges Marsh. These coincide with police responding a request for them to use their new dispersal powers, that have taken place on a number of weekends and a number of the gang, and other individuals, dispersed for either 24 or 48 hours.

5.6 The Borough wide Controlled Drinking Zone (CDZ) was brought in to force in 2013. The CDZ has led to fewer instances of drink related ASB in public places and has helped to underline Merton's ranking as one of the safest London boroughs. Alongside use of this power, The ASBU staff are looking

to attend the Alcohol Concern Blue Light training programme to deal with problematic persistent drinkers. Alcohol concern are looking at using specialist services to work with treatment resistant drinkers, who are the more risky or vulnerable individuals. The course is aimed to help those who encounter such people as part of their work to identify those people (when they come to ASBU attention) and understand why and how this group will be targeted, and what can be done within current legislation. Alcohol concern have approached ASBU to offer this free basic training.

6 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

6.1 Police crime:

Within Merton figures show that domestic abuse involving violence with injury has increased (by approx. 20.9% in the last 12 month reporting period). This may reflect increased confidence in the crime being handled but what is certain is that there is an increase in cases presenting. Sanction Detection rates are: 41.5% of all DV crimes.

6.2 One Stop Shop:

There were a total of 101 clients attending the One Stop Shop during Quarter 2 – 1st June – 30th September 2015, and 268 clients from 30th September 2014 – 30th September 2015.

The One Stop Shop celebrated its 5 year anniversary in September alongside partners. Since its launch in 2010 it has given support and practical advice to over 1010 clients

6.3 MARAC:

We have increased the frequency of MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) to deal with the increased caseload and meetings have gone from every 4 weeks to every 3 weeks. In Quarter 2 1st June – 30th September 2015, there were 101 cases discussed as high risk.

6.4 Repeat offenders:

There is an active targeting of repeat offenders through Integrated Offender Management (IOM) processes and through Operation Dauntless, which is the Metropolitan Police initiative to tackle DA.

6.5 Education

There has been a focus on health relationships in schools and new guidance for professionals on how to deal with adolescent abuse to parents.

6.6 Strategic work:

We completed an external review of need and provision in this area and a new partnership strategic group (VAWG Board) has been established to oversee the work to reduce Violence against Women and Girls. On 1st January, 2016 a new VAWG strategy will be launched.

7 CCTV

- 7.1 The Council continues to operate a Public surveillance CCTV service 24/7 365 days of the year monitoring the Council's 270 CCTV cameras and are in direct contact with the Police. A recent report to Overview and Scrutiny Commission set out the findings of a review of the operation. The findings are being acted on and investment is being planned to improve the performance. Work is in hand to renew the maintenance contract which will also provide the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) equipment. There are opportunities for this to be utilised for crime reduction purposes as well as traffic management which are being developed.
- 7.2 A new CCTV strategy was agreed in February 2015. This was preceded by a review carried out in November 2014 which assessed the need for a review of all 270 cameras in order to identify their need and to ensure that each camera is fit for purpose. The review also identified the need to recruit a full time CCTV manager. This was achieved in July 2015 with a completely new management structure for the CCTV team covering the management of both technical and service delivery matters. The restructure and creation of the new managerial set-up was achieved at minimal cost to the Council.
- 7.3 The new technical maintenance including ANPR enforcement contract was signed on the 23rd July 2015 with the first implementation meeting taking place 28th July 2015. The installation of new CCTV suite equipment took place in the spring of 2015, and gave CCTV operatives a much improved method of logging incidents and analysing data to assist in the management of the service.
- 7.4 CCTV has been instrumental in reducing crime and close work with the Police and other partners, including Circle Housing Merton Priory, has greatly assisted in identifying perpetrators and bringing them to justice. Through the CCTV Steering Group, much work has been done to develop closer working with the business community in order to ensure it plays as full a role as possible in tackling crime in town centres and other business areas. The good work of the team was recognised in early 2015 by the winning of the Metropolitan Police CCTV awards in April of this year. In March of this year the team also hosted a delegation from the government of Panama, who had requested to meet with the Council to learn more about the successful use of CCTV as a crime deterrent.

8 DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

- 8.1 The performance of the drug treatment system, as measured by the Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF) indicators (2.15a and b), remain strong in Merton. The most recent data (2015-16) shows that in Merton around 14% opiates and 54.2% non-opiate user successfully completed treatment and did not re-present within 6 months. These figures were higher than the national average (Opiates 7.6% and non-opiates 39%) respectively.

8.2 In Merton, as highlighted in the Local Alcohol Profiles for England published in August 2012, the estimated prevalence of binge drinking was 13.8% compared with 14.3% in London and 20.1% nationally.

8.3 The Local Profile for England (2013-14) also showed that within Merton:

- Alcohol related mortality for **Men** was 56.9 per 100,000, which is similar to England average 65.4 per 100,000. While Alcohol related mortality for **Female** was 24 per 100,000 which is similar to England average 28.4 per 100,000
- About 1685 per 100,000 **Men** were admitted to hospital due to alcohol related condition. This is similar to England average of 1715 per 100,000

9 NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

9.1 Neighbourhood Watch schemes cover just over 37% of the borough. 577 Coordinators are involved across the 30,000+ homes. Recent changes in the way we recognise NHW schemes will increase coverage. This follows analysis from burglary reassurance visits carried out by the Police and the opportunity to engage and involve more residents in the scheme. Work is well advanced in renewing signage on streets to indicate the presence of schemes.

9.2 The Neighbourhood Watch AGM was held on 29th October celebrating 11 years of Neighbourhood Watch in Merton.

- Junior Neighbourhood Watch
This project is expanding rapidly and is organised by two of the committee members under the manager's guidance. We have enlisted the help of Circle Housing Merton Priory and have incorporated our teaching programme for year-five children into their Junior Warden scheme. We have currently finished a 5 week programme at St. Mark's, with a further 3 courses already planned
- Self-Defence Classes
We organised 2 sessions of self defence classes for up to 20 people during October. Our previous classes were held exclusively for woman to increase their confidence and to reduce fear of crime, but we have been asked to include men and so both classes will now include both men and women. We received MOPAC funding for the instructor and the hire of hall, equipment etc.
- Re-energising watches
We have received MOPAC funding to increase the number of watches in the borough, and this has come at a time when numbers are slowly decreasing. We have been successful in finding replacements for co-ordinators when they leave but only a handful of new schemes have been set up this year, which is partly due to the changes with the SNT's.

NHW has arranged for canvasses and door knocks to be carried out in 6 wards where residents have said they are more fearful of crime and ASB. The knocks have been carried by all ranks of police officers and NHW officers.

This is seen as a much more productive way to increase membership and it is hoped that, with police support, this will be rolled out to all wards.

10 INTEGRATED OFFENDER MANAGEMENT (IOM)

- 10.1 This is principally work carried out by the Police and Probation services. As at Spring 2015, there were 15 offenders in the Merton IOM cohort.
- 10.2 The Probation service is in a state of change at present with the establishment of a contracted service and Community Rehabilitation Companies to provide services to low risk offenders alongside the Probation. The Offender Rehabilitation Act received royal assent on 13th March 2014 and the Act came in to full force in Spring 2015 with the London contract being awarded to MTC Novo.
- 10.3 In as much as progress has been made with improvements to the implementation of IOM and transforming rehabilitation locally, it's full impact is still being monitored and assessed by all stakeholders, particularly in respect of the impact on relevant services to meet the needs for the rehabilitation of short term offenders.

11 SAFER MERTON RESTRUCTURE

- 11.1 In December 2014 Safer Merton, became part of the Public Protection Division of E&R working alongside other regulatory services and parking. This did not include drugs and alcohol commissioning which had already been transferred to Public Health in 2014. The Safer Merton team is currently in the process of undergoing a significant restructure which has seen the deletion of various supervisory roles and their replacement with a single Community Safety manager post, responsible for managing all aspects of service delivery and reporting to the Head of Public Protection. The recruitment process for this post is well underway and it is expected that an appointment will be made later this month.
- 11.2 In respect of the medium term financial strategy, the Safer Merton team has a savings target of £70k to be achieved by financial year 2017/18. The restructure described above will go some way to achieving this. It is intended that the remainder of that target will be met through sources of external funding as opposed to further reducing the number of staff. Indeed the Safer Merton TOM (Target Operating Model) proposes developing the service by more fully exploiting funding opportunities available.
- 11.3 A review of the LMAPS (Local Multi Agency Problem Solving) function has been conducted resulting in a more streamlined, focussed programme of meetings concentrating on an outcomes based approach.

11.4 The new requirements of the Prevent legislation have necessitated the formulation of Council officer training programmes to raise officer awareness. These are expected to be rolled out before the end of the calendar year.

12. INCREASING COMMUNITY COHESION AND INTEGRATION

12.1 On 27 January the borough commemorated Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD). This year the theme for HMD was 'keep the memory alive' and marked the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia. The event was well attended and included contributions from the Wimbledon Synagogue choir and Ms Bea Green of the 10,000 children who fled Germany on the Kindertransport. The 2016 commemorative service will be held on 25 January 2016 in the Council Chamber.

12.2 The Merton Welfare Reform and Financial Resilience Group continues to deliver against a cross-partnership Financial Resilience Action Plan with six monthly updates to the Merton Partnership Executive Board to advise on progress and raise any resourcing or policy issues. The Merton Financial Resilience Action Plan aims to deliver activities under four broad headings: improving access to data and information sharing, improving access to affordable credit, and improving access to debt and money advice and promoting financial literacy. A Disability Benefits Advisor role was piloted throughout 2014/15 at the Citizen's Advice Bureau – the role provided clients with specialist advice and support on disability benefit claims, assisting with form filling, preparation for medical assessments, and support migrating from Disability Living Allowance to Person Independence Payment. The Council has agreed to use reserve from the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme to fund the Disability Benefits Advisor role for another six months.

12.3 The Croydon, Merton and Sutton Credit Union is based in Pollards Hill and has attracted over 150 savers in the first 6 months. The credit union has recently reviewed its staffing structure to improve the offer and take up of Credit Union services. A Loans Officer and Credit Control Officer will be employed to process loan applications more efficiently and the outreach work will now be done by volunteers. The credit union has also received funding to increase the number of staff working for large employers to contribute to a Payroll Saving Scheme. The Merton Chamber of Commerce has been commissioned to work with employers to deliver membership growth and lead promotional work for the scheme. The credit union is also being supported by Croydon Council to review its infrastructure, including improving its IT system with a view to developing electronic delivery of projects.

12.4 Performance against the 2014/15 target (90%) for the percentage of residents who agree that their local area is a place where people of different

backgrounds get on well together was slightly under target, with 89% of respondents agreeing with this statement.

- 12.5 This year the borough will mark Inter Faith Week (November 15-21). The Faith and Belief Forum has organised a seminar on Faith in the Media to be held on 17 November in the Council Chamber. With the support of the Morden Islamic Community Centre and the Muslim Women of Merton a Diversi-Tea event will be held on 21 November at the Morden Islamic Centre. The aim of Diversi-Tea is to use tea rituals from across the globe to bring together people of different backgrounds over tea and cakes.

13 SCRUTINY FEEDBACK

- 13.1 The Commission has continued to exercise its statutory function in relation to the scrutiny of crime and disorder, with at least two meetings each year examining crime data and questioning the Borough Commander extensively about the deployment of police officers in the borough.

It was pleased to hear that Merton is on a par or better than most neighbouring boroughs and applauded the achievement in reaching the MOPAC 7 target of reducing overall crime (measuring 7 key crime types) by 20%. The Commission has been requesting information on the number and roles of police officers in Merton for some time and was pleased with the level of detail in the report provided by the Borough Commander in July 2015 as well as his explanation of the approach taken to deployment.

The Commission received a report and presentation in July 2015 from the Chair of Merton's independent Stop and Search Monitoring Group. Members found the data helpful, discussed the balance between the number of searches and the proportion of arrests and noted the low numbers in Merton compared to other boroughs.

Other crime and disorder issues scrutinised in the past year include:

- CCTV - visited the control room, examined findings of an independent review and received updates on measures taken to improve management of the service, procure new equipment and review existing contracts
- Domestic violence needs assessment – noted findings of independent review and will receive an update report at its meeting on 24 November 2015
- Rehabilitation of repeat offenders - examined role of probation and the council and agreed to have a discussion in March 2016 with the service providers MTC Novo and the Probation Service

- 13.2. In the past year the Overview and Scrutiny Commission has also scrutinised a number of items related to the stronger communities theme, in particular:

13.3 Volunteering – the Commission has continued to monitor implementation of recommendations made by its volunteering scrutiny task group and is now satisfied that all recommendations have been implemented. Its recommendations have resulted in the development of more flexible ways for busy people to volunteer, increased communication plus recruitment campaigns and work to encourage young people to volunteer. The Commission receives an annual update on volunteering and has praised the extensive progress made, discussed ways of encouraging more people to volunteer and work being done to support employers who take on young volunteers.

13.4 Equalities - the Commission receives a report each year so that it can scrutinise progress in regard to the implementation of the council's equality strategy 2013-17 and provide comments on priorities for the coming year as appropriate

14 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

14.1 Merton Police have been consulted on this report

15 TIMETABLE

None

16 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

16.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

17 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

17.1 There are no legal or statutory implications arising from this report.

18 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

18.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report

19 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

19.1 The report is for information, but outlines the approach taken by various agencies/stakeholders in ensuring that crime and disorder levels in the borough continue to be reduced.

20 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None

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

- **APPENDIX 1** - Borough Commander's Report to Overview & Scrutiny Commission – July 14th 2015

22 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.